

Thakeham Parish Council's response to DC/26/0945:

Proposal; Variation of condition 1 of previously approved application reference C/22/0773 (Variation of Condition 1 of previously approved application DC/19/1707 (Revised layout for Phase 3 of the Abingworth Meadows development (Original application ref: C/10/1314) to provide for 75 dwellings including 26 affordable dwellings and community studio workshops). Amendment to design and layout of houses at plots 42-75) to reflect an additional swale within the landscaping (Retrospective).

Site; Abingworth Nurseries Storrington Road Thakeham West Sussex

1.0 Thakeham Parish Council (TPC), has NO OBJECTION to the application subject to Conditions (see below).

2.1 TPC met on Tuesday 7th July to discuss the application in our Planning Committee meeting.

2.2 TPC agree that the Parish was supposed to be the recipient of all the land highlighted in Yellow on the Site Overview document.

2.3 TPC agree that there have been some amendments made to original plans since the above, but acknowledge that all changes were yet to be decided by a final application to be submitted which we have here.

2.4 All discussions that TPC had with the developer (Bellway Homes), the LPA (Horsham District Council) and various residents groups since its inception have been in good faith and primarily in response to concerns raised at the relevant times – by relevant parties.

2.5 TPC believed that any changes proposed and accepted during these times were believed to have been cascaded properly and appropriately to all parties.

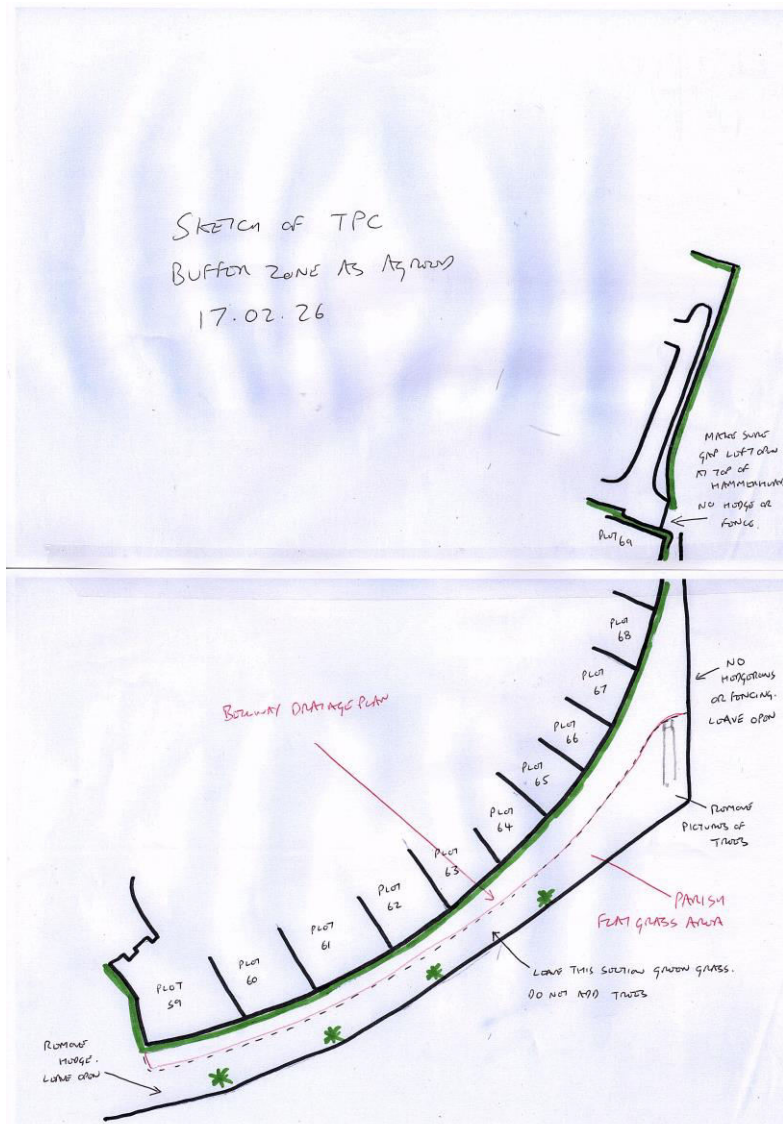
3.0 TPC supports and acknowledges the support from residents within Thakeham for the scheme that is protecting the houses from Flooding. That is the Swale, trench and drainage mitigation works that have been undertaken on the site since November 2024 as this positively helps the residents of Springett Close and Strawberry Close after the events in the winter of 24/25. Identified in document(s) Sheet 6 BELL23356-11.

