

# Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

## MONTHLY REPORT OCTOBER 2021

### Mepal crematorium application objection

We have submitted an objection to the proposal to build a crematorium at Mepal, as follows.

The Mepal Outdoor Centre site was, for more than three decades, a well-used and valued community outdoor leisure facility. If this application for a crematorium and associated elements is approved then the potential for meaningful outdoor leisure will be lost at the site. The few future leisure opportunities suggested are very much ancillary to the main purpose, reflected in the provision of just six parking spaces.

Whilst previous attempts to find an operator for the site to continue outdoor leisure facilities were not successful, alternative operating models have not been extensively explored which may have been more viable. The district council had also not considered any new investment, as could have been provided by allocating just a small proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy receipts it holds from new developments in the surrounding area. It should also be noted that post-COVID there is an increased focus on outdoor leisure facilities. The district council has therefore not demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the existing use as an outdoor leisure facility.

The community view of the proposals has been well established by the applicant's own survey as reported in the Statement of Community Involvement. Paragraph 3.4.2.8 Additional comments summarises the results, reporting that just 13.0% of respondents supported the proposals with 85.4% opposed to them. The primary reasons for the opposition to the proposals were:

1. The site should be retained as an outdoor leisure centre.
2. There is not seen to be a need for another crematorium to be build.
3. The site is not seen as the right location for the development.

It is odd to justify the development as a community resource when the overwhelming views expressed by the community are that the existing community leisure use for the site should be retained, when the community do not see the need for the new facility and when the community do not consider this an appropriate location.

The applicant does not provide a robust case to justify the need for a new crematorium in this part of the district. There is already significant nearby provision with the Fenland crematorium in March along with the new crematorium opening this year in Huntingdon. The identified catchment

area identified by the applicant for potential crematorium locations is centred on Ely rather than East Cambridgeshire District. This results in significant overlap on the western side with areas served by the Fenland and Hunts Crematoria. This is particularly true for the Mepal outdoor centre location.

It should be noted that the planning application for the Huntingdon crematorium included a comprehensive needs assessment which was considered as part of the planning approval process. No similar needs assessment has been provided for this application and yet establishing a robust case for the need for a new crematorium at this location is essential given the corresponding loss of outdoor leisure. The survey of funeral directors undertaken by the applicant elicited just 11 responses, with eight suggesting they would consider using alternative facilities in the area if they became available.

Transport implications and particularly road safety issues are of particular concern for this location. The applicant acknowledges that there will be a significant increase in traffic movements from the site compared to the existing approved use. The proposed cemetery and crematorium development will provide 123 parking spaces. There are an additional 28 car parking spaces near the cemetery area. The crematorium chapel will accommodate up to 125 people. There are no pedestrian or safe cycling routes to the site and the location is only serviced by a two-hourly bus service between Ely and Chatteris.

The transport assessment assumes there will be 15 vehicles associated with each cremation service with five services per day together with 27 other vehicles. This would be 102 vehicle arrivals and 204 two-way trips. The proposed Huntingdon crematorium is a similarly sized facility, however the transport assessment concluded that a figure of 23 vehicles would be more appropriate per cremation service together with 56 other vehicle movements. Given the assessment and justification in the Huntingdon transport assessment leading to a 50% higher figure, it would appear that the transport assessment for this application significantly understates the likely number of vehicle movements. To add further context, even with a generous vehicle occupancy figure of 3 people per vehicle, that would result in just 45 people by service on average or around 36% occupancy for a 125 people capacity chapel.

If the transport assessment data were to be aligned with the Huntingdon crematorium data and combined with the increased vehicle movements predicted from the neighbouring anaerobic digester plant then the currently proposed highway mitigations are likely to be inadequate and raise serious safety concerns.

Finally, while not in themselves a planning matter, it is important to note that there are some clear concerns about conflicts of interest with the district council and East Cambs Trading Co Ltd and this application. The applicant for the Screening Opinion 21/00681/SCREEN was East Cambs Trading Co Ltd (see letter dated 9 August 2021), however the subsequent planning application 21/01216/F3M has been submitted on behalf of East Cambridgeshire District Council. It is essential that any decision on the planning approval of this application is seen to be made objectively and does not raise concerns with members of the public that it may be influenced by any conflict of interests.

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## **65 High Street Sutton**

We have given notice that we intend to call in the application for alterations to the former Deli for determination by the Planning Committee.

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## **Garden Close appeal**

The appeal by Abbey Development Ltd against refusal of reserved matters for their outline planning application (20/01169/RMM) at Garden Close has now opened. The Planning Inspectorate's appeal reference number is APP/V0510/W/21/3275044 and the appeal will be determined on the basis of written representations.

