

# MELBOURN PARISH COUNCIL – PLANNING COMMITTEE

(District of South Cambridgeshire)

**A meeting of this Committee was held in the Austen Room, The Community Hub, 30 High Street, Melbourn, SG8 6DZ on Monday, 14 March 2022 at 7.30pm**

*Members of the public are reminded that copies of reports and supporting documentation for agenda items can be obtained from the Parish Council website, <http://melbournparishcouncil.co.uk> or on request to the Clerk*

**Present:** Cllrs Kilmurray (Chair), Barnes, Clark, Hart

**Absent:**

**In attendance:** Claire Littlewood – Parish Clerk, District Cllr Hales

**PL113/21 To receive and approve apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Cllrs Cowley and Wilson. Acceptable reasons were given.

It was:

RESOLVED to accept the apologies from Cllrs Cowley and Wilson.

Proposed by Cllr Clark, seconded by Cllr Barnes. All in favour.

**PL114/21 To receive any Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

**Members are reminded that they are required to ensure their Declaration is updated within 28 days of any change in circumstances.**

- a) To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda
- b) To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests (if any)
- c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate

None received

**PL115/21 To approve the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting on 14 February 2022**

It was:

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 14 February 2022 as an accurate record.

Proposed by Cllr Hart, seconded by Cllr Clark. All in favour.

**PL116/21 To report back on the minutes of the Planning Committee Meetings on 14 February 2022**

Clerk noted that lack of neighbour notifications on the portal had been reported to the Planning Authority. The Planning Officer confirmed that neighbours had been notified but that the planning portal was not updated. Planning Officer requested that applications with missing neighbour notifications be reported to them in future.

**PL117/21 Public Participation: (For up to 15 minutes members of the public may contribute their views and comments and questions to the Planning Committee – 3 minutes per item)**

None in attendance.

**PL118/21 Decision Notices: To receive any Decision notices issued since last meeting.**

There were no decision notices.

**PL119/21 Correspondence**

- a) To note the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document Adoption Statement

This was noted.

Signed:..... Dated:

- b) To discuss and consider the South Cambridgeshire District Council - Empty Homes Strategy survey

It was noted that the percentage of long term empty homes is less than 1/3 the national average, so the policies followed this far seem to be working.

PL120/21 **To note the following applications for tree work**

There were no applications for tree works to note.

PL121/21 **Planning Applications:**

- a) [20/02734/NMA2](#) Proposal: Non material amendment of planning permission 20/02734/HFUL (First floor rear and side extension, roof extension including change to gable ended roof and the erection of a detached double garage) Change design of window in the North Eastern Elevation to a single pane top hung vent, reduce number of skylight windows in the roof of the principal elevation from two to one and change position in the roof, change design of one window in the rear elevation to inward opening French doors and Detail provided to design of front entrance in principal elevation. Site address: 167 High Street Melbourn Cambridgeshire SG8 6AT Applicant: Mr. Ian Wilkinson

**ACTION:** Clerk to report to Planning Authority that neighbour notifications are not available on the planning portal.

It was:

RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.

Proposed by Cllr Barnes, seconded by Cllr Clark. All in favour.

- b) [22/00447/PRIOR](#) Proposal: Single storey rear extension Site address: 29 Maple Way Melbourn Royston Cambridgeshire Applicant: Mr And Mrs Housden.

It was:

RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.

Proposed by Cllr Clark, seconded by Cllr Barnes. All in favour.

- c) [22/00546/HFUL](#) Proposal: Two storey side extension, and part two storey/part single storey rear extensions. Site address: 22 Hale Close Melbourn Cambridgeshire SG8 6ET Applicant: Mr and Mrs Richard and Lianne Tydeman

A member queried loss of biodiversity due to block paving but it was noted that block paving should be permeable.

It was:

RESOLVED to support the application with the comment that the Parish Council welcomes the permeable paving.

Proposed by Cllr Barnes, seconded by Cllr Clark. All in favour.

[19:47 – Cllr Hart and District Cllr Hales left the meeting]

- d) [22/00592/HFUL](#) Proposal: Two storey side extension Site address: 56 Fordham Way Melbourn Cambridgeshire SG8 6JA Applicant: mrs lesley hawk.

It was:

RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.

Proposed by Cllr Clark, seconded by Cllr Barnes. All in favour.

- e) [PL/0254/22](#) Proposed application for the establishment of a waste transfer and recycling facility including ancillary facilities and associated landscaping and drainage provisions at Land to the south of Royston Sewage Treatment Works, Royston

Signed:..... Dated:

It was:  
RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.  
Proposed by Cllr Kilmurray, seconded by Cllr Barnes. All in favour.

- f) [22/00711/LBC](#) Proposal: To modify selected modern windows, changing them from single to slim line double glazing. Frames and glazing bars will remain unchanged except for their being recessed to accept the double glazed units. External appearance of the glass, frames, glazing bars and sight lines will remain as they are. Site address: 25 Station Road Melbourn Cambridgeshire SG8 6DX Applicant: Mr Chris Carter.

It was:  
RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.  
Proposed by Cllr Barnes, seconded by Cllr Clark. All in favour.

- g) [22/00725/CL2PD](#) Proposal: Certificate of lawfulness under S192 for a single storey rear extension . Site address: 42 The Moor Melbourn Cambridgeshire SG8 6ED Applicant: Mr Robert Turner.

