
MAIN CASE

Reference No: 15/03004/CCA

Proposal: The demolition of the existing sports centre at Camel Road and the construction of a new education campus comprising secondary, primary (including pre-school) and special needs (SEN) schools, sports facilities including playing fields, supporting infrastructure including vehicular and pedestrian access, parking, landscaping and the erection of a new leisure centre that will be shared between the school and community. Temporary construction access via Camel Road from the A10.

Site Address: Sports and Leisure Centre, Camel Road, Littleport, Ely, CB6 1EW

Applicant: Cambridgeshire County Council

Case Officer: Andrew Phillips Senior Planning Officer

Parish: Littleport

Ward: Littleport West

Ward Councillors: Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith
Councillor Paul Cox

Date Received: 18 May 2015

Expiry Date:

[Q23]

1.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

1.1 Members are requested to endorse the consultation response raising concerns proposed by Officers set out below:

- Due to the increase in morning rush hour traffic using Elm Side, the footpath and cycle link should be given priority in order to ensure sustainable methods of transport.
- It is requested that the Transport Statement is reviewed again by Growth and Economy department of County Council in order to confirm that the revised employment numbers and other changes does not change its positive recommendation.
- The amount of secure/sheltered cycle provision should meet or exceed the minimum standards under Policy COM 8. If this cycle provision is not all provided at the start of the development then it should be phased/tied to a Travel Plan that is reviewed annually.

- That a legal agreement or conditions is required to secure the Leisure Centre and associated sport pitches remain with priority remaining for the whole community of Littleport. A condition should be used to prevent the demolition of the existing leisure centre until the new one is ready for use.
- A finalised BREEAM assessment should be submitted to demonstrate how the design and siting of the school will meet at least 'Very Good' before the application is approved. A condition should be added to ensure the development meets at least Very Good before occupation.
- The overall design of the buildings does not form a holistic high quality design and there is concern over the materials being used that will further harm the final appearance. The design should be referred and reviewed again by the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel and the design either agreed or amended to reflect the panel's comments. Officers of East Cambridgeshire Local Planning Authority should remain involved in the design process.
- That a hard and soft landscaping condition should be added to ensure a high quality public realm, in particular the plaza at the front of the secondary school.
- Seek the Lead Local Flood Authority to provide comments in regards to surface water flooding.

East Cambridgeshire District Council should be kept actively involved in any further discussions and amendments, as it seeks to provide a high quality development in this location.

2.0 SUMMARY OF APPLICATION

- 2.1 This application is being determined by Cambridgeshire County Council. **East Cambridgeshire District Council is a consultee** and not the determining body.
- 2.2 The application seeks permission for a Pre School, Primary School (1 Form Entry, 210 pupils), Secondary School (with extension capacity to 5 Form Entry 750 Pupils), Special Education Needs (110 pupils aged 2 to 19) and a Leisure Centre.
- 2.3 No mention is made in the development description to the replacement of the pumping station and this is likely to form its own application at a later date.
- 2.4 The full planning application (County Council's reference E/3004/15/CC), plans and documents submitted by the Applicant can be viewed online via Cambridgeshire County Council's website:
<http://planning.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/swift/apas/run/wphappcriteria.display>

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 There have been a number of historic planning applications on and around the site. It is considered by virtue of the nature of the development there is no planning history of relevance.
- 3.2 The County Council as Local Planning Authority provided pre-application advice on the 28 July 2014 and no additional pre-application requests were made before the

application was submitted in 5 May 2015. It is understood this time was used to only discuss highway issues.

- 3.3 The County Council Local Planning Authority wrote to the developer on the 15 June 2015 relating to concerns and inaccuracies with the submitted application.
- 3.4 The developer submitted additional information to the Case Officers on the 18 and 19 June 2015 in order to provide answers to questions raised. It is likely that more information will be provided before the Committee date, additional information will be provided to Members by way of a verbal update.

4.0 THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

4.1 The application site, which is approximately 16.34 hectares, is located to west of Camel Road and to the north of Elm Side. The north-eastern part of the site is currently the existing leisure facility/recreation ground, while the south-western section is agricultural land.

4.2 The A10 is located to the west and residential properties define the southern boundary.

5.0 RESPONSES FROM CONSULTEES

5.1 The District Council Local Planning Authority is a consultee for this application.

5.2 Conservation Officer – The Conservation Officer states that the application requires a Heritage Statement as the proposal is likely to affect the view from the A10 of the Grade II* Listed Building of St George’s Church and the applicant has failed to demonstrate how the impact on this listed building has been duly considered.

The Conservation Officer provides a detailed assessment of the design and seeks amendments in order to ensure a high quality designed development (full comments available on the website).

The Conservation Officer concludes that the applicant should produce an appropriate assessment of the heritage assets and the impact of the scheme on those assets. It may well be that the public benefits outweigh the harm, however paragraph 128 of the NPPF states “*In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting*”. Additional work is required to show how this has been given adequate consideration in the process and ideally the design of the building should be looked at again in more detail to provide a cohesive design of higher architectural quality.