3.1 TPC have no Objection to the land known as the Buffer Zone being transferred to the Parish as public amenity greenspace (Sheets 5 & 6 BELL23356-11) with the following conditions;

3.2 The curve of the land that contains the swale is divided so that the ownership of the land containing the scheme to the north (adjacent to the properties in Springett Close) is owned and maintained by the residents to whose properties the scheme is designed to protect and not at the expense of the non-Springett Close residents in Thakeham Parish.

And

3.3 The land on the southern side of the curve, that is adjacent to the farmer's field in the south and to the PROW (THA/2487/1) on the East is transferred to Parish Ownership (please see below).



3.3i

3.3ii TPC acknowledge the crudity of the sketch, but would like the LPA to acknowledge that this sketch was to be the blueprint for the revised landscaping plans submitted within this application after agreements in principle with Bellway Homes, HDC and TPC after sites visits and meetings on 17th February 2026.

3.4 That said transfer of a boundary inside the Buffer Zone is clearly mapped out by deed, covenant and with the aid of Bellway engineers as to not endanger the bank of the southern side of the Swale. TPC notes that after conversations with Bellway site team engineers had mentioned webbing/matting had been used to stabilise the banks and we would not be willing to make a guess on where is best.

3.5 TPC is disappointed as we had previously agreed with HDC and Bellway Homes across numerous site visits and meetings that a boundary would be submitted within an application (see above 3.3i and ii). TPC had agreed in 2025 that we would accommodate a Swale system/trench in the Buffer Zone to help residents flooding problems as long as the

Buffer Zone would be divided up accordingly and this has not come forward on an application, even though previously agreed.

3.6 TPC have no objection to the landscaping as long as Bellway do not leave the site until the planting solution presented – had been properly established.

It was brought to the council's attention that the Buffer Zone land in has fallen into a state of disrepair. This has led to concerns regarding privacy and what we will be left with. Some trees have yet to be planted and others have died due to a lack of care.

3.7 Furthermore, residents in Springett Close have objected to privacy issues and presented pictures of people (themselves) at the fence line looking over.

3.8 The council contend that this is primarily due to the high raised bank of the Swale that is adjacent to the southern fence line of the properties. This was not on the original application and site levels were lower.

3.9 However, upon viewing the plans, TPC notes that there is supposed to be a privacy hedge line running along the top of the bank which will grow to protect residents from people looking in on their gardens and to stop people getting that close, so they can. We believe this will suffice upon proper implementation.

3.10 TPC contend that the full site of the Abingworth Field Estate has multiple footpaths and PROWs running throughout. Many of these butt up against properties and are often in frequent use. These include areas such as Strawberry Close, Pavillion Close and others. The proposed plans show no footpaths and no proximity access to residents in Springett Close as other properties have within the site and inclusion of the hedge line and a large Swale that runs the course of the Buffer Zone acts as a buffer to keep people away from the housing line.

3.11 TPC have also submitted, at the end of this document, a letter sent out to all residents by Bellway Homes informing them of this very transfer and that this had been the intention throughout the process. The letter was necessitated due to a lack of communication and mis-information to new residents of the Abingworth site from various Bellway Homes departments as to the agreements in principles arranged with themselves and HDC and TPC – that now form part of this current (and hopefully final) application.

4.0 TPC also heard resident concerns regarding the safety of the site. It was also pointed out by residents and councillors that there are hundreds of metres of culverts throughout the site that are not protected by fence – some at a greater depth than the swale in the current proposal.

4.0i The picture below was taken when the rains were heavy – but is used to illustrate no fencing to the left where PROW THA/3780/1 runs through the estate (approximately 290 metres).



4.1 To date, there has been no evidence of accident or incident within the area regarding the current culvert systems.

4.2 However, as part of TPC No Objection, we would request that a fence, consisting of a post and rail (which is commonplace in Thakeham) could be erected along the proposed boundary in the middle of the Buffer Zone curve, around the Swale.

