
REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

10th May 2006

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

**S/6339/06/RM – Cambourne
Changes to Existing Landform to Accommodate Spoil at
Eastern Valley and Area Southeast of Upper Cambourne for
MCA Developments Ltd**

Recommendation: Approval (Major Application)

Date for Determination: 2nd June 2006

Site and Proposal

1. The application site comprises two parcels of land within the eastern valley to the east of Great Cambourne (Areas A and B) and south of Upper Cambourne (Areas C and D). It lies adjacent to land already authorised and in use for spoil disposal, and stretching northwards to areas on either side of Oakdene track. It includes an area north of Lake 2, east of Great Cambourne and west of Great Common Wood. At the southern end of the application site, Spoil Area B is bounded on the south by the existing disposal area, on the west by the isolated residential bungalow "Oakdene", and on the north by the access track which leads down to Oakdene from Broadway. Newly planted structural woodland including a bridleway wraps around the southeast side at the Cambourne boundary. North of Oakdene track is a hedge and ditch, and rising land towards the east; this Area A stretches to the designated boundary of Upper Cambourne as shown on the Masterplan. Spoil Area C lies immediately to the east of undeveloped housing areas GC23 and GC26 for which no applications have yet been submitted. It stretches from the existing haul road north of Lake 2 to a hedgeline on the north side linking with Great Common Wood West defining the eastern boundary. North of the hedgeline Spoil Area D extends northwards to Eastgate, and is bounded by Jeavons wood on the west and Great Common Wood West on the east. The houses in Cressbrook Drive are adjacent to the southwest corner of this Area.
2. The application received on 3rd March 2006, as amended on 20th April 2006, seeks reserved matter consent to dispose of excavated subsoil from the development areas, within Cambourne, in order to avoid the environmental impact of exporting it off-site if possible. The applicant has calculated that this application site, and a potential area of deposition adjacent to the A428 bund, would be sufficient for the spoil generation of the development densities likely to result from the Development Framework Submission Draft January 2006. In the northern two areas (C and D) the spoil would be spread to a maximum height of 1.5 metres, above existing levels sloped gently at the edges, and keeping clear of the ditch adjacent to Cressbrook Drive, the retained hedge, and at least 5 metres from Great Common Wood. Southeast of Upper Cambourne, Area A would be raised by less than 2 metres at the highest point, and would have the steeper slope along the southeast side adjacent to the establishing structural woodland. Along the north side of Oakdene track the land would be retained at existing levels for 6 metres from the track (1.5 metres from the ditch), to accommodate the trackside hedge and the ditch to the north of it. Southwest of Upper Cambourne Area A would be raised by 2 metres to continue the gradient up from the lake area and create a new "toe" of the slope which rises to The Vine School

at the top of Upper Cambourne. South of Oakdene track, in the area southeast of Oakdene, the land levels would be raised by a maximum of 3 metres at the top of the slope, in order to tie in with the existing area of deposition southeast of Lake 4. At the top and bottom of the track the slope would rise 1.5 metres on the south side, set back by 1.5 metres from the track, and for approximately 100 metres along the central stretch the southern bank would be 2 metres high.

3. In this area the existing field drain would be filled with rubble wrapped in terram so that the slope can continue to drain as work proceeds. A new ditch would be constructed around the south and east side of the existing disposal area, to connect with the boundary ditch south of Area B. At the western foot of the slope in Area B a new ditch would be constructed to drain towards Lake 4, and flanking an existing low bund which separates the slope from a newly planted woodland. The ditch would be 30 metres from the boundary of Oakdene's garden. A further ditch would flank the development area of Upper Cambourne to drain into Lake 2.

The highest points on Areas A and B would be 71 metres, which is approximately the level at Lancaster Way in the centre of Upper Cambourne.

4. The application is submitted with supporting statements regarding Archaeological Method, Cambourne Future Spoil Requirements, Flood Risk Assessment, and Ecological Appraisal, and Public Rights of Way. Cross sections, height and gradient drawings are included to show the original, current and proposed characteristics.

