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Northumberland Wildlife Trust



People taking action for wildlife

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

29th July 2011

Director of Development
North Tyneside Council
Planning – 1st Floor Left
Quadrant East
The Silverlink North
Cobalt Business Park
North Tyneside
NE27 0BY

F.A.O. Sarah Davitt

Dear Madam,

Your reference: 11/01358/FUL

Location: Land At White House Farm Station Road

Grid Ref: Easting: 426799, Northing: 570918

Proposal: Residential development of 267 executive dwellings with new roundabout and access, incorporating ancillary landscaping, wildlife corridors, open space and additional highways works, and an outline application for up to 465 square metres of ancillary commercial development (Use Class A1/A2/A3/A4)

Applicant: Bellway Homes (North East) Ltd

Thank you for consulting Northumberland Wildlife Trust on the above application.

The Trust would like to **object** to the above planning application at the current time as we believe that, for overriding reasons, the land at White House Farm is not an appropriate site for development and that the slow strangulation of green space, particularly through loss of agricultural land, in the area is extremely worrying. We note that the applicant has attempted to address these concerns through the accompanying environmental statement, but we feel this is an issue more to do with land allocations within the UDP and draft LDF and as such is a fundamental issue for the planning authority to consider.

The Trust has previously commented on this application during the scoping and consultation phase and many of those comments remain relevant. However, the Trust is dismayed to see that many of our suggestions and concerns have not been taken into account and that the ecological report consistently uses sweeping, unsubstantiated statements (for example - "effects of disturbance ...are likely to be limited as the site already suffers high levels of disturbance from users of the public footpath and their dogs."), while no mention of the presence of Local Wildlife Sites and the labelling of the habitat as of "local to parish conservation value" (especially for farmland birds) is distinctly worrying.



Garden House, St Nicholas Park, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 3XT

Chief Executive Mike Pratt Patrons Bill Oddie, Chris Packham, Conrad Dickinson, James Joicey
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The Trust still supports and agrees with many of the concerns raised by both the Natural History Society of Northumbria and Natural England, but would like to especially highlight its **considerable concern** that the cumulative loss of open farmland habitats in North Tyneside would have an adverse effect on biodiversity, particularly farmland birds. This has also to be considered with regard to similar pressures in Newcastle and Northumberland arising from development such as the SW Sector of Cramlington.

This concern is further supported by the fact that the ecological report recorded 77 territories of 33 species during the breeding bird and walkover surveys on the site. Of these recorded species, **7 species are listed as being of principal importance for conservation** under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Furthermore, the Trust feels that this development along with the subsequent low cost housing development planned as part of the mitigation for this site will have a serious negative impact on the wildlife and carrying capacity for such wildlife in the area. This includes several BAP species recorded on site such as common toad, otter, hedgehog and brown hare, as well as several important bird species (skylark, linnet, lapwing amongst others).

Lastly, the Trust is concerned that there has been no wider mitigation to counter against the general loss of arable land in North Tyneside (of which there is not abundance as stated in the ecological report!) and we feel that the ecology measures of £35 000 to be spent at Gosforth Park is rather pitiful when compared to the overall financial contribution by the developers. However, at this time, we feel that it is not appropriate to discuss the finer details of the application but will be pleased to deal with this, including any amendments to the ecology measures of the development, at a later stage.

I hope these comments are useful. Please do not hesitate to the Trust should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Steve Lowe
Head of Conservation Bsc (Hons) CEnv MIEEM

Cc: James Littlewood, NHSN
Natural England
Derek Hilton-Brown, Newcastle City Council



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