

**Report by Tony Orgee, District Councillor for Babraham until 6 May 2018****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 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).

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.’

There are likely to be no specific changes for Babraham compared to the Local Plan as submitted - within the village framework, the village will remain as an ‘infill only’ village and the Babraham Campus remains as an employment site.

The Submitted Local Plan contained two sites (outside a village framework) allocated for housing on the eastern side of Sawston - one of these sites is partly in Sawston parish and partly in Babraham parish and the other entirely in Babraham parish. The *Main Modifications* required by the inspectors did not require any change to these allocations.

This Annual Parish Meeting began with a presentation about a proposed planning application for a site in Babraham Parish north of Sawston Road, Babraham on the eastern side of Sawston.

Concern was expressed at this 2018 Annual Parish Meeting that residents and the Parish Council knew nothing about these proposals.

This is inaccurate. The issue has been discussed at Parish Council meetings and at annual parish meetings in Babraham. My January 2013 Report to the Parish Council included, as its first item, the proposed two housing sites (site H/1b and H/1c) that were in the District Council's Proposed Submission Local Plan in 2013.

Babraham Parish Council, District Councillor Tony Orgee and Babraham Farms (CERN) **each objected to these two sites being included in the Submitted Local Plan**. The relevant consultation responses can be found on the District Council's website. The relevant representations are: numbers 61328 and 61330 (Babraham Parish Council (Mrs Lydia Macpherson), number 62435 (Babraham Farms (CERN) and numbers 61053 and 61054 (District Councillor Tony Orgee.

I should add that a number of residents of Babraham (not on the Parish Council) and of Sawston also submitted objections to these two sites being allocated for housing.

At the Full District Council meeting held on 13 March 2014 to agree the Submission Local Plan, that is, the version of the Plan as submitted to national government for approval, I voted against the *Village Policies* section of the Submission Plan - although I agreed with the broad thrust of the document (development in new settlements, on the edge of new settlements and in the larger and more sustainable villages in the District) - I could not agree with developments, mostly in Babraham parish, on the eastern side of Sawston in the Green Belt. In fact, at the meeting I proposed that the two housing site allocations H/1b and H/1c be removed from the plan. Minutes of this meeting, and indeed all meetings of the District Council, can be viewed on the Council's website.

### **Greater Cambridge Partnership and the A1307 corridor**

The Greater Cambridge City Deal between national government and the County, City and District councils was agreed in 2014. It gave local councils a grant of £100 million for the period 2014 – 19 to address congestion and transport infrastructure issues in the Greater Cambridge area (that is, the area covered by Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District).

Because potential schemes take some time to be developed, consulted upon, put out to tender and then implemented, it was recognised that major schemes would be unlikely to be completed, by the end of 2019.

Under the arrangement further tranches of £200 million for 2019-24 and £200 million for 2024-29 will be given to the local area provided recognisable progress is made in the period up to 2019.

An early decision was made to allocate just under £40 million to the A1307 Cambridge Biomedical Campus – Haverhill corridor.

A Local Liaison Forum (LLF) for this corridor was set up in early 2017 with myself as Chair.

Following a series of workshops where well over 40 different proposals (put forward by consultants and members of the LLF) were considered, a series of proposed improvements (Phase 1) along the A1307 were developed together with three alternative strategies for the section between the Cambridge Biomedical campus and Four Wentways.

22,000 12-page leaflets setting out all the proposals were delivered to residents and businesses along or adjacent to the route. A public consultation on these proposals was held from 9 February to 9 April, 2018, and responses will be reported to the Greater Cambridge Partnership's Executive Board in early Summer, leading to decisions on what elements of the proposals to take forward. Depending on which strategy is taken forward, the Greater Cambridge Partnership's Board may have to allocate additional funding to the area.

I did respond as a local member to the consultation, welcoming many of the Phase 1 proposals but opposing ideas such as banning right turns from Linton High Street onto the A1307 – likely, in my view, to simply lead to greatly increased traffic unsuitable minor roads.

The consultation proposals also, in my view, contained some serious omissions – for example, there were no specific safety measures proposed at the Babraham crossroads. However on page 5 of the 12-page consultation document there was a reference to 'safety improvements at Babraham High Street junction'.

At an early stage in the process of developing strategies, there was a proposal for a new Park and Ride site immediately next to Babraham. I'm pleased to say that following further consideration this proposal has been discounted and is not being taken forward.

### **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 would be 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.

### **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 residents 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**  
**17 May 2018**