4.3 This fence can serve two purposes;

4.3a Firstly, to alleviate any resident concerns regarding safety and;

4.3b secondly; to clearly show and evidence ownership and responsibility.

4.4 This fence and its location and purpose could be added as condition of the landscaping approval.

5.0 It was mentioned by some residents that the Buffer Zone not be open to the public and/or be transferred to a management company owned by the residents in the future. This is not part of the application but TPC are against this proposition for the following reasons;

5.0a Firstly, the proposal will see the entire area fenced off and kept as private land. Therefore, it loses its 'Public Amenity Space' consideration which would be a detriment to the rest of the wider community who were supposed to benefit from the space as part of the original planning consent.

5.0b Furthermore, by shutting this area down, the residents of Thakeham Parish could expect a rise of 5%-6% in their precept to cover the costs of maintaining land that they receive no benefit over – in essence paying to protect a dozen properties.

5.0c If, on the other hand, the entirety of the scheme was transferred to private ownership, then not only would the public loose out – but existing residents of the estate would see a huge uplift in their maintenance fees to look after the land.

5.0ci There may be numerous objections from certain residents as to the planning proposals – but these are from a minority area of the estate and reports and recommendations put forward do not have the full support of the existing residents who would be affected.

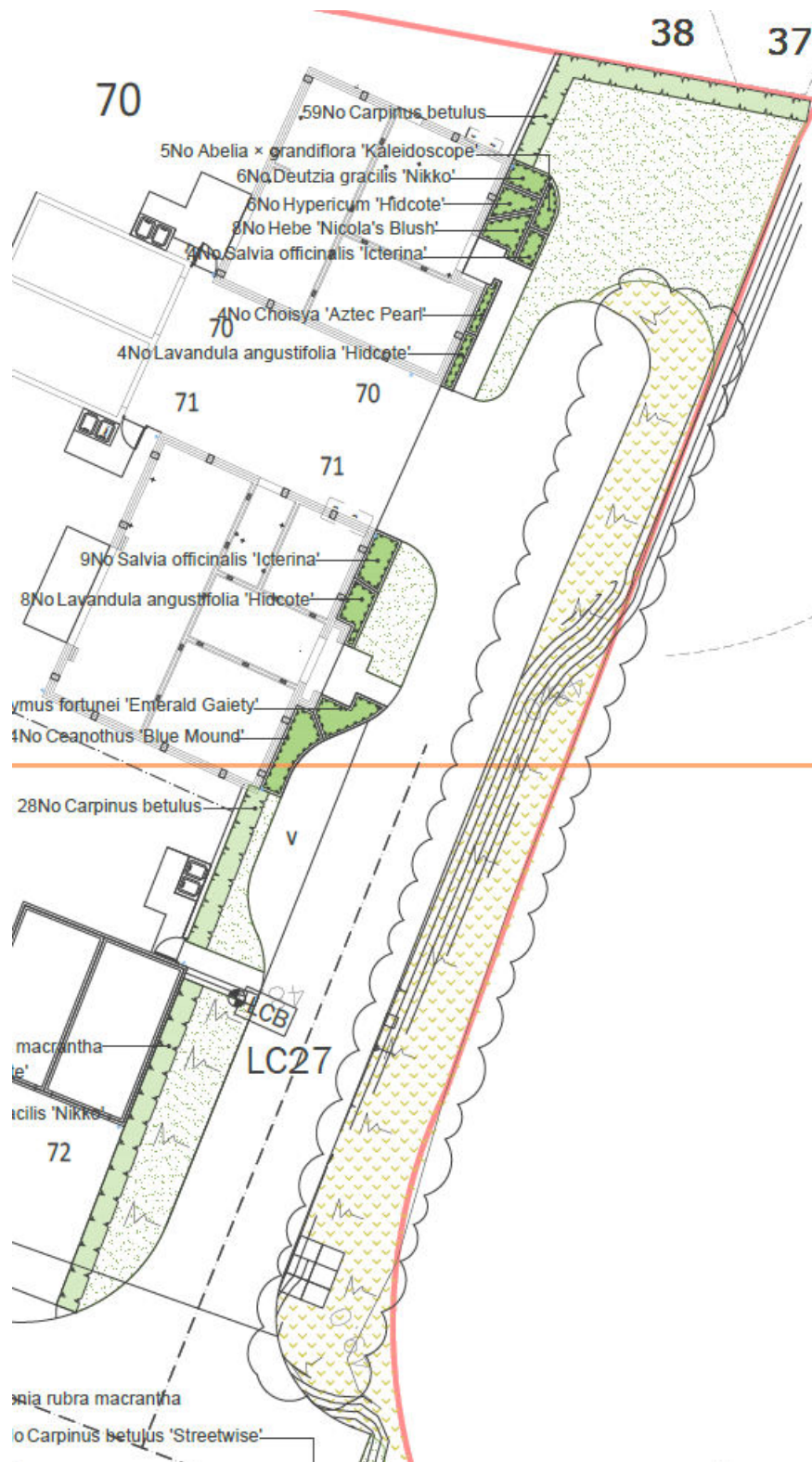
5.1 A sample of these came to the planning meeting above and made it known to the council that views expressed on behalf of the residents are not actually fully representative of the residents living within the estate.

