

Good Morning,

Firstly I would like to thank you for contacting Vistry advising of your concerns and comments etc and also apologise for the delay in responding.

It is fully appreciated the distress and concern caused by the removal of the trees and the impact it will have on the local area and I will therefore try and address the points raised in this single response. It is my intention to also circulate this response to the Parish Councils of Collingtree and East Hunsbury, together with the Collingtree Residents FB Group to hopefully make it visible to as many in the local community as possible.

I will now move through the main points in turn

### **Perceived lack of consultation**

Since the overall site was consented at Appeal and the Outline Planning Permission was granted there have been several planning applications for the area of land currently being developed which is the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the overall development. Whilst there have been several iterations of planning applications submitted, and approved, these are all very similar and any amendments have primarily been changes to the house types proposed with very minor adjustments made to the layout of the on site roads and footpaths etc. Importantly no additional trees are being removed than was originally planned and approved.

These applications have been approved over several years and for each and every planning application submitted the same consultation process would've been followed by the Council. This process entails the local council, formerly Northampton BC undertaking the following:

- advise the application has been submitted through site notices and adverts etc, together with displaying it on the planning section of the Council website
- undertaking formal consultation with all relevant consultees, of which there are many
- the report written by the council officer being submitted to Ward Councillors sitting on the planning committee
- and finally the application being determined by the Ward Councillors sitting on the Planning Committee who will ultimately decide whether the proposal is acceptable or not.

All of the above consultation and associated reports etc are available to view on the West Northamptonshire Council website under the planning section.

### **Why are the works required**

As per the attached plan, the tree felling and scrub clearance is required to allow the bus turning point to be constructed together with the roads and footpaths fronting dwellings 342 – 334 and 317 – 309.

Further along the footpath but set further back the additional tree clearance is required to make way for dwellings 291 – 283 and 265 – 258.

In addition to the above some trees have been removed within the golf course itself together with a small section of trees at the bottom of the footpath where it turns 90 degrees to run parallel to the golf course. This is the route for the drainage where it leaves the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the development, passes through golf course and continues into the fields beyond the footpath before discharging into Wootton Brook. These works are planned to commence next month.

Any areas where the footpath route is damaged or made unsafe by the removal of the tree stumps will be reinstated.

### **Timing of works**

The tree felling works are planned so they can be undertaken prior to the commencement of the bird nesting season thereby enabling the road etc to be constructed in the coming months.

It is understood criticism has been levelled at the Parish councils for not communicating the extent of the tree felling works earlier etc however with the principle of these works being agreed and subsequently consented many years ago the outcome would have been the same. The only part of the process which was flexible was the timing. Understandably the Parish Council did not want to advise as to the date of the works commencing until the Order for the footpath closure had become effective and initially I had wanted the footpath closure to come into effect on the 31<sup>st</sup> January , however due to the lack of availability of the specialist machinery required etc the works had to be put back a week at relatively short notice.

Comments have been made in relation to the fact the Order is dated the 20<sup>th</sup> January and therefore the closure would've been known about several weeks ago. I have no idea as to why the Order is dated as such because I only received official confirmation from West Northants Council on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February. Up until the point the Order is issued there is no certainty the footpath closure could go ahead.

For a short closure such as this of 5 days or less, the Order can generally be turned around within a week or so which is why the timescales were so tight.

### **Ecological & Landscaping Concerns**

Ecological reports and landscaping proposals were submitted at the application stage and these would've been considered by Northampton Borough Council and the other consultees accordingly prior to grant of Permission.

### **Long Term Status of Footpath**

Firstly it is important to state that some of the route that is currently walked is not on the actual legal route of the footpath as defined by the Definitive Map, as per the plan displayed where the route is closed together with a copy also attached.

At the current time the longer term plan for this footpath is not confirmed however there is a sum of money specified within the s106 to allow improvements to footpaths KG3 and KG4 amongst other areas to be undertaken under the Sustainable Transport Contribution section for which a sum of £568.5k is payable and is made up of the following items:

Towcester Road and London Road Bus priority measures	£126k
Cycle Lanes on Hilldrop Road and Penvale Road	£80k
<b>Upgrades to the lighting of public right of way KG2</b>	<b>£137.5K</b>
<b>Upgrades to public rights of way KG3 and KG4</b>	<b>£225K</b>

Within 1.4 of the Second Schedule it is stated that the Owner (i.e Vistry) shall pay £452.5k prior to the first occupation of the 189<sup>th</sup> dwelling; and

Within 1.5 of the Second Schedule it is stated that the Owner shall pay £116k prior to the first occupation of the 379<sup>th</sup> dwelling

Numerous comments have been made in relation to the desire to keep this section of footpath in as natural a form as possible and therefore this request should be made to both Collingtree and East Hunsbury Parish Councils together with any preferences because ultimately Vistry will not be delivering these 'improvements', WNC will be. Suggestions received include possibly overlaying the footpath in a gravel or hoggin type material , or alternatively wood chippings to make it more accessible for all whilst keeping its rustic feel. It can be appreciated that there are differing views however all of the comments received have confirmed those writing will miss the rustic feel. Other suggestions include the provision of dog waste bins.

### **Road Crossing through the Footpath**

I have spoken with the Definitive Map Officer at WNC in relation as to what happens relating to the footpath where the road will cross it and I have been advised this will form part of the decision making process when the planning Application is submitted. I am therefore writing to advise that this planning application is due to be submitted within the next 4 weeks and I will inform the Parish Councils and the Residents FB Group when this happens so that they have an opportunity to comment etc.

Suggestions relating to this element received to date include a gated crossing either side of the road made from timber as opposed to metal to maintain the rustic feel.

Hopefully the above addresses the majority of the points raised recently relating to the footpath and the tree felling etc and provides clarity to the situation but should any questions remain please do not hesitate to make contact again.

Regards

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