



Inspectors Questions (2)

6) Policy GAM7

I saw the nature of the former playing fields and their relationship with the former School buildings (to the east) and the new housing (to the west) during the visit.

Has the Parish Council undertaken a detailed assessment of the proposed Local Green Space against the contents of paragraphs 101/102 of the NPPF?

Answer:

A full analysis of potential Local Green Space sites in Gamlingay was conducted as part of the Local Plan examination in 2017/18. At that time this site was not included because it was in effect protected operating as a school site. Now that the school is closed the landowner, Cambridge County Council (CCC), is keen to consider the field for alternate non-recreational uses.

According to paragraph 102 of the NPPF, Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- “a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.”

Site location – The site is in a central/western location within the village and is surrounded by housing and redundant school buildings to the east. It is 0.8 ha in size. It is therefore in proximity to community it serves

Demonstrably special – The field was purchased in the 1950s by then residents (via the headmaster) to give their children a place for play and recreation (please see the attached newspaper article). Many of our now older residents remember taking envelopes of money into school from their parents, who had somehow managed to scrape this together. In the years since, others have fond memories of playing and attending community events on the field. These include the May fayres, sports days, the village show, school cross country races, and many scouting activities. Over 500 signatures were gathered on a petition to retain the field for community benefit in 2019. The field has a current recreational value as a playing field for preschool children, scout groups and footballers. It also has a number of significant trees and a historic pond, with a amphibians and water flora and fauna demonstrating a richness of wildlife. The field also provides a safe location for emergency helicopter landings

Local in character – the field is not extensive (0.8ha) and is one of only a few open spaces on the west of the village. There is a significant deficit of open space on the west of the village was identified in Gamlingay draft Village Plan -July 1972 (prepared by the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely County Planning department). The deficiency of public open space has not been addressed , and the proposal to include this site as a Local Green Space will help to address this issue.

Attached in the appendix is a summary of reports made about this field to support its inclusion as a Local Green Space in the Neighbourhood Plan. Further information can be provided on request.

7) Policy GAM8

I saw the importance and significance of the former School buildings during the visit.

Has the Parish Council assessed the proposed uses in the policy for their commercial viability? Is the implication of the policy that other uses would not be supported?

Answer

The Parish Council has no remit to spend public money to assess the commercial viability of the proposed uses for buildings owned by third parties.

The policy answers the strong opinion of residents in the parish that the buildings should be put back to community use. A common criticism faced by any proposals for additional housing in the parish is that existing community facilities (e.g. the GP surgery) are already at capacity. Given the added benefit of its central location, the neighbourhood plan recommends that this site should be used for educational and/or community use.

There is a well evidenced shortfall in preschool provision. Section 106 contributions were secured from the development of 90 units at Green End (Downing Gardens) to provide additional spaces. Cambridgeshire County Council, the public body responsible for delivering preschool care and the owner of the First School site, has not acted. Instead it has steadfastly refused to engage with the Parish Council over the future use of the site. The neighbourhood plan steering group believes that the First School site is the ideal location and existing buildings have suitable facilities requiring limited additional investment.

Other community uses for the site proposed by residents included a shop (e.g. relocation of CO-OP) and another GP surgery. There is also a current need for a suitable alternative premises for the Gamlingay Gym because Gamlingay Village Primary no longer want this facility on their new site (at Station Road).

What is meant by ‘safeguarding’?

Answer:

This is a means of keeping options open so that members of our community can have a meaningful say in the future use of the First School buildings and site. As stated above, efforts by the Parish Council to engage in dialogue with Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) on future uses of the site have been rebuffed.

We are aware that CCC, like all local authorities, is facing yet more funding cuts whilst facing increasing costs. As owners of the First School site and field CCC would raise the most income by selling it for housing. However, this is not the best outcome for the community.

Indeed, the whole site (school and field) was submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council's (SCDC) Call for Sites for the development of 45 units of accommodation as part of the Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan in 2020/1. This was rejected.

The use of a 'safeguarding policy' was suggested to us by a member of the SCDC Planning Team (see minutes our meeting at the EcoHub on 9th November 2019). This was based on a similar policy in the Histon and Impington Neighbourhood Plan (HIM16, www.hiplan.net) which safeguards land for community use. The 10 year period sets a deadline for other options to be explored and a decision made.

8) Policy GAM10

To what extent does the Parish Council consider that the policy has regard to the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (CILR)?

