

Annual Report from Fulbourn Forum for community action

Year ending 24 April 2020



Well, what a year! This was meant to be a celebration of the **first ten years of Fulbourn Forum for community action**, which was constituted on 23 March 2010. But 2019-2020 has, unusually, seen cancelled and rescheduled events and activities due to weather (Orchid Count; new herb beds) and lack of apples (Apple Pressing Day), the hottest temperature ever recorded in the UK (Cambridge 26 July 2019 – 38.7C), the drying of our springs and water courses, and finally, Covid-19 resulted in the cancelling of the March Community Market, and then the Repair Café and AGM in April 2020.

However, all this was unforeseen when we started our year with the **AGM on 10 May 2019 with a talk by Dr Alison Cooke entitled *Energy, Climate Change and the United Nations – your future in their hands***, which was our response to the December 2018 climate talks in Poland, and highlighted our concerns around the increasing seriousness of the climate emergency. We are keen that this vital issue is not forgotten while we come to terms with the changes to our lives under the pandemic lock-down and the longer-term implications.

Planning and development issues have still continued to form a significant part of the Forum's work. Although a large part of the **Ida Darwin Hospital site** has now been demolished, there has still been no Reserved Matters planning application submitted for final detailed approval, even though the outline plans were granted permission in August 2017. It is assumed that an application may be imminent.

However, with regard to the proposed **development of up to 110 dwellings on the two green fields between Cow Lane/Cox's Drove and Teversham Road** which received outline planning approval in August 2017, a Reserved Matters application was finally submitted in September 2019. To date, two amendments to that application have been submitted by the applicant, Castlefield International (part of Hutchison Whampoa Ltd). This application does not, in any way, deal with the fundamental objections to the original outline scheme. Fulbourn Forum submitted a detailed objection to the proposals. We do not yet know when the scheme will be considered by the South Cambs planning committee, nor the recommendation of the planning officers.

Of the two large full planning applications on the Capital Park site, approved in March 2018, the construction of the replacement **social club and the connecting 3-storey block of flats** has now commenced on site. It is assumed that once completed and occupied, the existing Social Club on Cambridge Road will be demolished to make way for the proposed **3-story, 72 bedrooms, high-dependency Care Home**, but no further information is currently known. Fulbourn Forum had objected to both these schemes on the grounds of being contrary to Green Belt policies, contributing to further high density ribbon development between Cambridge and Fulbourn, and being inappropriate, for several reasons, to their locations, particularly the social club and flats.

Regarding other developments, the **new house in part of the Six Bells public house garden** is now under construction, although there is, as yet, no sign of the proposed **development at 2-4 Pierce Lane** (full planning approval in July 2018) commencing. The rural **Green Belt 'Exception Site' housing** development on land to the south west of Balsham Road (approved in March 2018) is now complete and occupied. This provides

100% 'affordable' homes, 14 in total, some shared equity, others for rent, available only to people with an accepted Fulbourn connection. The unauthorised use of Green Belt land next to the Grange Farm Business Park in Babraham Road by CMT Ltd as **a construction training centre** appears to continue even though South Cambs prohibited its use after November 2019, directing that the land be returned to agricultural use. The authority's enforcement officers are aware of the situation and action is expected.

Elsewhere, in Teversham Road, a full planning application is currently under consideration for the **redevelopment of the existing buildings at Fernleigh Farm** for B1 commercial use. Although with a smaller footprint, this is an intensification of the existing B1 use on this Green Belt site due to the type of units being proposed. Fulbourn Forum has responded with proposals for a more sympathetic development.

