



## Rooksdown Parish Council Meeting 26 February 2024

### Summary

Rooksdown Parish Council invited Ant Edgley, Technical Director at David Wilson Homes Southern to attend the Parish Council meeting 26 February to provide an update to the Parish Councillors, Borough & County Councillors and most importantly residents of Gillies Meadow, Rooksdown.

Jo Holmes, Strategic Project Lead, Implementation, Universal Services & Lee Cunningham, Senior Engineer, Hampshire Engineering Service both from Hampshire County Council also attended.

### Topics covered:

- An overview of why relationship in Rooksdown had broken down.
- Better ways to communicate with residents in the future.
- An update on the state of the work on site.
- An outline of the outstanding work.
- A plan of action to complete the outstanding work.
- Resident complaints.
- Issues with individual properties.
- Peachtree Property issues.
- Road Safety Audits.
- Resurfacing of spine road & all roads off the spine road.
- Tree safety.

Where Ant Edgley had committed to take an action to come back to residents, this is **bolded** in the text below.

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## **Rooksdown Parish Council Meeting 26 February 2024**

Discussion with David Wilson Homes (DWH) and Hampshire County Council (HCC).

To include questions and comments from Rooksdown Parish Council, County & Ward Councillors and from Residents.

**For David Wilson Homes** - Ant Edgley, Technical Director, David Wilson Homes Southern

**For Hampshire County Council** - Jo Holmes, Strategic Project Lead, Implementation, Universal Services & Lee Cunningham, Senior Engineer, Hampshire Engineering Service.

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### **NOTES FROM MEETING**

#### **Chairman made introductions and thanked all for attending –**

- Meeting with David Wilson Homes (DWH) had been called because of issues raised via Parish Council meetings, formal communication and on local social media, emails to Ward & County Councillors.
- Looking for DWH to provide an update to Parish Councillors, Borough & County Councillors and most importantly to residents.
- David Wilson Homes self-styled as 5 star house builder with a tag line of 'where quality lives'.
- Noting early stages of the development DWH had the best working relationship with the Parish Council and residents compared to other developers in Rooksdown (Taylor Wimpey or Persimmon Homes)
- DWH had some great communicators; eg Darren Ward, whenever something asked of him it was done immediately. Since Darren moved on the experience not been great – around –
  - quality issues around inadequate and incomplete insulation
  - future adoption of the settlement pond
  - snagging items on the Play Parks
  - finishing road surfacing and paths
  - issues with lighting
- Rooksdown has been a building site for the last 15 years ... it is felt that as Housebuilders, they forget that people do actually live here and have had to put up with the mess and inconvenience for so many years.
- The Parish Council joined a meeting back in November. Everything that was discussed in that meeting ... nothing had materialized ... not one thing.

- DWH had been invited to the meeting to:
  - to provide an update on the state of the work
  - to outline the outstanding work
  - the plan of action to complete the outstanding work
- We would be taking minutes of the meeting & publish to residents following the meeting.

Ant Edgeley (AE) explained –

- as a business there had been a lot of changes in the division with management and it had been identified that engagement had been poor and something that was needed to be improved; if it continued as currently then there would be no customers in the future.
- not how DWH likes to operate.
- unable to fix what has happened in the past, but can engage more & try to fix this going forward.
- DWH is nothing without the people who move in to buy David Wilson Homes
- DWH wants to continue to develop within the Basingstoke area.
- apologise that it didn't continue as well as it had started.
- try, from this point, to be more open and transparent
- not much left to do on site

AE explained –

- he was in the Technical Department and had passed on some technical drawings and remediation items required to other departments
- made the mistake in not taking the people through the requirements as they were not at his level in the business.
- it hadn't moved forward as had been promised as well as some bad weather
- **would be coming back to site on Thursday 29 February to mark up a new plan, get the groundworker out as quickly as possible to rectify the areas.**
- **will provide a date to residents and the Parish Council for the work to be undertaken / completed & take personal control of this work.**

Parish Councillor (DK) asked – To qualify 'remedial' – remedial suggested that all the work had been done and there is a need to fix it. Resurfacing of Divot Way and off roads has not yet happened.

AE – the full process for the adoption of the road & how it should be taken forward – is to get technical approval, carry out the work on site, get the RSA carried out, then get remedial work done.

