

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held on
Wednesday, 13 March 2024 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Dr Martin Cahn – Chair
Councillor Peter Fane – Vice-Chair

Councillors:	Ariel Cahn	Bill Handley
	Geoff Harvey	Dr Tumi Hawkins
	Dr Lisa Redrup	Peter Sandford
	Heather Williams	Dr Richard Williams
	Eileen Wilson	

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Vanessa Blane (Senior Planning Lawyer), Laurence Damary-Homan (Democratic Services Officer), Chris Green (Highways Development Management Officer [Cambridgeshire County Council]), Michael Hammond (Area Team Leader), Bonnie Kwok (Principal Urban Designer), Emma Lilley (Senior Landscape Architect), Rebecca Smith (Delivery Manager) and Amy Stocks (Senior Planner)

Councillors Jose Hales and Sally Ann Hart were in attendance, as local Members.

Councillor Graham Cone was in attendance remotely, as local Member.

1. Chair's announcements

The Chair made several brief housekeeping announcements. Following these, the Chair proposed a variance in the order of business to take Minute 5 (23/01134/FUL – Land At Melbourn Science Park, Melbourn) as the sixth item of business and Minute 6 (23/01581/FUL – Manor Farm, Clayhithe Road, Horningsea) as the fifth item of business. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Peter Fane and agreed to by the Committee by affirmation.

2. Apologies

There were no Apologies for Absence.

3. Declarations of Interest

With respect to Minute 5, Councillor Peter Fane declared that he was a member of CPPF, who had made a written representation regarding the application, but had not discussed the application with the organisation. Councillor Dr Lisa Redrup declared that she had been a customer of the Melbourn Hub and swimming pool, both referenced in the Heads of Terms in the report, but was coming to the matter with an open mind. During Minute 5, Councillor Jose Hales, who was addressing the Committee as a local Member, declared that he was a director of the Melbourn Hub which was referenced in the report as a recipient of Section 106 funding.

With respect to Minute 6, Councillor Peter Fane declared that he was a member of the Country Land and Business Association, who had made a written representation regarding the application, but had not discussed the application with the organisation. During Minute 6, Councillor Heather Williams declared that she was a member of the Great Cambridge Partnership (GCP) Assembly when the GCP development of the Horningsea Greenway was discussed.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 were amended to reflect that Councillor Heather Williams left the meeting at the start of Minute 7 (Gamlingay) and at the start of Minute 9 (TPO, Shepreth). With the amendments, the Committee authorised the Chair to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 as a correct record.

By affirmation, the Committee authorised the Chair to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2024 as a correct record.

5. 23/01134/FUL - Land At Melbourn Science Park, Melbourn

Minute 5 was taken as the sixth item of business, as per the agreed variance of the order of business

The Area Team Leader presented the report and advised that 4 late representations had been received that did not result in any amendment to the officer's recommendation. The Committee was informed that all references in conditions to drawing number VN212120-D105-F were to be replaced with drawing number VN212120-D195-G, and that the applicant had requested a number of other changes to conditions:

- In condition 15, the removal of all reference of "off-site mitigation" regarding Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Officers had no objection as it would result in all BNG measures being delivered on-site.
- An amendment to condition 28 (cycle parking) to cover all buildings and the removal of condition 29. Officers had no objection as, with the amendment to condition 28, condition 29 would essentially be a duplication of conditions.
- An amendment to condition 42 to correct the class use reference of C1, which was a correction and as such officers did not object. Further request to amend the class uses for the Block A within condition 42 from only use for Class E(d and E) to "for purposes within Class E other than Class E(f) which officers did not agree with as it could potentially allow for uses that would not be supported in the location.

