

The case for registration of Rudloe Green as a Village Green

(Please note that throughout this document, Rudloe Green has been capitalised both to confirm its status as a recognised place and its significance in this document and to avoid confusion with other greens (including the colour))

History of Rudloe Estate and its Green

Rudloe Green was incorporated into the Rudloe prefab estate, one of a number of prefab estates established in the areas of Rudloe, Hawthorn, Thorny Pits and Westwells, during the Second World War. The estates housed immigrant workers, many from Ireland, drawn to work in the underground ammunition depot (CAD) and factories (e.g. BAC, Dowty, BSA, Parnell, Royal Enfield) established to enable secure (out of reach of bombs) production at Spring Quarry and Tunnel Quarry.

The life of the prefab estates extended well beyond the end of the war. The 'ownership' of the prefabs and, possibly, the land on which they sat may be illustrated by the prefab rent cards which run from the Ministry of Aircraft Production (1945-47), the Ministry of Supply (1947-52), the Ministry of Works (1952-58) through to Calne & Chippenham Rural District Council (1958 onwards). The prefab estates were demolished following the building of the (current) Rudloe Estate by the local council in the early 60s. Rudloe Green was, as indicated above, established within the Rudloe prefab estate and was further incorporated into the fabric of the new Rudloe Estate.

A map of the local area centred on the Green may be found at Appendix A; the Green is highlighted in green and bounded by a red line.

Rudloe Estate's Central Island, Rudloe Community Centre and the Green

GreenSquare owns and manages the majority of the homes on Rudloe Estate including those on the central 'island' bounded by Westwood Road and Leylands Road (apart from one privately owned home (on the island), no 9 Leylands Road). Rudloe Community Centre (RCC), a £1 million North Wiltshire District Council (NWDC) project which was completed in 2002, also lies on this central island adjacent to the Green. Some years after construction, RCC was described as 'not fit for purpose' by NWDC itself. An NWDC/Westlea Housing Association/Dove Associates feasibility study was undertaken in 2006 which resulted in a 60-page report but no action. In 2012, Wiltshire Council Cabinet Capital Assets Committee was still seeking a solution for RCC and adjacent Council-owned land (including the Green) – see <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s45311/06%20-%20Rudloe%20Community%20Centre%20-%20revised%20report.pdf>. RCC was handed back from its management, Rudloe Community Association (RCA – a registered charity), to Wiltshire Council in 2017. So, let us not forget that a NWDC 'regeneration scheme' of the late 90s, that of the replacement of the long-established, successful, well-used Rudloe Social Club by the new RCC has, effectively, ended in disaster and is the precursor of the current issues.

2018 Cabinet Meeting

At the Wiltshire Council Cabinet meeting in Salisbury in June 2018, we heard that the Strategic Assets & Facilities Management and Housing departments jointly recommended the preferred option for the site to be to engage in negotiations with a view to a transfer the Council's freehold land and property holding to GreenSquare on terms to be agreed, for a 'regeneration scheme of

affordable housing’ – see the full Cabinet report on ‘Disposal of Council land at Rudloe’ here: <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s143510/Future%20of%20Wiltshire%20Councils%20Freehold%20Assets%20in%20Rudloe.pdf>. The most significant part of the ‘freehold land’ is the subject Green. It should be noted that at this same Cabinet meeting representations were made and arguments put, by local people, for an alternative plan for RCC but the Cabinet decided to proceed with the recommended regeneration option.

