

Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 96

April 2016



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 newsletter contains;

- the Agenda of the Annual General Meeting 2016
- the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting in 2015
- chairman's Report for the last twelve months
- report on the Application for Bartram's site Bluebell Road
- report on the Application for relocation of Norwich Rugby Club
- the Treasurer's Report

Annual General Meeting & Talk followed by refreshments
Wednesday 11 May 2016 at 7.30 pm
Cringleford Playing Field Pavilion
AGENDA

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of the AGM held on 5 June 2015
- 4 Matters arising
- 5 Chairman's review of the year
- 6 Treasurers Report Reminder that some subscriptions should be renewed

- 7 Election of Officers for 2016/7
 - Chairman: Vacancy--- [Nominations required]
 - Secretary: Graham Fletcher
 - Treasurer: Hilary Hann
 - Committee members: John Ayton, John Elbro, Tim Edwards,
June Gentle, Graham Martin, John Thurman

All the above are willing to be re-elected
Any other nominations
9. Any other business

The AGM will be followed by a talk to be given by Tim O'Riordan Professor Emeritus School of Environmental Studies UEA.

The talk is entitled "The rivers of Norfolk with the emphasis on the YARE"

Refreshments

Yare Valley Society

Annual General Meeting 5th June 2015 held at The Willow Centre, Cringleford

The chairman Andrew Salisbury welcomed the members attending.

Apologies for absence were received from David and Alison Ward, Jack and June Gentle, Mike and Carol Blackwell, John Elbro, Cllr Bert Bremner, Canon Hazel Butcher, Prof Malcolm Wagstaff, Hazel Martin, and Dr Paul Hann

The Minutes of the meeting on 7 May 2014 were presented and approved. There were no matters arising.

The Chairman's report was presented.

The Treasurer's report was presented. Attention was drawn to the donations from Life members and to the reduction in printing costs mainly due to the use of emails. The report was approved nem con.

The Chairman reported a total membership of 227 members, with 182 members in contact by email.

Election of Officers

John Thurman took the chair for the election of the Chairman. He proposed the re-election of Andrew Salisbury, referring to his major contribution to the work of the Society. The meeting acknowledged his efforts with thanks and he was elected nem con.

Treasurer Hilary Hann was re-elected as Treasurer.

Committee. The following were elected to the committee en bloc:

John Ayton, John Elbro, June Gentle, Madeleine Keep, Graham Martin and John Thurman

There was no other business. The meeting ended at 7.45pm.

The meeting was followed by a discussion on current issues with the chairman supported by Cllr Judith Lubbock (Norwich) and Cllr Garry Wheatley (South Norfolk). Unfortunately Cllr Bert Bremner was ill and could not attend.

Chairman

Date

Chairman's Report for year 2015 to 2016

This has been an exceptionally busy year for your committee and other helpers. The obvious threats to the valley and its maintenance as a pleasant open space of real landscape value and an essential amenity for the residents of Bowthorpe, Cringleford, Colney and Eaton are of great concern. Our efforts will be apparent from the previous pages which outline our activities and I cannot speak too highly of the support and encouragement which I have received.

In the following pages there are requests for you to do something extra to help with the rejection of the two applications below which are grave threats to the valley. I would urge to take these very seriously and help in any way you consider appropriate.

There has been another side of our work which has been somewhat neglected, namely the spread of activities that we would have liked to provide such as children's days and guided tours in the valley. We hope that these will be resumed and new ideas for involving our members will be forthcoming when the above applications have been decided.

Immediately after the last AGM I announced to the committee that I would not be seeking re-election in 2016. The decision is nothing to do with the present applications. I think that the time has come for a younger person to chair the Society. I am concerned that most of the committee members are from Eaton and I hope that there will be a better representation from those in South Norfolk. Our Constitution allows eight committee members, but additional members may be co-opted. **Please let us know if you would be interested in any way**

Andrew Salisbury

Report on the Application for Bartram's site Bluebell Road

Proposal to build on the south east field of Bartram Mowers site at Bluebell Road

We are asking for your assistance to help prevent the Eaton side of Yare Valley from being spoiled.

Following the exhibition by McCarthy and Stone it your committee decided that the plan did not accord with the views of the Inspector nor with those of the city planners. The Society has been in touch with the senior planner in this area Steve Fraser-Lim and chief planner Graham Nelson. The following letter was sent to the developers outlining our concerns.

The following letter was sent to McCarthy & Stone 30 September 2015

Consultation on Bartram Mowers site Norwich proposals.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write on behalf of the Yare Valley Society in response to the consultation exhibition about the Bartram Mowers site. While we welcome the opportunity to enhance the Yare Valley walk by allowing public access to some of the open space adjacent to the site, we object to the current plans shown in the exhibition. Our main objections and concerns are as follows:

1 Lack of detail about the Masterplan and the Management Plan for the open space.

The draft Masterplan does not accord with the Norwich Site Allocations Plan. The development of the management plan for the public open space needs to be concurrent with the McCarthy & Stone development. The outline plan for the non-M and S development to the north is too speculative to be meaningful.