Members asked a number of questions of clarity covering a range of matters and officer's provided response, clarifying that:

- Tree removal on site would mostly result in the removal of category C (low quality) and U (poor quality/unretainable) trees, with 19 category B (moderate quality) trees being removed, as listed in the report. Across the whole site there would be an uplift in total trees as a result of the proposal.
- The "village green" in the western area of the site was the name the applicant chose for the green space.
- The "mobility hub" was a car park with a cycle parking and repair element.
- The figure of 530 new jobs on-site being provided as a result of the proposal was based on figures from the economic report from the agent (Savills).
- Officers were unsure if the hedge on the Cambridge Road boundary was to be retained, but landscaping conditions could be amended to require retention or replacement of the hedge. Trees along the boundary were to be retained.
- Condition 17 d) required details of the long-term maintenance of landscape areas and

criterion b) required replacement planting for any planting that died/was lost for 5 years from the date of planting.

- Residential amenity impact assessments were the same for both private and affordable housing in close proximity to the site, including with respect to Townscape and Landscape Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs).
- The principle of public art on the site was to be agreed as part of the proposal, with details of public art installations to be secured by condition 22. Officers advised that they were happy to work with Members and the local community in the process of agreeing final details and discharging condition 22.
- Water usage reduction on the site would result from the phased nature of development and condition 34 covered matters of water efficiency.
- Condition 23 could be amended to require electric vehicle charging points at the Moat House.
- The community use of Block A had been established in a manner satisfactory to officers and public accessibility of services within Building A was to be secured by the Section 106 agreement.

Highways and parking

Members sought clarity on why the creche facilities in Block A had been removed from the proposal. Officers advised that the access to Block A was to be via a dropped kerb and that Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Development Management had concerns over the number of car parking spaces provided at Block A and the number of vehicle movements that would occur across the dropped kerb. It was clarified that the Highways Development Management comments did not require any particular business to be included or removed from Block A, but that measures to minimise the number of vehicle movements over the dropped kerb access were required.

Members raised concerns over the quantum of parking spaces provided on site and the lack of compliance with the standards set out in policy TI/3 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018. Officers advised that travel plan data from the adjacent Project Birchwood development showed that 80% of those travelling to the site used a private car which suggested that a level of car parking provision below the standards of TI/3 would be acceptable, and further measures would reduce the amount of travel to the site by private car by another 5%. As such, officers felt the proposed quantum of parking was acceptable. With respect to condition 37, officers advised that the provisions of the Travel Plan and Car Parking Management Plan were to be monitored for 5 years following first occupation. Members suggested that 5 years following final occupation would be more appropriate and officers advised that this would be an acceptable amendment to the condition.

Visual impact

Members requested further details on the objection from the Landscape Team and the Senior Landscape Architect advised that the photography on the visual representation of the development was not in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note on Visual Representation of Development Proposals. As such, Landscape officers felt it was difficult to judge the significance of the visual impact of the proposal, and more information on whether views were verified and evidence from more views would have allowed Landscape officers to fully assess the proposal. Further detail was given and Members were informed that verified views would include more information on the location and level of zoom of cameras used in photographs. Members enquired as to if it would be possible to get further LVIA information, including verified views and winter views, and officers advised that this process would take months. As such, officers advised that a deferral to get further LVIA information would be inappropriate but concerns over harms resulting from visual impact and non-compliance with policies HQ/1 and NH/2 of the Local Plan could be listed as a reason for refusal if the Committee was minded to refuse the application. The Area Team Leader advised that whilst the proposal would result in some

visual impact, it was not considered overbearing and officers felt that the impact on local views was acceptable.

The Committee was addressed by an objector, William Webb on behalf of the Melbourn Science Park Neighbour Group. In response to Member questions, he and other members of the Group clarified that the Group was made up of residents of Moat Lane and that concerns over light pollution arose from existing light pollution from the nearby TTP site which the Group felt would be exacerbated by the proposal, especially given the buildings in the proposal were taller than those on the TTP site. The agent of the applicant, Paul Rowland, spoke in support of the application. With support from the architect Josh Stokes, he responded to Member questions of clarity and informed the Committee that:

