

County Councillor comments: 95 homes for Foxton S/2822/14/OL

Speculative planning applications in strategic infrastructure vacuum

In principle I support the development of affordable homes in our area. There is a particular need for affordable housing for lower earners and young people seeking to work and live in the area but for whom affordable housing is in short supply. However, this need is already in the process of being systematically addressed through planning applications that have been approved within a strategic planning policy framework and which are aligned with the Foxton Parish Plan – in particular the development of a significant new council estate off Fowlmere Road. Foxton is a comparatively small village and its growth has by necessity been carefully and proportionally planned.

I cannot support a planning application submitted for consideration in the absence of an agreed strategic planning policy framework, due to the absence of an accompanying plan to meet changing infrastructure needs of unplanned population growth. Allowing the development of an overwhelming number of new homes without strategically planned accompanying infrastructure would harm the village of Foxton, and also surrounding villages that provide and share its essential public services, by creating significant new problems relating traffic conflict, inadequate provision of early-years and primary education, and at-capacity local surgeries. Neither the parish nor the county council would be equipped to solve these problems. It is precisely for these reasons that growth must be handled within a strategic framework that oversees the creation of necessary infrastructure.

Local public consultation

The Localism Act and National Planning Policy Framework require local consultation. The response rate to the Gladman questionnaire is extremely poor (24 responses from xxx households) and suggests that Gladman has failed to engage the population of Foxton in their proposals.

A genuine consultation would have included a public event giving local residents and stakeholders the opportunity to raise questions and concerns, and for Gladman to respond directly. As Foxton County Councillor I've had no communication whatsoever from Gladman. I would have expected neighbouring parishes to be involved in consultation, on the basis of cumulative impact on shared infrastructure.

Lack of evidence base for proposed infrastructure contribution:

A proposed £1 million contribution via the New Homes Bonus is an arbitrary figure that is not set against any evidenced-based assessment of the actual infrastructure needs that the new homes would create, especially

- 1) Cost per child of creating new space at the primary school
- 2) New provision of early years education
- 3) New space at the doctor's surgeries in Harston and Melbourn, currently relied upon by Foxton residents
- 4) Remedial highways work within Foxton and in the surrounding area, including the access road and parking to Orchard Surgery Melbourn if required, the Frog End A10 junction turning into Melbourn which is on the County Council Accident Cluster list as requiring remedial accident risk reduction work, and the principle access point onto the A10 from Shepreth Road
- 5) Other aspirations included in the planning application, described as 'community benefits,' have not been costed – footway and cycleway improvements within the village, and road

crossing points, especially the A10 Shepreth Road crossing which for reasons listed below is complex and involves unknown variables.

A10 and Level Crossing:

The closure of Foxton Level Crossing is on the County Council's Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.

Currently, congestion and tail backs during periods of level crossing barrier down-time take waiting traffic well beyond the Shepreth Road/A10 junction, to the Fowlmere Road and Frog End junctions in Shepreth. The access from Shepreth Rd to the A10 during these frequent down-times is extremely challenging. The addition of 200 cars using that junction as a primary access point in and out of the village would create significant extra impact.

Progression of the level crossing closure project is uncertain because Network Rail as the core funding body is at an early stage within its decision-making process, and funding has not been identified. If the project does go ahead, there will be new traffic dynamic challenges and the impact of 200 extra cars at the Shepreth Rd junction must be factored in to requirements for new A10 access layout. Costs for this work are as yet unknown.

Whether or not the level crossing project goes ahead the impact of 200 cars will be of considerable impact on the Shepreth Road/A10 junction. A detailed understanding of either eventuality and consequent requirements is not demonstrated in the planning application.