

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

APRIL 2021

CLLR SARAH CHEUNG JOHNSON & CLLR ALEX MALYON

A reminder that information about South Cambs response to coronavirus can be found on the regularly updated coronavirus pages on the SCDC website: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

The council is still providing advice, grants and other support for businesses disrupted by the pandemic. For information, please go to: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business/coronavirus-information-for-businesses/>

INVESTMENT IN NORTHSTOWE PHASE 1 LOCAL CENTRE AND ENTERPRISE ZONE

We are incredibly pleased to have been able to announce that SCDC has agreed to spend £5.05 million acquiring the local centre and Enterprise Zone from L&Q – both within Phase 1. We want to ensure that residents and businesses are central to shaping the plans for this area from an early stage.

The council are already bringing forward plans for a community building, which will sit within the local centre. The vision for the Enterprise Zone and local centre is for it to be designed around pedestrians and cyclists. Enterprise Zones are designated areas across the country that provide tax breaks and Government support. They are great places to do business, especially for both new and expanding firms.

The local centre is located directly next to the employment land and presents an opportunity for the Council and the community to help shape and bring forward the retail and commercial development. The vision is to create a mixed-use area made up of shops, restaurants and cafés with the community building providing a central focus point.

We are currently in the process of appointing a team to work with residents, businesses, and others to ensure they can contribute to the development. We have already had enquiries from local businesses interested in locating at Northstowe. Green energy specialists are also among the groups the Council plans to approach for input. The ambition is for construction work to begin on site in the summer of 2022. More information can be found via this link:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/council-invests-more-than-5-million-in-northstowe-community-facilities-and-business-space/>

EAST-WEST RAIL CONSULTATION

East West Rail has started its 10-week consultation on the emerging proposals for route alignments. The final decision will be taken by the Department for Transport as this is a national infrastructure project.

We would like to thank Oakington Transport Action Group and Oakington Parish Council for their guidance and for keeping a close watch on the developments regarding this.

We have always been supportive of the need for a strategic railway line from Oxford. It has the potential to be a new green strategic route that improves links with other parts of the country and helps change the focus of the railway network away from London. In conjunction with the new Cambridge South station, it will allow the sustainable expansion of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

However, we and residents have been concerned about the impact of the potential route options. This non-statutory consultation had been expected by the end of 2020 and thousands of villagers across the district have now had over a year living with this uncertainty hanging over their heads. Part of the delay was caused by the pressure to include an additional route in the consultation. MP Anthony Browne wrote multiple letters to EWR and lobbied the Minister for Transport to insist that a Northern route should be considered from Cambourne cutting between Oakington, Milton and Cambridge North station, a position he took with no consideration of residents living in the northern villages.

EWR provides reasons as to why such a northern route is not included in this consultation.

Mayoral candidate Aidan Van de Weyer is right that EWR must listen to residents and build a line that brings benefits to the whole region, undertake full environmental impact assessment of the options, and ensure that the rail is zero carbon from the outset and that means electrification, something which at the moment they are not planning, despite clear recommendations in Network Rail's new decarbonisation strategy.

You can find details of the consultation here: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/the-project/bedford-to-cambridge>

NORTHSTOWE PHASE 2B – KEEPMOAT

These are the notes from the recent Rampton Drift residents meeting which we organised. Keepmoat homes, who will be partnering with Homes England to deliver Phase 2B at Northstowe which borders Rampton Drift.

Keepmoat Homes – The Fenways, Phase 2B, Northstowe

Meeting: Rampton Drift Residents' Association

Approximately 21 residents were in attendance.

Date: 10th March 2021, 18.00 – 19.30

Attendees: James Whelan – Keepmoat Homes (JW)

Nigel Jarvis – Lucken Beck (NJ)

Abigail Baggley – Boon Brown Architects (AB)

Madalina Milea – Boon Brown Architects (MM)

Kirsten MacFarlan – Boon Brown Architects (KM)

Vanessa Ross – Arc Landscape Design and Planning (VR)

Councillor Sarah Cheung - Johnson (SCJ) – Ward Member for Longstanton

Councillor Alex Malyon (AM) – Ward for Longstanton

Emily Jones – Homes England (EJ)

Andrew Thompson - Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (AT)