AE explained that whilst the RSA reviews had been done, unfortunately the work had been done out of sequence because they had got the technical approval and legal agreements late. Now required to undertake RSA 1, 2 & 3 in quick succession and then create 1 remedial list to undertake the remedial work.

Parish Councillor (DK) suggested that it couldn't be remedial work if the work hadn't been completed in the first place in line with the original plan (Spring 2023) – to surface the road at the end of the build phase as was promised when residents all bought their properties. The work was finally scheduled to be completed in early 2024 and DWH pulled the contractor 3 days before the work was due to start.

AE – admitted that the problem with the sequencing (outlined above) was solely down to DWH.

Cllr Bound explained that in Rooksdown residents had had poor experience with Taylor Wimpey and other building firms. However, DWH at the very outset corporately committed that when they had built a phase they would make sure that that phase would include the play area and would complete all the spine roads to final surface as they went, ignoring where they were within the adoption stages and the rest of the build site.

*'We would never do this to our customers'* David Wilson Homes corporate response.

Cllr Bound stated that it was really important that it went on record, as residents and people who live in the Borough of Basingstoke, that developers understand why we get frustrated because DWH promised so many things up front, we were all supposed to be grateful for DWH for building houses and selling them to the residents and then DWH treats the customers shockingly and goes back on every single promise that they had made.

Cllr Bound confirmed that it was outrageous the way that DWH conducts business and treated its customers.

Cllr Bound explained that the Parish Council and Ward Councillors had acted in DWH best interests upfront. DWH did not end up with a single objection to the development as, in Rooksdown, we understood new development. We had done everything we could to make it easy for DWH to build really, really, well.

Cllr Bound questioned whether DWH had fulfilled their part of the bargain.

Parish Councillor (JLD) questioned what had prompted the change to the Division, the change of MD & Board. Was it a commercial perception that failing or a reaction to external pressures.

AE – not something he could comment on but the reality was that the industry had a large turnover of staff. It was quite a stressful job. Workloads were quite intense. People tended to look to move on without any particular underlying reason. That was the nature of the industry.

AE explained that DWH had had a refresh not for any particular underlying reason. His job and his team's job had been made harder by not doing things in the right order. Commercially, it costed the business. It was not the only development where DWH currently had issues. There were other developments where similar conversations were being had. He explained that DWH had some great developments, but there were some which could have been done better. DWH were now trying to engage more with customers. Reinstating development forums. Noting this was not their standard type of development, given that Homes England told them how they were to build the homes. Wanting to engage now. AE explained that he wanted to enjoy working for company to be proud of. All looking to work for customers. Can't change what had been done here; but that they were trying to take on board and do better. Still wanted to work in the area; would do all he could to control this; people working very hard to get to a point of completion. **AE was happy to hear all challenges so that can help residents.**

Cllr Bound suggested that some of DWH customers had paid huge sums of money and requested that corporately DWH would communicate with all customers. He explained that sending updates via the Parish Council would not be acceptable, given that all councillors were volunteers and do all they can for the community. By taking on a liaison role for DWH that would allow DWH to duck their responsibilities.

**AE suggested he was more than happy to send a paper update to all residents particularly on the stages of what was still left to be done on the site. The only caveat that would be put in to the updates would be 'programme would be subject to weather constraints'.**

**AE was happy to do an update now – providing an update on what is needed to get DWH on to maintenance (to be able to get the roads adopted). That would then be 12 months away, assuming no failings & the structures held.**

**AE explained that the next update would be once the remedial list had been compiled following the 3 Road Safety Audits.**

**Parish Councillor (JLD) wanted to clarify a realistic time line to send out the first communication to residents within 3 weeks – AE confirmed.**

Parish Councillor (JLD) made the observation – for very obvious reasons DWH could not undo what had been done; given there was not a lot left to do where DWH could come in and turn over a new leaf and demonstrate publicly that they were learning – need the residents to be able to leave the meeting and feel there was something productive, meaningful and specific that they were going to expect.

### **Resident comments and questions**

For Peachtree properties – main problem – really cold; unable to sit downstairs. Houses uncomfortably cold. Residents wanted to be in comfortable their homes. One resident confirmed temp was not above 19.5 degrees in the house all day even though set the thermostat to 22 degrees.

Steel beam issue and problems with lean-to roof. Originally advised that both needed insulation, then that only the lean-to needed insulation.

