

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

MARCH 2021

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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.scams.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

DRAINAGE ISSUES

GENERAL WATER LEVELS

Relevant officers and representatives have met now a couple of times as part of the CPFLOW group where all agencies (EA, Anglian Water, LLFA, etc.) have discussed the flooding across the region and on the meeting yesterday, the EA and other partners have some very interesting figures around the rainfall events from 23rd December through to the end of February.

In short, the EA's presentation has spelled out a very substantial rainfall event, their charts have plotted rainfall from their rain gauges that in certain areas far exceed rainfall events from 1998 and 2001 and whilst they are just in the process of categorising this return period there is no doubt that this event is at least the 3rd largest rainfall event since records began in 1850.

During the meeting it was openly acknowledged that Willingham had locally recorded lower measurements from their rain gauges and this was in some way inaccurate, leading to residents believing that something else was at work such as poor maintenance or failure of systems etc.

The EA also produced their ground saturation records for which they confirmed that very high saturation of ground led watercourses and run off water to be extremely sensitive to any additional rainfall and as such this is exactly what we saw.

Anglian Water also confirmed that off the back of this high saturation, substantial surface water was entering their infrastructure overwhelming the system and causing failures.

LONGSTANTON

An update on SCDC awarded drain off Station Road past the Guided Busway, from our drainage officers:

We have been able to jet through the roots successfully but unfortunately, we couldn't complete the job as ADC Drainage have got their equipment stuck and it is still in the culvert. Despite being able to jet through the roots we are keen to remove the section of pipe and physically clear the section and we have contacted the contractor to provide an estimate of costs for carrying this out.

We have also contacted ADC Drainage to advise them of our intentions to combine the recovery works of their equipment.

On Station Road water levels in general, the Mere Way blockage is a fully culverted section of watercourse running from the guided busway downstream to Mere Way, so it only had an impact on land and property from Mere Way towards the busway on the Left-hand side of the road (except for Stanton House).

In practice this affected the paddock at New Farm, Iona, Cherry cottage, Rosevern, the allotment gardens and Stanton House, no other properties were affected along the left / right hand side of the road or towards the village from Mere Way.

Whilst I was in Station Road over the flooding period, I noticed many properties on both sides of the road pumping out into our watercourses, these properties were between Mere Way and Millfield. I noted that our open watercourse levels across the front of their properties were extremely low and well within water acceptance tolerances despite land at the rear of properties being extremely waterlogged and this was causing residents issues and to pump water into the watercourse.

This is a typical example in practice of what is suggested in the EA's saturation modelling where water sits in low lying areas and does not permeate through the soil, additional rainfall (even small spells) immediately overfill these areas and cause repeat or continued flooding issues for property.

It was also noted that many properties along Station Road had overflowing septic tanks and these were overflowing into the watercourse and this was obviously a product of high water in the rear gardens of properties but of course leads to environmental reports downstream.

NORTHSTOWE PHASE 3B SUBMISSION

[RESPONSE TO NORTHSTOWE PHASE 3A PLANNING UPDATED SUBMISSIONS FOR APPLICATION 20/02171/OUT.](#)

We are grateful for the additional information and further documents that have been provided by Homes England in this updated submission. Some of these have provided useful clarification. However, we do not feel that there have been substantial changes from the original outline planning application, and we are therefore maintaining our objections.

As District Councillors we wish to object to the overall development based on the following specific issues:

- 1. Green separation and inappropriate development including excessive building heights along the 'Oakington Edge'.**

The Oakington Edge document which has been provided with this updated submission does seek to respond to the comments made by ourselves, Oakington Parish Council (OPC) and residents of

Oakington. However, as the comments from OPC highlight this has not allayed the many concerns regarding proposed development along the 'Oakington Edge'.

As in our first submission we still feel that the proposed green separation is not sufficient to provide a buffer between the development of Northstowe and the village of Oakington, especially as much of this green separation will be in use by Northstowe residents in the form of allotments, greenways, cycle paths and a pocket park. In places it is estimated that this green separation narrows to 40 metres. Oakington residents and the Parish Council have raised objections that the boundary of Northstowe will now directly back on to the gardens of existing properties, affecting their privacy. We support these objections.

Concerns are raised about the proposal to locate a large parcel of housing to the South East of the site, near existing properties in Church View and Mill Road. This includes a three-storey block of housing, that will rise above the existing line of the trees. We would support the comments made by Sports England, highlighted by OPC that would support the locating of playing fields on this South East edge, to provide a further green buffer.

We oppose the location of housing on the South West edge of the site bordering Lowbury Crescent and Longstanton Road, which as stated in our previous comments further narrows the green separation. We would suggest that the development stops at the perimeter road.

