

## District Councillor report to Parish Council September 2020

### Jetty installed as Chisholm Trail work continues

The jetty which connects Ditton Meadows and Stourbridge Common at the time of you reading this report should have been installed as part of the Chisholm Trail works. The project is a joint one between the Greater Cambridge Partnership and the County Council to improve pedestrian and cycle accessibility in the city.

It is hoped that once completed the Chisholm Trail will enable people to use an off-road route to cycle or walk between Cambridge North and Cambridge station making healthier, greener options more attractive for commuters, school runs and social activities. It is hoped that the project will be completed in the Autumn of 2021 if the project continues to run to schedule.

### Schemes to support cycling and walking

The government has put a lot of funding (£642,397 in our Combined Authority area) into helping Councils roll out easier and safer places for people to cycle and walk around the Greater Cambridge area to support the recovery from Covid-19. The Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) will have started to introduce a number of these measures to improve social distancing when on foot or on bike.

All of these schemes are experimental and will be subject to ongoing consultation as to whether they should continue as we come out the other side of the pandemic. The different schemes include closure of some roads (mainly through roads), increasing restrictions at the bus gate, additional cycle parking, improving access for electric bikes and cargo bikes and working with businesses to come up with and pilot new ways of deliveries within the city centre.

The Chair of the GCP Cllr Roger Hickford provided the following statement which I agree with. Full lists of the changes and schemes across the area can be found on the link below.

*“Supporting more people to walk and cycle has been identified as vital to the national recovery from Covid-19 - and local authorities across the country are working hard to make walking and cycling easier and safer while observing social distancing.*

*“Bringing forward trial schemes means they can be installed quickly to support people during the pandemic, while also giving people the chance to try them out and tell us what they think before any decisions are taken about which, if any, to make permanent.*

*“These measures work with the county council’s schemes and will not only support people and businesses in the short-term, but will also provide a strong foundation to help create a step-change in the way people travel sustainably in Greater Cambridge.”*

### **The first £100k homes have been built within the Combined Authority area**

The first eight £100k homes are now under construction in Fordham and are expected to be completed by the end of the year. As you will be aware from previous reports, £100k homes have my full backing and I am really pleased to see the Combined Authority Mayor James Palmer starting to deliver on this scheme. I have long talked about the squeezed middle in Cambridge who don't qualify for social housing because their situation exempts them but equally cannot afford a deposit to get their first rung on the housing ladder due to the high cost of living in this area. It is easy to get stuck in high cost private rental making it very difficult to save for a deposit putting people that are working incredibly hard on modest earnings in an impossible position where they are trapped into a life of often high cost rental properties. I don't pretend that £100k homes is the answer to this but I believe if the scheme is rolled out widely it would go some way to addressing the problem. I hope £100k home schemes will be looked at seriously within new developments in our district.

£100k homes will mean owners having an increased ability to save compared with the rental market for a similar or equivalent property and like owning any home, owners will build equity in the property through mortgage re-payments. Owners will benefit from any house price growth which may or may not occur as and when they decide to move on. £100k homes are effectively discounted from their full market value via a legal agreement which remains with the property. The next purchaser of the property would have to be someone that qualifies for a £100k home and they would also benefit from the same percentage discount to the open market value of the property. The Combined Authority will work with house builders and developers to try and bring forward this scheme. £100k Homes Scheme will be defined under affordable housing in the National Planning Policy so importantly would count towards affordable home requirements that may come with planning permissions.

### **Correctly disposing of PPE and face coverings**

Please could parish councillors make clear to their residents that PPE and face coverings need to be disposed of in the black bin. This is not only to prevent the spread of Covid-19 but also hugely important in terms of recycling. If PPE is placed in the blue bin it can contaminate blue bin waste which will then not be fit for recycling and could potentially put operatives at risk.

The team has already found that face coverings and other disposable PPE items are being put in the blue bin. This is probably because of the measures put in place by the government to mandate face coverings being worn in shops, hospitals and public transport. The Council can provide posters for notice boards to raise awareness and help residents dispose of their waste correctly if required.

Advice has been published on the government website, if you are suffering from Coronavirus symptoms, any medical waste or equipment should be placed in a bag and left for three days before going in your black bin. I have put a link below to the government website for more information.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-disposing-of-waste>

### **Litter picking during coronavirus**

I have had residents ask about when litter picks can start again so have got the following update off the government website. If you see litter you can always report it to your local council in our case SCDC.

