

Rumour Busters – Myths and facts about BT’s redevelopment proposals

The Myths	The Facts	For More Info
<p>BT wants to build 3,500 homes at Adastral Park.</p>	<p>BT is proposing 2,000 new homes at Adastral Park alongside 2,000 new jobs and supporting facilities and services. No additional development will take place on its land. BT wrote to SCDC on 17 March 2010 confirming that there would be no future expansion.</p>	<p><i>Description of development in BT’s Planning Application form.</i></p>
<p>There’s no demand for jobs at Adastral Park at the moment so there’s no need for the 2,000 additional jobs proposed by BT.</p>	<p>There is constant demand to take additional space at Adastral Park as it is a highly desirable place to work. Around 4,000 people work on the site at the moment. The continuing commitment of BT to Adastral Park and open innovation has seen 32 external companies establish themselves alongside BT.</p> <p>Over the past 18 months, 11 new companies have become tenants of Innovation Martlesham and a new incubator for emerging companies has been established. Huawei, a major multinational, is looking to expand its offices at Adastral and BT has been asked to find space for around eighteen people for an Ipswich-based company that is looking to expand.</p> <p>Adastral Park is therefore ideally placed for further growth and BT is fully confident that the new jobs will be taken up. In addition, BT is leading the way on apprenticeships and graduate positions at Adastral Park. BT is working with IDEA (UCS, UCL, UEA, Suffolk New College, and Essex University) to scale up these opportunities at the Park from tens of jobs to hundreds of jobs over the next 12-18 months. The driver for this project is to move some work previously carried out offshore back to Adastral Park.</p>	
<p>BT is making people redundant at Adastral Park so clearly the new jobs aren’t needed.</p>	<p>Adastral Park is an economic success story for the region. We have identified the potential for approximately 2,000 new jobs across both BT and the companies that share, or will want to share, Adastral Park with BT. Lots of companies want to be located alongside BT as part of the cluster of high technology businesses.</p> <p>In addition, BT continues to restructure its operations. It has taken the decision to relocate the development of its ‘next-generation switch development’ to Adastral Park and its biggest single investment, next-generation broadband, is also being master-minded from Adastral. Add to this the next-generation TV developments and Adastral Park has a bright future.</p> <p>This confidence is underscored by the £7M investment in new facilities at the Park to provide state of the art development environments for the future. This is the biggest single investment in refurbishment of ICT facilities in BT.</p> <p>Overall, the development will create approximately 2,000 new jobs over the next 10 years, of which 650 would be for BT. In addition to the provision of new offices, there will be hundreds of jobs in construction to build the development and hundreds of jobs in the new schools, clinics and associated service companies and shops that will establish themselves at Adastral Park and are provided for in the application.</p>	

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<p>BT's alleged new jobs will not be for local people and are simply short-term contracts for people coming in from India and other parts of Asia.</p>	<p>Adastral Park is one of the largest employers in Suffolk and offers a range of employment opportunities, including full-time, part-time and contract-based jobs. This is likely to continue in the new development. While it is not possible to control where staff live, it's highly likely that a significant proportion of the new jobs will be taken by people already in Suffolk. But as a global company, BT and others employ talented and skilled people from across the world who become wealth generators in the County – many local people are proud that Suffolk hosts such a unique business destination.</p> <p>BT at Adastral Park also has a significant outreach programme with local schools in the area encouraging local children to become technologists and engineers. BT is closely engaged with other local businesses to help raise awareness of employment, business development and contract opportunities available at Adastral Park for local people and to stimulate economic growth in the area.</p> <p>In addition, there were 293 fewer sub-contractors based at the Park in September 2010 compared to September 2009.</p> <p>Finally, apprentice recruitment at Adastral Park over the last few years shows that some 30 apprentices from Suffolk have been recruited by BT at Adastral Park as well as a similar number of new graduates. 25 graduates are to be recruited in 2011.</p>	<p><i>Employment Statement, 2009.</i></p>
<p>BT will lose money if the development goes ahead. The plans are not viable.</p>	<p>The proposals developed by BT are viable – if they were not, BT would not be pursuing them. BT is a long term infrastructure planner and plans to be here for at least another 40 years. BT can also confirm that despite rumours to the contrary the BT Pension Scheme has no connection to this development.</p>	
<p>The application is premature. The LDF has not been subject to independent examination. The application cannot be approved until the LDF's Core Strategy is formally agreed and adopted.</p>	<p>The application is not premature and does not prejudice the LDF process. The existing Local Plan is very out of date in terms of the allocation of sites for necessary new development. The LDF has taken much longer than anyone anticipated originally so the draft plan has already been adopted by Full Council to help manage planning applications. It identifies land around Adastral Park for growth. In the meantime, the need for homes and jobs is not being met and there is now a significant shortfall of land and sites. In light of this, BT is entitled to submit an application on its land in line with the draft plan and there is no restriction preventing SCDC granting consent, should it wish to do so. This demonstrates why Adastral Park is the right option for the future community growth in the Suffolk Coastal area.</p>	<p><i>Planning Statement, 2009.</i></p>
<p>The development would destroy the area's rural character.</p>	<p>Although a development on this scale will have an impact upon the local environment, BT has made every effort to protect and enhance the character of the site – the rural character of the area will not be destroyed. As part of BT's proposals, approximately 41 per cent of the total area will become open green space (not counting private gardens) and much of it will become part of a new landscaped habitat. Currently this is either Grade 3 farmland or is being quarried.</p> <p>BT's planning application proposes new habitats for wildlife and birds, including the enhancement of landscape around the former on-site quarry. By re-using quarried land, BT will create new habitats that are richer and more diverse than the impoverished arable fields that are there today. Woodland areas on and surrounding the site will be preserved and extended, and there will be new woodland / ecology corridors running from north to south and from east to west throughout the site enhancing existing footpaths and bridle ways. Views of the new development from around the site will be very limited.</p> <p>Finally, the average density is 15.4 dwellings per hectare. This is significantly lower than new developments at Grange Farm, Kesgrave (20.1) and Ravenswood, Ipswich (26.6).</p>	<p><i>Chapter 4, Design and Access Statement, Supplement 2010.</i></p>

