



TESCO Takeover?

What's going on at Tesco?

IN A LOCALLY SOMEWHAT UNPOPULAR MOVE, Tesco has re-submitted a planning application for a large retail store on Winchester Road. This is despite the fact that both Asda and Morrisons are within easy reach of the same housing areas.



Meanwhile, it cannot have gone unnoticed that a string of retail units adjacent to Tesco in the Chineham Shopping Centre have now become empty and been left that way for a long period. It has long been rumoured that Tesco would like to encourage NatWest bank to relocate elsewhere in the shopping centre. If that were achieved and Lloyds Pharmacy (a subsidiary of Boots) were to also relocate or close down (given the larger outlet in the same group already located in Chineham), then there would be a possibility to access and redevelop all the adjacent units, plus the service yards to the rear. Add to this, rumours of proposals

for a two-storey car park in the area behind those shops and one would have something like a Tesco megastore.

Spotlight believes that serious discussions are already well advanced amongst the decision-makers.

Could one have too much of Tesco?

If bizarrely Tesco were given permission for a new Winchester Road store, one would have to question the viability of two such large outlets for the same retailer. If Tesco left Chineham, Spotlight understands that there is at least one major grocery retailer who would leap at the chance of taking over the vacated unit.

Interesting times lie ahead!



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The Chineham broadband saga continues.....

While several new BT cabinets have popped up all around Chineham, information as to how one might link into an improved service remains sparse. Furthermore, it seems that roads at the northern end of the parish might be left with no improvements at all. A recent attempt by Spotlight to obtain more detailed information was greeted by a surly and disinterested response to the effect that everybody would have access to a faster service by 2012!

It really is about time that these arrogant utility companies were obliged to be more accessible and to treat their customers as sentient beings rather than an inconvenience.



How Many Houses?

Senior councillors in the administration at Basingstoke and Deane, are seeking to achieve the lowest possible housebuilding rate for the borough.

This would be absolutely fine if there were not a long housing waiting list including people currently in households where children are now staying with their parents for longer and longer because they are not in a position to afford a house of their own. Additionally, our current government (much like its predecessors) is telling us that planners should “proactively drive and support” development and look to “approve proposals wherever possible”.

Spotlight has always maintained that whatever the flavour of central government there is always a continuing demand for more housing to “support economic growth”. Whilst at one moment we are also told that “localism” is the order of the day and that every community should make decisions about what is best for themselves, if development proposals of any size are refused, they will almost certainly be taken to a planning inspector who will be instructed to presume in favour of development.

For this reason, it is a nonsense to propose limiting housebuilding in the borough to 400 units as is currently being attempted. Statistically that will not even cover new demand likely to arise from within Basingstoke and Deane. To “consume our own smoke” a figure of 924 (prepared by borough officers) has been rejected in favour of a lower, manipulated, figure of 720!

The borough has recently had to accept significant developments forced upon it because of what is deemed to be an inadequate housing land supply for the next 5 years. If adequate provision is not made in the emerging local plan (LDF) then – when it comes to the crunch – the borough will have houses forced upon it in a way which is less locally planned and subject to reduced control by the borough.

That is why the borough council would be wise to consider a Major Development Area (MDA) for housing development to provide the opportunity to avoid planning by appeal. The borough and county councils having already purchased land at Manydown, specifically for the purpose of an MDA, should now be willing to prepare a master plan and development brief for this project to proceed as otherwise public money will have been spent under false pretences.

And, no, it would not be suitable to add a further large development site to the east of Basingstoke. Such would impinge upon the Loddon Valley with its important biodiversity and flood relief function.

And just to keep the record straight, Spotlight does not support ANY significant development anywhere in the borough before proper infrastructure is FIRST in place.

Barring a few houses straggling the A33, Chineham, Lychnpit and Taylor’s Farm would still be the green fields had similar decisions not been taken in the recent past.



Jazz 1 - Where’s the Fun?

Currently bus routes that run into the evening are all subsidised. These are Lines 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 76/86.