Answer:

Earlier drafts of this policy made specific reference to Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (CILR). However, SCDC has not adopted CILR and it is now clear that there are no plans for their adoption in the emerging **Greater Cambridge Local Plan (2021)**. Planning obligations, in the form of section 106 agreements and section 278 agreements, should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition. Without CILR or Section 106 we were left with no other viable option than contributions from new development to enable delivery of improved infrastructure for walking, cycling and riding in the parish. This policy recognises that all new developments have an impact on the transport network and environment, and all have a responsibility towards mitigating that impact.

What is the evidence for the costs included in the policy?

Answer:

Appendix 3 Page 74 of the plan specifically identifies the costs associated with providing this new network. Costs were based on a per M2 basis of similar footway/cycleway specification provided by Cambridgeshire County Council via South Cambridgeshire District Council's s.106 Officer (prices correct at 2020- with associated index linking).

9) Policy GAM12

I saw the importance of the Wood during the visit and the overall intention of the policy is clear.

However, is the policy necessary given that the wider spatial strategy of the Plan does not propose development coming forward in its immediate vicinity?

Answer:

Yes this policy is necessary because housing development is an ever present threat from adjacent land owners. The use of a cordon sends a clear message that no residential or industrial development will be approved within 200m of Gamlingay Wood for the lifetime of the plan. Exceptions apply with regard to the expansion of farming activities at Solitaire Farm, the development of a dedicated cycleway/footway to Waresley and other activities with the potential to deliver a biodiversity net gain.

Could the setting of the Wood be safeguarded in a more general way without the definition of a specific cordon?

Answer:

As stated in the neighbourhood plan, Gamlingay Wood SSSI status is currently 'unfavourable recovering'. The purpose of the cordon is twofold: first it seeks to avoid additional recreational pressure that would accompany new housing development (in particular); second, it specifically enables activities (such as traditional coppicing industry) where there is a nature conservation benefit.

We are unaware of any other neighbourhood plan employing a similar policy. While this may be unusual, we would hope (as with GAM10) that there is room for innovation in plans written by members of the community for their community. We are not trained planners and this is what makes a neighbourhood plan unique.

Gamlingay Neighbourhood Plan

Steering Group

06-01-22

Appendix -First School site



Magpas 2017



Magpas March 2018

Extracts from Facebook comments 2018-2021

Jonathan Newman (ex headmaster of GFS) in 2018 "We believe they were planted 67 years ago and clearly this is a good 'innings' for a cherry tree"

Gerry Brunt "My classes did some lovely collage art work using the cherry 🍒 trees as Inspiration. The softness of the blossoms, inspired the children's creative writing, and poems. I was very sorry when the trees had to be felled.

I remember some of the parents telling how they dug out the swimming pool. With the help of Ross Wooding, and Michael Bodem

Pearson we planned the "Nature Area'. With the help of parents we dug out two ponds. Planted appropriate plants. Many hours were spent

As the children explored their own environment.

Without the help and cooperation of the parents grandparents and friends this Nature Area would never been established."

Louise Pearce "They were there when I was a pupil there from around 1965 to 1971"

Catherine Gibson "Used to love collecting the blossom off those trees when I was little"

<http://www.gamlingayhistory.co.uk/recollections-2/len-jarvis-memories-of-gamlingay/>

The playing fields have changed considerably in Len's lifetime. There was a collection in the village to purchase the fields for the use of the village, and Len was involved in laying a pipe, filling in the ditch and forming a footbridge at the car park end across it. The local farmer, Mark Meeks ploughed the two fields to level them for seeding, and all the children were given buckets so they could walk over the ground picking up all the stones turned up in the process. The line of the ditch follows the ripple in the ground between the upper and lower fields which is visible today and we have a photograph of Len building the bridge.

Do you remember as a child (or as a parent) being asked to bring in donations to school to buy the top field for the First School? It later had drainage work done to enable it to be used for football. This would have been around 1949, when it was purchased from the farmer for £200. Mr John Robinson would have been Headmaster Apparently the class which raised the most got to leave 15 minutes early on Friday!

