

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

7 December 2011

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager - Planning and Sustainable Communities

S/1898/11/CM – CAMBOURNE & CAXTON**Erection of a Secondary School with Associated Access, Sports Facilities, Hard and Soft Landscaping, Car and Cycle Parking and Other Associated Infrastructure with Temporary Construction Access at Land West of Cambourne for Cambridgeshire County Council****Recommendation: No objections****Date for Determination: 26th October 2011****Notes:**

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because it is for a major development that is of significant importance and is contrary to policy.

Departure Application**Site and Proposal**

1. The application site, currently undeveloped open farmland, is located on the western side of Cambourne, adjacent to Lower Cambourne and the Business Park, and to the south of the A428. The land has formed part of an arable farm for some considerable period of time and this has led to low level of biodiversity on the site. The landscape in this area is generally flat and quite open in character with Cambourne's tree planting belt to the east, an old hawthorn, blackthorn and elder filed hedge to the south and a sparse hawthorn blackthorn hedge to the west of the site.
2. The site comprises approximately 10.72 hectares of land, which is larger than the area of land that would normally be required for a 5-form entry/750-place secondary school. However, there is already evidence that Cambourne may require a fourth primary school in the future. The County Council have taken a proactive approach to this matter and ensured that adequate land is available on this site if it is necessary to accommodate a 2-form entry/420 place primary school. There is also sufficient land for further extension of the secondary school or the development of sixth form provision, if required.
3. This County Matter (Regulation 3) application, to be determined by the County Council, proposes a new Secondary School for Cambourne, designed to accommodate 750 pupils, i.e. a 5-form entry school, and with employment of up to 100 full-time staff when the school is fully occupied.
4. The school has been designed as a two storey building with a central corridor running as a spine through the school, with the sports and dining halls to the north-east of the

corridor and three wings running from north-east to south-west from the main corridor, each having classrooms either side of the central corridor. The central spine provides the communal areas and the three fingers that extend to the south form the classroom space. The building is orientated in this way to maximise the technical requirements of providing day-lighting and natural ventilation to the teaching spaces.

5. The main entrance to the school will be at the eastern flank end of the building, which correlates with the main pedestrian/cycle and vehicular entrances to the site, which will all be from the east. At ground floor level, adjacent to the school entrance, will be situated the main administrative, staff and visitor facilities, together with a Learning Resource Centre (LRC). A central lift and stairs will also be located close to the entrance, providing access to additional staff facilities above.
6. The external areas comprise a variety of environments from active to passive and include formal hard surface play areas, grass sports pitches and habitat zones, including a pond. The hard-surfaced area surrounding the school will cover 0.15 ha and will be used for play and outdoor dining; 0.26 ha are proposed for games courts and 3.6 ha for pitches. The sports field is capable of accommodating four winter pitches, one of which would double up as a running track for summer use.
7. To the north-east of the school building, a car parking area is proposed with 50 spaces plus 3 disabled spaces and 2 spaces for mini-buses. In addition, 450 covered cycle parking spaces will be provided close to the main pedestrian/cycle access serving the site.
8. The hard-surfaced area surrounding the school covers 0.15 ha and will be used for play and outdoor dining. 0.26 ha are proposed for games courts and 3.6 ha for pitches. The sports field is capable of accommodating 4 winter pitches, one of which would double up as a running track for summer use.
9. Vehicular access to the school, is proposed to be taken from Sheepfold Lane, which runs to the rear (north of) of the existing Business Park units, and will principally be for staff access rather than pupil drop offs/pick-ups (albeit the latter will not be prevented). It is intended to promote walking and cycling as the main mode of transport for the school, as there is already a network that provides good connectivity throughout Cambourne. The catchment area for the school is intended to be Cambourne itself and the whole area is assessed in the application submissions as being within the County's guidelines for walking and cycling. As a consequence, it is not intended to provide buses to the site.
10. In terms of wider use of the school facilities by the community, there are no implicit plans outlined in the application to confirm the level of community access that would be made available. However, the school has been designed to allow for the main hall, gym, sports hall and performance facilities to operate independently from the main teaching areas which would potentially allow community events/activities to use these facilities without the need to open the whole school.

Planning History

11. There are no applications specific to the application site, which is currently undeveloped open farmland.
12. Applications of relevance include the permission for 3300 homes at Cambourne (ref. **S/1371/92/O**) and the recent approval for 950 additional homes at Upper Cambourne (ref. **S/6438/07/O**).

Planning Policy

13. National Planning Policy Guidance

- PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (January 2005)
- PPS1 (Supplement) – Planning and Climate Change (December 2007)
- PPS3 – Housing (June 2010)
- PPS5 – Planning for the Historic Environment (March 2010)
- PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (August 2004)
- PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geographical Conservation (August 2005)
- PPG13 – Transport (January 2011)
- PPG17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (July 2002)
- PPS22 – Renewable Energy (2004); and
- PPS25 – Development and Flood Risk (March 2010)

14. South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD 2007:

- ST/b: Accessible Development
- ST/4: Rural Centres

15. South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007:

- Policy DP/1: Sustainable Development
- Policy DP/2: Design of New Development
- Policy DP/3: Development Criteria
- Policy DP/4: Infrastructure and New Developments
- Policy DP/6: Construction Methods
- Policy DP/7 Development Frameworks
- Policy SF/6: Public Art and New Development
- Policy NE/1: Energy Efficiency
- Policy NE/3: Renewable Energy in New Development
- Policy NE/4: Landscape Character Areas
- Policy NE/6: Biodiversity
- Policy NE/7: Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance
- Policy NE/9: Water and Drainage Infrastructure
- Policy NE/12: Water Conservation
- Policy NE/14: Lighting Proposals
- Policy NE/15: Noise Pollution
- Policy CH/2: Archaeological Sites
- Policy TR/1: Planning for more Sustainable Travel
- Policy TR/2: Car and Cycle Parking Standards
- Policy TR/3: Mitigating Travel Impact
- Policy TR/4: Non-motorised Modes

16. South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Site Specific Policies DPD 2010:

- Policy SP/3: Cambourne
- Policy SP/4: Cambourne Approved Masterplan and Design Guide

17. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents:**

- Inset No. 14 Cambourne Map 4 of 4

18. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents:**

- Trees and Development Sites SPD – July 2009
- Biodiversity SPD – July 2009
- Landscape and New Developments SPD – March 2010
- District Design Guide SPD: High Quality and Sustainable Development in South Cambridgeshire (March 2010)
- Health Impact Assessment SPD – May 2011
- Public Art SPD – January 2009

Consultation

19. **Cambourne Parish Council** – recommend that the application be approved subject to a number of conditions and recommendations.