2012 Cabinet Meeting, Affordable Housing and Imposed Decisions

RCC and the Green were the subject of a Cabinet Report and Decision dated 24 May 2012 where it was resolved to work with GreenSquare and the local community to explore options for RCC and council owned land together with GreenSquare assets. It was resolved that a further report be brought to the Cabinet Capital Assets Committee outlining the outcomes of the feasibility work and a financial appraisal and to seek approval for any proposals to transfer ownership of and/or remodel the community centre. However, these proposals never got off the ground but a 2015 GreenSquare regeneration plan (at Appendix B) saw both the Green and RCC replaced by housing with much smaller replacement green and community facilities offered elsewhere. This plan may, in 2019, be resurrected as the option 2 of the 2018 Cabinet meeting ‘regeneration scheme of affordable housing’. But the area of west Corsham from Pickwick, through Rudloe to Westwells and Neston has six current developments (for 800 homes) at various stages of planning or completion which incorporate a significant number of affordable homes. Indeed, the two developments directly across the B3109 from Rudloe Estate, those of Park Place (Redcliffe) and Dickens Gate (Bellway), include the provision of 85 affordable homes through housing associations Merlin and Curo (see email from Wiltshire Council at Appendix C and letter from Bellway at Appendix D). But of greater significance, and as implored in 103 evidence forms or emails, is that the residents of Rudloe Estate do not want to lose their precious green space. The people of Rudloe, local people, have been ignored, never properly consulted about their wishes; the voices heard at Wiltshire Council meetings are, in general, those of outsiders who have views of the Estate which are not sensitive to or compatible with those of local people. At the Salisbury Cabinet meeting, Corsham councillors’ views of the Estate were that it was ‘sad’ and ‘deprived’; one was supportive of ‘option 2’ and of the aggregation of further social housing into the Estate. This, it must be emphasised, is the view of an outsider, someone who would fight tooth and nail against such aggregation in his own back yard. Rudloe Estate alone is a community of 242 homes including 81 flats and 34 maisonettes (the other Rudloe estates, both the earlier RAF and the later Leafy Lane estates, consist of a further 400 homes). This community needs space to live not more housing within the well-planned estate or on the communal green space.

Local Action

The ‘option 2’ recommendation at the 2018 Salisbury Cabinet meeting resulted in the setting up of a steering group under the auspices of GreenSquare. One of the proposed first actions of this group was that it should get local people onboard in order to arrive at decisions that would meet with approval by the community. However, nine months on and no action has been taken on the involvement of local people, no leafleting has been undertaken and in fact, as far as can be ascertained, little or no action has been taken at all. This is a continuation of the prevarication, from outside agencies, of the last 13 years.

In part because of the above, local people themselves took action in order to find out what is wanted by the community. Primarily, for the people of the estate, there are two issues: the Green and RCC. Both aspects are being addressed locally. A leaflet drop was undertaken on 13th/14th March 2019 with regard to the first aspect in order to find out what evidence there was for the use of the Green over the past 75 years, with the intention of having the Green declared a Village Green. (It should be noted that the printed leaflet commenced "*The transfer of Rudloe Community Centre ...*", however an online version to be found in the 14th March 2019 article here: <https://www.rudloescene.co.uk/news/rudloe/rudloe-estate/> corrected this with "*A proposed transfer of Rudloe Community Centre ...*"). 103 leaflets or emails were returned in support of the retention of the Green; conference calls were initiated; a community picnic was organised and well-supported - see the 30th March 2019 article at the same rudloescene webpage.

Rudloe Community Centre (RCC)

Whilst not directly related to a Village Green application, the 'second aspect' mentioned above, RCC, is certainly, along with the Green, important to the future life of the community. Local people have initiated their own steering group which includes five 'locals' and two councillors (one of whom is also a 'local') in order to find a solution for RCC's future. The group has met on four occasions between September 2018 and March 2019 and has come to an agreement that a Community Interest Company will be set up under the aegis of Camomile Cafe, a successful business which has been operating in Corsham for a number of years. Camomile was one of the organisations that submitted a business plan, in 2018, to Wiltshire Council for RCC. Camomile also made an impassioned representation at the Cabinet meeting in support of its plan. Unfortunately the Cabinet chose to go with the recommended option of a regeneration scheme. Since that time, business in Corsham has increased; RCC would be an ideal vehicle for expansion as it provides much more internal space, a dedicated car park and ... the Green! These local initiatives may be seen as valid, positive, well-supported proposals to enhance the life of the community.

A Community with no Services

In recent years, the Rudloe community has lost its Estate shop, the local Post Office/stores and its community centre (see information on RCC elsewhere in this document). Rudloe is a conurbation of 725 homes (if we include the new 88-home Dickens Gate development) and a projected population (using the 'average household size' of 2.3 from the 2011 census) of 1,715. This is a significant community now with no services yet the one 'service' that remains, the Green, has been consistently threatened by unrealised (and certainly unwanted) development plans over many years.

School Expansion

In order to cater for the increased (Katherine Park development) and further increasing (Park Place and Dickens Gate developments) population, Corsham School's Broadwood Site which is located at Broadwood Avenue on Rudloe Estate is expanding in two phases. Six new classrooms and other facilities will see the loss of about a third of the school's playing field. The increasing population of west Corsham, from Pickwick through Rudloe to Hawthorn and Westwells, and the reduced garden space of modern properties will realise the need for community recreational space. Quite a number of parents and children have stated on evidence forms that the Rudloe Estate Green is used after school for recreation.

