18th March 2014

Dear Cllr Whalley,

Thanks for the response.

If I could just first deal with some detail. Regarding the 11th December Corsham Planning meeting when 05724 was discussed, you indicate that someone from Corsham Parish could have perhaps been 'co-opted' to speak on behalf of the directly affected objectors - Rudloe residents. This would be a tortuous state of affairs with someone from West Corsham having to speak on our behalf. Perhaps we could have arranged this but the issue here was that no one knew that 05724 was on the 11th December agenda. Your agendas are published just a few days in advance of meetings; the vehicles for the dissemination of information on these matters were (and are) the rudloescene website and the Save Rudloe Greenfield email group with, in total, a membership of sixty-two. I manage both of these 'vehicles' but I was out of the country in early December. Perhaps we paid the price for relying too much on these methods. On my return, I contacted Corsham Town Council in an attempt to have 05724 'revisited' by the Planning Committee. However my 23rd December and 6th January solicitations were rejected by the Town Clerk as follows: "*Corsham Town Council represents the interests of its residents. As you live in Box Parish and the planning application is for a site within Box you are advised to direct your concerns about the Hannick Planning application to Box Parish Council. Your request, therefore, to reconsider the outline Hannick application is rejected*."

With regard to Box Parish meetings where this application was discussed, unfortunately and ironically I was away for all of them. However, the Save Rudloe Greenfield campaign sent a number of representatives and many other objectors from Rudloe also attended. I was assured that councillors received a good 'ear bashing' on the subject. With regard to Rudloe members on the parish council, as I indicated last Wednesday, Mr Barstow is vehemently opposed to this development and the other Rudloe member whom I canvassed on the subject just ten days ago could not give a personal opinion. Rudloe residents note, as you do, that in committee, no objection was made to the development. Very disappointing, and as I indicated last Wednesday, completely unrepresentative of the views of the people of Rudloe.

Turning now to the subject of Rudloe residents putting themselves forward for vacancies on the Town or Parish councils, this does appear to be a problem. I can only speak for myself here but I could not sit in Council (Planning Committee, for example) meetings and vote on matters of which I knew 'not enough' - it would be necessary for me to investigate fully all the matters at hand.  For example, the 05724 application firstly would have required my challenging the Corsham Planning Committee chair regarding her interest in the matter; then a perhaps one-hour presentation would follow along the lines of the 4-page, 2,200-word text appraisal and the 4-page pictorial appraisal sent to the Area Planning Committee members (after our experience last Wednesday it seems that committee members do not read these things 'in camera').

Similarly, I was very disappointed that Corsham Planning Committee supported the Wadswick Solar Park application. Another 'presentation' would have been required here if I was on the Corsham Planning Committee. The link to my 6-page 'My objection to the solar park' can be found at the foot of the 'News', 'Wadswick' page on the Rudloe website here: <http://www.rudloescene.co.uk/news-1/wadswick/>.

I believe, perhaps wrongly, that I could not dispense such lengthy diatribes from within committees and that these views can only be provided through lobbying? However the problem, it seems to me, is that such views are not given sufficient weight, indeed any weight, by the committees involved. As I indicated in my first email, with the principal arguments given by Corsham Town Council Planning Committee for rejecting the Gladman application also applying to the Hannick application, there appear to be hidden forces at work. In my view, this was affirmed by the Corsham Primary Executive Head's announcement, five months before the Hannick application had been submitted, that "the development had been approved".

Sincerely

Paul Turner

From: Philip.Whalley@wiltshire.gov.uk  
To: wirepuller@hotmail.com  
CC: dmartin@corsham.gov.uk; ratbag@thehopkinsons.net  
Subject: RE: Planning Application 13/05724/OUT and Wednesday's Northern Area Planning Committee Meeting  
Date: Mon, 17 Mar 2014 15:20:32 +0000

Dear Mr Turner,

Thank you for your detailed analysis of my statement and the subsequent comments I made at the Northern Area Planning Meeting. I will forward this to the Corsham Town Clerk and the Chair of the Corsham Town Council (CTC) to ensure that what I said properly reflects the position of the CTC.

New housing developments are always contentious decisions and understandably and invariably opposed by nearby residents but as was rightly pointed out at the meeting given present government policies if we had rejected this proposal we would have lost at appeal and needlessly wasted local tax-payers money.

