

Annual Report from Fulbourn Forum for community action

Year ending 4 May 2017



Yet again, the **Annual Report** must begin with an update on the development proposals that continue to cause concern about the ability of Fulbourn to absorb more growth, and the possible loss of green spaces that help define Fulbourn as an independent village, separated from the ever expanding urban edge of Cambridge. This urban edge was once Cherry Hinton, but is now, effectively, the Capital Park development.

In last year's Report, we stated that a new application for the **redevelopment of the Ida Darwin site**, following the rejection on planning permission in 2014, was expected soon – this has now happened and Fulbourn Forum has again objected, not to the principle of redevelopment, but in an effort to reduce the extent, height and density of the proposed scheme which would properly reflect the land's Green Belt designation, and to achieve a meaningful separation of open land between it and Capital Park. This time, the Parish Council has recommended approval of the application but has requested that it be consulted on these and other issues when a subsequent future application is submitted for full planning approval. No date is yet set for the application to go before the South Cambs planning committee.

Also in last year's Report, we confirmed that an Appeal had been lodged against the refusal by South Cambs District Council of an outline application by Castlefield International Ltd for up to **110 dwellings on the two green fields between Cow Lane/Cox's Drove and Teversham Road** (partly behind Poor Well). The Appeal was heard in mid-September 2016 and the Inspector's decision to dismiss it was received in early November. Unfortunately, the main reason for dismissal was the lack of an acceptable proposal to ensure the high quality maintenance and management, in perpetuity, of the complex natural and built infrastructure. This is mainly the green spaces which must function as water attenuation basins; ecological and biodiversity retention, mitigation and translocation of flora and fauna; and public open space for recreation and general movement for pedestrians and cyclists. Little weight was given by the Inspector to the importance of the retention and enhancement of the existing green fields in their natural state, against the evidence presented by the South Cambs Ecology Officer, the Wildlife Trust, Fulbourn Forum, and others. Subsequently, there was an opportunity for the submission of a new application, which happened in January 2017. Fulbourn Forum, the Save Fulbourn's Fields campaign group (SFF), many villagers, and the Parish Council have again lodged objections to the proposals. No date is yet set for the application to go to the SCDC planning committee.

We were shocked to hear of the sudden death of the expert planning consultant **George Crutcher** who died in October 2016, just a few weeks before the Appeal decision. George had prepared and submitted Proof of Evidence to the Appeal on behalf of 'Fulbourn Parish' (SFF, Fulbourn Forum, and the Parish Council) and contributed on all seven days of the hearing. We are indebted to him for his skill and dedication in helping us to fight this highly inappropriate development.

Mention must be made here of the huge effort made by many people in raising a sum in excess of £17,000 which allowed the planning appeal to be contested by the village in support of South Cambs. Orchestrated by the Save Fulbourn's Fields group, this included sending out letters, knocking on doors, a Pop-Up Café, a Bring-and-Buy Sale, a concert and Auction of Promises, and three guided village walks followed by refreshments. All were well supported. Thanks must also go to all those who gave donations, including the Parish Council which contributed £5,000.

The other Planning Appeal (resulting from non-determination within the prescribed timescale by SCDC) that reached a conclusion in June 2016 was the application for **50 dwellings on**

Green Belt land to the north of Lanthorn Stile (off Church Lane). Fulbourn Forum and the Parish Council had objected on the grounds of unwarranted and unplanned development in the Green Belt and because of the impact upon Church Lane. The Appeal, considered through written representation (to which Fulbourn Forum contributed), was dismissed due to the harm of the scheme to the openness, character and appearance of the area, the loss of good quality agricultural land, and the lack of affordable housing that satisfied local needs.

Another planning application under consideration in 2016 was that for **change of use of the Old Rectory in Church Lane** from offices to a private international school (Landmark School) for up to 100 pupils. Fulbourn Forum objected to this proposal on the basis, amongst others, that the site does not provide adequate external space for playground, and because of the potential highways impact upon Church Lane and the wider village by the need to bring children to the school from a wide catchment area. The Parish Council recommended approval of the application subject to a transport plan acceptable to South Cambs. The application was subsequently withdrawn and resubmitted with an intake initially capped at 50 pupils in an attempt to overcome Local Highway Authority objections. This revised application was approved by SCDC and the school is now operational.

A planning application for a **rural 'Exception Site'** was finally submitted by Accent Housing in November 2016, on a site to the south west of Balsham Road – this is on the other side of the road to the potential site referred to in our 2016 Annual Report. This full planning application proposes 100% affordable dwellings, 15 in total, on a site of approx. 0.54ha. As an 'exception site' in the Green Belt, the affordable homes will be only for people with an accepted Fulbourn connection, in perpetuity. On this basis, Fulbourn Forum has raised no objection to the principle and layout of the scheme, but has raised concerns in its submission to South Cambs around the lack of a safe crossing of the, often busy, Balsham Road, particularly for children at peak times, and a direct, safe route to the recreation ground. The outcome of this application is not yet known.

And, finally, concerning development proposals, an application has now been submitted by Cambridgeshire County Council to **expand the Primary School** to a two-form entry. Fulbourn Forum attended the public exhibition of the preliminary proposals in December 2016. The extra accommodation at the school is urgently needed to satisfy current demand for places and the likely additional children resulting from the planning applications noted above. Our main concerns have been around the lack of a solution to the inevitable increase in traffic congestion in School Lane, St Vigor's Road and Hollman's Close at the beginning and end of the school day.

Fulbourn Forum has continued to keep a close watch on the progress of the **Local Plan Examination in Public**. After extended delays, the conclusion of the hearings is now expected in summer 2017, but the finalisation of any report is now expected to be well into 2018. Meanwhile the lack of a 5 year housing land supply by South Cambs, and with no definite sign of a joint 5 year supply with Cambridge being accepted by the Inspector, the situation still leaves potential sites in Fulbourn vulnerable to inappropriate development, particularly the fields off Teversham Road.

While Fulbourn Forum continues to try to counter the threat of development that is inappropriate and unsustainable, it also continues to promote activities and actions that aim to improve and celebrate our built and natural environment, and our community cohesion and involvement. As before, we retain our links with Cambridge Past Present and Future (CPPF), the Friends of Fleam Dyke and the Roman Road, the Wilbraham River Protection Society, the Wildlife Trust, and the Fulbourn Windmill Society. **Work parties on the Nature Reserve** recommenced in November 2016 under the direction of the Wildlife Trust's new volunteer wardens, Peter Montgomery and Anthony Godsell. A total of six work parties were undertaken, culminating in the last one being specifically planned for younger children, in association with the Men in Schools group. Much of the work this winter has been to uproot

scrub from the meadows to help maintain the conditions which allow the orchids to thrive. We again helped to publicise the annual orchid count in June, undertaken with community help by the Trust.

The Swifts Group, led by John Willis, continued to keep a watchful eye on the use of nest boxes around Farmer's Row, Grandridge Close, Swifts Corner, and St Vigor's Church. In addition, action has been taken to install several nest boxes in the church tower, some of which have had CCTV installed, enabling real-time observation of the nesting birds from this summer. Some funding for this has come from monies earned from one of John's earlier summer surveys used by Accent Nene to satisfy planning obligations. The Swifts Week in July included surveys, displays, a presentation and workshop with pupils from the village school, and a talk by swift expert Dick Newell, of Action for Swifts.

The **Grow Your Own Group**, also led by John Willis, held nine informal gatherings in the Six Bells, and was instrumental in maintaining the **five community herb beds**, and undertaking plant/seed sales at the Community Markets. Our fifth **Apple Pressing Day** in the Old Stables at Fulbourn Manor in October again attracted a large turnout of helpers and visitors of all ages, resulting in around 250 bottles of pasteurised apple juice, all made from donated Fulbourn apples. Helpers and donators all received some free bottles, with the remainder being used at Forum events or sold at the Community Markets to raise funds for Fulbourn Forum. We again loaned our press and two pasteurisers to the **Darwin Nurseries Charity** for their own apple days.

The small orchard of nine plum and cherry trees in St Vigor's Road, planted by volunteers in 2015, continues to thrive. The small area of **wild flowers**, also in St Vigor's Road, after reseeded in 2015 with a perennial mix, only gave a relatively short display of colour in 2016, so we are looking at possible alternatives to achieve a longer flowering season. The other **community orchard, in the Nature Reserve**, of mainly apples and pears, planted in January 2016 by volunteers in cooperation with the Wildlife Trust, is also getting established but will take a few years before fruiting can be expected.