Planning History

5. **S/6258/04/RM** Alterations in landform – Refused on grounds of incongruity with the landscape character of the area, failure to submit a flood risk assessment, and failure to make an archaeological assessment. The Appeal scheduled for hearing on 9th May is now held in abeyance for three months. The highest points on this proposal would have been 75 metres.
6. **S/6169/02/RM** Construction of balancing lake, spine sewers, road, pumping station and associated landscaping – approved. This application covered the area east of Crow Hill and southeast of Lake 4 for purposes of spoil disposal, proposing a gently tailing spur from the hill down to the valley, and the current area of deposition rising on the east side of the lake and south of Oakdene.
7. **S/6003/96/RM** Structural landscaping scheme for the new settlement of Cambourne.
8. The whole of the application site lies within the area designated on the Cambourne Master Plan as a golf course (for which the fall-back use would be country park if no golf course operator comes forward).

Planning Policy

9. South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan")

Policy SE7 Cambourne new settlement

CS5 Flood protection

TP1 Planning for more sustainable travel

EN1 Landscape character areas

EN3 Landscaping and design standards for new development in the countryside

EN5 The landscaping of new development

EN12 Nature conservation

EN15 Archaeological sites
Cambourne 1 The Masterplan
Cambourne 2 The Design Guide

10. **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**

P1/3 – Sustainable Design in Built Development of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003

Consultation

11. **Cambourne Parish Council** – recommends approval, as original concerns have been addressed (i.e. the drainage ditch adjacent to Great Cambourne being cleaned out, improved and maintained to reduce the risk of future flooding, the landscaped area being seeded as each phase is completed, and consideration being given to using spoil to form bunds along the boundary of Cambourne and the A428).
12. **Bourn Parish Council** – recommends refusal on grounds of concern about the change of landscape due to the height of proposed hills, concern about the effect of run off onto Oakdene, and concern that putting a new rural drain into Lake 2 breaks an existing agreement to separate rural and urban flows in the system.
13. **Landscape Design Consultant** – the landform will need to be compatible with an eventual design for the golf course. The land is to be more sympathetically raised [than the appealed proposal] with respect to the landform shape, but further information has been requested on the overall height in relation to the wider landscape. The gradients adjacent to Oakdene track will appear as an unnatural feature. Assurances will be required regarding the adequacy of the total capacity for spoil disposal to avoid later additions.
14. **Ecology Officer** – in order to maintain badger foraging ground, greater clearance for the retained hedge is recommended, and immediate seeding on completion of fill in the area adjacent to the largest sett.
15. **County Archaeologist** – Some of the areas have not been subject to archaeological investigation, therefore objection would be raised to covering those areas prior to investigation. A condition would be acceptable requiring a programme of archaeological evaluation in advance of the proposed development in accordance with PPG16 paragraph 30. The archaeologically sensitive area in Area B will need further evaluation, and any areas of significance in the application site where preservation is to be *in situ* will require suitable protection and marking.
16. **County Countryside Access Team** – No objection subject to the following issues being addressed: the footpath diversions need to be shown in relation to the proposals, the new ditch which would cross the footpath will need to be appropriately culverted at the crossing, and if a new haul road crossing of the footpath is required, safety measures will need to be agreed by condition.
17. **English Nature** – satisfied that this will not result in an adverse impact upon wildlife interests.
18. **Environment Agency** – confirm that the flood risk assessment as submitted satisfactorily addresses the issues previously raised by the Agency in respect of the impact upon the surface water regime, and surface water run-off implications upon

third parties both locally and downstream. No objection subject to a condition requiring a scheme for the implementation of surface water drainage measures.

