

Statement for Gedling Local Plan Hearings

Opening comments

The residents of Mill Field Close accept that the field in question is no longer in the designated Green Belt area. We also accept that the land has been identified as possible housing land, since being removed from the Green Belt area. We are concerned however that the Council is not fully addressing issues associated with the site.

Inspector Draft Matters

Issue 9a: Burton Joyce

Q3: Is there sufficient provision of housing for young people and the elderly in Burton Joyce?

Burton Joyce has a variety of housing, ranging from a nursing home, a limited amount of sheltered housing, flats, bungalows and predominantly, houses of various sizes. The sheltered housing is very limited in number of flats, is of the outdated bedsit style and with no lift to the upper floor. It is not suitable therefore as longer term downsize/move on accommodation for couples or single people of increasing age or mobility issues. Many of the more modern bungalows are not designed with the needs of mobility in mind and similarly, the family housing is not designed for those who need the space and facilities of advancing age and reduced mobility. A previous consultation in the village, for a 'Village Plan', identified that there were people in the village who would like to stay in the village, but could not move from their increasingly unsuitable family housing, as there was not the quantity or suitability of alternative accommodation for them. The Parish Council, submitted its comments to the Council, for a planning application 2015/0424 regarding Mill Field Close, heard on Wednesday 23 2016. Gedling Council's summary of those comments, in its report to Council, says that the Parish Council had no objections in principle to the application, 'on the condition that the development would reflect the Local Plan and the needs of the community with an ageing population'.

There appears to be no acknowledgement in the Local Plan for Burton Joyce, that this lack of accommodation for an ageing population of the village, is a real and current issue. If there was more emphasis on the needs of the older population of the village, then this would free up family housing, as local people were able to move to more suitable accommodation. Of the two sites identified for Burton Joyce housing development, the Mill Field Close field, is the only one with level access to both the site and the village facilities.

A further question for residents, relates to 'affordable housing'. The formula for Burton Joyce, we understand, is 20% of new developments. We are aware of no current or recent public discussion on this matter in relation to the Burton Joyce sites, and for ourselves we are obviously particularly interested in the Mill Field Close

site. Is the inquiry able to establish how the formula would apply to the Burton Joyce sites, and Mill Field Close in particular ie, how it affects the number and nature of the housing stock developed and the target group for the accommodation?

Issue 9b: Mill Field Close (H20) [Policy LPD 68]

Q4: Is the proposed allocation justified and appropriate in terms of the likely impacts of development?

At time of preparing this statement, the potential for this site, is for 'up to 23' family style houses. There are contradictions in this; there is reference to the housing being in character with the 8 houses already sited on Mill Field Close, but the current site is not much smaller than the one under consideration, so it is difficult to see how 23 houses can be built in a similar character to the current ones. Indeed, the numbering of the current houses is 1 -9 on the 'odd' side of the road and 12 – 16 on the 'even' side, adjoining the site in question; clearly it was originally anticipated that the future build would be for numbers 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10.

No consideration has been given in the approval, of the type of housing that would be appropriate, given pressures on local infrastructure, nor the issue of properly accommodating the needs of an ageing population. There are issues of safety for pedestrians and vehicles, issues of flood risk, and local public services – health and education, which are not fully addressed in the process thus far. We have commented on these matters below.

Q5b: Is the proposed allocation deliverable? In particular is it....

Supported by evidenced to demonstrate that safe and appropriate access for vehicles and pedestrians can be provided?

