

23 October 2016

Dear Lydiard Tregoze Parish Councillors

This paper explains our motives for our Freedom of Information letters and concludes with a request from the Lydiard Heritage Action group to your Council.

Your Parish is the only statutory organisation that has offered support for Taylor Wimpey's application, whilst the following statutory consulted organisations have objected:

- Swindon Borough Council: reasons of heritage, landscape, biodiversity, design, transport, school places, planning policy, housing supply and overall approach to decision making
- Swindon Councillors voted unanimously on a cross party motion stating its: "... unequivocal objection to such a development." They also unanimously supported the Swindon Officer objection paper
- Historic England: 'conclude that the proposed development will have a significant & detrimental impact on the rural setting of the Grade I Church of St Mary and Grade II Lydiard Park'
- Lydiard Millicent Parish Council: for reasons of planning policy and impact on heritage
- Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services: failure to comply with Wiltshire's Core Strategy
- Garden's Trust - objection not yet received by Wiltshire, but they are writing to object
- Research into the flood risk continues and we expect Wiltshire's drainage engineer to place an objection - in addition there is considerable concern over the design of the Dam spillway within the Park (should the development be approved)

In addition, Wiltshire Highways officer has stated that 'the proposals are therefore contrary to sustainable transport objectives' and '.....I am prepared to raise a highway objection on the grounds indicated'.

Of the 601 representation letters available on Wiltshire's Website (as of 19 October), just two people have written a letter of support (therefore 99.7% are against). Those opposing include:

- Solicitor General Robert Buckland MP and James Gray MP
- The Friends of Lydiard Park
- The Love Lydiard Trust
- The Lydiard Park Heritage Trust
- The Lydiard Fields Action Group
- The Lydiard Heritage Action Group
- The Shaw Residents' Association

Of the remaining 592 letters of objection, 24% are from villages 'west of Swindon' (Purton, Lydiard Millicent, Braydon, Cricklade, Hook, Purton Stoke, Common Platt, Washpool and Minety) with a further thirteen objections from Royal Wootton Bassett.

Perspective - based on population, the number of people objecting from those villages is five times higher than that of Swindon (approx 13,000 residents versus 200,000).

In addition, a petition arguing against the application has received over 1,120 signatures.

It is not just about this plot of land - if Taylor Wimpey wins then they have won the most sensitive parcel of land possible; one which is within the Essential Setting of Lydiard Park. We firmly believe that, far from reducing the chances of coalescence between Swindon and villages to the west (through Taylor Wimpey's so called 'gift'), if Taylor Wimpey's application is approved, it will actually have the opposite effect. It will be the falling of the first and most significant domino, paving the way for the subsequent development of all the land west of Swindon up to and including Hook village.

From the documents received to date, we are able to paint the following sequence of events:

20 Oct 2014	First documented mention by Taylor Wimpey of 'gifting land'
5 Feb 2015	Taylor Wimpey (Turley) require LTPC to support their application and create a neighbourhood plan if they want the 'gift'
3 Mar 2015	Request from Taylor Wimpey (Turley) for an update on neighbourhood plan.
17 Mar 2015	Letter from Taylor Wimpey (Turley) Includes an offer of £5k for allotments and £5k for a cemetery and talks about Peter Willis (LTPC) 'awaiting further information from the neighbourhood plan steering group'. States - 'we agreed that the Lydiard Tregoze chapter should include an allocation for the development of up to 50 new dwellings....on the parcel of land off Tewkesbury Way'
7 Apr 2015	Request from Taylor Wimpey (Turley) for an update on neighbourhood plan
12 May 2015	LTPC resign from NEW-V. No reasons given
26 Jun 2015	Link magazine article - Taylor Wimpey talk about 'a number of meetings with LTPC' and 'our agreement will be written into the draft parish neighbourhood plan'. LTPC state ' we are still in discussion with Taylor Wimpey and nothing has been decided'

We know that the NEW-V plan is following Wiltshire's Core Strategy which means infill only for small villages. Therefore, based on this and from the sequence of events above, the only conclusion we can draw for your Parish resigning from the NEW-V is that as members, you would not be able to meet Taylor Wimpey's demands and therefore not receive your 'gift' of land.

We also understand that Royal Wootton Bassett has built / is building 1354 homes against a target of 1100 by 2026 - e.g. 20% above requirements (this does not include the LIDL application which includes 38 for the elderly + 220 houses). So why, in a 30 September 2016, Swindon Advertiser article did Mr Willis say "We've got to have some development within our Parish and as far as we're concerned that is the best place for it" (referring to the Lydiard Park application)

Our rationale for the original Freedom of Information request, and our persistence since, is for one simple reason; we do not understand why you as Parish Councillors have voted to support Taylor Wimpey's application. We will continue our research until we get a full understanding. Our requests for copies of each Councillors register of interest have not yet been fulfilled and so we can only assume that none have been filed.

In parallel to these requests, and as part of our efforts to safeguard Lydiard Park well into the future, we are conducting Land Registry searches in order to compile a map of land ownership and developer options.

It is not too late for you as a Parish Council to withdraw your letter of support and replace it with an objection. We ask that you do that.

Lydiard Heritage Action Group