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<p>The development will overwhelm environmentally sensitive and protected areas near the site.</p>	<p>The development is outside of the AONB, RAMSAR, Special Protection Area and the Newbourne Springs SSSI. All potential impacts have been thoroughly assessed. SCDC's Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment (Landscape Partnership, 2009) predicts the increase to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB (which includes the two SPAs) as a result of the housing allocation in the Ipswich Policy Area to be a 0.4 per cent increase in visitors per year.</p> <p>The potential for negative effects will be off-set by new public open space within the site, improvements to footpaths and access to the countryside around the site and away from sensitive areas, and a wardening scheme for the Deben Estuary AONB.</p> <p>These proposals have been agreed by Natural England and the Environment Agency. There is a geological SSSI on the site, which will be enhanced and protected. In addition, opportunities for ecological enhancement will form an integral part of the scheme, including the creation of open space areas on the former quarry in the south-eastern part of the site, and more extensive, connected and continuous woodland. Following the conclusion of the quarrying, BT's enhancement work will turn Grade 3 farmland into something more appropriate to benefit both wildlife and local people.</p>	<p><i>Chapter 10, Landscape, Visual Impact Assessment.</i></p> <p><i>Chapter 12, Environmental Statement, April 2009.</i></p> <p><i>Chapter 4, Habitat Regulations, Assessment & SSSI Mitigation Strategy, Environmental Impact Assessment.</i></p> <p><i>Regulation 19 Statement, January 2010</i></p>
<p>BT will build on greenfield land and violate several planning policies.</p>	<p>There are no planning policies in place which would prevent development. Much of the land at Adastral Park is relatively low grade agricultural land. A considerable part of the land has been or will be quarried to extract sand and gravel. It will not be improved by future quarrying. It is not land that is specially or specifically protected from development.</p>	<p><i>Planning Statement, 2009.</i></p> <p><i>Chapter 15 Agriculture and Soil Resources, Environmental Statement, April 2009.</i></p>
<p>BT is obligated to return the quarried land to its original status – it can't become housing.</p>	<p>Under the existing planning permission, the land currently being quarried has to be returned to agricultural use (not heathland). Under BT's proposals, much of the existing quarry will become public open space as part of the planned public park. When the park opens, its quality will be significantly improved as a recreational resource and wildlife habitat from what was there before. This will also mean that, to some degree, the development will be hidden in the contours of the quarry looking north from Waldringfield Road. This screening will be enhanced by significant additional tree planting.</p>	<p><i>Design & Access Statement, 2009.</i></p> <p><i>Design and Access Statement, Supplement 2010.</i></p>
<p>The development is too close to local villages.</p>	<p>At the closest point, the site is about 800m from the edge of Waldringfield village; generally this distance is greater at other points. The nearest new house would be about 1km away from Waldringfield. There will be woodland planting along all the boundaries. Just as the village of Martlesham has embraced the suburb of Martlesham Heath since it was built in the 1970s, BT is confident that they will both adapt to and embrace this new residential community in time.</p>	
<p>The development is too far away from local villages. It will be isolated.</p>	<p>BT is confident the new development is located a sufficient distance from Waldringfield. It will provide services and facilities of benefit to the people who live there that are closer than those they use today. New local infrastructure and services will cater for increased demand (for instance the new public park will be open for use by everyone, as will the new sports facilities). It is also worth noting that, when complete, the development will be large enough to meet most of its day-to-day needs on-site – including education, local shopping, leisure and recreation.</p>	<p><i>Planning Statement, 2009.</i></p>

