

A View from the District

As a University member I attended the Senate House Discussion on the University Council's annual report on 21 January, as it contained a glowing reference to the NW Cambridge development but with no reference to the Parish. I want the University to be clear on the different status parishioners will have, not least because of the existence of the Girton Town Charity, while the current plans would allow for dwellings to be built across the boundary.

The next day the Joint Development Control Committee met. The NW Cambridge team gave us a presentation of their plans for the primary school which will be also used as a teaching resource for the University's Faculty of Education and will be somewhat larger than the site actually warrants. This raised concerns about the catchment, and the effect on nearby schools and communities, an issue I shall continue to monitor.

At Council on the following day we discussed the closing of the only pub in Hildersham; the Localised Council Tax Support scheme (with an almost-hidden rider that the Parish Grant should not be paid this year); a rather measly pay award; and a consultation for a change to Welsh law, which may also in time affect us, concerning water companies' responsibilities to Traveller sites.

The Local Plan is reaching its final form. The draft was published and explained to us on 3 February and approved by the Portfolio Holder on 11 February, at a long meeting at which many objections were raised. The alternative to approving the plan is a planning free-for-all which would be to no one's benefit (except the developers'). Council will decide in March whether to send it for examination and approval by the government.

The Scrutiny Committee met on the same, long, day. On our agenda were the Medium Term Financial Strategy; the Corporate Plan; a Position Statement on finance, performance and risk; and a Review of our Conservation services. In each case I had concerns over the woolly nature of the documents and was supported in these by other members. I hope for significant improvements before they are approved.

If you would like my fuller monthly report emailed to you please contact me at scdc@de-lacey.org and I shall add you to the list of recipients. If you have any District Council issues you would like to discuss please don't hesitate to ask me.

Douglas de Lacey