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| From: | **Paul Turner** (wirepuller@hotmail.com) |
| Sent: | 09 June 2013 22:39:18 |
| To: | Julie Bielby Green Square (julie.bielby@greensquaregroup.com); kirsty.powell@greensquaregroup.com (kirsty.powell@greensquaregroup.com); Green Square (enquiries@greensquaregroup.com) |
| Cc: | Box Parish Council (mailbox@boxparish.org.uk); Dave Roberts Wilts Community Area Manager (dave.roberts@wiltshire.gov.uk); Esther (essiet@hotmail.co.uk |

Dear GreenSquare,

 My wife and I attended the consultation event on 23rd May, at Rudloe Community Centre. Interesting that your proposals are designated ‘Rudloe Renaissance’ but I believe that ‘renaissance’ was misspelled on at least one of your plans which is not a good harbinger!

 ‘Renewal’ schemes such as this look all very well on paper but, whilst not Green Square’s responsibility, the previous Rudloe community ‘renaissance’ has proved to  be something of a disaster because it was not fully thought through.  Rudloe Club in the old ‘Ministry’ building was well patronised because, I would suggest, residents were familiar and comfortable with and within it. Not only that, but it provided a number of uses which the new building does not. A claim to fame for my wife and myself is that our (and her sister’s) wedding reception was held there (no expensive country clubs for us!). Apart from wedding receptions, the large hall of the old club (which had a stage and bar) was used for events such as dances and dinners with celebrity speakers. No such revenue-earning hall was planned or provided with the new building. In addition, the old club had public and lounge bars. The lounge bar was well-appointed and was used, on many occasions, for social events by local Ministry personnel.  The new community centre provides no such facility which could be used, for example, by Basil Hill staff.

 So, I am concerned that the new ‘renaissance’ will prove to be a similar, de facto debacle. Another side-effect of the new community centre was the loss of about 25% of the recreation area. Similarly, in just the last months, the Green-Square ‘owned’ woodland adjacent to the B3109 has been sequestered by/to the school thereby removing further recreation space for the estate’s children. Den-making material could always be found in the woodland, particularly during the summer months. Now with the sequestration of the woodland by the marketing exercise of ‘Corsham Woodland School’, this woodland is lost and will be deserted during those summer weeks when children are looking for spaces to play.

 Regarding the current ‘renaissance’ and the proposal to build homes on existing garage areas, it seems that we are going backwards with estate planning. At Rudloe, the planners of the early-sixties took into account the requirement for green space and the potential increase in car ownership.  Whilst it appears that few of the garages are used to store cars, they are certainly used for motorbikes and domestic and garden equipment. Ours, in the block at the northern end of the estate at the ‘top’ of Long Close Avenue, is used for such storage (motorbike, lawnmower, rotavator, toolboxes, hydraulic vehicle jack, large joinery tools (6ft sash cramps for example)) and has been for fifty years. The car is generally parked outside the garage for ease of access. And for those that cannot afford the high prices charged by professionals, the garages (and their beams) have, over the years, been used (with block and tackle) to replace or repair car engines! It appears, from my call to Green Square, that no account has been taken of the storage requirements of existing residents but (potential) new residents will, apparently, be provided with sheds. Furthermore, the proposed new development (in Long Close Avenue) will result in the loss of about 100 metres of hedgerow and two mature trees.

 In addition, with the loss of the garage/parking spaces that the garage areas provide, more cars will have to be parked in the roadways. In our case, our car and those of visitors will have to be parked in the ‘main’ road which is part of the bus route for the 10E Town Bus. An example of the effect of the loss of off-road parking space on the estate can be seen in the attached photographs. This mayhem would present a considerable nuisance and result, I believe, in a loss of wellbeing for estate residents. If you have travelled down Woodlands Road in Chippenham, you will have seen for yourselves the problems created by the lack of provision of parking areas in inter-war developments.

 The above, I appreciate, could be seen as relatively small potatoes to those looking at the provision of family homes, but rather than increasing housing density, I believe we should be looking to make existing estates better places to live.  Rudloe will no doubt, sooner or later, be joined to Corsham as much of the greenfield between the two has been designated as potential building land (sites 475, 799, 1101 and 2080 in the Wiltshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment). Indeed site 799 is already in the hands of a developer. We should not therefore be looking to increase density in existing estates.  There is much concern from the residents of Ashwood/Southcroft Roads regarding this density. They, apparently, feel that they are already overlooked and overlooking; a block of houses between the two would severely intensify this problem. The residents concerned will, no doubt, make their own representations. The UK has the smallest homes in Europe; with new development housing density also increased by about 20% over the last generation, this does not make for a sense of wellbeing within or around the British home. The following extract is taken from the January 2013 report commissioned by the charity Population Matters and called ‘Population Growth and Housing Expansion in the UK’:

 *A typical house built today is much smaller than one built in 1920. Although house sizes have remained relatively constant for the last 20 years they now contain on average 20% more rooms. England and Wales are the only countries in the European Union which have no minimum space standards for housing (Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) 2007). The current average floor space for new dwellings in the UK is 76m2 compared with 92m2 in Japan and 115m2 in Holland. RIBA now recommends that minimum space standards should be introduced for all new homes in England and Wales.*

Another issue for Rudloe residents, particularly those on low incomes and those with children, is the high cost of public transport.  There are no services within reasonable walking distance of Rudloe so, for those without cars, public transport must be utilised. The cost of a return ticket for a mother and two (fare-paying) children to Sainsbury’s, Chippenham, for example, is £16.60. This is a substantial amount to ‘lose’ before shopping even begins! (Just an aside, but when I lived in Belgium, a ticket into the local town, which was a similar distance to the Rudloe-Sainsbury’s trip, was the equivalent of about 90p). Why are housing associations pushing for the provision of more housing in locations which requires residents to access services by public transport? A far better case could be made for the building of homes on the 2-hectare Corsham Recreation Ground with Corsham’s shops, doctors’ and dentists’ surgeries, the library etc being close by.

