

Adastral Park Vision

Frequently Asked Questions

April 2009

1. Why are you planning for so many homes?

The East of England Plan drawn up by the East of England Regional Assembly states that Suffolk Coastal District should plan to accommodate 10,200 new dwellings as a minimum between 2001 and 2021, including about 3,200 dwellings on the edge of Ipswich as part of the Ipswich Policy Area. After subtracting existing commitments from the 3,200 target, Suffolk Coastal District Council have identified that they need to find land for at least 1,050 additional homes on their part of the Ipswich Policy Area. These 1,050 homes need to be delivered by 2025. It is likely that even more will be required in the current review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. BT's proposals for the regeneration of Adastral Park and surrounding land include 2,000 homes as part of a long term plan. BT's plan lays out a design for the physical, economic and social infrastructure for the area within and beyond the period of time under consideration by the Local Development Framework.

Planning for 2,000 homes ensures that all infrastructure issues are designed appropriately and building the right type and mix of dwellings is vital to ensure that residents can be "mobile" as their careers and families and lifestyles progress.

BT's plans are to create new homes and jobs side by side. At Adastral Park there is a unique opportunity for a truly integrated living and working community, and a genuinely sustainable development to help meet the local need for new homes. Planning for this number of homes in this way and at this time will provide far greater certainty and quality than would otherwise be the case with more 'piecemeal' types of development.

2. Won't 2,000 new homes cause more traffic and congest local roads?

Meeting transport needs is a critical part of the planning process. BT's proposals aim to minimise any traffic impact through significant investment in the local transport infrastructure, and new access linking the site to the A12. Also significant investment is planned for the A12 itself to ease current and future congestion. Discussions are ongoing with Suffolk County Council as the responsible authority for transport and road issues.

Managing traffic moving to and from Adastral Park is important and BT has taken professional advice from Integrated Transport Planning on the best way to manage reinvestment in the park alongside the need to maintain good access and not have any greater impact on the A12. BT's revised planning application (April 2009) also delivers significant improvements to the original transport and access proposals.

BT's proposals also include plans for a network of bus stops linking all parts of the site, and BT will work with local public transport companies to discuss the improvement of bus services linking Adastral Park and the new residential community to other destinations in the area. Placing jobs and homes side by side will also have a positive impact with less need to travel by car.

The general approach is to manage as far as possible the existing and future travel demands to and from employment and residential areas by making walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing as attractive options as possible, and then to make improvements to the highway network to mitigate the impact of what extra traffic is created. Congestion on the surrounding road network is currently limited to quite short periods, and is generally related to the capacity of junctions. It is therefore at junctions that improvements will need to be focussed.

3. How will BT ensure that our existing services and infrastructure will cope, such as schools and the hospital?

BT's proposals will provide extensive new infrastructure to serve the regenerated Adastral Park and new residential community, and seek to avoid placing increased pressure on existing services. Local roads and public transport infrastructure will be improved; health and educational facilities will be provided, or funding will be provided to help existing services adapt to the change; and the masterplan for the new community includes plans for new public open spaces, community, sports and leisure facilities, and shops.

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The Primary Care Trust (PCT) has confirmed that development of this scale would require additional doctors and dentists, and so a new health centre forms part of the planning application. Discussions about hospital capacity have also taken place and the PCT is planning to cater for additional residents over a period of some 20 years, irrespective of where the necessary development happens.

BT will provide appropriate new education provision within the new development. Discussions have been held with the Local Education Authority to determine the correct level of contribution to ensure there is no detrimental effect on existing provision. We would expect to develop more details on these aspects of the proposals as we progress the planning application and continue our dialogue with Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC) and other local stakeholders.

4. Why is BT submitting this now instead of waiting for the Local Development Framework (LDF) process to complete?

The LDF process is ongoing to update local planning policy but this process does not preclude the submission of, or the granting of, BT's application now.

BT supports and will continue to support Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC) by providing any additional information it may need to determine the outline planning application and also complete its LDF process. The land surrounding Adastral Park has been identified as the preferred option for housing growth as part of the process. BT believes its outline planning application demonstrates why this is the right option for the future community growth in the Suffolk Coastal area.

The application is likely to be determined after the Council has considered the responses to the Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation.

5. Will all of the new employees come from the local area?

We envisage that the majority of new jobs at Adastral Park will be created by new companies and organisations coming to the Park – these new companies will appoint their own employees and BT would not have control over who they hire.

Having said that, the location of high quality homes close to this important centre for jobs will encourage new employees to settle locally, to become part of the local community.

In addition, BT at Adastral Park has a significant outreach programme with local schools at all levels in the area and is closely engaged with other local businesses to help raise interest in science, technology, engineering and maths subjects to encourage focus on the vital skills for UK employment. Awareness of the employment opportunities available at Adastral Park for local people is vital as is stimulation of economic growth in the area.

6. Won't the plans destroy the rural character of the area? Can it not be restored to natural heathland?

It is important to note that land adjacent to Adastral Park has been identified by SCDC as having the potential to accommodate a proportion of the District's future housing and related development as part of its preferred option for housing growth in the Local Development Framework process.

Also, land adjacent to the park has not been heathland for more than 90 years. It was used as an airfield from 1917 onwards and part was subsequently acquired by the General Post Office (GPO), which went on to become BT. The rest has been farm land since closure of the airfield. Today there are only very small and disjointed remnants of heathland vegetation left on the site.

While delivering housing that will help to meet the District's requirements for much-needed new homes, the outline planning application also involves setting aside a significant proportion of the land – around one-third of the total – as green open space, part of a landscape strategy that will re-establish local, native species.

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The revised application (April 2009) also increases provision for planting of trees and shrubs to strengthen the 'green screen' around the site. Overall, the adjustments in the April 2009 submission represent significant improvements to landscaping and use of green space on the site.

7. Why has BT re-submitted a revised planning application? What's different?

BT submitted its original Outline Planning Application (OPA) to Suffolk Coastal District Council in September 2008. Since then, BT has listened to the views of local people. BT has also been in detailed discussions with the local authority as well as a wider range of stakeholders and interest groups, including Suffolk County Council, the Highways Agency, CABE, Natural England and EEDA.

Having listened to the views expressed, BT and its professional team have re-examined the proposals and made a series of modifications to improve and enhance the scheme. These focus on making the application stronger and better aligned to views expressed by the local community and other consultees.

The main changes include:

- Relocating large areas of green open space and playing fields to the eastern edge of the site closest to the village of Waldringfield.
- Significantly increasing the planting along the boundary of the site, including new native trees and shrubs. The depth of all perimeter planting has now been increased to at least 20 metres, and in some cases up to 30 metres.

- Increasing the number and depth of 'Green Corridors' across the scheme, providing a comprehensive network of landscaped links through the site.
- Improvements to the routes of the internal access roads to enhance the setting of the proposed new residential areas and to simplify internal circulation.
- Alternative links to the Foxhall Roundabout through improvements to the former Felixstowe – Woodbridge route located to the south west of the site.

8. What will happen now? When do you expect a decision on the application?

In line with standard practice, BT will now work with SCDC to provide any further support, information or assistance required to help SCDC process the application. It will be for SCDC to determine how it wishes to consider the application and whether it supports the proposals or not. SCDC has also said that it will co-ordinate another period of public consultation on the proposals to ensure that any further views can be fed into the decision-making process.

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