

CHESTERFIELD AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

Chairman: Philip Riden
9 Owen Falls Avenue, Chesterfield S41 0FR

John Tonkiss Esq.
Chief Executive
McCarthy & Stone Ltd
100 Holdenhurst Road
Bournemouth
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24 April 2021

Dear Mr Tonkiss,

I have been approached, as chairman of the local civic society, by several people concerning the condition of the land on Saltergate in Chesterfield, currently occupied by the disused former offices of North East Derbyshire District Council, on which your company obtained planning permission in 2018 to build a large block of assisted living accommodation.

When your company applied for permission to demolish the existing buildings the Civic Society supported the application, partly because we felt that the desirability of having one of your company's retirement homes in the town outweighed the loss of the former Chesterfield Rural District Council offices of 1938 (i.e. the older part of the existing buildings). This view was not universally shared and there is now significant local opposition, not least from the Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust, to the demolition of the RDC offices. No-one would press for the retention of the later buildings.

Your company is not doing itself any favours by leaving this site standing derelict. It occupies a prominent position on one of the main roads leading into the town, immediately behind the Town Hall, and adjoins good quality housing and the bulk of the professional practice offices in Chesterfield. A senior borough councillor has accurately described the site as an eyesore which is having a negative impact on the town.

I appreciate that market conditions for the type of property your company builds may have changed since 2018, but I would urge you to make a decision as to whether to go ahead with this development. I note that it continues to be advertised on your website.

It is possible that an attempt may be made to have the RDC offices of 1938 listed. If this was successful, your company would be obliged to seek listed building consent for their demolition, which I suspect would be strongly opposed. Both the Civic Society and the Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust are well-established, responsible bodies whose views are taken into account by local planning authorities and Historic England.

If you have decided that it is not possible to proceed, I would urge you to dispose of the site to another developer. The Civic Society's view remains that, while we would like to see one of your company's residential facilities in Chesterfield, conveniently close to shops and other facilities, the site could also be developed for good quality family housing, which would have the equally desirable result of bringing more middle-class families back into the town centre.

Finally, I think it was regrettable that your company declined to comment when approached recently by the *Derbyshire Times*. This is a long established, respected county newspaper read by virtually everyone in Chesterfield, including those likely to be interested in the accommodation you may or may not be planning to build in the town. You have not enhanced your reputation locally by taking this line. It is partly for this reason that I am writing to you, in the hope of obtaining information which I can pass on to those who have asked what the Civic Society is doing about the eyesore for which your company is responsible.

I hope to hear from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

(Philip Riden)