

Stretham & Wilburton Community Land Trust



Shaping your local community by enabling local people to live and work in the place they call home

Newsletter June 2019

A warm welcome

After a busy few months for Stretham & Wilburton Community Land Trust (SWCLT), we're pleased to bring you up to date with our latest news. As a charitable body working across our two parishes, we're delighted to report that good progress is being made towards creating much needed affordable homes for local people.

In this issue, we're focusing on plans for a new development on Camps' Field in Wilburton. Having run four well attended public events about the

proposed development so far, we've received plenty of questions, feedback and thoughts from many of you. So, we want to take this opportunity to shine more light on the plans, dispel any misconceptions and clarify the facts, as we work together to shape an exciting new chapter in Wilburton's story.





Camps' Field: A closer look



The proposed development will be for roughly 120 new homes. Of these, at least 30% will be SWCLT-owned affordable homes reserved for local people, in perpetuity. These high quality homes will be owned and managed by the Trust to benefit our community.

- We chose Camps' Field because it is the only site where an acceptable deal has been reached with the landowner. During conversations over several years we've tried to secure

arrangements with a number of landowners in the village, but so far this is the only viable opportunity to come to fruition.

- The houses (both affordable and open market) will all be bespoke, architect-designed homes, with a mix of house types and styles that complement the rest of the village and reflect its aesthetic.
- The affordable homes will be evenly distributed ('pepper-potted') throughout the development, rather than clustered in one or two specific areas. We believe that integrating the affordable and privately-owned homes this way will create a more balanced community.



- Construction will be phased over a period of time, likely to be more than five years. However, the community amenities will be built as early as possible – in contrast to many wholly commercial developments where they are typically left to the end, or sometimes not realised at all. Similarly, the affordable housing will be prioritised early in each phase.
- Small business units don't currently feature on the plan, because so far we've not seen a strong demand via the public engagement work. But if this were to change and the community felt small business units would be a valuable addition, we could look to incorporate some.
- We'd also like to give our full reassurance that this will **not** pave the way to further development on the Camps' Field site. Indeed, we're taking steps to guard against this by ensuring that designated green areas that form part of the development will be protected in perpetuity, as discussed in more detail below.
- The terms under which we would develop Camps' Field are regulated by a statutory planning policy that's written specifically for CLTs and that commercial developers can't make use of.
- As a Community Land Trust, our entire purpose is to enable local people to live and work in Stretham and Wilburton – the place



they call home. While there is local employment at the school, pub, Twenty Pence Garden Centre and a number of other small and home-based businesses, the gap between local wages and housing costs can make it prohibitively expensive to live in the village. We also strive to help families that are priced out of their local area to stay closer together by providing them with the protection of a long-term affordable home.

- Over time, the homes will generate surpluses that can be reinvested into new community projects that benefit local people. This mirrors the enduring contribution made by the Stretham Charity. Dating back to 1553, it still owns five properties in Stretham and recently gifted £15,000 to Stretham Primary School for new computers. It's an inspiring legacy that we at SWCLT are keen to emulate.

- The 30% affordable properties will be community-owned assets which will be safeguarded by a legal asset lock and protected from the Right to Buy. This will ensure genuinely affordable housing is available for local people in perpetuity.





Increasing access to affordable housing



It's widely recognised that housing costs in Wilburton are significantly beyond the reach of many local people, particularly young working families. In Wilburton, as in most rural villages near Cambridge, people who want to stay living locally have limited choices. Some are being displaced far afield to more affordable areas; some have no choice but to remain at home living with parents well into adulthood; and others are crippled by high rental costs with no

opportunity to save for a deposit or ever get onto the housing ladder in the village.

To help people overcome these challenges, the SWCLT currently offers two types of affordable housing: affordable rent and shared ownership.

The absolute maximum rent the affordable rental homes can be made available at is 80% of the open market rate or at the level of the Local Housing Allowance, whichever is the lower of the two. However, we strive to offer the affordable homes at a rate lower than this and to keep rents as low as we can afford to. And it's thanks to our charitable status as a CLT that we have this flexibility.

Shared ownership housing can be made available for as little as a 25% share and can be



staircased to a maximum 80% share. This allows people who would otherwise have no chance of buying in their home village the chance to get on the housing ladder. Then, when shared ownership tenants move on, the property will either be valued by a RICS surveyor and sold to the next eligible person on the CLT waiting list who wishes to buy, or bought back and made available for rent at the discretion of the CLT. The shared ownership tenant benefits from the increased equity on the share that they own.

The affordable homes will be allocated to those with the strongest local connections who have a housing need. All the affordable homes will be allocated in line with our allocations policy which can be seen online at:

www.strethamwilburtonclt.co.uk

We already have 72 local families on our waiting list for affordable housing. All have strong local connections to Wilburton and/or Stretham, the large majority are in work and yet most can't afford to stay in the community. So we're working as hard as we can to bridge the gap and create affordable homes for more local people.

Creating green spaces



Despite its rural location, Wilburton generally lacks public open space, for example, we have no traditional village green. Although local green areas and



fields are used recreationally, they are not in public ownership, so might not remain available for use in perpetuity.

There's also been a significant decline in orchard and woodland areas. What's more, the character of the surrounding countryside is now dominated by large, intensively farmed agricultural fields, which isn't necessarily the best environment for encouraging biodiversity.

As we have discovered through our consultation, there is a strong desire to improve access to nature. After the first public event, it was clear that there's popular demand for an open, wild green space in the village – space where children can play and people can walk dogs,

perhaps with a wooded area, community orchard or wildflower meadow with footpaths and cycle paths.

