An initial social sustainability assessment for Marleigh

September 2021

1. Introduction

This report describes a first social sustainability assessment for the Marleigh development in Cambridge. Social Life was commissioned to carry out this work as part of Locality's wider community building activities for South Cambridgeshire District Council on the proposed Marleigh development to the east of the city centre.

Marleigh sits inside the Parish of Fen Ditton on the border of South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Council. When built it will include up to 1,300 homes, thirty percent of these will be affordable. A primary school and community facilities will also be built. Building began in October 2019 with the first residents moving into their new homes in summer 2020.

Social sustainability is a concept that describes the strength of a community and the wellbeing of individuals. It sits alongside environmental and economic sustainability as one of the three pillars of sustainability, first described in the 1987 Brundland Commission.[1]

Social Life describes social sustainability as[2]:

"A process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places they live and work. Social sustainability combines design of the physical realm with design of the social world – infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve."

Our aim is to carry out a series of social sustainability assessments to capture over time how the new Marleigh development is evolving into a new community that supports people to thrive, both individually and collectively. If the Marleigh community is to succeed, it will need to knit into the surrounding area, particularly the communities that are the immediate neighbours to the site.

The initial social sustainability assessment has focused on these existing communities, as very few people are yet living in Marleigh. This will enable plans for social infrastructure to be tailored to meet the needs of both new residents and residents in living in the wider area. The hope is that new Marleigh residents can benefit from the strengths of existing communities and existing communities can benefit from the facilities and services that flow from the new homes.

The research took place in spring and early summer 2021. COVID-19 restrictions limited the activities that could be safety carried out at a time when social distancing made face to face conversations impossible, and when community stakeholders were busy and preoccupied with local issues. This first assessment was therefore carried out online, recognising the need to keep residents and stakeholders and interviewers, safe.

We found many strengths in the three communities, including strong local identities, some strong social infrastructure, traditions of local activism and campaigning, and evidence of the way that residents had come together to support each other during the pandemic. There are also weaknesses, aspects that are undermining social sustainability, including poor public transport, limited housing options especially for people on lower incomes, weak provision for young people and for some, the difficulties of living in poverty.

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[1] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf
[2] Social Life (2012) Design for Social Sustainability http://www.social-life.co/media/files/DESIGN_FOR_SOCIAL_SUSTAINABILITY_3.pdf

Teversham and Fen Ditton have broadly similar profiles as relatively affluent villages on the edge of the city with well-established social supports and local facilities; East Barnwell has more vulnerabilities, some stakeholders described a sense of being forgotten and marginalised, with weaker service provision, however there were also well established traditions of neighbourliness and some strong social relationships.

The social sustainability assessment

The project fell into three stages.

- **Workshop**

An online workshop was convened bringing together local partners and stakeholders, to present the approach and to help build understanding of the approach. It also gave an opportunity to begin to discuss what is boosting, and what is undermining, social sustainability in the three areas.

- **Interviews**

We carried out 11 interviews with stakeholders online or on the phone to discuss their perspective on social sustainability issues, and to begin to map assets, facilities and services that are supporting local communities.

Five interviews were carried out with stakeholders in East Barnwell and Abbey ward; three in Fen Ditton and three in Teversham. People interviewed included parish and district councillors, representatives of local churches, schools nurseries and community organisations.

- **Local workshops**

We convened three workshops to discuss what was emerging from the interviews in the three areas. These were rich discussions that bought together a small number of stakeholders in each place, the District Council, Locality and Social Life researchers.

2. Understanding social sustainability

Social Life's social sustainability framework was used to shape this work. Social Life uses social sustainability as a framework to bring together and analyse the different factors that support local communities – such as social relationships, civic engagement, and residents' ability to influence decision-making – alongside an assessment of the quality of the built environment and community infrastructure. The framework was initially developed through a commission from the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England) aimed at bringing together research about what makes new housing developments thrive or fail.

The framework can be applied to new housing developments, and estate or area regeneration schemes. It has been used to plan services and schemes, and as the starting point for a metrics framework to measure the social impact of new housing and area regeneration.

