

**PUBLIC MEETING FOR FOXTON RESIDENTS
HELD ON 10th JULY 2006, AT 8PM
IN THE MEETING ROOM OF THE VILLAGE HALL
TO DISCUSS THE RESPONSE TO TWO OBJECTION SITES IN
THE VICINITY OF FOXTON RELATING TO
THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

PRESENT

Representing Foxton Parish Council

Chairing the meeting and Chairman of FPC, Mr D Pusey (DP)

Mr B Hockley, Vice-Chairman (BH)

Mr G Barnes (FPC Planning Committee Chairman) (GB)

Mr R Brooksbank (RB)

Dr C Grindley (CG)

Mr M Kennedy (MK)

Dr D McKeown (DMcK)

Miss S Thake (ST)

Mrs J Burns, Clerk

Mr Alan Neale, Planning Consultant (AN)

Upwards of 100 members of the public

Mr Pusey opened the meeting by introducing Mr Alan Neale, a planning consultant, who had been invited by Foxton Parish Council to talk to those present about the planning issues involved and to hear their views.

Mr Pusey said that South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) was in the process of introducing a new Local Development Framework (LDF). In this document, Foxton features as a "Group Village" as it did in the previous Local Plan. However, a number of people had registered objections to SCDC's draft LDF. One objected to the designation of Foxton as a Group Village, on the grounds that the village is considered to be a sustainable settlement in which further growth could be satisfactorily accommodated. The objector had suggested that the village should be designated as a rural centre, which, if accepted, would put Foxton in the same category as Melbourn, Cottenham etc. If the inspector were to uphold this view, then two "objection sites" hitherto not included in the village envelope could be included within the envelope and the way thus paved for development.

Mr Pusey said that the two sites in question were the field of 6.65 acres (sometimes known as the sheep field) bordering the A10 on the Melbourn side of Shepreth Road and a plot of land of 12.5 acres between the A10 and the rear of Foxton House. Development could be houses, commercial properties or both types of property. On present building densities a development solely of houses would lead to development on both sites totalling more than 300 houses, which would increase the number of houses in the village by three fifths. (Note: a reply received from SCDC after the

meeting puts the number at 235) The agent for the landowner claimed that this growth could be sustained within the village.

Mr Pusey said that as soon as the council became aware of these representations, it arranged for an information slip to be inserted in "The Laurentian". At the council's meeting on 3rd July it was agreed that a public meeting should be held to discuss the potential for such massive change to the village. Also, as the SCDC web site was not set up for on-line replies at that time, it was decided to make copies of the response forms available at the village shop. He said that SCDC's deadline for receipt of the response forms was 12 noon on 28th July.

Mr Pusey then invited questions and comments from the public.

Questions/Comments are attributed where possible.

Trevor France *What constitutes the term "sustainability"?*

AN: There are lots of definitions, but one commonly cited is "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the future" ie the resources one has should be used carefully. This leads to a sequential approach to sites eg Brownfield in preference to Greenfield sites. The sites being considered are both Greenfield sites.

Mike Thompson *What are the most important considerations?*

AN: There is a plan-led system: at the top of the system are the government Planning Policy Guidelines (PPG) and Planning Policy Statements (PPS) the most important of these being PPS No.1 and PPS No. 3. PPG 7 about houses says that these should be put where they can best be catered for.

The SCDC Structure Plan adopted in 2003 is based on these policies and guidelines and would eventually be superceded by the Regional Spatial Strategy. The present claims fly in the face of the current policy, for instance one can object on the grounds that the sites are Greenfield sites. Services and infrastructure are also of importance and I am trying to ascertain the capacities of the sewage, water and electricity supplies at the present time. A further consideration is transport. On the one hand, a development of this size would result in an increase in traffic. On the other hand, the clients use the existing road and rail links, especially the station, as a central argument for Foxton being a good candidate for development.

David Boreham *If Foxton is currently classified as a group village, what would it take to be given a different classification?*

DP: - A range of facilities similar to Melbourne

Keith Mills *How would the village cope without a flyover at the level crossing?*

DP: This is a fair point: it is essential that the village retain its group status.

Who decides the group village status?

DP: This is decided by South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Lee Brown *There are more houses on the Community project site than specified in the definition of a group village.*

DP: This site was classified as an exception site within the village. The objection sites are outside the village.

AN: It is unlikely that houses could be built on the objection sites in dribs and drabs.

Keith Mills *If people keep saying “no” then land prices go up making it more difficult for first-time buyers.*

Peter Sutton *In the context of John Prescott’s edict that 400,000 new houses are needed in the South East, might this be an argument for allowing the objection sites to be developed?*

AN: The present LDF extends to 2016 so that no development could take place on the objection sites unless SCDC changed the group status of the village.

