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Councillor P. Alford
Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets
and Asset Transfer,
Cabinet Office,
County Hall,
Bythesea Road,
Trowbridge,
BA14 8JN

March 25, 2022

Dear Councillor Alford,

Ref: Proposals affecting Rudloe Estate Community Centre

I'm writing to add my support to Councillor Derek Walker's efforts to get Rudloe Community Centre declared as an "Asset of Community Value" in the hope that this will enable the reinstatement of the existing Community Centre as a Community Hub.

I no longer live locally but I was born and brought up on the Boxfields Estate in the 1950s, living there until just before the estate's demolition in 1964. On Boxfields Estate the community centre formed a crucial focus. Let me quote you a paragraph from my book "The Boxfields Bungalows"

'The Centre', as it was known, became the hub of the community. In the late 1950s the Boxfields Community Association Minutes record it being used for cinema shows, whist drives, socials and concerts. Old Tyme Dances, Modern and Rock and Roll Dances, a youth club, a cricket club, ballet classes, boxing, political meetings, weddings and private parties. Crucial to the organisation and running of The Centre was Arthur Larkin. He became Chairman of the Community Association and acted as financial manager, caretaker, event organiser and youth leader. When activities were in progress he managed security and calmly enforced the strict 'no alcohol' rule.

(The Boxfield Bungalows; Rosie McNamara (2020); ISBN 978-1-5272-6950-7)

The majority of the centre's activities were managed by one man who was enthusiastically inspired estate residents whose lives were then enriched by their own efforts and a more cohesive, enduring community was created.

I acknowledge that we live in a different world now, but if you live on Rudloe Estate today and are older, or of limited financial means, or physically or mentally challenged, or if you

are lonely or a single parent then your horizons are frequently very limited. An active Community Centre has the potential to greatly enhance the quality of your life and opportunities.

If the Covid pandemic has taught us anything it is that social isolation has had a negative effect on people. The residents of Rudloe Estate and of the hundreds of new houses being built in the surrounding area are unlikely to be exceptions to this. People look to the local authority to make their lives more meaningful and I suggest that a fully functioning community centre in Rudloe is a worthy aspiration. Something which is not threatening to people, situated within their own community and which is easy to access for those without transport of their own. I am, quite frankly, astonished that you already have such a potential public amenity and that the proposal is to destroy it and then build another!

Why not breathe new life into the existing centre and actively encourage unelected members of the various councils to draw up plans to make use of the facility. It has been suggested recently that Rudloe Community Centre be used as a hub for Ukrainian refugees.

(Rudloescene webpage March 2022) ‘The, at present unused building, could provide temporary accommodation, a canteen and playspace. It has a kitchen and toilet facilities.)

This would create a centre not only for the local community but also much needed support for refugees. Such a venture would put Rudloe at the forefront of humanitarian efforts. The area around Rudloe and Corsham already has a most commendable record of welcoming refugees. Many Polish and Ukrainian refugees settled here at the end of World War II and substantial numbers chose to remain when circumstances changed for the better in their motherlands. In 1956 the nearby Thornypits Hostel provided a safe haven for Hungarians fleeing the uprising in their country.

I ask you to consider this proposal seriously. Rudloe Centre has undoubtedly got the potential to be a great asset to the local community and should be formally recognised as such.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Rosie McNamara