Social Life's framework was used to create a bespoke social sustainability framework for the Berkeley Group, intended to be used at the pre-planning and post-occupancy stages on new housing developments. It has subsequently been the basis of social outcome measurement on housing growth and estate regeneration schemes for a number of clients including Notting Hill Genesis, Peabody Trust, igloo regeneration, Countryside Properties and Cheltenham & Tewksbury District Councils.

The framework is made up of four dimensions - amenities and social infrastructure, social and cultural life, voice and influence and adaptability and resilience - that bring together a range of factors.

Social Life's Social Sustainability Framework

Amenities & social infrastructure

Access to amenities, services and other activities that cater to the needs of all residents and enable collective community life.

Social & cultural life

The less tangible elements of local life, from belonging, neighbourliness and relationships between different groups, to local identity and a sense of place.

Voice & influence

Residents' ability to participate and take action to shape their area, including groups, forums and governance structures which can engage people in local decision-making.

Adaptability & resilience

Capacity of places to adapt to changing needs and circumstances, including under-used space and flexibility in planning.

3. Understanding the area around Marleigh

The three neighbouring communities of East Barnwell (and the wider Abbey ward that it sits within), Teversham and Fen Ditton were the focus of this assessment. They are the closest areas to Marleigh and the ones most likely to benefit from new facilities and populations, or to be affected by increased traffic and pressures on local infrastructure.
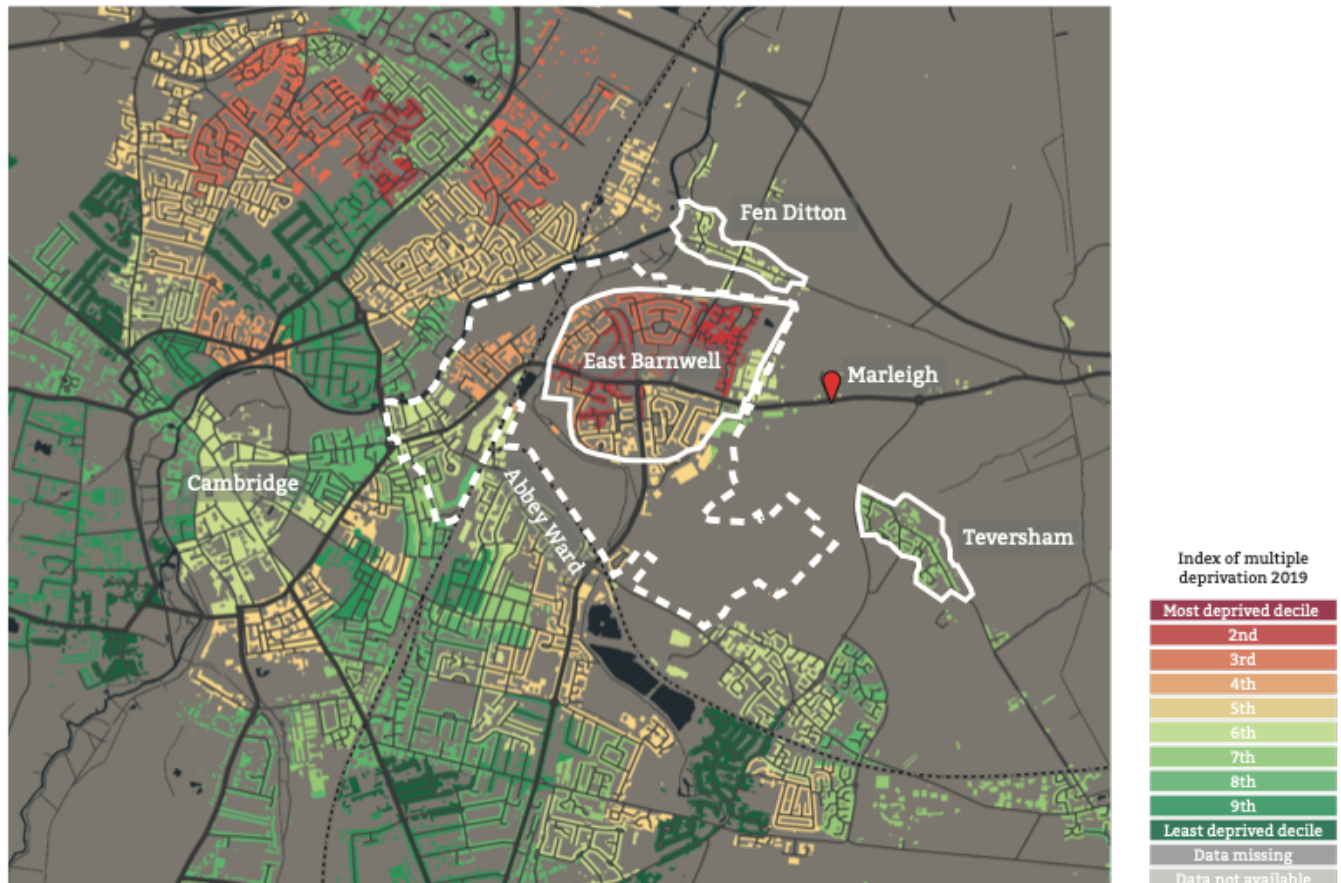

