

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Land Drainage Advisory Group	14 October 2005
AUTHOR/S:	Chief Environmental Health Officer/Drainage Manager	

BALANCING POND AT HOME FARM LONGSTANTON**Purpose**

1. To consider a request from the developers of the site that the Council adopt the balancing pond in perpetuity.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2.	Quality, Accessible Services	Adoption of the balancing pond will ensure that a high quality land drainage service is provided for the locality.
	Village Life	It is vitally important that an appropriate maintenance regime is in place for the balancing pond in order to help maintain the quality of village life.
	Sustainability	The proposal forms part of a sustainable drainage system for the area.
	Partnership	Adoption of the pond will ensure partnership working will continue with the local developers.

Background

3. The Home Farm development in Longstanton consists of approximately 500 houses and a Business Park. The agreed surface water drainage strategy for the development consists of new and improved watercourses for the area and the creation of a new Balancing Pond to cater for the surface water run-off from the site.
4. At its meeting on 14 December 2004, the Land Drainage Advisory Group recommended to Development and Conservation Control Committee that the planning application for the Balancing Pond should be approved. This recommendation was subject to agreement with the Council on suitable maintenance procedures being put in place for the future.
5. Delegated approval for the Balancing Pond was given by Development and Conservation Control Committee at its February 2004 meeting and the Land Drainage Advisory Group is now being asked to approve maintenance proposals. All parties involved with the proposal wish to see a suitable maintenance regime in place so that future flooding is avoided.

Considerations

6. The Balancing Pond forms part of the necessary drainage infrastructure for the new development. In order to ensure its long-term viability, the Pond will require regular maintenance work to be undertaken by a suitable organisation, authority or body that will exist for the foreseeable future. The local Parish Council, County Council, Anglian Water, Environment Agency and the Swavesey Internal Drainage Board are either unable or unwilling to adopt the Pond maintenance. The only remaining possibilities are the District Council, a private company or the local landowner.

7. Maintenance will be required on an annual basis in order to cut bank vegetation and remove marginal pondweed. It is also likely that routine visits will be required to remove isolated blockages around structures. In the longer term, it may be necessary to remove silt or carry out repairs to structures. It should be noted that this is work that could be met with the Council's existing resources of both plant and staff.
8. The Environment Agency has advised that the local landowner may not be the most suitable option for maintenance as ownership may change in the future. In this case, responsibility for future maintenance is likely to become unclear with the potential for an increased risk of flooding.
9. The Parish Council, Environment Agency, Swavesey IDB and the developers are all in favour of adoption by the District Council as all consider the use of a private company to have an uncertain future.

Options

10. The Development and Conservation Control Committee have sought the guidance of the Land Drainage Advisory Group as a means of conditioning the planning consent for the Balancing Pond. The Delegated approval by Committee was issued on the basis that a suitable maintenance regime would be agreed and approved by the Advisory Group.
11. The following options are therefore available to Members as a recommendation to the Portfolio Holder;
 - a. Maintenance to be carried out by the landowner
 - b. Maintenance to be carried out by a private company as determined by the developers
 - c. Maintenance to be carried out by the District Council following payment of a suitable commuted sum to cover long-term costs subject to the agreement of all parties involved

Financial Implications

12. Following discussions and correspondence with the developers, the Council will be provided with a sum of approximately £100,000 to cover the maintenance of the Balancing Pond in perpetuity. These moneys will generate in the region of £5,000 per annum as revenue interest.

Legal Implications

13. Upon adoption, The Council would have similar obligations to those on the adjacent award drain. These obligations are not particularly onerous and would form a natural extension of the works that are already undertaken on the award drain.

Staffing Implications

14. None

Risk Management Implications

15. The health and safety and financial management risks that apply to the award drains will apply to works and responsibilities on the Balancing Pond

Consultations

16. Local residents, Parish Council, local District Councillor, the Environment Agency and Swavesey Internal Drainage Board have all indicated a desire that the District Council should adopt the Pond. None of the above wish to see maintenance responsibilities passed on to private individuals or a private company.

Conclusions/Summary

17. The viability of the surface water drainage system for the Home Farm development will depend on a suitable maintenance regime for the Balancing Pond. Failure to ensure adequate maintenance will place many properties in the village of Longstanton under threat from flooding. To depend on private companies or individuals to carry out maintenance is a higher risk strategy than that involved with recognised drainage authorities. The maintenance work that adoption involves is well within the scope of the Council's land drainage workforce and the additional costs are adequately covered by the commuted sum that the developers will pay.

Recommendations

18. It is recommended that members advise the Environmental Health Portfolio Holder to agree to the adoption of the maintenance of the Balancing Pond by the Council on payment of a commuted sum of approximately £100,000.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: None

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