

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

2nd April 2008

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager - Planning and Sustainable Communities

S/6103/00/F - CAMBOURNE

Temporary Use of Car Park in Connection with South Cambridgeshire Hall Plot 3000, South Side, Cambourne Business Park

Recommendation: Approval

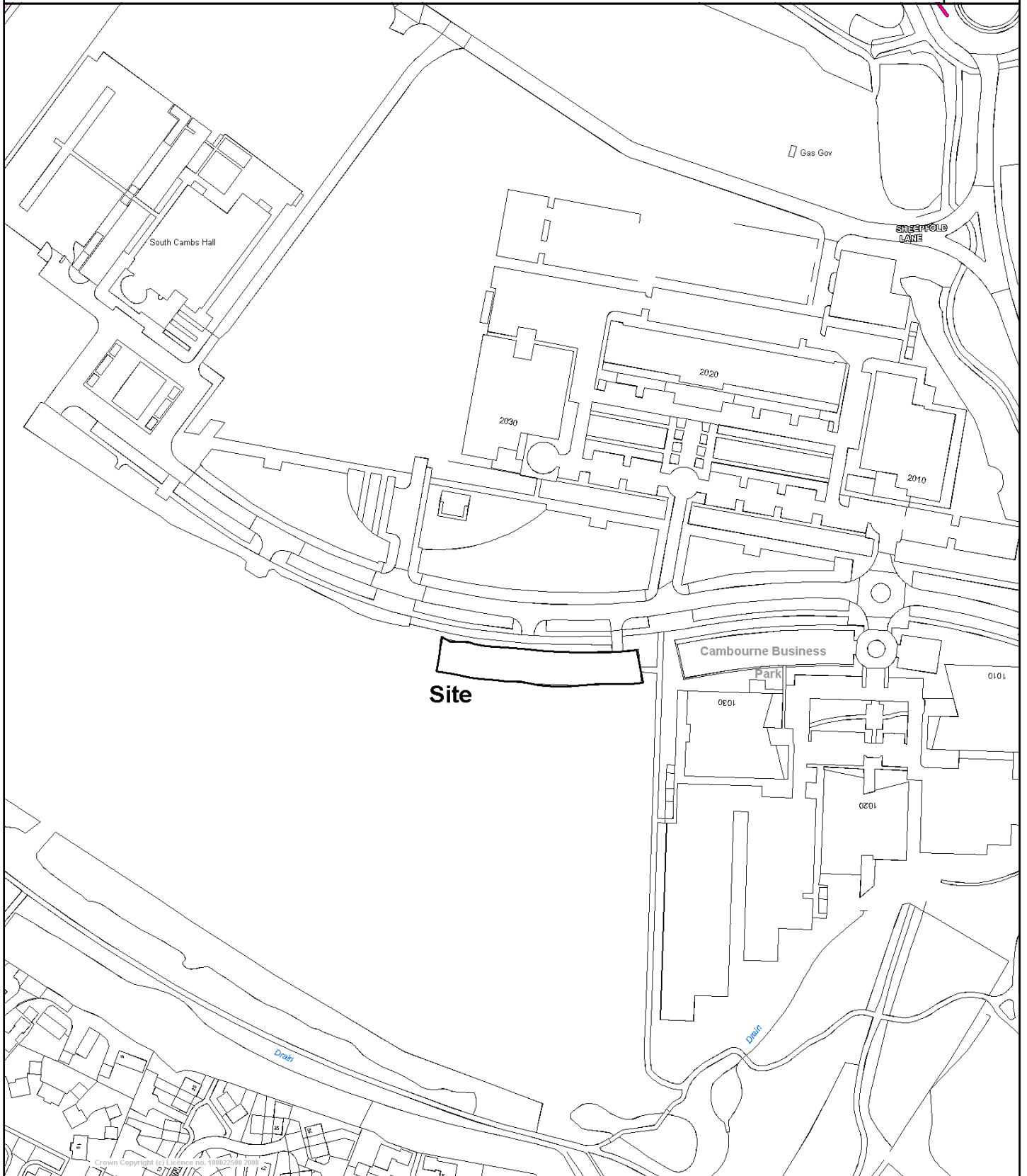
Date for Determination: 2nd April 2008

Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because South Cambridgeshire District Council is the proposed user of the application site.

