

# Annual Report from Fulbourn Forum for community action

## Year ending 20 April 2018



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 confirmed that a new outline planning application had been submitted by the local NHS Foundation Trust for the **redevelopment of the Ida Darwin site** but this had not yet gone before the South Cambs planning committee. This application was finally approved by the committee in August 2017. Fulbourn Forum had objected to the application both in writing and in person at the committee hearing, 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. Fulbourn Parish Council had recommended approval. As a "Departure Application" (a departure from both local and national policies), South Cambs' decision must first go to the Secretary of State for ratification. This has not yet happened due to difficulties in finalising the Section 106 Agreement with the applicant

Also in last year's Report, we confirmed that, following the refusal of an earlier application and the dismissal of an Appeal, a new, virtually identical, outline planning application had been submitted by Castlefield International Ltd (Hutchison Whampoa plc based in Hong Kong), for up to **110 dwellings on the two, often wet, green fields between Cow Lane/Cox's Drove and Teversham Road (partly behind Poor Well)**. This application was also approved by the South Cambs committee in August 2107. Fulbourn Forum had objected to the application both in writing and in person at the committee hearing, but this time the strong environmental evidence against development as presented by the South Cambs Ecology Officer, the Wildlife Trust, Fulbourn Forum, and others was not considered to be of importance by a majority of the South Cambs planning committee. In September 2107 we reported our deep concerns at how the committee meeting was conducted, how crucial information concerning Section 106 matters were only presented, very reluctantly, to the committee on the day of the meeting (and therefore did not form part of the case officer's report). Even then, the reasons for the Appeal Inspector's concerns and refusal were not fully addressed but left to future determination by officers and, therefore, no further public scrutiny. This approval cannot now be undone but we must be aware in the future of how such inappropriate applications are being pushed through by South Cambs.

The Save Fulbourn's Fields campaign group, the Fulbourn Parish Council and others had also strongly objected to this application.

The approval of this application was a huge disappointment for the many villagers who campaigned over several years to try to prevent the loss of these two fields, bisected by an important chalk stream fed from the springs in Poor Well. This is a significant loss to the village of a site with the potential to become a County Wildlife Site because of its ecology and biodiversity. It is the last remnant of fenland which comes right into the built-up area at the lowest end of the village.

Two other important planning applications were submitted and approved in 2017. The expansion of the **Primary School** to a two-form entry is now well advanced with completion planned for the summer of 2018. And the new private international school (**Landmark School**) in the Old Rectory in Church Lane submitted an application for its pupil intake to be increased from the original approval of 50 to a maximum of 100. This is now fully operational.

In July Fulbourn Forum attended the public exhibition on the proposed cycle Greenway from Cambridge to Fulbourn, and, in November, the exhibition on the proposed North Cherry Hinton development for over 1,000 homes and two schools, primary and secondary.

The full planning application by Accent Housing for **a rural 'Exception Site' on land to the South West of Balsham Road** submitted in November 2016 was withdrawn in 2017 and then later resubmitted with some minor modifications. This application for 100% 'affordable' dwellings, 14 in total, was approved by South Cambs in March 2018. As an 'exception site' in the Green Belt, the homes (some shared equity, others for rent) will be only for people with an accepted Fulbourn connection, in perpetuity. Due to the accepted demand for such accommodation, Fulbourn Forum had not objected to the principle and layout of the scheme, but had 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. However, these concerns were not reflected in the response to the application by the County Highways department and no action has, therefore, been taken.

Two further major full planning applications were submitted in 2017 and were considered by South Cambs planning committee in March 2018. The owners of Capital Park, Henderson UK Property PAIF, requested permission to **demolish the single storey social club** located to the right of the entrance to Capital Park off Cambridge Road, and to construct a **three storey, 72 bedroom, Care Home** in its place. A linked application proposed to construct a **replacement social club** on a small parcel of land at the end of Fulbourn Old Drift attached to a **three storey structure containing 10 flats**. The flats were identified as providing the finance to construct the club. Both applications are on brownfield sites in the Green Belt, in the Fulbourn Hospital Conservation Area, which should restrict the total floor plan area, the footprint and the height of the replacement building to that of the existing development. These constraints have been greatly exceeded but approval was given for both applications. Identified as "departure applications" (departure from local and national planning policies) the local authorities decision must first go the Secretary of State for ratification. This action and decision is awaited. Fulbourn Forum objected to both applications for a number of reasons, including overdevelopment and being contrary to Green Belt policies, both in writing and in person at the planning committee hearing. The Fulbourn Parish Council recommended approval of both applications.

Fulbourn Forum remains concerned that the continuing approval of inappropriate developments will put further unwelcome pressure on the village's wider infrastructure, and gradually absorb Fulbourn into Cambridge's outer suburbs. This is highlighted by the very recent offer for sale of the area of Green Belt land to the north of Fulbourn Old Drift (adjacent to the railway line), advertised as having "development potential". This is a not a brownfield site, and was put on the market as a result, and within days, of the planning approval for the social club and flats directly opposite. The sales blurb clearly identified that the planning authorities are willing to ignore their own Green Belt policies.

Fulbourn Forum has continued to keep a close watch on the progress of the **Local Plan Examination in Public**, the delay of which has been instrumental in encouraging 'rogue' applications and permissions. It had been hoped that the Inspector's final Report would be this year, but no date has yet been confirmed and it might run into 2019. The public consultation on the Inspector's proposed modifications to the Plan closed in February 2018. These modifications, unfortunately, include the removal of the **Local Green Space** designation proposed for the two fields between Teversham Road and Cow Lane (now with an outline planning permission – see above), and the acceptance of **an extension to the Peterhouse Technology Park** in Fulbourn Road, up to the new houses in front of Fulbourn Hospital. This continues the further drift to 'ribbon' development along this road, contributing to the loss of the green spaces between Fulbourn and Cambridge. Fulbourn Forum had objected to this proposal.

Fulbourn's re-designation in the Local Plan as a **Minor Rural Centre** has not yet been confirmed – if approved, this would limit any further housing development within the village development boundary to a maximum of 30 units. In addition, it now seems likely that the method of identifying the planning requirement for a **five year housing land supply** will be changed from the 'Sedgefield Method' to the 'Liverpool Method', which would give South Cambs a supply of 5.4 years, having underperformed on this requirement for many years. Unfortunately, this is now too late to prevent some of the unfortunate development already given permission. To help with our understanding of wider Local Plan issues, Fulbourn Forum attended the seminar in January entitled 'Keep Cambridge Special', organized by Cambridge Past Present and Future.

The loss of the two fields between Cow Lane and Teversham Road to development, prompted the idea to invite Dr Steve Boreham of the University of Cambridge's Geography Department to give a talk at our **AGM in May 2017**, entitled *Unseen Fulbourn – the geology beneath your feet. The Landscape History of the Fulbourn District*. A geologist, an ecologist, and a palynologist, Dr Boreham explained how Fulbourn Parish and the wider Cam valley has evolved over many thousands of years providing an understanding of how Poor Well springs relate to their immediate and wider environment and why their careful protection is so important. This expert and passionate presentation was well received.

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 2017 under the direction of the Wildlife Trust's volunteer wardens, Peter Montgomery and Anthony Godsell. A total of five work parties were undertaken. Much of the work this winter has again been to uproot thorn bushes from the meadows to help maintain the conditions which allow the orchids to thrive. We again publicised 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. The new nest boxes in the church tower have been occupied, some of which now have CCTV installed. The church was opened several times over the summer enabling real-time observation of the nesting birds, as well as recorded footage. The Swifts Week in July included surveys, displays, a presentation and workshop with pupils from the village school, and a talk by swift expert Edward Mayer of the Swift Conservation advice service.

The **Grow Your Own Group**, also led by John Willis, held eight informal gatherings in the Six Bells, and was responsible for maintaining the **five community herb beds**, and undertaking plant/seed sales at the Community Markets. Our sixth **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 180 bottles of pasteurised apple juice, all made from donated Fulbourn apples. There were fewer apples available this time, partly due to late frosts. 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. A small area of **wild flowers**, also in St Vigor's Road, was again sown after treatment of the invasive weeds and grass, and rotavation of the soil. The seeds were provided by South Cambs but, as in the previous year, the display was good but

relatively short-lived. Because of the effort involved and apparent need to apply weedkiller every year, we will not be sowing this patch in 2018. Alternatives will be considered. 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.

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 to 70 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 (particularly on the rainy day in April 2018) 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. The Fulbourn Forum litter picks were nominated by the Parish Council for an Environment Award under the South Cambs Community Awards Scheme 2018 and was given Second Place. This award is for all those who contribute to the success of the litter picks.

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. The third and latest **Fulbourn Repair Café** was successfully undertaken in March 2018 (the second was held in May 2017). We continue 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. Repairers come from throughout the wider Cambridge area, but several individuals from Fulbourn have also been regularly volunteering – Pippa Vine, Mark Irving, Joanne Redfern, Halina Szutowicz, and Roberta Bateman. 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 Cambridgeshire Repair Café Network, of which Fulbourn Forum is an active member and partner, was given First Place in the Environment Award section of the South Cambs Community Awards Scheme 2018.

**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 service to Newmarket**. Unfortunately, even though the County subsidy had been extended to April 2018, Whippet Coaches, at short notice, withdrew the service in September 2017, claiming that it was not viable. Following a meeting by Fulbourn Forum and others with County, they re-tendered the service but omitted the Saturday service, which had been identified as less attractive to bus companies. A new provider was finally found and the Tuesday and Friday services reinstated with some modifications to the route at the Teversham end. It is understood that this service is now secure until at least April 2019.

A further unexpected withdrawal of bus services to Fulbourn was the reduction of the **Citi1 and Citi3** to a one-hour service each from February 2018. Fulbourn Forum, together with Cllr John Williams (South Cambs/County) and Cllr Frances Amrani (Teversham PC) met with the Stagecoach MD, Andy Campbell, in March to discuss the changes and their implications. The reason for the reduced service was given as the difficulty of providing a reliable half-hourly service due to the regular traffic congestion in and around Cambridge. We were told that a

more frequent service was unlikely to be reinstated until the City's traffic problems are dealt with. With no early resolution to these problems in sight, it seems inevitable that car usage will increase (by those with that facility), particularly with the recent approvals for housing developments in the village. We are keen to hear of how people are coping with these public transport changes and of any resulting hardship.

Last year's new event, a Fulbourn contingent joining, at the Newmarket Road P&R, **Camcycle's Reach Ride to Reach Fair** on the May Bank Holiday Monday, attracted six participants. Altogether around 800 cyclists descended on the fair starting from Cambridge, Ely and local villages. We hope that more people (of all ages) will join us on future rides.

Our occasional '**News from Fulbourn Forum**' emails (now reaching around 425 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!

Unfortunately, our website was down for several months during 2017 but is now again operational. We must thank **Duncan Stafford** very much for originally setting up the website, and for being our webmaster over many years, but who has now stood down from that role. 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 back online at [www.fulbournforum.org.uk](http://www.fulbournforum.org.uk) 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, finally, we must also record our thanks to **Pippa Vine**, a founding member of the Fulbourn Forum committee, who last year left the village to live near her two daughters and families in Bristol. Pippa was very much our guiding light on environmental and sustainability issues, much informed by her involvement with Cambridge Carbon Footprint, Transition Town Cambridge, and her commitment to Permaculture methods of food production. She returned briefly last October to give an illustrated talk about her Fulbourn garden in The Croft, developed over several years.

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 20 April or at our pitch at the Fulbourn Feast on Sunday 24 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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