

Redcliffe's planning applications 14/04179/OUT, 15/10519/OUT, 16/09292/REM and now 17/06091/VAR illustrate the powerlessness of our planners and local people in spite of government rhetoric.

In David Cameron's 2009 'Vision' speech, we heard: "*There are plans to give people a much greater say over the issues that affect their daily lives; plans to give local councils and local people much more responsibility and power*".

And the 2010 Conservative Party National Contract makes interesting reading - it includes the following: "*Give local communities the power to take charge of the local planning system*".

Let's test the 'vision' and 'contract' through these Redcliffe planning applications ...

Many may have forgotten that the initial planning application for this site was 14/04179/OUT which was refused by Wiltshire planners and that Redcliffe's appeal was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate on the grounds that no assessment had been made of the in-combination effects of this and other proposed or committed developments in the vicinity on bat activity associated with the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Special Area of Conservation. No such assessment of 'in-combination effects' was commissioned and Redcliffe's 'workaround' was simply to submit another planning application.

So much for giving local councils and communities a greater say and more power!

Application 16/09292/REM included a Tree Removals Plan from ACD Environmental dated January 2017. The consultation period was set to expire on 1st March 2017 and thirteen representations had been made by local people or organizations. Yet Redcliffe went ahead and removed the trees on 14th February, two weeks before the consultation period was due to expire and before Wiltshire Council planners had made a decision on it and all other pertinent matters.

So much for giving local councils and communities a greater say and more power!

The consultation period for 17/06091/VAR will end on 17th August yet we find, in the documents filed under applications 15/10519/OUT and 16/09292/REM, a letter from Miriam Plant, Redcliffe's 'development co-ordinator' dated 28 July 2017, which simply states "*We hereby give notice of our intention to commence building works on 4 September 2017*". So to hell with any consultation or Council decision on 17/06091/VAR, Redcliffe is going ahead anyway.

So much for giving local councils and communities a greater say and more power!

In the broader context, local councilor Phillip Whalley and others are of the opinion that there should be a moratorium on all estate building in Corsham until the underlying causes of and remedies for the serious 2014 flooding have been established. But seven major developments have been 'approved' by one means (the planners) or another (the Planning Inspectorate): Copenacre (Bellway) – 100 homes, Pickwick (Redrow) – 150 homes, Bradford Road (Redcliffe) – 170 homes, Rudloe (Hannick) – 88 homes, Hawthorn (Framptons) – 180 homes, Potley (de Vernon) – 64 homes, 'Peacock Grove' (PlanningSphere) – 31 homes. With ancillary developments: 'Rudloe Renaissance' (GreenSquare) – 11 homes, Flamingo Club (LD&PC Ltd) – 10 homes, former police station (Turner/BBA) – 10 homes, former dairy (Crozier/BBA) – 7 homes, this gives a total of 832 new homes already constructed, under construction or approved. The Atkins report on Corsham flooding is a year overdue and still awaits Lidar data and analysis. But the developers are able to plough ahead anyway.

So much for giving local councils and communities a greater say and more power!

Is there any point then in this and the other five (as at 8th August) representations made on 17/06091/VAR thus far? Is there any point in the Council planners' deadlines and pronouncements? Indeed, is there any

point in this whole sham of a process? Fool that I am, my representation follows ...

GL Hearn's covering letter dated 23 June 2017 suggests variations to planning conditions in view of the changed proposal to have just a single entry/exit point (in Park Lane) to the development. Two changed plans support the 'new' proposal: Site Location Plan and a Transport Assessment Addendum. However these proposals have significant impacts on other documents such as the Design & Access Statement, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Landscape and Ecological Management Monitoring (sic!) Plan (particularly Appendices B, C & E and Appendix 1), Landscape Design Statement and the Residential Travel Plan. So where are these amended documents? No matter that these documents require substantial amendment, Redcliffe is going to start building on 4th September!

With regard to the documents that have been provided, let's take a look at the **Transport Assessment Addendum** (TAD).

