

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caxton and Papworth Ward

District Councillor's Monthly Report – September 2022

Cost of Living Support

South Cambs District Council is not yet seeing significant impacts as a specific result of increased cost of living. However, this is expected to change from September and October onward when gas and electricity prices rise again. In anticipation of this, a motion will be put to the next full council meeting, declaring a “Cost of Living Emergency” and announcing steps the council will be taking to help residents.

SCDC [has website content](#) which signposts residents to support available, such as with energy bills. Find this information here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/warm-homes-and-energy-efficiency-advice/>. The next edition of the free South Cambridgeshire magazine will also include similar information.

Warm spaces will be provided by volunteer groups in locations such as village halls and libraries from October. They will be financed by the County Council's social care budget and a charitable organisation called ACRE will be engaged to ensure suitable standards are maintained. Provision of hot food for needy residents may also be necessary and several of the groups who provided that service during the pandemic are stepping up to help again.

A428

The Secretary of State for Transport has signed the Development Consent Order (DCO) to allow work on the new dual carriageway between the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet roundabouts to begin before the end of this year. The Highways Agency will be holding a series of open days in the autumn to explain the plans in detail.

East West Rail

DLUHC (Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) has written to all councils, informing them that no major policy decisions will be made until the new Prime Minister is in post. This affects the decision whether to continue with the construction of the East West Rail (EWR) line. Although the current Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, has gone on record as saying he thinks the project should be cancelled, he also says that the final decision rests with the new PM.

Before that, local council and business leaders wrote to the Transport Secretary and Chancellor, asking for clarity on the future of the project. Bridget Smith signed both letters on behalf of South Cambs District Council. When challenged to state whether SCDC supports East West Rail, Cllr Smith read the following statement at July's council meeting:

“The Liberal Democrats in Cambridgeshire have been lobbying for the reinstatement of an East to West rail line for 50 years. The only thing that has changed in that time is the urgency with which we need to give people viable alternatives to the car in order to cut journey times, reduce our very high carbon emissions and help people with the escalating cost of living.

EWR is a Government scheme being delivered by a private company, resulting in poor accountability and little transparency. It has been an enormous frustration that government has kept residents completely in dark for years now about their intentions. This is a pitiful way of delivering a major piece of public transport infrastructure.

The two recent letters, signed by all local council leaders, the universities and key business organisations, to the Secretary of State and to the Chancellor were intended to pressure the government to come clean and make its position clear so that we can start to plan for a low carbon, low cost of living future for our region.

We made it absolutely clear before May's elections that we support the *principle* of a rail link and station serving Cambourne because it is only by providing really good quality public transport that we enable all people to travel easily to work, have equal access to opportunities, reduce reliance on cars and the consequential air pollution, carbon emissions, congestion and increased cost of living. Cambourne was built without any associated public transport infrastructure and residents will benefit hugely when this deficit is addressed.

However, we are reserving judgment on the final route alignment and location of the station because we have grave concerns about the environmental impact of the whole scheme and especially the impact on villages close to a new station and along the route. Additionally, we believe that a new station must be readily accessible by cycle or foot for the majority of residents of Cambourne and surrounding villages.

Furthermore, it is absolutely essential that a railway line fit for the 21st century is electrified – which Cambridgeshire Lib Dems will continue to campaign for.”

Aircraft Noise

Bridget Smith met with the Head of Flight Operations for Luton Airport as a result of receiving lots of complaints from residents in the west of the region about aircraft noise. Bridget asked what had changed recently and was told nothing had changed since the modified stacking area and flight paths were implemented on 24th Feb 2022. The airport often sees an increase in complaints in the summer when flight numbers increase, and people are in their gardens more. She was shown a map of the stack over Graffham Water and three possible landing routes, one of which goes over South Cambs and is used by 30% of flights. Which route is taken depends on the origin of the plane. The stack is at 9000ft but aircraft over South Cambs will always be lower than this - between 7000ft and 8000 ft.

When the consultation was carried out there were two options and Luton choose the option that required planes reducing their speed. As a result, additional noise from air brakes and the airframe is heard from the ground.

Government policy does not prioritise noise above 7000 ft. Their priority is reduced emissions and so there was very little in the consultation about noise. Also, government policy is to put flight paths over the fewest number of houses, that is, over rural rather than built up areas.

