

Moorpool Allotment Association.



64, Margaret Grove, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 9JL. Tel 0121 426 5669

Email: rob@suttides.freeserve.co.uk

Mr Simon Turner.
The Planning Department,
PO Box 28,
9th. Floor, Alpha Tower,
Suffolk Street Queensway,
Birmingham, B1 1TU.

Copy to:
Moor Pool Residents Association.
Moor Pool Regeneration Group.

11th May 2009.

MAA/RS/005

Dear Mr Turner.

I am writing to register what I consider are inaccuracies with the application reports specifically Site A, S/00872/08/FUL.

I am also aware of and support the contents of the recent letter to you from the MRG and the enclosure of the English Heritage appraisal.

Your report mentions a sum of £5000 offered to the Moor Pool Allotment Association for improvements. You cite the Allotment Officer who supports the retention and improvement of plots within the Estate as proposed and that "the stated qualitative improvements are in line with those generally provided for City allotment sites". (4/67). If we consider the remaining allotments but excluding Allotment Site B we find that there would be 62 allotments. Dividing this number into £5000 give an average figure of £80.65 each. This sum would not buy an allotment tool shed for each plot let alone composting facilities and a water supply included in the rental cost, and proper access, all of which would need to be provided to be "in line with those generally provided for City allotment sites". BCC sites can also have WC facilities, landscape maintenance and often a communal meeting room of some sort. You will know that the Moor Pool allotments are distributed over a number of areas and it is impractical for water to be supplied. Are you stating that there is now an agreement by the applicant to match the facilities offered by BCC allotments or are you under the impression that the equivalent BCC facilities can be provided for by the sum of £5000? I would suggest that that is impossible. What then are these "stated qualitative improvements"?

I am deeply concerned too about the little weight given to damage to the Site A allotments from the installation of SUDS. I would be interested to hear what historical evidence there is to support the practicality and long term effects of

such a proposal and whether if the installation of SUDS on BCC sites was proposed, it would be similarly supported by your Allotment Officer.

I see no mention of the maintenance requirements of SUDS or consideration given to future replacement with allotments and hedging in place. Neither does the report consider how SUDS will require restriction on allotment use and how this will be managed.

You suggest that the allotments were laid out for wartime food supply, (9/67) whereas they were an integral and important part of the Estates original design ethos in 1907, pre-dating both world wars. As such they are as important a feature, as for example the Bowling Green or Tennis Courts. Specifically they provided open space and healthy eating which Nettlefold and the other proponents of the estate contrasted with the conditions provided by the back-to-backs. This is clearly stated in the original prospectus. As an example of good layout the provision and availability of allotments within close proximity to dwellings was not only important then but even more so now. In any modern Estate layout such thinking would be considered exemplary. The importance of this aspect of the allotments has not been made clear or given sufficient weight in the report to the Committee. The comments by English Heritage and historical evidence support my points.

The lack of detail attributed to the allotments previous use underlines the need for a proper character appraisal and management plan. Any character appraisal would clearly reference the allotments relationship to the design intent and provide a basis for a more informed decision.

You also suggest that the allotments are a fairly uniform size and rectangular shape. (10/67) This is quite wrong with many allotment areas of irregular shape resulting in great variation. There are indeed 11 distinctly different allotment areas on Moor Pool excluding those potentially lost on Site A. These differences are important because it shows the intent to provide allotment space wherever possible and close to houses.

The demand for allotments relative to the number available is not made sufficiently clear. Nor is the number of allotments on the applicants own waiting list stated. The MAA can evidence demand if necessary.

The MAA and MRA objection also requested allotment restoration or open space as a condition of demolition and this point has been raised in the MRG letter. The MAA sees no reason why the restoration of allotments which are actually on Site A and which previously existed, should be discounted as a condition particularly in view of the assertion by Harborne Tenants (A company owned by the applicant) that these allotments were needed to satisfy the parking problems which were manifesting themselves. As we clearly pointed out, if the applicant can prove that parking is no longer an issue then these areas should rightly be returned to their former use.

The agreement which seems to have been struck between the Planning Department and the Applicant has also undermined the MAA efforts to bring back into use the allotments elsewhere on Moor Pool. I quote the following from communications with Grainger.

2.4.2009

Dear Phil (Nelson)

We agreed at our allotment meeting that we should like to take the allotments as they are. Because of the time of year most tenants would probably spend the remainder of the year clearing in preparation for next. Can we proceed on this basis and come up with a plan for dealing with the waiting list?

.....
*Kind regards
Rob Sutton.*

----- Original Message -----

*From: Rob Sutton
To: Phil Nelson
Sent: Thursday, March 26, 2009 6:47 PM
Subject: Re: Moorpool Viability Study*

Dear Phil

.....
As far as the allotments go I know that originally the plan was to let these cleared. However it is my view and I will discuss it at our Spring AGM on Tuesday that we would rather have them let as they are, and indeed clearance could do more harm than good if not done properly. Thats not to say that any money saved couldn't be put to use by the allotment association! I will let you know the thoughts on this after the meeting.

*Kind regards
Rob Sutton.*

----- Original Message -----

*From: Phil Nelson
To: rob@suttdes.freeseve.co.uk
Sent: Thursday, March 26, 2009 9:07 AM
Subject: Moorpool Viability Study*

Dear Rob,

..... *With regard to the vacant allotments on sites not affected by our planning application, it remains our intention to work towards re-letting them and we are currently obtaining prices for the work required. I will advise you further once this process is completed.*

If you need to discuss these matters further, please let me know.

Kind Regards

Phil Nelson Regional Manager grainger plc

It is clear from these and other communications that the other sites would be re-instated anyway and are not a factor in mitigating the loss of Site A allotments. Indeed by the Planning Department allowing them to be introduced as such, it is likely their re-introduction has been delayed. Despite the condition these allotments have fallen into as a result of Graingers 'management', they can be cleared by hand reasonably quickly. Given that the main planting season is coming to an end, the remainder of the year could have been devoted to arranging tenancies and thorough clearance. BCC allotments such as Pereira Rd have in the past been 'cleared' by bringing in a tractor and implements. This is not practical on Moor Pool and does not remove deep seated weeds. If this is what your Allotment Officer has in mind and which has been discussed with the Applicant it is not a viable or acceptable option. Hand clearance is the only

satisfactory method for Moor Pool and I would not rely on anyone other than the allotment tenant to do a satisfactory clearance.

I must also point out that the Bowling Green and Moor Pool are not open to the public as your report suggests, but are leased by Grainger to the fishing club and bowling club respectively, and cannot therefore be included within the open space calculations.

We are surprised that the planning department have agreed a change of use with the applicant for Site B, without any consultation of local residents or Councillors. Bearing in mind the proposal is that it should be for public benefit, public consultation should be carried out.

I have looked at these allotments on Site B with a local allotment Chairman and they are certainly restorable. Any assertion that they are not restorable is wrong. We also believe there would be far less impact from an allotment tenant working their allotment compared to the disturbance from unsupervised groups milling around in this so called 'low-key recreational' area, if the issue is that you are concerned about the effect on wildlife.

We would also question how you will ensure a 'suitable management regime' (10/67) and how this will differ from the current management regime which has allowed garages to become derelict, allotments overgrown, footpaths unsafe for access, and open areas on Carless Avenue overgrown and unkempt?

I request that the Planning Committee should be appraised of the points I have raised and allowed to give them full consideration.

Yours sincerely

Rob Sutton.
Chair Moor Pool Allotment Association.