I also appreciate your frustration  at the perceived lack of formal representation. I would however like to remind you that the part of Rudloe within the Corsham Parish boundaries does have a seat on the CTC but unfortunately no-one stood to fill it in the May 2013 election. The CTC then tried to fill it by co-option but still no Rudloe resident came forward. Perhaps if someone had then the views of the Rudloe residents could have been more forcefully represented.  I accept that as a resident of Box you  could not speak personally at the CTCPC when we discussed the matter but it is disappointing that no-one living in the Rudloe part of Corsham, or perhaps from Pickwick, would speak at this meeting if there was such extensive local opposition. Most of your representation, however, is through Box Parish Council where I presume you have more Rudloe Councillors . I presume you vigorously canvassed them but note that they also offered no objection to this development.

 Finally you mention the Pickwick development north of the A4. I do not believe this application is analogous with that at Fiveways but if you came to the CTCPC when this was discussed this you will be aware that I forcefully spoke against it.

Kind Regards

Phil Whalley

 Corsham Town

Wiltshire Unitary Councillor

01249 714227

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16th March 2014

Dear Cllr Whalley,

As you may have noticed at Wednesday’s Northern Area Planning Committee meeting, your views representing those of Corsham Town Council, were met with a high degree of disdain from the 30-odd Rudloe residents. This is hardly surprising given their disingenuous nature. You said that Corsham Town Council had given their clear support and that the view of the Town Council was not divided but very firmly in its favour. I put it to you that this is a sad reflection on the state of local politics. Where was the debate? Where were the voices putting the case against this development?

As the three, three-minute representations of Rudloe residents were completely disregarded and no further input was allowed from the public, I am driven to present arguments here, in this email, against what transpired at Wednesday’s meeting and previously at Corsham Town Council Planning Committee (CTCPC) meetings.

CTCPC does not allow representations from residents of Rudloe at its meetings so no public voices could be heard at the 11th December 2013 meeting when planning application 13/05724/OUT ‘Land south of Bradford Road, Rudloe’ was discussed. Yet at the Corsham Town Council Planning Committee meeting on 20th November 2013 when planning application 13/05188/OUT – ‘Land north of the A4 at Pickwick’ was on the agenda, representations were allowed of course, when three residents of Pickwick spoke eloquently against the application. In addition, around eighty members of the public attended this meeting to support the speakers (and put pressure on the Committee). You may or may not be aware but around thirty of those people were Rudloe residents supporting our Pickwick neighbours.

Unsurprisingly then, CTCPC voted unanimously to refuse the Pickwick application. According to the minutes, refusal was on the grounds of “local people should be able to select sites as part of the localism agenda”, “the proposal is outside the settlement boundary”, “the application is on a greenfield site when brownfield sites should be developed first”, “the proposal would constitute unnecessary development as the area is well on its way to meeting the housing need quota”, “the proposal is contrary to both the Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework” and “the proposal would exacerbate pressures on local facilities”. **All of these arguments apply equally to the Rudloe development but were not used at CTCPC in the Rudloe ‘debate’ or by you in the Northern Area Planning Committee ‘debate’ on Wednesday.**

Not only that but these same arguments were used, principally by you, on Wednesday to actually voice your approval of the Rudloe development. You drew in other arguments, again which apply equally to both developments.

**You said**: “In addition to providing housing and especially much-needed affordable housing – one of our key targets within the Corsham Community Area (CCA) - it also includes employment land which will provide jobs and other economic benefits to the CCA.” **This argument applies equally, if not more so, to Pickwick – the proposed there is for 150 homes against 88 at Rudloe and both have commercial aspects**.

**You said**: “CTC also supported the application because of the exemplary and responsive consultation process which began as far back as February 2012 and through this the CTC concerns about matters such as: the provision of affordable housing, separate access for the housing and commercial aspects of the development, landscape buffering, provision of pedestrian crossings, drop-off spaces for school children, speed limits and cycle routes have all been responded to and properly addressed.” **This sounds almost like a sales pitch!** Any developer would respond to and address minor points in order to push through a £20million development through which they, and others, will make millions. Why didn’t you, or any other council member, make reference to the Save Rudloe Campaign’s 6-page critique of the Case Officer’s report or the 4-page appraisal of the proposal. It was as if these papers, sent to all Committee members on Sunday 9th March 2013 and which addressed many of these matters, did not exist.

**You said:** “CTC also notes that the adjacent primary school has supported the scheme” (cue much laughter). **This is hardly surprising when the Case Officer’s report indicates that the school will receive £279,000 from the development**. Not only that but the Executive Head reported to school governors’ meetings in June and July 2013, five months before the planning application had been submitted, that the development “had been approved” and discussions were underway with architects regarding the design of new school buildings. In addition, the chair of CTCPC is an associate governor of Corsham Primary. This represents a significant conflict of interest, not of a personal nature, but in the impartial resolution of this application. Also, In Wiltshire County Council’s ‘Statement of Community Involvement’ document (referenced by Hannick in its ‘Statement of Community Engagement’), there are twenty possible consultation bodies listed. Schools are not included but resident and community associations are. Hannick did not consult any of the associations that represent the true views of the people of Rudloe: Rudloe Club, Rudloe Community Association (which has around 160 members) or the Springfield Residents Association amongst others. Their consultation process was thereby flawed, not exemplary as you stated.