Representations

19. One letter of objection has been received regarding the land adjacent to Oakdene on grounds of detriment to the public views and vistas of typical Cambridgeshire countryside from Oakdene track, increased rate of water run-off from steeper slopes, increasing flood risk and water lying on footpaths, and preference for the appeal on the previous refused application to be heard.
20. One letter regretting the impact on views south of Oakdene.
21. Two letters from residents of Cressbrook Drive requesting that the ditch on the west side of spoil disposal Area A should be shown on the plans, cleared out and maintained, and that work on the area should be phased so that it can be topsoiled and seeded on completion of filling. The question was also raised about the eventual impact of the raised land on the golf course and clubhouse indicated in this area on the Masterplan.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

22. The key issues are:
 - i) The capacity of the area to accommodate the amount of spoil from the settlement development area
 - ii) Compatibility with the Masterplan designation of the area as a golf course or country park
 - iii) Means of access to the disposal areas
 - iv) Drainage and stability of the new landforms
 - v) Impact on woods and trees
 - vi) Impact on amenity of residents, recreational routes and views
 - vii) Impact on the wider landscape character
 - viii) Landscaping and planting, including the golf course
 - ix) Archaeological investigation

Capacity

23. The applicant has submitted calculations based on the rate of spoil generated from average housing sites according to density and adjusted in the light of Cambourne experience that a higher rate of spoil results in local conditions. For commercial sites the experience of the Morrisons development is used. Playing fields, landscape areas and roads/sewers/drains are calculated at average rates. The currently approved development of 3,300 dwellings would accordingly generate 335,000 cubic metres allowing for bulking up and contingency. With the submitted LDF additional 700 dwellings this would generate 398,000 cubic metres. The capacity for spoil disposal on-site has been increased by the quarrying for local road development of subsoil from the disposal area. This “hole” is stated to be sufficient for most of the spoil generated by the current Great Cambourne development sites, bar approximately 10,000 cubic metres. The new A428 bund north of Upper Cambourne will be designed to follow the precedent of the area north of GC29/30 with slopes generally 1:12 and a maximum height of 75.5 metres AOD, which gives a capacity of 83,000 cubic metres. The south-east valley current proposal would take 318,000, giving a total capacity of 401,000 cubic metres. It is therefore concluded that the potential for spoil disposal within Cambourne is sufficient for the anticipated rate and type of development, and therefore no additional raising of land levels in the current

application site would be anticipated. The proposal therefore complies with Policies Cambourne 1 and 2 regarding the Masterplan, sustainability and environmental design.

Golf course

24. The whole area to the south and east of Great Cambourne is designated in the Masterplan as golf course, as part of the public open space required by the Section 106 agreement for Cambourne. The gently sloping new landforms are compatible with golf course design, and to some extent remove the tendency to create more complicated new features for interest on the course. Planted features would also complement the new slopes, as shown on the Cambourne Masterplan. At the point where the golf course straddles any footpaths and Oakdene track, the eventual detailed design will need to take into account safety and ease of access, for instance by creating cut-in ramped trolley paths. The finished design will need to comply with Policies EN 3 & 5. There is no current conflict with the Masterplan and policy Cambourne 1 of the Local Plan.

Access

25. At present the active spoil disposal area is accessed via a temporary haul road which crosses the valley between Lake 4 and Oakdene's garden. This would continue to serve Area B, without additional impact on amenity or footpath safety. Area A would be reached by a new temporary haul road through undeveloped areas of Upper Cambourne, reached from an existing concrete track link to the haul road east of Great Common Wood. This would have no impact on existing development but would require installation of a safe crossing point for the public footpath No.2 Bourn. Access to Area C would be via a spur from the haul road north of Lake 2, crossing a small area of undeveloped land. Part of Area C is very close to the haul road, and it may be that some rationalising is possible when access to GC23 is made from the haul road. Area D is directly adjacent to the existing main access to Upper Cambourne, Eastgate, at a point close to the haul route to Back Lane. Therefore no additional access through established residential areas would be required. These access routes are compatible, subject to conditions, with safety and amenity in accordance with the Local Plan Objectives 7.5 on Transport.