In addition, we are concerned about excessive building heights along this Oakington Edge. The Northstowe Area Action Plan proposed height restrictions of 2 storeys here so that buildings would be located behind the substantial natural buffers afforded by the existing tree belt. Unfortunately, this application still proposes three storey housing bordering Oakington. We would argue strongly that if approval is given for housing along this Oakington edge, facing Oakington village that it should be at a maximum 2 storey height.

Finally, we support the concerns raised by residents on Station Road regarding the removal of trees adjacent to their property. Without these trees there will be nothing to separate them from the development, and the proposed bus-only access to the site.

2. The location and proposed design of the Southern Access Road East (SARE)

There have only been minimal changes made to the proposal for the SARE and we reiterate our objection to the design of and location of the SARE. If the SARE is still required then we would support

the locating of this in the vicinity of the new A1037 or existing Dry Drayton roundabout, rather than feeding onto the Dry Drayton Road nearer to the village, near the Oakington Business Park. The proposed route will lead to an unacceptable increase in traffic through Oakington. The reassessment of traffic flows contained in this updated submission have in fact increased the figures for expected traffic flows through the village. We do not believe that the projected traffic flows will be sustainable. They will place significant pressure on the existing junctions and have a detrimental impact on the residents of Oakington. We are particularly concerned for the safety and issues of air pollution around the Primary school in Oakington, which sits directly on Water Lane.

3. Drainage and Flooding

Flood attenuation is also essential to Oakington village, much of which is located on a flood plain. The village has suffered several recent flood events, most recently at the end 2020. Unfortunately, this updated submission has not alleviated the serious concerns with the proposals for drainage from Phase 3a and how this will impact upon Oakington.

Should permission be granted, firm conditions and commitments are sought from Homes England to sufficiently mitigate the flood risk to Oakington village to at least a 1 in 200-year event standard (plus a 40% climate change allowance). We would refer the committee to the comments made by the OPC and Oakington Flood Mitigation Group and the proposed conditions which they have asked to be attached to any outline approval.

4. Ecology

We note with concern the comments from the SDCDC Ecology that a number of issues remain unresolved by the additional information contained within this updated submission and we would ask that these important ecological considerations are addressed prior to any approval.

In particular we are concerned by the potential for human wildlife conflict in areas of the development. The additional information has stated that the Ecological Management Plan will set out how the balance between ecological mitigation and potential disturbance by residents and their pets will be managed but questions regarding this remain and further clarification is needed before any permission is granted. The information provided states that open space provision for Phase 3a is currently over and above what is required. We would therefore support the proposal of the Ecology Officer to consider

specific dedicated ecological mitigation areas, such as the southern attenuation area, which will have limited accessibility to protect from human disturbance.

We are particularly concerned about the area surrounding the Military Lake. While we understand that commitments have been made to limit the use of the Lake itself for recreation, which we welcome, the area around the lake is also of significant importance, particularly for the common toad population, which is of County importance. The proximity of housing (apartments within 20-30 metres of the lake) and the use of this area for amenity will have a detrimental impact of wildlife and habitats and we would ask that consideration is given to this within the EMP.

5. Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

We do not feel that this updated submission has provided the necessary assurance that the impacts of construction on residents will be satisfactorily managed. As we outlined in our previous comments, we have had significant issues with enforcement of planning conditions related to construction on the Northstowe site. This has caused considerable disruption to residents living on or near to the site. It is therefore essential that robust, enforceable conditions are contained in any CEMP approved as part of this application. We feel there are continued inadequacies in the existing CEMP. We would ask that accurate, measurable, and enforceable conditions are placed upon any development, to cover:

- Development work timings – strict limits on times of construction
- Specific requirements on noise and dust monitoring, mitigation, and routes to resolve issues.
- Limits of construction vehicle movement with no construction vehicle access via Oakington village

NORTHSTOWE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

There have been concerns raised at the 60% number for affordable homes proposed for Northstowe Phase 2b (Keepmoat Homes) and we copy below information from Planning on how this number has been arrived at. We would note that affordable homes are not the same as social housing (council housing) and covers amongst others: Starter homes for people who are not yet on the housing ladder, shared equity homes and shared rent (e.g., for keyworkers to make them more affordable).

This has been quite complicated and in terms of Phase 2 requires some background to national policy and changing national policy. As you will be aware, the non-delivery of policy compliant affordable housing due to viability caused by delivery of strategic transport and education infrastructure has been a concern raised by planning committee.

It should be noted that Phase 1 delivered 20% affordable housing due to viability issues.

