



*from Stephen P. Tomkins
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12th April 2022

For the Attention of the Planning Inspectorate

Appeal reference APP/W0530/W/22/3291523

I write as someone who has known Fulbourn Village and its ancient wetlands for the best part of 50 years. I also write as Chairman of the Cam Valley Forum, a voluntary group, established in 2001. CVF work with our extensive network of partners to protect and improve the environment of the River Cam and its tributaries.

I am frankly surprised that the consultants from Wallingford and, indeed some of the County Planning officers, are so seemingly ignorant of their local ecological history, of the hydrogeology of the fen skirt, and the unrelenting losses of wetland, and its biodiversity, in this County.

Let me set this in context. Fulbourn was bordered by extensive wetlands all its early history. (Its very name describes a stream full of waterfowl!) Fulbourn village was the first place locally to house a Pumping Station, in 1891. This sourced all Cambridge water for 30 years. Within a decade the local Poors Fen dried up. The neighbouring Fleam Dyke Pumping Station was then built in 1921. This was the first of the now many Cambridge Water Company's deep chalk wells. As the first deep pump borehole it supplied half the (old) County of Cambs and Isle of Ely with all of its water needs until 1950. By the 1990's all our Chalk streams were being lost. The solution was seen as 'augmentation' - pumping even more water from the aquifer to support the streams. The local water companies abstract 100 megalitres per day from the whole Cam catchment. This volume (equivalent in volume to 40 Olympic swimming pools daily) has effectively halved annual river flows locally and dropped the aquifer levels to cause streams and rivers to dry up. The local Wilbraham River Protection Society will testify to all this information.

Against this background of unsustainable resource management, we not only have a national and local climate emergency but also a national determination to support wildlife and the environment generally. Doubling Nature here means recovering wetlands and not draining them into non-existence. This is totally backed up (in intent at least) by national and local government. Natural England are deeply concerned about local wetland habitat loss. The Environment Agency want a 60-70% reduction in ground water abstraction and will be driving this with local water companies. The national Chalk Stream Recovery Project would like us to have reservoirs down stream and a 'Chalk Streams First' policy. This we support. What is at least projected in this recovery is therefore a determination to see a rise in our over abstracted ground water not a fall.

In summary, the projected building development on this site is not appropriate in location.

Might I remind the Inspectorate that Gough Way in Cambridge and north-west Girton and Oakington villages flood risk areas (in 1960s developments) were both allowed against the advice at the time that they were flooding vulnerable. Developer pressure is the problem. Rivers have a natural ownership of their flood plains and we incur heavy future financial penalties if we do not respect our natural environment. Climate change and any regard at all for the precautionary principle militates against allowing this appeal.

sincerely

Stephen Tomkins (Chairman Cam Valley Forum)