

Annual Report from Fulbourn Forum for community action

Year ending 28 April 2016



Last year's Annual Report began with an update on the development proposals which had caused many to think carefully about the future of Fulbourn as a village and its relationship to Cambridge. This year's Report does the same. Reflecting the results of the village survey and the publication of the Parish Plan in 2009, the aim is seen as one of taking action, where possible, to maintain Fulbourn as an independent village, close to but physically separated from Cambridge. It is hoped that any future growth will be consistent with the limitations of the village infrastructure (including the road network) and facilities and services, with priority for any additional housing being given to those with a genuine connection to Fulbourn, either through family or work. This aim has become more and more difficult to realise due to government policies around affordable homes versus starter homes, and the intention to encourage the sale of housing association dwellings in the future.

Since the rejection in 2014 of the planning application to redevelop the Ida Darwin Hospital site for 250 dwellings, there has been no further change to the current situation. However, we have been advised that new proposals are expected soon, but, to date, there has been no consultation with the village. The site was accepted as suitable for housing by the Planning Inspectorate back in 2007 and, although many would prefer the site to remain for employment use, this may not be possible. Our aim, therefore, has been to try to reduce the extent, height and density of any development to reflect the land's Green Belt designation and to ensure an adequate separation between it and Capital Park, effectively the urban edge of Cambridge. Fulbourn Forum will continue to monitor the situation.

The planning application to develop the two fields between Cow Lane/Cox's Drove and Teversham Road (partly behind Poor Well) for 110 dwellings finally went before the planning committee in August 2015 (having been submitted in October 2014) when it was unanimously rejected in accordance with the recommendations of the case officer (Fulbourn Forum and others spoke against the application at the meeting). Unfortunately an Appeal was lodged in December 2015 which will be considered at a public enquiry in mid-September 2016. Fulbourn Forum is working with the Save Fulbourn's Fields group and the Parish Council to prepare a contribution to the hearing in support of SCDC's decision. This site is very vulnerable largely due to the interregnum between the old and the proposed new Local Plan, exacerbated by the delay in the Examination in Public while both South Cambs and City respond to the Inspector's request for further information. The conclusion of the hearing is not now expected until well into 2017 or even later, resulting in further opportunities for land owners and developers to submit planning applications on sites not identified for development in the Local Plan proposals.

In June 2015, an application was submitted for the development of 50 dwellings in the Green Belt to the north of Lanthorn Stile (off Church Lane). Fulbourn Forum and the Parish Council objected on the grounds of unwarranted and unplanned development in the Green Belt and because of the impact upon Church Lane. This site has been put forward for development several times over the past 30 or so years and been confirmed as unsuitable by South Cambs each time. Unfortunately, this application, due to delays by South Cambs in finalising their response to the proposals, has now gone to Appeal on the basis of non-determination. A decision will now be made by the Planning Inspectorate with the Appeal considered through written representation – the timescale is not yet known. It had been anticipated that South Cambs would reject the application. Fulbourn Forum has submitted a further response to the Inspectorate, as has the Parish Council. Should this Appeal be lost, then other Green Belt sites around Fulbourn could become vulnerable.

With the above three potential housing developments still active, a further planning application was submitted in January 2016 for the change of use of The Old Rectory in Church Lane from offices to a private international school for up to 100 pupils. Fulbourn Forum objected to this proposal on the basis that the site does not provide adequate external space for playground or parking, and because of the impact upon Church Lane and the wider village by the need to bring children to school from a wide catchment area. This application is currently being considered by South Cambs. In addition, Fulbourn Forum was present at a presentation given to the Parish Council by Accent Nene (Housing Association) and Hills (Contractors/developers) who are looking at the potential for an 'Exception Site' development of 30 dwellings, with only 12 being affordable or starter homes, on Green Belt land off Balsham Road adjacent to the large layby. No further information is currently available.

While we continue, with villagers' active support, to try to counter the threat of overdevelopment that is inappropriate and unsustainable, Fulbourn Forum also continued to promote activities and actions that aim to improve and celebrate our environment, and community cohesion and involvement. One aspect of this was the booklet, *A Walking Guide to the Fulbourn Area* (undertaken in conjunction with the Fulbourn Library and the Fulbourn History Society), which has now sold out but has been put online via a link on the Fulbourn Forum website. There are no current plans, but we hope that a new edition and reprint will be possible in the future, subject to grant aid being achievable.

To help promote involvement with and appreciation of our varied surrounding landscape, we have continued our links with Cambridge Past Present and Future, the Friends of Fleam Dyke and the Roman Road, the Wilbraham River Protection Society, and the Wildlife Trust. Work parties on the Fulbourn Nature Reserve were curtailed at the beginning of the winter while two new volunteer wardens were engaged, both local men. Work parties recommenced in January 2016 with the planting of the new Community Orchard around the old Estate Orchard, followed by two further work parties in February and March undertaking important scrub clearance. It is partly this clearance which has seen the orchids on the four meadows increase enormously in number – we again helped to publicise the annual orchid count in June, undertaken with community help by the Wildlife Trust.