Clare Gibbons – South Cambridgeshire District Council (CG)

Tracey Harrison – South Cambridgeshire District Council (TH)

Ellen Bridges – South Cambridgeshire District Council (EB)

Rosie Hughes – Interim Town Clerk, Northstowe Town Council (RH)

Tony Colville – Urban Splash (TC)

Ross McWilliams – BECG (RW)

Ben Farnes – BECG (BF)

- CG provided introductions and also outlined the agenda. CG also described how residents could submit questions via the chat function, which would be picked up and answered by the project team throughout the meeting.
- EJ provided some background regarding the site context and explained Homes England's role from the outset of the proposals.
- NJ provided a broad overview of the proposals, and also explained how the 60% affordable housing ratio was comprised of 20% shared equity, and 40% to be listed as starter homes, sold at 80% of market value.
- NJ talked-through the design approach of the scheme, in line with the Design Code, and also highlighted some central landscaping elements of the scheme, that includes a landscape buffer along the northern edge of the site.
- NJ provided further details about the small commercial element to the south of the site. Finally, NJ gave an overview of the timescales of the proposals and explained how Keepmoat was progressing a reserved matters application.
- AB provided further details on the design features of the proposals. AB confirmed that the height of the dwellings along the Rampton Drift boundary would not exceed 2-storey, and also added that the highest buildings would be the apartment blocks, next to the town centre, that would not exceed 4-storeys.
- AB talked-through the layout of the site, that would include a central east-to-west road that run through the site. AB added that the layout of the site is in accordance with the Design Code, which adheres to the historic grid pattern, of the site's former use as a RAF base.
- VR provided further detail on the overall landscaping strategy, and re-iterated how open green spaces within the public realm are a crucial aspect of the scheme. VR also added how the site's relationship with Rampton Drift, was a key parameter for the site, that included the connectivity of green space with Rampton Drift. VR also provided further details on the play aspects of the scheme.

- VR also gave further details on the site's drainage strategy and also provided information about the site's commitment to biodiversity.

- NJ provided an overview of timescales and next steps, and also summarised the overall engagement strategy, and how residents can provide feedback.

There were approximately 21 residents who participated in the meeting, and a total of 17 questions were submitted. They have been copied below, together with a summary of responses provided by the project team.

Question 1: Could you clarify the height of the trees between Rampton Drift and the new development? i.e., will there be a green, grass area or a larger tree line?

VR explained that a variety of species, suitable for this location would be planted along this boundary. VR added that they would typically be single stem trees, of between 5-6 metres in height.

Question 2: Do we know what equipment will be in the play area please? Such as Zip wires etc.

VR confirmed that the main play area is still evolving, and that the team are looking to integrate the existing archaeology onsite. VR added that the play area would try and be influenced by something very interesting, which would incorporate the site's distinct historical past.

AT explained that residents could submit / suggest preferred options to Keepmoat, with a view of trying to incorporate this within the scheme.

Question 3: At the moment, there is a large green space in the corner of Rampton Drift, adjacent to your development, this green space contains a play area. How does the presence of this play area impact on your plans?

VR described how the site's play strategy has been designed in line with the overall healthy living strategy, that informs the distribution of play within the wider play area. VR confirmed that Phase 2B will contain its own play area, in which residents would not be relying on the play area within Rampton Drift.

NJ added that all under pinning strategies had been pulled together, in which AT confirmed that the overall objective is to see a healthy living new town.

EJ described how Homes England will be having further discussions with development partners about the longer-term management and maintenance of these areas.

Question 4: A resident explained how she previously sent the project team an email, RM shared the email in the chat:

"I have some questions at this point:

1. You say that of 298 dwellings, 60% will be affordable homes - are these for private sale?
2. What kind of housing will make up the other 40%?
3. Is the other 40% for private sale?
4. How do you decide what play facilities to provide?

5. Do you already know what play facilities will be provided?

6. In the virtual exhibition one board points to a cluster of trees that will remain but on another board that shows the plans of The Fenways development, the trees are not there, can you explain?"

It was agreed that points 4,5, and 6 had been dealt with by the project team.

NJ gave a definition of affordable housing and acknowledged that 60% seems a high figure. However, NJ explained how this 60% would be made of 20% shared equity, available for affordable rent – NJ added that this is normally done through a Housing Association. NJ confirmed that the other 40% would be listed as starter homes, that would be sold at 80% of its market value.