PHASE 2

Phase 2 planning permission was granted in January 2017 at that time Starter Homes were not formally within the definition of affordable housing as set out in National Policy (the National Planning Policy Framework (2012)) and therefore is a specific provision for Northstowe (hence the name being Northstowe Starter Homes). At the time Ministers had made a series of announcements and changes through the Housing and Planning Act 2016 with ambition of providing support to first time housebuyers which became its Starter Home project/programme. However, the definition of Starter Homes is not strictly in accordance with the now adopted national Starter Home definition as it did not exist at that time but the discount and capping of the sales price falls probably now somewhere between Starter Home and Discounted Market Sale definitions in current national policy (see below).

Northstowe therefore pre-empted formal Government planning policy (as the Act needed to be reflected in Government guidance) and therefore the definitions within the s106 are slightly different to those that are in normal s106s for shared equity homes and also required departure from our normal SPD which is why the delivery is higher than expected due to the bespoke nature of the Northstowe Starter Home provision.

Regarding the Northstowe Starter Homes (the sale price being capped at a maximum sales price of £250k for a period of 5 years) this will continue to be delivered at 40% across Phase 2 in every development parcel. It was felt that capping the sales price for 5 years would help essential workers and other low paid workers onto the housing ladder.

Over Phase 2 affordable rent housing will be delivered with 20% delivery for the first 1,000 homes delivered in total (i.e., providing 200 affordable homes) and then a further 50 homes by 2,500 homes (total 250) and a further 50 by 3,000 homes (total 300) and a final 50 by the completion of the development (3,500 homes) bringing the total to 350 affordable rent homes in the Phase. This means the overall provision will be 10%. To frontload the affordable delivery in phase 2 was part of the committee approval.

Phase 2a will deliver 81 affordable rent homes (including 60 age restricted homes for the over 55s) (20%) and the 40% Northstowe starter homes (163 in total through 23 x 1 & 2 bed starter homes apartments, 97 x 1 & 2 bed starter home mansion house apartments and 43 x 2 bed starter home row houses). The affordable homes are not on the border with Rampton Drift and are along the busway and across the centre of the site.

Looking at the Phasing Plans for Phase 2, the next Phases, which will complete the first 1,000 homes, will probably be between Urban Splash and Phase 1 and housing within the town centre development with the elements between Rampton Drift and Longstanton being the last to be delivered and therefore with a lower amount of affordable rent housing.

PHASE 3

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in 2018 and 2019 which updated the definition of Affordable Homes to include:

Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out

in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.

So Northstowe Phase 2 perhaps got a better provision of affordable homes due to the high level of starter homes, but it stressed that the Starter Home provision was a provision specific to Northstowe as this was negotiated and reported as part of the planning committee resolution (the County Council are also involved in signing the s106).

In terms of Phase 3 we will be seeking 40% affordable housing across the Phase in a mix of tenures across the definitions in the NPPF and to meet the housing need (we are expecting further updates to the NPPF in the next year or so, but no formal date has been given). It is not anticipated that the definition of affordable homes will be significantly altered at this time. It should also be noted that we ensure that the design quality of homes market and affordable are the same and that the affordable homes are distributed across each parcel with clusters being kept at a maximum of 25.

This includes:

Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

a) Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

b) Starter homes: (as above)

c) Discounted market sales housing is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) Other affordable routes to home ownership is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

We have been asked what the viability issues were with Phase 1. This was before both Sarah and Alex's and our current planning officers time working on this, but we have put together this information and hope this helps to elaborate:

All parcels apart from the Bloor Homes parcel (H1) have a proportion of Affordable Rent and Shared Equity on them. The amount is determined by the scale of the parcel (i.e., the number of houses within it). The total of 300 is split 180 towards affordable rent with 120 towards shared equity.

In terms of viability, we think that because Bloor would have been delivered early with no affordable housing to support the early delivery of the road infrastructure to the B1050 and enhancements.

We would also highlight that what is clear from the report that the County Council education and transport costs (e.g. Guided Busway, Primary school, Secondary school contribution and other transport costs) totalled a significant proportion of the s106 and at c.£26m of the total £33m sought and that this on top of the cost of other infrastructure on site (e.g. LEAPs, Pioneer Park, the water park (sustainable drainage), Hatton's road ponds, the new junction on the B1050 and other costs) proved to have an impact on the viability of the scheme. At in excess of £20k per house in terms of the financial sum, the level of s106s is significant on top of normal development costs.

As it was deemed that all s106s and on-site infrastructure was necessary to make the development acceptable, the level of affordable housing was reduced. The Council sought professional advice in this matter. It would be that the level of s106 contributions sought and infrastructure needed was the reason why the level of affordable housing was lower than policy. We would add this discussion has occurred on similar large sites not just in Cambridgeshire but also further afield.

