

For consideration at Town Council Thursday 9th October 2025 (updated following Development & Planning Monday 6th October)

Structure of response:

1. Overview statement
2. Specific comments and issues with the Masterplan
3. Additional questions/considerations

1. Overview statement

The Town Council enthusiastically welcomes and supports the much needed regeneration and the principles of improving the neighbourhood and community, living conditions, energy efficiency (*P30*), green spaces, play areas, segregated parking, active travel, etc **but strongly objects to the proposed scheme**, particularly the inclusion of such tall buildings for both aesthetic and for social reasons. The scale of the multi-storey buildings of Icewell Hill and Churchill Court, viewed from the Victorian houses on Mill Hill and on Exning Road, is currently overwhelming. Similarly the view from Warren Hill to the town is acknowledged as being blighted by the Icewell Hill tower blocks.

We are concerned that such a large significant regeneration project now appears to risk replicating similar high-rise accommodation presenting a visual blight, out of scale with its neighbours and in time will develop similar social problems.

We are also concerned about the proposed increase in density of dwellings per hectare from 2 times to 3 times the norm (263 to 440 units), particularly being achieved through the use of tower blocks. More preferable would be lower-level housing (including provision for disabled such as bungalows) with an improved street scene and incorporating the benefits of a town centre location including for active travel.

So we would like to see a revised scheme, to be submitted for public consultation, replacing the tower blocks with more appropriate (for scale and household wellbeing) 3 storey (maximum) houses overlooking green open spaces and gardens where feasible. Residents' wellbeing and mental health is paramount so tower blocks with the potential for isolation (as highlighted during Covid), dependency on unreliable lifts, lack of individual personal space for children, pets, etc in our view do not provide the reality or quality for community living.

2. Specific comments and issues with the Masterplan

Unsuitable overall design:

The multi-storeys are incongruous with Newmarket's architecture and townscape, the multi-storey buildings are more suitable for urban environment such as Cambridge (*P9*). Tall blocks facing Rowley Drive appear likely to overbear St Mary's Church. Also balconies (*P63*) run the risk of the currently seen unattractive laundry and other inappropriate features.

Excessive height:

The view from Warren Hill (*P51, also P46*) shows that the proposed buildings will appear as prominently as the current, so a reduction to the number of storeys is essential, ideally 3 maximum in keeping with the majority of the town, including proposed properties facing those on Mill Hill which the Masterplan suggests at 3-6 storeys (*P44*).

The Masterplan proposes buildings “no higher than Churchill Court 5 storeys and Icewell Hill 6 storeys” (P44) – but the current buildings are too high!

Comparisons of existing skylines to proposed show the proposed to be no less or in some cases unacceptably more imposing (P48 to P50). Also St Mary’s Church virtually disappears in Fig 104 (P52).

Excessive dwelling density (and impact on local services):

Currently 263 homes (density 73.9 dwellings per hectare) (P4), **proposed 440 (density 123.6d/ha) (P42) Increase of 67%!** Also how does this equate to additional residents and the **impact of increased demand on local services** such as doctors, dentists which are already overstretched.

Parking stress:

There is already insufficient parking on-sites and in neighbouring streets which is a major factor in design and it is unclear how parking will be incorporated. Will underground parking on Icewell Hill actually be feasible? How is it accessed by road / from the housing? Will it introduce safety issues/anti-social behaviour? If not achievable then how will this be incorporated into the plan? Parking bays along Mill Hill (P60) would add to vehicles pulling in or out impeding traffic along an already busy road. Churchill Yards will require “an innovative parking strategy to minimise vehicle presence in the Yards” (P68) but how this will actually be achieved to meet the needs is unclear.

Whilst supporting encouraging Active travel (walking, cycling) the scheme should recognise that many still need vehicles in this rural area particularly with limited public transport services.

Horsewalks:

Improvements to the horsewalks such as the proposed hedging would be welcome (P55) as long as this is compatible with the JCE plan to roll out across the town’s horsewalks the white fencing that has been used for The Severals, considers the potential restriction of pedestrian movement to specific pathways and ongoing maintenance requirements.

Waste / bins:

Not clear how these will be incorporated for storage and collection.

Decanting/wellbeing/allocating to new homes/racing industry:

It is important that disruption to residents is minimised in terms of how long and where they are decanted to ideally staying local, such as utilising facilities such as Silks.

Multi-storeys provide less outdoor space for residents’ wellbeing (unless on the ground floor) unlike terraces which can have their own individual space for children to play, pets, etc.

Allocation to new homes we consider should give preference to current residents / local need, rather than from “out of district” and if the number of units is increased from 263 that the additional allocations are offset against the current housing target for Newmarket. Also ideally include suitable and affordable units for those working in the racing industry.

Protection of designated Local Green Spaces and street scene:

It is essential to retain existing and provide new/enhanced green spaces and street scene in any proposals.

Maintenance of landscaping and buildings:

Green spaces, trees and play areas are welcome, but must be properly maintained and it be clear who by. Likewise for cleaning and maintaining the buildings. Also provide appropriate laundry provision. A concern is that this may be at a cost to residents via service charges which we would not be in favour of. Replacing tower blocks for individual units would enable residents to maintain their own properties.

Construction work:

How will construction work around the horse movements operating until 1pm?

Business case/finance comments/questions:

What capital investment / payback period is being assumed? How will replacing tower blocks with houses reduce the density and to what level would that impact the financial viability?

Tower blocks require maintaining lifts, cleaning communal areas, etc but with individual units residents can look after their own properties reducing costs.

Will assumptions are made for rents and service charges – would they increase?

What potential S106 is anticipated and towards what? e.g. sports and leisure, local services and infrastructure?

Affordable homes at minimum 30% is sought (*P42*) – does this imply that these will be available to purchase? If so could this mean that social housing could be lost with private landlords charging higher private rents?

3. Additional questions/considerations:

- Redevelopment of the three sites in question must be in accordance with Local Plans, but if there is an increase in units can this be offset against housing targets for Newmarket?
- Are there any covenants that apply to any of these land areas?
- Some of the current flats are in private ownership. On what terms is this resolved? If necessary would compulsory purchase be applied?
- The West Suffolk policy is for 40% affordable homes although the proposal is for 30%, being a Brownfield site - but what level of affordable will actually be provided?
- Is the name change of Churchill Court to Churchill Yards appropriate?
- What is the planned laundry provision?