

WALDRINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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22 May 2009

URGENT

Mr P J Ridley
Head of Planning Services
Suffolk Coastal District Council
Melton Hill
WOODBIDGE
Suffolk IP12 1AU

Dear Mr Ridley

Re CO9/0555 Outline Planning Application BT Adastral Park and adjoining land

Waldringfield Parish Council OPPOSES this planning application

Waldringfield Parish Council strongly objects to the current application for development at Adastral Park for the reasons set out below. The Council points out that it would not have objected to a well considered application to modernise the facilities within the existing curtilage of Adastral Park only, provided such an application was submitted within a plan led development framework and with a view to creating new jobs in the area.

We consider that the artificial financial link between the employment redevelopment and the 2,000 house development is made to apply leverage to secure a planning consent that should be considered on its own merits. It is perfectly possible to modernise the facilities at Adastral Park (including the University and hotel), and generate new jobs there, without building 2,000 houses on the adjacent land. No financial case has been put forward to support BT's claim that this can only be funded by the windfall sale of adjacent land for housing. This land has never had permission for residential or mixed use development.

Of most significant concern is that the current application is premature and entirely pre-empts the determination and adoption of the emerging local development framework. The Applicant has promoted this site through the LDF (currently at the Preferred Option Stage). The submission of an application of this magnitude, at this stage, is entirely at odds with the principle of plan led development. Regard should be had to PPS 1 "Prematurity"

" In some circumstances , it may be justifiable to refuse planning permission on the grounds of prematurity where a DPD is being prepared or is under review, but has not yet been adopted where a proposed development is so substantial, or where cumulative effect would be so significant, that granting permission could prejudice the DPD by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development which are being addressed in the policy in the DPD"

The Parish Council has been consulted about the emerging LDF, but the current application would absorb the entire IPA housing allocation, and render entirely meaningless the consultation as to the housing "options" during later Stages of the LDF adoption process. Accordingly the Parish Council considers that this application has the very criteria laid out in PPS 1 that should lead to a refusal on the grounds of prematurity. The current estimates are for a draft LDF strategy to be adopted in 2010 at the earliest.

Without Prejudice to the Council's position on Prematurity, the Council wishes to make clear that notwithstanding the prematurity issue it has a number of strong objections to the substance of the application itself. The following is a summary of these, details can be found in the associated document:

- The development doesn't conform to the Local Plan currently in force and especially violates policies AP8, AP12, and AP25.
- Although in the revised application the housing edge has been moved back by a short distance from Newbourne Road, the total number of houses (and therefore residents, cars, etc) remains the same, so its impact on the surrounding area, the environment and the local infrastructure have not changed. Most of the green area created by moving the houses back is 'temporary open space', which BT intends to build 500 houses on after 2025. This will result in a total of 2,500 houses and will nullify any benefit from moving the houses back.
- BT provide no financial justification for their claim that they need the unearned windfall from the sale of land for houses to fund the improvements to Aadastral Park. BT should fund the modernisation of their R&D facilities from operating profits, as they have done many times in the past.
- The development will severely and adversely affect the locality including several environmentally sensitive areas. The sheer scale and size of this development will impact on the character, infrastructure, and environment of not only the immediate area but also a substantial area beyond. It will severely impact Waldringfield village and detract from the sense of openness and greenery that demarcate the area as a high value landscape. It will transform a beautiful part of rural Suffolk into part of an urban conurbation stretching all the way to Ipswich.
- The height of the proposed dwellings means that the development will be visible from a considerable distance on local roads and paths despite screening, and impact very strongly on the AONB. This will detract from the rural amenity enjoyed by local villages and their visitors.
- The proposed screening is better than the original application but still totally inadequate. The houses will be between 2-6 storeys, far too high for screening to be effective. The residents of Waldringfield Heath will look straight into a housing estate from their back gardens.
- The inevitable increase in light pollution (particularly from the sports pitches) will affect many of the surrounding local communities, especially those in the AONB, for some considerable distance. It will also have a serious affect on the wildlife in the adjacent SSSIs and RAMSAR site.
- The development will cause a substantial increase in traffic movements on local roads and the A12 and A14. These are already under severe pressure, especially during commuting times, when the Orwell Bridge is closed due to accidents or traffic congestion, and when the Felixstowe Dock is closed due to bad weather. The introduction of traffic lights on the A12 will further slow traffic. This development will add an extra 2,400 vehicle trips per day to the road system.
- The living conditions of Waldringfield residents will be harmed by virtue of traffic congestion, access difficulties to the riverside area, parking problems, and road safety risks (as the village has very few pavements). The route to the popular riverside is single track in places and the only local parking is within the pub car park (there being no public car parking).
- Waldringfield Heath residents are already subjected to increased traffic on Newbourne Road, generated by vehicles trying to avoid the congestion on the A12 through Martlesham, especially at peak periods. This can only get worse as more vehicles try to avoid the traffic lights and delays on the A12, caused by this development.
- BT claim they will provide new wildlife corridors – this is unnecessary as this land is already one big wildlife corridor. If BT were serious about wildlife it would allow the area to become lowland heathland, which is a scarce habitat.
- BT's proposed destruction of a Greenfield site violates several policies in the Local Plan, which seeks to safeguard the landscape quality and character of the Countryside. The current planning conditions for mineral extraction require that the land should be restored to its original status, i.e. agricultural use or heathland.
- For much of the development time quarry traffic will be using the same entrances and exits to the site as construction and residential traffic. Residents will be subjected to noise and air pollution caused by their close proximity to the quarrying and construction areas.
- Access to the main Accident and Emergency hospital at Heath Road will come under pressure from the extra traffic forced to use the inadequate A1214 and Foxhall Roads. (One part of Foxhall Road is already under investigation as an accident zone). This development will make it more difficult for the emergency services to reach patients speedily,
- In 2006 a Planning Inspector stated that the building of 120 Log Cabins 200m from the AONB should be refused because they would be harmful to the character of the area, and would be

