

Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 94

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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.

A NEW THREAT TO THE YARE VALLEY: Proposed relocation of the Norwich Rugby Club to UEA

There is a recent proposal to develop and massively expand the UEA playing fields between the river and Colney Lane, to accommodate the Norwich Rugby Club which wishes to move from its present home. On top of the proposals for the development at Bartram Mowers, this constitutes one of the greatest threats ever to the Valley's green space on the edge of Norwich. The present footpath and cycleway between the Sainsbury Centre and Colney Lane crosses the river and runs past a substantial open space of meadow and playing fields, very popular with walkers. There are currently some 8 sports pitches, small unobtrusive single storey changing facilities, and around 30 parking spaces adjacent to Colney Lane.

The new proposal, see <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/estates/improving-your-campus/buildings-and-projects>

is for

- 12 full sized pitches
- 7 smaller pitches
- 7 tennis courts (presumed - the plan does not specify exact use)
- a new vehicle access road across the valley to the clubhouse
- parking for over 300 cars
- a large 2 storey clubhouse/grandstand

The car park and clubhouse are planned for a prominent location in the grassland valley floor between the river and Colney Lane.

Most people support the encouragement of increased participation in sport and, for people who do not know the area, the proposal for the relocation of Norwich Rugby Club to the UEA playing fields at Colney Lane seems to fit in with this aspiration. The UEA sports pitches are suitable for the current sporting activities of the University **but it would be difficult to envisage a more unsuitable site for relocation of the rugby club.**

We therefore propose vigorously to oppose this plan, on grounds including:

- the destruction of the valley landscape at one of its most narrow and vulnerable points and the loss of amenity for walkers
- the loss of natural habitat
- the probable loss of trees and hedgerows
- the fact that the area is prone to flooding or waterlogging (the area is in the flood alert zone shown on an Environment Agency map)
- light pollution
- a substantial increase in road traffic, for both sporting and other likely events

John Thurman

There will be another opportunity to comment if/when a formal planning application is lodged, but a sufficient number of responses from our members could result in the rugby club not wishing to make an application to South Norfolk Council. We urgently need a large number of vigorous responses. Please write or email your views as soon as you can at this critical time to any or all of the following:

UEA.

*Hugh Davies, Deputy Director Sportspark
UEA Norwich NR4 7TJ
Email hugh.m.davies@uea.ac.uk*

Norwich Rugby Club.

*Mr Graham Hilton President Norwich Rugby Club
Beeston Hyrne, North Walsham Road, Norwich NR12 7BW
Email john-hilton3@sky.com*

South Norfolk District Council.

*South Norfolk House, Long Stratton NR15 2XE
Jo Hobbs, Planning Team,
Email planning@s-norfolk.gov.uk*

and your local Councillors.

Andrew Salisbury