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Date : 17 September 2009

OXFORD RE-SITE PROJECT: SUITABILITY OF MILL STREET AS A LOCATION

Introduction

1. Board Members are aware that one of the claims made by WOCAMP has been that Mill Street, West Oxford would be a unique location for a probation office of the size planned by TVP. WOCAMP have said that their researches show that there is no probation office of comparable size in a similar residential location anywhere in the country. Campaigners have asserted that this means Mill Street residents would be guinea pigs in a social experiment.
2. The claim has been made in letters to Ministers, in WOCAMP's submission to MoJ lawyers, in the local press, and most recently in interviews on radio and television following withdrawal of Trajan House by the developer. For the reassurance of the Board this paper presents evidence to show that the claim is entirely false.

Research method and results

3. WOCAMP appear to base their claim on just two examples of other probation offices – Kitts Green, Birmingham, and Greyfriars House, Reading. The locations of these two offices are certainly quite unlike Mill Street. However, the NAPO Probation Directory contains the addresses of all probation offices and can be used to identify those accommodating 20 or more offender managers (POs and PSOs), and therefore having a caseload of probationers comparable to the proposed Oxford office at Trajan House. It shows that in the 9 probation areas in the South East or adjacent to Thames Valley (excluding London) plus 12 other areas selected at random, there are at least 58 offices meeting this criterion.
4. Satellite views centred on the locations of each of these 58 offices show that 29 of them (50%) are in primarily residential areas, with residential properties immediately adjacent to or opposite them. Almost every probation area has one or more substantial office in such a setting. Cambridge, Colchester, Crawley, Eastbourne and Maidstone are some of the towns in the south of England that have probation offices in residential settings comparable with Mill Street.
5. Senior staff in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Kent and Sussex Probation Areas have confirmed that these five examples are active, operational offices where offender managers meet probationers and that they are in primarily residential areas.
6. Satellite views of the Trajan House site and of the probation office locations in the five towns listed at paragraph 4 are available for inspection.

ACTION

7. The Board is recommended to **note** this paper.