

SADBERGE RESIDENTS SAY "NO" TO RESERVOIR DEVELOPMENT

At an Open Meeting in Sadberge Village Hall on Wednesday evening local residents decided that they did not wish the village development limits to be expanded to allow houses to be built on the site of the disused reservoir just outside Sadberge.

The meeting, which was held as part of a year-long process of producing a Parish Plan for Sadberge, focused on the issue of the future development of Sadberge. The background to the meeting included concern amongst local residents about loss of services in the village. Sadberge Primary School closed in 2004. More recently, Arriva withdrew its bus service from Sadberge at the end of April this year, saying that it was not commercially viable, and although Darlington Borough Council is subsidising a limited bus service to Sadberge, there are now no buses in the evenings or on Sundays. Also, there is a possibility that the village Post Office and shop may close when the Postmaster retires later this year. This would be a particular blow for elderly residents without cars, who have been finding it increasingly difficult to travel outside the village.

The meeting explored whether allowing some housing development, including building houses on the old reservoir site, would protect Sadberge's remaining services. However, in the end it was decided that this would not be effective and, in a show of hands, those present voted by a four-to-one majority that the village development limits should not be expanded to allow houses to be built on the old reservoir site. Darlington Borough Council's Planning Team will take this view into account as it continues to work on its new Local Development Framework.

Alastair Mackenzie, who presented the four scenarios that the Parish Plan Steering Group had developed to help to structure the discussion, later said "The loss of services in villages like Sadberge is a real worry. However, building houses on the old reservoir site is not the answer. The extra residents wouldn't make enough of a difference to the commercial viability of the bus service and the village shop, and development of the reservoir site would have some undesirable effects such as increased traffic in the village."

[Note to journalists: Brian Jones, the Darlington Borough Ward Councillor for Sadberge & Whessoe, has said that he'll be happy to give you a quote about the Open Meeting.]

Future work on the Parish Plan will include consideration of other options for maintaining services in Sadberge, as well as a range of other issues including the traffic through the village, which has increased significantly over the last few years. Further Open Meetings will be held in July, September and October.