

Public Meeting of Castor Residents – 22nd February 2022 (22022022)

Village Hall 7.00pm Development of the Woodlands site

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Neil Boyce, opened the meeting and welcomed residents and straightway handed over to Cllr. David Shaw as the parish council lead on planning matters.

David Shaw referred to the public meeting in November when Nene Park Trust (NPT) and Country Court Care (CCC) representatives had outlined their intentions for the site. Now that NPT plans have been made public and published on the NPT Website it was felt to be an appropriate time to get a feel for the views of residents.

David made clear that the parish council had not formed any views at this stage and would keep an open mind pending the formal planning application being deposited with the city council (PCC). The city council are the planning authority and will determine the application. Parish council will exert their influence on PCC at that time

Parish council had already sent a note to both NPT and CCC setting out the planning policies that are appropriate to the Woodlands site. David specifically referred to a planning policy in the neighbourhood plan (NP) relating to Woodlands which weighs the benefits of making facilities available against the potential harm to the Castor village. PCC have a similar planning policy in the Local Plan relating to the protection of the Nene Valley. In addition, PCC had stated that they will use their planning powers to aim to achieve Net Zero Carbon; which implies that they will have a keen interest in landscaping and tree planting / protection.

David then referred to a plan of the Woodland Site and outlined the parts under the control of CCC and the sporting area controlled by NPT.

CCC want to demolish the existing sports centre and rebuild a care facility with additional car parking as a condition in the lease requires CCC to provide parking for the sports facilities over weekends. A resident asked that it was clarified that the additional care units were for “independent living” care facilities.

David also referred to the parish council request for a composite, integrated, vision of the whole site so that the expected planning applications could be considered in the context of the Woodlands as a whole, rather than in isolation from the implications of plans of other parties.

NPT plans included 5 additional courts, 2 Paddle Courts, 2 pickle ball courts and a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and two buildings (one for changing rooms and the other described as a community centre, but the NPT plans did not currently show the additional carparking or landscaping proposals, presumably the detail is to follow in the planning application.

David then invited residents to express their views.

Resident one

- stated that in order to assess the plans objectively he had asked for DATA. Data relating to current traffic flows and the projected traffic flows. Projections to be considerations of a norm and a peak on a busy sports day. Also data relating to the current use of facilities and expected increase in take up.
- The same resident questioned the reasons for building a community centre when that purpose is being served by the village hall.

Resident two

- Asserted that the published plans were inaccurate as showing parking where it does not exist and that it was pertinent since it is known the NPT need an additional 60 spaces

Resident Three

- Indoor bowls has had to be curtailed – was there any chance that the bowls green could be resurrected and used for outdoor bowls? David Shaw responded that the resident might need to contact David Hicks of CCC to pursue that question.

Resident Four

- Traffic Plan shows access via the Village Hall – is that realistic

Resident Five

- Along one boundary of the site are 7 protected trees and it follows that no hard surfaces should be constructed in the vicinity as might affect the roots of those trees. David referred to the recent planning appeal and the planning inspectors stress on the importance of those trees when the appeal was dismissed

Resident 6

- followed up the same point and suggested that a footpath access to the site might require the removal of trees

Resident 7

- asked for clarification of the intentions for the existing Sports centre and questioned the wisdom of demolishing a perfectly sound building and rebuilding the same facilities elsewhere on the same site.
- He also asked what was the expected timescale. David responded that a planning application might be submitted as early as March this year

Resident eight

- Expressed his support to the parish council in pursuing the green elements of any planning application assessment and asked if CCC had given enough thought to alternatives to gas heating as there were plenty of other solutions, Heat source, renewables solar etc.
- In regard to insulation CCC could set an example and not settle for the minimum insulation requirement

Resident Nine

- CCC had previously stated that a master plan for the site existed and we needed that to be produced so that planning applications were not considered piecemeal.
- What sort of independent living accommodations is being provided – single persons or couples, possibly with two cars.
- Have CCC got any assessment of increased traffic flows

Resident Ten

- Castor has a NP and a policy of protected views, and a sight line, of the church – It appears that the plans include Floodlit tennis courts directly on that sight line and suggested that this might be contrary to the NP and that perhaps they should be sited elsewhere

Resident Eleven

- Pedestrian Access should be vigorously pursued and some sensitivities overruled in order to minimise vehicular traffic. David responded that a large part of the sports use would be from outside the village, requiring transport, and that a pedestrian access in the wrong place could cause parking issues elsewhere instead of vehicles going the extra distance to the parking facilities on site.

Resident Twelve

- Stressed the importance, in her opinion, of Landscaping, enhancing hedgerows etc and that consideration of green issues should go beyond tree planting and protection as there is an opportunity to consider the impact on wildlife and Biodiversity with the aim of enhancement not simply protection and certainly no deterioration.

David sought additional questions or comment and in the absence of further input closed the meeting at 8.46pm