It was:  
RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.  
Proposed by Cllr Clark, seconded by Cllr Barnes. All in favour.

- h) [22/00679/HFUL](#) Proposal: Demolition of existing garage, passageway and front porch, erection of replacement two storey side and single storey rear extension, and associated alterations Site address: New Farm Royston Road Melbourn Cambridgeshire Applicant: Mr Andy Andreou.

It was:  
RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.  
Proposed by Cllr Barnes, seconded by Cllr Clark. All in favour.

PL122/21 **Enforcement updates: To consider any enforcement updates received since last meeting**

To receive an update with regard to building works on London Way

An update was received with regard to unauthorized building works. The enforcement officer visited the site on 24 February and advised the landowner that planning permission should be sought within 28 days failing which any buildings on the site would need to be demolished.

PL123/21 To note the date of next meeting : **11 April 2022**

Noted that the next Planning Committee meeting will be held on 11 April 2022.

The meeting ended at 20:02

Signed:..... Dated:

# MELBOURN PARISH COUNCIL – PLANNING COMMITTEE

(District of South Cambridgeshire)

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**Present:** Cllrs Kilmurray (Chair), Clark, Cowley, Hart, Wilson

**Absent:**

**In attendance:** Claire Littlewood – Parish Clerk

**PL102/21 To receive and approve apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Cllr Barnes – acceptable reasons were given.

It was:

RESOLVED to approve Cllr Barnes' apologies for absence.

Proposed by Cllr Cowley, seconded by Cllr Hart. All in favour.

**PL103/21 To receive any Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

a) To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda

b) To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests (if any)

c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate

a) PL110/21j) All Committee members declared an interest in this item as the applicant was a former parish councillor.

PL11021a) Cllr Clark declared an interest as the applicant is a neighbour.

**PL104/21 To approve the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting on 10 January 2022**

It was:

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 10 January 2022 as an accurate record.

Proposed by Cllr Wilson, seconded by Cllr Clark. All in favour.

**PL105/21 To report back on the minutes of the Planning Committee Meetings on 10 January 2022**

There was nothing to report.

**PL106/21 Public Participation: (For up to 15 minutes members of the public may contribute their views and comments and questions to the Planning Committee – 3 minutes per item)**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

**PL107/21 Decision Notices: To receive any Decision notices issued since last meeting.**

- a) 20/03164/S106A Proposal: Modification of planning obligations contained in a Section 106 Agreement dated 06 April 2005 made between (1) South Cambridgeshire District Council and (2) Flagship Housing Group Limited pursuant to planning permission S/2185/03/F Site address: 1-13 (inclusive) And 15-27 (odd) Victoria Way Melbourn Royston Cambridgeshire

*Decision: Permission Granted*

*MPC original comment: Support no comment*

This was noted.

- b) 21/05167/HFUL Proposal: Demolition of existing summerhouse and erection of a garden room Site address: 50A Orchard Road Melbourn Royston Cambridgeshire

*Decision: Permission Granted*

*MPC original comment: Support no comment*

This was noted.

Signed:..... Dated:

- c) 21/05424/HFUL Proposal: Two storey side extension and single storey front extension  
Site address: 56 Fordham Way Melbourn SG8 6JA Applicant: Mrs Lesley Hawk  
*Application withdrawn*  
This was noted.
- d) 21/05489/FUL Proposal: Change of use to garden land and erection of log cabin Site address: Langdale Farm Cambridge Road Melbourn SG8 6EY Applicant: Mr Jason Usher  
*Application withdrawn*  
This was noted.

**PL108/21 Correspondence**

- a) To note submission of [West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan](#)  
This was noted.
- b) To note correspondence on [North East Area Action Plan](#)  
This was noted.
- c) To note correspondence with regard to transfer of open spaces at Orchard Gardens  
Noted that District Landscape Officer's inspection report has not yet been received. Councillors were invited to visit the development to inspect the open spaces.

**PL109/21 To note the following applications for tree work**

No applications had been received.

**PL110/21 Planning Applications:**

- a) [21/05661/HFUL](#) Proposal: Partial conversion of garage to kitchen space and associated works. Site address: 2 Cooks Garden Melbourn SG8 6FT Applicant: Mrs Sarah Grant  
  
A query was raised with regard to notification of neighbours as there was nothing on the planning portal to indicate that this had been done. **ACTION:** Clerk to write to Planning Officer to query this.  
  
It was:  
RESOLVED to support the application with a comment to the Planning Authority regarding lack of notification to neighbours.  
Proposed by Cllr Hart, seconded by Cllr Wilson. In favour: Cllrs Hart, Wilson, Cowley, Kilmurray.  
Abstain: Cllr Clark.
- b) [22/00073/FUL](#) Proposal: Change of use from vacant office to Veterinary Centre. Site address: Heydon Lodge Newmarket Road Melbourn SG8 7PN Applicant: Royston Veterinary Centre Ltd  
  
Noted that Highways have raised objection to this application. Committee noted that the application is for a change of use and this was unlikely to make a significant difference to volume or flow of traffic and that there is good access and egress to/from the site.  
  
