



To: Executive Councillor for Climate Change & Growth:  
Cllr Sian Reid

Report by: Director of Environment and Planning

Relevant scrutiny committee: Environment Scrutiny Committee 13/01/2009

Wards affected: All Wards

## **REVIEW OF ARBURY PARK DEVELOPMENT Not a Key Decision**

### **1.0 Executive summary**

- 1.1 A motion was passed at the Council meeting in September 2008, that the Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Growth should bring a report to Environment Scrutiny with regards to the review South Cambridgeshire District Council has carried out of the Arbury Park (renamed Orchard Park) development. The findings of South Cambridgeshire's Scrutiny Review are particularly important given Arbury Park's location at the edge of Cambridge, its proposed transfer to Cambridge City Council and the opportunity it holds for learning lessons for other fringe developments.
- 1.2 Due to the pressures of work, this is an initial report to Environment Scrutiny Committee, and a more detailed report evaluating the findings of the Arbury Park Scrutiny Review and lessons to be learnt as set out in the Council motion, will subsequently be presented to Committee.
- 1.3 South Cambridgeshire District Council has carried out the review of Arbury Park in response to concerns raised by local residents. This involved setting up a Task and Finish group who interviewed developers, builders, social landlords, health partners, a representative of the residents' association and officers and councillors from the City, County and District councils. The findings of the group are contained within the Arbury Park Scrutiny Review Report (October 2008). This sets out 43 recommendations.
- 1.4 Following publication of the final report an action plan was produced to address the recommendations. This identifies actions, responsible officers/organisations, when progress is to be made and what progress has been made so far for each recommendation.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

- 2.1 To note the content of this report relating to the review of the Arbury Park Development by South Cambridgeshire District Council. A more detailed report evaluating these findings and identifying the lessons to be learnt for the other fringe developments around Cambridge will follow.

## **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 At the full Council meeting in September 2009, the following motion was passed:

'The Council notes that South Cambridgeshire District Council are conducting a scrutiny review of the South Cambridgeshire Arbury Park development, and that they will publish a final report at the end of September.

Arbury Park's adjacency to Cambridge particularly Kings Hedges and Arbury, its proposed transfer to Cambridge City Council, and the opportunities it holds for learning lessons for other fringe developments, make it a very important development for Cambridge.

The Council asks the Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Growth to bring a report to Environment Scrutiny in January 2009 or earlier which

- outlines and reviews South Cambridgeshire's findings
- identifies proposals to address weaknesses identified in the development as soon as possible and prior to any transfer to the City Council
- evaluates the development against the Quality Charter
- identifies lessons learnt for future developments

The developer, the joint development control and urban design teams, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Histon and Impington Parish Council and other Arbury Park organisations including the Action Group will be invited to attend and contribute to the discussion at Environment Scrutiny Committee.'

- 3.2 Pressures of work prevent a full report at this time. Therefore, this is an initial report to Environment Scrutiny Committee outlining:
  - The main findings from South Cambridgeshire District Council's (SCDC) work

- The current position
  - Outline of any further work SCDC are planning
  - Next steps
- 3.3 A more detailed stage 2 report addressing all of the points raised in the Council motion will subsequently be produced, in consultation with development control officers and the joint urban design team, and reported to Environment Scrutiny Committee.

### **Work carried out by South Cambridgeshire District Council**

- 3.4 South Cambridgeshire District Council has carried out a review of the Arbury Park development. This was in response to questions and issues raised by local residents following a Scrutiny meeting at the Meadows Community Centre in Arbury on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Scrutiny decided to set up a Task and Finish group, to examine the development of Arbury Park and to recommend learning points for use in the ongoing major developments in the district.
- 3.5 The Task and Finish group consisted originally of five district councillors and the chairman of Impington Parish Council. The group agreed a scoping document in February 2008 and held a total of 17 meetings which involved interviewing developers, builders, social landlords, health partners, a representative of the residents' association and officers and councillors from the City, County and District councils. They also visited another Gallagher development within Huntingdonshire District Council to compare experiences on new developments.
- 3.6 South Cambridgeshire's Scrutiny Committee approved the final report from the Task and Finish Group, the 'Arbury Park Scrutiny Review', on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2008. This report is provided as Appendix 1.
- 3.7 Following publication of the final report an action plan was produced to address the recommendations. This identifies actions, responsible officers/organisations, when progress is to be made and what progress has been made so far for each recommendation. This can be viewed at Appendix 2. The action plan is being taken to South Cambridgeshire's Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008 for endorsement.

### **Main Findings of the Arbury Park Scrutiny Review Report**

- 3.8 The Scrutiny Review Report looks at 17 broad topic areas and the issues related to these. A number of recommendations are then made under each of the topic areas.