Extracts from Asset of Community Value application to South Cambs District Council 2018

'The First School Playing Fields have been a community field since the 1950's when it was purchased by the villagers for £200 from the farmer. Works were undertaken in the late 1950's to remove/culvert the main drainage ditch in the centre, so the field could be used for football. The scouts currently use the field for their activities, and Gamlingay Football Club use the site for training the younger age groups, with the occasional match. The school field is the location for the annual community First School Fayre. The scout hut is positioned on the field, adjacent to the car parking area off Cinques Road. It is the only large green space on the east of the settlement. The Rainbow Preschool operates from premises situated adjacent to the field (The Old Methodist Chapel), and they currently use part of the school field for informal play.

50 Rainbow Preschool children use the field daily during term time.

500 residents attend the First School Fayre every Summer.

60 mini soccer players use the field for training, and sometimes matches.

100 Scouts and Rangers use the field and scout hut weekly.

All students attending the First School use the field daily (term time)-approx. 200 children.

The field therefore has a current and historical recreational, sporting and social function/use in this village, which needs to be recorded formally.

Site is mentioned in the District Councils Playing Pitch strategy document (May 2016) page 196, together with Gamlingay Village College site.

First School is likely to close, subject to relocation plans to Village College site (west of settlement). The current proposal is for the school to relocate in September 2018. The future of the fields and school site adjacent is yet to be determined.'

Extracts from The Gamlingay Gazette- Councillor Matters-Cllr S Kindersley reports

Sept 2019

First School Site

Residents continue to be concerned, quite rightly, about the future of the First School site. There is now security and the grounds are being maintained. By participating in the consultation for the Draft Neighbourhood Plan you will be able to voice your wishes for the future of the site.

October 2019

First School Site in Gamlingay

There has been a certain amount of posting about this site on Facebook. Firstly – just to ensure that the conspiracy theorists find it harder to invent more stuff – both Sebastian (as County Councillor) and Bridget (as District Councillor) have very clear views about the future of the site which have been often put in the Gazette and raised at Parish Council. The plan is to maintain the site in 100% public use and in particular that any pre-schools that wish to -

plus any new settings - move onto the site be enabled to do so. There would also be a new facility designed to be a centre of excellence for the education of primary-age students with autism who are enrolled at GVP.

Secondly – just again to make it absolutely crystal clear – neither of us would support the building of a single house on the site. Just no. Gamlingay has enough house building proposed for the next few years and the loss of this site to the community is unacceptable.

Regrettably the CCC team that deals with education sites with whom Sebastian had a meeting in March were not aware that there was a 25 year expiry clause on land subject to Compulsory Purchase. Therefore Crichel Downs rules do not apply (ie that CPO'd land must be offered back to the original owner). Sadly this means that the one certain and absolute block to the development of the Playing Fields has been removed.

This is because while it was not in CCC's financial interest to develop the land (because it would have reverted to Merton College) CCC would have been unlikely to have pursued it. The results of a Freedom of Information request by a Gamlingay resident appear to have coincided with the revelations that indicate that the land and any profit from it now would remain to the benefit of CCC and therefore CCC is very likely to pursue this avenue.

Obviously this all means nothing if South Cambs reject the submission of the site as part of the Local Plan Call for Sites - and let us all pray that they do. Sadly we won't know for 18 months or so; and in the meantime the site remains unused despite the very keen local organisations who wish to use it for community benefit. Amazingly frustrating and not helped by the 'odd' views expressed by some on Facebook.

December 2019

Gamlingay First School

Sebastian met with the County Council's Chief Executive, Finance Director, Education Director and Property & Assets Director to set out his (and the community's) deep frustration about the way the County Council is behaving in relation to the First School site. A full response has been promised by December 6th – too late for the Gazette deadline – so this will be in the next edition.

It's worth rehearsing the comments made to the Cambridge News: "Cllr Kindersley said his understanding was that the buildings could be used to house preschools, a plan he said: "was promoted by myself and the county council. The brilliant plan that would have satisfied absolutely everybody in all directions has been ditched without any kind of local consultation or even consultation with the local councillor, and we are now back to the situation where the village is starting to get really tetchy about the future of the First School site," Cllr Kindersley said. Adding "it is extraordinary that a great plan that had widespread community buy-in has been reneged on effectively by the county to see if they can realise hard cash".

A further piece of the jigsaw: the County Council commissioned a report from Atkins which set out very clearly the various options for reconfiguring the building for preschools and/or a SEN unit at a cost of £5,000 (yes, five thousand) so clearly CCC was serious about the plan as well.

March 2020

Gamlingay First School

Gamlingay PC hosted a Think Communities meeting at which a number of agencies met and agreed various points in relation to the First School site.