The first six are funded by Hampshire County Council (HCC) and Basingstoke and Deane (BDBC) jointly. HCC is taking out their money thus leaving the services running on what BDBC funds. The current HCC/Stagecoach proposals cut subsidised services in half by running the same frequency for half the time. (This is as opposed to half the frequency for the whole time).

As things stand, only the 76/86 will run in the evenings as now, until BDBC completes its review in September. Thus, that and the Shuttle will be the only buses in town after about 21:30. The 7 disappears altogether. On Jazz 1, Sunday services will drop to one bus per hour. It is also worth noting that if BDBC were to remove their contribution, buses like Jazz 1 would have to stop running at about 19:30.

Spotlight suggests that if the buses are not running after 21:30, this will also impact on usage of the earlier runs as people will usually be needing to get back to their starting point.



VISIT THE CHINEHAM SPOTLIGHT FACEBOOK PAGE TO KEEP UP WITH SNIPPETS ON A REGULAR BASIS.

The extra **yellow lines** have arrived, as promised, on roads around the Four Lanes schools site and along Crockford Lane where it exits onto the Red Army roundabout.

PCSO Keith Patching has left the Chineham beat and moved on to Rooksdown. His replacement is Richard Strauss whose first fairly public engagement was on the Neighbourhood Watch stand at the Four Lanes School Fete.

Complete refurbishment and enlargement of the Tollhouse Meadow **skate park** is now almost certain to go ahead following public consultation with high levels of approval. So far, the only modest expressions of concern have been from potential users who fear that the design is so good that there will be too much competition to get to use the facility! It is hoped – despite the necessary bureaucracy – that the installation can be completed before the end of 2011.

Chineham Parish Council recently voted to support expenditure of developer funds on a **fitness scheme** for the village hall site. Apart from a running track, it intended that there will be a variety of items of equipment for exercising both young and not so young physiques.

Further enhancements are in the pipeline for the **Binfields Leisure Area**. This will be subject to a public consultation exercise and approval by the borough of expenditure of developers' funds on the proposed schemes. It is anticipated that the upgrade will include a second zip wire and other equipment. Hopefully also improved access from the A33 foot bridge.

The Chineham woodlands and open spaces are one of the greatest assets of our locality. Apart from the rare Herb Paris, (depicted as part of the Chineham parish logo), there are other interesting plants and wildlife worthy of note. The borough council is to erect some **"interpretation boards"** at locations of interest. Spotlight has also encouraged the introduction of some signage to assist walkers using the designated routes through our woodlands.



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Letters

Firstly let me say a big thank you to all residents who kindly gave me support by voting Independent at the May elections. I also extend special thanks to all those residents who kindly gave me practical help. I was truly moved by the number of people who so kindly gave up their time – sometimes at very short notice – to assist in helping my win. I am truly saddened by the confrontational nature the campaign took up. It would not be surprising for it to be suggested that I, as a candidate, didn't like what my opponents were saying about me. However, when Tory supporters who normally help deliver election material refused to be associated with it, one might conclude that there was something amiss.

For the record, I feel I must make a couple of points absolutely clear: It was suggested that I was seeking to "reopen" the debate on whether black bins should continue to be emptied every week. Towards polling day, a leaflet was put about purporting to give evidence for my wish to do so. However, the council minutes from which an extract was printed as "evidence" was a meeting which took place on 2 March 2009 and actually related to a debate about how the council should go about considering the parameters on which to base a future waste contract. As this was, 2 long years ago it was hardly a "reopening" of the debate! At that stage, the committee decided to debar alternate weekly collections from consideration by the panel being set up. I detached myself from the process as I felt it impossible to carry out meaningful analysis without at least giving some thought to what is now practice amongst a majority of councils in the country and almost all in Hampshire. The same lack of thoroughness applied to the topic of an in-house arrangement rather than going out to contract. (A contract would inevitably include an annual cost escalation clause, eventually wiping out initial savings).

Yes, over the months, I occasionally made reference to the lack of rigour in the process but knew that my council colleagues would not change their approach and by the time the contract went out to tender, there was absolutely no point at all in seeking to change such fundamental aspects of the collection regime. Let there be no doubt that there would be savings – estimated in excess of £1m – if Basingstoke and Deane were to use the same system as that used by their chosen partners in Hart.