Two of our regular events have continued to flourish. **The Community Market**, held every three months (March, June, September and December) with an interesting mix of local food and drink, and handmade arts and crafts, provides the main source of income for Fulbourn Forum. Thanks, as usual, to the Fulbourn WI for running the market café, providing excellent and affordable refreshments – always very popular. We try, where possible, to provide some activities for young children to encourage families to attend and stay awhile. **The two Litter Picks**, in October and April, continued to be well supported and effective, with 60+ sacks plus a range of larger items being collected each time. We usually manage to cover a large part of the village plus out along the several approach roads towards the village boundaries. Many thanks must go to those who come on the day and also to those who pick up litter throughout the year. If you haven't been before, do come and join us – there are always areas that could be more comprehensively cleared.

Fulbourn Forum continues to be actively associated with the work of **South Cambs SPEP** (Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership). Using energy wisely, the avoidance of waste and the sustainable use of natural resources is one of our prime concerns. Last year we reported on the launch of Circular Cambridge by Cambridge Carbon footprint, after which we invited Dr Ann Miller to give a presentation at our 2016 AGM on the **Circular Economy** – avoiding waste by refusing, reusing, rehousing, repairing, relating and recycling. Out of this came the idea of becoming involved in the Repair Café movement (begun in the Netherlands in 2009), with the first **Fulbourn Repair Café** successfully undertaken in September 2016. We are now working with 'Green Groups' in the Shelfords, Stapleford and Sawston (known collectively as 2G3S) to run a series of Cafés throughout the year at alternate venues. The next Fulbourn one is in May 2017. Repairers come from throughout the Cambridge area, but six individuals from Fulbourn have been volunteering – Pippa Vine, Mark Irving, Joanne

Redfern, Halina Szutowicz, Roberta Bateman, and Spiros Aliprantis. If you are interested in getting involved, perhaps as a repairer, do come along and talk to the repairers and organizers at the next event.

The work of Fulbourn Forum, reflecting our constitution, roughly breaks down into five areas: Development and Conservation; Natural Environment; Sustainable Village (energy, food, local economy); Communications; and Community Support. This last item includes our continuing to chair an occasional meeting with local village PC representatives (Fulbourn, Teversham and the Wilbrahams), our County Councillor and the Public Transport Manager from Cambridgeshire County Council, to try to find ways of lessening the impact of the reduction or withdrawal of public subsidies from **rural bus services**, particularly for Fulbourn the No18 Whippet service to Newmarket. To our surprise, the subsidy for this service has been confirmed for another year (to April 2018). However, the Tuesday, Friday and Saturday single run is still under long-term threat.

With the better weather approaching, we can also confirm that that the booklet prepared by Fulbourn Forum together with the Fulbourn Library and the History Society in 2013, **A Walking Guide to the Fulbourn Area**, is still available online at www.fulbournforum.org, where individual walks can be easily downloaded and printed off. For reference, a hard copy (currently out of print) is available in the Fulbourn Library. And a new event, joining Camcycle's Reach Ride to Reach Fair is undertaken on Monday 1 May, joining the **community cycle ride** from Cambridge at the Newmarket Road Park&Ride.

Our occasional '**News from Fulbourn Forum**' emails (now reaching 400 addresses), together with the **website**, continues to keep villagers aware of what we are doing, the issues that we believe concern the village, and other local events and activities that are complementary to our aims. We thank all those who have given their time and resources, and support and encouragement, to make what we do together, successful and enjoyable. We also aim to work with, and support and encourage, our Parish Council, our South Cambs Councillors and our County Councillor – we thank them for their involvement, even when we sometimes disagree!

As with all voluntary organizations, there is much that needs to be done to maintain our regular activities, and to develop new projects and ideas. **So, can you help us?** Do as little or as much as you feel able – be involved on an occasional basis, perhaps lead or contribute to a new endeavour, or even to join the committee. We would be delighted to hear from you – talk to any of the committee, perhaps at the AGM on 5 May or at our pitch at the Fulbourn Feast on Sunday 25 June. Community action is what we are about!

Richard Townley, Chair; **David Cottee**, Secretary; **Judith Townley**, Treasurer;
David Bunting; **Eddie Konig**; **Pippa Vine**; **Peter Woor**.

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