You can carry out voluntary litter-picking. If you do this with other people you must follow the [guidance on staying safe outside your home](#).

If you collect littered face coverings or PPE, handle these with care. Dispose of them in a 'black bag' bin, not in a recycling bin. You should use safety equipment, including thick gloves, litter-pickers and heavy-duty bags.

### **Planning Reforms Announcement**

The announcement by government on the Planning white paper sets out the Government's proposal for future legislation that will be the basis for further consultation and discussion. I have tried to pull out bits of interest for Parish Councillors. Please take part in the consultation via the link and give your views.

- The Housing Secretary has set out reforms to speed up and modernise the planning system putting sustainable homes with local democracy at the heart of the process through the white paper published, Planning for the Future. Given it is a white paper, it sets out the Government's proposal for future legislation that will be the basis for further consultation and discussion.
- One key reason for the plans is that our complex planning system is a barrier to building the homes our country needs. It currently takes an average of 7 years to agree local housing plans. Under the new reforms, local housing plans are to be developed and agreed in 30 months to ensure that every area will have to develop a local housing plan in – currently only 50% of local areas has a plan to build more homes and given that they take an average of seven years to develop, many policies are out of date as soon as they are adopted.
- Green spaces and the Green Belt will continue to be protected with the reforms focusing on allowing greater building on brownfield land. All new streets will also be tree lined.
- The current planning system is unfavourable to small businesses, with the proportion of new homebuilding they lead on dropping drastically from 40% 30 years ago to just 12% now. It is hoped that by cutting red tape and complexities of the planning process, it will be a boost to SME builders who are currently cut off from entering many proposals by it. Small firms feel that the complexities of the current process, alongside the delays and additional costs that are often experienced through it are the key challenges they face in increasing home building.
- Under the new planning reforms, all new homes are to be 'zero carbon ready' with no new homes delivered under the new system needed to be retrofitted as part of the Government's work to reach zero carbon emissions by 2050.

- Currently, planning decisions are largely discretionary rather than rules-based. Nearly all decisions to grant consent are undertaken on a case-by-case basis and a third of planning cases that go to appeal are overturned. The new reforms will create a clearer rules based system. Local Plans will have to set clear rules rather than general policies for development. The Government will set out general development management policies nationally, with a more focused role for Local Plans in identifying site- and area-specific requirements, alongside locally produced design codes.
- Assessments of housing need, viability and environmental impacts are too complex: land supply decisions are based on projections of household and business ‘need’ typically over 15- or 20-year periods. These figures are often contested and do not provide a clear basis for the scale of development to be planned for. Assessments of environmental impacts and viability add complexity and bureaucracy to the process but the evidence has shown that they do not necessarily lead to environmental improvements nor ensure sites are brought forward and delivered. Local Plans will be subject to a single statutory “sustainable development” test, and unnecessary assessments and requirements that cause delay and challenge in the current system should be abolished.
- The current planning process has lost public trust with a recent poll showing that only 7% trusted their local council to make decisions about large scale development that will be good for their local area.
- Currently, only a few who can traverse the complex planning consultation process can engage with the development of local housing. The new plans will try to provide more engagement at the Local Plan phase and use digital technology to make it much easier to access and understand information about specific planning proposals so an individual can easily look at plans and understand through the use of their phones rather than physical planning notices. Local Plans will be developed over a fixed 30-month period with clear local engagement points.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements will be reformed with a new Infrastructure Levy as a nationally set fixed proportion of the value of the development, above a set threshold.
- The Government intend to introduce a fast-track for beauty through changes to national policy and legislation, to incentivise and accelerate high quality development which reflects local character and preferences.
- The Housing Secretary also announced today that the First Homes scheme will provide newly-built homes at a 30% discount for local people, key workers and first-time buyers. The discount will be locked into the home in perpetuity, ensuring future buyers can continue to benefit from it.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/907245/MHCLG\\_PlanningConsultation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907245/MHCLG_PlanningConsultation.pdf).

*Thank you for taking the time to read my report; if you have any questions or want to discuss any of the issues raised email me on [graham.cone@councillor.online](mailto:graham.cone@councillor.online) or ring 07595 361 285 (please leave a voicemail if I am unavailable)*

**Councillor Graham Cone**