The District Council has forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate and the appellant all the representations made to it on the original application. These will be considered by the Inspector when determining the appeal. Anyone wishing to make comments, or to modify or withdraw their previous representation, can do so online at <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

Written representations may be made by post to:

Jonathan Alden  
The Planning Inspectorate  
3P  
Temple Quay House  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

All representations must be received by Friday 29 October 2021.

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## **Community Land Trusts**

Lorna is seconding a motion on Community Land Trusts which will be debated at the meeting of the Full Council on Thursday 21 October. The motion follows the

sudden resignation of most members of Little Thetford Parish Council following considerable local upset about proposals by the 'Community Land Trust' in their area. This is not the first time a parish council and its community have come into conflict over 'Community Land Trusts'—residents in Wilburton recently held a parish poll and passed a vote of no confidence in their parish councillors over the latter's support for a controversial housing development proposed by the local 'Community Land Trust'.

The motion proposed by Ely councillor Simon Harries and seconded by Lorna is as follows.

This council recognises the important role of Community Land Trusts across the world in holding land on behalf of a place-based community, while serving as a long-term steward for affordable housing and other community assets. This council supports the principle that development should take place in partnership with local communities, and with their support.

This council notes that the administration has made working in alliance with CLTs across the District, and setting up its own District-wide CLT, its preferred way of meeting the need for affordable housing in East Cambridgeshire.

The council notes however that trust in CLTs among members of the general public has been damaged as a result of concerns expressed by residents in Wilburton, Stretham, Kennett and most recently Little Thetford, related to:

- Some decisions and actions taken by CLTs in their villages, in particular concerning developments widely seen as not appropriate in scale or location for the communities in question;
- Worries that parish councils are being unduly influenced by CLT trustees, shown by the vote of no confidence in Wilburton and resignation en masse of councillors in Little Thetford;
- Further concerns about profits gained by landowners as result of choices made by CLTs.

The council acknowledges its own responsibilities as a result of its public support to all these CLTs and believes that it is necessary to review the issues that have arisen in the four villages noted above. This review should have a specific focus on the relationship between ECDC and the CLTs in this district, to ensure that the involvement of CLTs as an integral part of council housing policy is seen as rational, safe and unambiguous, with an effective code of conduct in place. The following process for the review is proposed:

- a. Desk research, to review all relevant documents, to be provided by the CLTs in question.
- b. Written submissions, to be invited from residents in relevant villages and from landowners associated with the developments now being proposed.
- c. Interviews, to include a minimum of three trustees (or former trustees if none are in post now) from each CLT.
- d. Public meetings in each of the four villages, in which residents will be invited to provide feedback, evidence and views.

The review should be carried out by a politically proportional working group set up by the Finance & Assets Committee at their next meeting. This activity should be completed within three months of commencement and will report initially to the Finance & Assets Committee, and to Full Council directly afterwards.

In the meantime, no further CLT project-related financial commitments should be incurred by the Council or its companies until after the report, as defined in this motion, has been considered by Full Council.

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### **‘£100K homes’**

Although the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority has decided to close down the previous Mayor’s ‘£100K homes’ scheme, East Cambridgeshire District Council has expressed its enthusiasm to proceed with it.

Four ‘£100K homes’ have been advertised in the development known as The Old Tannery at the bottom of Forehill in Ely. While these may sound tempting, the tiny number of these homes is hardly likely to solve the area’s housing needs.

Furthermore, those promoting this scheme have never satisfactorily explained how those taking it up will avoid being trapped in properties they cannot afford to move out of if they find they no longer meet their needs. While purchasers will gain a proportion of the uplift in the value of the property on resale, the gap between that sum and the cost of market price housing will be as wide as ever.

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### **COVID business grants**

A sixth round of applications for Covid ‘Additional Restrictions Grant’ opened in mid-September and closed on 3 October. Eligible businesses which lost more than 30% of income between 21 June and 18 July as a result of Government restrictions can apply for an up to £1,000 grant. Once again however a number of businesses severely hampered by lockdown are unable to access the grant.

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## Afghan refugees

Lorna has put volunteers from a nearby Timebank in touch with the County Council to assist them in storing a large number of items donated by local residents to refugees fleeing the situation in Afghanistan.

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## Meet your councillors

We will be holding our virtual surgery via Zoom from 6:30 to 7:30PM on

- Tuesday 12 October 2021
- Tuesday 9 November 2021

Please contact Mark at [mark@markinskip.org.uk](mailto:mark@markinskip.org.uk) to book your timeslot.

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**Cllr Lorna Dupré**

**Cllr Mark Inskip**

District Councillors for the Sutton ward