

WARNEFORD MEADOW: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

A letter has been circulated recently by the NHS Trust in connection with the various proposed developments on Warneford Meadow and the Warneford Hospital Playing Fields. The NHS Trust is in effect acting here as a developer's agent, attempting to secure planning permission for a green-field site, with the associated increase in its value.

This letter makes a number of misleading statements and together with its timing (sent out over Christmas), reinforces the view of several residents that '*the Trust cannot be trusted*'.

1. In this letter, the NHS Trust say they "have been working hard to take ... into account the views of residents...". But:

- If this was the case, the plans would have been withdrawn since all neighbouring residents' associations have lodged fundamental objections to the plans.
- In truth, the NHS Trust, faced with imminent rejection of their plans, has been *forced* to attempt a revision, which is being 'glossed' as a response to residents' objections. They have not entered into a revision for the benefit of local communities.

2. The NHS Trust say that they have reduced the amount of land for development to 50%. But:

- In fact, the original plans showed that just over 53% of the Meadow (but nearly 2/3rds of the grassland) was to be developed, so the 'reduction' is negligible.
- The 'revised' plans have the same devastating overall effect on the Meadow (and cast doubt on the accuracy of any percentage figures produced by the NHS Trust).

3. The original plans were submitted in August, a time when most residents were away, with just three weeks given for consultation. Then:

- More associated reports (amounting to several hundred pages), were submitted by the NHS Trust just before Christmas.
- But the revised plans are **not available** at the Council offices, even though comments are supposed to be received by 19th January.
- This timing ensures that residents are ill-placed to consider and respond to the revised plans, even if they were available!

4. The NHS Trust letter claims that "a maximum of 50% has been suggested for student accommodation equating to a maximum of 685 units." (This is a direct quotation from letter.) But:

- According to a letter from Oxford City Council (OCC), this is not the *overall* maximum of the number of student 'units', which shows that 50% of the *overall* development would equate to 888 not 685 units, equivalent to 1,776 units if the whole was given over to student 'units'!
- In any case, the 'reduction' in the number of student 'units' is marginal when considered as a whole, and should be viewed against the background of an outrageous original plan and a less than straightforward presentation of the 'new' figures.

5. The density of building is likely to increase:

- The number of residential units on the Meadow could increase from 300 to 325 units (indeed this is actually 375 units in some of the documents), implying that there will now be 488 car parking spaces.
- The office space option of 24,500 square metres is unchanged, but proportionately on '50%' of the meadow.
- Overall, the density of occupation will almost certainly **increase** not decrease relative to the original plans. The Trust letter is strangely quiet on these issues.

6. Moreover, the Trust's letter only deals explicitly with student 'units', limited to one-half of the development. But:

- The other 50% is still to be developed for the **same** uses as in the original plans.
- The major part of the Meadow is still to be lost; the orchard is still to be destroyed.
- The hard-fought for footpath (No 111) is still to be removed (it's in the way!).

7. Also, as far as we are able to tell in this deliberate confusion, the construction 'footprint' actually brings the proposed development even closer to Hill Top Road.

8. The revised plans are:

- Almost unintelligible and are timed to give local residents as little opportunity as possible to make objections.
- There has been no consultation. After this submission, the Council will decide.

9. Oxford City Council should have followed the correct procedure:

- First deal with the original plans (leading to their likely rejection).
- Then, the Trust, if they so wished, should have submitted a new set of plans.
- There should be *genuine* consultation.

11. It is a matter of concern that the Council has allowed what could be interpreted as an abuse of procedure:

- Revised plans have apparently been allowed, indeed encouraged, at a very late stage to substitute for the original plans.
- These revisions were sent out just before Christmas, even though the Council offices are closed until the 2nd January and the plans are not available!

13. But, despite their intended complexity, the so-called revised plans have the same detrimental effects on:

- Transport congestion
- Loss of amenities
- Destruction of wildlife habitat

These plans should be rejected, object by 19th January, if possible:

The plan numbers are:

06/01540/OUT Warneford Hospital Playing Field

06/01559/OUT Warneford Meadow: student accommodation/residential units

06/01560/OUT Warneford Meadow: office floorspace

Write to: Oxford City Council, Planning Department, 10, St Ebbes St, Oxford OX1 1PT

14. Recent experience of development at the Boundary Brook shows that once development is approved, control is inadequate:

- The wildlife corridor has been destroyed.
- Footpaths illegally sited.
- Local residents' views ignored.

15. TOWN GREEN and MEETING:

- An application has been made for the Meadow to be awarded Town Green status.
- This reflects its use over more than twenty years by the local community.
- Town Green status means that the Meadow cannot be built upon.
- A meeting organised by the Friends of Warneford Meadow will be held on the 18th January at Cheney School (Assembly Rooms) at 7:30pm.

Friends of Warneford Meadow
January 2007