

Dear Resident,

Many of you will have enjoyed the use of the Millennium Park with families and friends for recreational activities and events such as Bonfire Night. The Town Council has leased the land for approximately 15 years for the benefit of the community from the owners DSL (a consortium of owners external to Durrington). Over the last couple of years, the owners have considered options to develop the land for residential housing with no success, probably due to the land being classified for recreation and open space. The owners recently approached the Town Council with a proposal to enter into a Joint Venture Agreement (JVA), which would have seen both sides working in partnership to produce a Residential Development Plan for the land. The Plan would have involved the design and potential development of a number of homes on the land along with the potential gifting of a piece of freehold land to the Town Council for such use as a play area. After careful consideration and following dialogue with Wiltshire Council Spatial Planning Department, the Town Council opted not to enter into the JVA as it felt it was not in the best interests of the community, based on the following reasons:

* The Town Council shares the concerns of the community over the future impact that 440 new service family homes in Larkhill may have on the village’s infrastructure, along with the potential for 60 more homes in the village under Wiltshire Council’s Housing Site Allocations Plan.
* Since the Avonfields Estate was built in 2013, comprising around 140 homes, approximately 60 other homes have been built in the village. The Town Council continues to support infill builds but there is increased pressure on the village’s infrastructure, particularly the road network. Agreeing to the development of more homes would only exacerbate this.

Under its current use (Recreational/Open Space), the Town Council believes that any development would have been difficult for the owners to achieve without the buy in of the Town Council, hence the owners’ proposal of the JVA. The Town Council responded to the owners with its concerns over building in the community and the loss of recreational/open space. The Town Council proposed that the owners considered a 5-year lease, under similar terms to those it currently enjoys. Unfortunately, this alternative proposal was turned down and in response, the owners have advised the Town Council they will not extend the leasehold beyond 1st December 2019.

Whilst the Town Council will no longer enjoy the lease of the land for the community to benefit from, it believes it has acted in the interests of the community to prevent any short – mid term development of it. In addition, the owners wished the Town Council to fund elements of the Development Plan through the JVA, which were not deemed an appropriate use of the Council’s limited resources.

The owners are now looking to market the land on a sale/letting basis, as it is unlikely they will gain planning permission for a housing development. There are planning restrictions as to what the land can be used for, but at present the Town Council does not know for what or to whom it will be sold/leased. However, the Town Council will do whatever it can, within its powers to try and protect the land under its Recreational/Open Space classification.

Over the next two months the Town Council will be working to return the land to its owners, therefore, there may be times when areas, or the entire park will be closed for health and safety reasons. As of the 1st of December, the lease will cease and the land will return to the owners, access to the park from this date is likely to be prohibited to the public.

This is a disappointing outcome for the community and the Town Council will keep residents updated of the owners’ plans when it becomes aware of them.

Yours faithfully



CLLR JOHN TODD - CHAIRMAN