One of the great advantages of the Camps' Field site is that its size gives us a wonderful opportunity to create new green spaces and amenities that could benefit Wilburton now and for future generations. A new wildlife area, for example, could contribute to a more varied village landscape, providing interesting spaces to walk, play and learn, while creating scope for community growing and encouraging local flora and fauna.

We're also extremely sensitive to the need to safeguard our local natural environment from further development and, in this regard, could call on a number of legal



mechanisms to protect such a designated green space in perpetuity. These include a covenant; handing it over to the Parish Council; or registering the land as a village green. We will continue to work closely with the Parish Council to consider the best approach. Similarly, when it comes to maintaining the green space, there are several options and here we'd most likely appoint a local groundskeeper or maintenance contractor.

Improving amenities



As well as planning new green spaces, we're also looking at ways the new development could have a positive impact on physical amenities in the village and always considering how our decisions could bring wider community benefits.

- The primary school is especially keen to see more children in the village. Unfortunately, it is currently having to reduce the number of teachers and teaching assistants, so improving access to affordable housing for families could help ensure the school's long-term sustainability.
- Although there aren't currently plans for a new GP surgery in the village, we are at the advanced stages of planning a new



surgery in Stretham, that will also serve Wilburton.

- While new homes at Camps' Field can't guarantee the provision of extra public bus services (this is beyond our remit), the presence of additional residents may help to make services more viable so encourage transport operators to step up provision.

Managing traffic and access



Several traffic calming measures that we believe would benefit the village could be implemented as part of a development at Camps' Field. These include extending the 30mph zone and creating at least one new pedestrian crossing.

- Along with the Parish Council and developer, we are committed to working with the Highways Department to extend the 30mph zone past Millfield Place and build a pedestrian crossing (or two if required), financed by the scheme. The new development will give us the leverage with Highways to push for these road safety improvements.
- We would facilitate delivery of these traffic calming measures, which



would be funded by the development.

- A Highways consultant has confirmed that access to the development is more than adequate for a project of this size.

Why develop Camps' Field as a CLT?



Unlike most new housing developments, which are typically undertaken by private developers on purely commercial grounds, Camps' Field will be developed as a Community Land Trust (CLT).

The National CLT Network defines CLTs as “a form of community-led housing, set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets. CLTs act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring that it remains genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for every future occupier.”

This is exactly how and why SWCLT was set up in 2012 as a not-for-profit body, in conjunction with both Stretham and Wilburton Parish Councils. It exists purely to benefit our communities, with membership open to anyone who lives and works in Wilburton or Stretham. We are governed by a trustee board of local, unpaid volunteers who care about the future of both villages, and give their time to



help provide affordable housing for local people. These volunteers know the community well and are committed to safeguarding the sustainability and vibrancy of village life. None of the individual trustees receive any benefit, financial or otherwise, from their involvement with SWCLT.

Ongoing engagement and next steps



Since September 2018, we've run four public consultations

about the Camps' Field site, which were all very well attended. We've also held meetings with local stakeholders including the Parish Council, Recreation Improvement Group, schools and others. Throughout this time, we've been continuously gathering feedback, which has all informed the first working draft of the potential site plan. As we build on this, we'll continue to engage closely with the community in an open and wholly transparent way.

- We'd like to reassure everyone that we very much welcome community engagement and take all comments and feedback into account.



- We will continue to work on the draft plan, taking into account feedback that we are receiving, before applying for planning permission.
- At this stage, the future of Camps' Field is not cast in stone. But we feel passionately that it offers all of us who live in Wilburton a unique opportunity that can only benefit our local community, our village and future generations who want to make a home here.

Other news from our community

At May 2019, SWCLT now owns or part-owns 14 properties at Manor Farm with another 5 properties due to be complete by the end of September and another 4 in Spring 2020.

The next meeting with NHS England on the proposed Doctors Surgery will take place in June with a view to a Planning Application being submitted very soon. The new Doctors Surgery will be a fantastic asset to Stretham and the surrounding villages providing many additional services on top of standard GP appointments. SWCLT is very grateful to Stretham Parish Council in their contribution of CIL money towards bringing the Doctors Surgery to reality.



SWCLT has joined with Stretham Charity Trustees to name a footpath running through Manor Farm after a well respected member of the community, Mr John Kisby. Mr Kisby served as a Trustee with Stretham Charity for many years as well as other voluntary roles within the community, and the Trustees of both SWCLT and Stretham Charity would like to mark the commitment and dedication of Mr Kisby in these roles. The signs to the Footpath will go up very soon.

Find out more about SWCLT

If you'd like to find out more about our work, how to apply for a SWCLT property or how to get more involved, you can find all the details on our website at:

www.strethamwilburtonclt.co.uk

Become a Member

Membership gives you a chance to shape your community and ensure the Trust is working towards its aims. It only costs £1 to join and application forms are available from the Clerk (contact details overleaf) or can be downloaded from our website. As a member you can help make a difference to your community and have a say in its future.



Stay in touch

If you'd like to know more about any aspect of our work or have any thoughts, we're always keen to hear from you. And, if you have a question, let us know and we'll raise it with the Trustees. As a charitable organisation, governed entirely by volunteers, we may not always get back to you straight away but we do take everyone's ideas, comments, thoughts and concerns into account.

Useful contacts

Rachel Watts, Clerk to the Trust
Tel: 07762 040800
Email: swclt.clerk@gmail.com

SWCLT website: www.strethamwilburtonclt.co.uk



National CLT website: www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk