

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caxton and Papworth Ward

District Councillor’s Monthly Report – May 2024

Small grants for Community Growing Projects

South Cambs has set up a grants fund to finance Community Growing projects. The fund totals £5,000 and is open to the end of the 2024/25 financial year unless spent earlier. The fund will provide small (up to £500) grants to Parish Councils, constituted community groups, schools, and informal groups for projects associated with the growing of food. (Informal groups require written support for their project from the Parish Council or the District Ward member). Examples of possible projects include installing raised beds on existing allotments and converting unused public spaces for growing food.

Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme re-opened

The Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme has re-opened for applications until 2 June 2024. Grants of up to £15,000 are available to parish councils and community groups for projects that reduce carbon emissions or achieve wider community engagement around climate change. See the grant webpage for the application form, full criteria and guidance, and details of past projects: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/climate-emergency-and-nature/zero-carbon-communities/zero-carbon-communities-grant/>. Please contact the Climate team with any questions or for support with an application: zcc@scambs.gov.uk

A428 Social Value Fund and Community Fund

The National Highways A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement scheme is again accepting applications to its Social Value Fund (£1.7m) and Community Fund (£250,000). The two funds are open to non-for-profit groups or organisations in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, including but not limited to local schools, charities, community groups, and environment groups. National Highways want to use these funds to maximise the wider benefits of the project for local communities, the environment, and the local economy.

Webpage: <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/a428-black-cat-to-caxton-gibbet/social-value-fund-and-community-fund/>

Press release: <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/article/national-highways-calls-on-communities-in-bedfordshire-and-cambridgeshire-to-apply-to-1-7m-legacy-fund/>

Shared Prosperity Fund – Green Space Improvement Projects

South Cambs has secured funding of around £100,000 from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to help improve green spaces in South Cambridgeshire. Types of improvements made through this funding will include:

- Tree planting and hedging
- Seating areas and benches
- Wildlife habitat improvements
- Wildflower planting
- Repair work to existing structures
- Paths and resurfacing
- Bat and Bird Boxes

The first stage includes improvements to council owned green spaces in Great Shelford, Little Wilbraham, Coton and Orwell. These areas were selected after assessing available pieces of land around South Cambs' own housing.

The second stage of the project will launch in mid-May when parish councils will be given an opportunity to bid for funding if they have land available to improve the green space that would benefit their community.

Applicant parish councils will be asked to:

- Demonstrate the land is in their control, or immediately available for improvement before March 2025.
- Provide a site location map and explanation of the type of improvements they want to implement.
- Commit to maintain the site to the necessary standard after the initial works are complete.
- Ensure their elected district councillors are aware of the application.
- Demonstrate the need for improved green space and the impact the improvement would have for local people in terms of health and well-being.
- Demonstrate how local people and volunteers will be involved in the planning, delivery, or maintenance of the green space.
- Detail if any other funding, from the parish council or third party, will be committed to the delivery of the project (this is not a pre-requisite).

The selected parish councils will be supported by a Landscape Architecture Company which South Cambs has procured to assist with the planning and delivery of the projects.

If you have any questions, contact james.croft@scambs.gov.uk

Vape recycling at Cambridgeshire Household Recycling Centres

Vape recycling has been introduced at all nine of Cambridgeshire's Household Recycling Centres – including those at Milton and Thriplow. The new vape recycling bins offer a safe and environmentally friendly way for residents to dispose of single use and reusable vapes. Disposable vapes contain lithium-ion batteries which can catch fire if damaged. Three million vapes are currently thrown away each week across the UK, and research by Material Focus shows that electrical items including vapes disposed of in the wrong bin cause more than 600 fires in refuse collection vehicles and at waste sites every year.

Parking Enforcement

Responsibility for parking enforcement has now passed from the police to the County Council. As part of the transition, South Cambs District Council has funded two enforcement officers to work with the County team. During February, March and April, they made routine visits to most of the villages in our ward. Most residents park considerately but should be aware if they park on yellow lines or cause an obstruction, they may receive a ticket. To request a visit from the parking enforcement team, go to: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/parking-services/south-cambridgeshire-civil-parking-enforcement>

Fly Tipping

South Cambs District Council has also hired two Communities officers to deal with fly tipping. In addition to removing the waste in their dedicated vehicle, they will examine it for evidence of the source. If they can identify the person responsible, they may initiate a prosecution. If you pay a contractor to remove your waste, check they are licensed and will take the material to a dedicated landfill site. Otherwise you remain responsible for the waste and may be prosecuted if it is disposed of illegally. To report fly tipping, go to: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/recycling-and-bins/keeping-your-community-clean/fly-tipping>

Planning News

Cambridge 2050 and the Local Plan

It seems unlikely at this late stage of this current government the proposed fast track local plan scheme will come to fruition. Greater Cambridge's local plan would be ready to submit except it does not allow for Cambridge 2050 because no information is available on that scheme. If the local plan were to be submitted now, it would be found unsound because of the uncertainty around Cambridge 2050.

The councils believe that the need for state intervention has now been accepted by Peter Freeman (chair of the DevCo) as it is clear that such large scale development will not be achieved by profit driven commercial developers. Trying to guess what this might look like is difficult, possibly the commissioning of smaller developers by Homes England to construct 'build to let' and social housing, similar to the Olympic Park model. The councils are being assured that the project is driven by employment numbers and that is the starting point for the latest version of our local plan.

Fen Reservoir

Even though the reservoir is not in South Cambs, some piping and other infrastructure will be. There are some early maps on the Anglian Water website showing a 'connecting facility' north of Madingley and related underground piping. There will be a single DCO (Development Consent Order) for the whole scheme. We are currently in a non statutory consultation period and the council will use it to highlight issues including conflict with C2C and impact on various sensitive sites.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Finalist in the Planning Awards 2024 Local Authority Planning Team of the Year

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning has been shortlisted for the Planning Awards 2024 Local authority planning team of the year. Currently in its 11th consecutive year, the Planning awards celebrate outstanding achievements within the planning and place-making industry. The work of Greater Cambridge Shared Planning is highlighted on the Planning Awards' website:

“Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) is of the largest planning services in the Country, it processes circa 6,000 applications annually and is currently overseeing 13 strategic scale (1,000 home plus) developments. Prioritising continuous improvement, the team actively promotes participation in planning, contributes to creating innovative, sustainable and inclusive services by redesigning processes, harnessing digital experiences, and empowering its 140 staff members. GCSP is involved in utilising the opportunity provided by a world-class economy to lead planning practice and innovation across the profession.”

The Planning Awards Ceremony will take place on Thursday 13 June when the winners will be announced.

Five year land supply

South Cambs has just published a report that includes new Greater Cambridge housing trajectory and housing land supply calculations. The housing trajectory shows anticipated delivery of new homes across Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire up to 2041. The report also demonstrates that jointly for Greater Cambridge (Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire together) we have 6.5 years of housing land supply for the 2024-2029 period.

National planning policy and guidance sets out the circumstances where planning policies should be considered out of date when making decisions on planning applications, and this includes where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a four or five-year housing land supply (as appropriate). On the basis of our housing land supply calculations for Greater Cambridge, this criterium does not apply to Cambridge or South Cambridgeshire. This is relevant for any planning applications that are being considered.

Update regarding East West Rail – April 2024

(Note: This update is largely identical to one provided to councillors by planning officers. I've tidied up spelling and grammar, and clarified a few points such as the location of the “Cambourne” station. The main value of this update is to provide a view of how planners are looking at EWR.)

GCSP (the Shared Planning Service) is currently engaged with EWR to understand their Development Consent Order and how it affects preparation of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

Over the past few years, officers sought to maintain a dialogue with the East West Railway Company and other partner organisations on the proposed East West Railway from Oxford through to Cambridge. Officers have accompanied nominated councillors to the EWR Partnership Board, and EWR Eastern Section Board Meetings.

Recently, officers in the Shared Planning Service have been more specifically engaging with East West Rail on the Development Consent Order and wider strategic growth and place-making matters in relation to the proposed new station at Knapwell/Cambourne. Given the separate but interrelated nature of these projects, officers have been engaging with EWR to understand their programme, identify resources that may be available to the councils and establish a governance structure that allows for effective communication and working arrangements.

There continues to be significant discussion in Central Government around the role and function of the East West Railway and, as such, there is still an opportunity to influence the outputs and wider outcomes for our communities. Both Councils have the opportunity to engage directly with Ministers, the East West Rail company and other key stakeholders, but often the most significant changes can be

secured through a shared voice with others. Therefore, officers in recent months have been increasingly working with Cambridgeshire partner bodies, Transport East and England's Economic Heartland to help inform the project.