East Barnwell/Abbey ward

Fen Ditton

Teversham

The three areas are different in terms of the social and economic characteristics of their populations. East Barnwell is more deprived – the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation scores part of this area as falling within the second decile (or lowest 20%) of neighbourhoods by deprivation score, with other parts being slightly less deprived falling into the third decile. Teversham and Fen Ditton do not share the same levels of deprivation, the IMD scores them both as above average in terms of affluence. Fen Ditton falls into the sixth decile (where the fifth decile is average), Teversham into the seventh decile.

Marleigh's neighbouring communities, by deprivation
Source: Consumer Data Research Centre[3]

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[3] https://maps.cdrc.ac.uk/#/geodemographics/imde2019/default/BTTTFFT/14/0.1969/52.1992/

5. Social sustainability in the communities around Marleigh

We found many strengths in the three communities, including strong local identities, some strong social infrastructure, traditions of campaigning and activism, and evidence of the way that people had come together to support each other during the pandemic. There are also weaknesses, aspects that are undermining social sustainability, including poor public transport, limited housing options especially for people on lower incomes, weak provision for young people and for some, the difficulties of living in poverty.

Teversham and Fen Ditton had broadly similar profiles as relatively affluent villages on the edge of the city with well-established social supports and local facilities. East Barnwell had more vulnerabilities, some stakeholders described a sense of being forgotten and marginalised, with weaker service provision, however here too there were well established traditions of neighbourliness and some strong social relationships.

We have made an initial assessment of the strength of social sustainability in the three areas, using Social Life's framework. This compares the three communities to what we believe would be expected in similar villages and neighbourhoods. The analysis is intended as a tool to inform community building and investment in facilities and wider social infrastructure, rather than a prescriptive diagnosis. It is based on in-depth conversations with stakeholders and does not include resident voice (other than where residents were stakeholders). It is important to bear these caveats in mind when using this analysis.

East Barnwell: Adaptability & resilience here is weaker than would have been expected of similar places, because of the impact of poverty and health inequalities on everyday experience. However other dimensions score higher. Alongside some weaknesses there are also strengths in amenities & infrastructure, social & cultural life and voice & influence.

Fen Ditton: The village has a strong social & cultural life, within other dimensions there are both strengths and weaknesses and the score is as expected of similar places.

Teversham: The village has a strong social & cultural life, within other dimensions there are both strengths and weaknesses and the score is as expected of similar places.

The detail of the social sustainability assessments is in the next section.

The social sustainability assessment: settlements around Marleigh

Voice & influence
Residents' ability & willingness to take action to shape the local environment; governance structures to represent residents & engage them in shaping local decisions.

