The Do

Trumpington Meadows
Sunday 9th October 2011
2pm to 4.30pm

Summary
As part of the Artist in Residence post at Trumpington Meadows, artist Caroline Wright invited a group of people to attend The Do – a walk and tea party taking place on and near the development site.

Following a period of research in and around Trumpington Meadows, Caroline formulated plans for an event that would bring together the people she had been engaging with to enable them to share their stories and experience the extent of the site. 40 guests, comprising local residents, parish councilors, residents association members, the team from Grosvenor, local historians, InSite Arts, past workers at the Plant Breeding Institute (PBI), people currently working on the development, artists and those involved with other Cambridge developments, City and County arts officers and all their families gathered to walk a route around the site taking in the future country park. Along the route they encountered several artworks, engaged in conversation culminating in tea and cakes at the nearby Bakehouse in Trumpington village.

Younger guests were given a disposable camera to record the event in their own way and Norwich photographer Tony Millings documented the artworks and event.

Apart from artworks, guests were treated to a short talk from Mick Sullivan, currently site manager for TMLC and past worker for PBI. He talked of his time over the past forty years at Trumpington Meadows in a variety of roles and his observations on the site today. He informed guests about the work done on the
river in readiness for the increased usage once the country park opens including river drainage and landscaping and new areas where the rover can be accessed by new residents.

**The Artworks**
Artworks were encountered along the route of the walk, each contextualized by its careful placing in a relevant location. Through the making process Caroline kept three key facts in her mind: the future of the site as a place where people will make their home, the historical importance of the site as a place for growing and the natural diverse riches the site holds.

**Neighbourhood**

1,200 houses will be built at Trumpington Meadows, bringing the same number of families together into a new environment. Over the years ahead, these families will make Trumpington Meadows their own; neighbours will meet and associations will form, children will play and learn together in the new school.

New conversations will develop; tensions and positioning may be a part of the settling in process.

Neighbourhood visually represents 1,200 individual units working together as a whole, chattering in the wind in a mix of colourful windmills newly rooted in the soil of Trumpington Meadows. At the conclusion of The Do, the windmills will be distributed to local children via schools and childrens’ homes.

**Archaeological Excavation, May 2011**

One of the earliest interventions at Trumpington Meadows was the work of the archaeologists painstakingly exploring sites of potential historical significance. After careful study, specific areas had been selected for excavation based on soil colour, field boundaries, undulations in the land, contours and other diagnostic information. The construction of houses,
school and community facilities offers a moment in time for the land to yield its rich history. The work being carried out by the Cambridge University Archaeological Department, exploring and sifting through the Trumpington soil, is an essential stage in the transition of the land from agricultural site to built environment. The short timelapse video illustrates part of an excavation in the first phase building area.

**A Question of Scale**

Trumpington Meadows uniquely extends to 532 hectares including a country park. This is a facility for all local and new residents to use. To walk the entire perimeter of the country park can take over three hours illustrating the extent of the site that people will enjoy. A Question of Scale suggests alternative ways to understand the land, scale and environment of Trumpington Meadows and celebrates the diverse nature of community and place.

**The Punthouse Library**

The punthouse afforded a home to the two punts owned by the Plant Breeding Institute. For one day only it was transformed into a library, constructed with bricks that will be re-used to construct the first houses in phase one. The library held a limited collection of books on a range of topics relating to the home, design, gardens and the country, community and architecture. Guests at The Do were invited to browse the collection and borrow a book of their choice, to take with them at the end of the event. When they had made their selection, they gave the title to the library invigilator who arranged for their choices to be transported to the tea party venue for collection at the end of the event. All books were returned by the date stamped on the library ticket.

**Golden**
A man’s home is his castle. It is an object of value, a place of personal identity, a treasured possession. A house is a home. A shiny, new, gilded house will be presented to each guest attending The Do as a memento of the event. Reminiscent of the wooden houses played with by the artist in residence’s children in the 1980’s, the small pieces are clothed in 23 carat gold leaf. The gold signifies monetary value, but more than that, it is about the value of having a place to live, work and play, having value to society as a community is shaped and a value in having a place to make one’s own.

**Tea and Cakes**

After the walk, guests enjoyed tea and cakes in The Bakehouse where they were given a house from the Golden collection accompanied by a booklet detailing the artworks, information about the site and the archaeology, information about Caroline, InSite Arts and the work that has been done on the river in the country park. Special golden cupcakes completed the ongoing theme of gold that ran through the day.

**Reflections**

Overall The Do was met with enjoyment and praise both during and after the event. People commented on the benefit of meeting people socially and on a level playing field and conversations were of a more sharing nature than when across a meeting room table. Walking the site afforded people the opportunity to experience the site in a sensory way and to see it before intense building work begins.
Conversations were cross interest and stemmed from the collective experience everyone was sharing. The artworks prompted responses ranging from “oohhh” and “aahhh” (the windmills), to “good choice of books” (the Punthouse Library and “thought provoking” (the signs).

The event was planned deliberately to use art as a prompt to look at things in a new way and to bring people together that may not have always been of the same mind. One suggestion arising from the event was the planning of a country walk around and through the country park, which was proposed by Elizabeth Cox and Andrew Roberts. They suggested artist involvement in this proposal (to design the leaflet).

A further possible consequence of The Do is the proposal to retain the work A Question of Scale on a permanent basis. This has been suggested by several guests at The Do and is being proposed to Grosvenor and other key parties.