

FOCUS on Godmanchester

December 2016



Graham writes: 1000s more houses?

It feels as though the vultures are circling the town again. Property developers are eyeing up the fields around the town for yet more development. 753 houses are already being built at Bearscroft, now called Romans' Edge, despite vociferous objections from Godmanchester. Now we hear developers want to build another 1000 houses on the fields beyond. And we understand other developers are looking to build on the fields to the west of the A1198, by the cemetery and around to the Comben Drive estate.

The developers are likely to say it is to help the district council meet its housing target as the developments at Wyton and Alconbury are going slowly. But, at present the District Council has sufficient housing sites in the pipeline to meet the minimum five year supply required by government.

I will be fighting these latest proposals as it is clear that many people believe Godmanchester is already big enough and we would get more traffic chaos and parking problems and lose the community spirit that makes Godmanchester such an attractive place to live.

We will keep you updated as we hear more and should planning permission be sought, please express your views – for and against, so we can represent your views.

Devolution

The local District and County Councils covering Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have agreed a deal with the Government to form a Combined Authority. We will now have elections for a Mayor to lead it next May. In return for having an elected Mayor, the Government has promised an extra £20 million a year for the next 30 years to be spent on local infrastructure and an additional £170 million for new affordable houses.

Lib Dems voted against this change as the Combined Authority is another layer of bureaucracy we don't need. The extra money sounds generous, but when you allow for inflation over the next 30 years, deduct running costs and spread it over seven councils, it amounts to less than an extra 1% spending power. The set-up costs will be £1.5m, including a mayoral office and staff costing £881,000 per year.

The small additional budget that the Mayor will have will not help to reduce the cuts to public services that we will continue to see.

Instead it is time for more radical reorganisation to abolish the Peterborough, districts and county councils and replace them with two unitary councils. Have a look at our web site for our views on the future of local government: www.huntslibdems.co.uk/localgovernmentfuture

From your Lib Dem Focus Team

The next few months will be critical for Godmanchester with major challenges to be dealt with. Developers are wanting to build more houses, the county and district council budgets are being cut which will lead to more cuts in services and the traffic chaos looks like it's getting worse with long delays into and out of Huntingdon.

We will continue to lobby and try and influence council officials to get these and other issues dealt with. With a strong local team in Godmanchester and being the second largest party in both the District and County Council we have a range of expertise to call on.

And finally as we approach Christmas, we would like to thank all our supporters and residents who get in touch with us. Enclosed with this leaflet is a simple calendar for 2017 with a number of contact numbers. We hope you will find useful.

You can also find us on Twitter @HuntsLibDems and Facebook www.facebook.com/HuntsLibDems

The Godmanchester Team – contact any of us if you have a problem we can help with



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More local news

Street Lights

From our chats with residents, the biggest grumble in Godmanchester at the moment is the dark streets. There are three aspects: street lights have been removed, most are dimmed and then switched off overnight.

We were told the new lights would be more efficient brighter lights. That was the justification for removing an average 10% of lamp posts across the county, with a higher proportion on residential streets but fewer on main roads.

But last year, as part of the budget cuts, the Conservative and UKIP councillors on the County Council voted to dim the lights by 40% and switch most off overnight between 1am and 6am leading to dark and dingy areas. Lib Dems opposed this cut saying this was potentially unsafe and people would be fearful of going out at night. We will be pressing for the lights to be turned back to full strength when we debate the County Council's budget for next year.

Roads to Wyton

The study to decide how people can get to and from the new development at Wyton seems to be progressing very slowly with results now not expected until after Christmas. Although they claim to be looking at all options, we suspect their preferred option is still to build a road across the Ouse valley between Hartford and Cow Lane, through the nature Reserve. We want to protect this attractive area and will continue to oppose any road that destroys it.

A presentation to Huntingdonshire District councillors Devolution deal referred to a "third river crossing". If you look at a map, there are very few places where a road could cross the river. So we worry that the Cow Lane route has already been chosen behind closed doors.

District council and county boundaries

The ward boundaries for both the county and district councils will be changing. Next year the County Council is reducing from 69 to 61 councillors and we will only have one county councillor in Godmanchester instead of two. In the May elections, Graham Wilson will be standing for Godmanchester and the southern part of Huntingdon. Mike Shellens will be standing in east and north Huntingdon.

The boundaries for the District Council seats will see a three councillor ward covering Godmanchester, the Offords and Hemingford Abbots. We think this is worse for Godmanchester's residents who currently have two dedicated district councillors (Sarah Conboy and David Underwood).

Gritting

The County Council's 26 gritters are now on standby, day and night to grit the roads when needed. However, the Council has reduced the routes as part of the Conservative and UKIP approved cuts. In Godmanchester the priority roads for gritting are the main routes through the town, from the Huntingdon Ring Road through to the A14, down West Street, from The Causeway to the A1198 and Tudor Road. Other roads which were on the list last year are no longer going to be done unless the weather is particularly severe over many days. See www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/wintergritting for the new routes.

It's a pity the County Council spoilt their message in their press release "Although there will be a reduction in the gritting routes, safety of the travelling public remains our priority". Talk about press spin!

Car Parking Charges for HDC car parks

We are pleased to report that HDC councillors are reconsidering the proposed charges at HDC car parks. We have three HDC car parks in Godmanchester and we'd be interested to hear your views on how we can make more use of those spaces to resolve some of our wider parking issues.

Fallen leaves and potholes

With autumn fast giving way to winter, many pavements are getting slippery with slushy leaves. If the leaves are on the pavement outside your house, why not sweep them up?!

And if you notice pot holes or uneven pavements when you are doing it please report them to the County Council online: <https://highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>

Neighbourhood Plan

You can't fail to have noticed that the Town Council are consulting on a Neighbourhood Plan for Godmanchester. We would encourage all residents and businesses to read it and provide comments back before Jan 4th.

A Neighbourhood Plan cannot stop development but it does allow the town to have a greater say in what happens. If you haven't seen it, do look on the Town Council web site and let the Town Council know your views. www.gmccouncil.com

New Local Lib Dem Members

Over 60 new people have joined the local Lib Dems since the Brexit vote. If you would like to join us, or get more involved locally, then either go to www.libdems.org.uk or ring Graham on 01480 412747.

