**Orchard Park Community Council**

**Planning Application S/2559/11 – Gallagher Estates and Lands Improvement**

**Site A (off Ring Fort Road) and Site B (off Chieftain Way) - the erection of 112 dwellings, including vehicular access and Construction of a mixed use building involving 7 retail units (840sqm) and 28 flats, (2, 1 bedroom and 26, 2 bedroom) including landscaping and open space.**

**Objection**

Orchard Park Community Council wish to object to Planning Application S/2559/11 for the reasons detailed below. The Council wishes to speak at planning committee at time of determination and, in the event of the application being refused without going to committee, wishes to be informed of, and to consider, the reasons for refusal by the Authority.

The Community Council have carefully considered all the submitted plans and documents, and pre-application discussions in regard to design and S106 with the Local Planning Authority and Gallagher Estates. We have considered the 2007 Arbury Park Design Guide, the 2010 SCDC Site Specific Policies DPD and the 2011 Orchard Park Design Guidance SPD and the extent to which this application complies with those. The Community Council has also considered the Government’s Localism Bill and the clear direction that local communities should benefit from development, rather than see green spaces, local facilities and services like local schools or recreational facilities overstretched.

Both sites are very important to Orchard Park. The local retail centre is a crucial aspect of the Masterplan vision for Orchard Park as a sustainable mixed use urban fringe development, and Site A will also form an important gateway into Cambridge and as part of the urban frontage for Orchard Park.

The homes proposed were not part of the original plans for Orchard Park. They are additional homes imposed on Orchard Park through consideration of the Housing Shortfall for South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) by a planning inspector, who allowed the total number of homes planned for the development to rise to over 1120+. In January 2010 SCDC adopted the Site Specific Policies DPD which included the additional homes for Orchard Park. The DPD accepted the need for mitigation of the impact of the additional homes for incoming and existing residents and laid down the principles constraints and requirements against which applications should be measured, including noise, air quality and transport impacts. It also stated that: *Any additional residential development will need to make provision for its recreational needs in accordance with the Council’s Open Space and Recreation Standards, as well as any enhanced or additional community services and facilities to serve the additional homes. Consideration may be given to off-site provision of the active recreational needs of new residents in consultation with Orchard Park Community Council as the managing agents.*

The Community Council objects to this application as it fails to conform to the planning framework requirements for Orchard Park including both the 2010 DPD and the 2011 Design Guidance SPD. It considers that in relegating the local retail centre to one suitable primarily for ‘top-up’ convenience store shopping only it will not meet the needs of residents for a thriving and sustainable local centre and will result in an increased dependence on cars and increased pressure on the A14 and surrounding roads as residents continue to drive out of Orchard Park for their shopping needs.

The Community Council also considers there will be unacceptable increased pressure on the facilities in Orchard Park – public open space and our recreational and sporting facilities – which this application fails to address in the provision of attractive public open spaces or through the S106 process.

The Community Council addresses these points in detail below.

**The Local Retail Centre.**

Gallaghers already have full planning permission for another scheme for the local retail centre, which was granted in 2009 and was true to the original vision for Orchard Park as a development which would provide enough shops to be mainly self sufficient. The Reserved matters application for Orchard Pak, approved in August 2009, was for shop units to create a local retail centre, totalling 1,523 sq m gross retail floorspace and including a supermarket anchor store of 958 sq m for the core convenience unit).

In 2010 SCDC and Cambridge City Council adopted informal planning policy guidance in regard to foodstore provision across North West Cambridge. This recognised that this part of the City is poorly served by main foodstores, resulting in high levels of spending on food shopping by people living in the NW Cambridge area, including Orchard Park residents, taking place outside the area, particularly to the Tesco stores at Milton and Bar Hill, and unsustainable travel patterns. Where shopping takes place more locally, residents travel to smaller supermarkets like Budgens in Arbury Court or Aldi in Histon Rd.

