

# Local Amenity Groups Response to Greene King Second Consultations

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## Introduction

This paper was put together by a loose association of Amenity Groups and others who have an interest in the site of the Greene King Brewery in Bury St Edmunds. This group includes the following organisations:

Bury St Edmunds Society  
Bury St Edmunds Town Trust  
Bury Water Meadows Group  
Churchgate Area Association  
West Suffolk Community Archive  
Guildhall Feoffment School  
St Edmunds School  
Southgate Area Association  
Eastgate Area Association

## Background

This paper is a response to the second round of consultations by Greene King (GK) and in particular the presentation by Allies and Morrison on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025. This paper rather uses the comments previously given after the site visit in June 2025 as a basis for the response to the GK draft Master Plan (MP) proposals.

It should be added that all the group is encouraged by and welcomes GK's commitment to the consultation process.

One thing has now become clear, since the first round of consultations, and that is that GK will only have the Microbrewery, Beer Café and Shop as their presence on site after their move. If they need offices in the town they will not be on the site. So all the brewery buildings and land will become vacant except those limited parts of the Brew House. This seems a rather minimal 'presence' and 'legacy' for GK after a noble 200 year history in the town.

We also accept that GK are a commercial organisation and will wish to ensure the reuse of their property will be commercially viable. However, we do feel that there has to be a balance between the commerciality of reusing the site/ buildings and 'Public Benefits' which might fall out of the relocation and currently the balance is rather stacked on the commercial side, it will be interesting to understand quite how the viability of the proposals is set out as justification for such a significant development, as that proposed.

## Overriding Issues

There are, as far as we are concerned two key issues and they are:

- **Traffic and Parking:** there is a lot of development proposed that will make a major difference to the traffic and pressure for parking at the south end of the 'Grid'. Despite some words that such issues will be taken into consideration there was nothing said at the presentation that gave any clue as to quite how this fundamental parameter could be addressed, off the cuff remarks like 'perhaps basement parking could be investigated' are less than reassuring.
- **Development of the undeveloped area south of Westgate Street** that is (despite some rather confusing and less than clear assertions at the presentation) in the Town Centre Conservation Area. This parcel of land which, admittedly, does have some limited built fabric on it, and areas of asphalt carparking, represents about the last area of open land that would have always delineated the south boundary of the Norman New Town between the houses in Westgate Street and the River Linnet which formed the southern defences of

the town. To lose this land to development would compromise the legibility and definition of the Grid, an internationally significant heritage asset, and this part of the site is quite rightly protected by its inclusion in the Conservation Area. To describe the new housing as an extension of the Grid, by labelling narrow access routes as 'The Lanes' rather demonstrates that the design team have not grasped the significance of the area and why the undeveloped land was included in the Conservation Area.

### **Some Specific Suggestions**

There are some specific suggestions we made in our paper that followed the site visit and below is set out how the draft MP has addressed these matters that we believed would be considered 'Public Benefits' by the group and these include:

Maintaining parking for the Theatre Royal behind the theatre.

*This is not ruled out, but there is no proposal for it and, along with other 'public benefits' of this type would depend on how much 'viability could be generated otherwise.*

Providing access to car parking for the use of St Edmunds school at morning drop off and afternoon pick up times. The current situation in Westgate Street is perilous at these times and the ability to remove cars from the street would be a great improvement for the local community in line with GK's values.

*This is not ruled out, but there is no proposal for it and, along with other 'public benefits' of this type would depend on how much 'viability could be generated otherwise.*

Providing an outdoor exercise space for the Guildhall Feoffment School on the site of the former Fire Station in Bridewell Lane.

*This is not ruled out, but there is no proposal for it and rather the site is designated for residential development.*

Providing a new local studies/ archive store for West Suffolk to include GK's own and other local records. A discussion has already taken place with GK on this and should the Raingate Street Record Office be sold off by Suffolk County Council, this would be a great opportunity for the community and GK to work together, in line with GK's values.

*This as an issue was not discussed there may be spaces in the reused buildings In the 'Old Brewery' area but this clearly would need further study. But, inevitably, along with other 'public benefits' of this type would depend on how much 'viability could be generated otherwise'.*

One of the issues that rather blights living in the town is car parking. There are only a handful of 'Resident Only' parking bays within the 'Medieval Grid', and some properties are becoming unviable due to lack of parking. If it were possible in some way this could be alleviated by use of existing GK areas this would be a benefit for the local community in line with GK's values.

*This does rather seem to have been ruled out.*

The buildings that front on to Westgate Street, which includes the main office building on the northern side of the site, are designated as being in Parking Permit Zone D. There is already insufficient capacity to satisfy demand during some parts of the day and therefore the provision of parking for new residential units needs to be handled with great care. Greene King's transport consultants should not rely on the parking study that was commissioned by West Suffolk Council which was shown to include many errors and give a false impression of parking conditions in this part of the town.

