



Rutland County Council

Challenges to the delivery of a new settlement at St George's Barracks

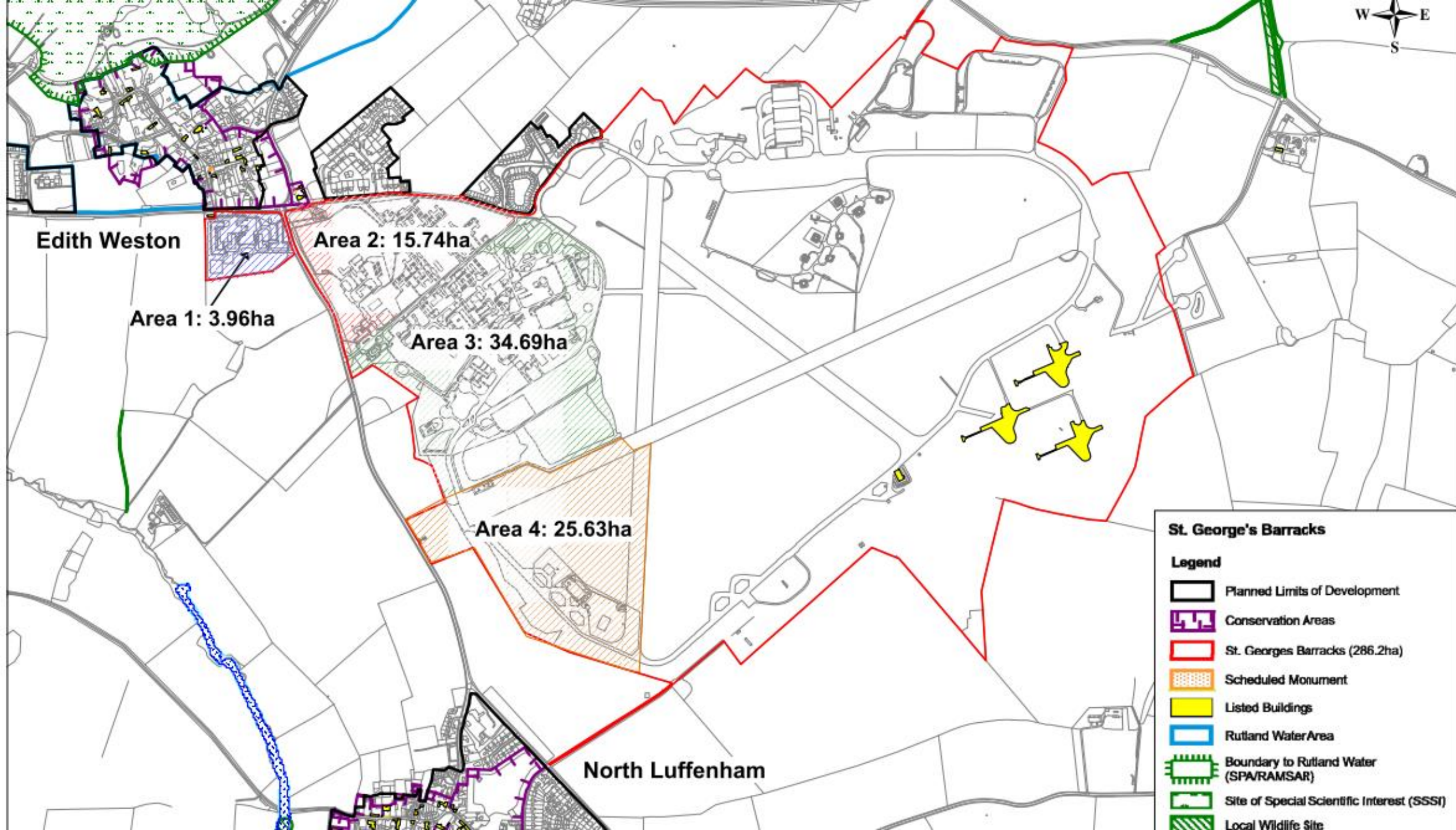
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St George's Barracks

