

Whalebones plan revised ahead of application

A woodland walkway, a healing garden and children's play area are among the latest proposals for inclusion in the fields and woods that make up the Whalebones estate in Wood Street, Barnet, where developers are proposing to build around 150 new homes

Revised plans for the development were presented at a public meeting in early February in preparation for an application to Barnet Council for planning approval.

Trustees for the Whalebones estate – one of High Barnet's much-loved green spaces between Wood Street and Barnet Hospital – have been working with Waltham Abbey housebuilders Hill on proposals for the construction of houses and flats in the farmland directly opposite the Arkley public house.

To offset approval for the new housing – in the 7.6-acre field beside the new Elmbank development – the trustees intend to create two areas of parkland and a woodland walkway open to the public with access from Wood Street and Wellhouse Lane.

After holding a series of consultations in recent months with local residents and community groups, Hill's planning design manager, Jeremy Thurlby, told the Barnet Society that their design work was almost complete.

However, the architects, Pollard Thomas Edwards, were keen to hear reaction, and would amend their proposals where possible.

Mr Thurlby said Hill believed they had responded to issues that had caused concern.

- The number of new homes to be constructed has been reduced from around 170 to 180 to "just over 150" with a mix of houses of two to two-and-a-half storeys in height and blocks of flats of three to three-and-a-half storeys.



A new roundabout would be built beside the Arkley public house to give access to a new housing estate planned for the farmland around Whalebones



Well Cottage, at the top of Wellhouse Lane, which is the home of Whalebones tenant farmer Peter Mason, would retain sufficient land for rearing geese and poultry. Originally two cottages, dating back to around 1650, it was the home of well keepers who supplied water for the horses of the carters and drovers who stopped off in Barnet when taking hay and forage into London or when leaving with loads of horse manure and ash.

- Space has been found to relocate the geese and poultry reared by Peter Mason who has a life-time tenancy of the small agricultural holding that is next door to the original Whalebones house (which is privately owned and is not part of the development).

- Another breakthrough has been to secure the support of a specialist charitable group, the Land Trust, which is prepared to take on the ownership and management of parkland and woodland walkway and would guarantee continued public access.

The largest area of public parkland would be in the field closest to the Wood Street-Wellhouse Lane junction.

This would include what Hill describe as a healing garden, laid out with shrubs and benches, and would provide what Mr Thurlby hoped would be a quiet sitting area for patients and visitors to Barnet Hospital.

Another attraction would be a children's play area – for children in the 6 to 12 age range – which would be laid out in a woodland setting, perhaps with logs for climbing and other equipment.

The land proposed for rearing geese and poultry would face on to Wellhouse Lane next to Well Cottage, the home of Peter Mason and his wife Jill.

He has been farming the land around Whalebones since 1962. The late Gwyneth Cowing, former owner of the estate, granted him a lifetime tenancy of

the farm in her will. Next door, further down Wellhouse Lane, the trustees are proposing to construct a new community building in the form of two timber-clad, barn-like structures to provide a studio for the Barnet Guild of Artists and separate facilities for the Barnet Beekeepers Association.

A short access road – opposite the Wellhouse Lane bus terminus – would lead to a small car park for the artists and beekeepers and turn into a cul-de-sac serving a group of five houses.

Entry to the main estate of new houses and flats in the farmland beside the Linden Homes development at Elmbank would be via an access road leading off a new roundabout to be constructed in front of the Arkley public house at the junction of Wood Street, Barnet Road and Galley Lane.



Revised plans for developing the farm land around Whalebones were outlined to the Barnet Society. From left to right, Robin Bishop (chair); Alexis Butterfield, associate partner, Pollard Thomas Edwards; Jeremy Thurlby, planning design manager, Hill; and Markus Geiger, architectural adviser to the society.

Alexis Butterfield, associate partner of Pollard Thomas Edwards, said the estate of new homes had been pushed further back from the main road in order to provide extra space for an expanded hedgerow and line of trees along the northern boundary.

"There is an 11-metre drop in the land from Wood Street to Wellhouse Lane and the higher buildings are staggered down the slope so that houses visible from the main road would be no more than one-and-a-half storeys high.

"All parking – except for visitors – would be in basements under the houses and flats, and the access road into the new estate would be a cul-de-sac with no access to Wellhouse Lane."