6.0 The Planning Police Context

6.1 East Cambridgeshire

GROWTH 2	Locational strategy
GROWTH 3	Infrastructure requirements

ENV 1	Landscape and settlement character
ENV 2	Design
ENV 4	Energy and water efficiency and renewable energy in construction
ENV 7	Biodiversity and geology
ENV 8	Flood Risk
ENV 9	Pollution
ENV 12	Sites of archaeological interest
COM 3	Retaining community facilities
COM 4	New community facilities
COM 7	Transport impact
COM 8	Parking provision
LIT 6	School allocation – land west of Camel Road

6.2 National Planning Policy Framework 2012

7.0 PLANNING COMMENTS

7.1 The key concerns are to ensure the parish does not lose a community facility, access to and from the site, potential surface water flooding, the sustainability of the site and is the design suitable for what will be a landmark building.

Principle and Requirement

7.2 The proposed development is supported by Policy LIT 6, which states that the site to the west of Camel Road could be used for schools and leisure facilities. The policy does not identify the boundaries of the site.

7.3 It is considered that the proposed educational provision is required to ensure that sufficient space is made available to provide education to the local population. The principle of the development is, therefore, supported.

Loss of Community Facility

7.4 Community facilities play an important role in maintaining the quality of life in settlements and include a range of uses including leisure facilities such as those affected by this proposal. The development will involve the demolition of the existing leisure centre with a new leisure centre being provided connected to the Secondary School.

7.5 The developer has not submitted a draft Heads and Terms with the application in order to ensure that the proposed Leisure Centre and associated public open space is given to the community rather than being managed by whoever runs the school. There is concern that if the school provider takes over then access to the Leisure Centre could be significantly limited.

7.6 The application should not be approved until a signed legal agreement/condition secures the community facility ensuring that local people do not notice a reduction in access to leisure or a condition that ensures the existing leisure centre cannot be demolished until the new leisure centre is built. If the community access is to be

agreed by way of a condition and not legal agreement, then a community access agreement should ensure that priority remains with the whole community and not the day to day running of the school(s).

Highways and Accessibility

- 7.7 The applicant has submitted a Transport Statement with the application and the Local Highways Authority has been consulted on the proposal. Comments from the Growth and Economy department of County Council are positive, though they will be seeking improvement works to Wisbech Road and Elm Side in addition to a travel plan monitoring.
- 7.8 The Pre School, Primary School, Secondary School and Leisure Centre vehicular access will be from Camel Road located to the east of the site. The Special Education Needs School is seeking access from Elm Side located to the south of the site.
- 7.9 Policy LIT 6 seeks that the main vehicular access should be from Camel Road, while seeking pedestrian/cycle access from Elm Side.
- 7.10 The Special Education Needs School is predicted to have 124 (97 of these by car/van) vehicular movements to and from the site in the morning rush hour. The Primary and Secondary Schools combined morning car/van movements is predicted to be 275.
- 7.11 While the main entrance to the site is considered to be from Camel Road the amount traffic using the access from Elm Side is likely to make this entrance significantly more dominate than predicted in Policy LIT6. While there is some concern over the amount of traffic, in particular during morning rush hour, using Elm Side the Transport Assessment concludes that the development will not have any significant impact upon the operation and capacity of the local transport networks and this is backed up by Growth and Economy department of County Council.
- 7.12 Littleport Parish Council has also raised concerns in regards to the access from Elm Side.
- 7.13 The designated footpath and cycle way that runs from Camel Road and around the eastern edge of the site measures 5 metres (2m footpath, 3m cycle lane). However, where it crosses Black Bank Drove this network shrinks to 3m. The reduction in width is likely to mean that pedestrian and cyclists will come into conflict or push one group into the roadway. It is considered that the developer has not achieved the aims of providing a suitable route for pedestrians and cyclists over Black Bank Drove as required by LIT6. This is made more important by virtue of the developer not seeking to improve Black Bank Drove for pedestrians and cyclists, as it does not want to encourage school children using unsupervised transport networks.

- 7.14 It is expected that the proposed footpath/cycle lane connecting onto Camel Road, will involve the creation of a footpath along Camel Road in order to connect up to the footpath network running into Littleport.
- 7.15 The information provided by the developer is seeking to provide less secure/sheltered cycle provision than what is required by Policy COM 8. The developer believes the development will require 263 cycle spaces but is only seeking to provide 182 cycle and 40 scooter spaces (222 spaces). However, County Council have stated that there will be 25 classes for the Secondary School, which requires 300 cycle spaces alone. It is noted that the SEN School is likely to require less cycle spaces, as it predicts most students will be dropped off. With Policy COM 8 setting a minimal standard, the significant under provision of cycle spaces is a significant concern. The developer will need to provide space for the minimum number of secure cycle spaces, though this could be dealt with on a phases basis linked to a Travel Plan that is reviewed annually.
- 7.16 The majority of the cycle provision is located at the end of the segregated cycle path from Camel Road, which is considered to be positive.
- 7.17 The developer is predicting 190 people to work on the site and is providing 221 parking spaces. It is noted that the developers Transport Statement believes there will be 212 people working on site. Policy COM 8 would seek a maximum level of 286 parking spaces. While the parking is significantly below this parking level, it is unlikely to cause significant on street parking as the site has linked uses and significant amount of space dedicated for dropping off spaces, which means any high parking demands is likely to remain within the site.
- 7.18 There is conflict in the submitted information. The Transport Statement should be reviewed again by the Growth and Economy department of County Council.
- 7.19 The construction access will be from the northern edge of the site from the A10 via Camel Road. It is considered that this will keep construction traffic from the vast majority of residents within Littleport.