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<p>The development will be an eyesore and will be clearly visible from the Suffolk Coast and Heath AONB.</p>	<p>It is wrong to presume that new development here will be an eyesore. Waldringfield village is within the AONB, contains many homes and other buildings that have been built within living memory. BT's Environmental Statement includes an assessment of the visual impact of the development. At present, Adastral Park is visible from the AONB. The Pegasus Tower and Orion Building can be seen across open fields from the junction of Heath Road and Waldringfield Road.</p> <p>It is proposed that these existing views will also be limited by new woodland. In addition, quarrying will mean that parts of the site which are currently flat become more undulating. Much of the new development will be at a lower level than the land is today, further restricting views from outside the site. It is also worth noting that there are already 97 buildings on Adastral Park, many of which are taller multi-storey buildings than are proposed in BT's planning application. On all other frontages to the AONB, proposed new woodland and earth banks restrict views.</p>	<p><i>Chapter 10 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Environmental Statement, April 2009.</i></p> <p><i>Chapter 4, Design and Access Statement, Supplement 2010.</i></p>
<p>The development will damage the environment of the River Deben.</p>	<p>The edge of the new residential community would be a minimum of 2km from the River Deben waterfront in Waldringfield. Natural England has accepted that the proposals do not have a significant impact on the AONB. This is equally true of the river environment itself.</p>	<p><i>Chapter 10, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.</i></p> <p><i>Chapter 12 Ecology, Environmental Statement, April 2009.</i></p> <p><i>Chapter 4, Habitat Regulations, Assessment & SSSI Mitigation Strategy, Environmental Impact Assessment.</i></p> <p><i>Regulation 19 Statement, January 2010</i></p>
<p>The development will exacerbate climate change.</p>	<p>There is a need for new homes and jobs in Suffolk Coastal. Whatever the carbon impact of this development, it will occur irrespective of where it is located. That said, BT's planning application for Adastral Park and surrounding land will set a new benchmark in Suffolk for integrated and sustainable development and regeneration. As part of this regeneration, BT plans to put in place an innovative energy strategy for the whole development. Adastral Park will be an excellent example of BT's corporate commitment to sustainability, taking action to tackle climate change and delivering a carbon efficient development. Some of the measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An energy centre to provide renewable heat and power. A significant Photo Voltaic installation is also likely to be installed in the near future ● High quality, mixed-use, durable, flexible and adaptable buildings that make efficient use of resources ● High levels of accessibility to public transport ● Safe, convenient and attractive walking and cycling routes ● Cycle parking, storage, shower and changing facilities in office buildings ● Secure cycle parking for all dwellings ● Real time public transport information and high speed broadband connectivity to all homes ● Facilities for charging of electric vehicles ● Services and facilities to serve the day-to-day needs of the community – jobs, education, local shopping, recreation and leisure – all provided on-site, reducing the need to travel. 	<p><i>Energy and Carbon Strategy, 2009.</i></p> <p><i>Design & Access Statement, 2009</i></p> <p><i>Design and Access Statement Supplement, 2010</i></p>

