**Wiltshire Council: Northern Area Planning Committee Wednesday 6 September 2017**

Agenda Items

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| **7a** | | **16/03721/REM - Land North of Bath Road, Corsham, Wiltshire** |
|  | **16/04544/REM - Land North Of, Bath Road, Corsham, Wiltshire** | |

***Statement by Tony Clark***

Good afternoon

My name is Tony Clark. I’m vice-chairman the Pickwick Association.

At your pre-meeting the Case Officer will, no doubt, have said that:-

* the requirements on ecology had been met;
* that the Council Ecologist was content;
* so there was compliance and Members could ignore anything we say to the contrary.

The applications rest on three ecological issues:

* First - accordance ‘with the principles of the agreed Ecological Parameters Plan’ [the EPP] and 4 itemised requirements;
* Second - Natural England’s insistence that the EPP is implemented ‘in full’; and
* Third - Legal compliance with the Habitat Regs.

We say the ***first*** is scuppered by a series of shortfalls in Redrow’s Reserved Matters applications – we’ve identified these in detail in a separate paper we’ve sent Members.

For the ***second***, Redrow have themselves admitted that there is a shortfall – ‘minor’ they say. The fact is that EPP provides a unitary ecosystem – removal of a single part (let alone Redrow’s catalogue of parts including the removal of grassy linkages between the green areas) degrades the whole and removes the ‘full compliance’ on which Natural England’s concurrence with The Appropriate Assessment rests. That is to say that failure to deliver any part of the mitigation agreed at Outline renders the AA void and the applications contrary to the Habitat Regulations.

So a licence is required from Natural England; a licence application would certainly fail the three statutory tests and be refused. To avoid this, Redrow have told NE that they will not apply for a licence – they simply intend to desecrate the site and take the rap.

The Case Officer may not have told you – though will gather this from the late observations - that:-

* The Council’s former Ecologist has lodged an objection to both Reserved Matters Applications due to concerns “*that the proposals would result in a significant disturbance, deterioration of a breeding site, and increased mortality which would be detrimental to the favourable conservation status of the populations concerned”.* This objection remains despite a change in personnel;
* The Council’s Tree Officer is on public record as saying that development takes no account of the health of the mature trees on the site and that the layout should be reconsidered.

Let me add just one other point:-

* Memorial Tree T15 – referred to by the Case Officer– was planted in honour of a Corsham soldier killed during WWII. At the Inquiry (in full knowledge of its arboricultural condition) the appellant undertook that “the link with the sacrifice of one family during the time of great national crisis 70 years ago will emphatically not be lost by this development.” We have a lasting duty towards those who have fallen in our name. The community is appalled by Redrow’s plan to remove it -removal contrary to the mitigation agreed at Outline;

We say that absent full compliance with the EPP, the Council may not lawfully grant Reserved Matters Consent.

We reserve comments on the late submission since we have not had time to consult our legal advisers.

Pickwick Association

6 September 2017