Amenities & social infrastructure
Amenities & support services for individuals & communities: schools, social spaces, transport & community workers.
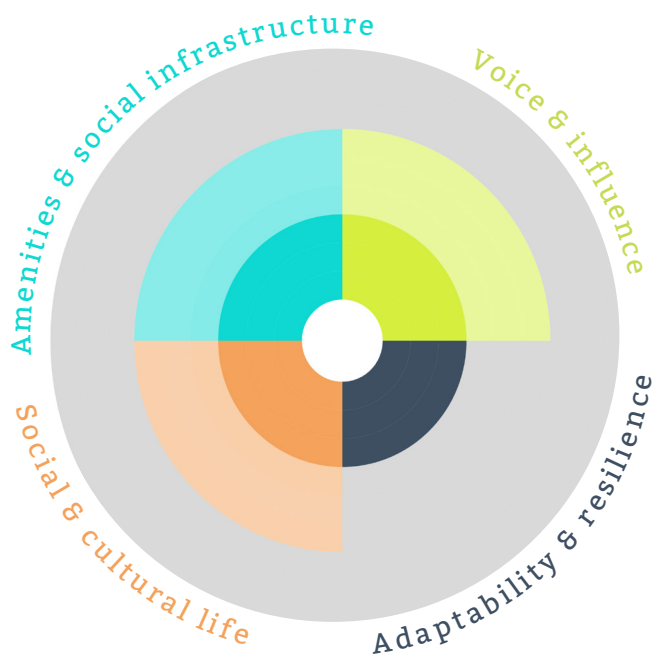
Social & cultural life
Sense of belonging, wellbeing, community cohesion, safety, relationships with neighbours & local networks.

Adaptability & resilience
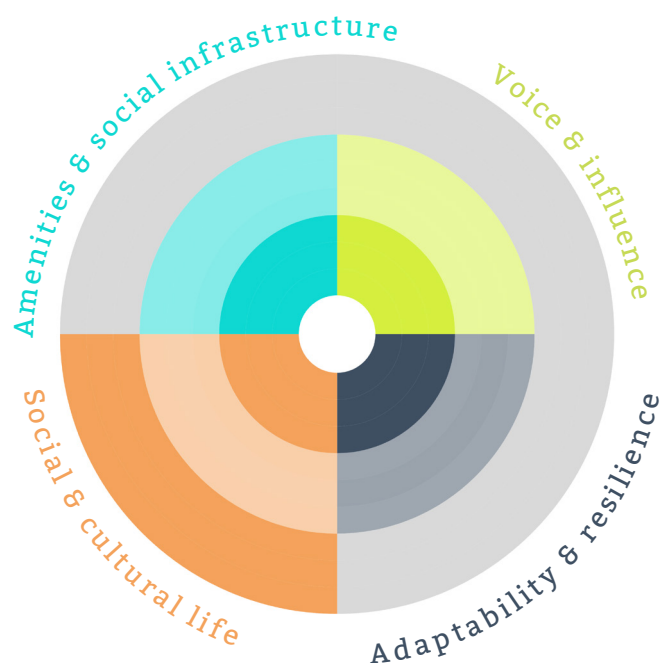Flexible planning; housing, services & infrastructure that can adapt over time; adaptable use of buildings & public space.

Key: larger segments indicate a stronger score. A small segment indicates weaknesses in this dimension; a large segment indicates strengths.
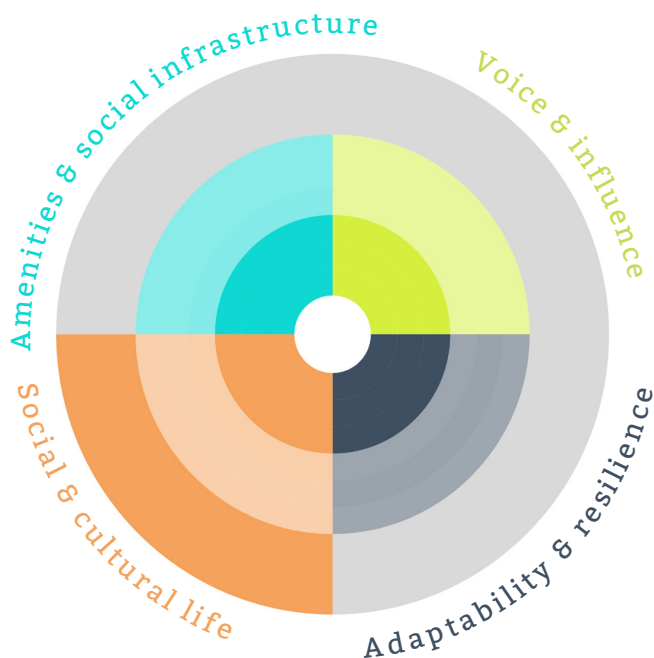