**You said:** “Nor does this application contravene CTC policy or North Wiltshire Local Plan by infringing on the local green buffer zone between the town and the surrounding villages.” **We look forward to hearing this argument again when the Pickwick development comes before the Northern Area Planning Committee.**

**You said:** “It is also the view of CTC that our housing targets cannot be met solely through the use of ex-MoD brownfield sites and given the Inspector’s recent comments on the draft Core Strategy that we’ll need to provide even more homes than those initially identified in the Core Strategy, that point is strengthened”. **We look forward to hearing this argument again when the Pickwick development comes before the Northern Area Planning Committee.**

**You said:** “And I have to say, I attended the two consultations with Hannick Homes and also the Town Planning Meeting last month that discussed this application and I can assure you that the view of CTC was not divided on this application but very firmly in its favour. And, of course, there were questions of detail about aspects of the development but I cannot recollect a single voice being raised in outright opposition”. **Odd don’t you think that all were in favour of the Rudloe development and all were opposed to the Pickwick development?** Whatever happened to robust debate at planning meetings? Given that the arguments against both developments are principally the same, there has clearly been another driver of the ‘all for Rudloe’, ‘all against Pickwick’ Council decisions. From the Rudloe viewpoint, that driver is clear bias.

**In your response** to Councillor Tonge’s concerns about the Rudloe development setting a precedent for the other proposals in the area, you said that you would argue that “if this (Rudloe) one is passed, it strengthens our ability to fight off the use of other, less appropriate (why?), greenfield sites in the Corsham area in a very different way(what did you mean by this – what different way?) and it gives me as an elected (?) member and the Town Council much more ability to fight against any further greenfield developments”. **It is pure chance (isn’t it?)** that has seen the Rudloe development come up first before the Planning Committee in the string of West Corsham speculative proposals (in fact Pickwick was originally scheduled to be first). Would you have used the same argument if Pickwick had been the first in line?

**You said:** “The ‘congestion’ argument is difficult to sustain. Any development will lead to further congestion. It’s a fact of modern life that the roads are becoming more congested and any development will lead to a bit more congestion but as the residents of Rudloe know, one of the problems we have is the huge level of inward commuting that takes place to, for example, MoD Corsham and you could argue that at least by having these additional houses, it gives the people who work there or in the light industry around this area, an opportunity to live locally and actually walk to work rather than use their cars”. **We look forward to hearing this argument again when the Pickwick development comes before the Northern Area Planning Committee.**

**You said**: “I accept that the service provision in the area (is not good) but you could also argue that additional housing will act as a catalyst so that more service provision can come into the community”. **We look forward to hearing this argument again when the Pickwick development comes before the Northern Area Planning Committee.** More service provision will not happen by magic – it has to be planned. However, Wiltshire County Council does not have a good track record of planning services at Rudloe – the £950,000 Rudloe Community Centre project being described just a few years after its opening as “not fit for purpose” by Wilts CC themselves. Also, if the 670-home Katherine Park development, completed in 2005, cannot act as a catalyst for services, then it is extremely unlikely that an 88-home development at Rudloe will.

All very disappointing, to say the least, for the Rudloe residents and others who attended the meeting on Wednesday. There was no so-called ‘debate’, apart from the Malmesbury councillor who did present a different viewpoint and abstained in the vote, just Planning Committee members, like yourself, presenting their pre-prepared discourses. With Councillor Sturgis arguing that there was no point in rejecting the application as it would be lost on appeal, one wonders what is the point of sham planning meetings which perpetuate the pretence of a democratic process but which are, in fact, nothing more than ‘stitch ups’ (if you’ll excuse the vernacular) with pre-ordained outcomes. I should say that local councillor Dick Tonge (not a Planning Committee member) did put an argument in Rudloe’s defence.

Our representatives’ duplicitous, sophistic input (or lack of any input as in the case of the one local councillor and Northern Area Planning Committee member who should have attended Wednesday’s meeting, as her parish and parishioners are directly involved, but instead sent apologies) to this pantomime is nothing short of a disgrace.

This email, along with other relevant papers, will be published on the Rudloe website.

Sincerely

Paul Turner