

Letter to Henley Standard

23 November 2020

Rhetoric, not democracy

Sir, — I wonder if Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson really does believe the rhetoric that she espouses (*Standard*, November 13).

Her comments about how South Oxfordshire District Council is dealing with the Thames Farm drainage debacle are quite ludicrous and try to paint a picture of fair play and democracy. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The facts are that Taylor Wimpey used a particular process to get their reserved matters approved.

This process was their choice and is a process where normally public consultation cannot occur.

This was the wrong process since it was actually such a massive variation to the original proposals.

The council was forced to resile from making a determination that was due to happen on October 23 solely because of the 150 letters of objection that were sent in by residents.

Residents were not consulted at all. They found out what was going on and stopped this ridiculously undemocratic process when approval was about to be given.

In fact, the developer had not even submitted a flood risk assessment with their application and the council was still on the verge of approving it.

This is not democracy nor the system working as it should. This is covert use of technicalities to maintain a very low profile and circumvent consultation and scrutiny.

As a public company which says they will treat neighbours as they themselves would wish to be treated, Taylor Wimpey should be ashamed of themselves and remove these statements from their corporate social responsibility policies.

What's more, the council knew perfectly well that sink holes had been found on site and the ground was poor and yet this was kept very quiet.

Officers approved a variation to the planning permission that allowed works to commence even though the drainage solution had not been approved and it was well known that a new quite radical solution to the drainage was going to be presented.

Both the variation of the consent allowing the roadworks to happen early and the drainage changes are very significant and major.

The variation should never have been approved, particularly when no external parties were even made aware of the application.

Furthermore, the current drainage proposals should be the subject of a proper application to vary the scheme.

It is debatable whether this site would have ever received consent had the true circumstances of the land been known but now that we do know, the whole matter should be fully and properly scrutinised.

As an alternative, apart from their financial loss, there is nothing preventing Taylor Wimpey from reducing the size and density of their development to one that would not cause such major harm to the environment and potentially exacerbate flooding in a remote location away from their site.

Normally a developer would be expected to contain their storm water on their own site and discharge it at greenfield rates rather than it pumping miles away to another catchment area. — Yours faithfully,

Peter Boros

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