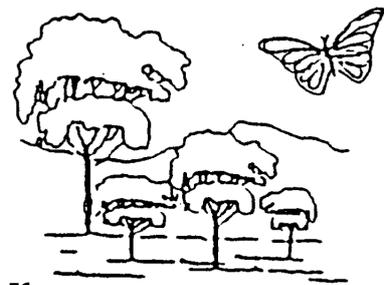


The objects of the Society are to protect the natural landscape and wildlife habitats of the Yare Valley south and west of Norwich, principally between Harford and Bowthorpe. We oppose any development that would detract from its natural qualities and support projects which would preserve the valley for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



Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 87

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AGM 2013 Chairman's Report

For those members who were not able to attend the AGM earlier this year, the chairman Andrew Salisbury reported as follows:

I must begin my report by saying that it is very satisfying to have such a dedicated committee. I especially wish to thank Jean Ray our treasurer for the way she has looked after our finances since 2002. Her common sense, dedication and friendliness have been appreciated by all. She has now handed the treasurership over to Hilary Hann, whom we warmly welcome onto the committee.

I would also like to thank Pip Pyper who has looked after our distribution of newsletters so well but has decided to give up this task and am pleased to tell you that Jean Ray has volunteered to do this. I also wish to give a big thank you to our deliverers of the newsletter without whom we would spend a lot of money on postage.

In some ways this has been a quiet year with few applications to build. Our concern this year has been mainly with local development plans.

We were very encouraged by Norwich City Council that our views on preventing development on Bartram Mowers site are being listened to and appreciated. The Norwich Local Development Plan does not include the site as available for development. This goes to an inspector in May who determines whether the decisions made by Norwich are sound. Bartram Mowers have objected to the exclusion of the site for development and this objection will go to the inspector. Norwich states that it has sufficient building plots elsewhere in the city.

Cringleford is also producing a local plan and the early indications are that it is an excellent publication. Our only concern was that there was insufficient emphasis on river walks in the Cringleford Parish and we responded accordingly. The Cringleford Plan will also go through the same process of inspection.

Once these plans are in place it is more difficult but not impossible for developers to go against the local plans. There was an application to build several houses at Low road at Keswick near the zed bend. This was later modified and eventually passed by South Norfolk. This was one of the very few occasions when the committee was undecided and it was

agreed not to comment on this application mainly on the grounds that it was outside our brief. We thought that we might get someone from the Keswick area as a committee member but it was not to be. Keswick Parish are not producing a local development plan.

Another application which was outside our area is the Newfound Farm at Cringleford towards the hospital. We were concerned that there could be implications for the river valley and wrote to that effect.

The Norwich Research Park is mainly quite away from the river except at Colney Hall. We have kept an eye on the Park but only so far as it impinges on the river valley.

At Colney Hall the situation is quite different. The application to use the site for a residential home care is quite wrong. We were very concerned about the misuse of this site. This application has been turned down by South Norfolk and so far there has been no appeal.

The University continues to expand and we have been warned that there is still a possibility that the Yare Valley river crossing may still be sought. We need to keep vigilant over plans the university has for encroaching on the river valley.

At present there is a lull in building applications but this will not last. We have a committee ready and willing to respond to any proposals that could affect the landscape and recreational use of this lovely valley which is so important for this area.

We just wish that one or two extra committee members from Cringleford or Keswick would come forward. We are not an awesome bunch, meeting about four times a year, and you would be very welcome indeed.

Use of e-mail

In order to keep our costs down, we urge members who have access to a computer to indicate that they are willing to receive newsletters (in PDF format) by e-mail. This particularly applies to those whose newsletters are posted. Please send an e-mail to this effect with your name and address to yvs@talktalk.net Thank you to those members who responded to this request in the last newsletter.

Change of use - The Saddlery, Bluebell Road

During the summer an application was submitted to Norwich City Council for change of use of The Saddlery building on the Bartram's site in Bluebell Road to a children's nursery. The Society opposed this application and Andrew Salisbury made the following points at the planning committee meeting:

'The society has a longstanding good working relationship with the City Council and we have been pleased with the concern and consideration given by the Council over many years to preserving the open aspects and landscape value of the river valley. The Council has consistently rejected development on this site.