Para 2.4 of the TAD states: *"It should be noted that the development no longer includes a 450sqm Doctors/Dentist Surgery, this has now been replaced with a 450sqm Community Building"*. Wiltshire Council is aware that the Rudloe Community Centre, a £1 million building of similar size has, principally through poor design and lack of use, been 'handed back' to the Council by its current management. This community centre lies less than half-a-mile, as the crow flies, from the proposed community centre. Our local councillor has, on 29th July 2017, stated: *"Any organisations interested in leasing or buying the building will be asked to provide a business plan showing how they will viably run the Centre. There is at least one charity currently being spoken to that may bring forward a business plan. Once the outcome of advertising is known, Wiltshire Council will make a decision on which of the options to pursue"*. So what is the point in building another community centre when the Council is seeking solutions for the existing community centre? (Paras 3.12 thru 3.18 also discuss the community centre trip generation and distribution).

Section 4 of the TAD is the Traffic Impact Assessment which illustrates the folly of further development in this small market town.

The assessment of ‘Junction 2’, the A4 Bath Road/Park Lane mini-roundabout fails to discuss issues surrounding traffic entering this junction from Park Lane. On-road parking for the Pickwick Park trading estate and St Patrick’s church turns this stretch into a one-way street with queues building up waiting for a clear road. The queues cause traffic to use Katherine Park as a rat-run. The following photos illustrate the problem:



A car waiting for a clear road at a relatively quiet time – mid-morning



During an 'event' (e.g. a funeral) at St Patrick's, all available 'parking' will be taken here



With all available parking taken in Park Lane ...



... dozens of vehicles park up on the grass verge twixt the A4 and Park Lane

With a projected 27 vehicles queueing from Park Lane at this junction at peak times (table 4.5), where does the TA envisage, given the Park Lane parking, the end of this queue? The answer is, of course, that the TA has not taken this into account and the queue will be a broken one stretching much of the way to the Katherine Park mini-roundabout.

The TA also fails to take into account the big picture regarding, for example, the new, proposed junction opposite St Patrick's church to the speculative Gladman/Redrow development. With churchgoers' vehicles parked in the west lane (see photo below) and a projected 23 eastbound vehicles queueing for the Park Lane mini-roundabout at peak times (table 4.5), westbound lorries may be held up here causing a tailback across the mini-roundabout. Also, again with the churchgoers' parking, vehicles exiting the Gladman/Redrow site and heading east may find the eastbound lane clear

but may then be faced, unexpectedly, with a westbound lorry in the eastbound lane – an accident waiting to happen.



Churchgoers' vehicles on the A4 west of the Park Lane mini-roundabout. The proposed junction to the Gladman/Redrow development will be at the location of the eastbound truck.

The utter folly of the building of a further 832 homes in Corsham (most in the Pickwick – Rudloe/Hawthorn corridor) adding to the 760 already built at Katherine Park is illustrated in the TA's tables 4.7 and 4.8 (the A4/B3353 mini-roundabout). The projected queues here, taking development into account, are 90 vehicles in Pickwick Road and 130 vehicles on the A4 west of the junction at morning peak times (08:00 to 09:00). Can this be imagined? Ninety vehicles queuing down Pickwick Road would take this queue into Corsham town centre and beyond! And 130 vehicles queuing from the west would take the queue up to Copenacre and beyond. Utter folly!

And the 'mitigation measures' that supposedly reduce these queues are nothing more than tinkering at the junctions with increased widths and splays. Common sense tells us that these measures will have no significant effect on the queues in spite of the figures given in, for example, table 5.2 which shows the 90-vehicle Pickwick Road queue reduced to 52 vehicles and the 130-vehicle A4 west queue reduced to 81 vehicles.

Much has been made in the press lately of the problems that vehicle pollution cause with the A4's eastern entry into Bath being highlighted as one of the most polluted environments in the country. These developments and the associated traffic levels will further exacerbate Corsham's traffic problems and potentially increase pollution to (more) unacceptable levels.

The country roads around this small market town were never meant to handle the volumes of traffic that over-development will bring. The Conservative pledge to "Give local communities the power to take charge of the local planning system" is a fine example of meaningless, electoral bluff and bluster.

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