

Tony Orgee

I am speaking this evening as a longstanding South Cambridgeshire councillor and resident of The Abingtons. As a councillor, I have been involved in a large number of planning matters over the years.

I want to highlight this evening the way The Abingtons supported the development of Granta Park. The initiative for Granta Park came from the then Chief Executive of TWI, Bevan Braithwaite, who saw the development of such a park as providing funding for upgrading and developing further work and facilities at TWI. Local residents could have taken the view of such a park as “Not in my backyard” – but they didn’t. From the outset, the village and the two parish councils reacted positively and constructively to the development of Granta Park, unlike the reaction of many other communities to significant developments. I am clear that the prospect of access to the area was an important consideration for villagers, and access for residents (as opposed to the general public) was a clear sign of the value placed by Granta Park on that support.

The network of permissive paths, the lake and the cricket pitch have attracted large numbers of walkers, runners and dog walkers and are an important off-road link to other footways and rights of way. With three non-vehicular entrances to Granta Park, the network provided a number of circular walks, linking to the formal rights of way and other permissive paths in the villages. This was important since the villages are not well-served with rights of way, and with the barrier of the A1307 on one side of the villages, Granta Park provided vital connections and a safe and pleasant area.

The new permissive path created around 2005 from the top of the hairdresser path across to Pampisford Rd provided an important link in the local network of paths and rights of way and has been well-used. In particular, it provided a safe route from the land settlement, for the increasingly busy Pampisford Rd has almost no footway. It is especially frustrating that this path has been closed off since there was specific confirmation that this path would be retained as part of the discussions about the Illumina building planning permission.

It is sad that this action has been taken with Granta Park largely developed, when there has been so much goodwill from both sides during its development. The action has caused an enormous amount of bad feeling amongst villagers, which saddens me since the partnership between Granta Park and The Abingtons has been a model of its kind for more than 20 years. Whilst nobody doubts the goodwill on both sides, full closure will undoubtedly create more problems longer term (in losing the goodwill, trust and support of the villages) than the immediate issues it seeks to solve. I therefore hope that TWI and Granta Park quickly find a way to give managed access to residents of the villages.