It was:  
RESOLVED to strongly support with a comment that we do not understand why Highways is making an objection as there appears to be a safe existing entrance and exit for much higher volumes of traffic than a veterinary centre is likely to attract.  
Proposed by Cllr Kilmurray, seconded by Cllr Clark. All in favour.
- c) [22/00023/HFUL](#) Proposal: Single storey rear extension Site address: 15 Greenbanks Melbourn Royston Cambridgeshire Applicant: Mr Antony Phillips.  
  
It was:  
RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.  
Proposed by Cllr Clark, seconded by Cllr Hart. All in favour.
- d) [22/00119/HFUL](#) Proposal: Demolition of existing conservatory, erection of replacement single storey rear extension and internal alterations Site address: 3 The Moor Melbourn Royston Cambridgeshire Applicant: Mr Thomas Shirley  
  
It was:  
RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.  
Proposed by Cllr Hart, seconded by Cllr Clark. All in favour.

Signed:..... Dated:

- e) [22/00163/HFUL](#) Proposal: Loft Conversion with a dormer and single storey rear extension. Resubmission of 21/04207/HFUL Site address: 36 Dolphin Lane Melbourn SG8 6AE Applicant: Mr and Mrs Tibbals

Noted that there is no indication of neighbours having been notified of this application on the planning portal. **ACTION:** Clerk to write to the Planning Officer to query particularly as there is a new neighbour who may be unaware of the previous application.

Discussion with regard to the size of the proposed extension and the reduction to the amenity area. Members noted that the residents had previously attempted to claim part of the adjacent road-side verge, to increase the size of their garden. Also noted that the extension is not in keeping with other properties in the vicinity. Members noted that the revised drawings show the upper level of the extension has been reduced in size but the overall footprint is unchanged. Concern was noted with regard to management of contractors' vehicles during build works.

It was:

RESOLVED to object to the application on the following grounds:

- over-development and resultant loss of amenity space;
- the proposed extension is not in keeping with the area.

If permission is granted, the Parish Council would request that a condition is imposed requiring a traffic management plan to avoid difficulties for neighbours during the build.

The Parish Council would like the Planning Authority to note that the applicants are aware of the impact of the proposed extension on amenity space as they had attempted to claim part of the adjacent road-side verge to extend their garden area.

Proposed by Cllr Wilson, seconded by Cllr Clark. All in favour.

- f) [22/00182/FUL](#) Proposal: Change of use from agricultural land to a secure dog walking/exercising/training area. Erection of secure boundary fencing, gates and mobile field shelter on timber skids. Site address: Land At Summer House Farm New Road Melbourn Royston Applicant: Mrs Jane Green

It was:

RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.

Proposed by Cllr Clark, seconded by Cllr Hart. All in favour.

- g) [22/00234/FUL](#) Proposal: Construction of a single storey dwelling with flat green roof and car parking. Site address: Land To The Rear Of 151 To 155 High Street Melbourn SG8 6AT Applicant: Mr Graham Newton

Noted that Highways is recommending refusal of this application. The proposed parking arrangements still appear to be insufficient with neighbours cars being blocked in and unable to turn to exit the site forwards. A member noted that it does not appear to be possible to keep construction traffic on site during the build. In addition, the width and weight of construction traffic is likely to cause damage to adjacent structures when reversing on to the site via the narrow track. Inadequate turning circle for parked vehicles is obstructed by a hedge. Also noted potential for damage to a historic wall to the rear of the site. A member noted that there have been numerous applications for this site since 2008 and would ask the Planning Department to note all previous objections. A member noted that by relocating the proposed workshop/bike store, this would reduce some of the access difficulties for parking.

It was:

PROPOSED to object to the application on the following grounds:

- The parking area for existing residents does not allow for cars to be moved independently as they are blocked in.
- The turning circle for vehicles exiting the site is too small.
- If all 4 cars are parked on site, it is not possible for more vehicles to enter and leave in a forward gear
- There is concern with regard to heavy construction vehicles accessing and leaving the site due to width and weight of the vehicles.
- There is potential for damage to a historic wall to the rear of the property.

The Parish Council respectfully requests that the Planning Authority takes note of previous applications when considering this application.

Proposed by Cllr Cowley, seconded by Cllr Hart. All in favour.

- h) [22/00236/FUL](#) Proposal: Single storey rear extension, refurbishment to the front and rear with the addition of new windows and render together with new vehicular access. Site address: 4 Norgetts Lane Melbourn Royston Cambridgeshire Applicant: Mr Keith Wright

Noted that Highways have recommended the application is refused – although permission for a dropped kerb has been given. Concern was noted that the driveway will become almost entirely gravel. There is

Signed:..... Dated:

no information in the application with regard to drainage. It was noted that there is no objection to the application for an extension to the rear of the property.

It was:

RESOLVED to object to the application on the following grounds:

- loss of lawned area which affects biodiversity and look and feel of the area.

- this will also change the street scene as there is contiguous lawn with neighbouring property.

The Parish Council would have no objection to the extension works if this were made under a separate application.

Proposed by Cllr Hart, seconded by Cllr Cowley. All in favour.

- i) [21/05213/CONDA](#) Proposal: Submission of details required by condition 4 (Arboricultural method statement) of planning permission 21/05213/HFUL Site address: 1 Garden End Melbourn Cambridgeshire SG8 6HD Applicant: Mr and Mrs Donovan Donovan.

Noted that the crown of the tree under consideration appears to have been reduced. Noted that there is an arboricultural method statement to support the application.