Drainage and stability

26. The Environment Agency is satisfied that the amount and rate of run-off from the new steeper slopes would not give rise to adverse impacts within Cambourne or downstream. This is because the gradients are largely compatible with the existing rolling landscape in the area. There are also adequate ditches to slow the rate of flow into the main Cambourne surface water attenuation system including the lakes. Oakdene track is not to be altered, and therefore run-off will be taken, as at present, by the adjacent ditch, as well as a new ditch at the foot of the slope. The applicant has submitted information from the Ground Investigation Report by RSA Geotechnics Ltd regarding the slope and embankment stability characteristics of the Boulder Clay, which could be remoulded to embankments at 30°, much steeper than, for instance, Crow Hill at 10°, or adjacent to Lake 4 at 5°, both of which are steeper than the new proposed slopes, apart from the low banks to Oakdene track at 10°. The proposal thus complies with policies CS5 and EN3 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

Woods and trees

27. The submitted Ecological Appraisal identifies some protective measures which are required, such as the 5 metre clearances which have been incorporated between the works and the canopies at Jeavons and Great Common Woods, and retention of the hedgerow between the two. Provided that the statutory precautions are observed

regarding protected species and nesting birds, there would be no adverse impact on ecology in the area. The “buffer zone” to the mature and new woodlands is sufficient to avoid root compaction, and no alteration to the water-table would result because of the virtually impermeable nature of the clay. Where the new southeast drainage ditch would need to pass through the structural planting on the south side, a detailed route will be planned to avoid disturbance to the tree belt. The proposal involves the removal of a relatively insignificant multistemmed tree near the existing drainage line near the south of Area B. The impact of this removal is less because of the two adjacent retained trees nearer the corner of Oakdene garden. The proposal thus accords with Policies EN5 and EN12 of the Local Plan.

Amenity and views

28. The impact of the creation of the new settlement involves ongoing change and temporary disturbance as an unavoidable consequence of development. Therefore the Local Plan policies for Cambourne require mitigation and enhancement measures such as the new structural landscaping. In the current case, it will be important to phase the deposition so that grass-seeding and peripheral tree planting can take place on completion of the areas, and the use as open space can commence. At that stage, the raised height of the land in the southeast corner would afford somewhat more expansive views over the surrounding area, whilst the raised banks to Oakdene track would afford more shelter from the wind. The outlook and horizon from Oakdene would be little altered, because of the distance of works from the bungalow, the tall conifer hedges around it, and the gentle gradient of the slopes. In the northern areas the land level difference would have little impact on outlook from residential properties. This complies with policies Cambourne 2, EN3 and EN5 of the Local Plan. The Masterplan diagram indicates a possible site for an eventual golf clubhouse in Area D, but this development is only a long-term prospect which would need to be addressed in detail at application stage, including the height in relation to its surroundings, as required by policy Cambourne 1 of the Local Plan.

Wider landscape

29. The southeast side of Cambourne is visible in the wider landscape from a few points along Broadway and the footpaths to the south of the settlement. It is therefore important that the shape of the new landforms replicates the gently rolling character of the existing valleys. It is also desirable to retain the existing high points in the landscape along the plateau (traced by the line of the A428), and therefore to avoid overall heights which exceed the existing high points. These requirements were not satisfied in the Appeal proposal, as the heights were greater and the slopes more extreme. It is considered that the current proposal overcomes these issues, and complies with Local Plan policy EN3.

Landscaping and planting

30. The areas would be seeded with an approved Cambourne grass seed mix as soon as possible after completion of filling. Narrow, intermittent groups of trees and shrubs would be planted adjacent to development boundaries. These details would be designed in conjunction with the development landscaping to ensure that it ties the housing with the surrounding landscape. Similarly, the tree and shrub planting for a golf course would be designed to tie in with the approved Structural Landscaping Scheme, and any design guidance which may be agreed for the golf course or country park. These requirements can be secured by condition and a phasing plan. Subject to these conditions, the proposal complies with policy EN5 of the Local Plan.

