

**South Cambridgeshire District Councillors' Report**  
**Clare Delderfield & Brian Milnes – September 2018**

**The Local Plan** – finally returned by the Government Inspector as “sound”.

Finally! After an unprecedentedly long time (over 4 years) the South Cambs Local Plan, the blue print for housing and development, has finally been passed by the Inspector. This was not the Local Plan that would have been out forward had the Liberal Democrats been in power four years ago but even so they now have to consider at their next Council meeting what is in the best interest of residents by either approving or rejecting the plan. A key consideration is that until very recently there was no 5 year housing land supply which together with no Local Plan has meant a free for all for developers to build houses just about anywhere. In fact there are now 5000 houses with planning permission that are not in any local plan.

Key housing sites in the two Local Plans (for Cambridge and South Cambs) that have been found sound by the inspectors are below. Only a proportion of the homes at the larger sites would be built by 2031:

- A new town north of Waterbeach – approximately 8,000-9,000 homes
- A new village at Bourn Airfield – approximately 3,500 homes
- An expansion to Cambourne to the west – since the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan was submitted planning permission has been granted for 2,350 homes
- Homes on land north of Cherry Hinton and west of Teversham – 1,200 homes
- Around 900 homes in the better served South Cambridgeshire villages including c.500 in Sawston
- Continue to develop Northstowe – around 10,000 homes
- Continue to build homes in existing growth sites on the edge of Cambridge (Southern Fringe, Cambridge East, Darwin Green and Eddington)
- Worts Causeway – 430 homes
- Extension to Cambridge Biomedical Campus to support the growth of this cluster
- Extension to the Peterhouse Technology Park on Fulbourn Road

Other key policies in the plans and findings of the Inspectors include a commitment to an early review of the Local Plans. This was already a commitment of both Councils as part of signing up to the City Deal agreement. The review would commence in 2019 with submission for examination in 2022. The Inspectors confirmed that the Councils' Green Belt evidence is robust and that no additional sites, beyond the limited sites proposed by the Councils, need to be allocated for development in the Green Belt.

For South Cambridgeshire, the Inspectors confirm that the plan makes adequate provision for Gypsies and Travellers who have been identified as meeting the current government planning definition. Further consideration will be given as part of the Local Plan review on the needs of Gypsies and Travellers who no longer travel.

If adopted, it will become **the** primary local document (alongside the National Planning Policy Framework **NPPF**), against which planning applications will be assessed. Should it be adopted, protecting the District from speculative and opportunistic developments, it will be imperative to start work almost immediately on producing a new local plan, suitable for the next 10 – 15 years.

### **New developments, old problems**

One of the proposed housing developments, H/1 (a) in the Local Plan, was “lost” for housing. This was due to landowners’ failure to agree the terms about how to turn commercial land into residential on Dales Manor Business Park.

Instead, we have had new tenants in the former “Liberty” (aka Rocialle Medical) site who, much to the frustration of local residents, are now noisily operating 24 hours a day. And on the former Marley site, there has also been occasional out-of-hours work causing disruption and annoyance to nearby residents, despite their assurances of neighbour-friendly working.

Clare and Brian continue to work with the Council’s Enforcement Officers here (and on the other significant development behind the Fire Station) to ensure conditions are complied with. It is disappointing that the previous administration council team were unable to broker terms for the Dales Manor site to be converted into a residential estate, and divert commercial development, say, to the former Spicer’s site.

You will have also seen that development of Pampisford’s “Unity Campus” is well under way. Another 1400 jobs are welcome. The additional traffic, not so.

### **Environmentally sustainable council housing**

Council homes across South Cambs are now among the most energy-efficient Council properties in the country. This means they are better for the environment, and easier and cheaper to heat and run for tenants. This follows a £15-million, four-year programme to make the District Council’s housing stock as green as possible. This has been funded almost entirely by the authority itself, through the rent it receives. Improvements carried out since 2014 have combined to give the Council’s 5,700 homes the equivalent of a ‘C’ score on Energy Performance Certificates.

This was achieved by upgrades to homes, including the installation of extra loft insulation, fitting external solid wall insulation and improving heating systems,

especially at homes not supplied with mains gas. The programme has also seen older windows replaced with triple glazing and older doors bought up-to-date to prevent draughts.

Additionally, during the past few years, around 2,400 Council properties have benefited from the installation of solar panels, providing clean, renewable electricity and further reducing energy bills, particularly during the recent heatwave. Where possible and appropriate, air source heat pumps have also been installed.