This application has halved the retail space proposed for the local retail centre at Orchard Park and limited the size of the main supermarket anchor store to one suitable only for ‘top-up’ convenience store shopping. The Community Council also notes that many small convenience stores cannot offer the range of goods and competitive pricing available in small supermarkets such as Budgens in Arbury Court. The most recent data from the Government on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2010) points to the very high need levels across Orchard Park, including the Income Levels affecting Children Index. The Community Council considers that a larger anchor store and more variety of small shops will better meet the diverse shopping needs of Orchard Park residents.

**The Community Council believes strongly that Orchard Park deserves something much closer to the original vision, especially for the supermarket anchor store on the site and not simply to have its local retail centre relegated to ‘top-up’ convenience store shopping**.

Limiting the size of the local retail centre also limits opportunities for eventual occupiers. Gallaghers’ own Retail Assessment states that the most likely occupiers of the main store would be Tesco (as a Tesco Express) or Spar, together with 1 or 2 hot food take-aways and that interest has been expressed in the other small units by bookmakers, charity shops, bakers or opticians. The Community Council believes that Orchard Park residents are best served by a wider and greater range of retailers, such as a pharmacy or chemist, florist, hairdresser.

The Community Council notes that the range of use classes proposed are A1 Shops Net Tradable Area, A2 Financial and professional services, A3 Restaurants and cafes, A5 Hot food takeaways with opening hours of 06:00 to 23:00. The Community Council would not support a blanket time period across all use classes, for instance, we would seek a more restricted time period for A2 uses

Many retailers approached by Gallaghers said that the location of the local retail centre at the rear edge of Orchard Park was limiting footfall and therefore interest in the shops. The Community Council believes that SCDC and Gallaghers should consider these responses and if the Kings Hedges Rd site might be a better location for a thriving and sustainable local retail centre which will better meet our needs.

**Transport**

**The Community Council objects strongly to the lack of adequate cycle provision for the local retail centre and the flats above**. All cycle provision must conform to the2011 Orchard Park Design Guidance SPD which states: *Higher levels of cycle parking are required due to the location of Orchard Park, close to the city centre and on bus routes, potentially reducing car dependency. Adequate levels of cycle parking, which is convenient to access and use, is covered and secure and afforded high levels of natural surveillance, should be incorporated within the design and layout of individual land parcels, as set out in the South Cambridgeshire District Council’s parking standards. See also The “District Design Guide: High Quality and Sustainable Design in South Cambridgeshire”. Cycle parking for employees should also be convenient, covered, secure and afforded high levels of natural surveillance. Public cycle parking should be of the “Sheffield” type to ensure cycles can be parked conveniently and securely.*

**The Community Council considers that the provision of inadequate and small scale retail space will mean that Orchard Park residents continue to travel outside of Orchard Park for most of their shopping needs, increasing traffic on local roads and the A14.**

Since the withdrawal of bus services within Orchard Park despite almost £1m already paid from Orchard Park development money to Stagecoach to run buses through Orchard Park, most residents will continue to be forced into greater reliance on their cars for their shopping needs. The Community Council remains very disappointed that the vision of Orchard Park, which was for buses to serve the development internally as well as the Cambridgeshire Guided Bus, has been compromised, and that residents do not have access to a ‘bus stop within three minutes walk’ which was part of the Masterplan and following agreed documents. **It considers that the provision of a thriving and sustainable local retail centre, enabling residents to meet their shopping needs locally, is the only way to address the need to minimise unsustainable travel patterns and reliance of cars.**

**Public Open Space**

A key element to the proposals is the public open space. The Community Council has worked hard with Gallaghers to look at the main public square in the local retail centre, enlarging it from the original plans, creating a shared space public realm environment around the square and a high quality flexible space on the square which we hope will also provide an opportunity for regular local farmers or craft markets to be managed by the Community Council. On balance the Community Council is pleased with the landscaping proposals for the main public square – POS2 – but consider that through landscaping an element of natural play opportunities should also be introduced into the green space and that the opportunity to incorporate a significant public art scheme must not be missed.

Additional open space and play areas are required for development associated with the additional 220 residential units permitted under Policy SP/1 in the 2010 SCDC Site Specific Policies DPD. These open spaces should be high quality and attractive designed schemes to provide attractive settings to the streetscene, enhance facades, define the edges of the public realm and public open spaces they adjoin and offer some play opportunities.

