

District and County Councillor's Report – January 2024

Happy New Year

We hope that everyone had a happy and restful Christmas break. We're both looking forward to working with you all again in 2024.

Solar Farm Application - update

We have previously reported on a potential planning application coming forward in our area for a solar farm. The size of the area being considered is fairly significant, some 900 hectares. Unlike we have previously reported, the total application site area is 900 hectares, not the area they are searching in – this turned out to be over 2000 – so if this were to gain planning permission, it would currently make it one of the largest solar farms in Europe.

The geographic area being looked at is from the north of Linton/Abington up to Balsham and west, roughly following the route of the Roman Road, across the A11 to the edge of Fulbourn.

The promoters of this idea, Kingsway Solar, were due to be going public with their plans on December 14th, but we understand this has been delayed until this month, January.

Stagecoach Updated Timetable

Stagecoach announced some proposed changes to the 13 service back in December, coming into force on March 3rd. On further inspection it only relates to some of the places that the bus will stop at in Haverhill, so won't really affect us in Cambridgeshire. Full detail can be seen at - <https://haverhill-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Stagecoach-East-Haverhill-Network-Overview.pdf>

Uttlesford Local Plan

Some may recall that a few years ago Uttlesford District Council (our neighbours in north Essex) were proposing a new town of circa 5,000 houses to be built at Great Chesterford. They were told by a government planning inspector that this wasn't sustainable and to think again. They have recently published their next proposal which doesn't include any large-scale developments near to the Cambridgeshire border. So those who were concerned, especially the parishes south of the A1307, can hopefully rest easy!

Budgets

February is always the time when local authorities set their budgets for the forthcoming municipal year. The County Council needs to find around £2m worth of savings whilst maintaining the services they provide, not an easy task. The District Council is in a much healthier financial position and won't need to make savings this coming year.

Councillors Henry Batchelor and Geoff Harvey

Brief A1307 Update

The cones have been removed from the Dean Road junction section of the road, with the new remodelled crossing now finished and operational. The final stages are the completion of the roundabout and associated footpaths. Bartlow Road, Linton is currently scheduled to reopen mid-February, but as with all construction projects, this is subject to weather etc.

Anaerobic Digestion Plant Proposals

In our area we have not one, but two planning applications submitted to the relevant local authorities for bio energy digestion plants. These are plants that breakdown agricultural materials and turn them into energy. For reference there is one on the A505 between Royston and Baldock.

1. The first application is located just over the Suffolk border outside of Haverhill and off the A1307. The site runs up the Cambridgeshire border and ends at the edge of West Wickham/Weston Colville. You may have seen signs for the anti-lobbying group 'Muck Off Acorn' – this refers to this application. As the application is in Suffolk it will be Suffolk County Council that will make the decision on this but whilst the time for public comments has closed, you can still look at the plans and write to the case office dealing with the application – andrew.rutter@suffolk.gov.uk

<http://suffolk.planning-register.co.uk/Planning/Display?applicationNumber=SCC%2F0045%2F23SE&fbclid=IwAR0aj4d4JMd9Yr3cP-Etp9rxdR4kKDwvzX0wMyHkfOomG45fCq0khXRbyrE>

2. The second application is in the parish of Streetly End, West Wickham. This site is smaller than the first and as it is in Cambridgeshire will be decided by Cambridgeshire County Council. The council are taking public comments now and this can be done via the website - <https://planning.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=SOBB1JDYKNQ00>

The period for public comments on this application closed in early December but you can always contact that planning officer directly, should you want to raise concerns after this time – helen.wass@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Rural Prosperity Fund

There is a new fund, soon to be released by the District Council, called the Rural Prosperity Fund. This is money from the government to aid economic and social activity in rural areas, such as ours. More detail to follow as the Council makes a decision on how to distribute this money, but there is a fairly significant amount available. Watch this space.

LHI Bids

Councillors Henry Batchelor and Geoff Harvey

This years round of Local Highway Improvement (LHI) bids are now open for parish councils to submit a proposal for funding for a small highway improvement project in our area. Our parishes have been successful in the past and funding has enabled some small, albeit much needed, improvements to the highway network that wouldn't usually form a part of the Highway budget. Full detail and application forms can be seen here -

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway/local-highway-improvement-funding>

Mobile food hub

There is a mobile food hub that visits Linton Village Hall on Coles Lane every Tuesday between 1pm and 2pm. There is no registration required just turn up on the day. If any more information on the scheme, this can be found on the Hope CIC (the charity running the scheme) website -

<https://hopeagainst.org/hope-cic-mobile-food-hub> or on 07474725477.

Contact Details

District Council – Geoff Harvey – geoff.harvey@gmail.com

County Council – Henry Batchelor – henrybatchelor89@gmail.com