East Barnwell/ Abbey ward social sustainability

Fen Ditton social sustainability

Teversham social sustainability

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5. The detailed social sustainability assessments

East Barnwell

Social & cultural life: *East Barnwell (& wider Abbey ward)*

Key elements	Strengths	Weaknesses
How people from different backgrounds co-exist	Stakeholders generally report people from different backgrounds get on well.	The artery roads divide Abbey ward.
How people feel about the place they live	There is pride in the local area.	Stakeholders report that people feel the area is forgotten.
External perceptions of the place & how residents feel about them	There is a sense that people pull together and look out for each other. This came out in the response to COVID.	Children and young people are perceived as troublesome.
Neighbourliness and strength of local social relationships	It is seen as a friendly area.	People don't know other residents beyond their immediate neighbours.
Local quality of life and wellbeing	There are strong, multi-generational family support networks.	There is not much mixing between the estates.
Sense of belonging	People have a feeling of belonging to the area - but to Abbey, not to Cambridge.	There are few activities supporting quality of life and wellbeing.
Sense of local identity	Generally stakeholders report that Abbey is a safe area, including at night.	Not everyone feels there is a strong sense of belonging.
Feelings of safety	Abbey ward is a green area, which supports health and wellbeing.	Local identity is often linked to negative associations about the area.
		People recognise that their area is often viewed negatively from outside, in particular there is a belief that Abbey is not safe.

Amenities & social infrastructure: *East Barnwell (& Abbey ward)*

Key elements	Strengths	Weaknesses
Good quality education for all	Local nurseries are well attended and well thought of.	There is no secondary school and no classes for adult learning.
Accessible healthcare for all	The primary school has new, positive, leadership.	The GP is oversubscribed and shared with Fen Ditton. Many residents have complex health needs.
Transport that meets everyone's needs	Abbey has its own GP surgery.	There are no direct bus routes to other areas, apart from to central Cambridge.
Spaces that can be used by local groups and that bring people together	There is regular bus service.	Community spaces are lacking, East Barnwell Community Centre has been waiting ten years for renovation.
Provision for teenagers, children, older people, families	Local charities, community groups, the local school and churches make their spaces available to residents and organise events.	There is little provision for young people.
Spaces that enable residents to meet	Local parks provide a focal point for families.	The are no pubs, restaurants, cafes or indoor in the area apart from the McDonalds drive-thru.
Good quality public spaces accessible to all	Parks, the splash pond and Coldham Common are well used.	

Voice & influence: *East Barnwell (& wider Abbey ward)*

Key elements	Strengths	Weaknesses
Trust & confidence in agencies	Local people have great confidence in the local nurseries, local charities, community groups and churches.	Low-income families are reported to find it hard to trust agencies.
Responsiveness of agencies to local issues	Residents tend to get involved in campaign groups about local issues.	There is a sense of despondency at not having been heard in the past.
Willingness to act to tackle problems	Local stakeholders are proactive in setting up informal groups.	There is low turnout in local elections.
Local activism & political participation	Residents are vocal on local Facebook groups.	Stakeholders report that some groups are reluctant to get involved.
Existence of informal groups & associations	Local charities exert influence on behalf of local people.	Stakeholders report that residents do not feel they have influence over what happens in the area.
Participation in forums for exercising influence		Attendance at council meetings is dominated by middle class people.
Perceptions of influence		
Citizen participation in decision-making		

