

On Fri, 21 Aug 2020 at 11:13, Philip Lewis [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Mr Moore,

It has been suggested by your colleague Simon Thomas, that I make contact with you in regard to possible developments in and around Fordwich.

Until something out of the ordinary happens, it is very easy to allow things to drift on as they always have been - especially in a relatively small, sleepy community such as Fordwich. As lockdown was first easing two potential projects impacting on Fordwich landed in my intray; firstly from Carter Jonas acting for Denton Homes(Fordwich) ltd. They appear to have an option to buy up to 21 hectares of land to the south of the town. Initially they are looking to develop just 3 hectares and build 45 houses on that space. There are all sorts of practical problems with that proposition, but they are not relevant to this email. Within three days a second announcement arrived stating that the Bretts works to the North of the town were closing and the land being prepared for residential development. Unsurprisingly the small community of Fordwich with its depth of history is united in opposition to any such large scale development that would utterly ruin the nature of the town, and at the same time destroy the wonder of the natural environment with which the town is surrounded. As mayor, I felt that it was right to oppose, but that we had to be able to propose as well.

What follows are, at the moment, my personal views. They have not been formally agreed by the Town Council, and have only shared with a few individuals. It was these views, however, that Simon thought I ought to share with you.

Fordwich is rich in history, with a story going back well over 14 00 years - we should this year have been celebrating 1400 years of the church on its present site. It has a place within the compass of the history of Canterbury as its front and back door over very many centuries, famous for a great deal more than simply bringing in the Caen stone for the Cathedral. Yet it is also set on one of the most picturesque stretches of the River Stour, with water meadows leading up to the ancient bridge. To the north - land largely held by Bretts - the flood plain is drained by a series of ditches, now very much overgrown by wetland woods, giving a very specific environment. Connected to the woodland to one side is the river, now widely (and perhaps in too uncontrolled a fashion) used for canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, wild swimmers and fishermen. Just down stream, along with all the other wildlife, there are otters and beavers. To the south of the river, and rising up behind the town is the wooded valley. It was until the 80s agricultural land, with orchards and hops in abundance. The land being eyed by Carter Jonas is now an overgrown tree nursery. It has not been worked seriously for over 15 years, and so has developed into a wonderful habitat for an ever-growing range of flora and fauna. It does lead naturally on to the ancient woodland established by Bishop Odo as the first hunting park in the country, established very soon after the conquest in 1066.

Since lock down has eased Fordwich - and in particular the river bank and the net work of footpaths that stretch North, South, East and West, have been inundated by new users, to the point of being a considerable problem because there is so little control or management. A field of hay on the watermeadow had to be destroyed because it was so polluted with excrement and metal shards. The river has seen innumerable minor accidents, with people having to be rescued. And litter. We have suffered as have all such beauty spots.

In response to all of the summary above, my response is to suggest that the town and area become an historic country park. Access to the park would be from one of two carparks - one to the south, one to the north. Accessible walks would lead from the carparks and link in to the network already established. The river and its immediate environment would be used in a controlled, manageable fashion. The town would have parking limited to residents - and to the car parks of the very successful pubs. The street would be narrowed to allow cars to use one lane at a time with parking bays and passing bays demarcated with wooden planters. The pavement would be widened and the areas of historic interest marked with sign boards. Obviously each of the car park areas might develop beyond an information kiosk to include toilet facilities, a shop, children's play areas etc. etc Perhaps that gives a brief picture. I am thoroughly happy to talk further. We are a very small council, with limited experience and would welcome whatever guidance and assistance you feel might be able to give.

Yours sincerely

Philip Lewis

Mayor of Fordwich