



**Report To:** Northstowe Joint Development Control  
Committee  
**Lead Officer:** Director of Planning and New Communities

29 July 2015

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## Review of Lessons from Orchard Park

### Purpose

1. To present the interim recommendations from the South Cambridgeshire District Council Scrutiny and Overview Committee Working Group set up to review the lessons learned from Orchard Park.

### Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Committee endorse the interim recommendations from the Working Group (see paragraph 16), and consider how they have or may be applied at Northstowe.

### Reasons for Recommendations

3. The interim recommendations were endorsed by the South Cambridgeshire District Council Cabinet on 9 July, and the Cabinet agreed to forward them to the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee (NJDCC) prior to its deliberations on 29 July 2015.

### Background

4. The interim recommendations of the Working Group were agreed by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 30 April 2015. They have been drawn up by the Working Group following an analysis of the information gathered during a series of discussions and interviews that have been carried out. Further work is being carried out by the Working Group but the Group hoped that the interim recommendations would provide useful information to support the NJDCC in its deliberations regarding s106 items and triggers and planning conditions.
5. Following a Member's suggestion at Council in June 2014 Scrutiny & Overview Committee agreed on 3 July 2014 to set up a Working Group to review the lessons learned from Orchard Park. It was agreed that the group's remit would be to look at how the recommendations made in 2008 by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee regarding Orchard Park [then called Arbury Park] had been implemented, if they had been applied to subsequent developments and what the effects of them had been. The initial timescale for this work was estimated to be 12 months. However, in the light of the NJDCC being required to consider in July the application for Phase 2 of that development, it was considered that the interim recommendations of the Working Group may provide useful information to support the committee in its deliberations.
6. The membership of the working group for the initial phase of work was:
  - Cllr Lynda Harford (Chairman)
  - Cllr David Bard
  - Cllr Alison Elcox

• Cllr Jose Hales

Tracy Mann, Development Officer

The Working Group first met on 9 September 2014 and has been supported by officers from Democratic Services and the Sustainable Communities and Partnerships Team.

7. On 9 October 2008 SCDC Cabinet received a report from the Arbury Park Task and Finish Group which had been set up to examine questions raised by residents of the new development. Cabinet undertook to provide a response and action plan and this was presented to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 4 December 2008. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee welcomed the response and action plan and resolved to review it at a meeting in April 2009. The recommendations of the Arbury Park Task and Finish Group can be found at Appendix A.
8. A further report entitled 'Progress since the Task and Finish Group Review' was submitted to the SCDC Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 5 November 2009. At that time it was noted that the economic climate had changed significantly and subsequently its effects may have influenced implementation of some of the recommendations.
9. The setting up of the current Working Group was agreed in response to concerns expressed by a Local Member with regard to progress in resolving further issues at Orchard Park. The group reported its interim recommendations to Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 30 April, which were endorsed, and aims to present its final report on 3 September 2015.

### **Considerations**

10. An initial list was drawn up of officers and stakeholders who would be able to provide evidence of compliance with, and the effects of, the recommendations from the 2007 review. The Working Group has looked at Orchard Park, Cambourne and the fringe sites.
11. The Working Group has met seven times, including its inception meeting plus attendance at an Orchard Park Community Council meeting. Those who have been interviewed, consulted or supported the review to date include:  
  
South Cambridgeshire District Council Officers  
Cambridge City Council Officers  
Cambourne Parish Council  
Orchard Park Community Council  
Local Members for Cambourne and Orchard Park  
Peter Bailey (Dr), Cambourne Medical Practice
12. Each individual or group was asked to reflect on the 2007 review recommendations and asked for their view on how these had been taken forward and what effects they had observed following the recommendations being made.
13. The Working Group is part way through the review and as such this report includes interim recommendations. These recommendations are being submitted at this stage in order to provide information for members of the Northstowe Joint Development Committee prior to their consideration of the S106 items and triggers and planning conditions for the Phase 2 application for that development. There is still, however, work to be done to obtain the views of residents and local members particularly with regard to the fringe sites.

14. It is interesting to see the very prompt acknowledgement of both councils to the change in the economic climate and their response to the needs of developers. It is not apparent that developers have responded similarly since the improvement in the economic climate. Much of the feedback has reflected growing frustration with the consequences of this and the emphasis that developers now put on viability arguments. It is recognised that this is outside the remit of the Working Group but members have expressed a desire that the Council should use its best endeavours to make Central Government aware of what appears to be unequal support for developers in this respect and its consequences.
15. The Working Group's general observation is that there is evidence that both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council have been attentive to all of the recommendations and in many cases processes have been adopted to follow those recommendations.
16. The following interim recommendations have been agreed by the Working Group:

**Recommendation 1 – The decision to require a road adoption strategy for Northstowe should be replicated on all future developments**

This recommendation relates to 1d in the original recommendations which included a requirement for developers to maintain paths and roads to an adoptable standard where houses are occupied. Subsequent to this both councils now require roads, wherever practicable, to be built to an adoptable standard but issues remain because the County Council cannot be obliged to adopt all roads.

The practice of using temporary haul roads should be promoted. This avoids conflict with other road users on part occupied developments and can facilitate early adoption of roads. [The County Council will not adopt a road that is still being used by construction traffic.]

**Note for NJDCC:** As stated, this recommendation has been included in the conditions for Northstowe Phases 1 and 2.

**Recommendation 2 – The good practice of school provision concurrent with first occupations should be continued**

This makes interim provision of resource for other key services such as health and also offers opportunities for social interaction.

**Note for NJDCC:** The first primary school at Northstowe is under construction in order to open September 2016, when the first occupations are due to occur.

