

Dear Resident

## The Clock Is Ticking!

Grainger has now submitted its formal planning applications. In brief, these are:

- Site **A** – The Valley Site (planning ref **S/00872/08/FUL** and **S/00869/08/CAC**)  
Twelve three-bed houses, eight replacement garages and two parking spaces. Loss of a significant proportion of the allotments and 90 garages
- Site **B** – (Corner Site of Margaret Grove and Moorpool Avenue) no submission. Allotments to be reinstated.
- Site **C** – Triangle off Ravenhurst Road (planning ref **S/00874/08/FUL** and **S/00870/08/CAC**)  
Three three-bedroom houses, three replacement garages and five parking spaces. Loss of 40 garages.
- Site **D** – (Corner Site off West Pathway) no submission
- Site **Ei** – Wentworth Gate/West Pathway Site (planning ref **S/00873/08/FUL** and **S/00871/08/CAC**)  
One three-bed house in Wentworth Gate. Loss of 3 garages.
- Site **F** – (The Square off Carless Avenue) no submission.

These proposals were shown publicly on January 26<sup>th</sup> and full details are available from the Planning Department web site at [www.birmingham.gov.uk/planningonline](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/planningonline). Copies are also available at the local office (by appointment) or Harborne Library and we will try to have copies available locally through the Residents' Association.

The MRG has reviewed these proposals and would like to make the following points:

- These proposals **affect everyone** on the Estate. Although the proposals are in a reduced form compared to previous plans, further planning applications may be submitted in the future. Indeed, should planning permission be granted for sites A, C and E, it is likely to provide a toe-hold for future development.
- **There is no benefit to the Community.** In their original proposals Grainger were offering some return to the estate with the possibility of a community trust, a recreational area and road improvements. These have now been **withdrawn** and Grainger is offering little assurance even on the much-needed repairs and upgrading of facilities at the Hall, despite the significant profit it would make on the houses it would build should planning permission be granted.
- These proposals still result in **loss of allotments** on the Valley Site and create a precedent that threatens all Estate allotments. The current plots behind the flats on Ravenhurst Road will be considerably reduced for road access, while those fringing gardens in Moorpool Avenue and Margaret Grove, together with other natural areas, will be lost. This would represent a serious loss of green resources that should be nurtured. Reinstating the allotments on Site B, while welcome, is not a replacement.
- These proposals will mean the **loss of over 120 garages** on Sites A and C, being replaced with 11 garages and 7 parking spaces. This will result in more vehicles competing for street parking, with the additional potential problem of overspill parking from the proposed new developments. Suggesting that there are sufficient available garages on the estate as a whole, based on highly debatable numbers, is not an acceptable alternative.

### What Can You Do?

The MRG, together with the MRA and other residents' organisations, will be lodging objections to these proposals. However, **every individual objection is also vitally important**. If, like many, you feel that the proposed developments are unacceptable, then you have only a short time to lodge your objection (by **March 19th**). I would urge you to do so as soon as possible as the number of written objections will carry considerable influence.

Objections should be by letter to Planning Management, Birmingham City Council, PO Box 28, Alpha Tower, Suffolk Street Queensway, Birmingham. B1 1TU or by e-mail to [planning.enquiries@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:planning.enquiries@birmingham.gov.uk) and should quote the planning number(s) of the proposal(s) you are objecting to. These are Site A (S/00872/08/FUL), Site C (S/00874/08/FUL) and Site Ei (S/00873/08/FUL). If you wish to object to all the proposals, it is not necessary to write three letters, just insert all three planning numbers into one letter and it will be treated as three separate objections. You may also consider contacting your MP and local councillors to record your objection and elicit their support (their addresses and contact details are given at the end of this letter). If you prefer, you can put your letter in the MRA post box at the Circle (in an addressed envelope) and we will send these on your behalf as a bundle, but please make sure we have them a week before the deadline.

Those objecting to these proposals will all have different, and sometimes individual, reasons for doing so. I am not providing a template letter, as I would urge each of you to write with your own particular concerns. Having said that, the following is a list of the issues that the Council are likely to take particular notice of:

### **Character of the Estate**

The Moorpool Estate was built according to "Garden Suburb" principles, and has Conservation Area status. The residents of the Estate are committed to maintaining the character and ethos of the Estate - in 2006 residents opted for a 4(2) Direction, which places further tight restrictions on development.

