

The Persimmon Development, Ixworth

Green Ixworth welcomes the recent consultation on the Persimmon Development. The use of the additional development land rather than just the original site provides the whole project with more flexibility and answers a number of our initial concerns.

We appreciate that more detailed information may already be in consideration of which we are unaware. Thus our detailed response to the consultation is dealing with two conditions: the broader principles of the development and issues which will relate to the Final Master Plan and set the parameters for the detailed plan.

The plan as presented satisfactorily answers a number of issues which have concerned us in the past, as detail is limited we shall add comments to ensure that you are aware of our detailed considerations.

The Draft Master Plan

Green Ixworth acknowledges that the area to be developed is within the agreed Development Boundary currently allocated for housing and a new primary school. More housing in Ixworth helps to satisfy the need expressed in the 2019 Housing Needs Survey commissioned to inform the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and supports existing services. Some of those services however will be very hard pressed to provide adequate service.

There are services such as the Surgery which has problems satisfactorily coping with the present numbers of patients let alone those being added by this development without expansion of both buildings and staff. The timing of this expansion should ensure it is completed before the first new homes are occupied.

Proposal: The extension of the Surgery is urgent in both space and personnel. Occupation of the homes should not happen until the new facilities are functioning.

Part of the area referred to in the consultation has been previously allocated by the Parish Council as an extension to the Cemetery. The footpath through the cemetery seems to be reasonable providing this does not interfere with the security and accessibility of the cemetery.

Proposal: The Consultation is unclear as to who would ultimately own and control new cemetery land. It is important that control of the land and access reverts to the Parish Council.

Boundaries

We welcome the commitment to retain the existing vegetative boundaries of the site.

We would further seek your commitment to ensure that where boundaries are deciduous that additional evergreen trees/shrubs are planted so the barriers are effective in winter as well as summer.

The coniferous boundary on the A143 has recently had the understory cut away thus creating a low access point for both road pollution and noise. This will need to be protected by the understory being replaced and/or allowed to grow back.

Your welcome proposal to retain the hedge on the A1088 and have a landscape buffer would enable some further planting of trees to thicken and heighten the hedge.

The retention of the Crown Lane bramble hedge would enable a row of larger trees to be planted preferably on the inside of the hedge or within it. In addition, if some existing self sown trees can be used, so much the better as they clearly suit the soil and micro climate.

Reference is made to the potential reinforcement of the school boundary. We would welcome this and it being extended from Crown Lane to the A1088 hedge. Understorey would reduce noise from the school and protect the sanctity of the cemetery. The proposed link to the school premises would reduce congestion at the main entrance.

The noise and dust generated throughout the construction period would be reduced by enhanced planting as suggested above, along Crown Lane and the Cemetery/school boundary, well in advance of the major works commencing.

The SuDS will have to be placed where it is technically feasible but our preference would be next to the proposed school drop-off facility. The area in the SW corner could be left with minimum interference as it is old ground with a good soil ecology.

The Ridge provides an important opportunity for planting forest trees with understorey interspersed with small sunlit open spaces for public access with plants and wildlife. The north side of the ridge should be clothed with lesser trees and wild flowers to reduce shade over the houses immediately to the north. This would mirror the major wilding due to take place, also on the ridge, the other side of the A143.

Access to the site

The previously successful appeal to access the site via a ghost junction on the A1088 was seen by an overwhelming majority as being driven by cost factors and factored in neither improvements in safety nor reduction in congestion. This has been further exacerbated by the Bloor Homes development in Stanton where changes to the Walsham Road Roundabout will have to be made to accommodate immediate additional traffic. In total, well over 1,000 new homes are likely to be built in the Ixworth/Stanton area in addition to the Crown Lane site plus the new large Used Car depot in Stanton. Although technically, Persimmon is only responsible for the traffic generated by their development it would make more sense if there were better cooperation between the several developers and the County Highways Department to resolve the longer term traffic problems anticipated, rather than addressed in a piecemeal way.

Proposal: A larger 5 arm roundabout at Walsham Road, would increase safety and capacity whilst reducing congestion for the additional road traffic.

Countryside access using good and interesting walking and cycling ways has become a priority. Covid generated and confirmed both a mental and physical health need for exercise in natural surroundings.. To satisfy these needs further footpath/cycleway access to the countryside will need to be improved. From the proposed bridge it should be possible to take two circular walks to the south and the north. The proposed bridge to join the two parts of Crown Lane will be at one extreme end of the development so unless links are made at the other end, a km away, the only circular walk available will be the southern.

New walking routes are being developed to the north of the Thetford A1088 road, if tied in with the roundabout traffic islands a northern circular route could be created.