It was:

RESOLVED to support the application with no comment.

Proposed by Cllr Kilmurray. There was no seconder. The resolution fell.

- j) [22/00317/LBC](#) Proposal: Installation of an electric vehicle charger on south east facing wall of wooden extension to the longhouse Site address: The Longhouse 2 Meadow Way Melbourn Royston Applicant: Mr Michael Barley

Cllrs had declared an interest in this application.

**PL111/21 Enforcement updates: To consider any enforcement updates received since last meeting**

Noted that a report had been received of possible unauthorized construction works on London Way.

**ACTION:** Clerk to report to enforcement officer and report back.

Notified neighbours : **ACTION:** Clerk to write to the Planning Officer to query why some applications appear not to include confirmation of neighbours being notified.

**PL112/21 To note the date of next meeting : 14 March 2022**

The date of the next meeting is 14 March 2022.

The meeting ended at 21:08

Signed:..... Dated:



**MELBOURN PARISH COUNCIL**

**Planning Committee : 14 March 2022**

**Ref: PL119 21a) Adoption of the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document**

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Dear Sir / Madam

**Cambridge Local Plan and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan: Adoption of the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document**

I am writing to inform you that the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council on 7 February 2022 and by Cambridge City Council on 11 January 2022. You have received this email because you are a consultee or have requested to be notified.

The adopted SPD is available to view on the [Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website](#) together with a number of technical supporting documents including a Statement of Consultation which provides a detailed record of the consultation undertaken during the process of preparing the SPD, the outcome of the consultation, main issues arising and how the SPD was changed in response.

We are required by Government Regulations to send you the Adoption Statement for the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD and therefore attach it to this email. This provides further information on the adoption procedure including the legal right to challenge it.

Should you have any queries regarding the adoption of the SPD, please do not hesitate to contact the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Policy Team at [localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org](mailto:localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org)

Yours faithfully

**Stephen Kelly**

Director for Planning and Economic Development  
Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service





## **Cambridge Local Plan and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan**

### **Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document Adoption Statement**

Notice of Arrangements for Adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document  
[Regulation 14 of Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England)  
Regulations 2012]

The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council on 7 February 2022 and by Cambridge City Council on 11 January 2022.

The SPD and the adoption documents are available to view on the [Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website](#) and can be viewed in person, by appointment only, at the following locations:

- Cambridge City Council, Customer Service Centre, Mandela House, 4 Regent Street, Cambridge CB2 1BY. Telephone (01223) 457000 for an appointment.
- South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6EA. Telephone (01954) 713000 for an appointment.

If you need assistance to view the documents, please email:  
[localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org](mailto:localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org) or telephone: 01954 713000

Any person aggrieved by the SPD may apply to the High Court for permission to apply for judicial review of the decision to adopt the SPD. Any such application must be made promptly and, in any event, not later than 3 months after the date on which the SPD was adopted (7 February 2022).

Stephen Kelly  
Director of Planning and Economic Development  
Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service

**MELBOURN PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Planning Committee : 14 March 2022**

**Ref: PL119 21b) Empty Homes Strategy**

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Dear Parish Councillor

Cabinet recently approved the draft Empty Homes Strategy, with delegated authority for the Lead Member of Housing to approve the Strategy following wider consultation. I am therefore writing to you to seek any comments your parish council may have on the Empty Homes Strategy. I also wanted to make you aware that the Council has recently approved funding to recruit an officer to deal with challenging buildings within the District, which will include empty properties. Whilst this post has yet to be recruited to, it would be useful to understand where empty properties are causing an issue within the District and therefore I would also ask if you could let me know if there are any such properties in your parish. Once we have an officer in post, we can then start to investigate these properties in more detail.

Any comments on the Strategy, or details of empty properties can be sent to:  
[strategic.housing@scams.gov.uk](mailto:strategic.housing@scams.gov.uk)

The consultation period for the Strategy will run until 27th March 2022.

Additional documents:

- [Empty Homes Survey of Owners 2021 , item 3. !\[\]\(c6a8736a601a632e2c96605cf66055ed\_img.jpg\) PDF 846 KB](#)



**DRAFT**

**South Cambridgeshire District Council**

**Empty Homes Strategy**

**2022 – 2025**

**Published: March 2022**

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# 1. Introduction

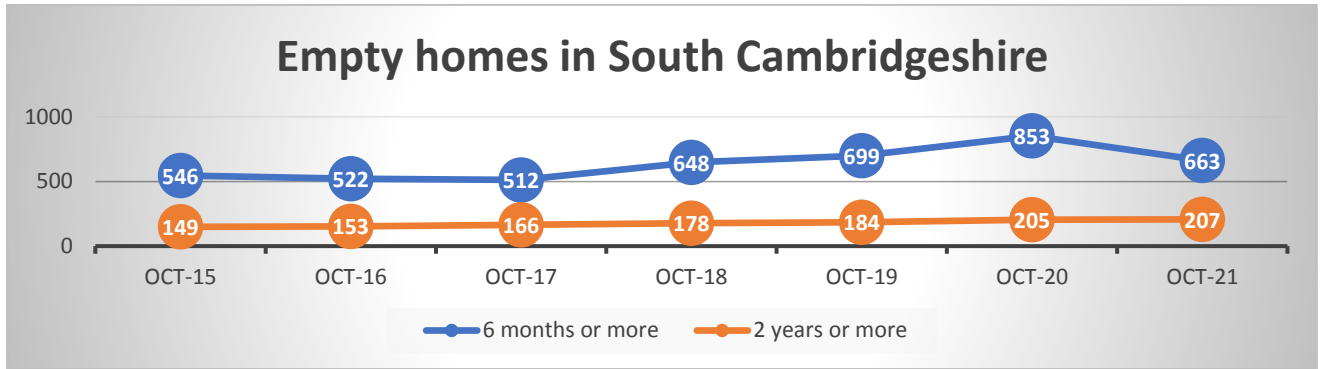
1.1. The overall aim of the Empty Homes Strategy is to understand the impacts of long-term empty homes in the District and what measures the Council can take in terms of bringing empty homes back into use.

