

Notes from the Public Meeting

Held at The Memorial Hall, 7.30pm, on Weds 23rd November 2016
To discuss housing development proposals in Swavesey Parish

PRESENT

Cllr Mr W Wright – Chairman of the Parish Council and Chairman for the Meeting

Cllr Mrs S Ellington – District Cllr, South Cambs, Swavesey Ward

Cllr Mrs L Harford – County Council, Representing Swavesey Ward

Parishioners : approximately 174 members of the public were present

Notes taken by Mrs L Miller – Clerk to the Parish Council

Apologies received: Parish Cllr Mr J Pook, Parish Cllr Mr C Parsons, Mr B Bowles, Mr G Green, Mr & Mrs Overend, Mrs S Rogers, J Frost

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone, introducing Cllrs Sue Ellington and Lynda Harford who are working with the Parish Council with regard to the development proposals. Cllr Wright gave a background on the SCDC Local Plan, currently undergoing hearings by the Inspector. The Local Plan should hopefully be approved later in 2017.

Cllr Wright explained how the Parish Council has been objecting to the applications received so far, since early 2015 and has been in numerous discussions with County Council Education and Highways Officers, as well as District Council Planning Officers about the situation in Swavesey. In particular the lack of infrastructure to cope with such a huge rise in housing, as is being proposed by these applications.

The Parish Council urged residents to write individually to the District Council when each planning application is consulted on. The more individual responses received, the more notice the Cllrs making the decisions will take. However it was stressed that objections made must be 'material objections' and demonstrate evidence to back up objections. The Parish Council has and will keep its website (www.swavesey.org.uk) up to date with information on each application, when it is open for consultation and who to write to. Information on what 'material objections' are and what the main issues for the village are also available.

Cllr Lynda Harford explained more on the Local Plan and how the planning decision process works, both via the District Council's Planning Committee and when applications are taken to Government Appeal. The Local Plan was deemed to not show sufficient available land for housing development, to the numbers expected by Government, for the next 5 years, therefore further work was requested which has held up the approval of the Local Plan. As SCDC cannot currently demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, it means that any adopted or emerging policies which can be considered to restrict the supply of housing land are considered 'out of date' in respect to paragraph 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The two main policies this affects are village development frameworks and the designation of a village with regards to future growth. Therefore we are seeing development proposals for land outside of the village boundary, which would not normally be possible.

National Planning Policy states that: where a Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of housing land, paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It says that where relevant policies are out of date, planning permission should be granted for development unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Cllr Lynda Harford also explained how developers are able to provide mitigation in answer to many of the objections raised, such as: providing S106 funding to the County Council towards provision of school expansion and improvements; funding towards highway improvements; building in additional surface water drainage infrastructure to ensure their development does not make the flood risk from surface water any worse around the rest of the village; funding to the Parish for provision of new and improvements to existing recreation space and indoor community facilities.

Many questions were put to Cllrs about the process and procedure of planning application consultations and how residents can respond.

Details of the main objections regarding cumulative impact of development on the village infrastructure were discussed. The main areas covered were: surface water flood risk; river water flood risk at times of prolonged rainfall and the effect when river sluice gates close; highway infrastructure and congestion; education places and how could schools be expanded; capacity of GP surgery; recreation space.

Concerns were raised that the planning procedure seems to be in favour of developers and there is no overall plan to assess how such a large amount of proposed development will affect a community.

Cllr Sue Ellington added that representations are being made to NHS England about the capacity of the GP surgery in Swavesey and how it might be improved if these development proposals go ahead.

Other concerns were raised over density of proposed development, future maintenance of attenuation ponds and infrastructure, which it was confirmed would be decided through conditions of any planning permission.

Cllr Lynda Harford and Cllr Will Wright both confirmed that Heidi Allen MP was fully aware of the development proposals around Swavesey and other South Cambs villages. Parish and District Cllrs had met with Mrs Allen with regard to this and Mrs Allen had met with senior officers at the Environment Agency, County Council and District Council to talk at strategic level about the impact these proposals would have on villages. Cllr Lynda Harford also explained that Mrs Allen is unable to influence planning decisions, which is District Cllr responsibility but that Mrs Allen is able to lobby Government with regard to National Planning Policy and assist in discussions with County Council with regard to education and highway issues.

Cllr Wright encouraged residents to engage with the Neighbourhood Plan project, which has been started by the Parish Council and stressed the importance of the Plan and how it would, once adopted, become a legal document and sit alongside the District's Local Plan with regard to future development.

Actions for the Parish Council

The Parish Council would collate all information on how to object to an application and what the main material objections in relation to village sustainability are and post these on to the village website at www.swavesey.org.uk

Links also to be posted to the Village Planning Facebook site.

As soon as any new planning application is received by the Parish Council for consultation, notice will be posted to the website and planning facebook page, giving details on how and where to make representations.

The Chairman thanked Cllrs Lynda Harford and Sue Ellington for their assistance with the meeting and thanked all those present for attending.

There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed at 9.00pm