5.1a Therefore, without a full referendum of every household, TPC cannot recommend any form of alternative ownership other than what was agreed upon in principle at the outset of planning for the estate and the variations that have come forward since then (in consultation with some resident groups), that the ownership of the Buffer Zone (less Swale) is transferred to the Parish as per the original objectives of Public Amenity Space – with no other conditions attached.

6.0 TPC have No Objections to the proposed layout of plans on document Sheet 4 BELL23356-11 other than to comment that;

6.1 TPC wish to see via planning consent/covenant or other legal means, the gate at the end of the area known as the 'Hammerhead' become the ownership of TPC with full access rights.

6.2 Previous landscaping concerns have been shared and consulted with TPC as part of the process where there was no hedge or fence and the site was fully open to the public from the PROW and the gradient was less to demonstrate this.



6.3

6.4 This was agreed in principle with the developer and HDC and some residents as TPC wish to have access to the Buffer Zone for maintenance responsibilities and in order for HDC Environmental Services to access a Dog Waste Bin that is to be positioned at some point in the future after a request from residents experiencing issues with fouling and waste being thrown over fences along footpaths in and around the site.

6.5 TPC is keen to point out the following;

6.5a In line with the previous transfer of the roads within the Abingworth Estate, the existing covenants of no residents parking on roads, will be extended to this area in light of the Hammerhead being required for vehicle turning.

6.5b Therefore, the access gate (under TPC secured control) would not impede or run the risk of damaging any vehicles in the area.

6.6 On the existing site overview plan, the Council was to receive the land in Yellow. This land strip runs alongside the Eastern side of the estate.

6.7 The submitted plans show a revised layout of housing, fencing and hedging. Delineating a new boundary of the estate that does not run up adjacent to the PROW (THA).

6.8 There is a gap of approximately 1-2 metres in width in places that sits between the proposed fence/hedge boundary and the actual site boundary.

6.9



6.9a Within this strip is a drainage system and various existing bramble hedging and shrubbery.

6.10 TPC contend that as this strip sits within a proposed boundary and the PROW – there will be a requirement for access for maintenance.

6.11 TPC have no objection to working with and supplying access through the gate, to approved contractors, that the management company would hire.

6.12 TPC will also cover the costs of the maintenance of the gate and post work to the sides of the gate.

7.0 Therefore, in conclusion, TPC has No Objection to the application subject to the division of the Buffer Zone land as previously agreed between the developer and local authorities (TPC & HDC) with resident responsibilities managing the swale and TPC maintaining the corridor from East to West whilst having access through the appropriate gate.

7.1 Should any aspect of these conditions vary or change during this process, then Thakeham Parish Council reserve the right to alter their decision and responsibilities in accordance with previously held discussions between the developers, ourselves and HDC..

11 March 2026

Dear Resident,

We write to you regarding the installation of the flood mitigation scheme and associated works within the designated buffer zone located behind the rear gardens of Springett Close properties along the eastern boundary.

Since the inception of the swale design, several questions and concerns have been raised by residents at various stages of the process. We appreciate the engagement shown and fully understand the importance of providing clarity regarding both the purpose of the scheme and the long-term condition of this area.

