

## **WYE with HINXHILL PARISH COUNCIL**

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Clerk: Mrs Jenny Oram, Priors, Church Lane, Waltham, Kent CT4 5SQ  
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Dear Parishioner,

4th February 2006

### **WYE'S FUTURE**

Some of you were not able to attend Imperial's presentation of its 'Vision for Wye College' on Monday 9th January. In addition, Imperial also gave the Parish Council a separate presentation. This letter sets out all that the Parish Council knows at present to try and keep you informed.

The following is a summary of the information so far provided by Imperial College, Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council.

It is arranged under relevant subject headings and the '**Statements Made**' are extracted from documents and presentations given to us and are correct to the best of our knowledge.

All these documents have been copied and put into a special file in Wye Library and are also available on the following website: [www.wye.org](http://www.wye.org). Access to the internet is available in the Library.

# 1 What is it all about?

Parish Council Comment:

**Imperial's 'vision' is to build a research centre, probably on its existing 'brown field' sites, and to build a Science Park adjacent to it, probably on open countryside and, if needed, sell off some land for housing development to obtain some funding for the project.**

Statements Made:

- The creation of a Science Park - adjacent to the research facility - to promote the effective commercial and industrial exploitation of the outcomes of Imperial College research.
- The first phase must be large enough to give the 'vision' a credible and practical start.
- Investment in the area by mature applied research companies with manufacturing and pilot production facilities, some of which may be, on a small scale, in Wye.

Imperial says that its 'vision' would:

- reinvent Wye as a centre for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and research, thus bringing prosperity to both Ashford and the wider Kent region
- go a long way towards delivering the target of 28,000 jobs required to make Ashford's planned growth sustainable
- provide a solid economic foundation for Ashford's growth and help drive further improvements in the town's retail and cultural facilities
- reinforce the transformation of the town centre
- reinforce perceptions of Ashford as a key transport node and a meeting place between London and Europe

## 2 Employment

Parish Council Comment:

**Whilst quoted numbers vary, it seems that there could be up to an additional 5,000 people working in Wye!**

Statements Made:

- Imperial research facility:  
Scientists & support staff in Wye 1400
  - Research/Science Park:  
High quality 'knowledge economy' jobs 2500
  - Manufacturing/pilot product facilities:  
An unknown number ?
  - Ashford and Surrounding areas:  
Indirect jobs 7500
- Therefore estimate of jobs in Kent ? 12,500

## 3 Housing

Parish Council Comment:

**Imperial indicates that housing would be built for its staff and, in addition, an undisclosed amount of land may be sold off for housing development to fund the main College development.**

Statements Made:

- Housing will be built to include housing of an appropriate range to cater to a broad spectrum of householders.
- Imperial, to raise funds, may release some of its land for development and it is not clear if that will be for housing.
- Initially about 200 homes would be needed.

## **4 Infrastructure**

Parish Council Comment:

**Roads, water supply, sewerage and other utilities are not large enough to support Imperial's 'vision', particularly roads during the four years after starting the project before any possible road link is built (2008-2012).**

Statements Made:

- Imperial recognises that there must be a substantial change in the services infrastructure.
- If the Highways Agency's plans for Motorway Junction 10a go ahead, it would not be difficult to put in a road from it to Wye. It would be necessary to identify a road corridor, through the countryside, through which it would run, undertake surveys, have a public enquiry and obtain funding.
- Completion of the Motorway Junction 10a could not be before 2010/2011.
- At certain points any new road would definitely have some landscape impact.
- Kent County Council is not interested in solving the problem of the river bridge and railway level crossing.

## 5 Funding

Parish Council Comment:

**There is no clear understanding of available funding at present, but Imperial does need to sell land to raise funds. It has several collaborators ready to join straightaway and is seeking to attract companies such as Shell.**

Statements Made:

- Imperial College, Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council will work together to raise the £1 billion necessary.
- Imperial says there are various European grants and awards as well as government grants available, but any shortfall will have to be made up by Imperial releasing some of its landholding in Wye to raise funds, which Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council understand.

