

5th February 2009

Blue Living statement in response to a survey of households in Calcot and Tilehurst

A recent survey, undertaken by the prospective Conservative parliamentary candidate for Reading West and local ward councillors, has canvassed local views on the principle of development at Pincents Hill.

We have a number of observations about the impartiality and objectivity of the questions asked and the robustness of the survey's methodology and statistical conclusions, and note that it was conducted, surprisingly, with no reference to any of the actual proposals for Pincents Hill. We would accept however that it highlights local concerns about new development.

New development and change are rarely welcome in any part of the UK and local objection is the default reaction in almost all development proposals. Nor is this an irrational response. Most people's experience of development is of car-dependent, single-use sprawl with a lack or absence of supporting infrastructure and services and poor quality housing that is not designed to stand the test of time. Is it really so surprising in this context that people are so fearful of change?

At Pincents Hill we aim to create a place which:

- Enables residents to access everyday needs for shopping, primary education and health care and leisure within walking or cycling distance of home, and provides superb public and shared transport options for longer journeys
- Has a strong community, a sense of belonging and shared identity
- Connects residents to a series of productive and delightful outdoor spaces, including private roof terraces and gardens, formal public spaces, a new woodland park and the countryside
- Improves biodiversity overall through improvement and establishment of wildlife habitat areas and corridors and integration of green roofs and walls, bat and bird nests

This community will help meet regional and local housing need. DTZ, in a study of Berkshire's housing market, have estimated that there is a need for between 3,000 and 4,200 affordable homes each year to 2026. Most of this demand comes from Reading and

Slough but there is significant demand in West Berkshire and much of it is in the east of the District. The DTZ study estimated that there was a **newly arising annual need** for 670 dwellings to 2026 and that there is a current undersupply of 3,050 dwellings which would have to be met before the annual need could be met. The South East Plan's modified targets of 530 new homes each year in West Berkshire to 2026 will not meet the affordable targets let alone new demand.

Moreover, while it would appear from recent news reports that the local economy is placed to cope with the economic recession better than most other parts of the UK no-one can afford to be complacent and new homes and the enterprise and spending power their occupants bring can help reinvigorate economic activity.

But more than this, there is a need for a new type of development in the UK - the environmentally and socially sustainable development of authentic neighbourhoods and integrated communities replete with high-quality public amenities and services and which facilitate low-carbon lifestyles. And there is a need for this new pattern of development to be replicated quickly in the UK.

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