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<p>The increase in cars from people living in the new homes will swamp local people and snarl up local roads.</p>	<p>By providing new homes and jobs side by side, there will be less need to travel by car. This makes Adastral Park unique among all of the options for future housing growth around Ipswich. BT will also provide significant investment in the local transport infrastructure to minimise any increases in traffic. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A new access road to the A12 ● Significant investment in the A12 itself and its junctions will ease current and predicted future congestion ● A network of bus routes and stops linking all parts of the site and the surrounding area, and Ipswich, Woodbridge and Felixstowe ● An expanded Travel Plan ● Improving cycling and walking networks in the area. <p>Due to Adastral Park's proximity to the A12 as well as the planned infrastructure improvements, BT believes its plans will create the least disruption within the wider SCDC area when compared to alternative proposals for new housing in the District.</p>	<p><i>Transport Assessment, 2009.</i> <i>Addendum, 2010</i> <i>Travel Plan, 2009.</i></p>
<p>It would be much better to distribute the homes across the District in a number of villages rather than have one large settlement at Adastral Park.</p>	<p>Providing land for less than 2,000 dwellings in any one location, at Adastral Park or elsewhere, constrains the range and viability of the physical and social infrastructure that can be provided for the benefit of the residents and the wider community. For example, it means new schools and health facilities may not be deliverable. Nor may the plans be welcomed by those villages because the pressure on existing infrastructure of a lesser development would be significant. In terms of access to jobs, to services and facilities, a location close to Ipswich is the most sustainable location. This proposal does not remove the need or the opportunity for small scale development to meet local community needs across the villages of the District. In addition, 'pepperpotting' new homes around the District will mean more cars on minor roads rather than directly on to the A12/14.</p>	<p><i>Planning Statement, 2009.</i></p>
<p>The plans will cripple the local education system, particularly Kesgrave High School.</p>	<p>The proposals make full provision for the education of the new community. As part of the planning application, and at BT's cost, the proposals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Full provision for pre-school children ● Land for and construction of a new two-form entry Primary School ● Land for and construction of the first phase of a new Secondary School <p>The proposals will have minimum impact on Kesgrave School and will complement it. BT has discussed these plans with Kesgrave School.</p>	<p><i>Discussions with SCDC as part of S106.</i></p>
<p>BT is proposing to build six storey buildings that are totally out of keeping with the local context.</p>	<p>As part of the planning application, a plan has been prepared to explain the relative heights of the proposed buildings. This has then been used for the assessment of visual impact. This plan allows for buildings up to six storeys in height only in parts of the existing, developed Adastral Park area, and overlooking the proposed central park on its west side. These would be in keeping with the scale of existing buildings on Adastral Park and considerably less than the Orion Building. All other homes will be restricted to a maximum of four storeys along the main boulevards and to two storeys around the edges of the development site.</p>	<p><i>Storey Heights Plan, Drawing Number BTP012-20-C.</i></p>

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<p>The density of the development is much too high and out of keeping with this part of Suffolk.</p>	<p>The overwhelming majority of the new homes proposed are family houses with gardens. The average net density proposed for the developed parts of the site is 37 dwellings per hectare. When the extensive public open space is taken into account this average density is 15.4 dwellings per hectare. This is higher than Martlesham Heath (9.4) but significantly lower than new developments at Grange Farm, Kesgrave (20.1) and Ravenswood, Ipswich (26.6). This is not a high density inner urban project, but a moderate density residential suburb. The proposals will provide housing types to cater for all sections of society, including young people, those living alone and young families.</p> <p>When the application was submitted, planning policy indicated a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare, and sought a range of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare. On the 8 June 2010, the Coalition Government amended this guidance to allow Planning Authorities to set out a range of densities across the plan area rather than one broad density range. SCDC has not yet set out a revised range of densities.</p> <p>The proposals for the site reflect its location and surrounds. It is not an urban site and there is no intention to create the high density, high rise and low open space provision that that site delivers.</p> <p>Providing land for fewer than 2,000 dwellings in any one location, at Adastral Park or elsewhere, constrains the range and viability of the physical and social infrastructure that can be provided for the benefit of the residents and the wider community. For example, it means new schools and health facilities may not be deliverable. Smaller scale development across a number of villages may also not be welcome because of the extra pressure it places on local infrastructure. In terms of access to jobs, to services and facilities, a location close to Ipswich is the most sustainable location. This proposal does not remove the need or the opportunity for small scale development to meet local community needs across the villages of the District. In addition, 'pepperpotting' new homes around the District will mean more cars on minor roads rather than directly on to the A12/14.</p>	<p><i>Design & Access Statement, 2009.</i></p> <p><i>Page 7, Design and Access Statement, Supplement 2010.</i></p>
<p>Suffolk Coastal doesn't need this many houses. There's no demand for them.</p>	<p>SCDC's own Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which is based on the population statistics for the existing communities, establishes that a lot more homes are needed to meet local needs. Adastral Park represents a sustainable solution that uniquely combines investment in new housing with investment in jobs and the economy, delivering improved overall benefits to the region. According to local estate agents and building societies, there is a shortage of the kind of houses that BT is proposing to build.</p>	<p><i>See SCDC's Strategic Housing Market Assessment.</i></p>
<p>The development will look like this:</p> 	<p>The development will actually look like this:</p> 	