Green Space Strategies and Policies – Wiltshire

Wiltshire Council Core Strategy Policy 52 seeks to protect and enhance the green infrastructure network in Wiltshire through, inter alia, the Wiltshire Open Spaces Study 2015 – 2026 (OSS) which can be found here: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-open-space-study-draft.pdf>.

The OSS shows the existing provision of green space in rural analysis areas (towns and villages below 3,500 population) in section 5.5.2 (table 6) in the column ‘accessible natural green space’ for areas of north-west Wiltshire as follows: Bradford-on-Avon – 47 hectares, Calne – 161 hectares, Chippenham – 91 hectares, Malmesbury – 240 hectares, Melksham – 14 hectares. The Corsham area trails far behind with 4 hectares. Whilst Rudloe Green may not be classed definitively as ‘natural’ green space, its accessibility trumps any drawbacks with regard to its naturalness.

Section 6.2.4 of the OSS (Recreational Space – Rural Areas) states that the current average level of provision is 3.12 ha/1000 population, with an additional 0.99 ha/1000 of private sports space. With a projected population of 1,715, Rudloe alone should have 5.35 hectares of recreational space. Section 6.2.7 table 10 (Rural Areas standards of formal provision) gives the quantity standard of recreational space as 3 hectares per 1,000 population ‘to include both public and private grounds (excluding education sites)’ so by this standard, Rudloe should have 5.14 hectares of recreational space.

Section 8.1.3 of the OSS (Existing provision to be protected) states that the starting point of any policy adopted by the Council should be that all open space should be afforded protection unless it can be proved it is not required.

In an earlier (undated) study/paper, the North Wilts Open Space Study, here: http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/northwiltsopen_space_study.pdf, Rudloe Green is designated as a Local Park (para 4.41, table 8) within an area, Corsham and Rudloe, “where the deficiencies of Public Open Space are most acute” (para 4.76). Within this document, Rudloe Green is given designations AG 201 (Amenity Greenspace), LP46 (Local Park) and PA 39a&b (Play Area).

(It should, perhaps, be noted here that Leafy Lane Playing Fields (LLPF), with an approximate area of 8 hectares, lies on the edge of the Rudloe estates on the western (AONB) side of Leafy Lane. However LLPF does not lie within the estates, it has dedicated football/cricket pitches and is not a general recreational area; dogs are prohibited.)

Planning for Homes in west Corsham (Rudloe)

Wiltshire Council’s ‘Planning for Wiltshire’s Future’, ‘Strategic Sites’ background paper here: http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire_2026_strategic_sites_background_paper_october_2009.pdf dated October 2009 identifies, in the map on page 62 (in this application at Appendix E with Rudloe Green identified in green), the ‘potential sites’ for development in Corsham. Seven of the twelve sites identified are in west Corsham in the area surrounding Rudloe.

Now moving forward ten years, we find that five of those sites are under development (with one, Copenacre, almost finished). Wiltshire Council’s Housing Land Availability report of April 2017 here: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/housingland-availability-2017-report.pdf>, shows, in the ‘North – site location maps’, in map ‘N6 Corsham/Box’ (attached at Appendix F, again with Rudloe Green identified in green) the sites surrounding Rudloe Estate vis 2033 1920 (Rudloe Manor), 2201 4090

(Copenacre site now phase 1, Bellway's Pickwick Court), 2201 3900 (Copenacre site now phase 2, Pickwick Court), 2201 4080 (greenfield Bradford Road/Park Lane site now Redcliffe's Park Place) and 2201 3100 (greenfield Bradford Road site now Bellway's Dickens Gate). These developments will bring 367 new homes, including 87 (50 at Park Place, 35 at Dickens Gate, 2 at Copenacre – see Appendices C & D) affordable homes. In addition, permission has been granted for 180 homes (with a standard affordable element) at ex-RAF Rudloe No 2 Site (2201 4090) in Westwells Road bringing the total to 547 homes. Further, as would be expected, the Green is not identified in Wiltshire Council's Housing Land Supply Statement of base date April 2017 (published in 2018) here: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/spp-housing-land-supply-statement-2017-published-2018-march.pdf>.

Rudloe Green hasn't featured in housing/development plans and has never been the subject of other development plans (e.g. Local or Neighbourhood Plan Allocations) but there is this continued 'threat' (apologies I haven't been able to come up with a better word), as mentioned elsewhere, from GreenSquare, now somehow 'ratified' through a 2018 Cabinet decision, to develop the Green (do housing associations fall outside the realm of Council planning?) for affordable housing. In spite of policies, required standards and plans, there remains this constant threat to remove or reduce Rudloe's recreational green space.

