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From: Cecilia Murphy-Roads (Senior Public Health Manager)

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South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan Consultation

## **Response from Public Health**

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### **RE: Neighbourhood Plan Consultation**

Thank you for consulting me on the South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan Consultation. The Plan has been compared to the New Housing Developments and the Built Environment Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for Cambridgeshire<sup>1</sup>.

The JSNA contains an evidence review of the built environment's impact on health and has distilled the evidence into the following themes:

- Generic evidence supporting the built environment's impact on health.
- Green space.
- Developing sustainable communities.
- Community design (to prevent injuries, crime, and to accommodate people with disabilities).
- Connectivity and land use mix.
- Communities that support healthy ageing.
- House design and space.
- Access to unhealthy/"Fast Food".
- Health inequality and the built environment.

The Plan has therefore been reviewed against these themes to ensure it addresses relevant impacts on health and wellbeing.

### **Public Health specific comments on the Plan are as follows:**

We welcome and support measures that protect green space, enhance a sense of local of community and improve health outcomes.

#### **SNNP1: Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity**

There is a significant Green Infrastructure Network within South Newnham. Provision of green space and infrastructure supports health through bringing with it co-benefits that occur when accessing it such as activity and social interaction. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is critical to maintaining the green infrastructure of South Newnham.

**SNNP2: Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain** – we welcome this policy for reasons as sited against policy 1.

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<sup>1</sup> [Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)

### **SNNP3: Reduce and maintain low levels of light pollution**

Public Health finds this policy beneficial - it has sort to ensure environmental impacts of light pollution are mitigated, such as using solar stud lighting on Lammas Land. However its implementation must always be in the context of supporting human safety and wellbeing for example ensuring sufficient lighting year round for those using active travel after dark in green space and travel routes. And making sure that public spaces are safe for women and school age children. This policy does aim to ensure the plan vision of a 'network of safe, car-free routes exists for walking and cycling that are in harmony with our environment' is encouraged.

### **SNNP4: Creating Local Green Spaces**

We know that where *There is a clear association between the built environment and physical activity (1)<sup>2</sup>, where the physical characteristics of neighbourhoods are identified as having a positive impact on health, wellbeing, physical activity and walkability, these characteristics are: choice and diversity; well-kept environments; affordable and efficient public transport; safe and sociable play areas; the presence of greenspace; well-lit and pedestrian-friendly footpaths; and street patterns that provide opportunities for informal contact among residents<sup>3</sup>*

Therefore designating and protecting the local green spaces: Gough Way Children's Play Area, Skaters' Meadow Footpath, Secondary Woodland at Pembroke Allotments and Newnham Croft School wilderness area, is essential to positive health outcomes. As more than 75 % of the neighbourhood consists of green space this is an important component of South Newnham's Neighbourhood plan.

*Providing adequate green space can promote physical activity with the subsequent benefits of reducing overweight and promoting mental health<sup>4</sup>*

**SNNP5: Protecting and Maintaining the Connectivity Network** - we welcome policy 5 as it encourages active travel which is a key priority for Public Health. Well connected and attractive public places and streets encourage more people to exercise and make active travel choices. This is particularly important to South Newnham due to number of cyclists and pedestrians. However the importance of sensitively supporting the connectivity network whilst respecting biodiversity and green corridors as well as making sure any associated risks from flooding remains mitigated.

Also ensuring the surfacing is appropriate to the active users group e.g hard surfacing for pedestrian/ cyclist, soft for equestrian etc.

### **SNNP6: Improving and Enhancing Neighbourhood Community Assets**

The policy promotes improvement and enhancement as well as sustained use of local community assets and leisure facilities. These assets are beneficial for health from the perspective of physical activity, mental health, social cohesion and social capital. An

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<sup>2</sup> Board, Cambridge Sub-Region Housing. Housing Market Bulletin 27. 2015. 27

<sup>3</sup> [Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)

important consideration is with regard to equitable access. Can all residents access and make use of all identified assets? Are suitable toilet facilities available close by?

### **SNNP7: Protecting and supporting Homes and Facilities for Older People**

Public Health welcomes this policy which seeks to protect and support the continued provision of rented accommodation for older people and those with disabilities in South Newnham.