Suggested conditions:

- (a) More parking spaces to be provided – a minimum of 75 should be provided.
- (b) Visitor parking provided using the drop off zone adjacent to the access loop to be clearly identified on the application.
- (c) Two lifts be provided – at either end of the building – to enable alternate route in case of emergency and reduce the travel distance to lessons in other areas of the building.
- (d) Assurance that the school can be used after hours for the community and confirmation of the schools position on community use i.e. adult education etc. in line with Comberton Trust's aims.
- (e) The tennis courts should be available for use as overspill parking.
- (f) Confirmation of coach access and parking provision.
- (g) Ensure the building is DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant with level access throughout.

20. **Recommendations:**

- (a) An agreement be made for no deliveries to Elms BMW and Mini Garage during school drop off and collection hours.
- (b) Reduce speed limit on Cambourne Road to 30mph to improve safety of junction with Sheepfold Lane and safety of children crossing Cambourne Road.
- (c) Reduce speed limit on all Cambourne roads to 20mph to improve safety of children on way to school – both cycling and walking.
- (d) Improve all main cycle ways and footpaths on main routes to school throughout Cambourne to reduce traffic congestion by making cycling and walking more attractive.
- (e) Improve connectivity of footpaths and cycle ways to encourage walking and cycling to school by providing alternative routes to school that avoid roads and traffic.
- (f) Upgrade surface of and install sympathetic low-level lighting to paths across Country Park between lakes, Crowdene bridleway, path by Haven Lake

through to Crowdene bridleway and path from wildlife trust office to Crowdene bridleway to encourage walking and cycling to school by providing alternative routes to school that avoid roads and traffic.

- (g) Provide pedestrian and cycling access to school through Business Park to encourage walking and cycling to school by providing alternative routes to school that avoid roads and traffic.
- (h) Provide road crossings (e.g. Pelican, Puffin) at key points on main routes to school (School Lane x 3, Broad Street, Cambourne Road to improve safety of children crossing the road.
- (i) Provide parking restrictions on Swansley Lane, School Lane and others if necessary to discourage parent drop-off.
- (j) Consider moving bus stops by cricket pitch on School Lane to ensure maximum visibility at crossing point from Country Park.

21. **Bourn Parish Council** – no comments.

22. **Caxton Parish Council** – recommend approval, although they expressed the following concerns:

- (a) Concerned about the temporary access and permanent access near BMW Garage, Sheepfold Lane.
- (b) Concerned that children of Caxton may not have access, even though it is in Caxton Parish. The Parish Council would be in favour of Caxton children being allowed to attend the school.
- (c) The Parish Council is unhappy about not being consulted in the early stages.
- (d) Concerns about parents dropping off children at Swansley Lane, in Lower Cambourne, which is not suitable as there are families with young children and no through road, where children are often playing outside.

23. **Cambridgeshire County Council - Highways (Development Control)** – they have advised that there are a number of factual errors and/or assumptions within the submitted Transport Assessment (TA), which may affect the decision of the Highway Authority, which need to be addressed. For example, the Highway Authority is concerned that the applicant's method of assessing the pedestrian and cycle flows along the footways in Swansley Lane and the proposed access to the school is not robust. The method of assessment used is not widely used outside the United States of America and has a limited application within a British context. Accordingly, the Highway Authority has requested that the County Planning Authority seek further explanation of the rationale behind the choice of this interpretative method and a detailed breakdown of the methodology used in arriving at the conclusions.

24. Given the distance that the school will be from the majority of the residential units within Cambourne the Highway Authority is concerned that the number of students that the applicant predicts will walk is excessively high. The routes shown in the applicant's Pedestrian and Cycle Route Assessment fail to acknowledge that many of the properties are significantly further away than the information provided would infer. If the distances are perceived to be too great to walk, this has the potential to increase motor vehicle usage and exacerbate the resultant on street parking issues.

25. Given the location, length and awkwardness of the proposed access road the Highway Authority is concerned that many parents who decide (for whatever reason) to drive their children to school will choose to use the existing residential streets to the south of the school as the preferred drop off/pick up point. This will be encouraged by the provision of the footpath/cycle link provided by the applicant at this location. Such drop off points inevitably create significant, though short lived,

problems for the existing residents. This is a national problem, with no easy solution. Unless controlled such parking is likely to create an unacceptable problem for the Highway Authority when the roads are adopted.