NORTHSTOWE PHASE 2B – KEEPMOAT

We attended a presentation from Keepmoat and are ensuring they are working on consulting more widely, in particular with Rampton Drift residents and are working with the Council to form a session for the developers and planning and housing officers to attend.

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

CONSERVATION WOODLAND WOODSIDE

Concerns have been raised regarding recent tree works that have been carried out in the area of conservation woodland at the rear of properties along Woodside. Residents are concerned about the condition of the wood and that this is gradually being degraded by the removal of trees. We have contacted our Tree Officer regarding this, and she has provided the below response.

In this case the decision was made not to impose a condition requiring replanting following the removal of trees as it was felt that trees in this woodland would not have done well- would have died or become stunted. Unfortunately, the landowner cannot be compelled to have a management plan for the woodland.

I know the piece of land you are referring to well. Part of it is covered by the conservation area, part by TPO 0005 (2005) W1 and part by the both the conservation area and TPO.

The TPO on site is a woodland TPO and therefore is considered in a different manner to individuals, area, or group TPOs. This is because woodland management differs to general arboriculture. It has different aims and different methodologies. This is partly because it uses different skills, techniques, and equipment, and partly because woodland is more than trees, woodland is an environment where the biggest visual organism is the trees.

When considering an application relating to woodland, the authority has to grant consent so far as accords with good forestry practice unless it is satisfied that the granting of consent would fail to secure the maintenance of the special character of the woodland or the woodland character of the area.

This piece of land is a derelict tree nursery lot. It has no special character or designation but is a nice piece of canopy cover for the village, a quiet area for wildlife as there are no public rights of way through the site, greenery visible above the houses and perhaps most importantly now a contributing buffer between Longstanton and Northstowe. Therefore, any reasonable woodland work would be permitted.

The work applied for under 20/1489/TTPO relates more to safety work than woodland. However, the area where ten stems are to be felled is a dense row of outgrown field stock i.e. when the tree nursery was left, the row of small saplings, which were small and numerous, were left to grow and never thinned out. This means in the intervening years they have become crowded, tall with a thinner stem than ideal. They have fought for the light through upward growth and become drawn up. There is also a significant amount of self-set trees as well. Overall, the quality of the trees is very variable but there are no trees which are individually impressive, because of the age of the woodland and its history as a nursery. Within this row there are maidens and multistems, hence why the tree works specification uses the word stem instead of trees. The agent and I used this term specifically to pin down the scale of tree works.

Ideally this woodland would have a management plan which would thin the trees (i.e., remove stems, not thin as in a crown thin) to a level where light would reach the soil, to enhance the herb and understory layer but it is a micro wood and clearly the owner does not want to go down this route. Woodland owners, currently, cannot be compelled to create and adopt a management plan by any authority or organisation. However, the owner is managing his wood by having an arborist undertake and safety inspection and then undertake the recommended works. This is a rare and unusual step for this type of landowner and should be applauded. It also discharges his duty of care as a tree owner and managing the risk.

With regard to planting, TPO applications are often approved with conditions, and where trees are removed often (but not always) include replacement tree planting. It is not always appropriate to place a condition on an approval for replanting, especially in woodlands. If trees were planted in this woodland, they would either die or become stunted, ill formed trees. Please also bear in mind that this woodland needs more light to the soil as it is quite the thicket.

Every tree works case is assessed on its merits. Although it appears, and feels, like a tree work application factory as we manage over a thousand tree works cases a year, they are all assessed on an individual basis. Jay assesses them all to see if they are valid and include the right information. I look at each one to assess what it is, where and its merits. A case such as 20/1489/TTPO had this but also, and a site visit from

myself, then a conversation with the agent about the work and specification, the agent returning to site so he can provide additional clarity, then another conversation between myself and the agent, the agent amending the proposal, Jay and myself amending the application and determining it. We actually overran the eight-week determination date, to make sure we got things just right.

If you would like more detail about TPO woodlands and applications, it is the same free web source as for a TPO information, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas#tree-preservation-orders--general>.

I would be hard pressed to give you one woodland resource as it is a very large subject. Cambridgeshire Libraries does not really cover this subject. The parish clerk receives the South Cambs Tree Warden Network emails and these often include woodland and farmland links to grants, resources and interesting websites. You never know what will spark and we have a diverse district with all sorts of interested landowners and groups. As the clerks are often a knowledge hub within a village, they can then distribute the email or information to whomever they think may be interested in an item. I love to hear that one of these emails has sparked something, a project or piece of work in one of the villages.

DISTRICT WIDE UPDATES

COVID-19 UPDATES

VACCINATION BRIEFING, THE HIGHLIGHTS OF WHICH ARE BELOW:

More than 90% of residents aged 70 and above in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have received their first dose.