Adaptability & resilience: *East Barnwell (& wider Abbey ward)*

Key elements	Strengths	Weaknesses
Local practices of collaboration	Charities and community organisations are proactive in engaging the community and setting up events.	Levels of poverty and health inequality undermine life chances and wellbeing.
Use & adoption of new technologies	The pandemic engaged different groups of residents in volunteering.	Volunteering is dominated by particular groups.
Residents' ability to shape their own neighbourhood in the future	Charities and community organisations support residents to learn digital skills and access computers.	Weak education, employment and low income in Abbey prevents residents from using and adopting new technologies.
Capacity to adapt to changing populations, needs and aspirations	The community is seen to have coped well with the changes in demographics over recent years.	Stakeholders report residents feel disempowered.
Capacity to adapt to changing economic circumstances	New leadership of the primary school has successfully engaged with the local community.	There are concerns about the local sustainability of the nursery and the primary school.
Availability and quality of local work opportunities	Cofarm successfully developed agricultural land for the people of Abbey.	There are concerns that Marleigh will not offer opportunities to Abbey residents.
Extent of under-used space, adaptable spaces & facilities		Marshalls is due to close.
		The Hub at Abbey People is constrained by space.

SOCIAL
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Fen Ditton

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Social & cultural life: *Fen Ditton*

Key elements

How people from different backgrounds co-exist

How people feel about the place they live

External perceptions of the place & how residents feel about them

Neighbourliness and strength of local social relationships

Local quality of life and wellbeing

Sense of belonging

Sense of local identity

Feelings of safety

Strengths

The community is described as friendly.

Stakeholders think that people feel responsible for each other.

People are said to like where they live.

Local life is described as having "a village feel."

There is neighbourliness, especially amongst some groups.

Fen Ditton is a green village.

The Kings Head is well used by the village.

There is a sense of belonging linked to the history of the place and a strong sense of "being a villager."

There is a distinct local identity characterised by closeness to the river.

Some new developments have integrated well into the village.

People feel safe in the area.

Weaknesses

Residents in some parts of the village (including those further away from the centre) are less involved in village life than those living towards the centre.

Stakeholders report less engagement in village life by residents in social housing or people who have recently moved to Fen Ditton.

Few people have school aged children, and families with children tend to live in certain roads where housing is less expensive.

Not everyone shares the same sense of local identity.

Amenities & social infrastructure: *Fen Ditton*

Key elements

Good quality education for all

Accessible healthcare for all

Transport that meets everyone's needs

Spaces that can be used by local groups and that bring people together

Provision for teenagers, children, older people, families

Spaces that enable residents to meet

Good quality public spaces accessible to all

Strengths

The primary school is well supported by the local community.

There is a GP surgery nearby in East Barnwell.

Fen Ditton has a regular bus service and good cycling routes.

There is a village hall, this has been bought by a local resident and can now be used by the community.

There is are two allotments groups and a gardening club.

There is a dedicated older people's group "The Coffee Pot".

Fen Ditton has three pubs, one is used by the village and the others attract customers from Cambridge and other villages.

Residents have come together to establish a community pavillion as a social centre.

Events like The Bumps attract people to the village.

Festivals and street parties bring people together, even during the pandemic.

Weaknesses

There are concerns about the primary school's future viability.

Elderly residents and people with mobility difficulties can have problems accessing services.

People with mobility issues can face problems using the bus.

There are few community buildings.

Youth provision is weak.

There are few places for people new to the village and people living in social housing to meet.

The local church may close.

Voice & influence: *Fen Ditton*

Key elements

Trust & confidence in agencies

Responsiveness of agencies to local issues

Willingness to act to tackle problems

Local activism & political participation

Existence of informal groups & associations

Participation in forums for exercising influence

Perceptions of influence

Citizen participation in decision-making

Strengths

The parish council regularly canvases people's opinions on local issues and distributes a local newsletter.

The parish council swiftly organised a Covid support group.

