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Canalside plans display

Your chance to see the proposed redevelopment.

Spring Residential, the developer that has bought the canalside redevelopment site behind St. Barnabas Church, is progressing towards making a planning application to the City Council. It will be displaying its proposed plans later this month at the Community Centre in Canal Street and is inviting comment on its proposals.

This site has had a long and tortuous history. The most recent phase started in August 2005 when a planning inspector turned down an appeal against the refusal of a planning application by Bellway Homes. Bellway had bought the land from British Waterways subject to planning permission. So when this was refused the site again came up for sale. Spring Residential then bought the land unconditionally, so it is theirs whether or not this application succeeds.

When it looked as though the sale was going through, British Waterways in May 2006 forcibly evicted a group of boaters who had occupied the site of what had earlier been a boatyard.

There had been two main reasons why Bellway lost their appeal. One was that the Inspector concluded that this part of the canal needed facilities for lifting out boats and for repair and maintenance. He said that British Waterways had to provide them on this site or in another "equally accessible and suitable location". Since then the boaters have been in discussions with British Waterways, but have yet to agree a location. You can get the latest news on this from the website of Jericho Community Boatyard which is at: www.jcby.co.uk.

The second reason why the appeal failed, indeed the main one, was that



The land for the new Jericho Community Centre would come from combining two areas: 1) the site of the Council-owned garages in Dawson Place; 2) a contribution from the adjacent site made available by the developer. This drawing is intended to give only a rough indication of the area.

Bellway had contributed no land for a new Jericho Community Centre. In his report, the Inspector pointed out that the new 'local plan' for Oxford requires that a new Centre be built on the site. He noted that for this purpose the Council had offered to contribute adjacent land in Dawson Place that is currently occupied by garages. But he concluded that this would not be enough. Bellway had argued that they could not give any land as this would mean they would not make enough profit from the development.

But, as the Inspector put it: "I see no reason why need for a land contribution would unduly inhibit development on the appeal site nor why a suitable and viable scheme accommodating the Community Centre requirement would not be forthcoming."

Any new developer would thus have to offer some land for the Centre. When it became clear that the preferred developer was Spring Residential the Jericho Community Association then started negotiating with them over a suitable area. We have now agreed with them the contribution of a piece of land indicated in the plan above that they will offer, should the development go ahead. The Community Association has agreed terms and will be shortly be exchanging contacts to secure this land for the community.

We have also been preparing 'in-

dicative' plans for what the new Centre would contain and what it might look like in preparation for submitting an outline planning application in the near future. These will establish the use of the site for community and associated uses but not show the detailed internal layout. We have had extensive negotiations with Spring over how the two sites would work together. Naturally there will be full consultations with the community on the details, probably in the spring when we will present initial proposals and then hold a public meeting for you to give your own ideas.

Meanwhile Spring's planning application will reflect this land contribution. Whether their overall residential development application succeeds or not is, of course, another matter and for the City Planners to decide.

Residents will doubtless have views about the scale and character of the development and whether the boaters' needs have been met. You can see Spring's plans, and ask questions and make comments, at the Community Centre in Canal Street.

Spring has booked the following dates in February: Friday 23rd, 12pm-7pm; Saturday 24th, 10am-2pm. If you wish, you can comment in writing to the City Council as part of the consultation process when the planning application is submitted.

This is an special one-page Echo. The next full issue will appear later this year.