## 6 Impact on the Countryside

Parish Council Comment:

**Imperial's 'vision' spreads beyond its existing 'brown field sites' but remains undefined. Certainly the Science Park and Housing will occupy land outside the existing College site. The proposed roads and other services required will all require changes to the countryside and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.**

Statements Made:

- All of Imperial's landholding is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- David Hill of Ashford Borough Council says it is a 'challenging' feature of Imperial's proposal.
- An environmental survey will be done as part of the planning process.
- Kent County Council is already networking to establish an environmental working group.

## **7 Impact on the Village and Community**

Parish Council Comment:

**Imperial has said that the development will inexorably change Wye from a Village to a Town and that doing anything on a small scale is out of the question.**

Statements Made:

On 4 January Imperial explained to the Parish Council its 'vision':

- It would bring about significant change to Wye. In ten years' time it will not be a village any more, it will be a town.
- When asked 'Why locate this development at Wye and not at another campus?' Imperial said that at Wye there is already a relationship between the College and the community. Furthermore, there are excellent communication links with Europe.
- When asked 'Why Wye? Why not Ashford?' Imperial said that it owns the site in Wye. If Ashford gave it 500 acres, it would do it there.
- Ashford Borough Council says that any development must be done sensitively and in a way that complements the essential characteristics of the village and the local community.
- Ashford Borough Council says it will be working with Imperial to ensure extensive local and other stakeholder involvement throughout the process.
- Imperial says Wye will have a bigger population; will constitute a centre of international activity; will boast a more developed transport infrastructure; and will provide on-the-spot employment opportunities. This will create increased prosperity in Wye, an important academic heart to the community and an international status that will be a source of pride. In return, Wye and Ashford in general will offer world-class research scientists an enviable environment in which to work, with high quality schools and international transport links.

## **8 Recreational and leisure facilities**

Parish Council Comment:

**Imperial has not made it clear if these facilities will be available to Wye residents. However, discussions regarding this aspect are inappropriate at this time as it is the necessity of the development that needs to be determined first.**

Statements Made:

- The provision of social and leisure facilities of an appropriate quality.
- There is no indication what these facilities might comprise, and whether they would be in Wye or Ashford.

## **9 Planning issues**

Parish Council Comment:

**The existing Local Plan does not recognise the need for Imperial to build in the countryside. However a new planning framework comes into place in 2007, and Imperial has made representations to Ashford Borough Council in order that its development could be allowed.**

Statements Made:

- The current Local Plan does not identify Imperial's land as being available for their proposed development.
- Ashford Borough Council is preparing a Local Development Framework which will guide planning in the borough, and by late 2007 its core principles will be in place.
- Currently it is proposed that in Tenterden and five surrounding villages, one of which is Wye, no more than a total of 850 new houses should be built. Also no new residential development beyond the built confines of existing settlements is envisaged. New building in the open countryside should be strictly controlled.

- Ashford Borough Council recognises that in the interests of the local community and the Borough's economic future, retention of a major presence of Imperial College at Wye is important.
- The Parish Council agreed with Ashford Borough Council's views but said that Wye should not to be tied solely to the future development of Imperial College.
- Imperial submitted responses to Ashford Borough Council's proposals in late August 2005, suggesting there are compelling reasons to reconsider because of the 'opportunity of national and local importance offered by Imperial College'.
- There will be further consultation on the new planning framework in 2006.
- Imperial has already sought the views of the government, which has expressed interest.

## 10 Timescale

Parish Council Comment:

**Imperial has indicated that things must move quickly. The outline programme dates given seem uncoordinated, and raise serious concerns, especially in terms of disruption to the village during the construction phase.**

Statements Made:

- Project development and planning approval                      2006-2008
  - Project start (earliest)    June 2008
  - Phase 1 start    end of 2008
  - First academic building open    beginning 2011
  - Phase 2 start    after 2011 (2014-2018)
- Given that Junction 10a and any link road to Wye could not come into operation before 2010/11 at the earliest, it appears that construction traffic for the first phase would have to use the existing road networks into Wye.

