

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~**South Cambridgeshire District Council****Design Enabling Panel****PANEL MEETING REPORT**

Scheme:	Cambourne West
Site address:	Cambourne West, Cambourne, Cambridgeshire
Status:	Pre-Application
Date:	6 th November 2014
Venue:	South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambourne
Time:	14:30 – 16:00
Site visit:	An accompanied site visit was conducted by the panel on 6 th November 2014 prior to the design review.

Panel Members

Simon Carne (Chair)

Ashley Dunseath, (LDA Design LLP)

Ben Kilburn (Kilburn Nightingale Architects)

Local Authority attendees

Rachel Cleminson, Urban Design Consultancy Officer (DEP Co-ordinator)

Ed Durrant, Principal Planning Officer (Case Officer)

Applicant and Representatives

Dick Longdin (Masterplan Consultant, Randall Thorp)

Nick Smith (Project Director, MCA)

Background

The Council's draft Local Plan identifies a site to the west of Cambourne, including the undeveloped land within the Business Park, for the development of a fourth village of approximately 1,200 homes. The Local Plan site is significantly smaller than McA's site, which is proposed to accommodate 2,350 dwellings. Policy SS/8 (Cambourne West) proposes a

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masterplan for the smaller McA site and the undeveloped Business Park land, with the primary access being through the existing Business Park road.

Site and surroundings

Planning approval for the new town of Cambourne was granted in 1994 for three interconnected villages, a local centre, business park etc all within a landscape-led masterplan providing high quality green spaces / routes throughout and surrounding the development. Subsequent applications have increased the numbers of houses to 4,500, and a secondary school has now been built to the west of the Business Park with vehicular access via Sheepfold Lane.

The 137ha site is located to the west of Cambourne, beyond the Business Park, secondary school and primary school (currently under construction). Although known as Cambourne West, the majority of the site falls within the parish of Caxton, a small predominantly linear village to the southwest of the site. Most of the land is in agricultural use and there are very few natural features across the site. There is a shallow valley that runs north to south and an existing centrally located farmhouse, which does not form part of the application site. There are some existing mature trees on the site, though these are predominantly located along the eastern and western boundaries of the site.

To the north of the site there is the dual carriageway of the A428 and the single carriageway A1198 is to the west, incorporating a bypass round the village of Caxton. To the northwest of the site there are some existing agricultural/commercial units and several fast food outlets just off the Caxton Gibbet roundabout. The village of Lower Cambourne, which has the lowest density of the three Cambourne villages, is to the southeast of the site behind a mature tree belt.

Design proposals

The current proposals are for 2,350 new homes, providing a mix of unit sizes and tenure, and potentially accommodating 6,345 residents. The application includes two new primary schools, an additional secondary school, 1,550sqm of A1-A5 retail space, 5-6ha of employment land, community facilities such as a village hall, and open space provision including allotments, community orchards, formal / informal play space, sports pitch provision and informal open space.

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A high quality green infrastructure network will be developed across the development, with a green spine running through the centre of the development, linking the water attenuation ponds, and ensuring green open space is at the heart of the development, a principle already established within the rest of Cambourne. This green spine will contain a range of spaces for community use, including village greens, sports pitches, play areas and community orchards, as well as the main spine road through the development. Community hubs will be located at nodes along the movement networks.

An area of green separation will be formed along the eastern boundary of the proposed development to maintain separation between the new housing and the existing community of Lower Cambourne. The additional secondary school will also be located within this separation space, adjacent to the existing school, so that they could potentially share certain facilities / services. New woodlands will be created along parts of the site boundaries, and historic hedgerows will be reinstated to provide greenways throughout the development as part of a network of pedestrian and cycle routes.

Housing densities will graduate from 30dph on the western edges of the development, up to 45dph adjacent to the existing business park on the eastern site boundary with a maximum height of 3 storey. Three character areas will be developed across the site as part of a design code.

Policy context

“South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD”
(2007)

Policy DP/2 Design of new development

All new development must be of high quality design and, as appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, should: preserve or enhance the character of the local area; conserve or enhance important environmental assets of the site; include variety and interest within a coherent design, which is legible and provides a sense of place whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness; achieve a legible development, which includes spaces with a defined sense of enclosure and interesting vistas and focal points, with good interrelationship between buildings, routes and spaces both within the development and

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with the surrounding area; achieve a permeable development for all sectors of the community and all modes of transport, including links to existing footways, cycleways, green spaces and roads; be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area; provide high quality public spaces; provide an inclusive environment that is created for people, that is and feels safe, and that has a strong community focus; and include high quality landscaping compatible with the scale and character of the development and its surroundings.

Policy DP/3 Development Criteria

All development proposals should provide, as appropriate to the nature, scale and economic viability: Appropriate access from the highway network that does not compromise safety, enhanced public and community transport and cycling and pedestrian infrastructure; car parking, with provision kept to a minimum; safe and secure cycle parking; safe and convenient access for all to public buildings and spaces, and to public transport, including those with limited mobility or those with other impairment such as of sight or hearing; for the screened storage and collection of refuse, including recyclable materials; and a design and layout that minimises opportunities for crime.