Mike Thompson *There has been talk about a large town to the north of Royston.*

DP: It wouldn’t be advisable to draw attention to that.

How does the school population affect the argument?

DP: The school is a serious issue when considering the infrastructure of the village.

David Boreham *Is there a rule of thumb about the number of schoolchildren generated by a certain quantity of housing?*

DP: I am not aware of one.

Do we know on what grounds the client’s agent thinks the site is sustainable?

DP: The transport links are the chief strengths in January’s argument.

Peter Sutton *What access would there be to the sites?*

AN: There is no detail about this at present.

Peter Sutton *Is there an appeal procedure by which the owner of the sites could appeal to a higher authority?*

AN: No there is not.

Peter Sutton *Does this mean that once a decision is made in favour of retaining the status of Foxton as a group village, the sites would be safe from development for another ten years?*

AN: Yes, that is the case and it is therefore vital that objections to these two sites being included in the village envelope must be lodged now.

Joyce Leigh *What type of housing would be built?*

DP: It is too early in the process to have any knowledge of this.

David Boreham *The inspector will make a decision on the facts, but will people power have any effect, and can FPC supply some notes?*

DP: It is important that as many people respond as possible, but in order for their responses to be counted separately, they must be given in the respondent’s own words: notes would lead to a lot of very similar responses which would be counted together as one response.

CG: FPC supported the group village strategy and the core strategy enquiry.

RB: Referring to Peter Sutton's comment about John Prescott's 400,000 houses, SCDC can address the requirement in the East of England Plan for houses until 2021 within the group village strategy.

DMcK: The landowner made 3 objections in his representation:

- The status of Foxton as a group village
- The fact that exception sites are permitted
- The size restrictions on development be removed

Paul Mason *If commercial buildings were planned for the site, what then would be the response?*

DP: The landowner has already made his submission, and this must form the basis for response.

Sheila Dunn *Development on this scale would greatly exacerbate the already existing problems with medical care.*

Rick Negus *The Harston surgery is incapable of absorbing a large influx of people – there is already a big housing development due at Fisons.*

AN: This is very pertinent information.

Mark Howard *It is difficult to drive through the village already. The water supply and sewage service to the village are already near capacity – facts and figures are needed. Public transport is not at capacity, but frequency of services is a critical factor.*

Members of the public pointed out that whilst there was spare capacity on the trains to London, at certain times the trains to Cambridge (particularly in the morning when young people were travelling to Cambridge schools) were very overcrowded.

Peter Sutton *Has it been known for an independent inspector to make a decision contrary to that of the District Council considering that the inspector will be bound by central government policy?*

AN: In the cases I have known there was not very often disagreement between the District Council and the inspector and I think disagreement unlikely.

If we want to emphasise group village status what are the key arguments for retaining it?

AN: Determining factors are the facilities available and room for growth. Infrastructure including road system, shops, schools is also important.

D McK: There is a hierarchy of settlements: Urban centres, Larger villages known as rural centres, minor rural centres where developments of up to 25 dwellings are permitted within the village framework, and group villages (at the bottom of the scale) such as Foxton.

DP: Group villages have relatively few services and facilities.

Mr Pusey asked Mr Neale to summarise.

Mr Neale said it was quite justified to bring the meeting's attention to current Government policy for housing. He recommended that those responding to the

proposition that the two objection sites be included in the village envelope should not be afraid to include the principle of sustainability and should put their own interpretation on the word.

He said the agents for the landowner see the school, the railway station and public transport as factors in their favour. However, he suggested the reality might be somewhat different. In addition, in simple amenity terms, there were mature trees on the boundaries, development would have an impact on adjoining properties, and the land acted as a buffer zone between the village and the A10. The flood plain was another factor. He recommended that respondents keep their comments factual and avoid being emotional in tone.

GB: There is a major gas main in the sheep field.

A few further questions followed:

Martin Jones *There is no parking at the railway station and there is already a problem with cars being parked in Station Road. The land previously owned by Shelford petroleum could be used as a station car park.*

It was thought this would not be possible as the ground was considered to be contaminated.

Peter Sutton *Should the public keep the parish council advised?*

DP: If the topic had not already been covered at the present meeting, this would be useful.

Anne Spence *Would householders affected by the development, if permitted, qualify for compensation?*

DP: This matter is too far ahead to consider at this juncture.

Peggy Lyons *Who appoints the independent inspector?*

DP: The Government.

The developers will try to sweeten us up by saying that they would put in affordable housing.

Ian Sanderson *Discussion and links can be found on the village website.*

DP: That is very useful to know.

The meeting then closed at 9.10pm.