

**SOUTH NEWNHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

**REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

**March 2017 to March 2022**

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## 1.0 FORMATION OF FORUM, EARLY WORKSHOPS AND SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

In 2017 concerned residents took the opportunity provided by the 2011 Localism Act to create a Neighbourhood Forum and with the aim of developing a Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Area was formally designed by the Cambridge City in March 2017 and the South Newnham Neighbourhood Forum was officially recognised.

The first steps for the Forum were to raise awareness of what a Neighbourhood Plan is and how this would benefit South Newnham, and a series of community workshops were held to gather information on what South Newnham residents value about our community and what they would like to see improved. Using the methodology based on the Community Capital Framework developed by the Prince's Foundation for local communities, a Sustainability Appraisal was drafted.

This appraisal took all important local circumstances into account and reflected the character and needs of our neighbourhood and became the measure of sustainability in our plan making. Positive and negative responses have formed the basis of our evidence gathering, plan making and policy drafting.

From the workshops and Sustainability Appraisal, five essential qualities of place that makes South Newnham special were agreed:

**Mix of housing styles.** Predominantly harmonious mix of styles ranging from 19<sup>th</sup> Century to present day and from modest terraced streets through to large family dwellings and some post war developments.

**Attractive Architectural Details.** Many examples of good quality materials and interesting details were put forward by residents, including doorways, lintels, window styles, roofs. Examples of important buildings are included – Grade 11 listed, Art Deco and Arts and Crafts.

**Connectivity.** An interconnected network of streets, alleyways and snickets at walkable intervals creates a sense of security and provides opportunities for informal social interactions. Pedestrian access by Skaters' Meadow footpath to the world-famous Grantchester Meadows, a beautiful riverside area popular with both locals and many visitors from across the city and beyond.

**Town/Country interface.** Almost entirely surrounded by countryside, with river, water meadows and prolific wildlife. Adjacent to historic green spaces, yet within easy walking distance of the city centre.

**Sense of Community.** A strong sense of identity and historical continuity from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. Close-knit community with good mix of long-term residents and visiting academics from all over the world. Village atmosphere at

the heart of the neighbourhood with good facilities including local shops, school, church, sheltered housing, pub – a strong sense of community.

### 2.0 TREASURY REPORT

There has been no financial activity for the last two years, as due to Covid-19 restrictions, the Forum has been unable to host events and functions or proceed with consultations for the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Income and Expenditure statement for the year ending April 2019, showed an income derived from Donations, and the Swift and Recycling events of £472.46.

Expenditure included printing and venue hire, totalling £443.56. This left a balance in the account of £28.90

The Forum has been successful in bidding for two Locality Grants, to cover the costs of hiring consultants for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The second grant of £5,600 was awarded in 2019. Fees paid to our consultant Neil Homer amounted to £1,230, but as no further work could be carried out due to Covid-19 restrictions, the balance of £4,740 was returned.

### 3.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN MAKING

In June 2017 members of the Forum committee met with the Cambridge City Council planning officers together with liaison officer, Ian Poole, who was advising us on the next steps to create a Neighbourhood Plan. Members submitted a list of draft Objectives and in July 2017 Ian Poole gave detailed feedback on which of these objectives could potentially become a policy and those that would be classified as community action points. He also stressed that the Neighbourhood Plan must not be in conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It was agreed that the structure of the Neighbourhood Plan was to be based on the headings of the emerging Cambridge Local Plan. Meetings were also held with the Conservation Officer and Environmental Officers.

Around 35 volunteers worked in teams to gather evidence for the Neighbourhood Plan and a comprehensive Evidence Base has been created covering all aspects of our neighbourhood. The consultations included meeting with local councillors, talking to all the local shop keepers and writing to or meeting with members of local clubs e.g., canoe club and rugby club, the primary school and sheltered housing. We also wrote to or met College bursars regarding their plans for student accommodation and spoke to local estate agents

A preliminary copy of the Neighbourhood Plan was shared with Cambridge City Council

in Spring 2018, and Council planning officers confirmed that we were on the way to achieving a first draft. Ian Poole was no longer working as a liaison

officer for the Council, and with no further help forthcoming from him, an alternative consultant was sought and appointed.

We applied to My Community – Locality, for a Neighbourhood Planning Grant to enable us to appoint Neil Homer as our consultant/advisor as a successor to Ian Poole, and we started working with Neil from 30th August 2018. He considered that the descriptions and policies that we had generated were of a high quality, but that the material needed to be reconfigured to align with the national planning approach. In particular, he advised that much of our description needed to come out and be placed in a new document namely the “Evidence Base”.

This entailed a re-write of the draft Neighbourhood Plan as Neil Homer proposed splitting the designated area into four Character Areas, to distinguish the architectural style and road layouts of each area. These four areas were the Croft with its Victorian terraced housing and village shops, the Barton Road with its larger individual style properties, the mixed housing on Grantchester Road and surrounding streets and the Gough Way Estate.

New section headings were adopted, and these were: Green Infrastructure Network, Local Green Spaces, Connectivity, Neighbourhood Assets, Homes and Facilities for Older People, Local Heritage Assets and Managing Design of Proposed Development in the Character Areas.

At the same time residents were approached to conduct street surveys on all the streets in the designated area. Using templates for guidance, topics included the composition of houses in the streets and the period of the properties, building facades, alterations to original buildings and the streetscape including state of the pavement, kerb stones, telephone poles and wires, street lighting, signage, name plates, wheelie bins and trees and hedges.

This detailed analysis of the housing and street-scene in Newnham updated the information in the Conservation Appraisal documents for Newnham Croft (2013) and West Cambridge (2011) and also included areas like Grantchester Road and Gough Way which are not situated in either of these Conservation Areas. This Street Analysis is an important part of the Evidence Base.

