



GREAT DENHAM

Parish Council

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Dear Sirs

14/01087/S106 – Modify/Discharge a Planning Obligation

We refer to your letter dated 30th June 2014 and the response from Great Denham Parish Council is set out below.

Affordable Housing

With regard to the proposal to modify the proportion of affordable housing we raise no objections to the proposed reduction to 15% in the remainder of the build. We do however ask that when determining where the position and cluster of affordable housing is made that the developer reverts to their earlier promise of “pepper pot” distribution. The community have made the point that they do not want to see large numbers in one location (as has been the case hitherto).

Park & Ride Phase Two

This aspect of the proposals has not been made very clear. If the remainder of the land is not used for park & ride facilities what is it to be used for? Savills letter to Mr Caffrey dated 25th June 2014 makes mention of “delivering the Great Denham recycling facility”. We would like a more detailed view of the plans for a recycling facility to be able to assess if this site will meet the community need in a suitable way. It is worth noting that this is now the third location that has been proposed for a recycling facility.

Section 278 Shakespeare Road/Ashburton Road Works

No meaningful comment.

Country Park Specification

The proposed amendments – specifically to path surfacing – agreed to the satisfaction of “Council Parks and Countryside Manager” have not been specified so the impact on the community is not

clear. We refer in particular to members of the community – local and wider – who have mobility problems and have to rely on wheel chairs or mobility scooters. We need to understand if the considerations by developer and Borough staff have included any impact on disability issues?
NB. There is an issue which, whilst not under consideration for these proposals but which might impact at a later date, is the upcoming Land Bank submissions to the Borough by Bidwells. Bidwells have submitted a proposal (Excluded Land Parcel 1) which will further and more seriously impact on the Country Park. If in due course, this proposal is granted it will reduce the Country Park by 16.9 acres. Furthermore it will mean that all the football pitches already laid out will be built on and replacements pushed out into the flood plain.

Open Space Maintenance

This proposal has - according to Savills letter to Mr Caffrey dated 25th June 2014 –already “been agreed with Councils Parks and Countryside Manager”. It is not clear what the reduction in the “commuted sum” proposed by the developer is based on? What has changed in this provision that allows for so significant a reduction – nearly £1.2m? In an earlier letter from David Wilson Homes to Paul Rowland under (Open space maintenance sum reduction) the explanation stated “accounting for income from visitor centre & service charges from residents”. Does this mean that an estimate of “income from visitor centre” will replace the £1.2m reduction? Does it also mean significant changes to “service charges from residents”? This whole section is unclear as to what has driven the huge reduction to the extent that the Borough has already agreed? Clearly £1.2m of income from the visitor centre is unrealistic so we have to conclude that the burden will be shifted to residents and the service charge that will be levied. This would not be acceptable to the community.

CCTV Provision

Regardless of the advances in technology 2 CCTV cameras for Great Denham is lamentably too few! This community must have better coverage to combat rising crime and antisocial behaviour issues. We therefore strongly urge the Borough to, a) Insist on more cameras and consult with the PC and crime stats on their placement. b) Do not allow any reduction in the original 106 agreed sum.

Public Art Provision

The opening statement under this heading by Savills makes no sense? “David Wilson Homes would prefer to remove the public art provision in order to protect provisions such as Education and Transport!” The proposal that the removal of the sum of £260k can be mitigated by “imaginative landscape design” and that “some feature can be made of the meeting places with district and local centres” is unquantified.

It further comes under scrutiny when taken alongside the proposed changes to the Master Plan and District Centre plans. These have seen considerable reductions already to the design brief. The community is systematically losing those things that were set out and made the prospect of Great Denham as a place to live desirable. We would propose that this money be channelled into replacing the Ecumenical centre with a landscape garden/feature with seating where residents could sit peacefully and contemplatively.

Clearly the reduction in the size of the district centre is a critically negative aspect for the developer to “mitigate” meeting place enhancements.