*Dealing with parking and traffic is a part of the MP that really has not been addressed- see above.*

Providing rehearsal spaces for the Theatre Royal. This again would be in line with GK's values.  
*This is being investigated as part of the reuse of the Brew House building.*

### **Some Uses that Would be Resisted**

Our paper that followed the Site Visit in July set out some uses that would be resisted and these were:

Developments that do not provide sufficient car parking for their uses. There is little enough car parking in the locality for residents without further competition from new uses.

*It remains to be seen how the MP will address this issue, see above.*

Warehousing uses.

*Thankfully none are proposed.*

Residential Estates. It is accepted that there will, almost inevitably, be a commercial imperative to try and get residential properties on the sites, it is felt that while these may be acceptable in converted buildings, commercial estate type housing may not be, and especially there is a strong antipathy towards gated developments. In addition, any residential use should be mixed tenure with social housing accommodated and overall, there should be a balance of domestic and other accommodation across the site.

*The MP rather sees the whole of the available land to be built upon to provide residential accommodation- indeed the MP rather boasts that 'Regeneration' will be 'residentially lead'. This would lead to estates being built on all the land between the River Linnet and the rear of the buildings in Westgate Street (see above). While clearly there may be an argument to be made for areas outside of the Conservation Area which already have buildings on them to be redeveloped, there is not the same argument to substantially harm the Conservation Area by building over land not previously built upon.*

### **More General Uses**

Our paper that followed the Site Visit in July set out some uses that would be in line with GK's Corporate Values and where there would be a strong support for 'Community Uses' with the potential for arts and crafts, small business units and tourism.

*This seems to be included in the proposals for the reused Old Brewery buildings, this will need more detail.*

Small businesses that provide training would be welcomed and supported by GK's own values.

*This seems to be included in the proposals for the reused Old Brewery buildings, this will need more detail.*

At present Bury has no 'Work/ Live' accommodation where folks can have their workshop/ office as an adjunct to their home. This could be a welcome addition to the housing stock and fit within the wider mix of types of residential uses.

*It is understood that GK are exploring a mix of residential types and these, presumably, could be one type.*

While there has been calls for an Art Centre the group wonder if this would be viable. Other Art Galleries in the very centre of the town have failed and more research would probably be necessary before another such establishment were set up. Indeed it may be better if GK were to create a trust to support the Arts in the town more generally, this would certainly be aligned with their values.

*This was not discussed.*

## **Response to Summary of Early Engagements**

These were summarised in an email dated 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025, and, again below, we update our comments following the presentation on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November:

**Arts Culture Heritage** We would certainly agree that GK should retain a presence in the town, and that the built heritage should be preserved.

*It seems a pity that GK are to have such a minor presence in the town: a pub a shop and a microbrewery seems rather minimal after 200 years. We agree that the built heritage should be preserved but this includes the Conservation Area, the current proposals do not do this.*

**Community and social uses** We wouldn't disagree with this but worry that it rather ignores the existing similar offers in the town.

*This needs detail to be added.*

**Employment and skills** We would agree with this, but accommodation provision should be based on a study of what is currently available in existing premises elsewhere in the town. The training aspects we strongly support.

*This needs detail to be added.*

**Green space and environment** We would strongly support this.

*While this needs detail to be added in principle what is intended for the water meadows is welcome. However, the loss of unbuilt on land would be resisted.*

**Engagement** We look forward to continuing our dialogue.

*We still do look forward to seeing the next stages and hope they take into consideration our views.*

**Health and Education** Provision of these is clearly an issue should there be a large increase in residential, and one reason why any proposals in that regard must be considered against such provision.

*This needs detail to be added.*

**Housing** Our views on residential accommodation are set out above.

*We've made our position clear on this, but any such proposals need to be developed with a plan to address traffic and parking.*

**Tourism and visitor provision** We generally would support tourism and expect GK would wish to maintain their contribution to the town's historic interest.

*This needs detail to be added.*

**Transport parking and access** Our views on parking are addressed above.

*This really needs to be prioritised as a study because it is a parameter that will either ensure success or failure of the project overall. This is a constraint that has not been catered for.*

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion we came to in our July paper was:

*We thank GK for carrying out consultations and hope this paper will add to the process of Master Planning the future of this very important historic location in our town.*

*I should say that the group that put these thoughts together contain individuals with a great knowledge and experience of development and change in Bury St Edmunds and elsewhere as well, indeed, as the process of closing breweries!!! They represent the key amenity groups in the town and are very happy to assist with this master planning process, that would be helpful to not only those who live in the town but, dare we say, Greene King as well.*

*In summary our view is that there needs to be a balance struck between the need of GK to have a commercial solution to this exercise and the Public Benefits that can fall out of the process. We look forward to seeing the draft documents as they emerge.*

While all this is still true, we are concerned that there are some real issues with what has been proposed to date. There seems to be a lack of understanding of the current issues with the use of the historic Grid and how folks live there and a lack of respect for the statutorily protected part of the site in the conservation area to the south of Westgate Street.

We look forward to future engagement and do hope some of what we have said will be reflected in the designs as they get more detailed.

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