

## **Stretham Ward October 2020**

### **East Cambridgeshire District Council Update from Lisa Stubbs**

#### **5 Year Land Supply**

Excellent news, the 5-year land supply remains intact despite a number of legal challenges! All of the challenges to ECDC's 5-year land supply position, have been successfully defended or withdrawn. The effect of which is that the development envelopes around our villages and settlements are in place and effective. This means that development outside these boundaries cannot normally happen (with the exception of certain types of development that are allowed under national policy).

Congratulations to all those who worked together to achieve this result for the site on Sutton Road and Main Street in Witchford. This outcome is also an exoneration of the approach Cllr Hunt and I took to not being predetermined. We protected the right to speak at the most impactful juncture, in the interest of the parish of Witchford, to rebuff these two sites. It should be noted and acknowledged how through bipartisanship and the rejection of rancorous advocates, ECDC, Witchford Parish Council, Cllr Hunt and myself worked together to thwart the establishment of two speculative developments.

#### **COVID-19 Recovery Plan**

East Cambs residents are doing a great job at keeping Covid at bay - our district is one of the very lowest in the country for new Covid infections, with an infection rate of around 1.1 per 100,000 people. But this virus is unpredictable and we must keep up the good work.

The Council has a comprehensive Recovery Plan which it is following, working with other public sector partners such as the Combined Authority, the County Council, the NHS and the Police. A Member led COVID-19 Working Party has also been helping to guide and inform actions.

Actions include:

- Development of a comprehensive Outbreak Plan (used four times so far)
- Provision of local Covid testing sites to support the NHS Test and Trace programme
- Identification of sites to assist with the NHS screening programmes for flu vaccinations (and planning for future Covid vaccinations)
- Working on a GIS Mapping solution to support resolution of local outbreaks
- Monitoring of and regular liaison with houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) and high staff population/intensity businesses
- Work with Parish Councils to create their own COVID-19 Response Plan
- Continually providing key messages via the website and social media
- Maintaining relationships with, and support to local community groups to harness their spirit and keep them energised throughout the recovery period
- Delivery of a Business Support pack via Enterprise East Cambs
- Specific support to businesses to help them comply with test and trace and the roll out of the NHS app
- Administering the new Self Isolation Support Payment to ensure it reaches those that are in need and eligible as soon as possible, and promote the Discretionary Housing Fund
- Appointment based face to face Housing, Community and Benefit advice and support for those in need of help
- Flexible and remote working embedded within our culture to increase resilience and ensure the Council continues to deliver high quality services and remains open for business

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- Review of online services - the Council website, Enterprise East Cambs and the new tourist website Explore East Cambs, to ensure services are accessible and it is as easy as possible to deal with the Council online. Providing a digitally assisted service for those who need help

#### COVID-19 Business Survey

As part of the Covid recovery work, Enterprise East Cambridgeshire (the economic development arm of ECDC) is running a survey which aims to capture information on how COVID-19 may be impacting businesses both in the immediate and long term. The survey is open until 16<sup>th</sup> October; the results will be collated and used to help identify needs and, together with the Combined Authority, shape support for businesses.

The survey can be found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ECDCCovidSurvey>

#### Climate Change Commitments

ECDC is forging ahead with its promises to move to a cleaner, greener East Cambs with progress on two new Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

The Natural Environment SPD aims to increase biodiversity via new development, to deliver better management, protection, enhancement and creation of priority habitats, and promote the creation of an effective, functioning ecological network throughout the district. The document provides advice on policy requirements relating to issues such as 'net gain' in biodiversity through development proposals, protection of existing nature sites, as well as the protection and provision of trees. Now that the Natural Environment SPD has been approved for adoption, it will be used by the Council's planning service and forms a material consideration when determining planning applications.



The council's Climate Change SPD will be going out to public consultation over a six-week period, running from mid-October to the end of November 2020. It aims to help the planning system achieve development which has a lower impact on the climate and seeks to ensure developers play their part to help address the climate emergency when planning development schemes. The document looks to ensure that all future planning decisions have the environment as a priority consideration. It also provides necessary guidance to those building in the district on their responsibilities to the environment. The Climate Change SPD proposes four new policies which cover the following key issues:

- Reducing carbon dioxide emissions
- Safeguarding renewable and low carbon energy sources
- Reducing energy demand in existing buildings
- Resilient and adaptable design

#### Doubling Nature Conference

Anna Bailey, Leader of ECDC, was delighted to be asked to make closing remarks at the recent Natural Cambridgeshire "Doubling Nature in Action" event which was held online. ECDC is supporting Natural Cambridgeshire's ambitious plans to double the area of rich wildlife habitats and natural green space across the region, with the aim of creating a world-class natural environment. ECDC are working with Natural Cambridgeshire on a plan to promote community action to give local communities inspiration and ideas about how they can double the space for nature in their area.

