

Development of Swangleys Green, land off Watton Road, Knebworth Community Involvement

Feedback from Knebworth Parish Council (KPC) and Neighbourhood Plan (NP) team

We would like to thank Gladman representatives for presenting the outline proposals with the Parish Council on 14th July 2021. The following observations are based on the public engagement website and discussion from that meeting. Some references to the NP are included for clarity.

The initial comments below are made without prejudice to either any changes in the outline scheme proposed for KB4, the NHDC Local Plan finalisation, the final adopted version of our Neighbourhood Plan or any subsequent planning applications made to NHDC which we will be consulted on. The comments below are not in relation to the KB4 site allocation.

We look forward to further conversations with yourselves and participation with NHDC on master-planning to tackle some of the cumulative impact issues laid out in our NP.

Access arrangements

1. Our primary concern is the access arrangements on Swangleys Lane. As discussed, this is used for pedestrian primary school access and thus a key safety concern. The current road is narrow in places to be effectively single-track. We note you are in discussions with HCC Highways about potential solutions, but as one of two primary access points and it also being a thoroughfare to Datchworth this is a crucial issue. Other solutions could be of potential benefit here e.g. alternate access to the primary school, subject to discussion with stakeholders.
2. We are also concerned about safe access on Watton Road and the proposed intentions for traffic flows, given the potential increase in traffic and a bus route. Watton Road currently has speed calming on it and is often used for recreation ground parking. There is potential impact on Bell Close residents from junction changes.
3. We note the one dedicated footpath/cycle link provided to access Old Lane to the east. In line with our sustainable travel policy (KBT1) we would like to understand what further provision for dedicated accessible walking and cycling routes could be made through the site. This could include access points on the site boundary (e.g. Haygarth) to promote a modal shift for accessing all other parts of the village and amenity for other residents in the village.
4. We would like clarity on whether St Martin's Road is intended to be used as a vehicular access point for the site, noting it appears, on the outline plans, that

there is access from the site to Old Lane and down St Martin's Road which is partly a private road.

5. We would like to understand further how the construction access would be managed in principle, notably via what access routes.

Deliverability of the proposals outlined

1. It is noted that these are outline proposals for initial consultation, and an initial planning application will be in outline and focus on access permissions. However the public consultation is clearly setting expectations about the good intentions to meet heritage and design aspects we have laid out in the NP, which the website references. As mentioned at our meeting, we remain concerned that through the commercial process of securing a developer, any control over the final design and good intentions by yourselves as promoters or the current land owners would be lost. We note some of the mitigation you explained but have a remaining concern that this will happen and seek further clarity you can provide on how you will take reasonable steps to prevent this divergence.

Community facilities

1. We welcome the proposed allotment allocation with parking on new sites (KBW5). We would ask that consideration is given in detail to provision of a water supply also for all allotments. We would also welcome vehicle access being secured to the adjacent existing allotment site recently purchased by KPC (NP LGS5).
2. We note that new open public spaces have been included in the proposals (KBW2). However we cannot see any current provision for recreational green spaces (KBW3) and would like to understand further how these could be reasonably accommodated within the site, notwithstanding the reserved education site to the north of KB4. There are amenity priorities listed in our NP (KB11) and we expect to follow up on this with NHDC as part of the master-planning and planning application process.

Housing and layout

1. We welcome the spine layout, open central space and general intent to implement a scheme reflecting the Garden Village heritage (KBBE4). We wish to ensure that access and spine roads are of a design to accommodate public transport (KBT1).
2. The oval open space within the site appears to have a foot/cycle pathway that roughly follows the current route of the existing centre section of Old Lane. It would be desirable if it could follow exactly the existing route of Old Lane, thus demonstrating the preservation of the historical connection to the lane. Preservation of existing hedging and trees along the route would be appreciated.

3. At this stage there appears to be little or no information related to the housing type mix, heights and provision of affordable homes. We note there appear to be c. 150 buildings for c. 200 dwellings. We understand, from conversations with members of our NP team, that this is expected to be mostly family homes and apartments. We would like further clarity on this (KBDS2), including understanding the intended use of the two large white square buildings at the rear of Swangleys Farm.
4. We would like further clarity on the parking provisions off-street and on-street for dwellings, including provision of EV charging points for individual and collective parking. We are seeking to minimise residential street parking (KBT3).
5. We cannot see any proposals of housing design at this stage to review how this would meet the intended Garden Village and heritage ambitions (KBBE8, KBBE1-5).