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ECO GRANTS SUBSIDISE BAD SCHEMES, SAYS BAAG

Private housing developments in Bordon that have no connection with eco-town plans are being rebranded by the Council as “early wins” so that grant monies allocated by the previous Government can be siphoned off to developers, says BAAG. As early as last summer, following his eco-town announcement, Labour’s Secretary of State John Denham invited the Council to submit bids for projects which were supposed to start appearing on site in 2010. These included “demonstrator” schemes showcasing new technologies and the approach to delivering affordable housing, as well as employing more consultants, preparing the community to accept the plan, turning the Old Fire Station in to an “eco-centre,” wireless broadband for the new “town square” and indoctrinating schoolchildren. The Council was awarded over £10m to spend on delivering these schemes, which included subsidising hundreds of houses at Viking Park, contrary to its own statutory Local Plan.

But now it emerges that previously approved housing schemes like the Moorlands site, Hogmoor Road and the controversial Bordon Working Men’s Club proposal could get around £30,000 of public money per unit, just to appear to the Homes and Communities Agency that the Council’s bid targets have been met. With no confirmed release of any MOD land, the Council seem desperate to dish out millions on almost anything in progress through the planning system, so they can count as “wins.”

BAAG Chariman Steve Parsons commented: “It’s a developer’s dream. The Moorlands scheme breaks every rule in the Green Bible. It has over 3 car spaces per house. Its density of about 13.5 units per hectare is well below minimum policy recommendation. It’s almost two miles from Forest Centre shops. There is no local bus service. In short, it’s about the least sustainable idea any one could imagine. Public money that could benefit Bordon’s streets and public spaces is subsidising a scheme that should never have been approved in the first place, perhaps to go straight into the developer’s bank account. That’s nothing short of scandalous.”

“Meanwhile”, says Mr Parsons, “the Council conspires with the MOD to grab the huge open spaces of Bordon for high density housing so the thousands of houses they have dictated in the so-called Masterplan can be crammed in. This is really “garden grabbing” on a massive scale. Work on the next version of that plan and what the people said about the previous one has been kept under wraps for six months now. How does that approach square with the new Government’s block on garden grabbing and its “localism” community based planning agenda?” Isn’t it high time this Council’s high-handed, old style Cabinet rule is swept away?”

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