TH re-iterated the affordable housing mix above. NJ finally added that the eligibility criteria is quite wide, in that starter homes are available for households who earn up to £80k a year, but struggle to step onto the housing ladder because of the high house prices within an area. NJ finally re-iterated that the 60% affordable element would not be purely for rent.

Question 5: Re: Rampton Drift play area - this is currently on RDA owned land - when this becomes accessible to others who will be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of this area? Currently, as I'm sure you are aware, this is funded via the Rampton Drift residents.

It was also agreed to answer Questions 8, 9, 12 and 17 within this section.

Question 8: Rampton Drift residents pay a Management Charge that includes Grounds Maintenance. Will the Greenway be adopted and managed by the council?

Question 9: What is the management model of the greenspaces? Particularly the green 'buffer' with Rampton Drift. Would prefer a more integrated view than a buffer between us.

Question 12: With regard to the connectivity plans between the greenways and the play/green area of Rampton Drift, how involved will Keepmoat be in the ongoing discussions with Urban Splash on the redevelopment of the Rampton Drift play areas and surrounds, and has thought been given to how that will impact Keepmoat's existing plans?

Question 17: Any play park in Rd must be managed and maintained by the wider community in same way as rest of Northstowe.

RH confirmed that Northstowe Town Council are looking at having discussions with any management group about the possibility of Town Council taking over the management of play areas / open green space. RH also added that further discussions are needed to find out what residents wished to see in these spaces.

TC from Urban Splash endorsed RH comments, and encouraged residents to come forward as future Town Cllrs, to ensure that these issues are shaped by them. TC explained that Urban Splash will look to continue to work with Keepmoat about this moving forward.

EJ added that Homes England are reviewing options for what best management practices need to be put in place for the future. EJ confirmed that further discussions about the longer-term management options are ongoing with the District and Town Council.

Question 6: How high will the apartment blocks be? (I assume this is up to 4 stories) but I think the question is probably more around - could you let us know how close the closest 3 and 4 storey properties sit to the boundary line.

This question was answered together with Question 10.

Question 10: Hello, we were under the impression that everything built close to Rampton Drift would be 2 storeys, but it seems that there will be block of apartments close to Rampton drift. Is that already decided or still in discussion?

AB confirmed the eastern boundary adjoining the town centre would comprise of 4-storey apartment blocks. AB explained how the dwellings would be 2-storey along the boundary with Rampton Drift.

Question 7: How will the development be phased? Will you be building adjacent to RD first?

This question was answered, together with Questions 13.

Question 13: Which edge will be built first? North or south? It feels that perhaps if the edge closest to Rampton Drift was built first then the noise impact of the build would be minimised for the rest of the build.

NJ explained that these details were not confirmed, due to the project still being within the development stages. NJ stated that the initial construction plans would be started within the north-east corner, closest to the town centre, and construction would move clockwise around the site – therefore the units closest to the Rampton Drift boundary would one of the last to be built.

NJ added that green spaces / landscaping features would be constructed sooner. NJ re-iterated that this is subject to change.

JW also confirmed that construction access would access the site from the south-west corner, i.e., opposite side of the Rampton Drift boundary.

Question 11: Is the affordable housing, both rented and shared equity, distributed across the parcel or focussed in particular areas?

It was agreed that this question was answered in previous sections, however AT posted the following in the chat:

"Hi Andy - the affordable housing will be distributed across the site. There is a limit of 25 in terms of the number that can be clustered together. Thanks Andrew Thompson."

Question 14: What's the parking allocation for the blocks of flats and is this sufficient to prevent any overspill into Rampton Drift?

NJ explained that the project team are working with the district council to achieve a good standard of parking across the whole of the site. NJ also explained that each dwelling would have a minimum of one allocated space, to minimise any potential parking issues.

Question 15: Not sure this is a question - think it should be a point raised officially on the planning? The block of apartments is too high and close to the boundary.

RM explained how residents can leave feedback via the virtual exhibition, and explained how residents can comments on the plans, after an application has been submitted.