As these designs were developed and works commenced following most property occupations, rather than during the original design and build phase, the presence of construction activity and changes within part of the original development configuration understandably prompted concern.

As many of the issues raised follow similar themes, we would like to address them directly to ensure full transparency and clarity.

Drainage Works and Tree Removal

As works progressed and homes became occupied, it became apparent that excess surface water was entering the development from adjacent land during periods of heavy, sustained rainfall and storm events. This matter was not foreseen within the original planning design once identified, however, a solution was sought to ensure that this additional surface water would be intercepted and directed away from the houses and gardens within both the Bellway Homes development and the neighbouring properties at Strawberry Close.

Following extensive consultation with Horsham District Council, Thakeham Parish Council, local affected residents and the Lead Local Flood Authority for West Sussex, various options were considered. The final design was subsequently agreed and implemented as the most appropriate and proportionate solution.

Upon setting out the swale within the buffer zone, it was regrettably identified that several trees would require removal to facilitate the works. These included trees located directly within the swale footprint, those in close proximity whose root systems would have been adversely affected by excavation works, and those which posed a risk to the long-term

functionality of the swale and weir system through leaf fall and overhanging branches. These removals were necessary to ensure the durability, operational effectiveness and manageable maintenance requirements of the scheme.

Ownership Status

The land within the designated buffer zone is currently under the ownership of Bellway Homes. Upon completion of the works, the ownership and maintenance responsibility for the swale and weir system will transfer to the appointed management company.

The remaining areas within the buffer zone are proposed to be transferred to the Parish Council, alongside the allotments.

The buffer zone, as with the wider communal areas of the development, is not designated as private land. Therefore, no access restrictions are currently proposed.

Ground Levels

Concerns have been raised regarding finished ground levels. We can confirm that the ground levels have been installed in accordance with the agreed design.

In relation to concerns regarding potential water retention between certain fence lines and the edge of the swale, high water-tolerant hedging has been installed in these locations to assist with surface water management and ground stability.

Additionally, several residents have raised concerns regarding fence post stability following the works. We can confirm that these matters will be addressed where necessary. Affected residents will be contacted individually to confirm scope and timeframes.

Boundary Treatment Adjoining the PROW Footpath

There are no plans to remove or replace the existing chain link fence along this boundary, and much of the current boundary treatment will remain in place.

We have, however, received a request from Thakeham Parish Council to introduce a small opening within our fencing adjacent to No. 22 Springett Close to allow for the maintenance and emptying of the proposed dog waste bin located along the Public Right of Way (PROW) footpath. Bellway formed the gap in the fence at the request of the Parish Council.

There is currently no public right of access restrictions proposed for the development, whether from the PROW footpath or via the pavements leading into the development from Abingworth Crescent.

Landscaping

With the tree and shrub planting completed we intend to return to complete the remaining seeding works once weather conditions improve sufficiently to allow proper establishment. Residents will be notified in advance of our return to site.

Design Elements Post Transfer

As part of the swale design process, our consultants were instructed to undertake a formal risk assessment. The findings concluded, consistent with comparable systems within the local area, that permanent perimeter fencing to the swale and weir system was not required.

Notwithstanding this, some residents continued to express concerns regarding safety. As a precautionary and temporary measure, Bellway Homes installed fencing at either end of the buffer zone while the matter was reviewed and whilst the land remains under our ownership.

Concerns have also been raised regarding the potential installation of a footpath through the buffer zone and, more recently, the siting of dog waste bins. We would like to clarify that these elements do not form part of Bellway Homes' planning obligations, nor do we intend to undertake such installations.

Any queries relating to these matters should therefore be directed to Thakeham Parish Council. We regret that we are unable to provide further clarification on these particular items.

We trust that the above provides clarity regarding the purpose of the flood mitigation works and the current position in relation to the buffer zone.

Our intention throughout has been to implement a proportionate, technically appropriate solution to address an unforeseen drainage matter, while ensuring the long-term protection of properties within and adjacent to the development.

Should you have any further queries relating specifically to the works undertaken by Bellway Homes, please direct these in writing to the Customer Care team, and we will respond accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Thomas Beer
Regional Director – Southern Counties Division