Anyone aged 64 and over, or Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (previously on the shielding list), who has not yet had their first dose should now make an appointment at www.nhs.uk/covidvaccination or by phoning 119.

Carers are included in cohort 6 for vaccination if they fit the definition of "adult carers", which is defined as "Those who are eligible for a carer's allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable." Eligible adult carers will be contacted via the National Booking System (NBS) to receive an invitation to book vaccination through Vaccination Centres, Community Pharmacies or Hospital Hubs, once a list of these individuals has been produced.

If an individual has been added to the Shielded Patient List as part of the new QCovid model, the NHS will contact them to offer them the vaccine as soon as appointments become available. The NHS may contact patients via text message, letter, or a phone call to offer an appointment.

Latest research findings

The latest findings from the Imperial College London's React study show that the number of COVID-19 infections is halving every 14.6 days. The research, which saw more than 85,000 swab tests carried out

across England between February 4 and 13, showed that infections had dropped to one in 200 people testing positive.

Rates are continuing to fall in all regions of England, according to the latest weekly surveillance report from Public Health England(PHE). In the East Midlands, the rate of new cases stood at 176.7 per 100,000 people in the week to February 14. This is the highest rate of any region but down from 228.4 in the previous week. South-west England recorded the lowest rate - 87.4, down from 123.1.

The Public Health England report also shows case rates in England are falling among all age groups. The highest rate remains among 30 to 39-year-olds, which stood at 192.5 cases per 100,000 people in the seven days to February 14, down week-on-week from 270.8. For people aged 80 and over, the rate fell from 208.0 to 129.6.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN SOUTH CAMBS

Working with volunteer groups across the District, officers and elected members have been looking back at the outstanding work done by volunteer groups, working alongside Ward members and SCDC patch officers, throughout the COVID-19 period. Many volunteer groups also wish, themselves, to harness their experiences and expertise and to build on these. South Cambs is now embarking on research to consider how best to take forward and develop this work to build community resilience networks across the District. It is intended to set up some focus groups to discuss initial ideas and to then determine how best to continue community groups beyond the immediate COVID-19 crisis. The intention would be that these groups would work alongside parish councils. It is early days yet and there will be due consultation with existing volunteer groups, with parish councils and with elected members as this work progresses.

COVID-19 BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Business Support Unit continues its important work with local businesses helping them through the COVID-19 crisis, with funding, with advice and with other support. This has been a massive effort and has involved a huge amount of dedicated hard work.

Grants: £6,932,202 paid in total to 3,056 business since November.

You can find further information on current financial and other sources of support for business via:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business/coronavirus-information-for-businesses/>

IDENTIFYING LOCAL DIGITAL CHAMPIONS

In addition to us continuing to make full use of more traditional methods of communicating with residents, we are now looking to reach out to our communities through more localised digital channels (such as local Facebook groups or village distribution lists). The aim is to ensure important communications reach more people in their communities.

To do this, we hope to recruit 'Digital Champions' in every village in the district. We would work with them to identify and better engage with local Facebook pages, What's App groups, bloggers &

influencers, and village news-sites etc which our Champions could act as liaison with, to help push vital messages out into the communities.

This will help us to understand the varied communications channels preferred by our communities so that we can improve and target our messaging and maximise its impact. This would be for key information only, such as latest COVID-19 messaging, key campaigns, emergencies, or potentially an issue where we are unable to collect all the bins in a village.

We will reassure the Digital Champions that we won't be flooding them with lots of messages on a daily basis, and it may be that we would have more than one Champion in a community to spread the load with each taking responsibility for different elements.

We are aware of a number of some village-based channels and Facebook pages and closed groups but want to talk to members and communities to better understand the opportunities. With that in mind, we will be starting the process of calling members to tap into your knowledge in the weeks ahead. If you already have some possible contacts for your patch, please let the Communications Team know.

SELF-ISOLATION SUPPORT SCHEME EXTENDED

[Financial help for people to self-isolate](#) has been extended until the end of June and expanded to include parents who need to have time off work to look after a child who is self-isolating.

The scheme was due to expire at the end of February, but the Government has announced that it has been extended to allow Councils to continue supporting everyone who needs assistance to self-isolate.

People who need to self-isolate are able to make a bid for funding from The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme which is administered by us - and each of the district and city councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Those who don't meet the criteria are also able to apply for a discretionary payment of £500.

Full details of the scheme – along with eligibility criteria – [can be found on our website.](#)

SOUTH CAMBS MAGAZINE – BIN COLLECTION CALENDAR

We have spotted an error in the bin collection calendar in the winter 2020 edition of South Cambs Magazine. This is the edition of the magazine that was delivered to all residents across the district late November / early December last year. So, for now at least, it remains the 'current' and most recent edition that residents have.

