

SCOTTOW

Developer says he may pull out

By DOMINIC CHESSUM

The developer behind plans to build an eco-town of up to 10,000 homes on a former Norfolk RAF base has said he is seriously considering pulling the plug on his bid.

Last night Richard Davies said he had "lost his appetite" for building a sustainable community on land at RAF Coltishall and was considering withdrawing his proposal.

However, he reiterated his disgust that planning permission had been granted to build a 500-place category C prison on part of the site and said even if he ditched his eco-town bid he was still serious about taking the decision to judicial review.

He said: "I have no appetite at this stage of the game for looking at Coltishall as an eco-settlement.

"Over the next week I will decide, in conjunction with advice from my lawyers, whether to withdraw the application."

Mr Davies said he was sorry that Coltishall could miss out on the chance of a "world class development" but said he had been "appalled at the local politicians who ganged up against the Coltishall eco-town," and had concerns that a future Conservative government might put at stop to the eco-town building policy altogether.

But the developer, who was born and brought up in north Norfolk, said he would still fight against the prison plan because he felt Coltishall was a special airbase which deserved better than to have a prison built on it.

He said: "We have instigated, through our solicitors, a judicial review of the planning permission granted for the Coltishall prison and we have found areas that our lawyers are concerned about."



PLANS: The former airbase at RAF Coltishall deserves better than to be the site of a prison, says Richard Davies.

He acknowledged that bringing the action would be costly but said the granting of the prison application was "an appalling state of affairs".

"If you believe in something you have to stand up against what you believe to be wrong," he continued.

"I am considering taking them to judicial review because I am a Norfolk boy and this is on the behalf of the people of north Norfolk.

"I believe it is not right and everybody I have spoken to feels the same way."

Mr Davies submitted his eco-town plans last year, and since then there has been concern among many living nearby about his proposal.

Earlier this year it was revealed that the Greater Norwich Development Partnership had put forward another option for an eco-town at Rackheath.

The last minute proposal was put forward after an invitation by housing minister Caroline Flint and has been seen by many as a large nail in the coffin of Mr Davies's bid.

The government said last week it would now not release a shortlist of the 10 chosen bids until early next year.

Last night, campaigners who have been fighting against the Coltishall plan warned that the battle was not yet won.

Paul Thomas, from the Coltishall Eco-town Action Group, said that even if Mr Davies did withdraw his scheme someone else could come in with a similar, if not identical, proposal and the campaign against the idea would continue.

KELLY'S TOUGH CLIMB TO THE TOP

Our future. It's in our hands.

Want to learn a new skill but think you won't be able to afford it? Think again.

Many people would like to refresh existing skills, learn a new skill or gain a new qualification. Recent research conducted on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council shows that over half of those questioned have considered learning a new skill, with over two thirds believing it would further their careers. However, over a third of respondents claimed that the main barrier to learning is the cost involved.¹ But studying for a new qualification may cost less than you think.

There are a range of courses on offer - starting at just a few hours per week - so you should be able to find a course that suits both your lifestyle and your budget. You may even be entitled to financial support - for example the Adult Learning Grant, Education Maintenance Allowance, a Career Development Loan, a grant or a bursary - to help you while you learn. Visit direct.gov.uk/adultlearning to find out more.

Remember - learning a new skill may cost a little to start with, but it could help you in the long run. Investing a small amount of time and money can reap benefits: whether it's a step up the career ladder at work, a new job or simply improving your confidence. In fact, gaining a new qualification could increase your annual salary by £2,000-£3,000.² So, what's stopping you?

Amy Salter, 22, from Cambridgeshire, says: "Having both qualifications and work experience gives you a much broader knowledge and a better understanding of what you are doing. Plus, doing an Apprenticeship, you get paid to train!"

What's stopping you? Check out the wide range of courses available - visit lsc.gov.uk/inourhands or call **0800 011 3030** to find out what's on offer.



¹ Research conducted by 72 Point on behalf of the LSC, August 2008.
² Based on the Labour Force Survey, 2007.



PLEDGE: Richard Davies has said he will fight against the plans for a prison.

NORFOLK

Recycling centres launch hazardous waste amnesty

People in Norfolk are being invited to get rid of hazardous waste during a special amnesty over the next two months.

Norfolk County Council is holding a series of weekend events during September and October at participating recycling centres.

Ian Monson, cabinet member for environment and waste, said: "If people are storing hazardous products at home that they no longer need, this is the perfect opportunity to dispose of them responsibly."

Household hazardous materials that will be accepted free of charge include garden pesticides and fertilisers, wood preservatives, treatments and varnishes, household chemicals and cleaners, fire extinguishers and photographic chemicals. Paint can be taken to the six main recycling centres at Caister, Hempton, Ketteringham, King's Lynn, Mayton Wood and Thetford all

year round but on September 13 and 14 it will also be accepted at Snetterton.

Asbestos, commercial hazardous waste, ammunition, explosives or marine flares and fireworks cannot be taken. Chemists will be on hand at the amnesty events to identify products and ensure they are handled safely. People are advised where possible to keep the products for disposal in their original containers which are clearly labelled and sealed.

The events will take place from 8am to 6pm at Hempton on September 6 and 7; Snetterton on September 13 and 14; Caister on September 20 and 21; and Mayton Wood on September 27 and 28; and from 8am to 4pm at Ketteringham on October 4 and 5; and King's Lynn on October 11 and 12.

■ For more information visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/hazardouswaste or call **0844 800 8004**.



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