- The applicant was committed to sustainable travel and sought to divert people away from using private cars to access the site and that the applicant would have proposed more parking on-site if they had felt it was necessary. Reference was made to condition 37 and the requirement for a Travel Plan and Car Parking Management plan to be submitted and approved.
- Most of the tree planting proposed was to be in and around public areas within the site, with discussions being held with officers on how to maximise the effectiveness of tree planting. The applicant was not relying on planting to provide screening as existing trees along the boundary, which were to be retained, already provided screening.
- Water consumption on the site would be reduced by the phased nature of development and water consumption estimates were based on the expected use of the buildings following occupation (wet labs). Details were given on the process of assessing water consumption.
- The proposal had been reviewed and design alterations were made in the pre-application process. The applicant did not feel that a reduction in the height or scale of buildings would be viable and excavation to allow for underground elements of buildings was not viable due to the geological nature of the site, with a high water table, and carbon emissions resulting from the process.
- With regard to LVIA's and the comments of the Landscape Team, the applicant would have been happy to follow the practice laid out in the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note if they were given enough notice. The applicant felt that following the practice would have resulted in the same images being produced, but the agent did note that winter views were lacking.
- The creche had been removed from the proposal in response to the Highway Development Management comments.
- With regard to light pollution, the proposal sought to minimise impact by keeping lighting as low as possible without compromising safety.

Councillor Dr Richard Williams left the meeting

Councillor John Travis of Melbourn Parish Council addressed the Committee on behalf of the Parish Council, who supported the application but held reservations. Councillor Travis responded to Member questions and clarified that the Parish Council held concerns over visual impact on the area and that traffic management was the biggest concern of the Parish Council.

Councillors Jose Hales and Sally Ann Hart addressed the Committee as local Members who objected to the application and responded to Member questions, clarifying that:

- A creche on the site would likely be well used. There was unlikely to be other available space in the village to provide a creche service, even if Section 106 funding was granted.
- There were concerns over Anglian Water's comments that the Melbourn Water Recycling Centre did not have capacity to deal with foul water flows from the site. The local Members accepted that this was not a material consideration for the Planning Committee but felt that the proposal would worsen foul water drainage problems in Melbourn.
- Massing and visual impact were a significant concern. Whilst the local Members

supported the design and efforts to move larger buildings away from the site boundaries, it was felt that the heights of the buildings would be oppressive and impact surrounding properties. It was also felt that the proposal was for metropolitan style buildings that did not match the rural aesthetic of the village. Concerns were also raised that not enough views had been considered in the assessment of visual impact.

- The additional car movements would worsen traffic issues in the village. The local Members felt that both traffic in the village, surrounding villages and on the A10 would be impacted as a result of the proposal but mitigation measures, such as traffic lights, would be too costly to impose responsibility on the developer to provide through the Section 106 agreement.

- The principle of development was supported but the scale and impact of the proposal was not acceptable to the local Members.

Prior to the debate, the Committee agreed that a creche should be provided as part of the development and officers advised that condition 42 could be amended to include Class use E(f) for Block A to allow for this.

In the debate, Members agreed that the principle of development was acceptable and discussed a range of matters. Concerns were raised over the comments of Anglian Water and the impact of the proposal on foul water drainage in Melbourn but the Committee noted that this was not a material consideration. Heights and massing were discussed; some Members felt that it was unacceptable in the rural context and concerns were raised over the potential for harm to neighbour amenity given the comments of the Landscape Team and lack of verified views and variety of views considered. Others felt that the developer had taken appropriate steps to mitigate harm and the design and scale of the proposal was acceptable and necessary to ensure the proposal was viable. Further discussion was held over concerns regarding car parking provision and the impact on local traffic. The Committee noted the weight given to the need to provide employment land on a national level and research facilities given local context. Members agreed that the proposal would result in a level of harm, but a decision was to be made on if the benefits of the approval outweighed the harms after mitigation. Some Members commented that changes to the conditions and Section 106 agreement would lead them to being approval minded.