There is a tradition of local campaigning and people coming together, the Fen Ditton Village Society is often central to this. An example is in the response to the proposed sewage works at Honey Hill.

There are groups that support vulnerable groups of residents.

Many residents participate in the parish.

Weaknesses

People living at the edges of the village are less likely to become involved in local activism.

Middle class people have stronger voices in the parish council. Other groups are not often represented.

There is a perception that residents in social housing participate less in decision-making than people living in other parts of the village.

Adaptability & resilience: *Fen Ditton*

Key elements

Local practices of collaboration

Use & adoption of new technologies

Residents' ability to shape their own neighbourhood in the future

Capacity to adapt to changing populations, needs and aspirations

Capacity to adapt to changing economic circumstances

Availability and quality of local work opportunities

Extent of under-used space, adaptable spaces & facilities

Strengths

Many people volunteered for the COVID support group, which is continuing and focusing on loneliness and other issues.

The parish council will take responsibility for new developments in its footprint as is is developed, possibly giving it more scope to act.

The village is relatively affluent.

People may benefit from new facilities built as part of new developments.

Weaknesses

Not all groups of residents were represented in the COVID support group.

There is little affordable housing and few options for young people who want to stay in the village.

There is some opposition to building new affordable housing, and a concern that what is built will not be available to local people.

There is a concern that affordable housing built in new developments will be shared ownership rather than social housing for rent.

Traffic is a problem.

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Teversham

Social & cultural life: *Teversham*

Key elements	Strengths	Weaknesses
How people from different backgrounds co-exist *How people feel about the place they live* *External perceptions of the place & how residents feel about them* *Neighbourliness and strength of local social relationships* *Local quality of life and wellbeing* *Sense of belonging* *Sense of local identity* *Feelings of safety*	There is neighbourliness and people look out for each other. Parents at the local school are described as being supportive of each other, there are good social networks between families. The local community are active supporting local elderly people. Residents see themselves as belonging to Teversham Village, separate from Cambridge. There is a sense of rural identity and of being on the edge of Cambridge. Hope Community Church has been trying to develop a sense of local identity across Teversham village and the Foxgloves area. The primary school holds events and share local traditions. Stakeholders report residents generally feel safe in the village.	Teversham Parish is seen as being made up of two areas, Foxgloves and Teversham village, each with their own sense of identity and demographic characteristics. The Foxgloves area also aligns itself with the neighbouring village of Cherry Hinton. Teversham is viewed by some as being "a bit overlooked" other villages are seen to have more facilities and amenities. The Foxgloves area of Teversham is described as more urban with a more transient community, with a different identity to the established village.

Amenities & social infrastructure: *Teversham*

Key elements	Strengths	Weaknesses
Good quality education for all *Accessible healthcare for all* *Transport that meets everyone's needs* *Spaces that can be used by local groups and that bring people together* *Provision for teenagers, children, older people, families* *Spaces that enable residents to meet* *Good quality public spaces accessible to all*	Teversham Primary School is well regarded and an important community hub. The parish provides e-bikes for hire. Many cycle with their children to school. The recreation ground is used by Teversham Colts football club and the school. There is an elderly persons group organising boules, Hope Communith Church organise a lunch club. Local playgrounds are popular and there is a skatepark for older teenagers. Parents meet in the park in Lady Jermy Way. Teversham Chapel and the Conservative Club make their spaces available to local groups. The community church and primary school run a regular events . A Teversham festival is planned for the summer.	Teversham does not have its own GP practice. Stakeholders describe risks to pedestrians from fast moving traffic. The bus service to Cambridge and Newmarket is very limited creating problems for older residents. The village church does not have a vicar and there are fears that without a vicar, this church will close. There are few spaces in Teversham for older children to meet. Teversham is described as impoverished, with no shops, cafe or pub. There is no village hall.