2 Visual impact

As shown at the exhibition the site is greatly over developed. We would urge a rethink about the density of the buildings on this prominent site in the valley.

None of the landscape and visual assessments, nor topographical and ecological surveys which Norwich City Council requires to inform the Masterplan were available at the exhibition. We do not understand therefore how the design put forward at the exhibition has been shaped by such assessments. The Council's Policy R42 is clear that the development must be "sensitively designed to minimise effects on important views to and within the Yare Valley" (p292 Norwich Local Plan). However, the proposals for the two large blocks effectively cut out all cross valley views from Bluebell Road, ignoring this requirement. The Council also requires that it should "minimise impact on the landscape and preserve the character of the area"; and that it will "complement the site's role as a gateway to the city" (p292). The two large blocks will not only dominate the landscape but will impact negatively on the character of the area.

3 Environmental assets.

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

We were surprised therefore that your plan proposes the removal of the impressive tree belt with its TPOs [tree preservation orders], between the two proposed blocks. This clearly does not accord with the planning requirements and we see no case for their removal.

4 Access points.

We are strongly of the opinion that there should be only one access point for vehicles and that this should be the existing one. This, and any additional pedestrian access points, need to take account of safety on the heavily used Bluebell Road cycle path, where there have already been fatalities.'

We realise that the exhibition was only putting forward tentative ideas which are lacking in some aspects and would ask that McCarthy & Stone will seize the opportunity to take note of our comments and provide environmentally sensitive and imaginative designs to enhance the area.

Andrew Salisbury,

Yare Valley Society Chairman

What happened next

After the exhibition there was an application by McCarthy & Stone to build on this site. It was evident from the application that they had made few if any changes and it became aware that they did not realise the need for a comprehensive Master Plan on the lines of the brief from the city planners. Nor did they consider in detail the need for a legal contract for preserving the open spaces [the strawberry field and the marshes by the river]. The letter below was sent for the committee on 2 December 2015.

Letter sent to Norwich City Planners

**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).

This 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.

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.

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.

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 if 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 be 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 but 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.

8 Summary

This application is unsatisfactory in many ways.

Andrew Salisbury Chairman

“What we can do now”

The city planners indicated to the applicants that several concerns remained and that a reconsultation was needed. As a result there have been modifications to the original plan. These include removing one of the two accesses to the site (making it an access in emergencies), partly reducing the height of the three storey building nearest the river. In essence the plan is as it first appeared at the initial exhibition. We understand that the City Planners did not ask for a lower dwelling density or mention in detail landscape issues.

We now have another opportunity to comment on the application

We would encourage all our members to write again.

We would urge you to write (perhaps again) to ensure your objections to the final application are clearly understood, and to show the strength of feeling about the inadequacies of the present application.

As a result of the reconsultation making a formal comment is quite acceptable.

Please write in your own words. You will probably wish to emphasise the dwelling density, lack of detail about the rest of the site, access problems and the landscape value of the river valley. Comments must be in at least five days prior to the planning meeting.

They are best addressed by letter to:-

Steve Fraser-Lim, Senior Planner, City Hall, Norwich, NR2 1NH

or by email to stevefraser-lim@norwich.gov.uk

Further information is available by phoning Norwich City Planning on **01603 212 507**

The planning application is Number **15/01646/F**

Please make every effort to attend the planning meeting.

It seems almost certain that the City Planning Committee meeting to decide the application will be on **Thursday 12 May at 10am in the Mancroft room at City Hall.** **We would encourage everyone who is able to do so to attend this meeting** as the Councillors need to know the extent of our concerns. If we could raise between 50 and 100 society members and local residents it would make an enormous difference to the tone of the meeting and possibly to the council decision.

Report on the Application for relocation of Norwich Rugby Club

Norwich Rugby Club at UEA

We need your views to be made to South Norfolk Planners

There is as you know an application to relocate the Norwich Rugby Club on the playing fields at UEA. This is of the greatest concern. It would turn the rather rural aspect of the valley at present into an urban area contrary to all that South Norfolk Council and Norwich City see as an essential open space between the city and Colney and Cringleford. As a result of the consultation exhibition the following letter was sent from the Society.

This is our initial response to the exhibition proposing a relocation of the Norwich Rugby Club to UEA Sports ground.

Letter sent to Norwich Rugby Club and University of East Anglia

We appreciated being asked to attend a meeting at the Sports Centre where we were able to find out more of the details of the proposals. We followed up this meeting with a meeting of the South Norfolk Planners. As a result of both meetings we are putting forward the views of the Yare Valley Society Committee.

The proposal at present is unacceptable. 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 would seem 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.

Our main concern is the changing of a mainly rural aspect of the river valley into a far more densely 'urban' environment. This is especially evident in the intrusion of a club house which is out of sympathy with the valley. It is two storey high with an attached cafe open to the public.

The construction is out of place in the valley at one of its most prominent sites. There is also proposed an artificial pitch with floodlighting and which is surrounded by a very unimaginative car parking for about 300 cars. There are implications for traffic density on Colney Lane and at the roads leading into Earlham Road Fiveways roundabout. Although no other buildings are suggested, the overall result is a site much less open and it has a disastrous effect on the landscape at one of its narrowest parts. It is our strong opinion that a different site should be sought.