The Swifts Group annual survey (plus exhibitions and displays) led by John Willis, confirmed that the use of the nest boxes on the new development around Farmer's Row, Grandridge Close and Swifts Corner has continued to increase, and it is thought that the number of breeding pairs is now back to around the number before the redevelopment began. John's detailed, professional survey has been used by Accent Nene to satisfy their planning obligations, earning a sum of money that has been earmarked for future projects and actions associated with the swifts or complementary issues.

The informal Grow Your Own Group met seven times during the year and was instrumental in maintaining the five community herb beds and undertaking plant/seed sales and displays at the Community Markets. Our fourth Apple Pressing Day in the Old Stables at Fulbourn Manor in September 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. We have now invested in a second pasteuriser, and our equipment was twice loaned out to other organizations, including the Darwin Nurseries. Fulbourn Forum also helped promote and participate in the Cambridge Pumpkin Festival, put on by Cambridge Sustainable Food.

The reseedling (with a different seed mix) of the area of wild flowers in St Vigor's Road was good but not as successful or long lasting as in the first year – this may have been partly weather related. However, the new mix is intended to self-seed, so we wait to see the outcome in spring/summer 2016. The small orchard of plum and cherry trees, also in St Vigor's Road,

continues to thrive. Some cherries fruited in 2015 but it is accepted that the plums will take longer.

Protection and enhancement of the natural environment, its ecology and biodiversity, is part of the work and ethos of Fulbourn Forum. Accordingly, we celebrated the UN Year of the Soils (2015) when we screened the documentary *Symphony of the Soil* at our AGM in April 2015. Highlighting the continuing degradation of the earth's fertile crust, the film clearly showing the need for agricultural practices world- wide to preserve and improve that vital element needed to feed the world's growing population.

Two of our regular events have continued their successful run. The Community Markets, held every three months (March, June, September and December) have provided an outlet for local food and handmade arts and crafts, and provide the main source of income for the Forum. We are indebted to the Fulbourn WI who has run the market café from the beginning – providing excellent and very affordable refreshments. The footfall varies, with the December Market being the most popular (and with additional stallholders) – we hope that regular visitors will spread the word that this is an interesting, varied and enjoyable market. The two litter picks, in October and April, continue to be well supported and achieve a huge amount with 60+ sacks plus a range of larger items being collected each time. We usually manage to do a large part of the village plus out along the approach roads towards the village boundaries. We must thank those who come on the day and also 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 covered.

Fulbourn Forum continues to be associated with the work of South Cambs SPEG (Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership) although there has been less activity over the past year. However, connected with energy use, avoidance of waste, and the overuse of natural resources, we attended the launch of Circular Cambridge in January 2016, a Cambridge Carbon Footprint project. Aimed at refusing, reusing, rehousing, repairing, relating and recycling – the circular economy – we hope that this will lead to some interesting projects such as a Repair Café (possibly in association with other nearby villages) and promote the idea of a sustainable economy and society.

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 arrange and chair occasional meetings with local village Parish Council representatives, 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 service to Newmarket. This is guaranteed only for another year (April 2017) so is still very much under long-term threat. Fulbourn Forum also visited the public exhibition and consultation concerning the proposed improvements for cycles to the Robin Hood junction and the cycle path leading up to the Yarrow Road roundabout – we have submitted a response which we hope will help improve the safety of this welcome upgrading.

Our occasional *News from Fulbourn Forum* emails (now reaching 378 addresses), together with the website, continues, we hope, to keep villagers informed of what we are doing, the issues that we believe concern the village, and other local events and activities that are complementary to our work. We take the opportunity to thank all those who have given their time and resources, and support and encouragement, to make what we do together, a success. The aim is to bring people together in a spirit of positive endeavour, to make Fulbourn a better place to live and work. 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 and contribution to the Forum

As with all voluntary organizations, there is much that needs to be done in the background to keep moving forward and to develop new projects and ideas. Since last year Gavin Shelton has had to stand down from the committee due to work and personal commitments, and John Willis, our treasurer, will be stepping down from that role and from the committee at the AGM on 29 April 2016, although he will continue to run the Swift Group and the Grow Your Own Group. John has been part of the committee from the beginning in 2010, keeping our accounts in perfect order, looking after our annual insurance requirements, and developing the necessary health and safety risk assessments for our various activities. We are very grateful for his enormous contribution to the Forum's wellbeing.

So, can **you** help us? Do as little or as much as you feel able – be involved on an occasional basis, perhaps spearhead or contribute to a new endeavour, **or even to join the committee**. We would be delighted to hear from you. Why not come and talk to us on an informal basis to see what is involved and find out how you might use your expertise or develop your interests. Hands-on community action is very rewarding!

Richard Townley, Chair; **David Cotte**, Secretary; **John Willis**, Treasurer;
David Bunting; **Eddie Konig**; **Pippa Vine**; **Judith Townley**.

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