Last year we reported that work had begun on the joint **Greater Cambridge (City and South Cambs) Local Plan**, a review of the 2018 Local Plan. The First Conversation Local Plan Consultation ran during January and February 2020 and Fulbourn Forum submitted responses to 23 of the 50 questions in the consultation document. The four 'Big Themes' of the consultation were Climate Change, Biodiversity and Green Spaces, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion, and Great Places. Within these themes was the question of the sustainability of continuing housing, population, and economic growth in the region. In addition, Richard Townley and David Cottey gave a short presentation, as part of a larger event, on some of the issues affecting Fulbourn at the **First Conversation Big Debate** held in the Corn Exchange on 17 February. Our interest in and concern for the natural environment, both within the parish and the wider context has been a significant issue. The publication of the River Cam Manifesto by the Cam Valley Forum in August 2019 highlighted the reasons for the impact of the depleted water table on our parish springs and water courses.

The Fulbourn Village Design Guide (VDG) was finally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in January 2020. The document should now be a material consideration in the determination of the proposed developments at the Ida Darwin Hospital site, the Teversham Road/Cow Lane site, and the Fernleigh Farm scheme. A3 size copies are available to view or borrow at the Village Library (when it reopens), or through Fulbourn Forum. **The Neighbourhood Plan** has continued its development over the year, and a Draft Document, Version 01.68, has now been seen by both South Cambs District Council and the Parish Council for an initial consultation. We understand that the PC are satisfied with the draft, while the comments of the District Council are being actioned by the working group under the guidance of the retained planning consultant.

The Cambridge to Fulbourn Cycle Greenway was, in February 2020, one of the first two Greenways to be approved. Identified as a 'high priority route', a completion is not expected until at least 2024, due to the complexities of the route and land ownership. The scheme is understood to include a new bridge over the railway line on The Tins section of the cycle path. Continuing our support for the Cambridge Cycle Campaign group, Camcycle, a group of 14 left from Fulbourn to join the **Reach Ride to Reach Fair** on the 2019 May Bank Holiday Monday.

While Fulbourn Forum continues to promote **a sustainable, well planned and attractive village**, and to try to counter the threat of development that is inappropriate, it also continues to promote activities and actions that aim to improve and celebrate our existing built and natural environment, and our community cohesion and involvement. We continue to retain our links with the Friends of Fleam Dyke and the Roman Road, the Wilbraham River Protection Society, the Wildlife Trust, and the Fulbourn Windmill Society. We are also a

corporate member of Cambridge Past Present and Future (CPPF), and of the Cam Valley Forum.

Work parties on the Nature Reserve recommenced in November 2019 under the direction of the Wildlife Trust's local volunteer wardens, Peter Montgomery and Anthony Godsell. A total of five work parties were undertaken. Again, the work concentrated on the uprooting with 'tree poppers' of hawthorn bushes on the meadows to help maintain the conditions which allow the orchids to thrive. However, for the first time since records began in 2001, the **annual orchid count** in June 2019 had to be cancelled due to very wet weather, but a visual assessment seemed to suggest that it was another good year for the orchids.

The Swifts Group, led by John Willis, again kept a watchful eye every Wednesday evening during the swift season on the use of nest boxes around Farmer's Row, Grandridge Close, Swifts Corner, and St Vigor's Church. Nest boxes in the church tower were again occupied providing opportunities on Open Days for visitors to observe the nesting birds and their young in real-time via the CCTV installation. John also gave and arranged talks and visits by school groups. As part of the national Swifts Awareness Week, a talk was given by swift expert Dick Newell on Cambridgeshire Swifts Projects.

The Grow Your Own Group, also led by John Willis, held seven informal gatherings, both in the Six Bells lounge bar and elsewhere (due to the temporary closure of the pub for refurbishment), was responsible for maintaining the **five community herb beds**, and undertook the plant and seed sales at the Community Markets. Our application for a South Cambs **Community Chest Fund grant** towards the cost of replacing two of the herb beds with green oak sleepers was approved in 2019 and the timber delivered in October. Bad weather delayed their erection on site several times, but were finally in place in December. The two beds are now filled and some of the original plants replaced. Additional planting will take place as necessary over the spring/summer months.