 Finally, does Green Square have any data on the usage of existing garages; who rents them, what they are used for, how many are not rented/used? If garages are not utilised, then perhaps, at the top of Long Close Avenue, for example, one garage block could be demolished with the space being used for play areas. At present, other than roads, verges and garage forecourts, there are no local (not central) ‘formal’ (5-a-side football, basketball, netball, skateboard/BMX  etc) or ‘informal’ (woodland) play-spaces for children.

Yours sincerely

Paul Turner

**GreenSquare’s response dated 17th June 2013**

Dear Mr Turner

 Thank you for your email dated 9th June

 Can I perhaps take your points/paragraphs in turn in order to respond.

         Apologies if we had a typo creep into our displays on the day I had not spotted it, we will ensure that we get this right next time.

        We are aware from all the feedback and research undertaken so far that the existing community centre does not represent or service the majority of the residents it seeks to provide facilities to. We hope we can work with Wiltshire Council who own the building to improve this facility in the near future.

        We were approached sometime ago by the school about the woodland adjacent to the main road, since we had no positive, community enhancing plans for its use as landowner we saw the opportunity of granting a lease to the school for Forest School activities as a way of supporting creative learning activities for young people who live on the estate we see this as a positive move not taking away a facility.

        I understand from my housing colleagues our Garage licence agreements stipulate that our garages are granted for use for parking cars and prohibit the storage of materials and equipment. We are aware as you say that this is not always the case on the ground. We will work with local residents over these issues moving forward and we recognise that terminating any garage licences for redevelopment purposes will cause some people real difficulties. We do however have to be mindful that there are thousands of people on the Wiltshire Council Housing Waiting list needing housing and we have a national housing crisis we have to tackle by seeking to provide more new affordable housing where we can by utilising our own land assets. The following is an extract from the Wiltshire Council website

 Affordable Housing is a top Wiltshire priority. The average Wiltshire house price is £212,000 but the average salary of £20,663 is well under the £32,000 that may be needed for a deposit on a 2-bedroom terraced house. Therefore, it is no surprise that we have a waiting list of 16,000+ of which over a quarter are in the highest need category. Unfortunately, there are only around 45 housing association and council homes allocated each week. Wiltshire has an impressive record of creatively delivering new affordable homes. However, our delivery always falls short of a massive need

         If we do have to remove any existing green features to facilitate development this will be done in accordance with all regulations following environmental surveys (Trees, Ecology) etc however we always work wherever we can do design around such existing features and green assets but sometimes this is not possible. Our sketch proposals are just that, we have not finalised any plans which would establish the loss or retention of the particular features you mention.

        We are aware that there are significant parking problems on the estate particularly at peak times evenings and weekends we will work with our designers, highways and planners to plan our developments such that these are considered, addressed and solutions found its too early to be more specific about this at the moment.

        In terms of space standards of UK homes, all homes provided by GreenSquare Group and the vast majority of Housing Associations are designed to a document called Design and Quality Standards 2007 published by the Homes and Communities Agency (copy attached) this does not apply to any private house builder or developer building for the open market. The requirements are stringent and are designed to ensure new affordable housing is built to a very high standard. We also build all our homes to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 which is a high energy efficiency rating. Consequently the houses we build are larger than the private sector equivalent and as the private sector only have to build to a lower minimum building regulations standards and to no specified enhanced energy rating our homes are a better quality product.

        On the issue of public transport the Government expects all housing associations to look at its land asset base, seek to build on brownfield sites (i.e. land previously developed or backland sites in existing built up areas rather than on greenfield sites) and maximise this to provide new housing. Whilst we can and do buy land for new housing we cannot always secure this in a competitive land market (because as noted above we build to larger sizes therefore we cannot always compete on land value with private developers who will always try to max out on lower quality, high density new housing). Our current proposals in Rudloe as you have seen from the sketch proposals are for only a handful of new homes, you may be aware that Hannick Homes own land and are proposing to apply for planning permission for about 50 new homes on the other side of the B3109 they would have the same issues over access to public transport yet this may well gain planning approval as we have such a shortage of new housing in the UK and developers are often securing approvals through appeal hearings if unsuccessful initially.

        We are not looking to provide new areas for play on the estate on our land but we are hoping to work with Wiltshire Council and Corsham Town Council to enhance and improve the current recreation offer on the existing green areas as we know not all age ranges are catered for currently. We do have records of our garages in use yes and will be using this information to inform our planning and thinking.

 I hope this is helpful and we will see you at future events.

 Kind regards Kirsty

 **Kirsty Powell** | Development & New Business Manager, GreenSquare Group

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