Thermal imaging camera shows the cold bridge 3 degrees lower than the rest of the ceiling.

Question raised – would AE buy house with a cold bridge?

AE confirmed that he would. Certain elements of the construction had to be cold, part of the overall calculation. Solid steel beams sitting on solid pads would be cold. Can't remove the cold bridging – had to work around with combination of design and heating. Calculations were designed to work around this.

Each house has different size radiators despite being the same type of terrace house.

The properties were advertised as sustainable, green homes; there were solar panels to offset electric and incl electric showers. Not green due to the amount of energy being used and being wasted.

How can the property be sustainable when the heat loss in one hour is the same as the gain? Whatever heat is in the house is just lost.

Main concern not heat loss, but the fire regs for the ceiling in the lounge.

Noting the pink plasterboard in kitchen not in lounge.

**AE stated that he was not aware of different radiators in similar houses. He suggested it may be for configuration reasons but would take that away to investigate and get back to all houses / residents with the same issue.**

**On fire regulations AE confirmed that steel beam properties fire protection needed to be sufficient for fire rescue; level for fire regulations in a home according to structure requirements which would be different in apartments. He confirmed he would take it away to investigate and get back to all houses / residents with the same issue.**

Cllr Bound reminded AE that 2 years earlier in a similar meeting with a representative from DWH they had been told about the different radiators. He pointed out that there were 17 households who wanted their living rooms to be warm but had not heard from AE what DWH as an organisation were going to do about it. He pointed out that all the residents wanted was for their living rooms to be warm to be able to utilise them.

**AE confirmed he would take away & work from today's comments & resolve it.** He was aware of the previous attempts to fix it ... resulting in the more recent round of remediation led by Bonnie - thermal imaging and insulation being added to where it appeared to be missing.

**AE explained he would review from looking at all the info - all they could do is look at info we have and look back to what done. As if designing that property from new.**

Parish Councillor (JLD) made an observation that AE's response boiled down to - if there was a technical way to look at the overall energy spend on heat which on average looked acceptable then that's good enough. However if the actual reality was, even with the average calculation, that the room was too cold. Was there a commitment to do more than required or would DWH just do the minimum that they were required to do?

Cllr Bound summarised that AE had said '*All I can do*' (what you are prepared to do) but that JLD had questioned what you *could* commit to do to solve it for the residents.

**AE suggested that DWH had to look at it and assess what they think the problem was and address it. If they had made a mistake then there may need to be more than one step to address. The first approach wasn't reviewed by all the right parties and they would look at all the issues this time round. If DWH were designing the properties from new, what would they do in this situation. He committed to properly looking into the issue, especially the heating which appeared to be inadequate in the lounge.**

A resident suggested no one would now trust what DWH would come back with, given that this has been ongoing for more than 2 years.

Another resident questioned whether DWH knew what was wrong and just didn't want to fix it.

Parish Councillor (DK) pointed out that there was something systemically wrong with this Peachtree group of houses at the bottom of Divot Way. The group were all constructed during COVID. Other Peachtree properties didn't appear to have this issue, with 2 recently being sold on open market. Something distinctively wrong with the properties built in the pandemic - probably driven by the way contractors were supervised during the pandemic.

A resident suggested that DWH's approach had been totally unacceptable. Despite having respect for the team of engineers, the residents could not now trust DWH with the more technical reviews. The resident made an analogy to selling his car - he would say that the car was perfect even if the car had engine failure. He suggested that the situation needed independent consultancy / chartered architects / surveyors to look at the whole situation, looking at the existing reports, the photographs from DWH and from the residents and look at the calculations. The cost should be

reimbursed by DWH. They had bought a house based on EPC – A and discovered 2 years later that there was not sufficient insulation.

Parish Councillor (JLD) requested whether DWH would commit to explore their commercial appetite to appointing an independent surveyor to answer the question as to whether the existing investigations had been good enough, saying whether further work would need to be done. She suggested that AE would probably not be able to commit at the meeting but requested a response to be included in the written update to the resident within the next 3 weeks.

