

HS/Michael Constable Defence Estates/1858/4

Briefing Note on Ministry of Defence Salisbury Plain Super Garrison For the South Wiltshire Core Strategy

Background and policy

Following the Strategic Defence Review in 1998 The Ministry of Defence (MOD) decided to reduce the number of British Forces based in Germany. The returning military units have to be accommodated at various locations in UK and one of the chosen locations was the Salisbury Plain Garrisons. A PFI was negotiated in 2006 with Aspire Defence to refurbish and build suitable accommodation in the Garrison Towns (Tidworth, Bulford, Larkhill & Warminster) for the incoming and existing units. The military strength in these Garrison towns is 15,000 together with a further 16,000 dependants. Construction work commenced in 2006 and is planned to continue until 2014 to accommodate an additional 1,300 military personnel with their families

The MOD also announced in 2007 the setting up of 4 Super Garrison areas in the UK, Aldershot, the East of England centred on Catterick and Salisbury Plain by April 2009 and Northern Ireland by April 2010. **“The purpose of these Super Garrison is not just improved infrastructure but to provide a sustainable military community better integrated with the local civilian community and the local civilian authorities”** (Secretary of State for Defence)

For further details and statistics see Wiltshire Council's **“Envisioning the Future”** published in July 2009.

Aims

The requirement to build a sustainable military community has necessitated a change in policy for military units. (Service Personnel Command Paper) It is now intended to build a more stable environment especially for military families by keeping units in a location for longer periods. This will facilitate less disruption to military children's education and allow partners of military personnel to develop a career and job prospects as they remain in an area for longer periods. It will also encourage military personnel and their families to invest more in their local civilian communities rather than look inward to the military community as they will remain in the locale to reap the benefits of their work. Similarly, civilian communities will relate to their military neighbours if the military personnel remain in a location for longer periods.

Actions

The integration of the military and civilian population has already commenced in a number of fields. The construction and management of the Tidworth Leisure Centre is evidence where the combination of both civilian and military organisations has produced an excellent facility for the benefit of all. Similarly the creation of Wellington Academy with its facility for boarding pupils has come to fruition on the basis of a joint requirement to educate the children of both civilian and military families. Tidworth/Ludgershall has been the focus of the majority of the integration work to date. MOD sold land at Ludgershall to SWRDA which is now the Castledown Business Park, to Tesco for a store in Tidworth and is in the process of selling land for 600 civilian houses in north Tidworth. These actions have provided improved retail facilities for the community together with employment and housing facilities.

With regard to housing MOD plans to demolish 125 existing sub-standard houses in Bulford Camp and rebuild 260 new houses on the same site for occupation by 2012. In addition outline planning permission has been obtained for a site in south Tidworth on which will be built 360 new houses, building work will commence within the next 3-years. The MOD also has a target to improve its current housing stock and this may entail major refurbishment of houses in Bulford and Larkhill including the demolition and rebuild of certain houses which cannot be economically refurbished to the required standard.

It is now hoped to change the focus of the integration to Bulford and Larkhill. These are almost exclusively military communities so will require extensive development to introduce a civilian element to these towns. The MOD has identified sizable areas of land in and around Bulford and Larkhill together with smaller areas at Tidworth and Warminster which could be released on to the market for various forms of development. These plans have been submitted to the Wiltshire Council to start the planning process, looking at the sites potential to provide land for residential, retail, recreation and employment. The aim is to introduce civilian housing to these areas which will boost the demand for retail and employment and lead to the development of recreational facilities for use by both civilian and military communities.

Wiltshire Council with the Local Military Commander has set up a committee overseeing Military Civilian Integration Projects. The Committee meet 6-weekly under the chairmanship of the WC CE and have commissioned a number of studies into the affect the MOD community has on the County and looking at joint projects which benefit the Wiltshire community as a whole.

Planning Issues

The MOD is looking for a policy within the Core Strategy that will allow the future development of sustainable and integrated communities based on operational MOD sites and the redevelopment of those sites which become surplus to MOD's requirement.

MOD's manning levels and operational requirements are by necessity variable as the requirements for the defence of the realm change. A major factor in MOD infrastructure requirements is the equipment procurement programme and this can change significantly over the Core Strategy period. There is also the policy of integration of the individual Services (Army, Navy, RAF) and the move to combined facilities which also affects the infrastructure requirements of the MOD.

Larkhill although outside the development area of Amesbury has easy access to its retail and welfare facilities. The road and transport links to Amesbury and Salisbury are sustainable especially if local facilities are improved at Larkhill. Development has been allowed in Durrington in the last decade and continues to be granted and it is considered to have similar sustainability factors as Larkhill but with Larkhill there is a more discernable structure of retail, housing and welfare facilities.

MI CONSTABLE MRICS
Senior Estate Surveyor
Defence Estates Operations South
Lowa Road
Tidworth
SP9 7BT

Annex A: In answer to question 4.4 namely “What effect would such a proposal have on the Core Strategies aim of concentrating most housing and employment development at Salisbury?”.

The location of military housing has to have regard to many criteria uncommon to civilian sector housing. MOD has specific standards to which military housing must be built. The travel to work distance for future occupants of such housing is always one of top priority and should be no more than 10 miles distance from the place of employment. Military personnel are often subject to working patterns uncommon amongst the civilian population and due to both sustainable travel and security concerns, military housing is often situated, if not within the boundaries of a particular military establishment, then as close as possible to it. MOD seeks to enable wherever possible sustainable travel options from home to work, in particular walking and cycling.

The Core Strategy’s aim of concentrating most housing and employment development at Salisbury is appropriate for civilian employment and housing but not military housing and employment. Military employment by its very nature is often situated at establishments that were chosen as locations due to their relative isolation from large conurbations, to enable their effective and efficient operation. Having regard to this historic legacy, the development associated with the future Super Garrison is likely to be concentrated around existing establishments. In regard to the requirement to provide military housing close to employment, it follows that the majority of new military housing shall be developed close to establishments.

Ellen O’Grady
Senior Planner
DE Ops North,
Kingston Road,
Sutton Coldfield.
B75 7RL.
0121 311 3635
Ellen.ogrady@de.mod.uk