**Recommendation 3 – More consideration should be given to a greater variety of opportunities for social interaction for early occupants of new developments**

There is evidence that although schools have proved valuable in providing community activities to bring residents together there are different responses to these arrangements. Some residents see this as welcoming and others may find it hostile and cliquey.

It has been suggested that innovative solutions could include pop-up coffee shops, cinemas and internet cafés.

**Note for NJDCC:** SCDC has created the post of Community Engagement Officer, funded through s106 payments from Northstowe Phase 1. It is intended that the post-holder will work with the CCC Partnerships Officer, also funded through s106 and Planning Performance Agreement payments from Northstowe, to facilitate and develop a wide variety of opportunities for social interaction, working with local residents and front-line partner agencies. The post of Community Engagement Officer is currently vacant, and will be re-advertised in the near future. Interim arrangements have been put in place for various aspects of the role including communications and local forums.

**Recommendation 4 – South Cambridgeshire District Council should adopt the charging strategy used by Cambridge City Council in connection with pre-application advice**

This recommendation relates to 3a in the original recommendations, which covered pre-application advice. Both councils have subsequently adopted policies for pre-application advice that have been well received and are working well. Cambridge City Council uses a traffic light system to monitor acceptance of the advice offered to make an application acceptable. They acknowledge however that some developers will choose to submit an application which is still deficient of some information or solutions. In these cases, where subsequent officer advice is required on those aspects after submission, the Council charges for that advice.

**Note for NJDCC:** The recommendation will be taken forward in the current review of practices at SCDC: Towards a Paperless Planning Office

**Recommendation 5 – Consideration should be given to further work being carried out on ‘New Town Blues’ and the referral rates to social services and their impacts on costs for councils and other public services.**

It has become apparent that evidence of ‘New Town Blues’ has been available since the 1930s but little of this learning seems to have been taken forward and it is acknowledged that much of this relates to funding. Failure to invest sufficiently in adequate community support at the start of a development has a major impact on future costs to councils and other public services.

**Note for NJDCC:** The Department of Health recently announced a Healthy Towns initiative, an application to this programme is under consideration with the promoters. The Northstowe Public Services and Community Services Working Group includes the Health Service and Children’s and Adults’ Services, and was set up in 2014 to aim to achieve a self-sustaining community at Northstowe with low referral rates to social services. The NHS has a Northstowe Project Team that meets regularly to plan to meet the needs of the new town. The County Council is currently working on a New Communities Strategy that will be presented to the General Purposes Committee, and also starting to review the New Communities Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) that was approved in 2010. The JSNA stated that ‘mental health issues have been one of the greatest concerns in recent new settlements in the county’.

**Recommendation 6 – Funding should be secured for training and/or technical support to be provided for parish councils affected by strategic development applications. There should be greater flexibility in the use of funds allocated.**

Whilst some officer support has been available to parish councils at the time they are considering applications it is felt that there is a greater need than has been satisfied

so far. A commitment for funding should be sought for this from developers at preapplication stage.

Some of the parish councils required to comment on strategic development applications are small and have limited resource. Although it is acknowledged that small grants have been made available for administrative functions, other costs such as heating and lighting meeting rooms have not been met.

**Note for NJDCC:** The Northstowe Parish Forum was set up in 2008, and has met regularly in order to provide training and support for all the parish councils surrounding Northstowe. Since the Phase 1 application was submitted, planning officers have attended Longstanton Parish Council meetings to provide technical support, and also attended other parish council meetings as requested. Funding for additional clerking expenses has been offered to Oakington and Longstanton Parish Councils, and taken up by Longstanton Parish Council.

17. Further work that has taken place or is planned since reporting to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 30 April includes:

- (a) Meetings with relevant County Council officers
- (b) Meetings with appropriate parish councils and local members
- (c) Meetings with residents' groups
- (d) Meetings with other relevant South Cambridgeshire District Council officers
- (e) Meetings with developers

This work will provide additional evidence of the way the councils responded to the recommendations and establish from residents' point of view the effects they had.

### **Options**

18. The NJDCC may endorse some or all of the interim recommendations of the Working Group, and consider how they may be applied at Northstowe.

### **Implications**

19. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

#### ***Financial***

20. The Working Group has not costed the work which would be required following endorsement of the recommendations if they are accepted.

#### ***Staffing***

21. The Working Group has not estimated the staffing requirements that the recommendations would result in should they be accepted.

### **Consultation responses**

22. Paragraph 11 lists those who have been interviewed, consulted or supported the review. The recommendations have been agreed by the Working Group.

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

**Establish successful and sustainable New Communities with housing and**

**employment at Northstowe and the major growth sites, served by an improved A14 and A428.**

23. The findings of the Working Group should directly impact the way in which the Council approaches strategic developments and aims to further support the work to establish successful and sustainable New Communities.

**Background Papers**

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: - (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council; (b) on the Council's website; and (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

[South Cambridgeshire District Council Cabinet, 9 October 2008 \(Report at Item 53 – Arbury Park Scrutiny Report\)](#)

[South Cambridgeshire District Council Scrutiny and Overview Committee](#)

4 December 2008 (Report at item 6 – Cabinet Response)

[Arbury Park Action Plan](#)

4 December 2008 (Report at item 6 – listed as an additional document))

[South Cambridgeshire District Council Scrutiny and Overview Committee](#), 30 April 2015

(Report at Item 8 – Task and Finish Group recommendations)

[South Cambridgeshire District Council Cabinet](#), 9 July 2015 (Report at Item 13 – Review of lessons learned from Orchard Park)

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