**AE suggested that DWH would provide a number of different update letters – dealing separately with the issues raised in the meeting. Parish Councillor (JLD) suggested that it was sensible to provide an update to all the residents, given they were all DWH customers. She suggested it would be sensible and appropriate, given that DWH had historically not done a good job of communicating with its customers, to over-communicate to residents who may or may not be affected / interested.**

**AE suggested that it would be difficult to write to those customers who were not involved in the situation in a way that they would understand. It would be a very long update and would not make sense to some residents.**

Parish Councillor (JLD) suggested that that was more of a comms issue.

Cllr Bound suggested that there could be a hybrid – He suggested it would look a bit odd if DWH didn't reference the issue with Peachtree homes in the overall summary to the residents, but it would be acceptable to send an additional response to everyone that lives in a Peachtree homes.

Cllr Ganesh suggested that AE would have sensed the mood in the room – given that the same conversations had been had some 22 months earlier. He explained that it appeared that we were going through the same process yet again. He suggested that all anyone wanted to know was the outcome – were DWH going to solve the issues or just 'explore'. Residents needed an outcome to solve the problem.

Parish Councillor (NU) stated that he didn't want to be sitting here again in a few months' time if there was a further change in personnel.

Cllr Bound suggested that there needed to be something to focus the minds of DWH. He explained that the residents had spent a lot of money on energy at a time of an energy / cost of living crisis. It would be only fair for DWH to reimburse all residents for the additional energy needed to heat the homes until the problem was fixed.

A resident suggested that they would be honest about DWH when on social media ... stating how bad they have been.

Another resident suggested they had issues with their front door – the door was way out of line, hinges wrong and draft could be felt coming through the door. He got his cousin to come to fix it.

Another resident suggested that they also had issues with their front door – that it got patched by DWH which wasn't ideal and there was still a gap in the door, which caused a draft.

Another resident suggested that the noise was terrible. Having lived in a terraced house, he knew what to expect, but believed that it was unacceptable to be able to hear his neighbour singing to his children at night; another neighbour could hear his neighbour going to the toilet at night.



**AE explained that he could instruct a sound test – however the residents suggested that the report would just come straight back as acceptable.**

AE explained that he lived in an apartment where he could hear when his neighbour below him sneezes. The requirement in regulation was not sound proofing, but was sound reducing. If works were carried out according to regulation it would guarantee meets sound tests. **What should have been done was a sound test so residents had an independent report on whether or not it met regulation. AE suggested he was happy to have this carried out as a priority. If the report flagged up any issue he would ensure that his contractor dealt with them quickly & correctly.**

Parish Councillor (JLD) questioned whether it was DWH position that as long as the sound test met regulation, that it considered it value for money for what the residents had paid, and sufficient for a customer experience. She went on to ask – Could it be that a house may pass the test but it would be DWH corporate view that would need further rectification?

AE suggested that it all depended on the situation – it was not black and white. The commitment and obligation according to the sales process was to build to a certified standard. All developers used the same robust specification. Generally don't get complaints about noise in the properties. Testing is via a Government process to ensure it meets liveability standards for a comfortable home. Reviewed by independent means to a set standard. There may be mitigating circumstances, if not working, all subject to review.

A resident stated that as we live in a dynamic life and that DWH was one of the biggest house builders in the country, was it time for DWH to take the lead and say it needed to be better? This was what consultancy does, learning from mistakes, needing to improve.

The Chair shared a photograph of the site questioning whether it was acceptable to be left as it was, for residents to be looking on to it. If the site manager had gone who was going to take the mess away?

AE explained that it was not acceptable but that storage was still required on site which should be fully enclosed and masked to make it as tidy as possible. Every development would see this; there were always shrinking pockets of small area storage.



A resident questioned what was DWH's motivation to deliver the completion of the works.

AE explained that residents were DWH customers. On his way to the meeting he was thinking about what could be done differently. **Only thing he could suggest to offer some comfort was to host a monthly development forum at the Community Centre. Once the main communication had been sent with the update from DWH he was happy to come once a month.**

Parish Councillor (MA) questioned what was DWH incentive?



