

Dear Councillor Corrie,

I am writing on behalf of the Great Langborough residents association, in response to the recent town centre regeneration consultation and the email conversations from Marc Maynard to which you have been party.

I do not plan to reiterate the points raised by Marc Maynard but will happily copy them to you if you do not have immediate access to them.

As a residents association close to the town centre we support the points he raised.

Members of our committee were also shocked (and concerned) about Cllr Clark's and your responses to Marc Maynard concerning general acceptance of the plans for Elms Field. We certainly have no recollection of having "collectively voted for the regeneration project" and even if this were generally true the exception amongst residents has always been to the Elms Field development.

At each stage of the consultation process we have been promised outcomes and then when approval is given those promises have been reneged on e.g.

"A major store like John Lewis" (David Lee) = a supermarket like Sainsbury's (Matt Deegan)

"Only three mature trees will be felled" (David Lee) = "I wish David hadn't said that" (Matt Deegan). Most trees will have to come down because of the underground car park

Driven by a retail strategy = a supermarket is the only option to justify the rent

A statement hotel with conference facilities/restaurant = bedroom only hotel like a Travelodge

etc

On behalf of the Great Langborough Residents Association (GLRA) I have attended and responded to all the town centre consultations and the forum over the years.

Many residents feel that there is a policy of ignoring the comments especially when asked to comment about the same issues again. What happened to the original views.?

For the last two AGMs of the GLRA we have had representatives from the Council as guest speakers on the Town Regeneration. When Cllr Deegan came down last year he was left in no doubt that within general acceptance of the overall plan the destruction of half of Elms Field was unacceptable to residents.

We do not feel that the Councillors are representing the views of the residents of Wokingham and are relying on a general apathy to get through their scheme (note the timing - summer/ Jubilee/Olympics).

The focus seems to have moved very far from "what's good for the town" to "what's good for the developers".

As you were at the last town centre forum meeting, you will have heard first hand , the concerns about the height of the buildings (the developers talked of 'framing' Elm's square and with taller buildings than reflect the town character and now those in the cricket pitch development), the transport issues and the ongoing concerns about the supermarket and hotel which we were assured were essential to the square. This is presumably a financial issue but the buildings are now taking up a huge amount of

space at the expense of the green spaces and the trees with even those on Langborough road now going to make way for the hotel access. I do not think the council have ever justified this to the satisfaction of the residents. We would welcome references to the studies cited by the developers and councillors on finance and transport as so often promised.

I found it disturbing to read from the emails that our views may no longer be consulted and hope that this does not reflect the current consultation which I know is now over. I hope we will hear the outcome and that resident's views will influence the final designs.

Our Association has been keen for regeneration to occur but not at the expense of the final outcome and I do not think we would ask the council to 'get on with it' without taking our views into account.

I have always felt that Elm's field is the sacrifice on the financial altar of the town centre and that this would have to be accepted but it seems that we are losing more of that amenity than was ever envisaged in the original plans.

As most probably the closest RA to Elms Field we do feel very strongly about its development and indeed the resulting traffic problems in many of our roads like Langborough Road.

As has been previously called for, the most accurate way to gauge what residents want, is to send out a survey to them to ascertain their views on the Elms Field development.

Perhaps the Council is concerned that this would reveal the residents true wishes and unseat the development which from your comments the council feel is unopposed.

Regards

Pat Smith – Chair GLRA