

**Report by Tony Orgee,  
District Councillor for The Abingtons ward until 6 May 2018**

In the absence of Ickleton's District Councillor Mick Martin due to illness, I have attended meetings of Ickleton Parish Council for most of the past year and have helped and supported Ickleton residents with a number of local concerns.

### **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan**

The Draft South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the Draft Cambridge City Local Plan were submitted together on 28 March 2014. The subsequent examination in public has taken far longer than expected, but it must be remembered that the examination in public is a simultaneous examination into **two** separate plans.

The Greater Cambridge area is almost unique in England in having one local authority (Cambridge City) totally surrounded by another (South Cambridgeshire). This is also an area with higher than average jobs and housing growth.

Unlike in some countries, local authorities in England do not own great areas of land and so the Local Plan process began with a *Call for Sites* – that is, the councils asked for sites to be put forward for consideration as potential sites for housing and/or employment – and there were hundreds of responses from, amongst others, individual land owners, developers, schools, colleges, councils and national government bodies.

South Cambridgeshire District Council assessed future housing growth for the period from 2016 to 2031 as 19,000. However, the sites put forward in the Call for Sites could have accommodated over 100, 000 new dwellings, so sites put forward were assessed and those sites considered to be most appropriate for development were included in the Draft Local Plan to provide the 19,000 new dwellings. However, if land not allocated for housing development is then allocated for housing development, the value of that land increases dramatically. It is not surprising, therefore, that owners of land put forward but **not included** for housing development in the new Draft Local Plan, challenged the allocations of land at the Examination in Public. In addition, developers challenged the figure of 19,000 new dwellings in the draft plan, and argued that it should be much higher. All this resulted in lengthy hearings at the Examination in Public, and at one point the inspectors suspended the hearings and asked the City and District Councils for more evidence to justify the housing numbers in their plans. This resulted in South Cambridgeshire District Council increasing the housing number in its draft plan to 19,500, an increase of slightly less than 3%.

The Local Plan process is now near its end – in the Autumn of 2017 the inspectors asked that consultation be carried out on the Main Modifications that they consider necessary for the two Local Plans to be found 'sound' (and can therefore be approved).

As the inspectors have stated, the Main Modifications 'do not change the broad strategy for development included in the Local Plans or the main locations for where this development will be delivered.' So major development will take place in new settlements and extensions to larger villages – Northstowe, Waterbeach, Bourn airfield and expansion of Cambourne.

The terminology 'Main Modifications' may imply something greater than is actually required: in many cases the modifications involve relatively small and simple changes in wording.'

The inspectors' final report is now expected in July.

## **Significant local proposals**

A planning application for an **Agritech Park** just south of the A505 near the McDonald's roundabout was put forward in late 2017, and considered by South Cambridgeshire District Council's Planning Committee earlier this year. I worked with local parish councils to oppose this proposal, and the South Cambridgeshire view, as set out in the relevant agenda papers, was very powerful. I spoke at the Planning Committee meeting against the application, as did the Chairs of Hinxton, Pampisford and Whittlesford Parish Councils, a resident of Hinxton and the local county councillor. It was disappointing that another resident who was called to speak was not present at the meeting. The Planning Committee's decision to oppose the application was unanimous.

The **draft Uttlesford Local Plan** includes a proposal for a 5,000 home development (the **North Uttlesford Garden Community**) just north of Great Chesterford. This proposed development is on elevated ground on the far side of the A11 from Hinxton. There are a number of very serious local reservations about this proposal and I have worked with a number of local parish councils in South Cambridgeshire to oppose this proposal.

The **Genome Campus** have held two separate events so far this year as they work towards submitting a planning application that is likely to include significant expansion of the Campus to the east of the A1301 to provide more research and development space and also about 1,500 dwellings.

The number of dwellings currently being talked about is considerably higher than that suggested about a year or two ago.

There are clearly some who want to support the Genome Campus with local housing, but linking additional employment at the Genome Campus with additional local housing simply reinforces the arguments put forward in promoting the North Uttlesford Garden Community.

Future proposals for the Genome Campus would, in my view, be best considered in the context of the new joint South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Local Plan, rather than as a standalone planning application.

The Agritech Park, North Uttlesford Garden Community and Genome Campus developments all have one feature in common - heavy reliance on improvements at the McDonalds roundabout to cope with the additional traffic generated. Critics, including myself, feel that the result would simply be traffic congestion far greater than that presently experienced, and even more rat-running through villages such as Ickleton and Duxford as traffic would seek to avoid greater congestion at the McDonalds roundabout.

## **Shared services**

As a way of working more efficiently, South Cambridgeshire District Council has joined with Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridge City Council to share certain services in order to reduce costs. For example, small district councils simply cannot afford to employ a wide range of legal officers and when specific expertise is required,

have to buy in those services from specialist companies. By sharing legal services across three councils, the shared service can afford to employ specialists in all areas of the councils' work and so avoid the high costs of buying in specialist advice.

## **District Council Budget**

The District Council set its budget at its February meeting. The Council has faced considerable financial pressures in recent years, and this pressure was reflected in the budget decision.

The Council has sought to provide more cost effective services – for example through joint working with other authorities (see *Shared Services* section above).

The shared waste and recycling collection service between the District Council and Cambridge City Council consistently achieves an over 99.5% collection rate and achieved a 100% collection service in the very bad and cold weather in late March / early April.

Creating better collection routes for waste and recycling collections across the two local authorities has led to a reduction of about 20,000 miles travelled per year by the collection vehicles and will give savings of about £700,000 over three years.

Net Portfolio Holder expenditure from the current year of £17.5m will increase to £19.2m in 2018/19. This increase is due to a number of factors including inflation; salary increments and additional requirements placed on the Council – examples include:

- national government's Reducing Homelessness Bill will be implemented in 2018 and additional staff are being taken on to provide the greater level of support needed.
- £55k is allocated for the green energy fund and £200k for the green energy loan scheme.
- The Capital Programme includes provision of £160k in 2018/19 for street sweepers.

At the District Council's budget-setting meeting it was proposed to increase the Council Tax for a band D property by £5 and proportionately for other council tax bands, which is a rise of 3.7%. This was approved by 31 votes to 2 with 11 abstentions.

To set matters in context, a 1% increase in the District Council's portion of council tax raises an additional £70,000 per year whereas a 1% increase in the County Council's portion of council tax raises over £2.4 million a year.

The District Council continues its work improving its housing stock, fitting internal and external insulation and solar panels, so tenants can benefit from reduced energy consumption and costs. Council house tenants have also benefitted in recent years from a yearly 1% **reduction** in house rents.

**Tony Orgee**  
**23 May 2018**