

Extract from an e-mail from Mr P Turner 10 October 2015

Paul Turner is a long-standing Rudloe resident who is the popular author of the website Rudloescene

Alan Payne

Sent from Windows Mail

From:

Sent: Saturday, 10 October 2015 13:29

To: [Alan Payne](#)

Alan,

The change in Corsham's plan is illuminating. Initially, the proposal was to follow fixed features which are likely to remain in place for many years – these were the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Leafy Lane, the B3109 and the A365. Whether or not one agreed with the concept, this appeared to make topographical sense. However, the change in plan while 'pulling back' the proposed annexation also reveals underlying motives.

In the new plan, instead of following the B3109 and A365, the proposed boundary now follows the new access road to Wadswick Green (for part of its length) and the eastern boundary of Kingsmoor Wood, thus putting part of Manor Farm's land and holdings in Corsham Parish with the rest remaining in Box. This arbitrary divide would mean that all the Strategic Housing Land Availability Sites would become part of Corsham Parish with the relatively 'unprofitable' major part of Manor Farm (farms pay no rates) and the hamlets of Chapel Plaister and Wadswick remaining in Box.

The hundreds of existing homes and many businesses in Rudloe and Hawthorn and the planned and proposed new homes (Hannick's 88 homes, Frampton's 180 homes) and businesses (Bath ASU's existing and planned expansion at Corsham (!not really Corsham but Hawthorn) Science Park and Ark Data's expansion at Hawthorn) would, unsurprisingly, be annexed by Corsham.

Through this change, one gets an insight into the real reason for Corsham's proposal - income, power and status - to the detriment of its smaller neighbour.

Any road up (as they say up north) I have just been watching Ian Nairn's 1970s comparison between neighbours Halifax and Huddersfield in the form of an architectural football match. Surprisingly, Halifax won the contest 5-2. I wondered how Corsham and Box would compare, not architecturally but simply as communities, so let's have a go ...

Both places have many clubs and activities for their communities. Rudloe did have a thriving community centre until the turn of the century but interference from outside agencies (the County Council and the local housing association principally) has seen an unnecessary replacement building constructed (completed in 2000) at a cost not far short of £1 million. And just a few years after

completion, it was described, by Wiltshire Council itself, as “not fit for purpose”. This community centre, within Corsham Parish, has been a financial, planning and community disaster. Would or should Corsham Town Council take any responsibility for this debacle? I’m not aware of any such disasters in Box (at least not on such a scale).

1-0 to Box

Clearly Corsham, being the far larger community and also a town rather than a village, has more shopping, dining and watering (cafes, pubs) facilities than Box. But while Corsham Town Council, in its plan, states “Corsham has grown by over 20 per cent in the last ten years and the settlement is due to expand much further in the next decade. The Town Council is positive about managing development ...”, what has it done to arrest the decline of its heart, the town centre itself? National businesses such as Nationwide, NatWest and HSBC have all withdrawn from Corsham, the last just days ago (October 2015), indicating that they see no future for the town. Similarly, local businesses have gone: Higos Insurance Brokers have closed their Corsham office concentrating their business in Calne and Devizes; the best restaurant in the Town, Cinnamon and Madison ladies fashion have closed recently; the small Martingate Precinct has two empty premises and two charity shops indicating a town in decline and the Wiltshire College Corsham Enterprise Centre, also in the Precinct, closed its doors in 2014.

With regard to the last, I wrote to the college, the local MP and Corsham Town Council asking how such a fine facility with purpose-built classrooms including a well-equipped computer lab could be lost to the community. While the college and MP responded, the Town Council did not, indicating a lack of interest in Corsham’s facilities and future.

It is all very well trumpeting the outward expansion of the Corsham settlement but without a vibrant town centre, Corsham will be just a large, satellite conurbation with residents of existing and new developments creating more pressure on our roads by using the much better facilities of Melksham, Chippenham, Bath and Trowbridge.

2-0 to Box

We have just returned from a tour of the north of England and the Scottish Borders and were surprised to find that parking was free everywhere – car parks and streets. There were no parking meters and no parking attendants in any of the towns we visited (except one posh, touristy town in North Yorkshire). Some years ago, I parked in Newlands Road Car Park in Corsham (where charges apply) but didn’t have any change. While I was away trying to get some (change) I met an old friend I hadn’t seen for perhaps thirty years. Now here’s a question for anyone who happened to chance on this article ... What should one do in such circumstances? Engage in conversation about the intervening years, what has happened in our lives, our families etc or say “Sorry mate, I know we haven’t met for thirty years but I must go and find some change for the parking meter”. We should not succumb to having our lives dictated by bureaucratic, mercenary, exploitative schemes. If ‘we’ want to encourage the use of our town and village centres we shouldn’t have restrictive parking schemes. Both Corsham and Box (as far as I know) have restrictive parking so it remains ...

2-0 to Box

Having experienced the goings-on of the Corsham and Box councils (particularly the planning committees) I can say, without fear of contradiction (you're welcome), that they are both equally useless. Just two recent examples: the Corsham Strategic Plan states that there should be no development between Corsham and outlying settlements such as Rudloe. Yet the Corsham Planning Committee supported the application for a new mine entrance on the Bradford Road without mentioning the supposed 'Strategic Plan' (this was the very body that created it!). Box Planning Committee supported a half-baked planning application that would have seen the 15-mile view from Wadswick Lane across to Salisbury Plain and Pewsey Vale obliterated. And both Corsham and Box committees supported the Hannick greenfield application at Rudloe when there are more than enough local brownfield sites to satisfy housing targets. Both useless so it remains ...

2-0 to Box at the final whistle (as I reckon two pages are enough!)

Paul Turner