

**12/02173/OUT, OS Field 4570 Woodgate Road, East Leake.
Response from East Leake Neighbourhood Plan Project Team**

A large tranche of new housing has been built in East Leake in recent years and needs time to become assimilated. In order for East Leake to now develop into a fully rounded and sustainable community rather than a collection of disjointed commuter estates, future developments require thought and phasing, along with a prioritised plan for infrastructure development to support the additional population.

Plans for a total of 547 homes in East Leake have now been submitted for planning permission. This is far beyond the minimum allocation proposed in Rushcliffe Borough Council's core strategy, and if all approved would place an undue burden on East Leake, not least because the developments would all take place at the start of the planning period, rather than being phased.

Furthermore the demand is for homes that extend the principal urban area of Nottingham, and East Leake is one of the furthest settlements from Nottingham, with poor transport links, so development here does not meet the requirement.

East Leake Parish Council has formed a Project Team to produce a Neighbourhood Plan to cover the Neighbourhood Area of the East Leake Parish, and the area has been approved by Rushcliffe Borough Council. See <http://www.east-leake.gov.uk/east-leake-neighbourhood-plan>.

A vision statement has been drafted, and will shortly be distributed to the residents of the village for comment. The Neighbourhood Plan will establish planning principles that take forward the aspirations in the vision under the following headings:

- A viable community (community feel / employment)
- Green environment
- An attractive village centre
- Easier to get around (walking, cycling, wider links)
- Better facilities and services
- Housing for all

The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to identify specific sites for housing development; however the contents are likely include the following:

- An envelope for built development around East Leake
- A plan for phasing over the whole 13 year planning period the minimum 400 additional homes required by the Borough Council (assuming their proposed core strategy is approved)
- Specification and prioritisation of infrastructure requirements for the additional housing (including Health Centre, Schools, Sewerage, Car Parking, Village Centre, Transport, etc)
- Target numbers for different housing types/size
- Preferred housing design/styles
- Size of developments (large v small estates)
- Infill v green field developments
- Preferred locations for different types of housing
- Excellent pedestrian and cycle connectivity between existing and new housing areas, and between new housing areas and facilities and employment
- Areas targeted for development to provide employment.

A Community-led plan for East Leake is being developed alongside the Neighbourhood Plan by the East Leake Community Plan Group, which recently surveyed all households in East Leake on a range of issues, including a section on Planning and Housing to inform the Neighbourhood Plan. The survey achieved a response rate of 38.6% and results will be available shortly. It is likely that the results will confirm past consultations and demonstrate that the majority of residents:

- are opposed to building on greenfield sites
- believe that smaller homes should be built rather than more large executive houses
- would prefer smaller developments to large new estates
- oppose expansion of the village over and above the minimum 400 houses already proposed

- believe any homes should be phased in over the planning period, not all built immediately
- think that the village infrastructure should be improved before further development takes place.

Approval of any large developments at this time would pre-empt and undermine the planning processes that are under way, at both the Neighbourhood and Borough levels. The community survey results are imminent and it is these that should inform future developments in East Leake, not the financial interest of developers in a hurried “first past the post” race.

What is proposed on the Woodgate site lacks imagination, innovation and distinctiveness, and there are some serious areas of concern specific to this development:

- **Poor footpath connectivity with neighbouring “Trees” estate and countryside footpaths.**
- **Problematic vehicle access and pedestrian access to bus stop.**
- **Extension of village envelope and visibility of development above ridge lines**
- **Various problems arising from the proximity of the railway line.**

The NP project team has made a preliminary assessment of the scheme proposed against the latest version of the Design Council’s [Building for life criteria](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/), see <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/>, and this is included below. It details further areas of concern and suggestions for improving the scheme.

Note that this response is from the Neighbourhood Plan Project Team, and is offered in addition to the formal response of the Parish Council via its Planning Committee.

