

## **A View from the District**

The new Chesterton Station moved a small step closer on 18 February when the Joint Development Control Committee approved an application to move the freight sidings. The Committee has now received (and approved) all the planning applications from the University for Phase 1 of NW Cambridge apart from a care home to be located in the City, but now private developers will bring forward their applications for the market housing. First occupations are expected in the spring of next year, and the build-out of Phase 1 will continue for a year after that. Then towards the end of 2017 Phase 2 will begin.

Opposition Group Leaders have had another meeting with the Planning Portfolio Holder to discuss the progress of the Local Plan, with little to report, except that the current sessions of the Government Inspection will be critical. We raised concerns about the way in which the Greater Cambridge City Deal was imposing yet more strain on housing supply and the fact that the proposed mechanism of providing its required 1000 new homes is already running into difficulties. We fear that unsuitable County Council owned land may simply be pressed into service to meet the demand.

Other than that, my focus has been entirely on Northstowe. I used the excuse of a cataract op to skip the Council meeting on 26 February which was essentially to rubber-stamp the budget; I had already made all my points to officers. But the Northstowe Phase 2 development is building to a climax as we are expected to make a final decision on 26 March. In many meetings we have achieved some few improvements in the amazingly meagre provisions offered by the Government for items such as pedestrian and cycle facilities and a town square, but they are still far from generous and still far from clear. There are also many issues on which as members we are still in the dark, including the extent of the moneys available for infrastructure. Mediocrity in civic facilities is almost guaranteed unless the Government will make more money available than appears at present.

To end on a lighter note: My College (St John's) recently put on an event for its architectural students and invited local alumni to attend; an architect who had spent much of his career in Hong Kong spoke on the topic of 'density in the city' and it was very instructive to imagine his ideas being realised in Cambridgeshire. Although full implementation would probably require a very radical change of government, there was much food for thought.

If you would like a fuller monthly report emailed to you please contact me at [scdc@de-lacey.org](mailto: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.

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