

GLEBE ROUNDABOUT SPEECH

This is a matter of humane design.

The changes that have occurred since the last meeting appear to be modest indeed – ramps in the rear gardens. They have not changed the fundamental flaw in the design which means that the disabled cannot access the ground floor properties by the main front door. If they use the route proposed then, because of the split-level design, they arrive in the flats on the upper level – which does not contain the living room and the toilet. It is degrading and needn't be so.

The test in the legislation is one of *reasonableness*. Is it reasonable, for example, on a greenfield site like this, to design ground floor flats that mean that the disabled and able-bodied can approach the front door together and, of course, it is reasonable.

This is an awkward site to develop, but it is not impossible. It is quite easy to turn the ground floor units around so that their main entrances are from the rear parking area, through a private entrance courtyard, with the living area and toilet being at the upper rather than the lower level. Access through such a courtyard happens all over the city – all of the MKDC houses on Coffee Hall being an obvious example.

The problem here is that this design is being driven by a desire to have front doors on the Boulevard frontage. Yes, it's a good idea in principle but, when the consequences for the disabled became apparent (and I first raised this in April) then the applicant and the Council should have sat down to work something out. It is not beyond the wit of man to produce a good and appropriate design solution.

The consequence now is that we have something that is a bit of a mish-mosh. How stupid is it, for example, to have a situation whereby any able-bodied visitor to the flats has to park and use an entrycom system to get through two doors, but that is what we have.

Milton Keynes should be about providing properties of the highest design standard and not seeking merely to scrape over the bar. The Council is, after all, the freeholder of this site and the Parks Trust is a charity – both should be leading by example.

At the moment we still have lines on a plan. It therefore makes abundant sense to spend a bit more time trying to refine the scheme to improve the lot of those with disabilities. I therefore respectfully ask that this application is deferred for a second time to allow the applicant and Council officers to see if there is a better way of achieving access to ensure that able bodied and those who are less able are capable of entering the ground floor flats through the front door together.

If however you do not wish to defer then I would ask that the application be refused on the grounds that it does not comply with Local Plan Policy Saved Policy D2 which states that "*Development proposals will be refused unless they provide access for those with impaired mobility*" on the perfectly reasonable basis that **access** does not mean access to the property *per se* but to the main facilities within it.