Given the scale and nature of the EWR project, the planning application for the scheme is being undertaken through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process. A DCO is a legal instrument that grants permission for large-scale infrastructure projects deemed to be of national significance, such as major transport schemes, energy projects, and other such developments. While the decision-making authority for DCO applications ultimately rests with the Secretary of State, the councils play a role as an 'interested party' representing the interests of the local community, and providing feedback on potential social, economic and environmental impacts of the proposed development on the local area.

GCSP's Strategic Sites is are currently engaging with EWR on agreeing a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) which will inform and steer the application, in particular on key environmental considerations (such as noise, vibration, landscape, health and biodiversity). They will engage with our communities as part of the statutory and non-statutory consultation stages of the DCO process. This is with the overall aim of ensuring the councils and our communities feel able to voice their opinions and to get the very best possible outcomes.

EWR submitted a draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) to Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS) on 22 March 2024, for review and comment, in accordance with section 47(2) of the Planning Act 2008 ("the Act"). The SoCC sets out how EWR intends to consult the local community about the proposed DCO application for the East West Rail (Bedford – Cambridge) project. The draft document was shared with relevant officers and councillors from Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council and formal consultation comments were submitted to EWR on 22 April 2024.

As part of the pre-application process, EWR is undertaking land referencing to identify landowners with an interest and/or rights over land and property that may potentially be affected by the project. As a component of this, EWR has issued Land Interest Questionnaires (LIQs). These intend to gather up-to-date ownership information for land that may be required for the project, such as for construction, as well as land that may be impacted by the operation of the railway, such as noise. EWR has advised that landowners receiving this letter does not necessarily indicate the need to acquire or use their land. EWR has compiled a list of questions and answers which aim to explain the purpose of the LIQs. This is available to view on their website: eastwestrail.co.uk/land-interest-questionnaires-liq-faqs, whilst printed copies will also be sent out by EWR to residents who have already received an LIQ.

Separately to the DCO process, EWR have indicated they intend to prepare Local Opportunity Plans (LOPs) around the four new stations identified for this section of the EWR project. The LOPs are mini-Outline Business Cases which will set out how the wider benefits of the railway support the case for EWR investment (they have no planning status or weight). EWR has indicated to officers that they see the LOPs reflecting the aims and aspirations for strategic scale growth as an expansion of Cambourne that the councils have set out in the emerging local plan. Now there is greater clarity on the broad location of the Knapwell/Cambourne Station, there is potential to explore the extent, scale and nature of development as well as necessary supporting infrastructure like open space, retail, employment and community/cultural provision through the preparation of the Local Plan. Therefore, it is important that officers at this stage continue to explore the opportunities presented by a potential new station, and other infrastructure projects, at Cambourne as part of the preparation of the Local Plan. This aligns with the Greater Cambridge Local Plan first proposals which states that any future site allocation will respond to the opportunity that will be provided by the proposed East West Rail new station.

EWR is preparing Door to Door Connectivity Plans for each of the new EWR stations along this section of the project, as agreed by England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Leadership Board. The purpose of these plans is to support aspirations around ensuring people have excellent connectivity to the potential new stations, primarily by public transport and active travel as so far is possible. Officers have engaged in recent workshops to help inform the content of the Door to Door Connectivity Plans as well as the wider principles that will sit above the plans for all of the EWR stations.

Government recognises that additional support is needed for LPAs in terms of funding and resources and therefore the Spring Budget 2023 identified £15m of funding to support local authorities along the East West Rail route to further progress their plans to make the most opportunity of the railway and its impact for their communities. (This funding is separate from that needed to facilitate construction of the Bedford-Cambridge section of the route, which has currently only been agreed in principle.) Officers have indicated to EWR the work that would need to be undertaken to inform the extent, scale and nature of any Local Plan site allocation in this location. It is envisaged that the GCSP will commission evidence around the range of studies required. The funding being made available and the evidence exploring the potential of Cambourne would be without prejudice to decision making on the emerging Local Plan, which is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authorities, and this would be made clear in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between GCSP and EWR and any funding agreements. Establishing a MoU for plan making is consistent with the approach taken with site promoters/landowners on other potential site allocations.

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