

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

---

**REPORT TO:** Scrutiny and Overview Committee 24<sup>th</sup> March 2011  
**AUTHOR/S:** Planning & New communities Corporate Manager – Jo Mills  
Head of New Communities – Jane Green  
**PORTFOLIO  
HOLDER:** Cllr David Bard – New Communities Portfolio Holder

---

### LEARNING FROM ORCHARD PARK TO INFORM THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE GROWTH SITES

#### Purpose

1. To review the recommendations made by Scrutiny's Task and Finish Group's report on Orchard Park in October 2008 to ensure that lessons learnt are being taken on board in the planning and development of other growth sites, particularly Trumpington Meadows.
2. The matter under scrutiny is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on future communities on the Cambridge fringe sites and Northstowe as well as Cambourne and Orchard Park. It was first published in the February Forward Plan.

#### Background

3. The Scrutiny Committee appointed a Task and Finish Group to review Orchard Park (formally Arbury Park) in February 2008. Following months of interviews with partners, stakeholders, officers and other interested parties; the group reported their findings to Scrutiny Committee in October 2008. Cabinet considered the report in November 2008 and reported back to the Scrutiny Committee in December 2008 with an action plan to address the Task and Finish Groups recommendations. The Scrutiny Committee reviewed progress on the action plan In April 2009.
4. Two years on the recommendations are being used to guide development of the growth sites.
5. Our experience is also being shared more widely. Authorities from around the country and further afield are keen to share experiences from our area, and over the last year South Cambridgeshire DC, together with Cambridge City, Cambridgeshire County and Horizons have been working with a number of authorities to pass on experience – Chelmsford, Broadland District and Prague 13, and we are current part of Joseph Rowntree Foundation Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods Network.

#### Considerations

6. Set out at appendix 1 is a summary of progress that made since 2008 against each of the broad recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group.
7. Good progress has been made in a number of areas in particular design and community engagement, and there is a real willingness and commitment to learn the lessons from Orchard Park and Cambourne by all partners.

8. The creation of the Joint Urban Design team has transformed the way design guidance is produced and applications assessed which will result in well-designed neighbourhoods.
9. Community facilities and services are being planned in a more coordinated manner. A multi-agency strategic group has been established to oversee the planning and delivery of community infrastructure and services across the growth sites. The Community Services and Infrastructure Group (CSIG) facilities partnership working and make best use of skills and knowledge. The group, which is chaired by SCDC (the Corporate Manager – Planning at New Communities at South Cambridgeshire District Council), is also overseeing a number of joint projects that currently include procurement of community facilities on the southern fringe and community engagement.
10. Ensuring the early provision of community facilities including schools, as highlighted by the Task Group, is a guiding principle being applied to all growth sites.
11. Changes have also been made to the way the Council liaises with developers in order to try and ensure sites continue to come forward notwithstanding the economic downturn. The Council with partners has successfully ‘kick started’ development at Orchard Park, has been working closely with the developers across all the sites to meet agreed timelines. Tighter project management arrangements are now in place to achieve this.
12. Likewise there have been changes to our approach to community engagement, with the establishment of Community Forums at an early stage, on both the Southern Fringe and North West Cambridge North West. The Council and its partners are also piloting different forms of engagements, for example using social media to engage with the wider community including young people.
13. Within SCDC by bringing together development officers, planners, and specialist officers within the New Communities Team, a more collaborative and project team approach is being achieved.
14. There are still areas where further work is needed, for example, the issue of road adoption, is still progressing very slowly at Cambourne and Orchard Park.
15. Given the reduction in resources there are also areas of work, which are progressing more slowly than the team would wish, for example, the production of a ‘New Communities Compendium’ to capture best practice, and on-going lessons learnt including a tool kit has been delayed.

## Implications

Financial	Existing resources.
Legal	None
Staffing	Existing resources.
Risk Management	It is critical to ensure that The Council and its partners continue with best practice and to demonstrate that it is learning lessons for the well being of future residents and to maintain its reputation as a listening Council.
Equality and Diversity	Considered as part of all proposals.
Equality Impact Assessment completed	EIA put in place when respective policies and strategies agreed.

Climate Change	Ensuring new communities are designed to maximise sustainability and minimise carbon consumption is a key objective.
Consulting Young People	The Council's commitment to engaging with Children and Young People is confirmed in its Children and Young People plan. To date this has been achieved via specific projects such as Northstowe design days but the introduction of different forms of engagement particularly social media will provide greater opportunities. An E-engagement project is to be piloted on the southern fringe targeted at young people.

### Consultations

16. Consultation and engagement is crucial throughout the development process as highlighted in the Task Group's recommendation. This continues to be major part of the team's work.

17. **Effect on Strategic Aims**

By learning the lessons of the past the Council demonstrates that it is a listening Council, committed to the well being of its existing and future residents and ensuring that these new developments are places where people are proud to life.

### Conclusions / Summary

18. The Committee is asked to review its original recommendations and note the significant progress made since 2008, as set out in appendix 1, acknowledging that lessons have been learnt.

19. Improved ways of working are making a difference in key areas, which will benefit both existing and future residents.

20. Lessons will continue to be learnt as circumstances change and as different sites come forward; the Council is committed to listening to residents and stakeholders to ensure continued improvement across all areas of the Council's work.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth 2008
- Response to Arbury Park Task and Finish Group Report and Action Plan – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008
- Review of Arbury Park Development – Reports to Environment Scrutiny Committee, Cambridge City Council – January and June 2009
- Orchard Park Scrutiny Report and Action Plan 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009.

**Contact Officer:** Jane Green – Head Of New Communities  
Telephone: (01954) 713164

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr David Bard – New Communities Portfolio Holder