

Presentation, by Paul Turner, to Wiltshire Council Cabinet on the Future of Wiltshire Council's Freehold Assets in Rudloe (Rudloe Community Centre) – Salisbury, 12th June 2018

From the agenda documentation, we find that the Council's Strategic Assets & Facilities Management and Housing jointly recommend the preferred option 'for a regeneration scheme of affordable housing'. 'Regeneration' or 'regeneration scheme' are mentioned 14 times in the document.

I put it to you that this is a misnomer; this option would not regenerate a community; it is a catalyst for community problems. GreenSquare's corporate branding includes 'Building homes, creating communities' but should perhaps be 'building homes, building more homes'. Communities aren't created in this way and they are certainly not made or perpetuated by demolishing community centres. GreenSquare, in fulfilling the 2013 Wiltshire Council Rudloe Housing Needs Survey, has infilled garage blocks and associated parking with eleven new homes thus **creating** community issues through overdevelopment of a well-planned estate (I have much anecdotal evidence on this).

The default option for potentially 'available' land or buildings now, it seems, is accommodation of some kind. We have recently lost our Post Office and stores at Hawthorn as, in spite of there being a viable business plan to continue the business as a Post Office and shop, the owners preferred to profit from conversion to flats. The Rudloe Estate shop has closed and the community centre is closed awaiting a pragmatic plan.

More than 800 new homes are under construction or proposed for west Corsham in an area, now, with no services apart from a school. No shop, no Post Office, no pub, no community centre, no doctors' surgery, nothing. I note that the preferred option would require two forms of subsidy yet any subsidy required in keeping the Centre open is proscribed. Surely just a relatively small part of the Community Infrastructure Levy (Section 106) monies for these new builds could be allocated to support the Rudloe Community Centre.

All local villages have their halls – Box, Colerne, Biddestone, Holt, Atworth, Broughton Gifford, Shaw, Whitley – even the small communities of Gastard and South Wraxall. A decision against the continued use of Rudloe Community Centre as a community hub would be a blow to the heart of our community.

The old centre or club, which was demolished to make way for houses (of course), was without doubt a community hub which had a public and a lounge bar and a large hall used for dances, dinner events and wedding receptions. Our claim to fame is that our (myself and her majesty's) wedding reception was held there as was her sister's. The demolition of the old community centre was, on reflection, a grave and costly error both for the ratepayer and the community. We should not repeat this error with the new centre which cost the best part of £800k.

I believe we have not given enough time for plans to develop. Many groups used the centre; yoga, zumba, bingo, Tuesday Club (for older people), the Baptist Church ... I used to go to choir every Thursday. Irregular uses were: childrens' parties, music events, funeral wakes and so on. There are many other possibilities from doctors' surgery to Post Office to kindergarten. I would urge the Cabinet not to be drawn into a preemptive decision and to repeat past mistakes.