Site and Proposal

1. The site lies on the south side of the Cambourne Business Park spine road south of the ornamental lake. It lies within parcel 3000 and is allocated for eventual use as permanent parking for development on that parcel. The building to the east is occupied as an office and has its own car park at the rear. On the north side of the lake the Cambourne Business Park Marketing Office is sited in front of the 2030 office building. The car park is laid out with a tarmac surface marked with 75 car spaces. Lighting columns are in place, and a separate pedestrian access to the footway has been installed. There are 3 metre wide strips of shrub planting between the car park, the footway and the carriageway. The proposal is to use this temporary car park for specified occasions as overflow from South Cambridgeshire Hall car park.
2. This application is submitted to comply with a condition of planning permission S/6103/00/F for Temporary Car Parking which was granted, as provision in excess of the Business Park long term parking ratio, in recognition of the occasional intensive use of buildings by firms awaiting the construction of larger premises in the Business Park for them to move or expand into. The permission was subject to Condition 2 which required details to be approved for each proposed use of the temporary car parking, in order to ensure, among other things, that the proposal would accord with the promotion of reduced reliance on the private car for travel to work and the use of alternative means of travel with less environmental impact, as required by national and local planning policies.
3. The application is submitted with background information about car parking at South Cambridgeshire Hall. The main circumstances are outlined as follows:-
“The Lyons Inquiry, the local government white paper ‘Strong and prosperous communities’ published in October 2006 and a corporate governance inspection report in February 2007 have all highlighted the Council’s key role in community leadership, ‘place shaping’ and partnership working to meet local needs. This emerging role has placed new demands on the Council in terms of hosting major conferences, meetings and other events.



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4. In the short term, the Council does not have the resources or the capacity to meet demand for parking for such events. However, recognising that a solution, in terms of car parking provision and the new Travel Plan must be found, the Council has established a fully resourced project to develop and implement a new Travel for Work Plan, which will offer longer term options to meet agreed objectives in relation to sustainable travel to and within the organisation. Elected Members and senior management will take a lead role in supporting the objectives and implementing sustainable travel options.
5. In order to manage car parking at South Cambridgeshire Hall while the new Travel for Work Plan and the associated arrangements are being developed, the Council has asked Cambourne Business Park Limited for permission to lease the temporary car park opposite the marketing office as an occasional overflow car park, for a limited period of twelve months.
6. South Cambridgeshire District Council relocated to Cambourne Business Park in May 2004. The building has 180 car spaces to the west of the building, for approximately 340 staff plus Members. This was a higher allocation in relation to the floorspace than for other offices on the Business Park, in recognition of the public function of the building in relation to customer visits and Council meetings. 24 of the parking spaces were intended to be "sacrificial", to be phased out as the Travel for Work Plan was successfully implemented. There was also a 4 year Council bus service which is to be discontinued in April 2008. In the intervening years demand for car parking spaces at South Cambridgeshire Hall has exceeded supply. Monitoring undertaken over the past 4 months has shown an average excess of 4.4 cars over available spaces. Overspill parking around the Civic Square in front of the building has occurred on a regular basis. Since 1st January 2008, illegal parking has exceeded the number of spaces available on 62 out of a possible 86 occasions (where an occasion is either a morning or an afternoon). Most of the 13 occasions, when cars exceeded spaces by more than 10, coincided with meetings for which room bookings were made. Overflow parking peaked at 17 cars.
7. In recognition of these circumstances the Council has stated its intention to:
 - a) Update and actively implement its Travel for Work Plan.
 - b) Promote improved public bus services and their use by staff and visitors.
 - c) Make more efficient use of the existing car parks by reserving only essential requirements such as disabled spaces, leading Members and key staff (not meeting attendees).
 - d) Increase the on-site car parking provision by around 30 additional car parking spaces, to the west and north of the building, of which 10 would be for overflow parking on an occasional basis utilising part of the existing amenity area at the rear of the building. There are options for improving the landscaping of the amenity area and/or providing some recreational outdoor space. The proposals, which would require a separate planning permission, would provide for additional trees as well as more planting and hedging.
 - e) Take a one year lease on the application site temporary car park so that it can be used for pre-programmed events such as full Council meetings or training/conferences which are attended by members of the public.