On 7th June 2019 we met with the City Council Sustainability Officer who gave us feedback on how our policies could incorporate the effects of climate change and biodiversity issues. These included our vision statement that supports the transition to a low and ultimately zero carbon society, the biodiversity net gain that would result from a green infrastructure policy and ensuring that proposals impacting our connectivity network do not increase the risk of flooding.

The draft plan was submitted to Greater Cambridge Shared Planning and discussed at a meeting on 18th September 2019 with Alison Talkington who was now leading the Neighbourhood Planning Process. Formal comments from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning were detailed in a letter to SNNF dated 22nd October 2019. Addressing the comments required another re-write, and

the work was planned, but was curtailed by the restrictions of Covid-19 lockdown.

In 2021, as Covid-19 restrictions eased, work to re-write the Plan began in line with the new advice given by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning. The re-write of the Plan has now been completed. The Basic Condition Statement, which describes how the South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan policies comply to the Cambridge City Council Local Plan and National Planning Framework Guidelines, has also been completed, as has the Consultation Statement. This later document describes how the Forum consulted residents and other parties, the issues raised, and how they have been addressed, either with Neighbourhood Plan Policies or through community action. Once it becomes possible to start the 6-week consultation, the draft Neighbourhood Plan can be submitted to Cambridge City Council.

### 4.0 ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY

In its plan making the South Newnham Neighbourhood Forum has sought to establish through community consultation, how the principles of sustainable development can be embedded into a Neighbourhood Plan. The main objectives as set out in the National Planning Policy framework of sustaining economic, social, and environmental development have taken into account our local circumstances, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of our area so that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way.

Starting from the early workshops, our evidence gathering has shown just how important our green spaces are and how important it is to conserve and protect our natural environment, which accounts for two thirds of the designated area. Our green river corridor is particularly vulnerable to climate change, as are the threats to the biodiversity of our green spaces and we responded to the city consultation on Green Infrastructure for the new Cambridge City Local Plan.

Gathering the evidence on our neighbourhood community assets we have shown why South Newnham has a "sense of community". With its local community and leisure facilities and local shops, the South Newnham "village" is a model for sustainable living.

With the restricted movement in lockdown, the access to local shops and facilities helped both the vulnerable and the volunteers helping with shopping and other errands.

Although the Forum had not yet been able to commence the 6-week official consultation, community engagement has continued, and the following initiatives have taken place:

#### **Green Infrastructure:**

The Forum has worked with Newnham Residents' Associations, and also supported initiatives to form Friends Groups to help protect and enhance our

green infrastructure network. Groups include Friends of Paradise Nature Reserve, Friends of Sheep's Green, Friends of Skaters' Meadow Footpath and Friends of Sheep's Green and Lammas Land.

Actions supported through them include:

- Assisting City Council working parties in Paradise Nature Reserve,
- Erecting signs to stop cycling through Paradise Nature Reserve,
- Planting of trees and wildflowers on verges on Skaters Meadow Footpath,
- Liaising with Queens College on light pollution from Owlstone Croft,
- Helping residents to install nest boxes for swifts,
- Working with the City Council on a Management Plan for Lammas Land
- Community litter picking,
- Ending herbicide spraying on Lammas Land and the verges on Fen Causeway and Barton Road.

### **Connectivity Network:**

The Forum has responded to a number of consultations including:

#### **Residents Parking**

The Forum supported the implementation of the scheme as a Parking Permit Area. This has been very successful in reducing the number of commuter cars parked in Newnham but has also freed up parking for visitors outside the hours of 11 am to 2 pm The PPA scheme also limited the amount of signage required.

Local shop keepers were consulted on the effects for them of the residents parking scheme, and bays for shop owners were built into the scheme.

#### **The Greater Cambridge Barton Haslingfield Greenways consultation:**

The Forum supported the initiatives to improve the cycle path, crossings, junctions, speed limit, surface and verges on Barton Road.

#### **The Government White Paper on Planning**

The Forum supported proposals to make the planning process more transparent and easier for residents to access and objected to proposals which would take control of key planning decisions out of the hands of local people.

#### **Lighting on the Driftway and across Lammas Land**

The Forum supported the installation of solar lights.

#### **Community Network:**

Forum members are actively involved in many local groups, including the Newnham Sports and Social Club committee, which is working to find ways of increasing membership and starting activities to boost income and make fuller use of the facilities.

#### **Local Heritage Assets:**

Forum members submitted applications for 6 buildings, the gas lamps and stink pipes to be recognised as BLIs by Cambridge City Council

## **5.0 FORUM ACTING AS A STATUTORY CONSULTEE FOR GREATER CAMBRIDGE PLANNING SERVICE**

Following the designation of the South Newnham Neighbourhood Forum, the Forum has been included as a Statutory Consultee for the Greater Cambridge Partnership. This means that we are notified and have a chance to comment on all planning applications and tree works in our area.

The Forum though has no decision-making powers, and any response to planning applications can only address points of compliance and non-compliance with the policies that are already set out in the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 and the West Cambridge and Newnham Croft Conservation Area Appraisals.

We do not comment on most applications, but by acting in this capacity the Forum has developed a thorough understanding of both national and local planning policies.

With this knowledge the Forum has drafted Neighbourhood Plan policies conforming to the general policies of both the Cambridge City Council Local Plan 2018 and the National Planning Policy Framework but with specific policies relating to South Newnham.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

The Neighbourhood Plan for South Newnham is now almost complete, and we ask for your support to take it forward for consultation and, we hope, approval.