
County Councillor Report

Cllr Michael Atkins, Hardwick Division

September 2021

Summary

- Covid-19: significant rise in cases, vaccinations being offered in schools
- Local Plan First Proposals: 19 (out of 690) sites proposed, 1 in Hardwick Division
- Local climate leaders: nominations ahead of COP26
- LHI Bids: deadline extended to 14th October
- Afghan Refugees: three families to be settled in South Cambs.
- Active Travel: discussions ongoing over three local schemes
- Contact details

Covid-19

Following the return of schools, case numbers have risen rapidly to approximately 300 per 100,000 residents. Over 40% of new cases are in the 10-19 age range, and most schools are reporting some level of infection. However, cases have also started to rise again for over 40s, which is suspected to be children bringing the virus home from school.

Vaccinations of 12-15 year olds have commenced on school premises, and the aim is that most schools will be visited before half term.

Vaccination rates are comparably low in Cambridge city, so please continue to encourage friends and family to take up the vaccine if they have not already done so. This and the usual safety measures are very important to keeping pressure off our local hospitals.

Local Plan – First Proposals

The Local Plan, when adopted, will be a set of policies, approved sites and other documents detailing where major housing and business development will take place across Greater Cambridge from 2021 to 2041. We are currently mid-way through the development process, with adoption scheduled for 2024 or 2025.

The current pipeline of approved housing development is unlikely to fully meet the need for new houses, so in 2019 there was a Call for Sites, with over 690 new suggested sites put forward for development, including several in our villages. These have been evaluated, and The First Proposals have now been published, identifying 19 of those 690 new sites as suitable and sufficient to meet to our housing needs.

There are 37,000 houses already allocated to existing sites ('the pipeline'), and a further 2,500 houses are proposed for these sites through more rapid construction and/or increased density. The 19 new sites will roughly contribute: a further 4,000 houses in Cambridge; 3,000 on the edge of Cambridge; 2,000 in new settlements; and just under 400 in rural areas.

These sites have been proposed because they meet our housing needs whilst minimising the climate impacts of both the development and the ongoing living at those sites, which has led to a strong preference for urban and new-town sites with good public transport.

There is one new site proposed within Hardwick division, and one just outside our area:

- Highfields Caldecote: phase 2 of the “Linden” development to the east of Highfields Rd
- Dry Drayton/Highfields Caldecote: employment site on the north side of St Neots Rd

These sites do not have planning permission as we are still at First Proposal stage, and the Plan could be changed before being adopted in 2024/2025. It is however unlikely that the other sites in our area put forward in the Call for Sites will now be adopted into the Plan, but I will of course inform residents if this changes.

The First Proposals are currently being scrutinised by councillors from both South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City councils. After this, there will be a public consultation in November and December 2021. The consultation will be an important opportunity to parish councils and residents to feed into the plan and I hope many of you will take part. I appreciate this is a long and complex process, and I would be happy to speak to any parish council or resident with concerns.

Local Climate Leaders

Ahead of the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), Glasgow in November, the Council wishes to celebrate those individuals, businesses or community groups who've found meaningful ways to take positive environmental action, and so inspire others to help tackle the climate emergency. Please consider nominating any who fit this description, by emailing communications@cambridgeshire.gov.uk explaining why they deserve to be an ambassador for climate action in our area.

LHI bids

Parish Councils are invited to apply on an annual basis for funding for Local Highway Improvements, and the deadline for 2022/3 bids has just been extended to the 14th October. Many of our villages have been successful in receiving funding for safety measures to reduce car speeds, and I would be happy to discuss this with any local parish that is interested, and advise on the application if helpful.

Afghan Refugees

Thank you to local residents who have been in touch asking how they can support Afghan refugee families. The District and County Councils are working together to offer homes to 3 families escaping the terror in Afghanistan, using houses available through SCDC's private rental housing company. The County Council with specialist charities will make sure that these people have the access they need to support, education and health services so that they can start to rebuild their lives.

Active Travel

Discussions are ongoing over three proposed Active Travel schemes in our villages: a proposed bus gate and one-way system on St Neots Rd, Hardwick; one-way systems in Madingley; and a cycle lane over the M11/Barton Rd bridge. Although the consultation has now closed, I am still liaising with officers on this matter, so please let me know any comments you wish to be considered. Any schemes taken forward will be subject to individual consultation on the final design.

Contact Details

Councillors and residents are welcome to contact me on any issue which is concerning them:

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