Safety is a major concern for local residents. Mill Field Close junctions with the A612, an increasingly busy major secondary road, with narrow carriageway at this point, narrow and partial pavement on the Mill Field Close side of the road and wider pavement for dual use with pedestrians and cyclists, on the opposite side of the carriageway. Issues include

- A near blind bend to the East, when exiting the current Mill Field Close junction (see Pic 1)
- Vehicles mounting the pavement on the main A612 road, when there are vehicles waiting to turn into Mill Field Close from the Eastbound carriageway
- The current refuge near the junction, was placed there as a result of a child being killed at this point some years ago. The traffic has significantly increased since then. The size of the refuge is apparently a standard size, but is inadequate for the specific setting. (pic 5)
- Only a short narrow stretch of pavement leading to the pedestrian refuge near the junction and the refuge too narrow to accommodate a pushchair, mobility

scooter or cycles: this is made worse by the overhanging shrubbery not being maintained, other than by residents. (see Pic 2)

- Narrow pavement running from the Close towards the next road to the East – St Helen’s Grove (see Pic 1)
- There is no turning circle in the close, for large vehicles such as the bin wagons or larger delivery vehicles. Consequently, they have to reverse into or out of the Close, from/onto the A612 – particularly dangerous when there is only one operative in the vehicle concerned, so no-one to act as guide or try to hold up the traffic on the main road
- Issues of speeding: the change in speed limit is near to this junction and is often not adhered to, exacerbating the above issues (see Pic 3)
- Gedling Council summarised the Parish Council comments on this issue as ‘difficulties for residents entering and leaving Mill Field Close due to volume and speed of traffic, difficulties of ease of pedestrian access as pavements and crossing points are already considered inadequate or non-existent’
- There is inadequate parking already – the road is too narrow for parking on both sides of the road and visitors to houses along the main road often park on Mill Field Close
- The start of Mill Field Close has a sharp bend in it which can cause incoming and outgoing vehicles to cut across the lanes. This will be a more serious issue, with increased development of the site and increased road/junction usage. (see Pic 4)

We have raised these issues with Gedling Council and also with the Highways agent for Nottinghamshire County Council. To summarise, the responses are that there is no engineering solution to the junction problems, it is a busy road so people have to be vigilant, the current level of pedestrian access and accident, is insufficient to warrant any crossing improvements. There seems to be no recognition of future demands. The picture shows the limited space between users of the refuge and the traffic. (see Pic 5)

We have suggested that there is a solution, but we can see no evidence that it has been seriously considered and we have no confidence that simply deferring everything to a detailed planning application will result in any constructive solution. The tone of the responses thus far do not suggest any willingness to accept or solve the issues. The proposed development of another ‘up to’ 23 houses, will obviously increase the traffic, cycling and pedestrian issues. If this is to be a development of family housing then one must expect a greater number of children using the junction, both accompanied, to access the village, and also unaccompanied, to the secondary school to the West, which many local children walk to, along the main road, but as the only pavement beyond Mill Field Close is on the other side of the carriageway, then the children will have to cross at Mill Field Close. Our ideal solution is to close the current Mill Field Close junction and, as part of the new development, create a new junction some yards further to the West, by way of a mini roundabout so that the Mill Field Close users and those of Crow Park Road on the opposite side of the road can use the junction in greater safety and also slow the traffic to the correct speed, but without too much interruption of traffic flow. (See pic 3) A less comprehensive

solution would not address the vehicle issues but would assist the pedestrian and cycle users; a light controlled crossing in place of the current refuge, would make it safer to cross but also mean that those crossing, would not have to rest in the inadequately sized refuge, (see Pic 5) as they could cross in one go. It would only delay traffic for short spells and only when people need to cross. Whilst this issue may seem like a point of detail, it does reflect the wider issues of increased traffic through the village with associated difficulties in crossing the main road through the village, and potentially greater use by heavy goods vehicles due to wider planning and commercial activities in the area. This must surely be a factor in the wider strategic planning of the area.

Is It...

Q5c: Deliverable, having regard to the provision of the necessary infrastructure and services, and any environmental or other constraints?

It is unclear as to how the plan addresses the issue of pressure on the local education and health systems. These are clearly important for current and future residents.