Panel views

It should be noted that the comments below include items from the Panel's in camera discussion and amplify the brief opinion delivered at the end of the session.

Summary

The Panel welcomes the expansion of Cambourne to the West and were very pleased to see the proposals in advance of submission. The design narrative and evolution of the earlier master plan phases is convincing. The inclusion of the North-west corner of the site up to the Caxton Gibbet roundabout is strongly supported. Comments and suggestions for points of access, development of residential character, location of employment, community and education space of a more detailed nature are set out below.

Discussion

Overall master plan

The Panel welcomed a clear and convincing explanation of the design evolution for a site with few constraints but therefore little to latch onto. The progress through a site defined by the surrounding road network and some limited existing planting has been based largely on the minor topographical feature of the “valley”, an obvious opportunity to link into the existing roundabout approaching Cambourne Village to the south and along Sheepfold Lane to the North east.

Community

The new development will be closely linked but separated from the adjoining areas of Cambourne. To avoid the creation of impenetrable barriers, opportunities for links between Cambourne West and Cambourne Village and the Cambourne Business Park should be encouraged. Community facilities including open spaces, playing fields, allotments and orchards are all provided and generally spread across the area. How these facilities work together and in conjunction with other community and educational facilities will be important factors in the success of West Cambourne.

Options for either one or two secondary schools were discussed and at this stage comment is clearly premature. Whilst the County Council’s preference is a co-joined secondary school solution, the Panel wondered whether this would not be concentrating too large a facility in one location. Whilst economies of scale are important this might lead to a sterilization of a large part of the development area.

A more direct relationship between allotments/orchards and residential areas was suggested. Opportunities to enhance the character of these areas with appropriate hedges or walled enclosure, so that they are not seen as untidy intrusions, should be part of design guidance.

Connectivity

A journey through the site with a number of incidents along the way, including communal facilities, open spaces of different character, water features, green links for pedestrians and cyclists characterizes a landscape led structure. Whilst this will potentially provide an attractive

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route, it is also envisaged that this will provide bus routes and main access to communal facilities.

At this stage there was no information on the likely traffic loads and the detailed performance of the indicative layout. The impact of vehicles for through traffic, access and the relationship between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles will be an important consideration in making this landscape concept work. Whilst indicative sections were available, the Panel considered a walking / driver level view through the site would be helpful in explaining the spatial concept.

Further vehicle access opportunities were raised and discussed. The option of a direct link from the Cambourne Business Park and Council offices would be a great improvement to the access arrangements. This would be a much better solution to the linking of the existing and new community. It would also much improve the access to the existing secondary and primary school currently under construction. The Panel acknowledges that the land ownership and control issues to be resolved but the greater good of the development is the prize.

In parallel with this option, the Panel considered vehicular access from the Caxton roundabout would provide additional access to future residential developments. It was noted that construction traffic was planned to access from that location. Whilst the employment area accessed from the roundabout would be an addition to a small cluster at that location, the Panel consider its value to Cambourne would be greater if part of an expanded cluster on Sheepfold Lane.

Character

The master plan has clearly built on the experience of working over many years in Cambourne. The initial settlement has now emerged as something that is neither village nor town. This stage has the opportunity to provide a character evolution that could see this phase developing a character of its own, less a series of residential developments and more a “piece of town”. The Panel believe that the richness that a more varied mix of uses, occasional shops, including independents could have a beneficial effect on the way this phase emerges.

Given that the application is in outline and that the parameters of access, land use, heights and green structure will be the main aspects for consideration, much will evolve in detail as the design guidance and code are developed. The ability to provide a flexible response to the

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parameters should be encouraged to avoid the risk that the illustrative plan becomes the default position.

The Panel welcomed the linear park defining the heart of the development with different incidents along its length. This spine would combine with the primary traffic route through the development but would provide different frontage conditions by moving from one side to another to break up the linear character. How this works in practice will require design work to integrate the landscape and transport issues.

The master plan envisages a continuous enclosure of the new settlement with only occasional breaks in hedge or tree belt alongside the main highways to north and west. The desirability of visual and acoustic screening should not preclude larger breaks for example at the southern roundabout entrance opening up views into development perhaps focussing on the attenuation pond. Views into the development need to be considered as well as screening.

Climate

At this stage there was no discussion on more detailed aspects of climate. The Panel welcomed the practical and well-considered approach to site drainage and water attenuation.

Conclusions

The Panel were impressed by the approach to the overall master plan. It was hoped that issues raised in discussion could be incorporated at this stage with agreement with other parties (Business Park access) or could be part of further development (Caxton roundabout access and employment land relocation).

The discussion focused on matters of more detailed design, including location of facilities, infrastructure and future design guidance. The Panel is keen to review these elements as they come forward.