

# Oakham Town Council Working Group

## re: Proposed Willowbrook New Build

### Issues concerning the residents of Claresholm Close

#### Background

This paper has been produced to inform the Oakham Town Council working group, whose remit is to gather information and comments about the proposed new build at the Willowbrook site. The stakeholders represented in this paper are all residents of Claresholm Close, which is situated immediately to the back of the proposed new build.

When originally presented, the proposed building application was rejected by Oakham Town Council (8<sup>th</sup> August 2018) and we, as neighbours to the proposed new build, agree with their decision.

#### Specific Issues

This is a factual statement of the issues causing resident objections to the proposed new build at the Willowbrook site.

1. The access to the site is through a narrow track which leads to the allotments from Willow Crescent. This is next to a primary school (The English Martyr's Catholic Voluntary Academy) and a play area. Frequently during the day Willow Crescent becomes very congested, and the the increased traffic as a result of doubling the Willowbrook facility will undoubtedly put further strain on an already precarious accessibility balance.
2. Willow Crescent has frequent parking on one side, close to the entrance to Willowbrook, which is compounded by visitors to the Willow Stores opposite. In addition to this, since the Willow Crescent flats have neither off-road parking nor garage facilities, car owners who occupy the flats have no recourse but to use the road as parking space, and inevitably park their vehicles opposite the Willowbrook track entrance.
3. For the above reasons, increased footfall and vehicle numbers will be a problem over access to this road. In addition to this it is doubtful whether an emergency services vehicle, whether ambulance or fire tender, would be able to access Willowbrook for significant periods of time as a result of the increased congestion. This might represent a threat to the emergency contingency of the residents of Willowbrook.
4. In the long term, the proposed new building is not a replacement for the existing building, but an entirely new development, which will result in increasing the number of clients by 115% i.e. more than doubling the existing number of clients it services. The proposed new build is also intended to cater for an additional (though unspecified) number of administrative staff over and above present levels.
5. The proposed new build is a development on land which the Rutland Development Plan designated as an important green open space. It should therefore be seen as

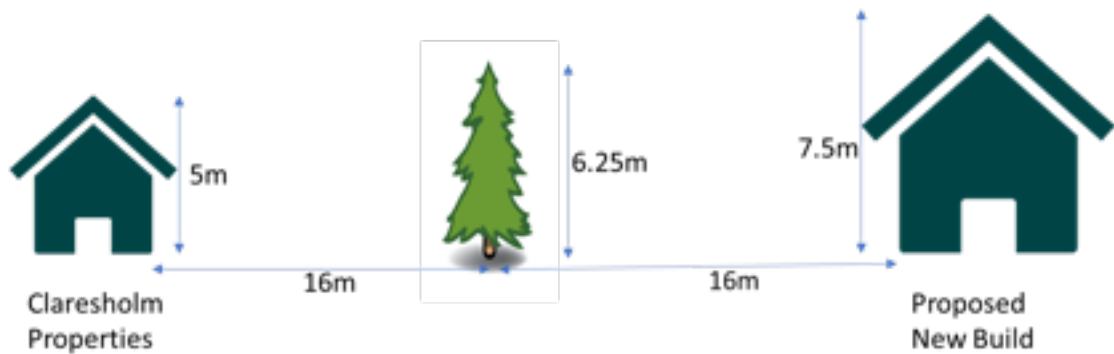
an overdevelopment of such an area. Quite how the proposed development and the Rutland Development Plan can coexist is not at all clear.

6. The proposed two storey building overlooks residences in Claresholm Close creating significant issues of privacy and security. Though fencing/screening has been offered, we are not aware of any contractual commitment to provide and/or maintain such barriers.



To clarify the screening/overlooking issue, the two photographs above show views from two of the rear bedroom windows of No. 7 Claresholm Close. The field immediately behind the two ivy covered willow trees is the site for the proposed new build and it is plain to see that no privacy will be afforded without screening. Further, the two ivy covered willow trees are old and in a state of decay, with the left hand tree leaning at such an angle as to present challenges in the construction of the new build.

7. Equally, there is an issue as to the minimum height required to provide effective screening, and again we are not aware of any commitments in this respect. Measurements show that the Claresholm Close properties have upper storey window heights of 5 metres, whereas the proposed new build has a height of 7.5metres. The respective distances from any barrier show the **minimum** required height to be 6.25m (+/- land height differences) – see drawing below.



8. Given the minimum required height (6.25m) of the screening, it is likely that the living area of the proposed new build, being only some 4 meters from the tree line will not receive adequate daylight. Far more effective might be the re-location of the living area to the north side of the proposed new build since that would give more light and an unimpeded view for clients. We understand that there is a sewer running through this land but that is no different to the provisions made to the existing building. It has been suggested that, if this alteration were made to the proposed new build, then the building 'would not work', but it unclear as to exactly what 'would not work'.
9. There is a concern over physical access to the brook separating Claresholm Close gardens and the site of the proposed new build. The brook, though not deep, has a very soft, silty bottom into which an adult will sink to a depth of approximately 0.5metres in places. This is bounded by steep, crumbling banks on either side. Sliding into the brook is easy to achieve but getting out from this near bog like area can be a challenge for all but the most able-bodied individuals. This does not currently represent a significant risk since there is a robust barrier of closely planted coniferous trees. This is not the case for the boundary of the proposed new build.
10. Noise from radios and clients has been a frequent issue over the years and increased numbers of clients and staff will only add to this nuisance. Though this has been 'tolerated' in the past, it will certainly not reduce as a result of more than doubling the numbers of people on site at any time.
11. Part of the proposed new build is the inclusion of an additional area for car parking immediately next to the perimeter of the site. Here there are concerns over additional noise as well as the effect of the car park being lit at night time. In particular it is felt there will be an issue of car park lighting coming straight into the rear bedrooms of residents' properties
12. In the past there has been a rat infestation which has resulted in rat presence in the gardens of Claresholm Close. This was largely due to a significant amount of fly tipping (sofas, furniture, crates etc.) which, along with refuse from the adjacent allotments, provided a perfect environment for rats to thrive. Concerted efforts have abated this problem but there is a concern that this is not allowed to reoccur.
13. There was no prior consultation with neighbours, apart from a letter from RCC, or with Oakham Town Council. This might be construed as a cynical mechanism to diminish or side-step the Town Council's authority in the important role of town planning.

Finally, in support of the above concerns, we would like to extend an invitation to all concerned to visit No 7 Claresholm Close for a first-hand view of the site from the residents perspective. This can be arranged with James Curtis on 01572 756149.