**AE suggested that DWH shouldn't need an incentive; given that DWH had sold a property it was DWH's obligation to finish it, given that they wanted to be able to develop further in the area. He understood that DWH had not fulfilled their obligations in a timely manner for the Rooksdown development but wanted to rectify what they could. He explained that DWH had been around for a long time and wanted to be around for much longer. If DWH breaks the relationship it has with its customers, then there wouldn't be a business.**

**AE intended to be very clear in his management meeting 27 February at DWH and would raise all the issues that had been discussed in the meeting. He would make Rooksdown his personal responsibility to see it through. To show his commitment, he was prepared to come down to Rooksdown face to face with the Parish Council and the residents. He appreciated that the meeting this evening would be minuted and fully documented. The to-do list would initially grow, but was happy to keep coming to a development forum until there were no longer any items on the list. He suggested that anything that came up after this time could be escalated to Customer Care. He was happy to share his contact details for residents to contact him directly.**

Parish Councillor (DK) requested

- an immediate commitment re junction Divot Way / Condor Way – for this to be fixed within 2 weeks.
- The status of the established trees at the end of Divot Way having overheard that works needed to be done to a number of trees.

**AE confirmed that there would be at least 3 tree surveys undertaken. Pre development, once the main construction has been completed and then the management company would undertake before handover to the local authority.**

**AE promised to review the latest report that had been carried out and if that was a long time ago, would request an updated report.**

Parish Councillor (DK) formally requested a copy of the latest tree survey. **AE confirmed he would make that report available.**

A resident questioned whether DWH will pay compensation for the inconvenience.

AE explained that he was unable to answer that question, but it would generally be addressed at the point in time when issues have been resolved. Not something that DWH will duck away from.

A resident raised the point about difficulties in selling their property given the issues with their property.

AE suggested that he did not believe that any of the issues discussed this evening would show up on a structural survey, therefore should not be an issue.

Cllr Bound reminded AE that part of the Solicitor process is to ask the seller if they have had any issues with the property. Residents would have to answer these questions honestly & ethically otherwise that would put them in a very difficult position.

## Hampshire County Council (HCC)

JH confirmed the current status of the roads – they were private with no legal agreement with HCC. She went on to explain that HCC were committed to supporting the developer to get to a standard to move towards adoption. She explained that there was a clear position, a clear commitment from both parties in terms of technical approvals. She explained that legal agreements were outstanding. Would need formal approval. There was a process to follow. Unable to give timescales. If the developer was to top out now, knowing that works still needed to be done, then there was the chance that this would create a weakness in the surface. Therefore it was a sensible approach to leave it to the last thing.

Cllr Bound stated that in Rooksdown we had never had an experience where the developer had not topped the road. Residents, understandably, wanted to know why it had not been done.

Parish Councillor (DK) wanted to understand whether DWH were going to come and top the road.

Parish Councillor (JLD) questioned why AE had said that in December DWH had said that they were going to be topping the roads in early in January. She wanted to understand what was the turning point from saying yes in December, to no in January.

AE explained that they had not followed the correct processes and they were all out of sync. The main reason for not topping the road was because it would get destroyed by the works that still needed to be done. DWH miscalculated how long the process would take.

Parish Councillor (DK) stated that DWH had been offsite since last April 2023. Residents were expecting the spine roads to be topped back then.

**AE explained that DWH had previously underestimated how much had to be done for all to progress with HCC. The business was trying to limit disruption to residents and planned to do it all in one go. He suggested DWH were so close to having the Road Safety Audits completed and then will come in and do it in one go.**



AE explained they were weeks away from having everything completed. All were working hard to get it all done. RSA 3 design response would go to Hampshire this week. Once it was with Hampshire, they would come to undertake their inspection and create a remedial list which would then be passed to the Groundworker to price up and programme the work.

Cllr Bound picked up an earlier comment in regards to Homes England that the homes weren't standard.

AE explained that he was not blaming Homes England. They were bespoke because it enhanced the homes, which were not standard for DWH. The requirements of Homes England had no bearing on any of the problems under discussion.

Cllr Ganesh questioned the timeline for next steps.

**AE explained that the RSA3 had been received back from HCC. This would be back to Hampshire by Friday 1 March.**

Cllr Mummalaneni stated that HCC officers needed to follow a process no matter how long it takes. It was essential for quality of work otherwise if the work was substandard then we would all be paying for the work to be corrected out of our taxes.

The Chair closed the meeting explaining that minutes would be published of what had been discussed in the meeting for transparency.

The Chair thanked AE, LC and JH for attending the meeting and that it was not a personal attack on AE but to appreciate what had been raised in the meeting.

AE responded that he did take it personally, because he likes to design homes for people to want to live in. He did not want to be in this situation as it was not what people in the industry did their job for.

Duration - 1 hour 20 minutes