Following the debate, the Delivery Manager summarised the officer's recommendation and the changes to the conditions and informatives suggested by officers and requested by the Committee, listed below:

- Condition 15 was amended to remove all reference to "off-site mitigation" with regards to Biodiversity Net Gain, and the removal of criterion i).
- Condition 17 was amended to include reference to details of boundary landscaping.
- Condition 23 was amended to include reference to the provision of electric vehicle charging points in the Moat House car park.
- Condition 26 was amended to remove reference to "Rev F" and replace it with reference to "Rev G".
- The first sentence of condition 28 was amended to read "prior to occupation of each new or refurbished building, details of facilities for the secure parking of cycles for use in connection with that building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority".
- Condition 29 was to be removed.
- The final paragraph of condition 37, above the reason, was amended to state that "the Travel Plan and Parking Management Plan shall be implemented and monitored as approved upon the final occupation of the development, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority".
- Condition 38 was amended to change reference to dwg. no. VN212120-D105-F to reference to dwg. no. VN212120-D105-G.

- Condition 40 was amended to change reference to dwg. no. VN212120-D105-F to reference to dwg. no. VN212120-D105-G.
- Condition 42 was amended to refer to Class C1, instead of Class C2, in reference to the usage of The Moat House. Condition 42 was also amended to add reference to Class E(f), in addition to Class E(d and e), with regards to the usage of Block A.
- Informative 15 was to be removed.

The Delivery Manager also advised that changes to the Heads of Terms had been suggested, with an addition of £10,000 to the Transport Obligation for the implementation of parking restrictions in the vicinity and/or traffic calming measures, if necessary. The trigger point for the Community Facilities Obligation was also to be reviewed in the negotiation of the Section 106 agreement to reflect the comments of Members.

By affirmation, the Committee agreed that, if it were minded to approve the application, approval would be subject to the amendments to the conditions, informatives and Heads of Terms as described by the Delivery Manager.

By 7 votes (Councillors Dr Martin Cahn, Peter Fane, Ariel Cahn, Geoff Harvey, Bill Handley, Dr Tumi Hawkins and Eileen Wilson) to 3 (Councillors Dr Lisa Redrup, Peter Sandford and Heather Williams), the Committee **approved** the application in accordance with the officer's recommendation, and subject to the conditions (with minor amendments to the conditions as drafted delegated to officers), informatives and the completion of a Section 106 agreement, as laid out in the report from the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development and amended by the Committee (with minor amendments to the Heads of Terms as set out delegated to officers).

6. 23/01581/FUL - Manor Farm, Clayhithe Road, Horningsea

Minute 6 was taken as the fifth item of business, as per the agreed variance of the order of business

The Senior Planner presented the report and informed the Committee that a third-party representation in support of the application had been received after the report had been published. In response to Member questions, officers provided advice on matters related to non-compliance with policies of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and other matters:

Compliance with policy S/11

Given that the site was in an infill village, officers deemed that 7 dwellings would not be compliant with policy S/11 as the location of the proposal was unsustainable due to the lack of services and facilities in the village. The very exceptional circumstances of sustainable recycling of a brownfield site did not apply as the site did not qualify as brownfield.

The National Planning Policy Framework definition of brownfield land (previously developed land) (page 74) excludes land that is or was last occupied by agriculture or forestry buildings. The Committee was informed that the ongoing Government consultation on strengthening planning policy for brownfield development carried no material weight as decisions were to be made on adopted policies.

With regard to a lack of evidence on loss of employment as required by part 2 (d) of S/11, the previous agricultural tenancy for the site had expired in 2021 and no evidence of marketing of the site had been provided by the applicant. Given the time since the last agricultural lease of the site and the lack of marketing evidence, officers did not have

evidence to conclude that the conversion of the buildings would not result in the loss of local employment.

With regard to the introduction of residential dwellings to replace agricultural buildings, officers were of the view that there would be more vehicular movements as a result of the proposal. This was due to the fact that each dwelling would have two associated car parking space and given the nature of Horningsea as an infill village, residents of the dwellings would have to go outside of the village to access services which would result in more vehicular movements. Officers advised that this assessment was based on the previous agricultural use of the site and traffic movements generated, rather than wider analysis of traffic in Horningsea.

Compliance with policy TI/2

The proposed Horningsea Greenway, which was under consultation for an associated Traffic Order, was not considered a material consideration with regard to promoting sustainable travel. Officers advised that the Greenway could be taken as a material consideration, mitigating the non-compliance with policy TI/2, once construction had started. It was clarified that the officer's recommendation was centred around the contravention of policy S/11, with contravention of other policies adding further weight to the recommendation of refusal.