Proposal: The site should be interspersed with foot and/or cycle ways using the natural environment to guide the routes. The area to be developed is currently a major asset for walkers and dog walkers. In order to maintain this facility a pathway within the tree screen on the A143 and A1088 should be provided.

Proposal: The ability to move within the development and by connections into the village centre and services safely, is most important.

A143 Bridge.

The site is surrounded by natural green corridors, trees and hedging along the A143 and A1088, a

mix of trees and hedging along the western boundary and bramble hedging along Crown Lane. These boundaries have enormous value for wildlife to move freely, to act as a noise and pollution screen for humans and provide a more natural environment for walkers. The village is therefore well served by natural corridors around the developed perimeter. However because of the two bypass roads on the north and east sides, the corridors are not connected to the countryside. Wildlife has to cross one of two very busy and fast roads. As there is an urgent need for a bridge across the A143 it should therefore be dual purpose, human and wildlife, able to take walkers, cyclists, pushchairs, motorised scooters and wildlife. This will enable the strictures of the bypass to be overcome, permitting mammals, invertebrates, birds and amphibians to move between the village green spaces and the countryside, a direct enhancement of the village's biodiversity and may compensate, in part, for the loss of diversity when the uncultivated field is developed.

The original Crown Lane site is a haven for wildlife, hares, rabbits, small mammals, invertebrates, locally resident Red Kites, buzzards, kestrels, sparrow hawks and song birds, especially sky larks. It will not be easy to remove this biodiversity and replace it with a 10% enhancement as legally required. Relatively old scrub is much more valuable than replacement land because of resident and established bacteria, fungi, invertebrates, etc. than new which has almost no established species.

Apart from funding the bridge will require a very much more significant landing space than was available in the previous application.

Proposal: A dual purpose bridge should be built across the A143. It should enable people, whether or not with disabilities, cyclists, families and wildlife to cross the A143.

Climate Change.

Although many regulations and details from Government are not yet in statute, there are many good reasons to start implementing change rather than waiting to see. The extra expense of bringing buildings up to higher standards or trying to improve biodiversity on a developed site is high and otherwise would be borne by individual householders. This development will be in accord with the West Suffolk Council Climate Emergency policies and should be an exemplar of a high quality response to Climate Change .

Energy consumption from national resources should be diminished where possible as production of electricity will need to more than double over the next 20 or so years, we therefore need to reduce consumption where we can and use what is left with care. There are no easy alternative energy sources. It is unlikely that Green Hydrogen will be available in large quantities for bulk production of a replacement for natural gas as the production process uses huge amounts of energy and alternative blue or grey hydrogen produce prodigious levels of emissions.

There are therefore two main elements to address;

1. Energy usage and
2. The Natural Environment and Enhancing Biodiversity

Energy usage

Proposal: Design and construction of houses should provide maximum solar gain both for generating power and providing passive heating and/or cooling. The best insulation standards should apply. This is a cheap contribution to reducing emissions.

Photo Voltaic panels

Rather than cover huge swathes of land with solar panels, we should follow the German example of utilising all roofs during construction. Not requiring tiles beneath the panels, makes significant savings in construction costs and energy. It is more expensive and labour consuming to install

solar panels after construction than during, similarly with batteries. Roof design needs to minimise obstructions to maximise solar panel area, e.g. dormer windows, sewer vents. EV charging points will function better and cheaper with panels and batteries.

Proposal: All the houses should be completed with installed photo voltaic panels and batteries with aspects of between 150 degrees and 210 degrees to maximise cost efficiency.

Heating

Proposal: Heating with high levels of insulation would be less expensive than currently. Gas boilers have no medium term future and are likely to be mostly replaced with heat pumps. Rather than install gas boilers, even if currently permitted, heat pumps should now be installed in all new housing. It will be much cheaper and less disruptive than after completion of construction.

Heat Pumps

Efficiency is greater if deep bored ground source heat is used in a collective scheme, however because of the live aquifer below the site this may not be permitted. Individual ground source units may require more obstruction free land than is available for most of the new homes. Therefore other than where Ground Source can be used, Air Sourced Heat pumps should be fitted.

Proposal: To maximise the benefit of heat pumps under floor wet systems should be installed to benefit from low temperature heating. This would also increase the effective room size compared with wet radiators.

Proposal: If gas pipes are to be installed they should be H² compliant.

Proposal: Access to fast internet services is critical for economic and personal development and minimise the need to travel. Ready installed fibre should therefore be a priority with householder flexibility to choose the provider.

Climate change is bringing more storms and until the resilience of the public service networks are improved, further breaks in power transmission may be expected. With the soon to be introduced digital only phones, provision should also be made for emergency power for the system beyond the one hour batteries which may be provided on request.

Natural Environment and Biodiversity

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)³ states that "*Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures*". Climate Change has shown the need for the cooling which natural environments provide. Well-designed landscapes will do this at the same time as providing opportunities for wildlife, in particular large trees will help to reduce temperatures.