Affordable and accessible housing options are essential for those on lower incomes. Other considerations within South Newnham for older and disabled residents include street furniture that accounts for disability and is dementia friendly. Sufficient resting places are necessary too in terms of accessibility. Accessibility to green space for older people is beneficial as *walkable green spaces near residences of older people aged 75+ significantly and positively influences five-year survival.*<sup>5</sup>

### **SNNP8: Conserving Additionally Identified Local Heritage Assets**

Local Heritage assets are an important element of the architectural and historical make up of South Newnham the inclusion of a further eight assets serves to support and enhance the public realm and visual landscape all of which bring positive mental health benefits. More shared assets at community level may help to encourage increased social cohesion and a greater sense of community.

### **SNNP9: Improving the Energy Efficiency of Existing and New Buildings**

Energy efficiency is a key factor in developing sustainable communities. Public Health agree with this policy which seeks to ensure opportunities are taken at the development stage to improve the environmental performance of the neighbourhood's building stock. Where feasible making use of design principles such as passive cooling, rainwater harvesting, solar collectors, maximising natural daylight etc. Also housing that is a reasonable size and affordable to heat is associated with positive health outcomes. With increasing summer temperatures another consideration is how to manage overheating in summer. Possible solutions include external shading, louvres/ shutters and solar control glass to alleviate excess solar gain. These varying design approaches to mitigate excess heat are more readily considered with new development but ought to be reviewed in retro fitting and conversions too.

### **SNNP10: Responding to Climate Change and the Risk of Local Flooding**

We welcome the use of SuDs and other mitigation approaches in new development to protect human health from flood risk. We support that the inclusion of the full details of surface water flood risks are incorporated into the plan. Residents who may be affected in flood prone areas, particularly vulnerable ones, could be encouraged to create/ join a flood group, they are typically lead by the Parish Council or by a nominated flood warden(s). Community action of this type supports community resilience and well-being thereby

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<sup>5</sup> [Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)

reducing physical and mental health impacts from severe weather. Completing personal flood plans and community flood plans also form part of this resiliency.

**SNNP11: Protecting and Enhancing Local Character through Design-led Development.**

We welcome the use of design principles to facilitate balanced and sustainable development which meets the evolving needs for housing in the neighbourhood area. As per policy 8 protecting and enhancing the local character courtesy of design led development will maintain an agreeable public realm suitable for the residents and a positive visual landscape to support and maintain mental wellbeing.

**SNNP12: Protecting Residential Amenity in South Newnham**

As per policy 8 and 11, policy 12 from a public health perspective is about sustaining an agreeable visual landscape for mental health purposes. And in regard to residential amenity we support keeping all green planting, trees and hedgerows within the urban residential areas of South Newnham to maintain biodiversity.

**SNNP13: Converting Existing Houses into more than one Separate Housing Unit.**

Reasonably sized properties are more affordable to heat and or cool therefore associated with better health outcomes. Conversion of existing houses to alternate configurations of housing maybe appropriate to provide better life-time housing options. However conversions must be good quality; ensuring minimal noise transfer between dwellings and with adequate space provisions being adhered to. For example following minimal space standards similar to the London housing minimal space standards. Having sufficient storage space, access to privacy, space for working from home needs, improved day light and ventilation are all essential to positive health outcomes. As well as

*Children especially, teenagers deprived of adequate space at home may be disruptive and aggressive. In addition, low space standards contribute to poor health and low educational attainment that can express itself in incidences of antisocial behaviour...*

*Qualitative studies have found that homes with improved thermal comfort reported: increase in usable indoor space; improvements in diet, privacy and household/family relationships. Although no clear evidence on health improvement, respondents made links to improvement in physical and mental health.<sup>6</sup>*

**SNNP14: Protecting the Character of Neighbourhood Garden Boundaries**

Yes public health agree as per policy 12.

**SNNP15: Conserving and Enhancing Existing Views and Street Scenes**

We support this policy to maintain an agreeable street scene within the area for current and future generations as high lighted against policies, 8, 11 and 12 also.

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<sup>6</sup> [Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)

Public Health welcomes the community actions in 7.7.23 of the plan as they are responsive to health and wellbeing needs as discussed against the policies above.

And finally there appears to be a couple of gaps:

- Have you considered the needs of Gypsy and Traveller as part of your neighbourhood plan?
- There is nothing relating to fast food / hot food outlets in the plan. Have you considered there is no current or future concerns regarding this type of development in South Newnham or potential health impacts on residents?