Normally, the bin collection calendar dates in one magazine run up to (and usually past) the final delivery date for the following magazine. In this instance that has not happened. The spring 2021 edition, which contains the new bin calendar, starts getting delivered to residents on Monday 8 March. The primary source of bin collection dates for residents should always be our [online bin collection calendar](#). Residents can contact refuse@scambs.gov.uk or call 03450 450 063 for waste-related questions.

MHCLG UPDATES

GUIDANCE ON APPROACH TO ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS DURING CORONAVIRUS

The Government has, (26 February), published guidance on how political parties, candidates, agents, and campaigners can undertake COVID-secure campaigning activity for the May 21 polls.

Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-secure-election-campaigning-will-go-ahead>

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-governments-approach-to-elections-and-referendums-during-covid-19>

RAPID LATERAL FLOW TESTING FOR HOUSEHOLDS AND BUBBLES OF SCHOOL PUPILS AND STAFF

Yesterday (28 February), the Government announced that households with primary school, secondary school, and college age children, including childcare and support bubbles, will be able to test themselves for coronavirus twice a week at home. Households, childcare and support bubbles of primary, secondary and college staff and adults working in the wider school community, including bus drivers and after school club leaders can also be tested. The twice-weekly test kits can be accessed:

- via employers if they offer testing to employees
- at a local test site
- by collecting a home test kit from a test site
- by ordering a home test kit online

Schools should not give test kits to parents, carers or household members and should not order more test kits for this purpose. Letters containing advice on where to access testing will be made available for schools to share with parents and staff shortly. The guidance provides information on who can be tested and how people can get a test.

Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-households-with-children-of-school-aged-to-get-rapid-covid-19-tests-per-person-per-week>

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff>

FINANCE

THE MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The five-year General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) delivers our Business Plan for South Cambridgeshire and its four principal objectives namely Growing Local Businesses and Economies, Housing that is Affordable for Everyone to Live In, Being Green to Our Core and delivering A Modern and Caring Council. It is reviewed and refreshed every six months. At its February meeting the Full Council has refreshed the MTFS to incorporate an updated financial forecast of the risks

associated with COVID-19 and of the changes made and intending to be made by the Government in its financial support for local government, including the changes to the Public Works Loan Board rules.

In order to deliver the Business Plan and our statutory duties the Council must take a proactive approach to managing its resources effectively. Our four-year Service Transformation Programme introduced during 2019/20 and our commercial investments are delivering savings and additional revenue and are at the centre of this. As a result of the refresh, despite the challenges we now face we forecast we will need to find £5 million in savings and additional income over the coming five years which is about the same as it was this time last year. Moreover, we have a healthy General Reserve balance of around £16.5 million to deal with unforeseen problems.

We are still expecting the Government to carry out a major review of local government finance next year and we continue to take what we believe could be the worst-case scenario for us in our forward planning.

THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR

The Full Council meeting also approved the General Fund Revenue Budget and the Housing Revenue Account and Capital budget for 2021/22.

The heart of the General Fund Revenue Budget is the COVID-19 business and social recovery in South Cambridgeshire and about continuing to give support to our residents and businesses to help them recover from the pandemic in the coming financial year. This budget also recognised the Government's local government financial settlement for the coming financial year - which in the words of the Local Government Association - is dependent on councils increasing council tax bills.

The net expenditure for 2021/22 to be met from Government Grants, Business Rates and Local Taxpayers is estimated at nearly £21.7 million pounds. Council Taxpayers are being asked to pay an extra 10 pence a week for the average Band D property, bringing its annual council tax bill to £155.31p. Not to do this would require us to use money from reserves building up trouble for the future. Nevertheless, the Council Tax bill from South Cambridgeshire District Council will continue to be in the lowest 25 per cent of all district council taxes. We have a Local Council Tax Support Scheme for those on low incomes which we have already discussed this afternoon, as well as having discretionary powers to help council taxpayers.

We have seen a hit on Business Rate income, and we have concerns that the long-term effects of COVID-19 in terms of business failures and property devaluation may impact on the Business Rate growth in this coming financial year. Against this background of less income from Business Rates and grants, the council is not just relying on more money from council taxpayers.

