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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **E.H.D.C. SECRECY OVER MASTERPLAN RESPONSE**

“The new Government’s manifesto commitment to put local communities back in control of planning hasn’t reached the ears of East Hampshire’s politicians or bureaucrats,” says Jack Warshaw of BAAG. The Council has refused his Freedom of Information (FOI) request for copies of the responses to the masterplan consultation which closed just before last Christmas.

“I made the request because the Council announced that a new masterplan would soon be published, but we still know nothing about how many people sent comments or what they thought about the previous one,” says Mr Warshaw. “Are we supposed to take the next version on trust? The Council’s claim that their consultants have been working on a report all these months is simply not good enough. The next masterplan is already being approved and printed in secret. People who took the trouble to respond don’t deserve to be fobbed off with some carefully worded report justifying whatever they intend to impose on us. We want to see the actual data and decide for ourselves whether what we said has been taken seriously.”

In a letter to Mr Warshaw the Council’s official claimed the data could not be released because it is tied up with the consultant’s report. Mr Warshaw says “That’s absolute rubbish. They got a pile of questionnaires last December and that’s what I’ve asked to see. I am appealing against the Council’s decision but I suspect their aim is to delay any outcome until it’s too late, after they issue the new masterplan. They must have something to hide. People should be aware of that when all they get is publicity paid for at our expense about how wonderful eco-town life is going to be, all wrapped in soothingly polished words they consider safe to spoon feed us with.”

BAAG already has hundreds of responses to their own survey, which shows over 90% opposition to the Council’s plan, whilst at the same time expressing support for incremental, scaled down “brownfield land” development to address any loss of jobs and population if the Army relocate. That is the only way the character of Whitehill Bordon and the area’s protected biodiversity can be preserved and enhanced, they say. Council Leader David Parkinson promised a referendum on the matter months ago, but there is still no sign of it happening. He probably regrets the promise now and hopes to create a climate more favourable to a “yes” vote in the meantime, or perhaps sneak it in during summer holidays as the Council did before. More worrying still, they seem bent on building hundreds houses, subsidised by millions of pounds of taxpayers’ money at Viking Park and elsewhere, contrary to the approved statutory plan. They should be ashamed of ploughing on regardless with Labour’s discredited, numbers-driven policies.

BAAG is calling for the masterplan and any other consultation data to be made public now.

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