The idea behind the original design was to bring some of the best features of country living in to the city. Each house is slightly different from the others, avoiding repetitive or symmetrical design, with fresh air and sunshine entering on all sides. At the same time there is great architectural consistency of design across all the houses of the Estate. It was designed as a whole, integrating housing and green spaces throughout.

Grainger's proposals cut across these principles, and damage the character of the Estate. They overdevelop available space with housing of unimaginative, rectilinear, repetitive design, removing significant green space, notably allotments. Some parts of the Estate are run down (notably the Valley Site), but the solution is not to fill those parts with new housing.

### **Urban Space**

The original founders of the Estate had the foresight to plan an integrated environment with "better houses, more gardens and more open spaces for playgrounds for children" (1908 *prospectus*). Current planning regulations also recognise this important aspect and have open space requirements. Grainger's proposals remove current open spaces in an area that is significantly lacking in parks and play areas.

### **Loss of Allotments**

Under Grainger's proposals, a number of existing allotments will be replaced with residential properties. Under paragraph 3.62A of the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP), redevelopment of allotments should only be allowed in exceptional circumstances and where demand has fallen. This is not the case on the Estate, nor locally or nationally, so no development on the allotments should be allowed.

In addition, proposed replacement allotment space on site B does not create new allotments – it reactivates existing ones.

### **Streets Less Pedestrian, Cycle and Vehicle Friendly**

Grainger's proposals will lead to more on street parking in two ways:

1. Owners of the sorts of houses Grainger proposes to build often have more than the two cars anticipated per property. The overspill will have to go on the street.
2. Grainger's proposals do not offer enough secure substitute parking for the current users of the off-street parking areas.

The road system of the Estate is unable to cater for more on street parking and traffic. Passing points and access for emergency and refuse vehicles are already seriously compromised by these factors on roads such as Moor Pool Avenue and Margaret Grove.

This will make the streets less pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly, a particular concern for elderly residents, those with young children and those who opt for "greener" travel.

The under use of the existing off-street parking areas is due to a failure since 1996 (by BPT and subsequently Grainger) to maintain those areas. This has led to parts falling in to disrepair. Some residents are forced to park cars on the street, while off-street parking remains vacant because it is not fit for use. The solution lies in making the areas fit for purpose, not in building houses on them.

### **Ecology Issues**

Allotments, hedgerows and trees are a significant natural resource and provide corridors for the natural movement of species. They are also an integral part of a garden suburb, designed to incorporate green spaces.

Grainger's proposals should be rejected because they result in the destruction of the natural habitat of many birds, animals and plants, notably sparrows, badgers, frogs, toads etc. The gardens for the new houses would be no substitute for the allotments, hedgerows and trees destroyed.

New trees planted because of the destruction of mature ones would also be no substitute in terms of habitat. It takes decades for new trees to re-establish the same habitat. Tree removal and premature replacement would undermine the character of the Estate - a key aspect of a 100 year old garden suburb is its mature trees and the precious habitats they provide.

## Previous Planning Application Rejected

In 1996, an outline application for residential development on allotments on the eastern end of Margaret Grove was refused by the Council. Two key reasons for this refusal were:

1. The destruction of allotments was contrary to the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP);  
and
2. The proposal involved the loss of an area of urban open space of public value.

These two points are even more relevant to Grainger's application than they were to the application in 1996 due to the scope of the redevelopment now proposed. Grainger's application should be refused on similar grounds.

## Flooding Risk

Gardens and properties on the Estate, in particular adjoining the Valley Site, have experienced flooding recently and Grainger has not remedied this situation. Building houses on the Valley Site will increase run off and surface water increasing flooding risk. Grainger has not satisfactorily addressed the current flooding problems, never mind the increased flooding risk inherent in their proposals.

If you wish to include one or more of the above points in addition to your own objections, then you are welcome to do so. But please use your own words so that we cannot be accused of template objections. If you feel you are able to copy e-mail or letters to us so that we can gauge the level of feeling on the proposals then we would be most grateful.

And, finally, why not show your support by displaying the back of this page in your front window...

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Proposed Development		Planning Reference nos
Site A	The Valley Site	S/00872/08/FUL and S/00869/08/CAC
Site C	Ravenhurst Road Garages	S/00874/08/FUL and S/00870/08/CAC
Site Ei	Wentworth Gate	S/00873/08/FUL and S/00871/08/CAC

**JUST  
SAY  
NO!**

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**TO GRAINGER**

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