Archaeology

31. An Archaeological Method Statement prepared by Wessex Archaeology is submitted with the application. It identifies those areas which have already been subject to

investigation, and the parts which have been classified as archaeologically sensitive. There are, however, areas within the application site, Areas A, C and part of Area B which have not yet been evaluated. The Method Statement proposes no further investigation, but protection of the uninvestigated or sensitive areas by infilling from the edges so that a 1 metre deep protective layer of spoil is deposited before vehicles are permitted on the site, and all works to be undertaken in the summer or autumn after a prolonged dry spell. However, the County Archaeologist is only satisfied with the methodology in relation to Area D where investigation has revealed no significant archaeology. He states that “the archaeological potential of areas which have not been evaluated cannot be predicted with certainty. Nor can the effects of the proposed landscaping be determined. For example, the effects of compression caused by the deposition of spoil over areas with thin topsoil cover could be severely detrimental to the long-term survival of archaeological remains in these areas. We are also concerned that there may be a longer term issue, with deposition of spoil effectively preventing evaluation in advance of future development proposals. We would therefore recommend that these areas should be subject to a programme of archaeological evaluation in advance of the proposed development and secured through the inclusion of a negative condition in any planning consent, in accordance with PPG16 paragraph 30”.

The applicant has been advised of this objection, and asked whether they would agree to such a condition; the response will be reported to Committee. In the absence of agreement on a suitable condition the proposal would be contrary to policy EN15 of the Local Plan.

Recommendation

32. Approve siting, design, means of access and *principles* of landscaping subject to the following conditions:-
1. Reserved matters time limit (relating back to those set out on outline planning permission.
 2. No development shall take place unless and until a scheme for the phasing of commencement, finishing and landscaping of each of the four Areas (A, B, C, D as shown on drawing no. 85C1-31revF) has been submitted to approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall proceed in strict accordance with the approved scheme.
(Reason – In the interests of residential and landscape amenity to avoid prolonged disturbance in accordance with Policy Cambourne 2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004).
 3. No development shall take place on any of the four Areas (A, B, C, D as shown on drawing no. 85C1-31revF) until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping for that Area, which shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development. Development shall proceed in strict accordance with the approved schemes.
(Reason – Because insufficient information was submitted with the application, and to enhance the quality of the development and to assimilate it within the area in accordance with Policies EN5 and Cambourne 2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.)

4. No development shall take place unless and until details of the gates and measures for safety at the road and footpath crossings have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall proceed in strict accordance with the approved scheme.
(Reason – In the interests of pedestrian safety and countryside access in accordance with Policies TP1 and Cambourne 2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.)
5. Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of surface water drainage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall subsequently be implemented and maintained in accordance with the approved scheme.
(Reason –To ensure that a satisfactory system of surface water drainage is established and maintained following completion of the works, and to ensure that the risk of flooding to third parties is not exacerbated, in accordance with Policy CS5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.)
6. No development shall take place within Areas A, B and C until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason. To safeguard sites of potential archaeological interest and secure their investigation in advance of development, in accordance with Policy EN15 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 and government guidance PPG16.)
7. No work shall take place on site outside the hours of 0730 to 1800 hours on Mondays to Fridays, nor 0800 to 1300 hours on Saturdays, and shall not take place at all on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays.
(Reason – To protect the amenities of nearby residential properties and footpath users in accordance with Policies Cambourne 2 and TP1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.)

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**
P1/3 (Sustainable design in built development) and
P7/6 (Historic Built Environment);
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
SE2 (Development in Rural Growth Settlements),
Policy SE7 (Cambourne new settlement)
CS5 (Flood protection)
TP1 (Planning for more sustainable travel)
EN1 (Landscape character areas)
EN3 (Landscaping and design standards for new development in the countryside)
EN5 (The landscaping of new development)
EN12 (Nature conservation)
EN15 (Archaeological sites)
Cambourne 1 (The Masterplan)
Cambourne 2 (The Design Guide)

2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:-
- The capacity of the area to accommodate the amount of spoil from the settlement development area
 - Compatibility with the Masterplan designation of the area as a golf course or country park
 - Means of access to the disposal areas
 - Drainage and stability of the new landforms
 - Impact on woods and trees
 - Impact on amenity of residents, recreational routes and views
 - Impact on the wider landscape character
 - Landscaping and planting, including the golf course
 - Archaeological investigation
3. The applicants attention is drawn to conditions of the outline consent, ref S/1371/92/0 dated 20th April 1994, that remain relevant, particularly Condition 6 – implementation of landscaping.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning file refs S/6003/96/RM, S/6169/02/RM and S/6258/04/RM

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