harmful to the living conditions of the residents of Waldringfield. These effects will be far greater with a development of 2,000 houses even closer to the same boundary.

- BT's claim that this development will create 2,000 jobs is looking increasingly dubious given that they have recently announced a reduction of their workforce of 15,000, on top of a previous 10,000 jobs cut.
- Only 3% of the current workforce at Adastral Park live within 1 mile of their work. So at least 97% of the working residents are likely to be employed further afield, putting more pressure on roads. The development will have to include approximately 24% affordable housing. These houses will not be occupied by the highly technical and skilled workforce to whom BT claim they will be offering the jobs, further weakening the supposed linkage between homes and jobs
- The region is already under great strain to provide adequate water supplies. This development will further exacerbate the problem.
- BT goes to great lengths to highlight the 'sustainability' of the development and how energy can be produced locally. But it is not necessary to build 2,000 houses in order to produce green energy. In any case the energy sharing arguments used to justify the housing are just suggestions and not firm proposals that would be binding. The 2,000 houses, with their driveways, tarmac roads, cars and household appliances will have a far greater carbon footprint than allowing the land to remain agricultural, or returning it to heathland, which would be the genuinely green option, in keeping with BT's own environmental policies
- Currently all local secondary schools are over subscribed and larger than deemed desirable by Educational Specialists' recommendations. This development will make the situation much worse, and BT do not have any genuine solution to the problem.
- The new housing estate will be completely disconnected from the other urban areas east of Ipswich, such as Martlesham Heath. The A12 and the BT buildings in Adastral Park will form a barrier isolating the new residents from Martlesham Heath and making attempts to build linked communities impossible.

In October 2007 BT presented their proposals in Waldringfield Village Hall. At this meeting there was total hostility from the public to the proposal to build 2,000 houses. It is no exaggeration to say that the people of Waldringfield are furious and outraged at what BT is proposing, for all sorts of reasons. The response was similar at the exhibition that followed in April 2008. None of this is mentioned in the documents submitted, let alone acted upon. The cosy picture painted of BT "listening to Waldringfield" is grossly misleading. BT has misrepresented the real views of the overwhelming majority of the people of Waldringfield, who do not want 2,000 houses built right on their doorstep.

Yours sincerely,

Jean Potter

Jean Potter (Mrs) AIAB
Parish Clerk to Waldringfield Parish Council

Attachment – Comments on Planning Application relating to:
Planning Statement
Statement of Community Engagement
Employment Statement
Environmental Statement
Design and Access Statement
Transport Statement