Question 16: Can you please clarify what is being done to mitigate against any potential flooding issues for Rampton Drift caused by the development? (given that Northstowe already appears to have caused flooding issues on the estate) (Gavin)

AT described how a SUDs strategy would be used onsite to ensure that the site caters for a once in a hundred-year rainfall. NJ gave an overview of the key features of the drainage strategy, and explained that a detailed drainage strategy would be submitted as part of the application.

AOB

- NJ re-iterated how residents can provide feedback and explained how this will be considered throughout the planning process.
- AT explained how residents can continue to be involved within the plans, after an application is submitted.
- CG thanked residents for their time and closed the meeting.

There are virtual presentation boards of the information on this development here: <https://keepmoat-thefenways.consultationonline.co.uk/>

LAPTOPS FOR SCHOOLS UPDATE

We ran an appeal to provide laptops for our local schools to support children learning at home. Through an appeal on social media and to local businesses, a total of 33 pre-loved laptops and 14 tablets were distributed. Martin Bacon Academy received 7 laptops from the local community, plus a brand-new desktop, monitor and printer from construction company MACE. Firouz Thompson also arranged for her workplace, Royal Society of Chemistry, to donate 10 laptops. The Pathfinder Primary School received 16 and Hatton Park 10, plus 14 tablets and a brand-new laptop paid for by Northstowe Foodies. Other donors were CN Bio, Dr Reddy's, PigCasso's food truck and employees from Abbexa, Synaptics and Citrix, as well as residents and Emmanuel Church. Thank you very much to the members of the community who have supported this appeal, it has made a real difference for schools and children.

NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL

Following the Community Governance Review, Northstowe and Rampton Drift have now officially come under the responsibility of Northstowe Town Council. Currently an interim Town Council, made up of Cllr Cheung Johnson, Councillor Malyon and Cllr Hudson has been formed. The initial meeting of the Town Council will be held on 22nd April. The full Northstowe Town Council, comprising of 15 councillors, will be elected on May 6th.

BARRIERS ON AIRFIELD ROAD

We had reports that the concrete barriers at the Oakington end of the Airfield Road/Longstanton Rd had been moved following some construction work and that it was difficult for users to get through.

We requested that these were moved by Homes England and users have reported that this has improved access.

COMMUNITY RECOVERY GRANTS

SCDC has just launched an additional Community Chest grant programme specifically for Covid Recovery and has put £30,000 in the pot. The aim is to help local community groups and parish councils resume activities that might have been stopped due to Covid or which have tailed off in recent months.

The Council's Grants Advisory Committee temporarily amended the rules around the eligibility criteria for its Community Chest Grant scheme for the next two months to allow applications for these grants of up to £2,000.

Previously, few parish councils could apply to the scheme as the criteria stipulated, they had to have fewer than 160 registered electors. But for the next eight weeks, it will be open to all parish councils and community groups – including new ones that are now setting up. Applications are being accepted until 10 May 2021, with submissions being reviewed at the May 28 Grants Advisory Committee meeting.

Meanwhile, the normal Community Chest Grant scheme continues to run for community groups for a maximum grant of £1,000.

Applying for a Covid Recovery Community Chest Grant is the same as applying for a standard Community Chest Grant. The applicant simply selects which type of grant they are applying for at the start of the process with all other criteria being the same. See <https://www.scams.gov.uk/community-development/grants/community-chest-grants/>

DISTRICT WIDE UPDATES

5 YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service has now published its updated housing trajectory and five-year housing land supply position statement.

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service is a partnership between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council.

A housing trajectory is used by Councils to calculate their five-year housing land supply and to demonstrate that anticipated housing delivery will meet or exceed their housing requirement. Our updated Greater Cambridge housing trajectory (April 2021) concludes that Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire jointly have 6.1 years of housing land supply for the 2021-2026 five-year period. This conclusion is based on our five-year housing land supply being calculated jointly, using the Liverpool methodology, and applying a 5% buffer.

CHANGES IN COVID RESTRICTIONS

Residents are being urged to show restraint and continue to follow the rules as lockdown restrictions are eased this week – remembering that a gradual return to a more normal life 'depends on us':

Outdoor gatherings - including in private gardens - of either six people (the Rule of 6) or two households are now allowed. Indoor gatherings are not permitted.

