

Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 93 November 2015



The objects of the society are to protect the natural landscape and wildlife habitats of the Yare Valley south and west of Norwich, principally between Harford and Bowthorpe. We oppose any development that would detract from its natural qualities and support projects which would preserve the valley for the benefit of all.

This is a special newsletter about the McCarthy and Stone application to build on part of the Bartram mowers site on Bluebell Road. This was highlighted in the last newsletter in October but the application is now with the city planning department.

We are asking all our members to respond to the application in writing or by email as much more notice is taken of a large number especially if about a hundred respond. Comments for or against the application are helpful. It is important that your comment is in your own words rather than copying the society's comments. Although the site is in the city, it is an important part of the river valley which enables Cringleford to retain its special identity. We urge Cringleford members of the society as well as Eaton residents to respond. In fact McCarthy and Stone sent information to several Cringleford residences.

It would appear that only 62 dwellings are planned but the the "Assisted living extra care component" comes under a different regulation [C2] in which the number of apartments allocated do not need to be specified. The number here is another 60. In total, **122** apartments are applied for in on this small part of the whole Bartram site.

The deadline for comments is 9 December though it would be helpful if your comment reaches the planning department by 2 December. Please make your response a priority.

Please address letters to:-
Mr S Fraser-Lim, Senior Planner, Application number 15/01646/F,
City Hall, Norwich , NR2 1NH

Replies by email to:-
stevefraser-lim@norwich.gov.uk

Norwich City Planning Application Number 15/01646/F
Erection of 62 age restricted retirement (including affordable) apartments
Class C3 Assisted living extra care accommodation class C2
Access, car parking, landscaping and ancillary development

The documents from the Norwich City Site Allocations Plan are printed in blue italic.

1 Insensitive development

Site allocations plan page 291 states:-

The site on the slopes of the Yare Valley is identified under JCS policy 1 as a key green infrastructure corridor. Open space neighbouring the site is protected from development as part of the Yare Valley under policy DM6 and as an open space under policy DM8.

Therefore it is essential that development is sensitively designed to minimise effects on important views to and within the Yare Valley. Consequently the type, scale, density and design of housing development will be determined by a masterplan which will assess how the development can best be designed to minimise impact on the landscape and preserve the character of the area. The masterplan must also ensure that the development will complement the site's role as a gateway to the city given its close proximity to the A11 and will cover the layout of the open space.

1a The application is not sensitively designed to minimise effects on important views across valley from inside and outside the site. This concern was demonstrated in the presentation by the Local Plan Inspector. The view points from Bluebell Road are blocked by terraced buildings and this does not allow views across the valley. It would not be difficult to arrange for such views by rearranging or reducing buildings but this aspect is a concern of the city which is completely ignored. The two large accommodation blocks will not only dominate the landscape but will impact negatively on the character of the area.

1b The type and scale of development indicated on the masterplan for the rest of site R42 clearly pays no regard to the need to minimise the impact on the landscape and certainly nothing to preserve the character of the area. It is a standard sketch layout seeking to maximise the space for building.

1c The masterplan does not attempt to complement the site's role as a gateway to the city. Not only because of its proximity to the A11 but also for those that come into the city along Bluebell Road many of whom will be going to UEA, the Norwich Research Park and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, as well as to the Bartram site.

Each of the above points make such a rejection of the application most pressing.

2 Density of dwellings

Whilst the scale of the development of the site will be determined by the masterplan, for the purposes of calculating the site allocations plan's contribution to the JCS housing requirement an assumption has been made that the site [that is the whole site] will deliver in the region of 120 dwellings. This figure is based on the assumption that the site will be developed mainly at low densities to ensure the impact on the landscape is minimised.

The reference in the Local Plan to 120 units relates to the whole of site R42 and is clearly based on the assumption that development needs to be at a low density to meet the landscape conditions. The masterplan entirely ignores this and the applicant's claim that their scheme proves that the site can accommodate more is only achieved by a total disregard of the constraints (see also 6 below). At the applied density there could be a total of 300 dwellings on the whole site.

The density of the dwellings is a sufficient reason for rejection of the application regardless of points made elsewhere.

3 Lack of detail about the whole site in the Masterplan

The masterplan is for the whole site and there is a glaring lack of information about the development of the rest of the site.

Even if the applicants are not interested in building in a second phase the demands of the council brief insist on a comprehensive plan for the whole of the Bartram site. This lack of detail is very worrying.

4 Access points

The existing road access onto Bluebell Road should be used to service the development, with an additional access to the east if necessary.

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4a We are strongly of the opinion that Bluebell Road has become a much busier road as part of the city-wide network with access to the University and hospital and the introduction of new accesses should not be allowed, particularly in view of the limited views offered by the bends in the road in this section.

4b A case for another access has not been made. It would also make the blocks of housing far more obvious and illustrates that the development is insensitive to the area.

4c There is no reason why the existing access should not serve the whole of site R42 (as envisaged by the inspector). Safety on the heavily used Bluebell Road cycle path, where there have already been fatalities needs to be considered.

4d There is no need or justification for a separate access for the affordable housing units, particularly opposite the slip road junction.

4e These additional accesses should be removed from the application.

5 Management Plan for the open space

The remainder of the site is proposed to become publically accessible open space, with improved pedestrian and cycle access and improved Yare Valley Walk.

A management plan for the open space will be provided.

Arrangements for the management and future maintenance of the public open space and the protected lines of view across the site in perpetuity will the subject of a legal agreement with the council.

We are not aware of any legal agreement in place or otherwise as required by the masterplan. It is essential that no actual building or development takes place until the agreement is firmly in place, to ensure that the future of the open space and the maintenance and improvement of the marsh and the Yare Valley Walk is preserved in perpetuity.

6 Environmental assets

The City Council policy brief R42 requires the development to *protect and enhance environmental assets within and adjacent to the site, including retaining tree belts.*

The masterplan implies that the remainder of site R42 can be covered with development resulting in the removal of substantial trees, hedges and shrubs which totally ignores the Local Plan provisions.

7 Deficiencies in the Application

The application is difficult to study fully in the time allowed and it is not presented coherently and contains errors. The data on responses to the exhibition is incorrect in that the Yare Valley Society did respond and we are aware of more than one respondent who referred to the non-compliance with the Local Plan.

For additional information you may wish to contact the Society's Chairman

Dr Andrew Salisbury

42 Bluebell Road, Norwich NR4 7LG

or telephone 01603 455237

or by email ajsalisbury@talktalk.net