## **11 Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council's Views**

Parish Council Comment:

**There is considerable concern regarding the level of detail that the various Councils have already had from Imperial, especially given the level of serious consideration they seem to be giving Imperial's proposals.**

Statements Made:

The role of Ashford Borough Council's Leader:

Councillor Clokie was happy to sign the Concordat in his own name as it reflected the spirit of the references to Wye College in the Council's Core Strategy Options Report and in the Ashford Economic Action Plan, 'Priorities for Growth'. There was no need for any formal Council approval for the Leader to sign the Concordat and no approval was sought.

The role of Kent County Council:

According to Peter Raine of Kent County Council, it is common for councils to discuss with developers in advance. In this instance a Concordat was signed because Kent County Council recognises the problems in the way of the project, but it is nevertheless minded to consider Imperial's proposal.

According to David Hill of Ashford Borough Council:

The Concordat was signed as a *first step* towards the development of a world-class science research and product development facility at Imperial's Wye Campus.

According to David Hill of Ashford Borough Council:

Ashford Borough Council is committed to working with Imperial as its 'vision' takes shape, and wants to ensure extensive local and other stakeholder involvement throughout the process.

According to Councillor Clokie of Ashford Borough Council:

'We look forward to working with all relevant stakeholders to shape the emerging proposals in a way that delivers [Imperial's] 'vision' while protecting the essential qualities of the village and the local community.'

According to David Hill, Ashford Borough Council needs to ensure: The proposals contribute to the Council's overall aspirations for the Borough and that they do not have an *undue* impact on the village and local community. Any development must be done sensitively and in a way that complements the essential characteristics of the village and the local community. The latter need to be protected.

## **12 Local Consultation**

Parish Council Comment:

**As far as we know, Imperial's 'vision' has been developed with no consultation with Wye or other villages. It has not sought any local views. It says it wants to consult but not on whether the scheme should go ahead or not.**

Statements Made:

- When speaking to the Parish Council, Professor Borysiewicz emphasised how important it would be for the success of Imperial's 'vision' to create a high quality environment in the widest sense. This is why early engagement with the local community is so important. In a Liaison Group both sides of the argument can be heard. Dialogue is voluntary, but Imperial is working on the assumption that the village wants the College to continue, and hence constructive dialogue is essential.
- The Parish Council pointed out that Imperial was offering consultation assuming that the project was 'a done deal'. The Parish Council wished to have consultation on determining whether the deal was in the best interests for the Village at all.
- At the moment the Parish Council is trying to find out more about the composition and remit of the Liaison Group that Imperial wants to set up.

### **13 What are the alternatives?**

Parish Council Comment:

**Imperial has said that it will only stay in Wye IF it can carry out the development, and it cannot be anything other than on a large scale.**

Statements Made:

- When speaking to parish councillors, Professor Borysiewicz presented a stark choice between all or nothing. 'We either go completely or stay. **IF** we stay, the only way it will work is as a massive development. There are no other alternatives for Imperial.'
- On 9 January, however, he indicated that if consent is refused Imperial would 'do something' at Wye, but its operation would be much reduced from what it is at present. It would forge partnerships with other institutions but there would be no hope of any development.

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Wye Parish Council will continue its efforts to find out from Imperial College the true scope of the development and continue to keep you informed.

The Parish Council wishes to thank you for the offers of time, expertise and skills you have all given to form the Wye Future Group. This has now been formed as an independent self-governing group, from whom we will draw expert support as required.

## **WYE with HINXHILL PARISH COUNCIL**

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+ VACANCY

*There is a vacancy for one Parish Councillor at present.  
An election for this will be held soon.  
If you are interested in joining the Parish Council,  
please contact the Clerk (above) for details.*