

Joy Clough <jclough@oakhamtowncouncil.gov.uk>

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15.10.19

Dear Mrs Munton,

Rutland House Community Trust

Thank you for sending me the minutes of the meeting of 10.10.19, and I am so sorry that I was too ill to attend. I wanted to be there to give the Trust some clarification and perspective on the position of the Town Council. I am not speaking on behalf of Oakham Town Council, but I was authorised to represent the Council at your meeting, and this is the report that I would have verbally submitted.

It may be that RHCT always intended to build on this amenity land, but the Council of 2007 is not the Council of today, and the permission from the Secretary for State (2011) clearly states that this land was 'for the use and enjoyment of the residents and staff' with the lease (2012) clearly stating that the permitted use was as gardens and amenity land in connection with the adjoining buildings.

When RHCT contacted OTC in August 2017 about possible development plans, OTC discussed the matter at their October meeting and asked for further information. If discussions had taken place at this time an agreed way forward might have been arrived at, but instead RHCT produced plans, and in contravention of the terms of their lease, applied for planning permission.

The Council's first intimation of this was when those plans came to them as a planning application on 8th August 2018. I myself was in the public gallery at that meeting. OTC was unhappy that planning permission was being sought without its permission, then discussed the plans in detail and unanimously recommended refusal on several specified grounds. One of these was the lack of remaining amenity land and useable green open space.

Working parties then met to discuss this, and as custodians of the land OTC had also to consider the concerns of residents. Both residents and OTC have made compromises. At the Council meeting of 12.12.18, although permission for the building was agreed in principle (by just 2 votes), the Council were unanimous in rejecting the parking area development on the remaining level open land. Since then RHCT has responded with further justification for the addition of the new access road through the current garden and a parking area on the current amenity land.

OTC has some new councillors since the May 2019 election, but when the RHCT development came onto the agenda again on 25.10.19, Council again did not accept either of the suggested options, i) block paving as per the current plan, or ii) reduced area of block paving sufficient for access and turning space for an ambulance/minibus, and referred the matter back to the working group.

The view of the Town Council has been consistent from the very beginning of this process. It is willing to support the need for this additional provision, but as you can see from the chain of events, it has not been happy with the plans from the start. This is what I would have brought to your meeting had I not been unwell.

I am just one Councillor, and I am trying to help find an acceptable way forward. The inference at that last Council meeting was that a working group should look for an alternative and acceptable solution, but I can see nothing in these RHCT minutes that suggests any willingness to consider this approach. I cannot pre-judge the Council's response if RHCT again submit the existing plans.

Personally, I can only suggest that RHCT looks again at the whole plot of land. The area is surely adequate for a development that will meet your needs and be acceptable to neighbours and OTC, and the question of the slope and the sewer were both addressed with the first RHCT development.

Regards

Cllr Joy Clough