1.2. Whilst any empty home is a wasted resource in terms of housing available for people to live in, South Cambridgeshire District does not suffer significant issues in terms of the number of homes left empty for long periods of time. This Strategy therefore sets out a balanced approach to tackling empty homes in the District that is both fair and proportionate in relation to the overall supply of housing in the area.

## 2. Empty homes in the district

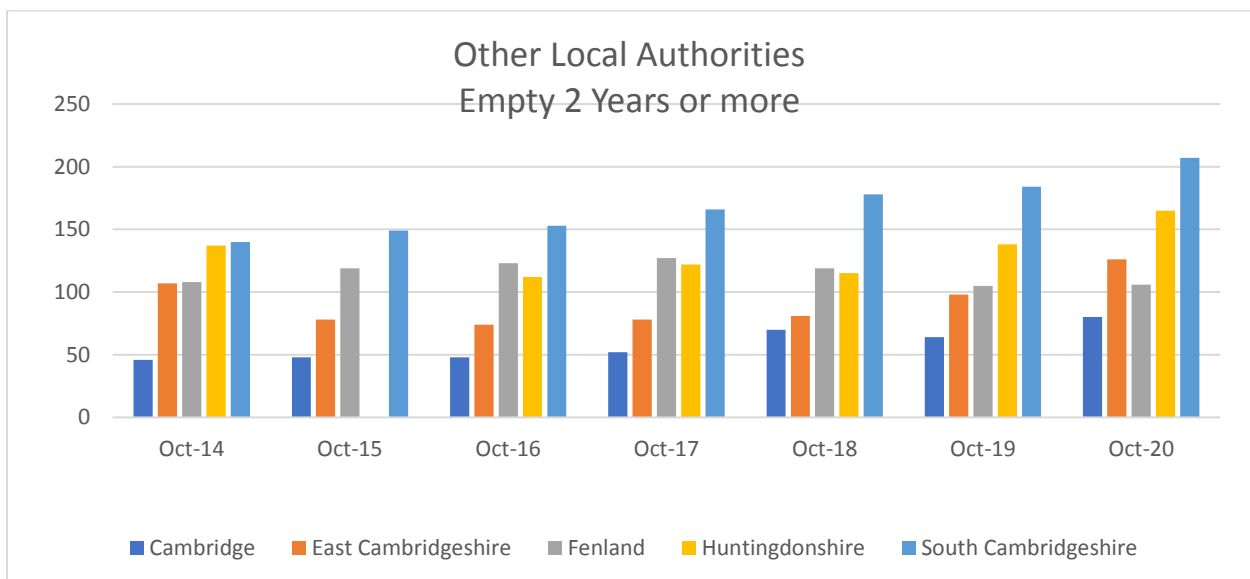
2.1. The number of empty properties (*uninhabited for six months or more*) within South Cambridgeshire has decreased over the last year to 663 properties following a spike in 2020 of 853 properties. The high rise in the number of short-term empty homes can be attributed to the restrictions due to covid 19 affecting people being able to sell, relet or return to properties. It should also be noted that properties included in this figure will include those that are in the process of being sold, and whilst the trend may stay relatively stable, there will be a certain amount of churn.

2.2. The more relevant figure to note, is the number of long-term empty homes (*empty over 2 years*), currently at 207 properties in 2020/21. As a proportion to the overall number of homes in the District, the number of long-term empty homes is not a significant issue and represents just 0.3% of the overall housing stock. Of those that are empty, there are 32 properties that have been empty for between 5 and 10 years and 21 properties empty more than ten years. Only a handful of properties cause issues for the Council which generally relate to the condition of the property or the upkeep of the gardens.