Other matters

Plot 4 bedroom 4 of the indicative plans was listed as a double bedroom but did not meet the space standards for a double bedroom. As space standards applied to new build developments and the proposed development was a conversion, this information was highlighted for information purposes and was not a material consideration.

As the site was curtilage listed, Class Q permitted development rights to allow for the change of use and conversion of agricultural buildings to residential properties did not apply to the proposal.

The Committee was addressed by the applicant, Nick Dakin, who responded to a number of Member questions and clarified that:

- Residents of Horningsea could purchase food from both the farm shop and the local garden centre in the village, without the need to use a car.
- The agricultural buildings on the site were derelict and could not be used for agricultural purposes. Furthermore, the buildings on site did not meet the modern standards for agricultural use due to their age and design as they were Victorian structures.
- All of the proposed dwellings were to utilise heat pumps.

A community supporter, Michael Hellowell, addressed the Committee and, in response to a Member question, stated that there were a number of delivery services that provided food and other resources to residents of the village. Councillor Graham Cone addressed the Committee in support of the application as local Member and, in response to a question, advised the Committee that his view was that Horningsea provided a sustainable location for the proposed development given the existing and planned sustainable travel links and services within a short cycle.

In the debate, Members expressed support for the design of the proposal, felt that it was sympathetic to the nature of the village and suggested that it would enhance the Heritage Asset. The Committee noted that the proposal was within the Village Development Framework. Members expressed the view that the existing buildings on-site were derelict and had a very low chance of returning to agricultural use so concerns over the loss of

employment land were not engaged. With regard to policy S/11, Members felt that the existing and planned sustainable travel links between Horningsea and Fen Ditton, as well as the services available in both villages, made the location sustainable for 8 dwellings. The Committee noted that exceptions for 8 dwellings to be permitted if it would lead to the sustainable recycling of brownfield land were laid out in policy S/11 and, whilst the site was excluded from the definition of a brownfield site, Members felt that the proposal was a sensible and sustainable use of previously developed land that would not return to agricultural use. Members commented that the site visit and representations were useful and had provided evidence that the proposal was sustainable. The Committee accepted the reasons for the officer's recommendation of refusal and understood why that had been given, but Members felt that the application was one in which the Committee should use its discretionary powers to vary from policy requirements. Members stated that a precedent would not be set if the Committee were to make a decision contrary to the officer's recommendation as an overturn would be based on the specific context of the proposal and the village.

Following the debate, the Delivery Manager summarised the officer's recommendation and officers advised that, if the Committee was to make a decision contrary to the recommendation of refusal, approval of the application would require a number of conditions and the completion of a Section 106 agreement. Councillor Bill Handley proposed that the Committee move to approve the application, contrary to the officer's recommendation laid out in the report from the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins and the Committee agreed to the proposal by unanimous vote.

The Committee then unanimously voted to **approve** the application subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement, securing the Heads of Terms identified in the report from the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, and subject to conditions, as titled below, with officers delegated to produce the final wording of conditions in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair:

1. Time limit	2. Drawings	3. Archaeology- phase 1 and 2 desk study
4. Contaminated Land assessment (compliance)	5. Remediation method statement	6. Unexpected contamination
7. Construction and delivery hours	8. Construction Environmental Management Plan	9. Surface water drainage scheme
10. Maintenance of water drainage system	11. Foul water drainage works	12. Sample of materials
13. Details of pavours/setts	14. Strategy for re-use of structure material	15. Vehicular access material
16. Vehicular access width	17. Vehicular access level	18. Closure of southern access
19. Cambridgeshire County Council's construction specification	20. Water efficiency	21. Broadband
22. Energy Statement	23. Hard and Soft Landscaping	24. Removal of Permitted development rights.

7. Compliance Report

The Delivery Manager presented the report and the Committee **noted** the report.

8. Appeals against Planning Decisions and Enforcement Action

The Delivery Manager introduced the report and the Committee **noted** the report.

The Meeting ended at 4.18 p.m.