We are also concerned that the exhibition did not have sufficient details on possible re-contouring, drainage proposals, lighting specifications, replanting proposals, building construction details, possible fencing and ground maintenance and probable widening of the access, with restrictions to prevent the car park being used by hospital and university staff, university students and the general public.

It would be crucial to be assured of free public accessibility for walkers and cyclists. We wish to know what loss of current amenities are proposed and if existing pathways are being retained (possibly by diversion).

We would strongly urge that the club looks for other sites away from this sensitive river valley site with its considerable landscape value.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Salisbury

After this response from the Society about the exhibition there was an application to South Norfolk Council relocate the rugby club on the UEA site. The following letter was the Society's comment on the application.

Letter sent to South Norfolk Planners 22 March 2016

South Norfolk Planning Application 2016 0233

Local Plan

We refer particularly to the South Norfolk Local Plan; Development Management Policies [SNLP/ DMP] and in particular DM1.1 / 4.26 (natural assets) and DM1.1 / 4.28 (environmental assets), enhancing biodiversity.

We also refer more explicitly to DM 4.5 and DM 4.6 especially where mention is made of the Valley Urban Fringe. This application makes drastic changes to the visual landscape. The proposal would create an enormous increase in intensity of activity. The proposal would change the area beyond recognition and is a serious departure from the existing state. The site is an important open space of visual landscape value and for recreation and is a much valued area between the villages of Colney, Cringleford and the city.

The Application

The building of a clubhouse is against SNLP/ DMP as is the construction of an artificial pitch. The construction of high fencing would on its own destroy the visual aspect of the site. The creation of carparking for about 300 cars with no management constraints is ridiculous whether there is rugby or not. It is unthinkable that this could be put in a Valley Urban Fringe as is the construction of a two way road across the landscape.

Loss of community benefit

The applicants assert, without justification, that there is a community gain. There is strong evidence of the loss of community benefit in the strength of opposition to the scheme: 2200 people have signed an on-line petition, and over 150 objections have been sent to the Council. Some comments in favour of the scheme, and opposing it, lack substance but it is noteworthy that the vast majority of the comments based on well reasoned planning arguments are objectors. There would be no gain at all for local people for whom there is a large and tangible loss of community benefit. The application does not significantly increase, if at all, the county's rugby provision especially with possible flooding.

Summary

The world wide reputation of UEA for environmental studies has not been adequately considered nor has biodiversity in the valley. The application is contrary to the South Norfolk Local Plan. As such it is unacceptable. The club will need to find premises elsewhere.

Andrew Salisbury

Chairman Yare Valley Society

What we can all do now

We would urge everyone who has not sent a comment (or wishes to modify their comment) to do so as soon as possible.

This is best addressed by letter to:-

Tracy Lincoln, South Norfolk Planning, Swan Lane, Long Stratton, Norfolk, NR 15 2XE
or by email to Tracy Lincoln tlincoln@s-norfolk.gov.uk

Further information is available by phoning South Norfolk Planning on **01503 533 674**
The Planning application is Number **2016 0233**

It is important that we get as many objections as we can to avoid the application going ahead. It is very likely that the date for the South Norfolk Planning Committee meeting dealing with this will take place on 25 May starting at ten o'clock.

If you are sending an objection please use your own words but you may wish to mention in particular the clubhouse, high fencing, artificial lighting, flooding, car parking and the scenic, landscape and environmental value of a pleasant rural open space separating Colney, Cringleford from Norwich City.

It would be a tremendous boost to the objections if we could have as many as about 50 to 100 attending this meeting at Long Stratton as observers. It would show the Councillors (many of whom will know little of the area) how much local concern there is in this matter.

At the Planning Meeting there are a total of five minutes for those objecting to the application and it makes sense for these five minutes be spent by the Parish Councillors involved and by a representative from our Society.

YARE VALLEY SOCIETY

Accounts for period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015

Income	Current Account		2015 £
	2015 £	Expenditure	
Subscriptions	300.00	Hire of Room for AGM	30.00
Donations	11.00	AGM refreshments	14.40
YV guides	283.00	AGM photocopying	5.00
Sales/activities/ Cakes	84.30	Materials for activities	10.00
		Haymaking posters	15.00
		Web registration	43.06
		Newsletter printing	16.80
		Public Liability Insurance	140.38
		EJP Print Ltd for YVS guide	121.50
Total	<u>678.30</u>	Total	<u>391.14</u>
		Surplus	287.16
Total	<u>678.30</u>	Total	<u>678.30</u>

Bank Reconciliation:	Balance at 1 January 2015	£ 634.89
	Surplus	<u>287.16</u>
	Balance at 31 December 2015	£ 922.05

Deposit Account

Balance at 1 January 2015	£ 3007.17
Add Interest	<u>£ 18.08</u>
Balance at 31 December 2015	£ 3025.25

Please note that subscriptions are due from those whose membership lapses in 2016.

Hilary Hann, Treasurer. 04/16