

S/1397/09 Members' Comment

I was on the PC and in the meetings that considered this proposal, but have come to the committee to consider the matter afresh, and would also like to urge the committee to look at this development with new eyes if possible, bearing in mind recent changes to government legislation giving local councils freedom to determine the quantity and quality of new developments it approves, without the top down “targets” we were previously given.

The “vision” of this council is to make South Cambridgeshire a safe and healthy place to live where residents are proud to live. We also claim to be a “listening” council, providing a voice for rural life and first-class services accessible to all.

The key issues in re-visiting the application are: **(1) infrastructure, (2) density of housing and (3) housing mix.**

Density:

This is a large development, by the village standards. The site is a “saved housing allocation” from a Site Specific Policy for approximately 90 houses. Whilst the principle of development is established and not in question, if my number rounding is right, the application is now considering circa 100 houses..... This is a density of 33 dph, whereas, previous developments in the village were based on a lower density of 25dph. The proposal, whilst seemingly still in proportion on paper, in reality, means that there will be 18 more houses than would otherwise have been built in the same space in the older neighbouring developments.

How is this development to be accessed? Via one minor road, that is sandwiched between existing houses, and onto an existing development.

The Villagers who are, understandably, extremely concerned about the density of the houses and its impact on their amenity and the character of the village, and the lack of infrastructure to cope with the proposed expansion. Members will recall that a petition of about 350 signatures was gathered and submitted to this committee earlier on this year. **Are we listening to these people?**

Housing Mix

97 houses are proposed. 58 of these are market dwellings, whose mix is now more acceptable. Obviously, a lot of work has gone into the revision and all involved are to be commended.

39 affordable units are proposed on this site, which residents are again quite concerned about. There is no doubt about the need for affordable housing in the district as a whole. However, it would seem that the principle of provision for “local need” is being overlooked. Or perhaps the definition of “local” is what is at odds here. **The site is in a village, and not an urban or semi urban area.** The local people rightly, expect a development of affordable housing to be aimed at meeting the “local” needs of the village. Parish plans are developed for local needs, and do not take into account needs of the wider district or other parishes. Should our housing development not follow suit?

The community, as it is, is barely sustainable, considering the lack of infrastructure that it currently suffers. Let us not overlook the social issues that such a development will bring, and not talking about it isn't going to make it go away. It is merely being deferred to a later time, and may cost us more in the long run. There are already issues in the village that the lack of facilities is causing. This proposal will only exacerbate that. **Again, I ask, are we listening to these people? Is this development going to provide that place where they are proud to live? Will this be a sustainable community? Are we at risk of forcing an urban life on a “rural” setting?**

Infrastructure

This is the bug bear of this development.

1. **Drainage & Sewerage**: Long standing issues with the capacity of the pumping station that has still not been resolved. Anglian Water claims it is sufficient, but it is residents who cop it when it overflows, leaking effluent onto the streets. And it is they who are inconvenienced, when tankers come to pump it all out, sometimes in the middle of the night.
2. **Transport**: The £140,000 S106 being earmarked for this is commendable. Whatever timetable arrangement is put in place by the County Council with Whippet Coaches, should be done in consultation with the locals. There is no point in scheduling services at a time when it is not required, which will only result in complaints from the provider that the service is not being used. **Is this service to be guaranteed from closure at any point during those initial 5 years?**

I note that additional cycle parking is to be provided at the bus shelter on the A428. **Are the cyclists to ride on the main road, or on the potted, irregular surfaced apology of a cycle track that currently exists? Will new cycle tracks be provided?**

3. **Education**: It is a well known fact that there is no capacity in the existing local educational system, at any level, to cope with the needs that the new development will bring. I note that the County Council has asked for, and secured financial contribution for this shortfall. I find it interesting that the County Council says that *“it is premature at this stage to be able to say exactly how the money will be spent in any detail”*. **What are we to make of that? Sorry folks, we don't have any spaces for your children in the schools, but hey, don't worry, we'll get money off the developer instead, and we can't tell you what we will spend it on. Don't worry, it will be alright on the day!!** Forgive me for being sceptical, but in the light of the fiasco with the guided bus, should we not be concerned enough to ensure we get more specific details? Are we not in danger of putting the future of our children at serious risk and causing more problems for these families? And the wider community at that? Will the children have to be bussed to other villages or even Cambridge at additional cost to the taxpayer, and distress to the families? If the County Council cannot assure us of spaces being available or thinks its premature to give us details of how it will spend that money, perhaps it is premature for us to accept such a development? Once bitten.....

4. **Recreation**

We all know the saying that “the devil finds work for idle hands”, and that is what has been happening in the village, which lacks recreational facilities for the young people who are at the age where they can cause serious distress to residents. This community cannot sustain further increases without a radical change in provision of recreational facilities for young people. **Where are the first class services we aim to provide? On paper only?**

Conclusion

In conclusion, if we are to build on this land, then let us build a development that is fit for purpose.