

September 2012 onwards

Following abortive attempts to buy land on two sites in Back Road, the Allotments working party resumed their search for allotment land in Linton.

In November 2012 Hildersham Parish Council offered Linton Parish Council the option of using their North Holding field in Hildersham. This offer was turned down as the site was too far away from Linton village centre, there was no foot path or safe route to the site and a large section of the land would have needed to be put aside for parking.

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) was published which showed pockets of land being put forward for development. Virtually all of these sites were deemed unsuitable by SCDC. The Allotment Association then looked at these sites based on certain criteria to choose the site best suited to their needs. The preferred site was identified as the field in Horseheath Road adjacent to Lonsdale (SHLAA site 032) and owned by the Diocese of Ely and outside the Village Envelope. Several meetings and much dialogue has taken place with representatives from the Diocese who have made it very clear that they do not wish to sell the land for allotments. However if a small development were to be permitted then they may donate some land for allotment use. As previously stated development has been refused by SCDC under the SHLAA.

In March 2013 the Parish Council agreed to seek compulsory purchase on the land in question. Legal advice was sought from South Cambs District Council (SCDC) to ensure that the correct procedures and information were gained before starting the process. We were reminded that this should only be as a last resort (email dated 21st March 2013 refers). We were advised to make a formal offer to the Diocese to purchase the land so that all options had been exhausted. In June 2013 a market valuation for the land was received from the District Valuer which included an element of 'Hope Value' reflecting a higher value than underlying agricultural values. This equated to £14.5k per hectare. In June 2013 the Council wrote to the Diocese making a conditional offer to purchase five acres of land at £16k per acre. In July 2013 we received a response from the Diocese rejecting this offer and advising that they would strongly resist compulsory purchase. They also stated that they would much prefer to see whether there was a route that achieved all parties' objectives. For example, if the PC was to support some housing development on part of the field and if that persuaded SCDC to approve it, it might generate sufficient capital that (i) they could donate allotments to the Allotment Association for free or at a significantly reduced cost; and (ii) they would invest the balance of the capital realised in higher-yielding stocks and shares and use the income in furtherance of their Christian mission in the Diocese. In August 2013 a public meeting was held to update residents on the current situation and attended by representatives from the Diocese. Those residents present voted overwhelmingly to pursue the purchase of allotment land. Meetings with the Diocese are ongoing but to date there has been no compromise.

In August 2014 the County Council Highway Authority (HA) confirmed that a Transport Statement would be required to be submitted to enable the HA to provide comments and to ascertain the impact of the proposed development. A conceptual plan has also been drawn up for the proposed site.

Dialogue has continued with the Diocese of Ely but again no compromise has been reached.

In August 2015 the Diocese of Ely submitted an outline planning application (S/1969/15/OL) for up to 50 houses and 30 allotments on the site in Horseheath Road, adjacent to Lonsdale .

In September 2015 the Allotments Association arranged for a soil test to be carried out on the required land in preparation for compulsory purchase.