

Land at Eastmead Avenue - consultation feedback

Emerging themes and our thoughts are set out below:

Parking – inadequate on surrounding roads and site

We knew that parking would be a contentious matter and as we stated in the original documentation, we had originally looked to over-provide parking spaces to alleviate congestion on surrounding roads but had been encouraged by planners to look at potentially not doing this and instead looking at making better use of the cycle lanes that exist in the area, offering access into the town. We note that many of you have raised parking concerns and will look at this aspect of the proposals again and see what balance can be struck.

Access – one road in

Access is another important aspect. We note comments made about the fact that only one road leads onto the site under our proposals and also that the access itself onto the site is reasonably tight towards the end of Eastmead Avenue. It is worth pointing out that this would meet planning demands but will again reconsider this aspect of the design. There may be alternative options which we need to pursue and we will feed back on these, but we appreciate the concern and the points raised on this matter, particularly from those who live towards the end of Eastmead Avenue where the proposed access currently is.

The thinking behind the access shown relates to the traffic control bollard in place on Beaver Road and not wanting to create a way to bypass this resulting in a busy through route.

Flats not in keeping with area, concerned about height, overlooking established gardens

We will look at this aspect of the design again. The length of the gardens had indicated in planning terms that the height of the flatted development could be higher than would ordinarily be expected. It would not be dictated by the existing street scene. We note the comments about flats not being in-keeping but of course given the limitations as to which parts of the site can accommodate housing due to the flood zones that exist on the site, this means that to make the affordable housing element viable we might need to introduce some flatted development to increase the number of homes that can be built as it is the rental income from the affordable housing that will ultimately determine the viability of the scheme. And of course with around 1,500 households on the waiting list we need to deliver as many homes as we can and build what we can to try and alleviate the demand. There are also central government drives to make efficient use of land, but this aspect must be design-led.

Privacy issues

We understand that people may be concerned about being overlooked when they have not been previously. We will look again at the storey heights of particularly the flatted development within the constraints we have as set out above. Overlooking is a material planning consideration that our architects will fully consider.

No vehicular access to units/men in sheds

We appreciate that at the moment there is limited access, but will look to enhance this as part of the wider plans for the site.

Poor cycling infrastructure

We believe that there is a good cycle lane route into the town centre from close to the site and we have been asked to explore this as a means of perhaps having fewer parking spaces on the site itself.

Noise

There will be additional noise during the construction phase. If plans are approved and contractors are appointed, then we will ensure that any contractor we work with will sign up to the considerate contractor scheme – as part of their work they seek to minimise disruption to the local community and, for example, keep noise and dust to a minimum. They cannot eliminate all disruption but will make sure this is kept to a minimum.

Light

We know that our architects carefully consider the tracking of the sun when designing any scheme to make sure that there is no major impact of light deprivation as a result of anything that we build.

Flooding

The flood zones that cut across the site are of course a determining factor in what we have proposed to build and where. The housing can only be delivered on the left-hand end of the site which means that we cannot address some of the points that have been made by residents in this first consultation. We are constrained by the flood zones and so that is why we need to look at some flatted development. In the assessing of flood risk, commercial development is not as sensitive as residential development, which is why this has been included in the location shown. The design would provide natural active surveillance across as much of the site as possible to help address ASB. We will take another look at the options in light of some ideas that have been shared.

Vandalism in area

Some respondents raised concerns about potential vandalism in the area. Of course, it is our intention here to create a space that people will have great civic pride in and will look after, much more so than the existing space which attracts flytipping etc. We want this to be a space much enjoyed by everyone.

Long term viability of commercial units

We are interested in the comments on the commercial units – this requires greater thought from us. The spread of responses reflects the fact that it is an innovative idea but needs careful thought around footfall, viability and what happens if the scheme does not take off as intended. We will consider this further ahead of our second stage proposal.

Public footpath off Lower Denmark Road between 2 Rose Villas and Denmark Terrace should be reinstated

We will look into this suggestion further.

Wildlife

We will undertake all necessary ecological assessments to ensure that we are not displacing wildlife. Many of you have noted that the proposed parkland area to the right end of the site will be a beautiful place to visit and we would hope this will attract wildlife in a more sustainable way. Be assured the final proposals will protect existing ecology and increase net biodiversity.

Lack of GPs, hospital being overburdened

Of course, with any new housing comes concern over stretching existing medical services. The council does liaise with healthcare partners and they have a say in responding to planning officers about proposals.

Why are you not building bungalows when there is a lack of these in Ashford

We understand that bungalows are in high demand and indeed the Council is one of the only developers in the borough who is actually delivering them. The issue with bungalows is that they do

require a lot of land, whereas houses take up a smaller space of course being on two or three levels. Flats are advantageous as they can work for older people too as they are level access. We have delivered a number of high quality spacious apartments with balconies or private outdoor space recently that have been well received.

We do not at this stage know how long it will take to bring revised plans back to the community but we will ensure you are notified when they are ready to be viewed.