I am also at a loss to understand how one can take from the fact that I abstained on the council's budget resolution (which includes a host of fiscal measures including raising fees for burial and parking), that this meant I was in favour of raising council tax. One might just as easily draw the conclusion that I supported lowering it!

As a person concerned about climate change (however caused) it is also of interest to me that Basingstoke and Deane has one of the worst recycling performances in the whole country. Whilst our performance remains broadly static, other councils with rates nearly twice as good as ours are still vigorously seeking improvement. The doubtless popular recent decision by the borough council to move to kerbside glass collection will improve a statistical measure of our recycling performance but in a totally questionable way for environmental protection. Not only will the collected glass decrease in overall value because it will no longer be sorted between the various colours, but the fuel and other energy used in its collection will – experts say – completely outweigh any increase in recycling volume. For these reasons, and others, it is not sound on environmental grounds.

In closing, I would ask my electoral opponents how – given the unworthy contents of their early electoral material – they could then seek to argue that they were fighting a "positive" campaign?

If Tories were so sure of the truth and balance of their argument, why did they find it necessary to bring such massive resources into the Chineham Ward on polling day, including – not least – our MP. Could her time in her role as a junior government minister not have been better spent than dedicating valuable hours seeking to oust a fairly lowly individual Independent councillor?

Martin Biermann



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Simply Food is Simply Popular

YOUR M&S

At the time of going to press, agents acting on behalf of Marks and Spencer have submitted a planning application for change of use at what is currently the Next store. This is necessary because the unit currently has permission which specifically excludes food retail.

M&S wish to sell foodstuffs and incorporate a restaurant on the mezzanine floor.

The proposal appears to be very popular locally although there is serious concern about the impact on the car park immediately in front of the store. This already experiences serious congestion most days and has a very unhelpful access and exit layout.

There is some concern that without a revised arrangement or – as a minimum – electronic indicator boards, vehicles will be backing up to the Binfields Roundabout on the A33, as – it is said – has already happened in the past.

The planning application can be viewed on the borough council's website under reference BDB/74777, using the following link:

<http://planning.basingstoke.gov.uk/DCOnline2/Acol-NetCGI.dcgov?ACTION=UNWRAP&RIPNAME=Rot.PgeAniteDocs&TheSystemkey=124340>

To REALLY Keep in Touch

The Spotlight Facebook page is steadily growing in popularity. For those with a Facebook account, it is one of the best ways to receive up-to-date news and comment on issues specifically of likely interest to Chineham Ward residents.

Readers who – understandably – might not be interested in entanglement with Facebook, a second choice for news between issues of Spotlight newsletters is to go to the Spotlight website. The website is not yet up to scratch but provides a useful stopgap for breaking news and can provide more detail than is possible on Facebook. It is available to any user with a web connection and can be found at www.spotlightonchineham.co.uk. To access the Facebook page, a search on Chineham Spotlight Facebook should get you there pretty simply.

Mast Matters

Agents on behalf of Vodafone and O2 have re-submitted their application for a phone mast at the Binfields Roundabout. Their new application offers three alternative locations, none of them the original one. One is in the centre of the roundabout and the other two are on the verges either side of the access road to the Chineham Shopping Centre.



Whose Watching?

A county officer has helped solve the mystery of cameras on various A33 roundabouts in our neighbourhood, as follows:

“The cameras mounted on high poles at the Binfields and Crockford roundabouts were CCTV cameras that were being used to carry out a traffic survey at the junctions. The Popley Way/A33 Reading Road traffic signal junction and the junction of the A33 with the Ringway were also surveyed at the same time.

These surveys are part of some early investigatory work being carried out by a developer who is looking to promote the development of two retail units on the existing Impact House site, Gastons Wood. I have had some very limited discussions with the developer's transport consultant regarding the scope of the transport work required to support a future planning application and I understand they will be approaching the Borough Council to begin formal pre application discussions once they have put together some more information on the proposals.”

VERY interesting!



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