

**ST NEOTS EAST URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being))**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 9th November 2010, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) considered a report by the Head of Planning Services on the St Neots Eastern Expansion Urban Design Framework. The Panel also had received the comments of the Development Management Panel on the document.

2. DELIBERATIONS

- 2.1 The principal areas of concern raised by the Panel are highways and educational provision. The Panel accepts entirely the aim of integrating the eastern expansion into St Neots as a whole. Separated as it is from the rest of the town by the East Coast Main Rail Line, the Panel acknowledges that, without careful planning, there is a danger of a separate community developing which is not integrated with the remainder of the town.
- 2.2 The Panel accepts that the idea of a third secondary school in St Neots located within the eastern expansion might exacerbate the sense of a separate identity and therefore does not support the recommendation of the Development Management Panel in that respect. Nevertheless the Panel suggests that an adequate financial contribution is secured from the developers to ensure that the existing secondary education establishments in St Neots can be expanded to meet the anticipated increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.3 With regard to primary education, the Panel was advised that the County Council had sought a minimum of three new schools, as there is under capacity west of the rail line in existing establishments. The land use plan suggests an allocation of land for two new schools in addition to the existing primary school already provided as part of the Loves Farm development. The Panel would query however whether this is sufficient for a development of 5000 homes. Notwithstanding the Panel's support for integration of the new development, the Panel does not consider it appropriate for children of primary school age to have to travel far to school which could lead to traffic congestion and reduce the number of children walking or cycling to school. The Panel had a particular concern about the proposed distribution of sites for primary schools within the eastern expansion with those houses in the north eastern sector of the new development being some distance from the primary schools proposed.
- 2.4 The Head of Planning Services has given the Panel an assurance that he will re-examine the County Council's response on educational provision in advance of the Cabinet's consideration of the framework document but the Panel would ask Cabinet Members to note their views on this matter.
- 2.5 The Panel's other area of concern relates to highway provision and particularly the uncertainty over improvements to the A428 before the development takes

place, it is clear that the new development will create greater pressure on the A428 which is already suffering from traffic congestion and the Panel supports ongoing efforts to encourage investment in the upgrading of the road to accommodate the inevitable traffic growth.

- 2.6 Bearing in mind the Panel's acceptance of the integration of the eastern expansion into St Neots, the Panel is also keen to ensure that there are sufficient vehicular links in addition to those for cyclists and walkers. A failure to secure sufficient links could lead to unacceptable congestion as those which remain at Cambridge Street and via the A428.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Panel invites the Cabinet to note its views on the Urban Design Framework and its support for the comments already expressed by the Development Management Panel with the exception of a third secondary school which, in the Panel's view, could detract from the integration of the eastern expansion with the remainder of St Neots.

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