Essentially, Cambridgeshire County Council agreed to grant Gamlingay Parish Council a 9 month Lease of the Playing Fields. The Lease will be at a Peppercorn rent and the Parish Council will take on full responsibility for the maintenance, management, insurance of the Playing Fields . The Lease will allow the Parish Council to share use of the Playing Fields, by way of an agreed Licence – for a maximum of the Term granted by the Lease, less one day.

CCC will allow the PC to plant replacement Cherry Trees to the south of the Playing Field Site. 6 trees will be planted in agreed locations – 3 donated by the South Cambs Tree planting scheme and 3 by local groups. This fulfills the commitment made by CCC when the original trees were removed owing to disease.

CCC will work with the CAM Academy Trust regarding the Former First School Buildings. It is understood that our Education Team have requested a decision by the end of March, as to whether the Former First School Site is suitable and useful for their needs. If CAT do not require the First School Site, CCC will submit an application to the Department of Education to declare the whole site surplus. If the DofE declare the Site surplus, CCC will be free to look at options for Disposal or redevelopment of the whole site.

CCC have agreed to safeguard the Playing Fields for Community Use going forward and as part of this there will be the potential for a longer Term Lease/disposal of the Playing Fields to GPC going forward. All options for the whole site to be considered will seek to safeguard the playing fields.

CCC committed to work with the Parish Council with regards the wording of the Policies within the Gamlingay Neighbourhood Plan.

The future of the site is very complicated – bound up by hideous amounts of red tape and legislation. We are very grateful to all those who attended the meeting and we feel more confident that we now have a roadmap for the future of the site that will be in keeping with the wishes of the Gamlingay community.

[1959 Article from local newspaper- attached as a PDF](#)

KR

06-01-22

GAMLINGAY IS LOYAL

TO

CAMBS.

The tenth in our series of articles on Cambridge-shire villages.

THE village of Gamlingay lies in a valley exactly half-way between Cambridge and Bedford. Its most attractive approach is by the country lanes from Bourn and Longstowe, when a cluster of medieval-type cottages and a diminutive church spire present a pleasant picture to the eye. It is a friendly village—gentle, welcoming. Its people always have time to talk.

They talk about agriculture, for—despite the attractions of its two small factories and the jobs in the neighbouring towns—farming is still the main preoccupation.

The landworker's job is a demanding one. He cannot lie in bed much after 5.30 in the morning, and this perhaps explains the lack of "night life" in the village for, with early rising in mind, most people are in bed round about 9 o'clock. They

that the site finally had to be compulsorily purchased.

There have been other difficulties in acquiring land—for instance, in obtaining a site for the bungalows so sorely needed to rehouse old Gamlingay people at present living in huts in the next village. Since the war South Cambs. Rural District Council have built 80 houses in Gamlingay, and would have built more had not waterlogging of the site made this impossible.

Even this difficulty could be overcome if Gamlingay really wanted any more houses. But the rent of a new Council houses is expensive for a landworker with a large family,



The Cock Inn, one of the few buildings which survived the fire of 1600.

grow a lot of potatoes and green vegetables at Gamlingay—Brussels sprouts, cabbages, lettuce, beetroot and turnips. There are a few small-holdings under the Land Settlement scheme, but in the past few years there has been a noticeable drift from the land.

College is Largest Landowner

Merton College is the largest landowner in the district. Its shadow stretches all the way from Oxford. Its influence is regarded with some distaste by the villagers, many of whom consider its attitude to their schemes as frankly "obstructive." The villagers still remember the difficulty they met in obtaining a suitable plot for the new Gamlingay Village College. They regret

Only a few weeks ago, Gamlingay's representative on the District and County Councils, Mr. C. H. Careless, complained of the unfair burden which the "differential" rent scheme lays on the shoulders of the people who can least afford it. Small wonder, perhaps, that there are few demands for full size houses.

Mr. Careless—he owns the local newsagent's shop—has served for 14 years on South Cambs. R.D.C. and almost as long on the County Council. "If you resign, we will too!" said his fellow councillors when, at a recent meeting, he intimated that the speech he was making might be his "swan song."

One of the things which Mr. Careless has always defended is Gamlingay's desire to stay in Cambridge-shire and not, under a re-arrangement of county boundaries, be ceded to Bedfordshire. Many of the villagers share this loyalty. They prefer to do their shopping or go to the cinema in Cambridge—even

though there is no bus service to the city (as there is to Bedford) and they have to go by rail. "We just like Cambridge as a place," is the view of some Gamlingay housewives.