<sup>1</sup>Figure 1

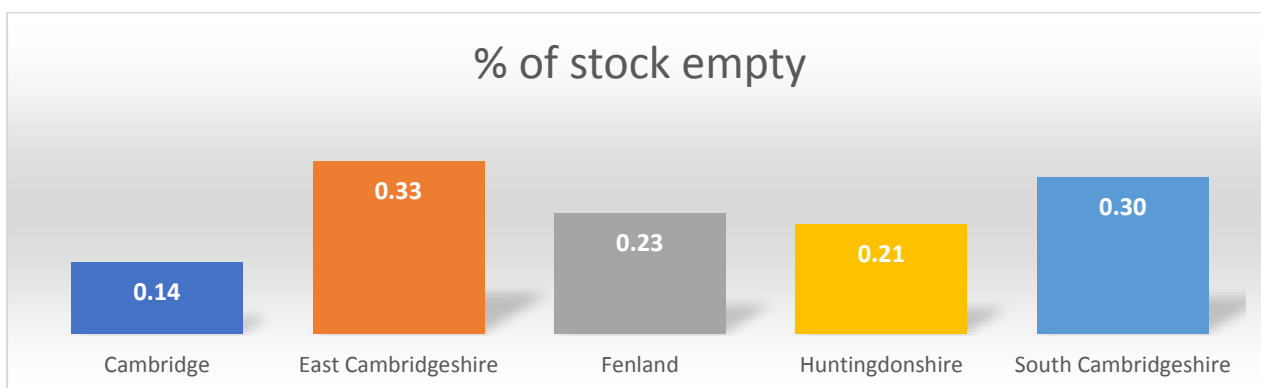
2.3. In comparison with other local authorities in the sub region, South Cambridgeshire District has a slightly higher number of empty homes, although in terms of the percentage of properties that are empty for two years or more the difference is negligible. Nationally the average percentage of stock that is empty for two years or more is 0.93%, compared to 0.30% for South Cambridgeshire.



<sup>2</sup>Figure 2

<sup>1</sup> Data from CTB1 Council taxbase reports <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/council-taxbase-statistics>

<sup>2</sup> Data from CTB1 Council taxbase reports <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/council-taxbase-statistics>



<sup>2</sup>Figure 3

### 3. Why it is important to bring empty homes back into use?

- 3.1. There is a significant lack of affordable homes in South Cambridgeshire and by bringing unoccupied properties back into use we can increase the supply of housing that is available.
- 3.2. Increasing the number of properties in use provides more housing options to residents and helps in reducing the pressure on the current housing stock.
- 3.3. Empty properties may attract opportunities of squatting and anti-social behaviour and can be detrimental to the look and environment of the District.
- 3.4. Empty properties can also increase the demand on services, such as dealing with complaints arising from empty homes and calls to the police/fire service to attend an empty property.
- 3.5. For owners of empty properties, it costs money to leave a property empty; the longer the property is empty, the higher the charge for council tax. (see section below: Council Tax). There are also additional costs which may include those relating to dilapidation, pest control, security and insurance.
- 3.6. It is therefore in everyone's interest to bring empty homes back into use as soon as possible.



## 4. Why are homes left empty?

- 4.1. There are many reasons why a property is left empty and it is difficult to pinpoint a particular reason why homes are left empty in the District. For properties that are empty for over 6 months, this includes new build properties that can sometimes take longer to sell, especially on the growth sites where there are a large number of properties becoming available at the same time.
- 4.2. Generally, it is the longer term empty properties of two years or more that can cause nuisance to an area, where problems may arise in terms of their condition and upkeep.
- 4.3. South Cambridgeshire is an affluent area and often the homes being left empty do not cause a financial burden to the owner and are being relatively well maintained so do not pose a danger or health and safety risk. Similarly, financial incentives or penalties, such as offering grants or raising the council tax, are not always as effective in this area.
- 4.4. In some cases, property owners have more than one empty home (*empty over 2 years*). The reasons for these being empty often comes down to a re-development of a site. If there is a larger re-development being planned, properties may remain empty while the rest of the development site is being cleared and other properties are still tenanted or owned.
- 4.5. Within the properties empty over 2 years there were over 50 properties with the Executor of the deceased listed as the contact. This gives an indication of the number of properties that remain empty after the death of an owner. This can sometimes be due to protracted legal issues in terms of probate.
- 4.6. Empty homes are also dispersed across the District and there is no one area that has a high concentration of empty homes. They are often in the countryside and not as obviously visible as they might be in a more densely populated area such as a city or town.

- 4.7. The number of enquiries we receive about empty properties causing an issue is relatively low, averaging 5 in a year. These issues are usually dealt with by environmental health and/or planning enforcement and often relate to issues of visual amenity such as the upkeep of the garden or condition of the property.
- 4.8. The number of repeated complaints or action on the longer-term empty properties is also very low. This indicates that these properties are being fairly well kept or are in such a rural location that the effects on neighbouring properties aren't causing wide spread issues or complaints.
- 4.9. The reasons for homes being left empty are often complex and individual to a persons' circumstance. As an example, following a complaint from a neighbour regarding an overgrown garden, it was established that the property was planned for refurbishment and had been empty for some time. Unfortunately, the owner became unwell and had to move into a care home. In this instance, our planning enforcement team worked with an agent on behalf of the owner to carry out the garden maintenance required.
- 4.10. It is therefore important that any action taken by the Council is both proportionate and appropriate to the individual circumstances.

## **5. Survey of owners of empty homes.**

- 5.1. In July 2021 a survey was undertaken to owners of empty homes as part of the Council Tax yearly review of empty homes. We wrote to all owners of empty properties with a paper copy of the survey and a return envelope as well as an option to respond online.
- 5.2. In total, 279 responses were received, which represents a 30% response rate. Of those responses only 93 (44%) have confirmed that they are still the owner of the property and that the property is still empty. This would suggest that the number of empty properties is lower than currently recorded.