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#### Sky Lanterns and Helium Balloons

The District Council has decided to ban the release of sky lanterns and helium balloons on its land and is encouraging others to take similar steps. The motion to Full Council, which was passed unanimously, aims to protect the environment and wildlife from litter and other potential problems caused by helium balloons and sky lanterns. An estimated 200,000 sky lanterns are released every year in the UK with an increasing number of incidents relating to this including fires and animal deaths. We are encouraging people to mark occasions or remember loved ones in different ways, such as planting a tree.

Organisations can show their support by signing up to the Charter here:

<https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/content/sky-lanterns>

#### White Paper Planning Reforms

Central Government is currently consulting on massive reform of the planning system, which would see the biggest changes to the system (both in terms of Local Plan making as well as how planning applications are determined), since the Town & Country Planning Act 1947. You can view the consultation here (it closes on 29<sup>th</sup> October):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

- Local Plans will be simple and map based – no more weighty, wordy documents
- Digitisation of the system to make it easier to access and comment
- Land will be classified into three types – **growth** areas, where the effect will be that outline planning permission has been granted, **renewal** areas, and **protected** areas, where no development will take place
- An emphasis on building beautiful and good design
- Local Authorities will set design codes for areas of land
- Local Plan making will be quicker (30 months maximum)
- Planning applications will be dealt with more quickly with stages of the process deleted to make it more streamlined and speeding up of environmental impact assessments
- The level of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), i.e. developer contributions, will be set by central Government, collected and spent locally with more freedom on how it is spent
- Review of enforcement powers

The Council will consider the headlines of its response to the consultation at its Full Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

#### MoD Housing Site, Ely - Phase 2

A planning application for 53 new homes at the old RAF site in Ely has been submitted. ECDC purchased the site from the MoD in order to bring the empty properties back into use. The Council had to pay open market price for the site. If a private developer had purchased the site there would be no requirement to deliver any affordable housing from the existing homes that are being renovated, but the Council is delivering 15 shared equity homes from the renovation stage, which are reserved for local working people. Part of the contract with the MoD required the Council to submit a planning application for new infill housing on the site. 53 new homes are proposed with 30% being affordable, again reserved for local working people.

ECDC are keen to try to increase the 30% figure and if planning permission is granted will be applying for grant funding to convert more of the open market homes to affordable, again, reserved for local working people. We have to wait until after the planning application has been determined to do this, as the funding

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bodies require proof of “additionality” – the funding bodies grant funding in order to convert open market homes into affordable homes. This is a big project for a small District Council, but we felt that buying the site and bringing it back into use, whilst getting as much affordable housing for local people from the site as possible was the right thing to do.

#### First £100k Homes at Fordham

The first 8 £100k homes are now available for eligible buyers to purchase in Fordham. The £100k homes initiative has been brought forward by the Mayor, James Palmer and the Combined Authority and provides first time buyers with the opportunity to purchase 100% freehold a home for £100k.

More £100k homes are in the pipeline, including on sites in Ely. You can read more about the £100k Homes project and register your support for the idea, or register your desire to purchase a £100k Home here:

<https://www.100khomes.co.uk/>

#### Commuter Car Parks

The District Council’s railway station car parks at Angel Drove in Ely and Littleport are, unsurprisingly, well down in terms of occupancy levels compared with pre Covid-19. Previously, the Ely commuter car parks were close to 100% occupancy, whereas levels now stand at around 15%. This is not surprising, given the new found love of people for working at home. It will be interesting to see what sort of level it settles at in the future “new normal”. Network Rail is soon to introduce a new 3 day a week season ticket offer, so it may well be that commuting levels don’t ever return to normal levels – a helpful boost to climate change targets, but also a fundamental shift in the working patterns of the UK.

#### Equalities Policy Consultation

In conjunction with National Inclusion Week, ECDC has launched a five-week consultation to gather views on its new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. The new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy aims to expand on the Single Equality scheme that was previously in place, as well as set out the Council’s commitment to providing an inclusive and supportive environment for staff, members, contractors and visitors that is free from discrimination. The consultation is open until 31<sup>st</sup> October and can be accessed here: <https://www.eastcambbs.gov.uk/equalities/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-policy-consultation>

#### A10/A142 BP Roundabout Ahead of Schedule

The A10/A142 BP roundabout works are set to be finished 4 weeks ahead of schedule, so it is now hoped that the roundabout will be completed and opened towards the end of October.

#### GP Provision in Ely and Princess of Wales Hospital

Anna Bailey continues to work personally on delivering increased GP provision in Ely to serve both Ely and the surrounding villages and hopes to have good news on this front very soon!

In line with our promises at the election back in May 2019 work continues towards a re-provided Princess of Wales Hospital and NHS plans are slowly progressing; we will be looking to support this project financially from ECDC, through developer contributions.

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