

## District Councillor's Report Sept 26<sup>th</sup> 2023 - Cllr Tom Bygott

### **Wilson's Road Bridleway**

On August 31st I visited the Wilson's Road Bridleway in Longstanton with representatives of the Cambridge Cycling Campaign and groups representing horse riders, walkers and users of countryside rights of way, including the Swavesey and District Bridleways Association (SDBA), the British Horse Society, the Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum and the Trails Trust. Also present were members of Longstanton Parish Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council's planning officer for Northstowe. Wilson's Road Bridleway connects the end of Wilson's Road in Longstanton with the bridleway along the south side of the rebuilt A14, enabling cyclists, walkers, horseriders and others to cross over the access road to Northstowe (see below) using a new cable-stayed bridge, with a connection to Bar Hill and its Tesco store using a second new cable-stayed bridge over the A14. Cambridgeshire County Council and Homes England had decided to install a new hard surface along the route to enable a projected increase in cycling and other non-motorised wheeled vehicles, such as scooters, once the southern part of Northstowe is complete.

Representatives of the users' groups unanimously agreed that the decision on the hard surface should be reversed and the funding used instead to complete the bridleway along the B1050 from the main part of Longstanton and the northern end of Northstowe. It was noted that once the Southern Access Road opens, trips from Northstowe and Oakington could be made along the new paved bridleway alongside and that access from this bridleway has been preserved at the request of the SDBA to the southern end of the cable-stayed bridge. I have agreed, working with the planning officer for Northstowe, to arrange a meeting with the County Council, Homes England and the landowners for the users' groups to present their case.

Although I currently use this route to cycle from Oakington to Tesco in Bar Hill, the current grassed surface is sufficient for this purpose and provides a pleasant journey for leisure cyclists. Paving over a very ancient and beautiful grassed route would be a form of urbanisation of the countryside.

### **Naming of the Northstowe Southern Access Road West (SARW)**

As catchy as the current temporary name may be, the South Cambridgeshire District Street Naming and Numbering team and Homes England are currently in the process of choosing a new name for the road that has been built, but not yet opened, to connect the Northstowe Town Centre with the B1050 south of Longstanton. The road partly follows the route of the old runway, but will extend outside the perimeter of the old airfield and also contain addresses for houses, shops and other buildings.

The first name that had been suggested was 'Vickers Varsity Way', named after the Vickers Varsity, a type of aircraft manufactured by the Vickers company that had been operated on the airfield: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers\\_Varsity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers_Varsity). It was first flown in 1949 and had been operated by the Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1976. An objection was received for that name, but I have not been told what the reason for that objection was.

The next official suggested names were 'Farmland Road' or 'Wheatsheaf Way'. Given that most of the country is covered in farms and that most of them grow wheat, I objected to these two names on the grounds that they are "geographically anonymous". I also think that they are innocuous and feeble, and fail to convey the importance that that road will one day have as the main entrance to Northstowe.

Since then, a resident of Longstanton has suggested the names "Queen Elizabeth II Avenue" or "King Charles III Avenue". I fully support both these suggestions. The latter has the benefit of uniqueness, which is important for the findability of addresses, particularly in emergencies. These are compliant with SCDC's Address Management Policy, which also says that it is "preferable" for a person after whom a road is named to be "related to the particular area or village where the development is taking place". The Sovereign is by definition related to each village over which he or she reigns. The Royal Family has had a long connection with the airbase. His Majesty learnt to fly at 5FTS Oakington, was based at RAF Oakington and had his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday photographs taken there in 1969.

## Cambridge and District Blue Plaques

Visitors to Cambridge may have noticed that on the front of The Eagle pub opposite St Bene't's Church, just off King's Parade, there is a blue plaque commemorating the discovery of the double helix structure of DNA. On 28<sup>th</sup> February 1953, Francis Crick and James Watson, who had been working at the nearby Cavendish Laboratory, walked around the corner to the Eagle where their laboratory colleagues had gone for drinks after work, to tell them about the scientific breakthrough. Francis Crick is reported to have told his colleagues that "we have discovered the secret of life".

The original plaque was installed on the 50th anniversary of the discovery in 2003 but its condition had deteriorated and it had started to become illegible. Using a black marker pen, someone had written "+Franklin" underneath. As a member of the Cambridge and District Blue Plaques Committee, I was asked to work with a small group, including biochemists and scientific historians, to compose the wording for a replacement plaque and to decide whether Rosalind Franklin's name should also appear on the new plaque.

After more than two years of discussion and debate, we decided that it would say that "This breakthrough relied on data from Rosalind Franklin, Maurice Wilkins and other scientists." I spoke at the official unveiling of the replacement plaque on 30th August, and presented the old plaque to the Whipple Museum of the History of Science, as the graffiti and discussion about Rosalind Franklin's role has had become an interesting part of our social history.

[www.cambridgeppf.org/FAQs/announcement-of-the-discovery-of-dna](http://www.cambridgeppf.org/FAQs/announcement-of-the-discovery-of-dna)

I would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to nominate a building in South Cambridgeshire or Cambridge to hold a blue plaque. Plaques can be erected to commemorate individuals or events; the nomination criteria can be found at:

[www.cambridgeppf.org/Pages/Category/blue-plaques](http://www.cambridgeppf.org/Pages/Category/blue-plaques). Plaques erected in Cambridge City carry the Cambridge City Council coat of arms on a light blue background, and those in South Cambs carry the South Cambridgeshire District Council coat of arms on a dark blue background. We have in recent years installed plaques to the astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle, the Rev W Awdry (who wrote Thomas the Tank Engine) and the founders of Girton College.

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