5.3. As part of the survey, we asked the question: 'How did you come to be responsible for the property?'. The top answers were:

- Inherited it (25%) / Bought to live in myself (25%)
- Bought as an investment (8%) / Included with other properties (8%)
- Executor of the estate (7%) / Bought for family/friend to live in (7%)

5.4. When asked why the property remained empty, the top three reasons were:

- Trying to sell it - 40%
- It is being repaired/renovated – 24%
- It needs repairs/renovations – 11%

5.6. When asked the question 'what services the Council should consider providing to help owners bring empty properties back into use:

- 15 respondents said grants for repairs or renovations would help,
- 5 said help or advice to find a buyer,
- 96 respondents (79%) stating 'none of these' would help them.

5.7. Of all the respondents with an empty property, 85% also stated that the cost of repairs or renovations were not a reason for the property remaining empty. This indicated that making grants available may not be an effective way to encourage properties back into use.

## **6. Options available to bring Empty Homes back into use.**

6.1. The Council's preference is always to work with the owner of the empty home to encourage them to bring the property back into use. We will signpost and offer advice where possible, apply disincentives through council tax and as a last resort take enforcement action where homes are causing a nuisance or harm to the community.

## **Advice & Practical Support**

### **6.2. Shire Homes**

6.2.1. Shire Homes is our in-house private sector leasing scheme and offers home owners a hassle-free way to rent out their properties. We will signpost empty home owners to this scheme where they are interested in renting out their property. Properties must be of a lettable standard to qualify for this scheme.

### **6.3. Ermine Street Housing**

6.3.1. Ermine Street Housing, the Council's arm's length private sector letting agent, has previously brought empty homes back into use through a leasing agreement with the Ministry of Defence. In total 53 properties have so far been occupied through this agreement in South Cambridgeshire.

6.3.2. Ermine Street Housing also purchase properties to rent out privately. We will also signpost owners of empty homes to Ermine Street as an option if they are interested in selling their property.

### **6.4. Being Green to our Core**

6.4.1. Renovating properties to bring back into use will generally mean the energy efficiency of homes will be improved, new heating systems installed, new doors and windows, etc. We encourage and support owners to make the most efficient use of their properties and will signpost to the latest government initiatives and grants available as part of our promotional and advisory work.

### **6.5. Reduced VAT for long term empty homes**

6.5.1. Since 1 January 2008, renovations and alterations to residential properties that have been empty for at least 2 years have been eligible for a reduced VAT rate of 5%. This applies to labour and materials associated with repairs, alterations, construction of associated garages and hard landscaping. The Council will issue letters of confirmation upon

request where evidence is required for owners to apply for the reduced VAT. Further information can be found on the [government's website](#).

## 7. Disincentives through Council Tax

7.1. When Council Tax legislation was changed in April 2013, local councils were given the option to set the level of discount on certain types of properties. After consultation with local residents and property owners the Council announced that the six-month exemption in respect of properties that were unoccupied and unfurnished (Class C properties) would no longer be available (meaning that full Council Tax would be payable on these types of properties from as soon as they become unoccupied and unfurnished). In addition the Council took the option to raise Council tax to 150% for dwellings that had been unoccupied for a period of 24 months or more. There are some exceptions to the additional premium charges for unoccupied properties such as annexes or if a property is undergoing structural work or major repairs (they may get up to 12 months exemption (from the date the property was empty) from the additional premium charge for empty homes).

7.2. It was also agreed to withdraw the 10% discount for furnished second homes; this now means that the full rate would be charged.

7.3. Class B properties, those that are unoccupied and owned by a charity (either furnished or unfurnished), will still be able to receive a six month void period followed by the full charge if still unoccupied.

7.4. From April 2019 the Council implemented further charges on long term empty properties to incentivise homeowners to bring properties back into use, rather than sitting empty. Homes that are empty for two years or more will be charged double their regular council tax (i.e. an additional premium of 100%)

7.5. From 1 April 2020 homes that are empty for five years or more are being charged a 200% premium on top of their regular Council Tax. From 1 April

2021 there is a 300% premium charged on top of their regular council tax for properties that have been empty for ten years or more.

7.6. If council tax is not paid on an empty property it is dealt with through the usual steps of any non payment of council tax. Reminders will be sent, followed by a Court Summons seeking a Liability Order. A Liability Order can be used in a number of ways to recover the money owed to the Council, including applying for a Charging Order to put a legal charge on the property for the amount due, plus costs, when the property is sold. The Council can also apply to the court to request that a forced sale is made to the property. See section 8. below for further information.

## **8. Tackling the problem of empty homes where they become an issue**

8.1.1. A Challenging Buildings Working Group has been established in partnership with Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council. The objectives of the group are to:

- Prioritise the buildings that are known to the Councils in terms of repair, location and number of complaints and determine the scale of the issue.
- Develop a prioritised strategy that will enable choices to be transparent, also identify resource to support action.
- Be proactive and implement a standard procedure to bring a building back into use thus regenerating the local area.
- Provide a consistent approach from all three Councils and sharing of expertise.

8.1.2. The Council has also set up an Enforcement Working Group that looks at all enforcement issues within the Council. Where there are issues relating to empty properties that cannot be resolved, this will be escalated to the

Enforcement Working Group to ensure we have a joined-up approach to any action identified.

## **8.2. Enforcement options to bring empty homes back into use**

8.2.1. Exercising the option to utilise enforcement action requires considerable staff input, time, legal, and financial resource. Taking enforcement action will always be as a last resort when all other options in terms of engagement and support have been exhausted. Enforcement action must be proportionate and reasonable taking into account the harm and nuisance caused to the surrounding environment and the likely success of any court application. For some enforcement there needs to be an application to the Secretary of State or a Third Party Tribunal, who ultimately decides whether to take a case forward.