Outdoor sports – Activities that take place outdoors, such as tennis and basketball courts and open-air swimming pools can reopen, and people can take part in formally organised outdoor sports. This does not permit spectators.

Work from home - People should continue to work from home where they can.

Stay local – Residents are advised to stay local and minimise the number of journeys they make where possible, avoiding travel at the busiest times and on the busiest routes. People should also remember to take face coverings and sanitiser with them.

Travel abroad - Travel abroad is prohibited, other than for a small number of permitted reasons. Holidays abroad are not allowed, to manage the risk of imported variants and protect the vaccination programme.

Remain cautious, even if you have had the vaccine - This is because the vaccine takes two to three weeks to work and for a full course, two doses are required. It is still possible to catch COVID after having had the vaccine, so it is important to continue with social distancing, handwashing, and other safety measures.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

One of the most heartening things that has come out of the pandemic has been the terrific volunteer community response. It was estimated that, at the height of the Covid emergency, over 4,500 people were engaged across South Cambridgeshire in helping their fellow citizens get through the worst of the crisis. We are incredibly grateful for the community response in our villages, coordinated by the Parish Councils and OWN.

Now that there appears to be an end to the lockdown and the vaccination programme is reducing the infection risk to us all, SCDC is looking forward at how the community response might be continued into the recovery period. In the coming weeks, council officers will be contacting volunteers to ask them for their views on this. It is appreciated that many will be very tired and looking forward to a break and this is understandable. It may be that a different set of residents step up and continue the work. Whatever the volunteers decide, SCDC will support them in whatever way it can.

COVID BUSINESS SUPPORT GRANTS

SCDC has paid out a total of £10,570,066 in Government business grants to 4,447 businesses since November.

SCDC has paid £3,550,204 out of their £4,594,889 discretionary/hardship allocation and we are awaiting details of what further monies we can expect and what activities and businesses it will be able to help.

We continue to do everything we can to support all businesses regardless of their size or turnover through our website, our newsletter and by direct contact with our expert business support team - we have advised a staggering 2000 businesses over the past 12 months.

On top of this we have been running a series of 7 Business Webinars and are planning 7 more with the one in July entitled Rebuilding the Greater Cambridge Supply Chain post Covid. It will focus on the Food and Drinks sector and so should be of great interest to our pubs, restaurants, and takeaways. Further information to follow.

COMBINED AUTHORITY CLIMATE COMMISSION

The report of the CPCA Climate Commission has now been published and is available online and we wait to see how many of the recommendations are accepted. It is indeed ambitious but makes the point very strongly that we are past the point of being able to choose not to do things to protect the environment. One of the key points that will affect us all is prioritising sustainable travel (electric, cycling, walking) over road schemes when considering new investments. They also said that new homes had to be built to higher energy efficiency standards and older homes had to be improved so that they use much less energy. The commission also noted the huge significance of the Fenland Peat area and the opportunities to stimulate farming methods which would sustain the peat and stop it drying out which releases vast quantities of carbon into the atmosphere. SCDC is supporting the UNESCO Fen Biosphere project which will protect this nationally significant asset.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Right back when the Devolution Deal was signed by the previous administration at SCDC there was a £100 million pot of money for affordable housing which we were led to believe would hugely benefit our district with our very high house prices. The reality is that very little of this money has gone to S Cambs (most has gone to East Cambs and Peterborough) and now the government has pulled the plug on the fund with £45million still to be allocated. Their main concerns were around the 'value for money' from what had been spent so far. The position now appears to be that the government will be controlling any further money for housing spent through the CPCA (with no guarantee that there will be any more) thus making a bit of a nonsense of why we have a Combined Authority at all.

COUNCILLOR UPDATES

Monthly email newsletter - with updates on local news as well as wider district issues which will impact us all. To sign up please go to: https://www.sclibdems.org.uk/email_signup_longstanton

(Note to help us manage GDPR it is easier for us to host from the LibDems webpage, but we absolutely promise this link will NOT subscribe you to LibDem news)

For all the latest news & updates so far please go to: https://www.sclibdems.org.uk/longstanton_news

For those on social media we have a very active Facebook group covering the whole ward here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2066298150052161/>

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about these, or any other matters.

Alex Malyon and Sarah Cheung Johnson

District Councillors for Longstanton, Oakington and Northstowe

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