The Community Council are very disappointed with the remaining green spaces suggested both in size and location, including Gallaghers’ suggestion that a small buffer strip alongside busy main roads could ever be usable green space for residents.

**The Community Council therefore objects strongly to the overall public open space proposals and considers that Gallaghers must provide far higher quality green space across both the sites for those who will live there as well as enhancing the area for existing residents.**

**Developer Gain Money – S106**

A key part of the Government’s Localism Bill is ensuring that local communities benefit from development, rather than see green spaces, local facilities and services like local schools overstretched.

The Community Council is appalled that Gallaghers are trying only to maximise their profit and minimise what is due to our community in this application, because adding these extra homes above those in the masterplan means there will be a high deficit of green open space and increased pressure on our existing facilities across Orchard Park. The Community Council consider Gallaghers have not matched the criteria given in SCDC’s Site Specific Policies DPD and Policy SP/1 (2.9) which states: *Any additional residential development will need to make provision for its recreational needs in accordance with the Council’s Open Space and Recreation Standards, as well as any enhanced or additional community services and facilities to serve the additional homes. Consideration may be given to off-site provision of the active recreational needs of new residents in consultation with Orchard Park Community Council as the managing agents.*

The Community Council urge South Cambridgeshire District Council to reject out of hand Gallagher’s proposal for £1million S106 money that offers our community almost no benefits once the money which must support the additional pressure on education – almost £1m in itself – is taken out of the equation.

**The amount required through the planning framework is £1.6 million. Gallaghers are offering just £1million. From the £500,000+ which would come to the Community Council and which Gallaghers are refusing to give, the Community Council intend to provide badly needed allotments for our community (up to 50), kick-start and manage the regular markets on the main square and extend the changing room facilities on Ring Fort Rd to provide a high quality flexible community space, increasing access and usage of the sporting facilities.**

**Affordable Housing**

**The Community Council recognises the need for and supports affordable housing and we object to the provision from Gallaghers of less than 30% affordable housing in this application, its concentration on one site and the prevalence of 2 bedroomed flats**. The Community Council believes that affordable housing of 40% as required by SCDC policy should be sought. It also believes that the distribution and unit size of affordable housing across both sites should be consistent with the creation of a mixed and balanced community.

The Community Council is concerned that no details of tenure and reasons to support a 50/50 split between intermediate and social rent have been given, and wish for clarification on if the units will be let under the Government’s new Affordable Rent scheme and at what percentage of market rent that would be set, given the very high median rent levels in Cambridge.

**The Community Council is also very disappointed that once again, affordable housing is proposed ahead of and separately from market housing**. Building only some of the local retail centre site and the affordable homes will mean that remaining parts are left lying empty and disused for some time to come and that once again there is a lack of joined up thinking to provide for the needs of a new community, prevent future building work disruption on established sites or to recognise the pressures that increasing the level of affordable housing on Orchard Park ahead of the market housing puts on the services, including those run by the Community Council.

We urge South Cambridgeshire District Council to consider the need to create a mixed and balanced community and match the pace of private and affordable builds.

In 2012/13 the Community Council is investing c £20,000 in community development on Orchard Park, especially in services for children and young people, and we consider that, as proposed, this new development will put additional and unacceptable pressure on our services.

**Design**

The Community Council has looked carefully at the design of the only detailed building – the one containing the shop units and 28 flats - and considers that some of the green facades proposed will present a stark and unattractive contrast to surrounding streets. The Community Council also does not consider that the mixed use building meets the criteria of the 2011 Orchard Park Design Guidance SPD which states: *the intention of development on land parcel COM2a is for a mixed use Local Centre (key frontage 1), with the aim of providing a civic focus and area of activity. Development proposals should provide a high quality landmark with a strong frontage overlooking Unwin Square, creating a distinct arrival space.*

**Public Art**

The Community Council objects to the application as it fails to comply with SCDC’s requirements for public art both in general policy terms and specifically for Orchard Park.

The Community Council is keen that proposals for public art, as required by SCDC, should enhance the main public square. The previous permitted application had proposed a water feature or the Community Council have suggested a public clock which could be an exciting proposal involving residents with an artist.