It was with regret that we had to cancel **what would have been our eighth Apple Pressing Day** in October 2019. After approaching our many contacts in the village who have apple trees, we found that there were too few apples available to undertake the event. The large majority of trees had all had a very poor year. It will be interesting to see whether this is reversed in 2020. The small **Community Orchard in St Vigor's Road** on the central green, consisting of nine plum and cherry trees, planted by volunteers in 2015, continues to thrive with all trees in blossom in April 2020. The other **Community Orchard, in the Nature Reserve**, mainly apples and pears, planted by volunteers in January 2016, also continues to thrive.

The Community Markets continued their successful run in June, September and December 2019, but then we took the decision to cancel the market planned for 14 March 2020, as the Covid-19 pandemic escalated. The cancellation was fully supported by the stallholders. The markets provide the main source of income for Fulbourn Forum, but we will not continue with these events until a change in circumstances allows them to be undertaken safely, for both stallholders and visitors. As always, we extend our thanks to the Fulbourn WI for running the market cafes, providing excellent and affordable refreshments.

The Community Litter Pick in September 2019 was undertaken in less than perfect weather, but a good number of committed volunteers still turned out to pick, even with dark rain clouds looming. Thank you to everyone. Over 50 sacks were collected, although a few areas were not fully completed. Some volunteers turned out later in the week, which was much appreciated. A group of older pupils from the Steiner School also participated this time,

picking on the Friday before the Sunday event. Unfortunately, the litter pick planned for 5 April had to be cancelled, another victim of the pandemic. We are aware that a few people are still undertaking small picks of litter during their exercise walks during the lock-down.

Fulbourn Forum continues to be actively associated with **South Cambs energy and climate emergency actions**, including attending two Zero Carbon workshops, and we continue our links to Cambridge Carbon Footprint and Transition Cambridge. We had planned two **Repair Cafes**, one in November and one in April. The first was another very successful event, but the second was yet another cancellation due to the coronavirus crisis. Again, we are indebted to the many repairers who willingly give their time and expertise to participate, some from the wider Cambridge area, but also several from Fulbourn – Mark Irving, Halina Szutowicz, Roberta Bateman, David Nobel, and Dave Sexton, with Joanne Redfern running the booking system. Thanks also to the volunteers who help run the event on the day, including the provision of homemade refreshments in the café. Fulbourn Forum is an active member and partner of the Cambridgeshire Repair Café Network.

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. Our occasional **News from Fulbourn Forum emails** (now reaching over 450 addresses) 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 work and involvement.

Many might be looking for ideas of where to walk locally during the lock-down. The booklet prepared by Fulbourn Forum together with the Fulbourn Library and the Fulbourn History Society, in 2013, ***A Walking Guide to the Fulbourn Area***, is still available online at www.fulbournforum.org.uk, where individual walks can be easily downloaded and printed off. Unfortunately, the Fulbourn Library hard copy is not available while the library is closed. Although the website is still functioning for the purpose of accessing the booklet, the main part of the website has now not been updated for some time, due to a lack of human resource. We hope to be able to correct this later in 2020, if at all possible.

All future activities and events are now on hold until further notice, although remote work on the Neighbourhood Plan, and other planning/development issues will continue. As with all voluntary organisations, there is much that needs to be done to maintain our regular activities, and to develop new projects and ideas. So if you would like to get involved when things resume, please do get in touch. That might be on an occasional basis, perhaps to lead or contribute to an existing or new endeavour, or even to join the committee. We would be delighted to hear from you or provide you with further information on any of the above issues and activities – talk to any of the committee, or email the Secretary. Thank you.

Richard Townley, Chair; **David Cottey**, Secretary; **Judith Townley**, Treasurer;
David Bunting; **Eddie Konig**; **Peter Woor**; **David Nobel**.

Facebook: Joanne Redfern

Email: fulbournforum@gmail.com

T: 01223 880616 W: www.fulbournforum.org.uk F: www.facebook.com/fulbournforum