To do our bit we have embarked on an ambitious 4-year plan to transform council service quality, better realign our financial resources to business plan priorities and improve customer service. This will achieve a reduction in net expenditure compared to 2020/21 of over £2.1 million. But we can't just stand still. Helping our communities and businesses fight back in these difficult circumstances is essential. So, some of the savings achieved have gone to pay for additional support. For COVID-19 we have set aside a revenue contingency of a quarter of a million pounds and there is a two-year post

for a Welfare and Visiting Advisor to support and enhance the work of the Housing Benefits team during this difficult time for our residents. There is more funding for homelessness at this time of economic hardship and for land drainage when we are seeing record breaking rainfall due to climate change. And staffing support to maximise our investment opportunities, which is key to retain our financial resilience to deliver place making and income. South Cambridgeshire District Council with a General Fund reserve of £16.5 million is in a sound financial position and this budget gives us the financial stability to proceed into the next council year and beyond.

The Housing Revenue Account budget is focused on delivering more council housing and improving the service to our tenants. The HRA budget continues to be set in the context of a 30-year business plan. We must also remember that broadly speaking the HRA cannot be subsidised by local tax and it has to support a housing debt of £205m pounds taken out by the previous administration to enable us to retain our council rents from the Government.

As to the council house building programme, we have external funding from section 106 commuted sums, retained right to buy receipts and how we utilise these funds is identified in the Housing Capital Investment Plan. Since April 2018 we have completed 105 rented and shared ownership properties and have 248 in the pipeline. We have also disposed of 8 plots for self-build. We estimate the HRA balance at the end of this financial year will be just over two and a half million pounds and while this is adequate for HRA purposes it would not be prudent to let it fall much below that figure. There is therefore no alternative to increasing council rent levels if we are to maintain our drive to improve the customer service to our tenants and grow our social housing stock.

Rents will increase by 1.5 per cent in line with Government policy and this means that the average social rent will increase to 106 pounds and 2 pence per week. And in line with rent legislation our affordable rents will continue to be no more than 80% of the market rent. At the time of writing the report the average affordable rent was 148 pounds and 18 pence.

We are acutely aware that some of our tenants are having financial problems. Paragraph 21 explains that because of the pandemic current council rent arrears have increased significantly in percentage terms. However, the introduction of the new Orchard housing management system should allow for targeted review of tenants' arrears & collections. We anticipate that this position will improve as we emerge from the pandemic. The HRA budget also includes support for tenants some of whom are receiving Universal Credit.

ZERO CARBON INITIATIVES

There is a lot of useful and interesting information in the Spring edition of the zero carbon communities newsletter, well worth reading.

<https://sway.office.com/nbeul3HuLf5mQr4P?ref=Link>

The Doubling Nature strategy, which we hope will have wide-ranging implications for all aspects of the Council's work, is also set out here. We hope, also, to announce soon the criteria and application deadlines for the ZCC grants round for 2021/2002 and will be encouraging all parishes in the Ward to apply.

South Cambs Climate and Environment Fortnight 2021 is part of our commitment to be 'green to our core'. It features a series of online events which focus on climate change and the environment, which commenced on 22 February. Full details can be found here:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/nature-and-climate-change/climate-and-environment-fortnight-2021-events/>

OxCAM ARC

There have been notices in the press recently concerning the government's intentions to provide more detail on the development of the OxCam Arc – a growth corridor between Oxford and Cambridge. This is an area of the country marked out for significant development in terms of jobs, housing, infrastructure. There is also now more attention to the impact of climate change on the way development takes place. The green agenda, with an emphasis on low carbon initiatives, on biodiversity, on landscape and water management is very much being led by South Cambs – particularly through the work of the Leader, Bridget Smith and that of Chief Executive, Liz Watts.

It is important for our area, our villages, that we keep abreast of these developments and have an input into the developments; and elected councillors will be doing just that. We have attached to the end of this report information from a presentation made recently giving more details of the development of the spatial framework; and we will continue to report as and when further information comes forward.