'The original use was for horticulture which was then changed to retail and now a further change is proposed. Such changes signal a willingness by the Council to consider even more changes. A rejection of this application would be a strong message that the valley is to be kept in its present state. The application involves erecting a hedge further down towards the river. It is somewhat naive to say the present change of use is minor.

'The Planning comments are generally well considered and deserve commendation but there are some omissions.

'There is a serious omission about the effects of the after school activities for older children. The safety considerations here are most important.

The lack of attention to signage is a concern. The present signage is a mess with no rationale and further signs for the proposed nursery will make matters worse.

There is also a problem over parking and traffic. About 20 staff cars will be parked all day as well as the effect of dropping off and collecting of young and older children. Insufficient attention has been given to this. The increase in traffic is quite significant.

'We were dismayed to see the lack of detailed attention by the applicants. Safety measures which are very important when considering young children are given scant attention. Ofsted would be horrified to read such a poorly presented application from an organisation involved in education.'

There was a lot of discussion by the Planning Committee and the change of use for this building was passed. For 6; against 4; abstentions 2.

It appears that if the nursery is to remain longer than two years then another application is needed and further attention will be given to safety.

Some history: machine guns in the valley!

Some little known history came to light when one of our members discovered the record of a World War 2 bunker having been constructed on what is now the UEA campus. It was some 12 feet below ground level and was equipped with explosives, a machine gun and other hardware for use as a resistance base in the event of a Nazi invasion. The exact location is uncertain, but was probably near the North Park Avenue entrance, possibly in the dell below the UEA hill, or in the tree belt above the Broad, on what was then a golf course. It seems never to have been excavated, and what weaponry remains is anyone's guess.

Norwich Research Park

A planning application is being prepared for an IT network between the Norwich Research Park and the University. Dr Goodwin, Project Manager at the NRP, contacted the Society to talk about this project prior to the application. John Thurman and Andrew Salisbury met him at the Innovation Centre on 2/9/2013.

The proposal is to bury a pipe about eight inches (20 cm) wide underground and this involves also in burying under the river. A trench less than a metre wide will be dug to insert the pipe and will be filled in and reurfed afterwards. The work will be done in stages and from the NRP goes along the edges of fields until near the river. Here a guided electric 'mole' will bore a hole a few metres below the river bed just upstream from the footbridge. The pipeline will then go across below the Sainsbury Centre and past the Norfolk Terrace Ziggurat and into the UEA Computing Centre. This work is essential for good uninterrupted communications within the NRP including the hospital and UEA. This does not affect the river valley except on a temporary basis and should be completed with minimal disturbance probably in November or December. A lot of planning has gone into this. Two trees are to be removed but the rest are being looked after well. When the project is completed the valley will appear to be unaltered.

The chairman has written to Norwich City Council planning department indicating that 'the proposed development is very good for the NRP and UEA and will allow them to run more smoothly. The Society supports this development wholeheartedly'.

Other issues were also discussed at the meeting. These included the status of Colney Hall in the NRP; road and bus links to NRP, including a proposed access from Hethersett Lane with new traffic lights at the junction with the Watton Road; potential transport links across the valley; river footpaths; Earlham Hall and Park and the importance of the open aspect of the river valley. We intend to keep in touch about matters of mutual interest.

Giant Hogweed

The Society has received the following e-mail from Paul Holley, Natural Areas Officer, Norwich City Council:

This year we had a small resurgence in the amount of Giant Hogweed (GH) at Cringleford and at some other locations, which was dealt with. I would appreciate any reports of GH in the Yare Valley next season, preferably as early as possible so we can treat it before it gets too tall. Any Yare Valley matters concerning Norwich City Council should normally be reported via the council's website, but in the case of GH, Yare Valley Society members can contact me directly by email, paulholley@norwich.gov.uk

Articles, comments and letters for possible publication in future newsletters can be sent to Alison Ward, 20 Brettingham Avenue Norwich NR4 6XG or e-mail yvs@talktalk.net