

'Castle Mill' Environmental Statement Addendum ("ESA")

Representations from the Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association ("CMAA") Committee ¹

The CMAA Committee's comments in our previous submission remain relevant to the ESA, particularly the plans to use the badger run for planting trees which break the conditions agreed between CMAA and OU. In our meeting with Nicholas Pearson Associates in December 2014 we were assured that our concerns with planting trees in the badger run would be addressed and we would be consulted further. We were not. These comments have barely been addressed by the ESA. Additional comments are given below.

General site concerns

- The plan raises a strip of land out of the flood plain. We are concerned that this space is insufficient for mature trees and that shade, root and canopy will encroach onto allotment land and would present a security issue.
- CMAA fence on the boundary with Castle Mill was set shallowly due to the nearby electric cable. A cable survey was done for OU on November 1st 2011. We await a copy.
- Any gabion space will need to be from OU land and will take out of the 2m badger run as agreed with Natural England.
- Our concerns about remaining light pollution have not been addressed and the gaps in the lower Castle Mill buildings must be retained as they give the CMAA site some relief from the oppressive height and the impact of shade.
- We are pleased that OCC advised that the contamination issues were remediated. We look forward to the environmentally sound water harvesting from the Castle Mill roofs to be in effective operation.

Badgers

- The ESA fails to address CMAA's **continued** concerns regarding the current and previous badger setts near the allotments. The preferred route for badgers while the Castle Mill building work took place continued to be through and into the CMAA site and badgers continue to regularly access the allotments and damage the site, fences and crops.
- We have worked hard to live alongside badgers but the area must remain badger proofed to prevent setting and access to the CMAA site and our members voted unanimously at our AGM in March 2015 in support of work needed to exclude badgers to ensure the site is sustainable.
- Work so far includes:
 - The OU has badger-proofed the fence and badger run between the development and allotments and the allotment gate area.
 - It also agreed in July/August 2014 to undertake further work (due March 2015) to restrict badger access around the fence at the southern end of the allotments. This was not done due to an objection from the Environment Agency.
 - We have received invaluable advice from Nigel Fisher, OU's Warden of Wytham Woods on the necessity for badger protection for our site.
 - Natural England agreed that badgers in a sett adjacent to the allotments can travel to the north and south without accessing the allotments. We are now finalising detailed plans to erect badger proof fencing for the rest of our site (not covered by the OU fences referred to above), along with water harvesting and storage to replace previous access to the streams.
- Our present plans, to badger proof the entire CMAA site, have the support of our members, our local councillor Susanna Pressel and the OCC Parks Department as well as the consent of the Environment Agency. We only await final estimates and a decision on funding from Oxford University. It would be a waste of money (and a cruel twist) if all our work was undermined by problems caused by tree planting within the existing badger run.

Willows

- OCC Parks agreed CMAA willows on our Castle Mill Stream boundary were to be pollarded in 2011. This has been deferred repeatedly.
- Although the willows on our Castle Mill stream boundary increasingly screen the buildings, because they are crack willow they must be pollarded so the screening will go. We are willing to work with OCC and OU on plans similar to those submitted previously by LDA for the removal/substitution of some of

these willows on an agreed schedule to screen the buildings more effectively than anything planted on the OU site.

Conclusions

- We are disturbed at the time and money spent by so many on consultants and lawyers on this issue which seems to slow down the process of resolution.
- As explained above, we have serious concerns about the proposals, particularly regarding the plans for tree planting between the flats and allotments. Key issues that we raised about this have not been addressed. The ESA fails to address our continued concerns regarding badger setts near the allotments.
- The buildings have impacted negatively on the allotments. However, it would be damaging to Cripsey Meadow if there were any further major building/demolition as well as really upsetting environmentally to waste resources thus.
- On the positive side, Cripsey Meadow has welcomed residents of Castle Mill and their children as members and it is great to see so many younger gardeners growing their own food. Also, vandalism on Cripsey Meadow has ceased since the buildings arrived.
- We believe that tree planting in the badger run could potentially cause problems as outlined above and we also do not believe that trees planted here would screen the buildings as effectively as trees which are further away from the buildings.
- We think it is time everyone got together to talk about effective screening. A large amount of money has been committed to this situation and should be spent if the screening is effective, but it would be sad to see more money wasted on things that will make little or no difference. We are willing to work with OCC and OU on plans to replace some of the willows on our Castle Mill stream boundary with trees that would screen more effectively.
- After this hard learned lesson we trust OU will do better when the buildings need renewal. There is so much else that could be done with this kind of money to improve the lives of more people in the city. Everyone involved made mistakes and needs to learn from them. Please let's move on.

14 October 2015

¹ Representations are from the CMAA Committee excluding the Vice Chair, Alex Hollingsworth, who took no part in the discussion and drafting of this response in order to avoid any possible conflict of interest with his role as a member of the West Area Planning Committee. Other members of the committee are:

Wendy Skinner Smith
Claire Pike
Sara Jones
Jamie Forbes
Tony Clear
Jeremy Hyde
Richard Haigh
Annalisa Cecchi
Sarah Edwards
Emma Delap
Keith Holton