ASSESSMENT OF WOODGATE ROAD PROPOSALS AGAINST BUILDING FOR LIFE CRITERIA

INTEGRATING INTO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Criteria	Neighbourhood Plan Group’s Comments	Score
<p>1. <u>Connections:</u> Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones; whilst also respecting existing buildings and land uses along the boundaries of the development site?</p>	<p>Not met.</p> <p>This development is physically isolated in terms of access.</p> <p>No attempt has been made to integrate the development with properties on Orchard Close / Sycamore Road estate. A single access road from Woodgate Road, not much below the brow of the hill, seems problematic. The staggered junction at the location shown will be intrusive for existing residents, and dangerous for pedestrians.</p> <p>Positioning the access road across from the existing junction with Rempstone road and forming a proper junction with pedestrian crossing etc, and possibly a roundabout, should be considered. This could possibly be conceived as a feature, reflecting the route of the old road to West Leake and the ancient crossroads at this point. However there would still be concerns about visibility.</p> <p>No attempt has been made to link to the existing footpath immediately to the east of the site. The route via the existing footpath is cited as a connector with the adjacent “Trees” estate, but this involves exiting the site, walking alongside a busy road, and up a flight of steps. Footpath access via Orchard Close, on the other hand, could potentially provide level access, suitable for baby buggies and mobility scooters, providing safe and convenient access for the residents of the trees estate to the new amenity space. A</p>	<p>Red</p>

	<p>cycle route could potentially be created.</p> <p>Similarly, whilst the application acknowledges the presence of a footpath along the ridge west of the railway line, there is no means of reaching this from the most westerly part of the site. A public footpath within the site to the corner by the railway bridge, and a pavement across the bridge to the existing footpath would be a relatively low cost option for the developers to provide but would significantly improve the network of off-road footpaths for the village, avoiding the difficult walking route along the road.</p> <p>As far as the footpaths within the scheme are concerned, in places they pass to the rear or side of proposed and existing houses, in contradiction to the recommendation of the Building for Life standard.</p>	
<p>2. Facilities and Services: Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as a school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?</p>	<p>Not met. There are serious concerns.</p> <p>Primary School provision, as the catchment area school is over capacity at present.</p> <p>The village centre can only just be considered within walking distance, especially for the less mobile and people carrying heavy shopping uphill.</p> <p>The library and Health Centre are both in urgent need of replacement/improvement. The Health Centre is already inadequate for the needs of existing residents.</p> <p>There is already insufficient parking, both short stay and long stay, in the centre of the village, and the distance of this site from the village centre would generate many additional vehicle journeys.</p> <p>The foul water sewerage system in the village is already operating at or above its design capacity, and there have been instances of discharge of foul water into the brook in extreme weather conditions. In our view the upgrading of the system is essential to accommodate additional housing in the village. We have no specialist knowledge to determine whether the existing sewer in that part of the village can accommodate the additional demand.</p> <p>The proposed pond uphill from properties on Sycamore Road could provide an increased risk to those properties and the railway line if the scheme is not designed properly and well maintained on an ongoing basis. There is lying pond water/ditch water on the site that does not seem to have been considered.</p> <p>The provision of allotments at the back of this proposed development seems unusual. If the intention is that they are for use by the wider community rather than just this estate, it would seem more appropriate to provide direct access to them without having to drive past many of the houses.</p> <p>There are no shops, pubs, cafes etc included in the scheme.</p>	Red
<p>3. Public Transport: Does the scheme have easy access to public transport to</p>	<p>Partially met. The bus stops are within walking distance, but not close to the site, and involve crossing a busy road with traffic turning in several directions, with no provision made for a crossing. The</p>	Amber

<p>help reduce car dependency?</p>	<p>“two minute walk” referred to in the documentation is more than a little ambitious! The bus services have their limitations, and need to be improved, e.g. addition of a late evening bus from Loughborough.</p> <p>The section on sustainability in the Transport Assessment asserts that pupils could travel by bus to Harry Carlton. This is unaffordable for many families. The fare structure does not encourage short distance trips within the village, particularly on an occasional basis. The bus would not therefore be frequently used. This underlines the need for good, off-road, pedestrian/cycle links.</p> <p>There is no cycle route associated with the scheme.</p>	
<p>4. <u>Meeting Local Housing requirements</u>: Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?</p>	<p>Not met. Indicative information suggests that, apart from the affordable housing, the focus is on larger executive housing, whereas the demand is for smaller units such as starter homes.</p> <p>There is nothing in the scheme that suggests live/work possibilities.</p>	Red