Flood risk

- 7.20 Cambridgeshire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority has stated that it does not want to comment on the application and is leaving any comments to the Internal Drainage Board. However, the Environment Agency makes it clear in its comments that it is the County's responsibility to provide comments in regards to surface water flooding.

Sustainability

- 7.21 There is concern over the Sustainability Statement April 2015 that makes reference to the East of England Plan that was revoked in January 2013. However, it does state that the site will meet BREEAM Very Good and preliminary evidence is showing that it is possible for the site to meet this level. With a BREEAM assessment requiring both internal and external factors to be assessed, in combination with the size of the development, a detailed finalised report should be submitted before the application is approved to prove how this development will

meet 'Very Good'. A condition should be added to any consent to ensure that the development before it is occupied meets with this standard.

Design and Layout

- 7.22 This proposal will be a major landmark building within Littleport and the design and layout, therefore, need to be of a high standard. The size of the development will make it viewable from Camel Road (both from the east and north) and potential glimpses from the public roads to the south of the site. It will also be visible from the A10.
- 7.23 The architect's vision for the site was to create a set of buildings that while performing a community function followed an agricultural vernacular.
- 7.24 The final design, as submitted, has not been assessed by the Quality Panel. The previous design that was shown to the Quality Panel had concerns raised regarding the design and massing of the proposed building(s).
- 7.25 The individual elements of the proposal have been given their own design. The Secondary School is the tallest building, though has a flat roof, at three storeys. The attached Leisure Centre is lower in height and with elements either projecting or indented allows for a viewing platform over the sport fields to the north. The Primary/Early Years building is single storey with the height kept low, this is likely to provide a more human scale to the pupils using the school. The Special Education Needs School is a two storey building with a design similar to that found on business parks, though it is also similar to the current Leisure Centre.
- 7.26 The design overall gives the impression that while each design could work on their own, together they are considered to be incoherent design. This sought of mix of designs would be common if a single building has been extended over a long period of time (several decades). While each element of the proposal should be visibly recognisable this should have been done by accents of a holistic design, rather than drastic changes in design principles.
- 7.27 With the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel being made up of a variety of architects the proposal should be taken back and the Panel's comments given priority in this case over East Cambridgeshire Local Planning Authority.
- 7.28 While pre-application and the Design and Access Statement gives the impression that natural timber will be used for the external appearance of the buildings the proposed elevations state that concrete boarding will be used. This is considered to be of a significantly poorer material and raises concerns over the quality of the design. The use of aluminium is supported, as this material is likely to age well and will strengthen the contemporary nature of elements of the design.
- 7.29 It is considered that the landscaping should be used to provide greater focus to the secondary school entrance, as the current layout does not take into account the desire line between the car park and entrance way. There is also concern that the large glazing element at the front of the secondary school is not the entranceway to the school, the main entrance door appears to be to the side of this architectural feature. The developer will be providing more clarity on this aspect of the design.

- 7.30 The positive use of landscaping will also help the proposal to blend into the countryside and minimise the visual impact of the development upon the character of the area.
- 7.31 It is considered that the development will have a less than substantial harm upon the view of the Grade II* Listed Building of St George's Church from the A10 but the public benefits of the development outweigh this harm.
- 7.32 It is not known why the Main Hall for the primary school is within the secondary school. It would be considered more practical that the primary school's Main Hall should be attached to prevent school children having to leave one building and enter another. It is recommended that a glazed link is provided between the primary school's 'main hall' and 'primary circulation', this would not prevent pedestrian access from the south to the Secondary School or Leisure Centre. With the link between the primary school and early years forming no practical purpose (no doors to the early years), this element should be removed in order to provide separation between the buildings.
- 8.0 **SUMMARY**
- 8.1 This application is being determined by Cambridgeshire County Council and Officers have recommended a consultation response for Members of the Planning Committee to endorse.
- 8.2 It is considered that amendments to the design and layout of the scheme are required, in addition to a legal agreement or conditions are used to ensure that the leisure facilities remain within the public domain. The sustainability of the development is important and a BREEAM assessment proving it meets at least very good is achieved. There is currently a significant under provision of the secure/covered cycle storage and the southern access not giving sufficient space for cyclists and pedestrians. Finally further information in regards to flood risk is needed to provide a duly assessed development.

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Officer(s)</u>
Application and supporting documents.	Andrew Phillips Room No. 011 The Grange Ely	Andrew Phillips Senior Planning Officer 01353 665555 andrew.phillips@eastcambs.gov.uk

<http://planning.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/swift/apas/run/wphappcriteria.display>

Adopted Local Plan www.eastcambs.gov.uk

NPPF <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>