### **The Combined Authority**

It seems that every week there is another bit of bad publicity associated with the Mayor, James Palmer and the Combined Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Combined Authority. We have just witnessed the recruitment of a County Councillor into a £120,000 pa director's job (he has now stood down from CCC) and the latest is the surprising departure of the £190,000 Chief Executive. Bridget Smith, the Leader of SCDC is a Board member of the CA and is getting increasingly frustrated by the governance arrangements and lack of transparency of decision making. Aside from all the money being spent there is – so far – precious little to show for it.

### **Cambridge Ahead**

Cambridge Ahead is an organisation comprising about 40 of the top Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire firms. They have commissioned some very interesting work looking at the economic future of the Greater Cambridge Region. This has shown that annual economic growth in this area exceeds any previous predictions and is at about 7% but also highlighted the risks around not being able to sort out housing as wages fail to keep up with house prices resulting in recruitment problems for business which will in turn start to drive business elsewhere – e.g. Singapore. The time frames are scarily short for the economy to potentially start to see a downturn.

### **Police and Crime Commissioner**

Bridget Smith, the leader of South Cambs DC, met with Jason Abelwhite the Police and Crime Commissioner last month and learnt that he is not taking over the fire service immediately as the have service has taken out a Judicial Review against the Secretary of State for allowing such take overs to take place. He has promised not to close any police stations in South Cambs but is replacing PCSOs with warranted officers as they now cost the same amount. He is recruiting 168 new officers and reducing PCSOs from 126 to 80. He also has a lot of money in his Casualty Reduction fund and will pay for all the equipment and training for any community wanting to do Speed Watch.

## **East West Rail**

CamBedRailRoad (CBRR) is a community based group that is promoting an alternative route for the 'missing link' on the Cambridge to Oxford railway. The section between Sandy and Cambridge has not yet been planned – and an announcement is expected very shortly. CBRR consider that the current preferred route corridor (which includes 4 different lines) is inadequate. They are actively promoting an option running along the A428 corridor connecting the new developments at Bedford, St Neots, Cambourne and Northstowe before dropping into the new station at Cambridge North. This would have the advantage of connecting 3 major North/South rail routes and provide an east/west line that connects major centres of population – which the preferred route corridor does not. You can view the plans at <http://www.cambedrailroad.org>

## **Council Grants**

South Cambs Council, under the new administration, has been reviewing what grants they offer to communities. Future grants will be focused on helping community groups to meet the council's priorities and the Council is anxious to hear from projects which benefit those members of our communities with the greatest needs.

## **Becoming an Employer of Choice for people with disabilities.**

A motion was passed by all elected members at South Cambs to look at ways in which the Council can become an employer of choice for people with disabilities be they physical, mental, sensory or anything else. The employment figures for people with disabilities is truly shocking and we feel that there is an untapped market of people who want to be economically active and who have a great deal to offer. Only 25% of people with a learning difficulty, speech impairment or mental health condition are employed. If you are an employer who would like help in attracting disabled employees please contact us.

## **Single Use Plastics**

South Cambs also supported a motion to look at ways in which the Council can reduce its own use of single use plastics and encourage residents to do likewise. It is extremely difficult to avoid single use packaging and it must be up to Government to legislate to get the supermarkets to move from their over-reliance on plastic. Iceland and Morrisons have made a start so hopefully others will follow but we can all do our own little bit. As a start you can avoid buying anything that is in black plastic which cannot even be recycled and WILL end up in landfill.

## **Loneliness Toolkit**

Loneliness is a huge problem for far too many people from all walks of life. Loneliness is all too frequent and contributes to poor physical and mental health. The District Council is putting together a Loneliness Toolkit to help communities come up with

ways of tackling this increasing problem which could affect any of us at any time be we young or old. If you have any good ideas please get in touch!

### **Park and Rides**

For those of living at a distance from Cambridge and wanting to visit for work or pleasure, there is little other choice than drive as the public bus service if any is rare, slow and expensive. The only way to transfer onto public transport is by using the Park & Rides which are largely at capacity. After a lot of debate over the past 3 months the Mayor, James Palmer, has finally agreed to allow the Greater Cambridge Partnership (administrators of the City Deal money) to get on with building some more Park & Ride sites in order to combat the ever increasing congestion in the City. The slightly bizarre thing is that these P & Rs are going to have to be 'temporary' which could well mean they are not a solid surface and have no loos or waiting rooms. There will be a full consultation process.

### **Experiencing a Rough Time?**

Not many of us get through life without experiencing mental health problems be they mild or serious. If you are concerned for yourself, a family member or friend please take a look at the Keep your Head website which brings together reliable information on mental health and wellbeing for children, young people and adults across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough [www.keep-your-head.com](http://www.keep-your-head.com)