26. The Highway Authority will consider any conditions it wishes to request be placed on the application once clarification is received on the Transport Assessment and these can inform their position on the application.
27. **Cambridge City Council / SCDC Joint Urban Design Team** – They appreciate that due to its remote location and limited connectivity, the designer has had obvious challenges in ensuring adherence to best practice urban design principles of site location. Notwithstanding this, the applicant has addressed urban design concerns raised at pre-application meetings and, where possible, by including suggested amendments on the proposed development. For example, the JUDT had initial concerns over the scale and form of the building related to issues of long blank facades that looked rather ‘top heavy’ on a box-like structure with a flat roofscape. The applicants have revised the form to avoid long blank facades by introducing ‘stratified’ (layered) elevations, which allow the building to sit within the horizon line when viewed from distance. It also breaks down the scale and volume of the building in a vertical manner.
28. With respect to landscaping, it is noted that the site is exposed and structural planting within the site needs to be carefully considered to limit the adverse effects of prevailing southwesterly winds.
29. They are unclear on how renewable infrastructure will be accommodated on the building or site. Given the site’s relative exposure, some form of wind power may be appropriate. Some or all of the flat roofs should be considered for the application of a green roof system, whether extensive or intensive, and PV panels. There are considerable teaching benefits for students to see, and be a part of, planning for climate change and they would hope the applicant will take this opportunity to develop a truly sustainable, exemplar building. The ambition of BREEAM Very good is somewhat disappointing and a BREEAM Excellent rating would be a more laudable and appropriate target given that this is an educational facility.
30. The JUDT hopes that the development will be constructed to a high build quality and recommends that conditions be applied to ensure an appropriate level of control on materials and other landscape details.
31. **Cambridgeshire County Council (Rights of Way & Access Team)** – No objection to this proposed development, but point out that the proposed school access drive crosses Cambourne Public Bridleway No.2 and the proposed pedestrian and cycle access to the school crosses Cambourne Public Footpath No.1. Accordingly, the applicant is required to provide measures to ensure maintenance, safety and appropriate access to the bridleways.
32. **Cambridgeshire County Council (Ecology) (in liaison with SCDC Ecology)** – recommend that additional badger information is provided prior to the determination of the application, to confirm whether the badger setts situated on the southern boundary of the site will be directly impacted by the proposals.
33. However, if planning permission is granted, the following information should be provided and secured through planning conditions:

- (a) Submission of Co-ordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP) to include: (i) pollution control measures for the A428 balancing pond; (ii) reasonable avoidance measures method statement for Great Crested Newts; (iii) design of access road that is sympathetic to amphibians (e.g. avoidance of gully pots); (iv) revised landscape scheme that includes badger mitigation (e.g. shrub/hedgerow outside perimeter fencing /move perimeter fencing to inside the hedge line, and local varieties of orchard trees; and (v) detailed design of the proposed balancing pond that is designed for wildlife.
34. **Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service** – would ask that adequate provision be made for fire hydrants.
35. **Sport England** – supportive of this application in that it will provide new sports facilities for the school, which broadly meet Sport England technical guidance. However, further consideration should be given to the issue of community access to these facilities.
36. More specifically, their comments include the following salient points:
- (a) The applicants wish to use parts of the site for temporary sports provision until such time as planning applications come forward for further education purposes (i.e. primary school and secondary school extension). However, this raises a potential conflict with Sport England playing fields policy in that the proposals would then involve a loss of land in playing field use.
- (b) From a sporting perspective, it makes sense to use the two parcels of land for additional temporary sports pitch provision rather than fencing the land off, therefore Sport England agree in this instance to consider the principal use of this land as designated for future educational use rather than as permanent playing field land. Accordingly, Sport England are prepared not to object to the loss of playing fields from future planning application or applications to develop this land for educational purposes, as set out in the submitted plans relating to this current application. They would, however, recommend that the applicants investigate the possibility of securing additional adjoining land to provide additional playing field provision, particularly if the secondary school is expanded.
- (c) With regard to the potential community use of the indoor and outdoor sports facilities at this site, they note that a public sports centre is currently being constructed within Cambourne which will meet most of the community needs for indoor facilities within the village. It may be possible, however, for the facilities at the new secondary school to compliment the proposed new community facility, for example, by providing a specialist facility not provided at the sports centre site. Similarly with regard to the outdoor pitches there may be a local need for pitches not currently being met within Cambourne that could be met at the school site (e.g. cricket nets or athletics facilities). Accordingly, further consideration should be given to making facilities available to the public to meet an identified community need.
- (d) In broad terms the layout and orientation of sports pitches meet Sport England guidelines contained within their technical guidance.
37. **Cambridgeshire Constabulary (Architectural Liaison Officer)** – In terms of crime risk, providing the perimeter treatment meets recommended standards, it is likely that the risk from crime ‘out of hours’ would be low. A key concern relates to the pedestrian/cycle route serving the school from Swansley Lane, which will be routed through a line of mature hedging – this should be cut down to make a safe route.

38. **Cambridgeshire County Council (Archaeologist)** – Extensive archaeological works undertaken in connection with the development of Cambourne have identified this landscape as of high archaeological potential, with the late prehistoric and Roman periods particularly well represented. It is anticipated that significant archaeological remains extend into the application site, and initial evaluation has confirmed the same. To comply with Environmental Impact Assessment regulations, the results of the evaluation should be submitted and the Environmental Statement should consider appropriate methodologies for mitigating the impact of the development.
39. **Environment Agency** – Although they are satisfied at this stage that the proposed development can be allowed ‘in principle’, the applicant will need to provide further information relating to the proposals to an acceptable standard to ensure that the proposed development can go ahead without posing an unacceptable flood risk and/or risk of pollution to the water environment. Recommend the imposition of a number of conditions relating to: surface water drainage scheme, foul water drainage scheme, and completion of the Phase 1 Land Drainage Solution for the Utton’s Drove Waste Water Treatment Works prior to occupation of the development.
40. **Anglian Water** – no objections, subject to the imposition of planning conditions relating to submission and approval of foul water strategy and a surface water strategy/flood risk assessment.
41. **The Wildlife Trust** – They are pleased to see that the plans include a school wildlife area, planting of locally native species and that a landscape and biodiversity management plan has been produced. They recommend that fruit trees to be planted in the proposed orchard are locally native varieties.
42. Notwithstanding the above, they have some concerns with respect to the existing shelter belts on the edge of Cambourne that they manage. They need to be assured that access for management will be maintained and confirmation that all options for provision of pedestrian/cycle access to the school have been explored, as the latter cuts across quite a large section of the existing shelter belt.
43. **Cambridgeshire County Council (Access Officer)** – no objections.
44. **SCDC Environmental Health (Contaminated Land Officer)** – satisfied that a condition relating to contaminated land investigation is not required.
45. **SCDC Environmental Health (Environmental Protection Team)** – no objections, but recommend a number of planning conditions be applied to any consent granted, covering the following matters:
 - (a) Details of the location and type of any power driven plant or equipment, including equipment for heating, ventilation and for the control or extraction of any odour, dust or fumes from buildings;
 - (b) During construction period no power operated machinery to be operated before 0800 or after 1800 on weekdays and 0800 and 1300 on Saturdays, Sundays or Bank Holidays;
 - (c) Hours limitation for commercial/retail vehicles loading and unloading within the site – 0700 to 2300 Monday to Saturday and not at all on Sundays, Bank and Public Holidays;
 - (d) Construction Method Statement for foundations if driven pile foundations proposed;
 - (e) Lighting scheme, to include details of any external lighting of the site such as street lighting, floodlighting or security lighting.

