

EDLP 2020 – 2040 Preference Options

Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report, November 2022

Section 1. Detailed Comments on the Arguments in the Sustainability Appraisal Report

01 Biodiversity

The appraisal states (Page 256):

Site Exmo_03 is surrounded by development but has mature vegetation on the site, and close by, so might be expected to support some local biodiversity importance though other urban, as opposed to edge of settlements sites, specifically Exmo_40 support less vegetation and would be expected to be of lesser importance.

There is no mature vegetation on the site that is atypical of that found in surrounding gardens. The small trees and shrubs are managed and used either to provide firewood or screening. The willows are coppiced and harvested periodically. Care has been taken not to block sunlight to the gardens of properties in Springfield Road. The mature trees that may look as if they belong to the site are all on the other side of the stream in the Valley Park or in one case, in the garden of 56 Springfield Road.

02 Landscape Commentary.

The arguments in this section result in a neutral outcome for Exmo_03. There are two points that may not have been considered that favour development:

- The southern pavement of Bapton Lane ends outside 14 Bapton Lane. Development of the site would allow the pavement to be extended toward the pedestrian bridge over the stream thus improving safety for pedestrians, often parents and children going to-and-fro to school in Withycombe. The lane narrows at this point and a clear pedestrian boundary and route would be helpful. Pedestrians and cyclists are also currently “mixed” in this section of the lane.
- The existing hedge to the site contains modest trees that nevertheless require trimming at public expense as they are under power lines running to Bapton Farm. A new pavement section would require their removal.

06 Land Resources

It should be noted that the site is in some respects a brownfield site as it contains the foundations and part of the walls of greenhouses built in the 1970s together with a block constructed store.

Section 2. Arguments Against The Inclusion of Exmo_03 in the Valley Park

The land is currently included as part of the Valley Park. This was done many decades ago when the whole of the land forming the remnants of Bapton Farm was so designated. That land included the whole of the now Greenfingers Garden Centre and both sides of the Bapton Brook. As such it was logical to include Exmo_03 as it was contiguous with the land up the valley on the western side of the brook. When the Greenfingers site was removed from the Valley Park that logic was lost: the site is now isolated and given its small size, can provide little or nothing to enhance the Valley Park or locals enjoyment of it.

Exmo_03 is small and an elongated triangle in shape. It has been used as a garden area for many years dating from the mid-1970s and prior to that, as part of the remnant Bapton Farm, had large greenhouses used in supplying vegetables and fruits to the then Farm Shop. The remains of those greenhouses, walls and foundations are still on the site and visible.

As has been said, Exmo_03 is a small piece of land and is isolated from the Valley Park and the through route to Withycombe as a result of the Greenfingers Garden Centre site to its north. People walking to Withycombe or the Town Centre from the Marles or higher up the valley can only do so by following the path running alongside the eastern perimeter of Greenfingers. They stay to the east going into Nutbrook and onward. The land under discussion cannot be incorporated in any sensible way into that as a new through route.

The land is long and narrow making it of very limited use for recreation. If it were to be opened to the public, it is likely only to be used for toileting dogs. Being small in area that is likely to lead to a build up of faecal material to the point where it becomes a hazard to dogs and humans. It will also need to be maintained free of weeds etc. adding additional costs to the Council budget.

If the land is seen as some kind of wildlife area it fails because of its small area and proximity to the rear gardens of neighbours in Springfield Road. If not well and expensively managed, it would become at best a wasteland of weeds, scrub and feral trees but also potentially a dumping ground for unwanted household materials and a site for drug consumption/selling and thus a detriment to its immediate neighbours in Springfield Road.

If allocated for development the enhancements to the Bapton Lane perimeter would improve safety for pedestrians by allowing an extension of the pavement. A suitably designed dwelling would complement the existing Bapton Farm house and complete the southern side of Bapton Lane. Whilst technically on the flood plain it should be noted that the level of the land is well above that of the lane and the same as neighbours in Springfield Road, none of which have ever been flooded as far as I am aware. The stream has been canalised alongside the site greatly improving its capacity to cope with floods.

For all the above reasons and to remove the anxieties of neighbours, Exmo_03 should be removed from the Valley Park and designated for development.

Philip Denner
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