Voice & influence: *Teversham*

Key elements	Strengths	Weaknesses
Trust & confidence in agencies *Responsiveness of agencies to local issues* *Willingness to act to tackle problems* *Local activism & political participation* *Existence of informal groups & associations* *Participation in forums for exercising influence* *Perceptions of influence* *Citizen participation in decision-making*	The parish council has improved its website and social media presence, and sends out regular emails. Residents successfully campaigned for lower speed limits. The parish council made a COVID hardship fund available to residents in need. During the pandemic the school acted as an information hub for parents. Local people actively voice concerns about village infrastructure and traffic problems. Residents have joined with other villages to campaign against the new sewage works at Honey Hill. Stakeholders describe district and county councillors as effective representatives. The parish council was widely consulted about new developments in the area.	Some stakeholders feel that local people do not think they have a voice. The council is seen as slow at road repairs. Some stakeholders feel that older people's views are "less listened to". Stakeholders report little ethnic diversity on the Parish, and underrepresentation of young people. People living in the Foxgloves area area are less likely to get involved in the parish council. There are concerns at the effectiveness of consultation by developers.

Adaptability & resilience: *Teversham*

Key elements	Strengths	Weaknesses
Local practices of collaboration *Use & adoption of new technologies* *Residents' ability to shape their own neighbourhood in the future* *Capacity to adapt to changing populations, needs and aspirations* *Capacity to adapt to changing economic circumstances* *Availability and quality of local work opportunities* *Extent of under-used space, adaptable spaces & facilities*	During the pandemic the parish worked with the church and the district council to deliver meals to vulnerable residents. Residents do come together to sort out problems and look out for each other. The COVID response group had many volunteers. In the future, nearby developments may offer new connections, better infrastructure and amenities. New families are moving into the area and the village has become more ethnically diverse in recent years.	There are fears that the reduction in affordable housing at Marleigh will reduce affordable housing options. There are concerns that the affordable housing in Marleigh is easily identifiable. Some residents are living on low incomes, a significant number of pupils at the primary school are on pupil premium. Stakeholders are concerned about the increase in traffic and speeding on Airport Way as the local population grows. Broadband is seen as not good enough for people who work from home. Stakeholders describe how the uncertain future of Marshalls and the airport creates worries for their employees.

6. Implications and next steps

This analysis suggests some approaches that could strengthen social sustainability in these three areas, both through community building for the Marleigh development, and through the social infrastructure and services provided through the development in the future.

- **Boosting social integration:** Different life experiences affect the way that people from different social backgrounds become involved in local social life, and in local decision making. There is a need to make sure that people who have less resources are enabled to take part in local activities. This could include supporting events and initiatives that explicitly aim to promote social integration.

- **Tackling inequality:** In East Barnwell, the experience of living with poverty and poor health outcomes affects many residents. A range of initiatives, from reducing with food poverty to promoting exercise and healthy lifestyles can help support people in these circumstances.

- **Promoting housing options:** There are concerns about the availability of affordable housing for local people across the three areas, for some this is about the lack of housing, others have concerns that the wrong sort of housing is being provided to meet local needs. Promoting the housing options that are available through Marleigh will help local residents access the new homes that are available.

- **Building on what is working well:** There are some strong assets across the three areas, including community-based organisations, social networks, and traditions of neighbourliness and local activism. These should be important starting points for community building.

- **Building an including sense of belonging and identity:** Local identity is strong in the three areas, but this sometimes excludes certain groups, in East Barnwell for example the sense of identity can be grounded in a sense of difference. It is important to build a sense of pride and belonging that brings together all the different social groups in an area.

- **Meeting the needs of particular groups:** There are some concerns about particular groups including older people, socially isolated people and younger people. These can be addressed by new initiatives and services, including better transport options, provided through the new development.

A second social sustainability assessment will be carried out in 2023-24, repeating the approach of the first assessment but supplementing it with interviews with residents. A third assessment in 2026-7 is provisionally planned, if the approach is shown to have value.

About Social Life

Social Life is an indepdent research organisation created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. Our work is about understanding how peoples' day-to-day experience of local places is shaped by the built environment - housing, public spaces, parks and local high streets - and how change, through regeneration, new devel- opment or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas.

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