- (f) Noise assessment and scheme for the insulation for the music suite (practice and recital rooms) and workshops within the building;
- (g) Limitations on daytime and night-time background noise levels including submission of a noise prediction survey/report.
- (h) By virtue of granting of planning permission for a school it is accepted that this area will become mixed use and there will have to be a reasonable acceptance by residents about the nature and duration of noise associated with the school. However, the noise from a new school should not have an unacceptable adverse impact (an impact level identified in the Environmental Statement) in the first place and the highest level of noise mitigation should be implemented.
- (i) It is noted that the applicant's Noise Consultants have correctly taken the 'worst case' scenario (i.e. use of all 4 sports pitches for team games simultaneously between 07:30 to 17:30 Monday to Friday for school use and after school activities) in drawing their conclusions. Whilst in reality it is very unlikely that all the pitches will be used simultaneously, it is considered that appropriate planning conditions be imposed to either restrict the hours of use, the number of pitches that can be used at any one time, and restrict community use outside core school hours and at weekends. Alternatively, and in combination with physical noise mitigation measures, such as a substantial noise barrier and or an earth mound or berm along the entire length of the east boundary could be considered.

Representations

- 46. **Councillor Harangozo (SCDC)** – as vice-chairman of the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG), he is extremely disappointed with the BREEAM 'very good' rating. Whilst it is difficult to justify more expense for smaller primary school buildings, very substantial buildings such as this provide considerable scope for inclusion of significant exemplary features.
- 47. Cost effective measures that could deliver significant additional carbon savings along with reducing the school's running costs, include: Consideration be given to biomass heating, particularly given the close proximity to the A428 for biomass deliveries; follow 'passiv haus' principles in the construction and secure a higher level of air tightness (factor 3) which is best practice for major public buildings in this country; install triple glazing, at least on the northern elevation, to conform to 'passiv haus' principles; install wind turbine(s) rather than solar PV. PV is not a good renewable energy source for schools as it produces little energy in winter months, whereas wind is all year round and strongest in autumn and winter; best practice indicates that wind generated energy could feed some of the air source heat pumps displacing grid electricity – so there is potential to create a very low carbon heating system alongside biomass boilers; potentially relocate the wind turbine at Orchard Park Primary School to the secondary school, particularly in view of the substantially better wind resource at the proposed site; air conditioning should not be permitted on site – rather monodraught ventilation units should be installed.
- 48. He considers that along with the heat recovery that is being proposed, it should be possible to achieve an additional 15-20% reduction in the school's carbon emissions, particularly if two small wind turbines and biomass can be included. Wind generated electricity along with rigorous energy conservation measures should ensure that BREEAM very good rating is surpassed.

49. There should be access (preferably car-free) for all cyclists to secure parking – potential for cycling is very high at Cambourne because the settlement is very much designed to encourage this mode of travel.
50. **Cambourne Business Park** – very supportive of these proposals for a secondary school as they think it will be a great benefit to Cambourne. They are also pleased that the plans show well-defined access routes to the school for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles that do not include the Business Park. They have previously raised concerns about the potential use of their roads and footpaths especially in regard to parents dropping off/collecting children. They would not welcome this, as they believe this could lead to congestion at a time when many of the Business Park employees are arriving at work and they would be concerned about the safety aspects of this. Whilst they are confident that the proposals address their concerns, if there should be any problems arising they would expect the school and the Council to work with them and to take appropriate action to resolve the issues.
51. **Taylor Wimpey** – as principal developer in Cambourne they express their full support for the submitted planning application to develop a Secondary School. Given the success of the new settlement and the internal birth rate, there is now clearly an overwhelming need for a new secondary school in Cambourne; particularly in the interests of sustainability i.e. to overcome the need to transport children out of the village to Comberton Village College. In addition, the school would provide local employment opportunities and potential social and economic linkages between the school and the adjacent Business Park.
52. The County Council has received around **20 neighbourhood letters** of representation on the application.
53. 1 letter expresses support for the application, whilst the others raise either objections or concerns. The principal issues raised include:
54. **Choice of Site:** Is totally against planning policy and the original design brief for Cambourne as it is outside of the village envelope and is a green field site; Better and cheaper choice of site would be land which is vacant on Cambourne Business Park, which also provides ready made roads and infrastructure, and less disturbance to residents of residential streets in Lower Cambourne; disappointed school was not accommodated within the footprint of the original settlement masterplan; land planned for a golf course might be a more suitable site; school should be moved northwards towards the corner of the agricultural land bordered by the A428 and business park as this would: reduce need for unnecessarily long service road and potentially tie in with drop offs at the end of the Business Park; was any consideration given to land adjacent to the Bourn Road near to the Vine Junior School, where easy access for both foot and vehicles could have been achieved with little disruption and remained within the Cambourne development area; consideration be given to the Bourn Airfield site, which is easily accessible from the villages of Cambourne, Bourn and Caldecote, plus the majority of children will come from Upper and Great Cambourne for which this is a more logical location.
55. **Precedent for further development:** once completed, it will instantly open up the adjacent land for future development, which is totally against the original planning approval and design for the village.
56. **Access to School:** Concerned at loss of residential amenity through increased disturbance from vehicle drop offs/pick-ups from Lower Cambourne residential streets and increased use of these streets by children on foot and on bike (including

