Planning Application Number: 2026/1959

Location: Colney Hall Watton Road Colney Norfolk NR4 7TY

Proposal: Hybrid planning application comprising: (i) Full planning permission for the creation of the Colney Later Life Living Community comprising of 119 specialist later life living units (restricted to occupiers aged 55 and over), and communal buildings (providing communal facilities, medical space and Innovation and Research Space) access, internal roads, parking, landscaping, green infrastructure, sustainable drainage infrastructure, engineering operations and associated infrastructure; and (ii) Outline planning permission (with all matters reserved except access) for an 80-bed specialist dementia care home.

Please consider the following comments of the Yare Valley Society committee when determining this application:

Ecological Survey missing from Application

No Ecological Impact Assessment seems to have been made for this Application. Observations by YVS members and others in the vicinity of Colney Hall Estate suggest that the site could have a very rich biodiversity, and provide habitat for a wide range of species including a significant number having UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority status (including species on red and amber lists).

The lack of an Ecological Assessment places the YVS and other organisations at a serious disadvantage when commenting on the Application. Moreover, without the Ecological Assessment the general public will be unaware of the potential for ecological damage by the development.

An Ecological Survey is essential for a proper consideration of this application.

Degradation of Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor (SGIC)

The Yare Valley Corridor is recognised as a key Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor in the Norfolk biodiversity network. The Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan June 2022 (para.7.9.3 and 7.9.7) sees the Corridor as minimising the impacts of housing growth; and a Yare Valley Parkway as a green infrastructure priority linking Bawburgh in the West through to Whitlingham in the Southeast.

The Yare Valley Corridor can also be expected make a major contribution in the realisation of a Nature Recovery Network (NRN), and in achieving Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The Development would degrade the Yare Valley Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor's ability to counter the current threats to nature.

Impact on biodiversity in the Corridor

The Yare Valley Corridor provides a variety of wildlife habitats, and links them into the local green network for wildlife movement and so promotes biodiversity. The development will reduce the Flora and Fauna in the SGIC and the noise from tree removal and the construction of roads and buildings can be expected to significantly disturb wildlife.

The development would reduce biodiversity in the Corridor.

Impact on the Corridor mitigating climate change

The Yare Valley Corridor mitigates the effects of climate change by storing water in its wetlands, retaining water in its vegetation, and acting as a carbon sink. The development will reduce vegetation, e.g. a large number of trees would be removed. It would be many years before replacement planting recovers the loss.

The development would reduce the effectiveness of the Yare Valley Corridor in mitigating the effects of climate change, in particular in relation to carbon storage and reducing flooding downstream.

Impact on the Corridor's contribution to community well-being.

The Corridor provides interesting, visually attractive, and connected public green space - increasingly recognised as essential to the well-being of communities. Much of this part of the Corridor, because of the presence of shielding trees and scrub, has a sense of remoteness that would be destroyed by the sight of buildings on the Colney Hall Estate.

The development would reduce community green space benefits of the Corridor.

Risk to river water quality and pollution of habitats

There is growing concern public about the existing high levels of pollution in our rivers, and a growing demand that they be reduced. The site has the river Yare (a rare chalkstream environment) on three sides, and so there is a high risk of contaminants from the site reaching the river. The site is upstream of a connected river corridor of wildlife habitats including wetlands, nature reserves and SSSIs.

Part of the development site has previously been used as historic landfill and consequently presents a risk of contamination that could be mobilised during construction to pollute the adjoining wetlands and the river Yare itself.

The development plans should be able to demonstrate, that for the construction period and in perpetuity, the development will cause no overall increase in nutrient and other pollutant levels that could affect the downstream habitat sites.

Conflicts with Landscape Protection Policies

South Norfolk District Council has put in place Policies to safeguard the green landscape around Norwich, in River Valleys, and generally. They include:

Policy DM 4.5 Landscape Character and River Valleys.The site is a dominant landscape feature visible from the east, north, and west of the River Yare (and from a future Bawburgh Country Park).It is important that "Particular regard will be had to protecting the distinctive characteristics, special qualities and geographical extents of the identified Rural River Valleys and Valley Urban Fringe landscape character types."

Policy DM 4.6 Landscape Setting of Norwich.The site lies within the Norwich Southern By-Pass Protection Zone (NBPLPZ) and forms part of the landscape setting of Norwich.

Policy DM 4.8 Protection of Trees and Hedgerows. A substantial number of trees would be removed by this development. It is important that "The Council will promote the retention and conservation of significant trees, woodlands and traditional orchards and will serve Tree Preservation Orders where necessary."

The development conflicts with South Norfolk District Council Policies that are intended to safeguard the green landscape of the Yare Valley and the setting of Norwich.

Thank you for taking these comments into account when considering the application.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Morgan

Hon. Sec.

on behalf of the committee of the Yare Valley Society