In February 2023, there will be a Post Implementation Review when Luton will submit all of the complaints it has received and other data to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). If they are not deemed to have stuck to the terms of the agreement, the CAA may tell them to make changes. If the CAA think that the agreement was wrong in light of the data and the complaints, they can tell Luton to find an alternative and reconsult, or may even determine what the new agreement should be.

Luton will be publishing regular newsletters which you can register for or which you will be sent if you have submitted a complaint. In the meantime, residents should continue to email concerns directly to noise.enquiries@LTN.aero or submit them online at <https://www.london-luton.co.uk/corporate/community/noise/making-a-noise-complaint>. If anyone has evidence of aircraft flying lower than 7000ft, that information should also be submitted to Luton.

Cambridge Congestion Charge

Towards the end of August, the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) announced proposals for a congestion charge for the city of Cambridge, starting in 2025. (The Greater Cambridge Partnership is the local delivery body for the “City Deal” with central Government and has oversight of strategic planning. It includes representation of three councils – South Cambs, the City and the County – as well as Cambridge University.) A Citizen’s Assembly was convened and identified charging as the best option.

The assumption of the proposal is that the volume of traffic in the city will become unsustainable within a few years unless action is taken. The revenue from the charge will be used to fund more frequent bus services across the area with heavily subsidised fares of £1 or £2. Initially it will only be levied during the morning and evening rush hour, although it will be extended to the middle of the day in 2027. There is no proposal to levy charges in the evening or on weekends. The exact boundaries of the charging zone and the charge will be subject to consultation (the widely publicised £5 charge is not final).

The intention is that Park and Ride sites (current and future) will be outside the charging zone. Exemptions for key workers, hospital visits and essential vehicles are also proposed.

Planning Compliance

As part of the wider review of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, the part of the service relating to ensuring compliance with planning controls has been reviewed. This review is particularly required because of the rise in the number of complaints received, which reflects a national trend, and the need to respond efficiently and effectively whilst keeping informed those who are involved. SCDC’s strategy is to promote a proactive approach to responding to breaches of planning regulations with appropriate interventions. In the last six months, work has been undertaken to examine existing processes, to streamline them, adopt new IT systems to aid reporting, and to improve the information available on these matters.

All the information on compliance with planning regulations has now been updated and consolidated onto one page within the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service website (<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/>), with links available from the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils websites. There is written guidance on what is (and what is not) a breach of planning control, as experience is that many do not understand that some building works are able to take place without the need for planning permission to be granted. In addition, there is a helpful, explanatory video. Where it appears that there is a breach of planning control, complaints can now be submitted using an e-form. This allows any documents and/or photographs to be uploaded which will help the compliance team with their investigations.

The service hopes that this will enable residents and others to understand the issues involved in securing compliance with planning regulations. It continues to seek improvements to the way it responds to complaints about unauthorised developments with the development of a new Enforcement Plan and restructuring of the Compliance Team. Please contact the Project Manager (Enforcement) - New Communities and Planning - Mike Holmes (email Mike.Holmes@scambs.gov.uk) with questions or issues.

Greater Cambridge Local Plan

There has been some confusion about the status of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which identifies possible sites for development in both Cambridge City and South Cambs. Nineteen sites have been approved from the hundreds of submissions in the first phase, in total 9,096 dwellings, the majority of which are in the city. In South Cambs, an additional 1,950 dwellings are proposed in Cambourne and further development will take place in Northstowe. Smaller developments (100 dwellings or less) are proposed in other villages. It should be noted these homes are in addition to the 37,198 dwellings brought forward in the last local plan, which was agreed by the previous administration (many of those homes are already under construction and, indeed, occupied).

The current “emerging” Local Plan is now open for a second phase of submissions. Developers may submit new sites or modify proposals that were previously judged to be unsuitable. The final plan will close sometime next year.

Recycling Small Electricals

Do you have small electrical devices that are beyond economic repair, for example, kettles, toasters, vacuum cleaners and mobile phones? The Shared Waste Service has now installed pink-coloured recycling banks across Cambridge and South Cambs where you can drop off such devices. The nearest banks to us are in the car parks of Morrisons in Cambourne and Tesco in Bar Hill. You can also drop them off at the Household Recycling Centres in Milton and Thriplow.

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