8.2.2. Although there are empty homes dispersed across the District we do not suffer the same problems as urban areas that have high levels of empty homes in particular hotspots that can lead to a haven for crime, vandalism, anti-social behaviour and squatting. For South Cambridgeshire it is more the lack of housing available and these properties being a wasted resource rather than empty homes being problematic, and we will always try to work with owners to resolve issues rather than resorting to enforcement action. Where properties are being well looked after, council tax paid and are not causing a particular nuisance or harm, the Council has very little powers to bring a property back into use.

8.2.3. In cases where a property causes major issues in terms of non payment of council tax, significant harm or nuisance to others and the owner shows a clear unwillingness to engage with the Council, there are legal enforcement options available to use.



### **8.3. Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO)**

8.3.1. EDMOs are a legal power contained within the Housing Act (2004) that enables councils to take over the management of an empty dwelling with the aim of securing its occupancy.

8.3.2. An EDMO allows councils to take over the running of the property, carry out repairs and then rent it out. These may be considered if the owner has refused/ignored all reasonable solutions to bring it back into use and would usually only be considered for those that have been empty for a significant period of time and are a nuisance to the community. It involves building a case and making an application to a residential property tribunal for approval to make an interim EDMO.

### **8.4. Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)**

8.4.1. Specific powers set out in Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 and Section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allow councils to compulsorily purchase individual empty homes to enable them to be used for housing.

8.4.2. Compulsory purchase powers should be used where it is expedient to do so, and only where there is a compelling case in the public interest.

8.4.3. The Council's Compulsory Purchase Order Policy published in October 2020 sets out the approach, circumstances and conditions under which the Council will consider the use of compulsory purchase powers.

### **8.5. Enforced sale of empty homes**

8.5.1. Homes that have become an eyesore, or pose a danger to the public can be subject to a range of enforcement measures using legislation. "Land that adversely affects the amenity of the neighbourhood" can be served with a Legal Notice under Section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990; or where "premises are such a state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance",

Notice can be served under the Buildings Act (1984). In most cases, failure by the owner to comply with a legal notice can lead to councils arranging for the works to be carried out in default and charging the costs to the owner, or registering a charge against the property. If this goes unpaid councils can enforce the sale of the property to recover all costs.

8.5.2. Where there is debt incurred due to an absent owner not paying council tax due on an abandoned property, a similar procedure can be followed to place a charging order on the property.

## 9. Equality and diversity

9.1. Equality is about treating individuals fairly, supported by legislation designed to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Diversity is about the recognition and valuing of difference for the benefit of the Council and the individual. Equality and diversity are not interchangeable but are interdependent. There is no equality of opportunity if difference is not recognised and valued.

9.2. An equality impact assessment has been carried out. There have been no barriers identified for any specific protected characteristics.

9.3. We are committed to identifying, understanding and eliminating all barriers that prevent access to services, information and employment.

9.4. As a major employer and provider of services, South Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to actively promoting equality and diversity, and working to combat discrimination across all nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Sex
- Race
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Gender Reassignment
- Religion or Belief
- Disability
- Sexual Orientation

## 10. Contacts

10.1. This Strategy has been prepared by the Housing Strategy Team. If you have a query relating to the Strategy or an empty property, please contact:

Email: [strategic.housing@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:strategic.housing@scambs.gov.uk)

Tel: 01954 713 000

Executive Director of Sustainable Growth:  
Patsy Dell



Milbourn Parish Council

**SPATIAL PLANNING UNIT**

CHN216, County Hall  
Hertford, Herts SG13 8DN

Telephone: 01992 556211  
Minicom: 01992 556611  
Contact: Mr Chay Dempster  
Email: [spatialplanning@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:spatialplanning@hertfordshire.gov.uk)  
My ref: PL/0254/22 (CM0984)

Date: 01 March 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

**Proposed application for the establishment of a waste transfer and recycling facility including ancillary facilities and associated landscaping and drainage provisions at Land to the south of Royston Sewage Treatment Works, Royston**

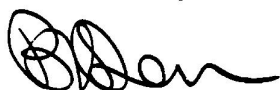
The above application for planning permission has been submitted. All information submitted with the application is available on our website: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/planning](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/planning) or use the following weblink to go directly to our planning application search page: <https://planning.hertfordshire.gov.uk/>. Here you can enter in the application reference number: PL/0254/22 and click on the search button at the bottom of the page and this will take you directly to the application details.

If you wish to submit comments on this planning application, please do so through our website by selecting 'Comment on this application' at the top of the application details page. Alternatively, you can email them to [spatialplanning@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:spatialplanning@hertfordshire.gov.uk), or post them (allowing for postal time) to the address at the top of this letter. Please submit comments within the next twenty-eight days and not later than 29 March 2022 so that they may be taken into account when the application is decided. If you have difficulty meeting this deadline, please let the Case Officer, Mr Chay Dempster, know immediately when you would be able to send your comments. When making a decision we can only take into account planning considerations.

In the event of an appeal against the decision, the regulations require me to forward to the Planning Inspectorate and to the appellant any representation sent to me, and these will be taken into account in deciding the appeal.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Case Officer should you wish to discuss the matter further.

Yours faithfully



Brian Owen  
Team Leader, Development Management