

PERSIMMON HOMES – CROWN LANE DEVELOPMENT

Since 2007, Persimmon Homes has owned the first phase of land due to be developed on the field north of Crown Lane and, for the last 3 years, various planning applications have been submitted relating to access into the proposed development as well as the first quantity of houses which has varied in size from 70 to 90 and currently sits at 87. The only planning permission that has been granted relates to providing a "right hand ghost island junction" into the development. The access road nor the houses have been determined by the Planning Authority at St Edmundsbury Borough Council and remain under consultation.

As many may recall, the Parish Council has been at the forefront of a campaign to ensure the safest possible access into this development is delivered by insisting this should be done according to what was adopted in the 2010 Crown Lane Masterplan which would see the northern roundabout of our bypass expanded in size to accommodate a new exit on an extended 5-arm roundabout which will fall in symmetry with Mulley's roundabout. However, inconsistencies within Suffolk County Council Highways Department saw officers, who had previously supported this, take a modified stance of having a policy that was against 5-arm roundabouts, which consequently resulted despite fierce objection from all tiers of local councillors and residents, with an appeal being won by the applicant and the only deliverable option at the present moment being a right hand ghost-island junction that mirrors the other junctions on the A1088 stretch of our bypass which have been riddled with incidents over the last 15 years including two fatalities and an incident last year which required the attendance of two air ambulances. Despite major protestations from us on behalf of the community, our calls continue to fall on deaf ears and views as to the "theoretical and technical safety" of this junction continue to be done through virtual means rather than meeting with the Parish Council and other local people to see for themselves the gravity of the situation.

At the end of July, together with two of my fellow Councillors, I welcomed representatives from the developer to visit us and see for themselves just how their plans seek to jeopardise the safety of our village and particularly people they are looking to sell houses to as well as potentially create a new locally-renowned accident blackspot. Having met with them early in the morning, all the arguments we made, from distance approaches to the roundabout through to the level of congestion on all approaches as well as the speed approaching the roundabout on the A1088 could be easily seen. However, it was quickly determined the developer's representatives were under significant pressure to get this application moved on with and to deliver based on what they had consent on rather than work co-operatively in partnership with the local community to deliver what is best through what is adopted in the 2010 Crown Lane Masterplan. Put simply, although Persimmon could have proceeded with an improved 5-arm roundabout application which had support of Highways England and all levels of local-councils, they chose to withdraw it in favour of what is ultimately a significant cheaper access, thus putting a price on road safety and that of our community.

The Parish Council are committed to campaigning through as many means as possible to get our voice heard before it is too late. Thanks to many other inherent issues with various aspects of the proposed development, it is widely expected not to have a decision determination any time soon which does help somewhat in strengthening our campaign against the developer. However, we cannot do it alone. Every single one of us in Ixworth will be affected in some way or other by this development which is why it is critical the infrastructure requirements are sorted as a matter of urgency and one of the biggest ones concerns the access into the development. Whilst the Parish Council are stepping their efforts up to have our voices heard higher up the chain within Persimmon, it would help if as many residents as possible would use the points given in this article to send in a letter in support of this campaign to the hierarchy of senior management. The people whom you should address anything to are:

Persimmon plc, Fulford, York, YO19 4FE

Mr Jeff Fairburn – Group Chief Executive (jacqueline.fennon@persimmonhomes.com)

Mr Dave Jenkinson – Group Managing Director (dave.jenkinson@persimmonhomes.com)

Hopefully, by residents and the Parish Council campaigning from more than one direction, we can get our voices heard and hope to get the best outcome possible for our village!

Ben Lord – Chairman, Ixworth & Ixworth Thorpe Parish Council