

FORMER THAKEHAM MUSHROOM FARM

Landscape Masterplan — Residents' Questions & Answers



MUSHROOM FARM, THAKEHAM - LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN

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Residents' Questions and Answers

Former Thakeham Mushroom Site

Q1. What is Bellway now proposing?

Bellway has submitted amendments to its planning application for the former Thakeham Mushroom Farm site. The proposal remains for 150 new homes, including affordable housing, but the amended scheme now includes:

- Approximately 18.8 hectares (46.5 acres) of public open space – equivalent to around 26 football pitches.
- New recreational areas, including walking routes, play areas and nature spaces.
- Land dedicated to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- A small maintenance/storage building and parking area to support management of the open space.
- Traffic-calming and sustainable transport improvements within the village.

Q2. What are the main changes since the original planning application?

Following discussions with residents, Thakeham Parish Council and consultees, Bellway has amended the scheme to:

- Include additional land west of the public footpath as public open space and habitat land.
- Change the layout of homes near Massey Close to improve the relationship with existing properties.
- Introduce a small car park and maintenance building to support the open space.
- Deliver traffic-calming measures on Storrington Road.

Q3. How much public open space is proposed?

Approximately 18.8 hectares (46.5 acres) of public open space is proposed – significantly more than would normally be required under local policy standards. This could include:

- Natural green spaces and meadows.
- Children's play areas.
- Walking and recreational routes.
- Woodland and wildlife habitats.
- A wildlife pond.
- Informal recreation areas.

Q4. Who will own and manage the public open space?

The intention is for the majority of the public open space and habitat land to be transferred to Thakeham Parish Council, for a nominal sum of £1. The important point is that the Parish Council would own and control the land itself. The current intention is not to place the land under the control of a private estate management company. The Parish Council would be responsible for managing and maintaining the land in accordance with an agreed Management and Maintenance Plan.

Q5. How will the maintenance of the open space be funded?

The intention is that Bellway's developer contributions will fully fund the ongoing management and maintenance costs of the land to be transferred to the Parish Council. This means the Parish Council would take ownership and control of the land, with the costs of its long-term management funded through contributions secured from the development. The precise arrangements and funding mechanism would be secured through the planning process and legal agreement.

Q6. How much would the Parish Council pay for the land?

The proposed transfer would be for a nominal sum of £1. The Parish Council would then own and control the land and, subject to the agreed arrangements, be responsible for its management and maintenance.

Q7. Will the public be able to use the land?

Yes. The intention is for the land to operate as publicly accessible open space for the benefit of local residents. The detailed arrangements for access, management and facilities would be secured through the planning process.

Q8. Will any buildings be constructed within the open space?

A small storage and maintenance building and associated parking area are proposed. This is intended to support the practical management and maintenance of the substantial area of open space.

Q9. What is happening to the existing mushroom farm buildings and structures?

The retained mushroom farm land is known to contain existing buildings, structures and areas where contamination may be present. As part of the planning and development process, Bellway will be required to deal with the existing buildings and structures, including their removal where required. The full extent and nature of any contamination is not yet known; further investigation will establish the appropriate remediation and safety measures. In the period following any planning permission and while any future proposals for the retained land are being considered, areas identified as requiring control for health, safety or environmental reasons would be appropriately enclosed and fenced.

Q10. What is happening to the land that Bellway is retaining?

The retained land is separate from the land proposed to be transferred to the Parish Council and does not form part of the current planning application for 150 homes. Bellway intends to promote the retained land through future Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan processes, with the aim of securing an allocation for residential development and/or other appropriate uses. The land may be promoted for up to 85 homes and/or alternative uses. However, no development is currently proposed on this retained land. Any future development would require the appropriate plan-making and/or planning application processes, including public consultation and assessment by the relevant planning authorities. The current application does not grant planning permission for development on the retained land or establish that development should take place there.

Q11. Does the current application seek permission for development on the retained land?

No. The current planning application relates to the proposed 150 homes and associated infrastructure and open space only. The retained land is outside the current development proposal.

Q12. Why is the Parish Council considering taking ownership of the land?

The proposal would provide an opportunity for substantial areas of land to come into public ownership and local control, providing:

- New public open space.
- Recreational facilities.
- Biodiversity and wildlife habitats.
- Walking and informal recreation opportunities.
- A long-term community asset.

The Parish Council is considering whether these potential benefits, together with the proposed funding arrangements, provide a worthwhile opportunity for the local community.

Q13. What happens next?

Bellway has submitted an updated planning application package to Horsham District Council (Planning Application Ref: DC/26/0266). Horsham District Council will undertake a further period of consultation on the amended proposals. Residents, the Parish Council, statutory consultees and other interested parties will have an opportunity to review and comment on the changes. The Council will then consider the consultation responses and technical information before determining the application in accordance with the statutory planning process. Given the scale of the proposal, it is anticipated that the application will be considered by the Council's Planning

Committee, where elected councillors will consider the officer's assessment and recommendation before making a decision. Residents can submit comments directly to Horsham District Council during the consultation period, and all representations will be considered as part of the planning process.