If the proposed green areas and enhanced vegetative boundaries are part of the final plan, a major step will have been taken towards maintaining existing levels of biodiversity. The Crown Lane/Cemetery space, the Ridge and the buffer to the A1088 also make a significant contribution. With connectivity provided via a dual purpose bridge and existing routes into the village the development could prove an enhancement to the site's current levels of diversity.

Proposal: The Guidance produced by the NHBC Foundation and the RSPB, NF89, establishes levels of biodiversity with which we believe your development should be able to conform.

Other than in exceptional circumstances native trees and shrubs should be used throughout the original planting on the site with a mixture of deciduous and evergreen plants. The benefits of using native trees and shrubs are:

- Better adaptation to local soils and micro climates.
- Provide shelter and foods for native species of insects, fungi, mammals, birds, etc.
- Generally easier to maintain than non native species.

Proposal: The maximum area of existing scrub and rough grass should be retained with minimum soil disturbance.

Proposal: The Sustainable Drainage System, SuDS, should be designed to ensure retention of sufficient water to create marshy areas thus enabling a wider range of wildlife habitats on what is otherwise very dry and free draining land.

In view of potential drought conditions increasing as result of Climate Change and the land due to be developed being very permeable, use of potable water for watering should be discouraged.

Proposal: The best alternative is to provide for a separate drainage, filter and storage system for Grey Water. This could be collective or for individual properties.

Parking is a huge problem in any environment and is covered in statutory provisions. We recognise that visitors will need to park and use public EV charging points. We therefore need to ensure that pavements and verges are not used.

Proposal: To protect the users of footpaths, particularly those with disability, there should be a physical means of preventing cars utilising verges or footpaths.

Proposal: All parking places, public or private should be capable of EV charging.

Proposal: Parking should avoid being in tandem to minimise pollution and reordering.

We very much support your decision to establish a drop off point for the two schools in your suggested location.

Housing

The Housing Needs Survey, referred to earlier, demonstrated significant local need for new housing. Much of this was for single storey (primarily for downsizing with age), affordable housing for purchase and rent and social housing. The ability of children brought up in the area to be able to afford to continue to live here as adults is a major concern. Although not a question in the Survey, it is clear from anecdotal evidence that numbers of those working in Ixworth are unable to afford to move to the village, thus requiring their own transport and parking spaces of which the village has too few.

Earlier consultations over design with the village indicated a need for styles and finish to be broadly familiar with existing traditional properties and not above two storeys.

Proposal: Priority types of housing should be either single or two storey, affordable housing for purchase and rent, and social housing, Government requires local authorities to also make provision for self build plots. Detached, semi-detached and terraced are all acceptable in principle.

Because the development is on land higher than the rest of the village, the roof lines need to be considered with care. Large trees on the ridge and boundaries would help to mitigate their visibility .

The size of gardens and proximity of boundaries to homes creates difficulty for those who wish to experience the joy of gardening or just the pleasure of experiencing nature.

Proposal: Planting in communal areas is critical and should, in most cases, be of wild native varieties, with wild flower meadow wherever possible.

Proposal: Gardens should have a secure covered space to store bicycles and garden furniture/equipment or large garages capable of taking a modern largish car plus bicycles and garden furniture/equipment.

Proposal: Space easily accessible from the kitchen for storage of the three recycling bins without being an eyesore

Proposal: The increasing need of workers and school children to be able to work in privacy and quiet at home needs to be recognised in design and use of space.

Proposal: The increasing older demographic will need wider doors on the ground floor for wheelchair access to avoid moving home and to maximise choices. The cost difference is minimal and other developers already provide this.

Families

Proposal: There is a strong need to provide for families especially the needs of children. Areas suitable for young children to play supervised should preferably be within the vision of parents at home. For older children, unsupervised play opportunities should not be more than 5 or 6 minutes walk away. This is largely met by the green areas on the draft master plan with appropriate equipment. Careful combination of play areas within some natural environments can be both pleasurable and educational. All recreational areas should be provided with seating.

Growing food plants is recognised as a major benefit to both general education and health via exercise. Many modern gardens are not large enough for the serious planting of food plants as well as recreational use. The traditional allotment was designed to grow food for economic reasons. In present circumstances we can now add reduction in carbon emissions and improved mental and physical health and diet.

Proposal: Establish an area for allotments within the development, perhaps along the boundary with the extension to the cemetery.

Conclusion

Green Ixworth welcomes many of the features you have proposed and believe that the proposals we have made can only add to your proposed measures and enhance the benefits of the development to our community. We would welcome an opportunity to engage with yourselves over any issues where we may differ.

We attach two maps which help to clarify our thoughts.

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