The plan does acknowledge that the site is in the flood plane, but our experience is that the focus is on river flooding. The experience of the residents is that the main risk is from rainfall – run off, waterlogging, (some of which is generated from the steep hill that is located near this area) and impact on the drainage and sewerage systems. It should be noted that an underground tank was installed some years ago, adjacent to the site in question, due to difficulties encountered by residents in the local area – not just Mill Field Close. This tank blocked last year and pump vehicles had to be brought in to clear it, over a couple of days. Some of the current residents have had problems using the downstairs toilets during heavy rain and some of the garden areas near the railway line flood in heavy rain; the end of the back garden at no 12 for example, was flooded for most of 2016 and this is not an exceptional situation. The Parish Council comments summarised in the Report to Gedling Council on November 23 2016, also acknowledge problems of water pressure, drainage and sewerage systems. The suggestion is that this will all be sorted out at detailed planning. Again, we are not confident that the issues will be seriously addressed. Any discussion around the planning thus far, has been on the new development. We are concerned that the Council's plan and the owner's proposals for Mill Field Close only refer to the new development. Clearly, loss of the field will affect the availability of a water pooling area in times of rainfall and any plans for this site (and also the village more widely) must specifically ensure that the impact of any new development, at the very least, does not make worse, the current experience of local residents.

If this development is to be family housing, then it should be noted that the only children's play area in the village is in the centre, and again requires use of the junction of Mill Field Close and the refuge, in order to access the village.

In terms of environment, the site was cleared shortly before the outline planning application was made, with no regard to the wildlife, vegetation and habitat: for example, there is a badger set on site and the men clearing the site were completely unaware of it; hedgerows were completely removed on the border with Mill Field Close; all trees across the field were cleared and only a few on the edge were left. Survey work undertaken as part of the planning process, is therefore only looking at the position now. Fortunately, the badgers seem to have recovered and badger paths can be seen across the field. (See Pic 6). The birds have not returned in their original numbers. There are still bats in the area. We are not encouraged to think that there is any commitment to preserving any green space, or wildlife habitat.

Q6: Have these matters been addressed through the planning application process, given that the site benefits from planning permission, subject to the signing of a Section 106 Agreement?

As outlined above, we do not believe that these issues have been addressed, but rather are not considered significant or are deferred for the detailed planning stage, but without comment that suggests the issues need any significant solutions. Our experience thus far, based on the discussions and also the responses we have received to specific points, does not give confidence that they will be addressed at that stage either.

Any s106 payment will, we presume, be relatively small, given that, in the greater scheme of things, this is a small development. It is difficult to see how it could possibly cover all the costs involved in creating additional school places, additional health service cover, new highway and drainage/sewerage infrastructure or new green/play areas. The residents want clear confirmation that these matters will be actively and positively addressed, and with no detriment to the current experience of living on Mill Field Close.

Conclusion

The current residents of Mill Field Close accept that there is likely to be some development on the site in question. However, the Council does not seem to have considered the most appropriate type of housing that would best suit the needs of the village and we are not confident that there is serious commitment to addressing the issues raised above. There should at the very least, be a firm commitment from the Council and the developer/owner, that any new development will not exacerbate the experiences of the current residents and preferably, will improve the situations. Whilst our concerns are of course, specific to this particular site, they are ones that are also echoed in the wider village area.

Submitted by Residents of Mill Field Close

Photographs illustrating points made in the body of the submission



Pic 1: View from junction line of Mill Field Close, with A612, showing near blind bend from the Eastern approach, towards the City. Also shows pavement width, to walk to the bus stop for City bound buses.



Pic 2: Shows the small access pavement to the refuge (just to the right edge of the picture) for crossing the A612. The shrubbery is not maintained and is cut back by residents.



Pic 3: Shows the short distance between the MFC junction, the refuge and the change of speed limit sign. Also shows the junction of Crow Park Road on the opposite side, with A612, where a new junction could be located, to serve both Mill Field and Crow Park.



Pic 4: Shows the sharp 'S' bend at the entrance to Mill Field from A612. The proposed site is to the right of the picture.



Pic 5: Shows the restricted gap between traffic passing the refuge and users of the refuge. MFC is to the right of the picture.



Pic 6: Shows the badger tracks leaving the field proposed for development