

District and County Councillor's Report – December 2023

Solar Farm Application

We have previously reported on a potential planning application coming forward in our area for a solar farm. The size of the area being considered is fairly significant, some 900 hectares. It's worth pointing out that this is the total area being looked at for planning merit, it is likely that a much smaller area will come forward as part of a formal planning application.

The geographic area being looked at is from the north of Linton/Abington up to Balsham and west, roughly following the route of the Roman Road, across the A11 to the edge of Fulbourn.

The promoters of this idea, Kingsway Solar, will be going public with their plans on December 14th, so please do take a look when possible.

Autumn Statement

We have previously reported that Michael Gove, the minister for the department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), had been very public with his plans to turn Cambridge into a British version of 'Silicon Valley', attempting to turn us the key location for tech and scientific research companies to base themselves in Europe. His vision of making that prospect a reality is by building circa 200,000 houses in the area, making it more sustainable for large companies to locate here. To put that into some kind of perspective, Cambridge city is currently 60,000 houses, meaning that an additional 200,000 would make Abington, Linton, Balsham etc suburbs of Cambridge.

This idea doesn't seem to be going away, as in November's Autumn Statement, it was announced that there was going to be £3 million put into a 'Cambridge Delivery Group' to drive this forward. There was also £2 million announced for tackling the water scarcity issue in the county, which, in our view, is nowhere near enough to tackle this problem.

Nevertheless, watch this space as it will be interesting to see how this develops.

Uttlesford Local Plan

Some may recall that a few years ago Uttlesford District Council (our neighbours in north Essex) were proposing a new town of circa 5,000 houses to be built at Great Chesterford. They were told by a government planning inspector that this wasn't sustainable and to think again. They have recently published their next proposal which doesn't include any large-scale developments near to the Cambridgeshire border. So those who were concerned, especially the parishes south of the A1307, can hopefully rest easy!

Street Light Switchover

The County Council is about to embark on a project to replace all of the bulbs in streetlights to more effective LED lanterns. The work is due to begin in early 2024 and will take roughly 2 years to replace the 47,500 streetlights in Cambridgeshire. Information on when our area can expect this change will be published on the County Council, as well as Balfour Beatty's, websites in due course.

Anaerobic Digestion Plant Proposals

In our area we have not one, but two planning applications submitted to the relevant local authorities for bio energy digestion plants. These are plants that breakdown agricultural materials and turn them into energy. For reference there is one on the A505 between Royston and Baldock.

1. The first application is located just over the Suffolk border outside of Haverhill and off the A1307. The site runs up the Cambridgeshire border and ends at the edge of West Wickham/Weston Colville. You may have seen signs for the anti-lobbying group 'Muck Off Acorn' – this refers to this application. As the application is in Suffolk it will be Suffolk County Council that will make the decision on this but whilst the time for public comments has closed, you can still look at the plans and write to the case office dealing with the application – andrew.rutter@suffolk.gov.uk

<http://suffolk.planning-register.co.uk/Planning/Display?applicationNumber=SCC%2F0045%2F23SE&fbclid=IwAR0aj4d4JMd9Yr3cP-Etp9rxDR4kKDwvzX0wMyHkfOomG45fCq0khXRbyrE>

2. The second application is in the parish of Streetly End, West Wickham. This site is smaller than the first and as it is in Cambridgeshire will be decided by Cambridgeshire County Council. The council are taking public comments now and this can be done via the website - <https://planning.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=S0BB1JDYKNQ00>

Public comments for this application close in early December but you can always contact that planning officer directly, should you want to raise concerns after this time – helen.wass@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Winter Vaccinations

Flu, Covid-19 and shingles vaccinations are available to eligible groups. Flu and Covid vaccine information is available at www.nhs.uk/winterevaccinations and information about shingles vaccines at www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/shingles-vaccination

LHI Bids

This years round of Local Highway Improvement (LHI) bids are now open for parish councils to submit a proposal for funding for a small highway improvement project in our area. Our parishes have been successful in the past and funding has enabled some small, albeit much needed, improvements to the highway network that wouldn't usually form a part of the Highway budget. Full detail and application forms can be seen here - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway/local-highway-improvement-funding>

Older Adults Social Inclusion Grant

The County Council has a grant available for funding for services, clubs and activities that support older adults, 65 plus, with emerging care or support needs.

Full info and application can be found at - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/care-together/older-adults-social-inclusion-grants>

Councillors Henry Batchelor and Geoff Harvey

Shire Hall

The previous home of the County Council, Shire Hall in Cambridge, is being remarketed due to the previous buyer of the site, Brookgate, pulling out of the purchase citing market conditions. So if you know anyone in the market for an historic building, there's a great one up for grabs.

Cambridgeshire Holidays & Food Programme

This is another County Council run programme that provides holiday activities and food for children who are in receipt of benefit-related free school meals. This isn't the only eligibility criteria but all families in receipt of free-school meals have been sent a voucher directly. Full information at - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/support-with-the-cost-of-living/holiday-activities-and-food-programme>

Mobile food hub

There is a mobile food hub that visits Linton Village Hall on Coles Lane every Tuesday between 1pm and 2pm. There is no registration required just turn up on the day. If any more information on the scheme, this can be found on the Hope CIC (the charity running the scheme) website - <https://hopeagainst.org/hope-cic-mobile-food-hub> or on 07474725477.

Free Electric Blankets

South Cambs District Council are offering a free electric blanket to those most in need, in the run up to the winter months. Those that qualify for these will need to be claiming Council Tax Support and also one of the following criteria:

- Attendance allowance
- Personal independence Payment
- Disability Living Allowance

Full detail of the scheme can be found here - <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/free-electric-blankets-will-help-residents-most-in-need-this-winter/>

Contact Details

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