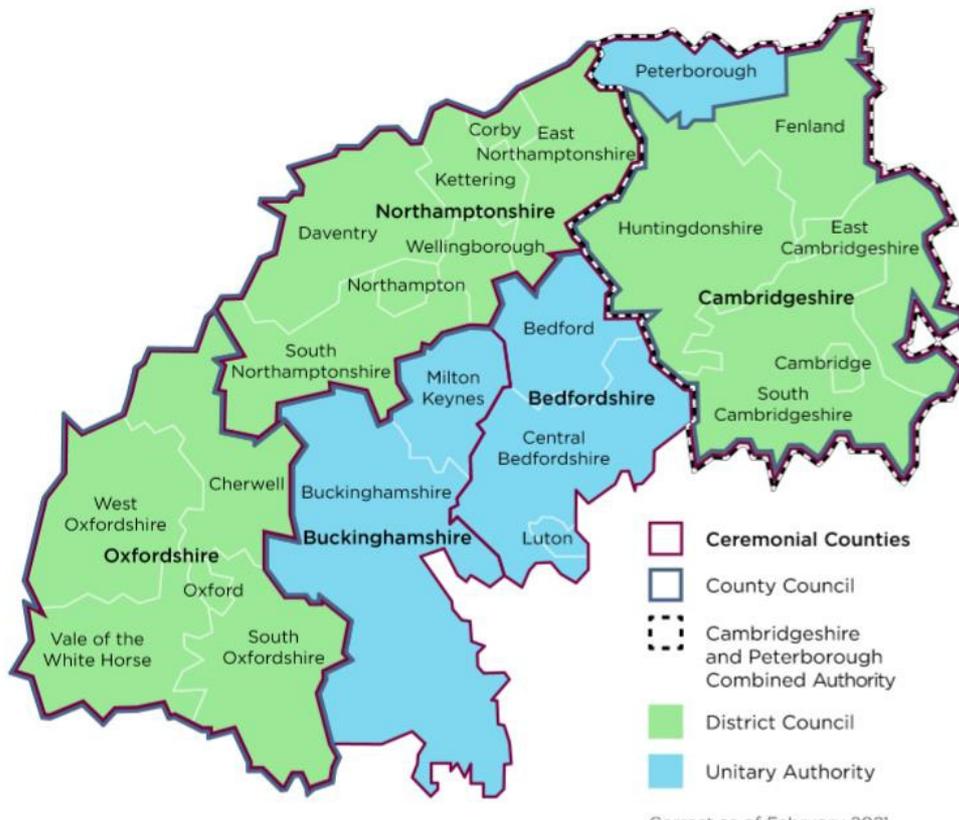
OxCAM ARC SPATIAL FRAMEWORK: POINTS TAKEN FROM A RECENT GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT

PURPOSE:

- support long-run sustainable economic growth across the area
- help to make the area a brilliant place to live, work and travel in – for existing residents and future communities alike
- Support lasting improvements to the environment, green infrastructure, and biodiversity.

By "...focusing on the strategic opportunities for growth and environmental improvement that cross local administrative boundaries and require more joined-up thinking across the area..."

Approach to the Framework – 10 Principles- Collaborative Adaptable Long-term Integrated Inclusive Digital-first Evidence-based Sustainable Quality Add Value



The Areas Economy – Spatial Framework will...

- provide an assessment of existing employment land, planned growth, and anticipated future need.
- set policies to support local planning authorities in allocating these as Strategic Business Zones or Strategic Industrial Locations, as appropriate
- set policies to support different land uses for different sectors and sizes of business.

The Environment

Setting policy to...

- support retention of, and investment in, key existing and potential new habitats, and improve access to nature and accessible green space
- set high standards for new development, including on carbon emissions, water management, green space, integrated and functional green infrastructure, e.g., for active travel and biodiversity net gain
- support an integrated water management approach, taking into account sustainable water abstraction and drought resilience, water quality, reducing risk and resilience to flooding and how and where new infrastructure should be developed

- support clean air outcomes, with clear links to housing and transport policies
 - embed the enhancement of natural capital across the Arc
- Includes objective to identify Environment “Opportunity Areas”

Transport and Infrastructure in the Arc

“...taking an infrastructure-first approach to growth – identifying and delivering strategic infrastructure priorities as development happens”.

- Mapping existing health, education, accessible green spaces, social and community infrastructure, utilities, green and blue infrastructure, and other infrastructure requirements at an Arc-wide scale
- Identify future need and gaps in provision
Create an infrastructure plan to facilitate future growth.
- proactively setting strategic policies for local transport authorities and local planning authorities to enable this.
- targeted climate resilience and air quality policies based on air quality modelling.
- wider strategic policies to facilitate utilities investment in line with key development opportunities, including digital infrastructure.

Housing and Planning in the Arc

“...We will plan for the right level of growth in the Arc... to do this the spatial framework will identify:”

- Opportunity Areas, to support local planning authorities to plan for this growth
- the infrastructure needed to support sustainable growth in those locations, and the key locations for strategic infrastructure to support sustainable growth
- locations for environmental enhancement to achieve greater environmental benefits that can allow development to take place elsewhere

Spatial Framework – policies to enable...

- new settlements to come forward at the scale and speed needed
- new development to support habitat recovery, delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and provision of good-quality green space within schemes
- brownfield redevelopment and densification, and expansion of existing settlements, in sustainable locations or locations that can be made more sustainable by enhanced access to sustainable transport modes
- housing needs to be met in full, including delivery of much-needed affordable housing

“...It will indicate locations but will not include site allocations, and it will not include detailed policies set elsewhere in national policy or better left to local plans.”

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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