

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

13 January 2010

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager – Planning and Sustainable Communities

S/1435/09/F - COTTENHAM

Extension & Erection of New Building to Form New 6th Form Facility with Associated Car/Cycle Parking, Landscaping & Drainage. Relocation of 3 Existing Temporary Classrooms at Cottenham Village College, High Street for Cottenham Village College

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 28th January 2010 (Major)

A. Update to the report

Agenda report paragraph number 16 – Conservation Officer's comments

The Conservation Officer states that the Village College is adjacent to the Cottenham Conservation Area and 1, 2 & 3 Elm Barns, all Listed Grade II. The proposal is for two imaginatively designed contemporary buildings. They have proportions that are similar to the existing buildings on site and are located towards the rear so will be well hidden from views from the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings, apart from glimpses between trees along the south-western boundary of the site. Subject to a condition requiring samples of materials, no objections are raised to these buildings. The relocation of the temporary classrooms is also considered to be acceptable. Objections are, however, raised to the loss of trees T66 and T67, as they provide softening and screening to the views of the College buildings at the edge of the Conservation Area. Their loss seems unnecessary as the car parking is still possible with their retention. A condition should also be added to any permission to cover landscaping and materials.

In response to this, Officers recommend that proposed condition 7 to be expanded to require samples of materials. Also, as advised in paragraph 50 of the Committee report, amended plans are expected to ensure the retention of trees 66 and 67, thereby resolving the Conservation Officer's concerns.

Agenda report paragraphs numbers 24 and 42 – Local Highways Authority/New Communities comments regarding the Travel Plan

The Local Highways Authority has placed a holding objection further to the following comments received from the County Council's New Communities Team.

- Cottenham is served by 4 public bus services but only one of these is suitable for staff and students to use to travel to and from the school.
- Concerns are raised regarding the calculation of the proposed trip generation and modal split. The current 2009 modal split scenario should be used to enable a worst-case scenario to be tested and enable understanding of the impact of the proposed development on the transport network.
- Whilst it is understood that trip rates from TRICS and the mode split for the CVC may not be appropriate for determining the trips rates/mode split for the

facility, the projected mode split is very different from the survey undertaken in 2009 and the data from the school census. Further evidence is needed as to why this is an appropriate mode split. This could be by providing mode split information specifically for the SNC facility currently on site or an explanation as to why each of the percentages in the mode split is thought to be accurate.

- The TA has assumed that no students from the 6th form facility will drive to the site. However, there should be some expectation that some students may drive to the site and this should be considered in terms of impact on trip rates and on-site parking.
- It is difficult to understand the actual impact on the highway network as the trip generation information is in terms of student numbers rather than vehicle numbers. No information is provided on the number of school buses or taxis accessing the site, and where parents drop pupils off. Clarification on vehicle numbers accessing the school currently and in 2014 is required. Capacity assessments on nearby junctions may be required depending upon the increase in the number of trips.
- No information is provided as to how trip generation and mode splits account for the distribution of classes throughout the day. Will students using the dedicated school bus to travel to college stay all day or will they use alternative forms of transport to travel home? Further information is also required about the Cambridge Regional College bus service – when would they operate and would they only be for 6th form students?
- The proposal only provides 12 additional parking spaces, over and above the existing unauthorised spaces, for 19 additional staff and, potentially, some students. The TA states fewer parking spaces will create greater competition for parking spaces and ultimately deter staff members from bringing their car. Alternatively, it is likely that staff and students may choose to park off-site in nearby streets. In light of this, further information is required.
- The proposed 50 cycle spaces is considered to be appropriate.

In response to this, the applicant's Transport Consultants has discussed all the points raised with the Local Highways Authority/New Communities Team. It was agreed that all the issues could be resolved by updating the TA with more background information that is already to hand, including assumptions made about trip generation etc. Following these discussions, a revised version of the Transport Assessment was forwarded by the Transport Consultants to the New Communities Team. This recommends that 2 additional conditions be provided:

Proposed Travel Plan Condition – The approved School Travel Plan shall continue to be implemented and monitored on an annual basis and, 3 months prior to first occupation of the new 6th form centre, an enhanced final travel plan will be submitted to the LHA for approval, addressing detailed operational issues of parking management, school bus transport, taxi movement and the daily operational profile of the 6th form centre. This condition works on the principle that the current travel plan will be promoted more intensely in the existing school situation, with more detail provided once the precise number of 6th form intake and their locations/transport arrangements are known.

Proposed Cycle Parking Condition – The numbers of staff and students requiring cycle parking will continue to be monitored as part of the Travel Plan and stated as part of any annual monitoring. Should the level of cycle consistently exceed 5% of the total provision during 5 years from first occupation, the applicant will be expected to provide additional on site cycling capacity. This condition would act as a safety net should the 50 additional spaces prove insufficient over a 5 year period.

The revised Transport Assessment clarifies the following:

- The existing unallocated parking spaces are expected to be converted into 20 official allocated parking spaces for staff members.
- Staff arrivals and departures are expected to be sporadic due to class scheduling. The proposed parking arrangement and provision is therefore considered to be sufficient.
- The use of the cycle spaces will be monitored annually as part of the Travel Plan to ascertain whether a greater provision is required and to facilitate additional stands if necessary.
- The 2005-2009 modal shift figures have been revised and it is clarified that the average modal split for each year is considered to be a worst-case test. It has been assumed this modal split will remain constant until the 2011 opening year.
- A table showing the number of vehicles accessing the site (cars, car sharing and taxis) between 2005 and 2009, calculated using average census data, has been provided.
- It is not anticipated 6th form students will drive to the site for the following reasons: given their social and economic background, it is highly unlikely the students would have ownership or access to a vehicle; there are no parking facilities for students on-site as all parking is allocated to staff members only and this is being reinforced; there is little scope to park off-site due to parking restrictions and residential zones within a ¼ mile radius, acting as a further disincentive. Car use by 6th form students is unlikely to be higher than 5%, which equates to a maximum of 6 cars. This is not considered to have a significant impact on the network.
- A calculation of the number of vehicles visiting the site from 2011-15 has been provided.

Any comments received by the Local Highways Authority/New Communities Team in respect of the revised Transport Assessment will be reported verbally at the Committee meeting.

Agenda report paragraph number 25 – Environment Agency

No additional comments received

Agenda report paragraph number 29 – County Archaeologist’s comments

No objections

Agenda report paragraph number 52 - Biodiversity

The Ecology Officer’s query as to whether there could be a sunken swale/long grass feature above the French drain has been discussed with the applicant. The Village College has advised that this wouldn’t be a very viable option as the proposed drain runs along the playing fields and it would not wish to open this up at the expense of the playing fields. In addition, there is a well established hedgerow running alongside the proposed drain and it is queried whether this would serve the purpose of providing a nature corridor/link already.

Following these concerns, the Ecology Officer has advised that he would not be able to insist upon the provision of the swale.

B. Further Information received after publication of the agenda report.

Amended Transport Assessment dated 7th January 2010.

C. Recommendation

The recommendation remains one of delegated approval, subject to the receipt of amended plans to resolve comments made by the Trees, Landscape Design, Conservation and Ecology Officers, and by the Local Highways Authority.

In addition to this, Officers are also seeking delegated powers to approve the application subject to issues relating to the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan being resolved to the satisfaction of the Local Highways Authority/New Communities Team, including any additional conditions, as suggested by the applicant, that may be deemed necessary.

Additional Background Papers: the following background papers (additional to those referred to in the agenda report) were used in the preparation of this update:

Amended Transport Assessment dated 7th January 2010.

Contact Officer: Lorraine Casey – Senior Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713251