A Selection of Locals' Views on the Green (as described in evidence forms/emails)

Apart from quotidian activities such as football, cricket, tennis, dog walking, physical exercise, which can be undertaken in safety as the Green is overlooked directly by the 12 Leylands Road flats, the following activities are mentioned in evidence forms/emails.

Esther Turner, who was born on the Rudloe prefab estate, says that one of her first memories is the Coronation celebration on the Green in 1953; Leanne Davidge recalls a charity event in aid of Dorothy House; Jan Hartley says it was a safe place for her children to learn to ride; Distanza Orr mentions birthday parties, snow activities, physical training; Mrs Barrow (who is in her 80s) has made an impassioned representation; P Mann recalls Jubilee parties; Richard Grace states that his autistic child enjoys the space; Robert Evans mentions rest, relaxation and letting the kids run around and significantly "As I live in a flat that does not have any garden, our green spaces on the estate are vital to our well being. This green is the only option I have to sit outside where I live"; Mrs Rachel Kennedy (who is 99 years young) says "I am going to be 100 years old this July and I have lived in Rudloe for over 60 years ... My children have grown up here and have enjoyed playing on the green as well as my grandchildren ..."; Lesley Ricketts mentions carols on the Green and also sitting with Mrs Kennedy watching the children playing football and having fun; Colin Kennedy says that the old Rudloe Social Club held football & cricket matches on the green; Stanley Creighton (age 5 weeks) says he walks with mummy and daddy to enjoy the fresh air; Mr J Brownhurd says he used to walk dogs and the reason he bought his house was for the green; Jenni Emmett/Ashlyn & Neeve Magowan recount meeting up with mums and friends; Kerry Hall says it's all that's left of Rudloe for the children; four Generys & J Gill say "it has been an integral part of our lives"; Sharon Peale says "always see children playing on the green"; Debby Campbell mentions British Bulldog and 40/40; Steve & Nicola Davis recall family fun days; Kirsty Skinner recalls snowball fights; Mrs J McMillan says "Have lived on Rudloe for 63 years, my family of 6 played on the green, football, running, fancy dress"; Phil Beattie says "I was born in one of the old pre-fab bungalows on Rudloe Estate back in June 1953 ... I was always keen on playing football and I used the green on an almost daily basis from

September 1964 until mid 1975 along with two of my brothers and the O'Sheas, Kellys, Swains, Caffertys and others. We would use two of the trees at the top of the green as one set of goalposts and our jumpers as the other set"; Samantha Gegg says "It is important that kids have easily accessible play facilities"; Julie Silk says "Myself and my son have spent many hours after school/weekends playing football on the green. The nice thing about it is that when you're down there all the other kids came down to join in and it would turn into mass football matches"; Hannah Creighton says "Now having a son of my own, I look forward to enjoying the space with him and his friends in the not too distant future"; Jenny Freeman says "We have used this area for both of my children growing up to play football, sledging when it has snowed, we have flown a kite here, played Frisbee and even tennis"; Adrian Webb says "The Green is the only safe place for the children to play. It's very popular with the parents sitting on the green watching the children playing"; Karina Tugwell recalls "Tried roller skating on the grass to see how far we would get"; Debbie Pearce says "My father is in his 80s and likes to take a stroll around the green as it is not too far for him"; Kirsty Page says "I feel as if no one cares about people in Rudloe as they seem to be taking everything we have here, the park and field is the only decent thing kids have here ... the kids LOVE that field".

Conclusion

Corsham has its recreation ground and park, Box has its recreation ground, Neston has its recreation ground, Box Hill has its common and Rudloe has its Green yet it is only Rudloe's Green that has been consistently threatened with development in the 21st century. One wonders why. Is it because the 'sad' and 'deprived' people of Rudloe have less of a voice over what happens in their community than their perhaps richer and more well-connected neighbours?

The Rudloe Estate Green has been in continuous use since the end of WWII as may be seen from the 103 evidence forms submitted with this application. Indeed, the 'Save Rudloe Green' leaflet distributed to all Rudloe Estate households elicited a wave of action from the estate's residents including conference calls to include myself and a community picnic on the Green – see the 30th March 2019 article here: <https://www.rudloescene.co.uk/news/rudloe/rudloe-estate/>. The Green is an essential green space for the estate's residents and particularly for the occupants of the 81 flats who have no garden space of their own.

The ongoing threat to the Green over many years should not be allowed to continue. It leaves residents with a perpetual feeling of disquiet. A valid and perfectly reasonable way to put an end to these threats is to declare the Green to be what it actually has been for the best part of 75 years, a Village Green.

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