increased litter dropping) – particular concerns raised by residents of Swansley Lane from which main pedestrian/cycle access to the school will be served. Concerned that Swansley Lane and adjoining streets are not built to accommodate increased traffic and parking, particularly with limited turning areas. Nearest bus stop to the site is outside South Cambridgeshire Hall but there will be no access from the Business Park to the school. School Lane, given its speed controlling curved design is inadequate for current traffic so adding a large school in the area would cause even more problems. Recommended that serious consideration be given to promoting/upgrading the bridleway that runs between the residential part of Lower Cambourne and the Business Park as a better route for cycles and those on foot, perhaps utilising the car park off School Lane (near the boundary of Great Cambourne) for dropping off children; a pedestrian crossing should be installed on School Lane for children en route to the school; parking restrictions should be applied on Swansley Lane and School Lane; some children from Upper Cambourne or parts of Great Cambourne may opt to access the school by crossing over to the Business Park near one of the A428 access roundabouts, accordingly pedestrian crossings should be installed at suitable locations to make this safer.

57. **Temporary Construction Access:** objection to the temporary construction access from an existing road exiting onto the Caxton bypass (A1198) near the now derelict Yim Wah restaurant (required due to the presence of protected great crested newts being present in the location of the proposed new access and need to mitigate August – November) as it is unlit and will present a danger to the occupiers of houses along this temporary route as well as resulting in a loss of residential amenity through general disturbance. If permitted, restrictions on use of the temporary access should be put in place i.e. restriction on hours of use.
58. **Visual Impact:** aggrieved at loss of the open vistas across farmland that residents currently enjoy as they walk the perimeter path in this area. However, if it is to proceed then efforts must be made to minimise the effect in this regard by sympathetic planning to consider elevations, height, proximity, noise, planting etc.
59. **Community Access:** the facility should be made widely available for community use.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

60. As this application is a 'County Matter' application to be determined by Cambridgeshire County Council, the District Council's comments are sought, as a consultee, on the planning merits of the application.
61. The key issues to consider in this instance are: the principle of the development and need for the secondary school; location of the school when considered against reasonable alternatives; design and layout; landscape and visual impact of the proposal; open space and sports provision; highways, access, car and cycle parking; biodiversity and nature conservation; flood risk and drainage; environmental health issues; sustainability, renewable energy and BREEAM; socio-economic and health impact considerations; and community access.

Principle of development and need

62. The County Council has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child living in its area of responsibility who is of school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state sector. When the original masterplan for Cambourne was developed in the mid-1990s, it was intended that 3000 dwellings would be constructed. The forecasting for secondary school places estimated that this would

generate a demand for between 450 and 600 secondary school places. At that time, there was concern at the viability of a secondary school of this size serving fewer than 600 children. As a consequence, it was decided the most appropriate way forward would be to extend the existing Comberton Village College (CVC) in phases from a 6FE (900 places) to a 10FE (1500 places) school, through the use of Section 106 contributions.

63. Notwithstanding the above, Cambourne has continued to expand beyond the original masterplan, with the following changes:
- (a) The original masterplan was amended to increase the densities on the site to allow for an additional 300 dwellings on the site creating a total of 3,300 dwellings;
 - (b) Changes to the mix of dwellings led to more family housing being provided; and
 - (c) Outline planning permission was granted in October 2011 for an additional 950 dwellings in Upper Cambourne, which will lead to a total of 4250 dwellings in Cambourne.
64. The current forecasts predict that the CVC will be at maximum capacity of 1500 places for 11-16 year olds by September 2013. There is no further development potential at the Comberton campus, and the School Governors have confirmed that they do not wish to see the school expand above this level.
65. The County consider that there is now an urgent need for additional places, and if provision is not made in Cambourne by September 2013, the only alternative would be to transport a large number of children across the County to other schools that have available places. County Education state that "...the cost of doing this would be considerable and, with increasing demand elsewhere in the County, there could still be a shortfall of school places. This could lead to considerable journey times for some pupils, as available places may not arise in the secondary schools near Cambourne. This is already happening to a limited degree in some age groups, where capacity at CVC has already been reached."
66. Based on the above, it is considered that the need for a Secondary School in Cambourne has been proven.

Location of Development when considered against reasonable alternatives

67. Following initial forecasting by County Education that there might be a need for a new secondary school in Cambourne, the County started to investigate possible site options in and around Cambourne. These comprised sites within the existing settlement area, and land to the north, south, east, or west of the settlement. The conclusions drawn can be summarised as follows:
- (a) *Within the existing settlement of Cambourne:* There is not the amount of land available within the development boundary that could, effectively and efficiently, accommodate a new secondary school without the loss of existing open space or community facilities.
 - (b) *To the north:* There is insufficient land between the A428 and the northern settlement boundary to accommodate the school. Accordingly, the school would need to be sited on land north of the A428, which would require either the construction of a subway/new footbridge to provide safe pedestrian/cycle

access across the A428 or would require parents to drive and drop off pupils. This option was considered non-sustainable, isolated and unviable.