### 3.9 The main issues include:

- A key lesson from Arbury Park is the need for a timely formal agreement of a Design Guide with the master developer. Resourcing this at an early stage leads to clearer and more efficient processes later on. The master developer had drafted a Design Guide in consultation with the Council, but it had not been formally adopted and therefore was not being applied.
- The need to engage the specific skills of an urban designer through all stages of the development. There was evidence that the lack of an urban designer for Arbury Park had reduced the design quality.
- There was concern about the quality of planning applications registered and it is important that SCDC continues to refuse incomplete applications, and encourages pre-application negotiations.
- The S106 agreement was negotiated thoroughly and SCDC is developing expertise in this area, building on experience in Cambourne. However, the task and finish group found that the S106 agreement had not been adequately monitored or enforced, and this had contributed to delays by the developer in delivery of S106 facilities. For example, the new community centre was expected before the 2008 school holiday, but was not completed by then.
- A recurrent message was the need to phase the building work. It was necessary to complete the complex infrastructure first, but this led to a commercial time-pressure on developers when they came on site. Therefore pockets of housing were developed across the site, with isolated streets being reached via a busy, muddy building site. Also some community facilities were not available soon enough, and as the housing was developed in pockets rather than as one cohesive settlement, this led to a lack of community identity.
- Monitoring of air quality and noise from the A14 is ongoing. However, any impact to health would be long term and may not be quantifiable. A noise barrier was constructed alongside the A14 to protect Arbury Park, however residents on the opposite side of the A14 have reported an increase in reflected traffic noise. The construction of commercial premises at Arbury Park to act as a barrier has been delayed, following submission of poorly designed schemes and a downturn in the demand for such units.
- Arbury Park falls within Impington Parish Council. The Parish Council has worked closely with SCDC to support the emerging community and receive revenue funding through the S106 process. This is desirable in order to protect existing residents

from the financial impact of supporting a new community. In accordance with the S106 agreement, the Council's Electoral Arrangements Committee has resolved to create a new parish, to be called Orchard Park at the suggestion of residents.

- Some residents have been unable to move in on time as their homes were built about 450mm nearer than planned to the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway. This resulted in the busway having to be redesigned, a supplementary land sale had to be completed and homes needed retrospective planning permission. Another set of delays, affecting more than 50 homes, related to a problem in installing a gas supply. A re-examination of the fire precautions caused a delay at another block of affordable homes. The anxiety to would-be residents was compounded by not knowing whom to ask for reliable information.
- A consortium of Registered Social Landlords was used in planning and negotiations for affordable housing from the outset, and SCDC appointed one officer to oversee affordable housing negotiations. Both these factors led to a strong and co-ordinated approach to the provision of affordable homes. However, affordable housing has tended to be built in large clusters rather than mixed into the development, although SCDCs Local Development Framework policies are now much stronger in detailing how affordable homes should be distributed within new developments.
- The completed pockets of housing are on a building site. They are among properties under construction, undeveloped areas, building debris and spoil heaps, Roads and footpaths are unfinished, there are no dropped kerbs, trees or road markings. SCDC are working with developers to clean up the sites, so that it will be left tidy and safe in the event of building delays due to the market downturn.
- A common problem for the first residents of any new development is the delay in installing road nameplates and providing a road map. It was found that early provision would be beneficial.
- The primary school was located at the edge of the development, however, the school head and chair of governors said that it should have been at the centre of the community, physically and socially.
- There isn't a GP Surgery at Arbury Park, and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) worked with nearby surgeries in preparing them for residents arriving in Arbury Park. However, residents might not necessarily choose those nearby surgeries if the welcome pack information had not arrived in time, or if others were more accessible by bus.

- A meeting with a regional energy supplier revealed that regional planners had not consulted them early enough in the planning of Arbury Park, nor other developments in the region. They stressed the long lead-time required to successfully develop sufficient capacity for growth areas.
- In the long term, Anglian Water will be responsible for the foul and surface water drainage systems at Arbury Park. The developer's contractors install the infrastructure and then it is adopted by Anglian Water when they are able to approve the standard of installations. However, Anglian Water is unable to resource ongoing inspections during construction and so installation errors are not being spotted early on. This can lead to delays in adoption, during which residents are unsure where to direct any problems.

### **The current position**

3.10 The Arbury Park Action Plan (Appendix 2) takes forward the 43 recommendations set out in the report and identifies the current situation. The action plan shows that 12 of the recommendations are now complete/in place (denoted by a tick in the progress column), and that the remaining recommendations are being taken forward/on schedule. This includes the creation of a joint urban design team for the City Council and South Cambridgeshire.

### **Outline of any further work SCDC and the County are planning**

3.11 The action plan identifies further work to be undertaken in relation to Arbury Park, by who and when. The report identifies recommendations that can be applied to future developments in the district.

### **Next steps**

3.12 This is an initial report outlining action taken so far and planned as a result of problems identified at the Arbury Park development on the northern fringe of Cambridge. A further report to Environment Scrutiny Committee will:

- Review the findings from SCDC in further detail and actions (if any) for the City;
- Identify proposals to address weaknesses identified in Arbury Park as soon as possible and prior to any transfer to the City Council;
- Evaluate Arbury Park against the Quality Charter; and
- Evaluate lessons learnt for future developments, particularly the urban extensions.

## **4.0 Implications**

4.1 There are no significant direct financial / procurement, staffing, equal opportunities, environmental, or community safety issues arising from this report. Financial and staffing resources are already committed through the budget and service plan process. The more detailed second stage report will seek to identify lessons to be learnt for future developments, which could lead to environmental and community safety improvements and have financial benefits.

## **5.0 Background papers**

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Arbury Park Scrutiny Review Final Report October 2008
- SCDC Scrutiny and Overview Committee Report 4th December 2008 – Agenda Item 7: Response to Arbury Park Task and Finish Group Report (includes Action Plan)

## **6.0 Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Arbury Park Scrutiny Review Final Report (October 2008)

Appendix 2 – Arbury / Orchard Park Action Plan

## **7.0 Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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