

Creating a better future for Newnham and West Cambridge



**Report on an informal engagement event to
discuss the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan.**

Anne Miller

Newnham Labour Party

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Summary and objectives

This informal engagement event was organised by Newnham Labour Party to allow the local community to discuss the draft “Greater Cambridge Local Plan” with Cllr Katie Thornburrow, Cabinet Member for Planning & Transport.

It was held on 7 January 2024 in Newnham Croft School, Chedworth Street, Cambridge, CB3 9JF with the following aims:

- To raise awareness and understanding of the Local Plan, and its impact on Newnham and the West of Cambridge
- To provide a collective response to the consultation
- To encourage individual responses

The presentation and discussion focussed on

- What’s planned for Newnham and the West of Cambridge?
- How will the environment be protected between now and 2045?
- How can the draft plans and policies be improved?

The event was widely publicised in the neighbourhood, and about 45 people attended on a cold evening, including all 4 Councillors for Newnham Ward (1 Labour, 3 Green).

After an initial presentation by Cllr Katie Thornburrow, participants were divided into groups of 3-6. Each group was tasked to discuss what they’d heard *then* “Create a poster to give the shared planning service your key message. For example, a policy or proposal that you like and want to support? Or something you dislike, and want them to improve?”

The resulting posters were displayed on a table, and all participants were given 3 red blobs and invited to use them to “vote” for their favourite suggestions. The results of this 2 stage process are summarised below, with the posters shown in the appendix

Participants were also urged to respond to the official consultation individually.



Community views

This section summarises the results of the process, in which groups of 3-6 produced posters with their “key message” then all participants voted in order to identify the top suggestions

Housing

People widely recognised the need for housing (as opposed to offices and labs) and particularly supported more council housing and more social housing. However, people wanted to make sure that the new homes were in the right place, aimed at the right purpose and built to the right standards

Interestingly, none of the posters expressed concerns about the proposed number of new homes in the draft Local Plan

The poster with the most votes from the workshop explicitly supported more council housing

- “More council housing” (17 votes)

There were several other posters relating to housing.

- “Housing supply”(10 votes)
 - Homes in central location, not offices/labs
 - Help to share/downsize for the elderly
 - Tourism: hotels, Air BnB
 - Too many jobs”
- Pinehurst Model, not Eddington Accommodation blocks (5 votes)

Note that “Pinehurst” refers to the 3-4 storey blocks of apartments off Grange Road. Built in the 1930s they are surrounded by lawns and mature trees.

Transport

It had been explained that transport policy is not part of the Local Plan, but as the poster with the second highest number of votes succinctly put it:

- “Transport is a problem” (15 votes)

There were three additional posters relating to transport. These supported active travel and buses, but not busways.

- Active Transport!” (6 votes)
- “Supporting policies on local buses (not busway)” (6 votes)
- “Busway is a Trojan Horse” (6 votes)

Note that many residents of Newnham Ward are concerned about the proposed route of the C2C busway from Cambourne to Cambridge, which would pass through the ward.

The reference to it being a “Trojan Horse” relates to local concerns that the C2C busway will lead to the development of the West Fields, between Grange Road and the M11.



Climate Change, Green and Open Spaces, River Corridors

The proposed policies on climate change and open spaces were summarised and got support.

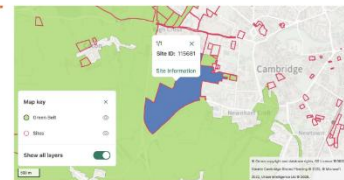
CLLr Thornburrow had pointed out that Site ID 115681 on West Fields had NOT been selected for development and hence should be protected from development until at least 2045.

The poster supporting this got 10 votes.

- “Back Local Plan, no development of West Fields”
 - Save the green belt,
 - Right house, Right place: near work.
 - Prioritise and maintain open green spaces
 - Low rise housing blocks”

NOT SELECTED - Site ID 115681

- Site area of 155 hectares.
- Capacity for mixed use with approximately 2400 - 2800 homes.



CLLr Thornburrow had briefly discussed the proposed policy BG/RC about the River Corridors. This policy was also well supported

- “Preserve green corridors” 11 votes

A poster covering several issues, including the proposed policies on building standards, received 7 votes

- “Pleased with the proposed standards for building” (2 votes)
- No development on west fields, in river corridor, in green belt, on floodplains (1 vote)
- Transport links in policies of strategic importance to the plan
- Must have genuinely more social housing (1 vote)
- No GCP” (3 Votes)

Climate change

Key policy changes:

- Space heating for all buildings will be equivalent to Passivhaus
- All heating will be from non-fossil fuels
- There will be **no gas connections** to any site
- Maximise on-site renewables
- All new buildings must demonstrate **energy in use** after they have been completed
- Major development must show **whole life carbon emissions**
- Housing over 100 homes must use **dual-pipe system and water re-use**
- Every dwelling will have a water meter and use **water butts**
- SuDS to take into **account climate change** and impact over the **lifetime** of the development
- For over 150 homes provide a **circular economy** statement.
- Major developments must justify **demolition** in terms of circular economy
- There will be a presumption of retaining peat soils in situ

Democratic deficit

There was widespread uncertainty about the aims of the Cambridge Growth Company, and whether it would comply with the democratically developed policies and plans in the Local Plan. Many were also concerned about power of the University Colleges. For example, Queens College’s ongoing development of Owlstone Croft, beside Paradise Local Nature reserve, has upset many. Some are similarly concerned about the GCP (Greater Cambridge Partnership)

Two well supported posters called to:

- “Constrain power of University Colleges” (14 votes)
- “Stop the Cambridge Growth Company” (12 votes)

Other

2 final posters asked

- “Crucial criterion: do we all benefit? 7 votes
- Is this plan transforming the most polluting construction industry we’re forced to invite onto our neighbouring fields (1 vote)

Appendix: Posters created during the workshop