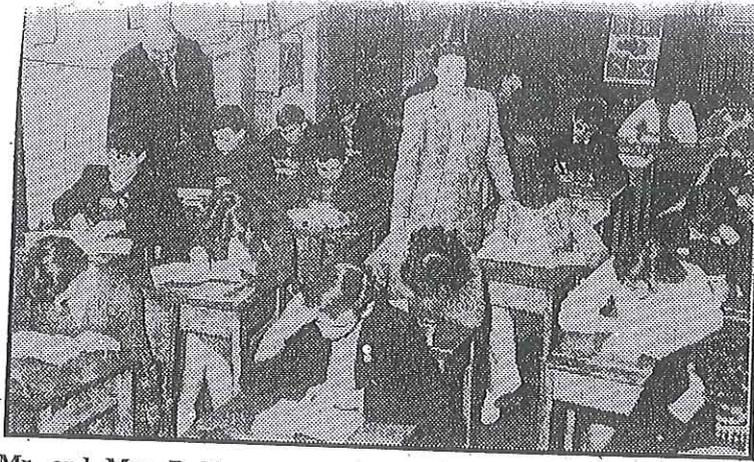
There is a traditional rivalry between Gamlingay and its Bedfordshire neighbour, Potton, which lies only two miles away over the border. So keen was this rivalry at one time that the two football clubs refused to play each other; some say that the bitterness was so great that the wilder villagers of each would enter the territory of the other only on a drinking spree.

A Long Standing Partnership

But for some years the evening classes in Cambridge and Bedford, and at the village's own school, have been increasing in popularity. When the Village College arrives—in something between two and five years—there will be no need to go outside Gamlingay in the evenings at all. People will come there instead.

The village school is already almost a Village College in many respects. Its Headmaster, Mr. J. T. C. Robinson, and his wife, have taught alongside one another at this and another school for 29 years. This long-standing partnership has produced here a school of unusual efficiency and enterprise. The Robinsons have revived the game of cricket in the village—by organising the purchase of a playing field—and they have provided what is certainly unique among the village schools of Cambridgeshire, if not of England—a bathing pool for giving the children their first lessons in swimming. Co-operation by the villagers with this project was something out of character, in a place where the conscious sense of community is perhaps as a rule not strong. But the Robinsons have an infectious enthusiasm for everything they undertake.

The children of Gamlingay do not have to look far beyond their own village for their history lessons. The 17th century seems to have been the most eventful for the village: up till 1600 it was an important market town, but in that year a great fire destroyed it almost entirely (the Cock Inn is one of the few build-



Mr. and Mrs. Robinson superintending work in the village school.

ings that survived). Afterwards the villagers of those days were either too poor or too lazy to rebuild immediately, and Potton instead became the centre of local business.

In the middle of the century Gamlingay was a great centre for Puritans, and John Bunyan himself came from Bedford to preach there. Another famous local preacher was John Berridge, of Everton, who it is said, "used to stand on the boundary line of the three counties (Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire) and proclaim the Gospel."

The village almshouses, of which local people are very proud, were built about this time. Sir John Jacob (who himself lived to be a centenarian) endowed them in 1668. His coat of arms over the central one of the row of delightful little lattice-windowed houses, with a Latin inscription, commemorates his generosity. Another benefactor was Elizabeth Lane, whose monument holds pride of place on the wall of the parish church.

Home of Founder of Downing College

Gamlingay was the home during the early 18th century, of that eminent founder of Downing Col-

lege, Sir George Downing. He built the handsome Gamlingay Park in 1713.

Rich in its historical Nonconformist associations, the village contains also in Gamlingay Chapel built in 1710 and the little Mission Church, dated 1856, built on Gamlingay Heath to hold 110. The village's old Baptist Church was founded by the Puritan Nonconformists who had close associations with Bedford.

And one could go on, reviving the history or describing the undoubted charms of this smiling village. Perhaps its most heartwarming characteristic is that as one of the farthest flung villages in the county, and lying as it does exactly half-way between Cambridge and the even more convenient Bedford, it should prefer Cambridge, and want to stay in Cambridgeshire.

Next week—COTTENHAM

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Miss Mercy Dickeson, who at 93, can still read without glasses and does all her own housework.