- (c) *To the south:* this was ruled out as the amount of land required would potentially be perceived as leading to a coalescence with the village of Caxton and/or the need to include open space allocated for use by the existing community.
- (d) *To the east:* A developer has offered the County land at Bourne Airfield, with a view that this could open up the adjacent land to the east for further housing development. However, this land was ruled out by virtue of the extremely limited infrastructure at this site which would mean that it is unlikely that a secondary school could be delivered by September 2013.
- (e) *To the west:* Two options have been considered for land to the west of Cambourne. Option 1 relates to the current application site and option 2 relates to current undeveloped land at the western end of the Cambourne Business Park. Whilst the owners of the Business Park had initially expressed an interest in making land available on the Business Park, they could not secure the support of other operators on the site and, in March 2011, the site owners confirmed it would not be possible to deliver a secondary school on their land. This has left the agricultural land west of the Business Park as the only viable option.

68. In support of the chosen site for the secondary school, the applicant cites a number of site specific advantages, including:

- (a) The land is well located for pupils attending the school, particularly those living in Lower and Great Cambourne;
- (b) The proposed development is on land of low ecological value;
- (c) The site will not lead to the loss of existing community facilities or designated public open space;
- (d) The site has the flexibility to enable the secondary school to expand in the future, if need arises;
- (e) There is sufficient land to locate a fourth primary school adjacent to the proposed secondary school if required.

69. Whilst the site is outside of the defined settlement area and is in a rather exposed landscape setting, for the reasons identified above, it is considered that the County has demonstrated that this is the only viable site for the school and given the clear needs for secondary school provision to serve Cambourne that this is a material reason to allow this site to be developed for the school.

Design and Layout

70. The Design and Layout of the school was subject to pre-application engagement with officers at this Authority and members of the local affected Parishes (Cambourne and Caxton), and has been through a number of iterations to reach the final scheme submission.

71. Although, due to the site's relative remote location and limited connectivity, the architects have had obvious challenges in ensuring adherence to best practice urban design principles in terms of site location, it is considered that the submitted scheme has addressed initial urban design concerns. In particular, the scheme has evolved to ensure that the main entrance to the school (eastern flank elevation) has been

designed to create a clear status, identity and desire lines for both pupils entering the site from the dedicated pedestrian/cycle entrance from Lower Cambourne and from the new road entrance from the north-eastern corner of the site. Furthermore, the scale, form and external finishes of the school have been carefully articulated to create a building of horizontal emphasis and predominantly soft natural finishes (the use of timber cladding) which are respectful of its rural and exposed location.

Landscape and Visual Impact

72. The site forms part of open agricultural land that is flat and flanked by a very shallow valley. There are no trees on the site and accordingly the site will be highly visible from the A428, from long distant vantage points to the north and west of the settlement and from dwellings and public footpaths on the western edge of Cambourne.
73. In working up the application, which has included pre-application discussions with this Authority and the Parish Councils, it was felt that the overall approach to the project design should not seek to hide the building through dense mature landscaping, rather the building and proposed landscaping should complement each other.
74. As described above, the school building has been carefully designed both in terms of scale, form and external appearance, to ensure that it is sensitive to its rural location. Planting to the outer boundaries and around the site will help further soften visual impact and similarly provide some screening from the exposure of the site to the prevailing southwesterly winds.

Open Space and Sports Provision

75. Sport England has confirmed that the quantum of pitches and indoor sports provision is acceptable.
76. With regard to the potential community use of the indoor and outdoor sports facilities, Sport England note that a public sports centre is currently under construction within Cambourne [opening in December], which will meet most of the community needs for indoor facilities within the village. However, they consider that there may be an opportunity for the facilities at the new secondary school to complement the Sports Centre, for example, by providing a specialist facility not provided at the sports centre. Similarly, with regard to the outdoor pitches they consider that there may be a local need for pitches not currently being met within Cambourne that could be met at the school site.
77. Based on the above, it is considered appropriate to support Sport England's community access aspirations as part of this Council's recommended comments to County. More specific comments on Community Access are provided below.
78. It should be noted that the application includes no proposals for floodlit pitches. Any proposals for floodlighting would need to be subject of a separate planning application.

Highways, Access, Car and Cycle Parking

79. A principal concern of neighbourhood objections/issues with the application have been likely traffic congestion and disturbance in Lower Cambourne, through school drop-offs and pick-ups close to the proposed main pedestrian access to the school off Swansley Lane. Similar concerns have been raised by both Cambourne and Caxton

Parish Councils, with the former recommending that more consideration be given to upgrading the existing pedestrian/cycle routes in Cambourne, including such measures as better lighting and road crossings, to act as an alternative to the use of routes through residential streets.

80. Whilst not raising an objection to the application, County Highways has raised concerns that "...given the location, length and awkwardness of the proposed access road the Highway Authority is concerned that many parents who decide (for whatever reason) to drive their children to school will choose to use the existing residential streets to the south of the school as the preferred drop off/pick up point. This will be encouraged by the provision of the footpath/cycle link provided by the applicant at this location. Such drop off points, inevitably create significant though short lived, problems for the existing residents. This is a national problem, with no easy solution. Unless controlled such parking is likely to create an unacceptable problem for the Highway Authority when the roads are adopted."
81. Subject to additional clarification on assumptions made in the applicant's Transport Assessment, County Highways are likely to recommend planning conditions be imposed to address their concerns.
82. Given the above concerns, it is considered appropriate for this Authority to recommend that appropriate measures are put in place to address the potential for issues of traffic and general disturbance from school drop-offs and pick-ups in Lower Cambourne. This could be addressed by requiring traffic monitoring in the early years of school opening and appropriate mitigation measures, as necessary (i.e. controlled parking zones), being put in place. It is also considered appropriate to request that the County Planning Authority give full consideration to measures to upgrade existing footpaths in and around the site (in particular the pathway north of Lower Cambourne/south of the Business Park) and crossing points to School Lane and Cambourne Road, with many children attending the school from south of School Lane and west of Cambourne Road (from Great and Upper Cambourne) to help promote walking and cycling to the school.
83. The County Planning Authority (the determining Authority), through a letter dated 7 November 2011, has advised the applicant of the level of comments received in response to the community consultation exercise relating to concerns regarding safe access to the school for pedestrians and cyclists and the potential impact of drop offs and picks ups from vehicular traffic on Swansley Lane and its junction with School Lane. They have asked the applicant to provide further information in relation to the potential impact of traffic movements and means of mitigation. It is also intimated that the applicants and County Highways have held further discussions to explore the issues and potential options for addressing the concerns and that amended plans and further information is being prepared to address these concerns.
84. At the time of writing this Report, the aforementioned amended plans and information had yet to be submitted to the County Planning Authority. However, once received this information will be subject of further review and consultation, prior to the application being reported to the County Planning Committee early next year. It is hoped that an update on these matters will be possible at this Council's December Planning Committee.

Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

85. The Environmental Statement, which accompanies the planning application, provides a detailed assessment of biodiversity and nature conservation considerations that are relevant to this application.
86. The site is considered to have low biodiversity value and the application provides an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of the site through the provision of a variety of features such as a pond and new planting areas that will create new habitats.
87. The County Ecologist (in liaison with our Ecologist) and the Wildlife Trust have made representations on the application with respect to mitigation measures for protected species and the need for native tree planting, which form part of the recommendation below.

Flood Risk and Drainage

88. The Environment Agency has made representations on the application which confirm that they are satisfied 'in principle' that the proposed development can be allowed, subject to the imposition of a number of conditions relating to requirements for a surface water drainage scheme, foul water drainage scheme, and completion of the Phase 1 Land Drainage Solution for the Utton's Drove Waste Water Treatment Works prior to the occupation of the development.
89. Notwithstanding the above, we understand that County Development Control (the determining Authority), through a letter dated 7 November 2011, has advised the applicant that they require detailed drainage design work to be undertaken prior to the determination of the application because it may have implications for the design and other aspects of the development e.g. the balancing pond and habitat creation. This seems to be an eminently appropriate position, which should be supported by this Authority.

Environmental Health

90. The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has confirmed that the applicant's 'Phase 1 Environmental Desk Study' provides sufficient evidence that a condition relating to contaminated land investigation is not required.
91. Similarly, the Council's Environmental Protection Team raises no objections, but would wish to see a number of planning conditions imposed, which control construction activities (i.e. hours of activity) and seek details of proposed external lighting to the site – this is reflected in the recommendation.

Sustainability, Renewable Energy and BREEAM

92. In support of the application, the applicant's Planning Statement states that:

“[A BREEAM for Education (2008) Pre-Assessment for Design Stage] demonstrates that a rating of at least 'very good' is anticipated to be achieved for the building, and throughout the process adaptations have been considered to improve the performance of the building. Overall, there are a number of important elements of the buildings design, which will help achieve these objectives and improve the energy efficiency of the building, [these include]:

 - (a) The use of solar shading to reduce over heating

- (b) The use of an efficient building envelop
- (c) High efficiency heat recovery ventilation units
- (d) Solar Thermal collectors
- (e) Incorporation of an air source heat pump
- (f) Infrastructure to be incorporated to allow for photovoltaic panels in the future
- (g) Daylight and presence detection to automatically control the lighting systems in appropriate locations
- (h) All external lighting to be controlled by a suitable time clock and photocell to offer energy efficient operation
- (i) Gas fired condensing boilers with low NOx emissions to provide the majority of the heating and domestic water to the building.”

93. Whilst it is accepted that achieving BREEAM ‘very good’ meets policy expectations, it would be a positive aspiration to consider whether BREEAM ‘excellent’ rating could be achieved. Some or all of the roofs could be considered for the application of a green roof system, whether extensive or intensive, and some PV panels. Likewise, given the site’s relative exposure, some form of wind power may also be appropriate. There are considerable teaching benefits for students to see, and be part of, planning for climate change and it is hoped the applicant will take the opportunity to develop a truly sustainable, exemplar building. It is recommended that planning conditions to ensure that, as a minimum, SCDC standards, set out in policies NE/1, NE/3, and NE/12 are met.

Socio-economic and Health Impact

94. The applicant has confirmed that they have considered this Council’s ‘Health Impact Assessment’ Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in the planning and design of the application. In this regard, they state in support of the application that:

“The proposed development is based on improving the quality of life of residents in Cambourne in a number of ways and seeks to address the imbalance that is occurring and the further discrepancies between supply and demand of secondary school places for Cambourne in the future. The ability to access good education is a fundamental building block for the quality of life for any child and a local school that will allow children to cycle and walk rather than being transferred by bus or car will lead to improvement in overall health and welfare. In addition, the presence of a local school will encourage the children to attend out of school activities and lead to the potential for a healthier lifestyle and independence for the children...”

95. From an economic perspective, the applicant considers that the school “...will provide local employment that will reduce the potential need to travel and reinforce the status of Cambourne as a sustainable community where you can live and work locally without the need for the use of a car.”

96. Such conclusions are supported, as it is felt that the proposed development is likely to exert a major positive impact in terms of health, wellbeing and education to the existing and future residents in Cambourne.

Community Access

97. The application documentation provides no implicit commitment to the use of the school by the community. However, at a recent meeting involving the Deputy Head of Comberton Village College (CVC) (the proposed school operator), the Parish Council, local community groups and officers of this Council, it was confirmed by CVC that they are committed to providing a programme of ‘out-of-hours’ adult education

classes. Indeed, they are currently in the process of developing a plan in this regard, which would include such activities as cookery, fitness, modern languages, the performing arts and pottery.

98. An action from the aforementioned meeting was for a small group of representatives (including the Village College, SCDC and Parish Council) to formulate a draft community access agreement and operational framework for management of the facilities and delivery of a sustainable community activities programme, to provide a level of comfort on the provision of community access to the school.

Departure

99. The application constitutes a departure from the Development Plan, as it lies outside of the village framework, and has been advertised as such. If the County resolve to grant planning permission for the development they will need to determine whether it should be referred to the Secretary of State in accordance with national legislation (Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2010). If referred, and subject to the Secretary of State deciding not to intervene, the application will be determined in accordance with the County Planning Committee's resolution.