Great Denham Library

It is yet another arrogant asserted statement and given absolutely no regard to the community’s wishes by Savills, “that providing a library at Great Denham will serve no useful purpose”. It also attests that the Borough have previously confirmed that “libraries are not a corporate priority”. The Parish Council has over a number of years discussed the provision of a library with both the Borough and the developer. So involved and engaged regarding this subject a compromise was agreed. The parish would forgo a stand-alone library building but an additional floor would be added to the community hall which at some point later would serve as a library. This could be a shared responsibility by the Borough and the community with the community staffing through volunteers etc.

Savills acting for DWH are now arbitrarily removing this option. DWH have confirmed that – despite

wide consultation – they would now only build a single storey community hall.

“The simplest way to make sure that we raise literate children is to teach them to read, and to show them that reading is a pleasurable activity. And that means, at its simplest, finding books that they enjoy, giving them access to those books, and letting them read them.”

“A way to destroy a child's love of reading, of course, is to make sure there are no books of any kind around. And to give them nowhere to read those books”

Neil Gaiman - Author

Great Denham Ecumenical Centre

We would agree that there is no need for an Ecumenical Centre. As we have discussed on many occasions both with developer and Borough the opportunity for a reflective and peaceful place to meet and sit in a landscaped area would be a very useful alternative. Monies saved from building this and from public art budget would still deliver a significant saving for the developer.

Great Denham Youth Facilities & Proposed Ranger Facility

This facility was supposed to be available after the occupation of 100 homes. We must be nearing 700 new homes occupied and we still do not have the facilities delivered. However as the new proposal is still larger than that originally specified it would be difficult to object.

However reducing the changing facilities to 4 from 6 would cause problems if all the sports pitches were being used simultaneously. It is the community's wish that the parish becomes heavily involved in organized sport for the young people of the parish. In order to do this we would require all 6 changing rooms.

The PC are also concerned with regard to the paragraph in Savills letter of 25th June under the heading **Country Park**. They imply that only subject to “the favourable outcome of the viability submission” would they provide the café/Ranger Officer facility within the country park! We would remind the Borough and developer that the provision of this facility was linked to the 106 obligation to provide playing fields for West Kempston. Following the release from this obligation discussion and tacit agreement were reached to build the pavilion in Great Denham to incorporate the Ranger facility. To now say it would only be provided if the outcome of their viability submission is received favourably is a threat they must withdraw.

Build Costs

Proposals from DWH to lower the build costs by removal of some of the energy efficiency standards and the higher specification insisted by the Borough will have the impact of a two tier community. The first part built to a higher standard and the second to a lower.

Proposed Pedestrian Bridge

The community are concerned that the bridge crossing to Kempston was to be retained at great expense when this money could be used to upgrade Kempston Mill Bridge and the remaining monies ploughed back into the community. No-one in either community seemed to want the bridge but no-one at BBC seemed prepared to take the decision to cancel it.

Conclusion

The proposals put forward under “financial viability” by the developer have a meaningful detrimental impact on the community. There are some issues as above, that the Borough should not concede and others where planners see “serve an equal purpose to the original specification” that the community would challenge and others that we would agree with.

The losers in this process can only be the Parish of Great Denham and the community who live in it. It has always been the attestation of the parish council that planners have not given sufficient consideration to the wishes of the community. We are aware of the legislation that requires you to allow these viability submissions but know of no legislation whereby you have to accept any or all of it. The CBRE report – which you commissioned - was a report looking back and reflecting on where the developer had lost out due to changing land values and building costs plus ROCE. We would draw your attention to the last 12 months and to future aspects for the developer.

In 2013 the Barratt Group (of which DWH is a member) increased profitability by 203% from £192m to £390m. <http://www.barrattdevelopments.co.uk/barratt/en/investor/fnews/fpress?id=105>
We are also aware that this will undoubtedly go before a planning committee. We are also organising a public meeting in the community to which we would extend to you an invitation to attend (date to be confirmed). We will also be writing to the Mayor and inviting him to attend.

Yours faithfully

Roz Buchanan

Clerk – Great Denham Parish Council