- St George's Barracks is located about 5 miles from Oakham adjacent to the villages of Edith Weston and North Luffenham. Close to the south shore of Rutland Water.
- The barracks site is a 300+ Ha former military airfield, accommodation blocks and military buildings.
- Currently used for military dogs and service personnel
- Site includes Grade 2* listed Thor Missile site and areas of undesignated ecological interest and part lies within a mineral safeguarding area
- November 2016 MOD's Better Defense Estate announcement that St George's Barracks would be vacated and the site disposed of by 2020/21





___ Political background

- Rutland County Council leadership team took a decision to work with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
- Purpose of this was to explore the possibilities for the future use of the site which will be a major brownfield site once it is vacated
- A joint approach for the whole life of the project was agreed with the DIO to try to ensure the best outcome for the site.
- RCC leadership and MOD agree a Memorandum of Understanding
- The site remains in MOD use and the date for closure has now been extended to 2026



— A shared vision

- Political support and leadership from the then conservative controlled Council for redevelopment of the site, including the concept of a new settlement
- RCC and DIO begin working together to create an evidence base and shared vision for a new sustainable community
- Council and MOD worked together to secure public fund for the site.
- Submission of a joint Housing Infrastructure Fund bid for £29m



— A New Garden Community

- Potential for 1500-3000 new homes, employment, recreation and community facilities
- Aim to deliver high quality and eco design across the site
- new infrastructure to support a new community, including a primary school and health and well-being centre
- include a range of homes and tenures, including affordable housing, social housing, retirement living, custom build and starter homes.
- Protection of heritage assets and creation of a new large country park on majority of the site



What about Planning ?

- Briefing paper prepared in November 2016 suggesting site should come through the SHELAA process and be assessed as part of the Local Plan process.
- No planning involvement in early discussions with MOD
- summer 2017 - Consultation Draft Local Plan published which made little mention of St George's. Our thinking at that time was that it could be considered at Local Plan Review or through a separate DPD when there was more certainty about its future.
- May 2018 Council consulted on the idea of a new settlement at St George's - consultation prepared and led by the corporate team - planners only involved in manning the exhibition
- Spring 2018 - higher housing requirement for the county, together with the political focus on a new settlement at St George's meant that it was inevitable that the Local Plan needed to consider the site.
- July 2018 focused consultation published outlining the implications for the Local Plan of a major brownfield site at St Georges, and its impact on draft policy and the spatial strategy.
- A new settlement proposal at St George's was seen as a "fait accompli" by some
Ramping up a campaign of objection

Challenges?

- Usual planning related issues including site constraints, heritage and minerals etc
- Role of the MOD – did they drive it or were they a passenger??
- Cart before horse (Council MOU agreed, before the practicalities of a proposal were considered) Political decision was made before planning issues had been considered. Transparency of this decision questioned by the community
- Power of the community – meant that the loudest voices were heard, <https://fight4rutland.org/why-fight-4-rutland/> is an example of the campaign which gained political support. Use of social media to whip up the objectors. but was there a silent majority?
- In 2018 a Full Council decision not to accept £29m HIF funding was fundamental to the deliverability of the Local Plan strategy. (Vote was 13/12 against accepting it)
- Political fall out of that decision led to a change in control of council, many of new councilors had campaigned on the basis of “ no development” / anti- St George's



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— What we could have done differently?

- Ensure that the site owner/developer takes the lead and follows the Local Plan route
- Maintain council independence from the site owner/developer
- Ensure clarity and transparency of the different roles the council may play from the outset – political v planning etc
- Ensure all “planning” issues are appropriately evidenced and addressed and a range of options are considered before a scheme is seen to be “agreed”
- Engage the local community from the outset (provide a range of potential options and use them to develop a proposal which reflects their wishes, but also explains why, if they have some which are not practical or deliverable
- Identify key local leaders (not councilors) to work with the community, developing and assessing ideas
- Maintain community and political support throughout – take them on the journey