Recommendation

100. That the County Council be advised that this Council wishes to raise NO OBJECTIONS to the application for a secondary school on land west of Cambourne, subject to the following issues being satisfactorily addressed and planning conditions being imposed as follows:
- (a) Measures be put in place to monitor traffic and short-term parking in Lower Cambourne during the early years of the opening of the school, and if deemed appropriate following such a review, to implement parking controls/introduce Traffic Regulation Order(s) in and around the school to address identified problems. Conditions will also be required to ensure that car and cycle parking schemes accord with policy TR/2, that cycle spaces are secure and covered, and that sufficient disabled car parking places are provided and in suitable locations; travel plan implementation and monitoring;
 - (b) Full consideration be given to the upgrading of existing footpaths in and around the site (in particular the pathway immediately north of Lower Cambourne/south of the Business Park), subject to ensuring that bridleway routes and the rural character of the greenways are not compromised.
 - (c) Provision of crossing points to School Lane and Cambourne Road, to help promote and facilitate safe pedestrian/cycle access for children attending the school from south of School Lane and west of Cambourne Road (from Great and Upper Cambourne);
 - (d) To ensure that the development will be constructed to a high build quality, conditions should be imposed to ensure an appropriate level of control on external materials, landscape details, security features, such as fencing, to address the Constabulary's Architectural Liaison's comments, fire hydrants, ;
 - (e) Submission of Co-ordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP) to include: (i) pollution control measures for A428 balancing pond; (ii) reasonable avoidance measures method statement for Great Crested Newts; (iii) design

of access road that is sympathetic to amphibians (e.g. avoidance of gully pots); (iv) revised landscape scheme that includes badger mitigation (e.g. shrub/hedgerow outside perimeter fencing/move perimeter fencing to inside the hedge line, and local varieties of orchard trees; and (v) detailed design of the proposed balancing pond that is designed for wildlife;

- (f) Support 'in principle' for Sport England's suggestion that the school should make sporting facilities available to the public to meet identified community need (i.e. specialist sporting facilities not offered at the new Cambourne Sports Centre), subject to such usage not conflicting with suggested Environmental Health controls (see below) on usage;
- (g) Imposition of conditions as recommended by the Environment Agency and Anglian Water, with respect to submission of a surface water drainage scheme; submission of a foul water drainage scheme noting the requirements of policy NE/9; and completion of the Phase 1 Land Drainage Solution for the Utton's Drove Waste Water Treatment Works prior to occupation of the development;
- (h) Imposition of conditions as recommended by this Council's Environmental Health Officers, covering the following matters: (i) details of the location and type of any power driven plant or equipment, including equipment for heating, ventilation and for the control or extraction of any odour, dust or fumes from buildings; (ii) during construction period no power operated machinery to be operated before 0800 or after 1800 on weekdays and 0800 and 1300 on Saturdays, Sundays or Bank Holidays; (iii) hours limitation for commercial/retail vehicles loading and unloading within the site – 0700 to 2300 Monday to Saturday and not at all on Sundays, Bank and Public Holidays; (iv) Construction Method Statement for foundations if driven pile foundations proposed; (v) Lighting scheme, to include details of any external lighting of the site such as street lighting, floodlighting or security lighting; (vi) Noise Assessment and scheme of insulation for the music suite (practice and recital rooms) and workshops within the building; and (vii) limitations on daytime and night-time background noise levels including submission of a noise prediction survey/report;
- (i) By virtue of the submitted Environmental Statement identifying an unacceptable adverse noise impact from the proposed school, it is also considered that appropriate planning conditions be imposed to either restrict the hours of use, the number of pitches that can be used at any one time, and restrict community use outside core school hours and at weekends. Alternatively, and in combination with physical noise mitigation measures, such as a substantial noise barrier and an earth mound or bern along the entire length of the east boundary could be considered;
- (j) Whilst it is accepted that achieving BREEAM 'very good' meets policy expectations, it would be a positive aspiration to consider whether BREEAM 'excellent' rating could be achieved. Some or all of the roofs could be considered for the application of a green roof system, whether extensive or intensive, and some PV panels. Likewise, given the site's relative exposure, some form of wind power may also be appropriate. There are considerable teaching benefits for students to see, and be part of, planning for climate change and it is hoped the applicant will take the opportunity to develop a truly sustainable, exemplar building. Notwithstanding, conditions to ensure SCDC

policy requirements in relation to sustainable development, renewable energy and water conservation are met will be sought;

- (k) Consideration should be given to formulating a community access agreement and operational framework for management of the facilities and delivery of a sustainable community activities programme, to provide a level of comfort on the provision of community access to the school;
- (l) Any planning conditions required by the County's archaeologists to ensure that the heritage of the site is protected.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (January 2005)
- PPS1 (Supplement) – Planning and Climate Change (December 2007)
- PPS3 – Housing (June 2010)
- PPS5 – Planning for the Historic Environment (March 2010)
- PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (August 2004)
- PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geographical Conservation (August 2005)
- PPG13 – Transport (January 2011)
- PPG17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (July 2002)
- PPS22 – Renewable Energy (2004); and
- PPS25 – Development and Flood Risk (March 2010)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted January 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD (adopted July 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Site Specific Policies DPD 2010
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents:
 - Trees and Development Sites SPD – July 2009
 - Biodiversity SPD – July 2009
 - Landscape and New Developments SPD – March 2010
 - District Design Guide SPD: High Quality and Sustainable Development in South Cambridgeshire (March 2010)
 - Health Impact Assessment SPD – May 2011
 - Public Art SPD – January 2009
- Planning File Refs: S/1898/11/CM, S/6438/07/O and S/1371/92/O.

Contact Officer: Trevor Faulkner – Principal Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713417