CREATING A PLACE

<p>5. <u>Character</u>: Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?</p>	<p>Not met. This feels like another anonymous area of standard new suburban housing development. There is no distinctive vision.</p>	Red
<p>6. <u>Working with the site and its context</u>: Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates?</p>	<p>Not met. There are several areas of concern.</p> <p>The site is neighboured in several places by bungalows. Having houses next to them is out of scale and invasive for the residents, especially since the site is higher than most of the adjacent bungalows.</p> <p>Although efforts have been made to contain the built area of the site to the east of the ridge, and to protect the ridge through plantings, it remains clear that the upper parts of this development would be seen above the natural ridgeline which currently defines the village boundary to the west.</p> <p>It suggests that the western part of the site would be designated a play /natural area. There is no detail and no indication of how this area would be managed. There are concerns that the play area has no overlooking to render it safe for unattended play.</p> <p>It should be noted that, contrary to the developer’s assertions, the adjacent railway line is NOT disused. It carries commercial traffic to British Gypsum and also heritage trains, and its use could increase. East Leake residents already living elsewhere alongside this line have raised concerns about the recent increase in traffic. There is nothing in the scheme about mitigating the noise impact.</p> <p>The railway runs through a deep cutting at this point, and there are concerns that the development, particularly the proposed pond, could destabilise the bank.</p> <p>The railway cutting ecology is of value and there is nothing in the scheme to increase the size of this area or protect it from</p>	Red

	<p>neighbouring houses and allotments (dumping rubbish, trespass etc). A buffer area should be considered. To protect the ecology of the site any high fencing would need to be permeable to wildlife and allow light into the cutting.</p> <p>The windmill on the site should either be protected so that the site is completely undisturbed, or subject to archaeological examination to determine its historical value before planning permission is granted.</p> <p>The route of the roman road believed to run through the area should be established and ant necessary steps take for its preservation/excavation.</p> <p>The fact that the ecological survey discovered only four species of (large) birds is astonishing – perhaps they were not looking very hard.</p>	
<p>7. <u>Creating well defined streets and spaces:</u> Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well.</p>	<p>Not met.</p> <p>The indicative layout provides no evidence of good design. Buildings do not appear to have been designed to turn corners. Front doors do not always face the street. There is no clear hierarchy of streets.</p>	Red
<p>8. <u>Easy to find your way around:</u> Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?</p>	<p>Navigation is aided by the nature of the sloping site. However there do not appear to be any landmarks incorporated to improve orientation, and the twisting nature of many of the streets may be problematic. Entry via a crossroads with Rempstone Road and a straight internal access road could improve navigation.</p>	Amber

STREET AND HOME

<p>9. <u>Streets for all:</u> Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?</p>	<p>Insufficient information to judge There is no provision for cyclists. It is difficult to see how the streets will function as social spaces.</p>	Red
<p>10. <u>Car parking:</u> Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?</p>	<p>Insufficient information to judge.</p>	Red
<p>11. <u>Public and private spaces:</u> Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?</p>	<p>Insufficient information to judge.</p> <p>Nothing is included about street/footpath lighting or maintenance of vegetation, which could lead to dark, unsafe areas. No management plan is included. There is no strong articulation of methods of increasing biodiversity and/or supporting native species.</p> <p>The play/natural area to the west of the site is potentially a useful amenity but poorly overlooked and not well positioned to maximise usage. Its position near a steep railway cutting needs to be considered. It cannot easily be accessed by residents of the adjacent trees estate.</p>	Red

<p>12. <u>External storage and amenity space:</u> Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles?</p>	<p>Not met. There is no detail to determine this</p>	<p>Red</p>