



# GREAT DENHAM

Parish Council

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**Parish Clerk** – Mrs. R. Buchanan  
18 Biddenham Turn  
Biddenham  
MK40 4AT  
T: 01234 341997  
[gdclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:gdclerk@hotmail.co.uk)

15 October 2013

Dear Mr Bennett

Following the past two meetings in September with Jim Caffery Principle Planning Officer and in October with you, the Parish Council – acting on parishioners concerns – have some serious misgivings regarding development progress in the parish of Great Denham. This falls into two categories, the first being lack of suitable or inadequate facilities to support the community and the second, the wholly unacceptable changes you are proposing to the district centre.

## **Lack of or Inadequate Facilities**

After the occupation of 100 homes DWH should have provided a youth facility. With 600 new homes occupied we have a piece of grass that is inadequate and does not provide any stimulation or offer any type of play or engagement for young people in Great Denham.

You have placed in the community four play areas all of which as above do not stimulate or provide any enjoyment for the children of Great Denham. The fourth facility you have recently installed is the best of them all, but when compared with other local developments pales into insignificance, in short you have not provided play equipment for the development that meets the needs of a young community which includes many children. We estimate that there are now between 300&400 children living in Great Denham and their needs have been completely ignored.

You have provided social housing on the development which I believe amounts to 30% of the total build? You and the Borough Planning Office overturned the Parish Councils objections to how these social houses were to be grouped. Chris Hatfield of DWH told our early community meetings that social housing would be given the “pepper pot” approach that is to say “sprinkled in small groups of no more than 12/15. You built 44 together in H (I) and despite the fact that the PC told you that this would cause endless problems you still went ahead.

From that area the crime stats – readily available from Bedfordshire Police – cover drug use, drug supplying, prostitution, aggravated assault, domestic violence, theft, car offences, vandalism, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage.

You have continued to build large quantities of social housing close together and so the problems continue. Youths with no facilities are congregating in the underpasses and many instances of anti-social behaviour are evident. We walked with you round the latest area being built and the number of bins left on pavements and the unkempt state of gardens was all too evident and symptomatic of large clusters of social housing.

We are not saying that there shouldn't be any social housing in fact the PC recognises the need for

such. What we are asking, is why did you change your original promise to “pepper pot” social housing within the overall development? This has contributed to the list of problems above, so do you intend to continue with this method?

Yours sales teams – and in this we include Barrett’s and Lagan Homes - have been telling house purchasers that a shop would be built and available in June 2012 but this has still not been started. You intimated in our meeting that this should be available in a further 12 months’ time i.e. October 2014! Your company is gaining a reputation for not delivering what you promise. There is a growing feeling in the community that DWH and its partners on the development have breached the original feel and ethos of how this community was to be shaped.

From the meeting with Jim Caffery we were given to believe that you had conducted a viability study and determined the return on your investment pointed to changes you would need to secure from the Borough in order to be able to commit to the 106 agreements! We believe the principle change you have requested is that no further social housing be built on the development? Given the way social housing has been set out on the development to date we would support this request.

The community hall has passed through planning in June this year. When will build start on this or is this part of the changes you are asking of the Borough?

### **Proposed changes to the District Centre**

The original plan for the district centre included a large retail food store, library, small retail units, pub, perhaps a small gym and some office accommodation. The library as a stand-alone building has gone. What you shared with me in our meeting as development proposals for the district centre I found to be unbelievable. “A food store with three retail units attached and a 2.5 storey 60 bed care home”. You also proposed to build further retail units on the site of the library.

These proposals are not acceptable to the people of Great Denham. We want a district centre more in keeping with the original plans. We do not want a care home! The parish is only 6 years old and we are struggling to provide facilities for young families with children. DWH should put more effort and energy into fulfilling its promises and living up to its own advertising hype.

As a Parish we seem to be the last in the line for consultation and communication. This development should take into account the needs of a young, diverse and energetic new community.

The Parish Council are aware that what we say to you or to the Borough Planning office carry little or no sway (as attested to with H(1)) in our efforts to get the best we can for our community. We want this to change and we need you to communicate at the outset regarding any changes/proposals that will affect this parish.

We would ask that you respond to this communication with a detailed list of your proposals with time scales to address the issues we have raised.

If you would like to understand better the pulse of this community we would be more than happy to call a public meeting where you could gauge for yourself the hopes and wishes of the community.

Yours sincerely

James R Weir