

## **Report from Drainage Group for Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting on 10 February 2020**

Since the last Steering Group meeting on 19 November, the Drainage Group have the following to report:

### **1. Barratt's reserve matters application for 180 homes on Thetford Road:**

We had a meeting with the Planning Manager and the Engineering Manager from Barratt's and two engineers from their Consultants Rossi Long Ltd about the Drainage Strategy as well as a Senior Account Executive from BECG, Built Environment Communications Group.

We had sent them some information about the work of the Group and some of our concerns. The documents for their Drainage Strategy were very technical but I cut and pasted the relevant parts for the Group so we all started with the same information.

We began by introducing ourselves to each other and then asked them to explain the strategy to us using paper versions of the engineering drawings that were so difficult to read on line.

Their strategy is much simpler than the one proposed by Gladman's consultants and we think it will do the job onsite. They will keep the central ditch as it is and confirmed that they had spoken to the farmer of the field to the east and he confirmed that he has a system that drains into it.

They will use permeable paving on the north east part of the site as it has acceptable infiltration. We approve of permeable paving because it looks good, does the job and cleans the water before it gets to the watercourse. It also does not need much maintenance and that responsibility will be in the deeds of the householders. The paving is basically concrete and might need refilling of joints with aggregate in about 5 years. Any replacement now has to be such permeable paving although we were amused that they thought folk would apply for planning permission or that any plain concrete or tarmac would be enforced!!

They will pipe the excess water from other drives and all roofs to the attenuation basin on the southern boundary. This will be planted with appropriate plants and become an attractive feature hopefully to wild life as well as humans.

There is a separate drainage system for the roads and a separate attenuation basin which will be maintained by NCC Highways.

They told us that the LLFA were objecting with 4 points that needed clarification and they sent their comments to me after the meeting. These are

points of detail and I think they will be able to meet them with some more information to the LLFA.

We had 2 concerns:

The first concerns what they described as a private surface water sewer running from the garden of Last Park in Canon Close to the Thetford Road and thence to the watercourse to the south. They had it surveyed with a camera and it is damaged in places and blocked in others so may well be contributing to the flooding on that part of the field. We have discovered that the part that is in Thetford Road is adopted by Anglian Water and I have asked the local manager whether or not they have adopted the one in the field. A local resident of Canon Close is going to let me have the architect's drawings so that we can see the whole drainage layout for that estate as the sewer extends northwards beyond the garden of Last Park.

The second concern is the amount of water that will be discharged into the watercourse during a storm. We got them to use the 2016 storm as a way of helping us understand. It is clear that they will build the system to deal with storms much heavier and more prolonged than that one but the concern is about a possible 15 litres of water a second being discharged into the watercourse. And we suspect that downstream will not cope with that.

I have had a half hour conversation with the senior Flood Risk Officer in charge of the team at the County Council that deals with planning applications. He has told me that the 15litres/sec is what would drain off the field as a field in the big storm and so is compliant with all regulations. He also said it was not a lot of water!!! All riparian owners are required to accept water flowing to them and can pass it on to the owner further downstream. However, they are also required to keep their watercourse clear so that the water flows. So we are back to getting the team at the County to enforce this with the landowners further down the flow to the Brook.

So, in summary, I don't think there are any valid objections to the drainage scheme for this development.

## **2. Conversation with the Senior Flood Risk Officer at Norfolk County Council**

Other useful information that came from that phone call:

- a) The Environment Agency flood risk maps for surface water flooding especially in urban areas are usually accurate ie the LLFA have checked them when actual flooding has occurred. The Group think the ones for Watton show accurately where past flooding has happened.
- b) He explained that while they are not statutory consultees on small developments (1-9 dwellings), they meet regularly and are in frequent

phone and email contact with the planning officers at Breckland who raise concerns with them. This is why the Planning Officer quoted our representation on 51 Thetford Road as we had local knowledge that even the LLFA did not have. And the advice in such cases is informal as we saw with 121A Brandon Road. So it is certainly worth our while making such representations.

- c) He also supported us in monitoring drainage aspects with dated photos. So he encouraged us to monitor the newly cleaned out ditches relating to the Barratt's site. He suggested after very heavy rain and perhaps once or twice a year. We will be monitoring the build up of silt in the watercourse as that will show if it is not able to flow because of blockages downstream.
- d) I have been in touch with the officer at the LLFA who deals with ditches so that we can progress getting others in the run to the Brook cleaned.

### **3. National Flood Forum**

The Forum have published a guide called Simple SuDS for Local People put together by members who have been flooded and with input from drainage experts. It only concerns above ground features such as permeable paving, attenuation and detention basins, swales etc but we found it helpful in the meeting with Barratt's. It gives useful clues about what to look for when monitoring such structures and what shows they are not working properly. We hope they will produce one for monitoring underground features such as attenuation tanks, culverts etc.

I am thinking about going to their one day conference in York on 5 March.

### **4. Monitoring SuDS features**

I think the Group should start doing this for the Birdland Estate, prior to the next stage of the application for the Tesni development coming forward. We will need to find out who the maintenance company is for the development. While the man in charge of the planners at Breckland is leaving for a job up north, he is arranging for us to have a contact with a senior planning officer about such things.

We can then also look at the ones for Saddler's Rise and other newer developments.

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