Work has already started on a) and c), and there is a current staff consultation underway on d).

Planning History

8. **S/1371/92/O** Outline permission for the new settlement of Cambourne, including a business park.
9. **S/6136/01/O** outline permission for the siting of building 6010 for use as headquarters for SCDC subject to a condition requiring implementation of a green travel plan.
10. **S/6147/02/RM** approval of reserved matters for Building 6010 as headquarters for South Cambridgeshire District Council.
11. **S/6103/00/F** permission for Temporary Car Parking for the Business Park.

Planning Policy

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: saved policy:

12. **P1/3** – Sustainable Design in Built Development

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 saved policies:

13. **Cambourne 1** – Development in accordance with Cambourne Masterplan
14. **SE7** – Development in accordance with Cambourne Masterplan and Design Guide.

Local Development Framework Core Strategy adopted January 2007

15. **ST/4** Rural Centres including Cambourne – Development and redevelopment without any limit on individual scheme size will be permitted within the village frameworks of Rural Centres, as defined in the Proposals Map, provided that adequate services, facilities and infrastructure are available or can be made available as a result of the development.

Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007

16. **DP/1** requires development to demonstrate that it is consistent with the principles of sustainable development.
17. **DP/2** requires the design of new development to be of high quality, with criteria listed.
18. **DP/3** sets development criteria, a checklist to ensure all requirements are met.
19. **ET/3** development in established rural employment areas is acceptable to enable more efficient use of the sites, and to allow them to be adapted for the needs of existing and future users.
20. **TR/1** encourages planning for more sustainable travel through accessibility, alternative modes, and parking levels. This is supported by **TR/2** which sets parking standards, **TR/3** which requires mitigation of travel impacts, and **TR/4** which encourages use of non-motorised modes.

Consultation

21. **Cambourne Parish Council** resolved that temporary permission should be granted.

Representations

22. None

Planning Comments – Key Issues

23. The main issues in this case are: the adequacy of the site for the proposed use, how the use will be managed in connection with South Cambridgeshire Hall, compliance with sustainability objectives and policies, timescale in relation to the travel plan, safety and security, and landscape, biodiversity and amenity.

Adequacy of the site for the proposed use

24. The car park is sited 250 metres from South Cambridgeshire Hall. This is a reasonable distance for meeting attendees or staff to walk, and the building is easily visible to those arriving. The car park surface is not a permanent finish, but is firm, well-drained, and is marked out with parking spaces. The access to the Business Park spine road is adequate, and signage could be erected to highlight its location on days when it is brought into use.

Management of the use in connection with South Cambridgeshire Hall

25. The additional car parking would not be available for general use. The Council is currently monitoring car parking on a regular basis for a trial period and will use evidence from this to identify a daily threshold. The additional parking would only be brought into use for days on which planned meetings and other events would cause the demand for car parking to exceed the threshold. On those days, the additional parking would be managed by Council facilities management staff by means of collapsible bollards and demountable signage.

Compliance with sustainability objectives and policies

26. The Council has at the heart of its Local Development Framework Core Strategy, the “cornerstone of sustainability”, which requires effective protection and enhancement of the environment, and prudent use of natural resources. This is carried forward in the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007 which has Sustainable Development as the first policy, DP/1, which requires all development, among other things, to minimise the need to travel and reduce car dependency.
27. Policy DP/3 includes development criteria c. “car parking, with provision kept to a minimum” and f. “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.”
28. Policy Objective ET/d is “To reduce commuting distances and the need to travel, particularly by car, by bringing home and workplace closer together, and by encouraging employment opportunities in accessible locations, or accessible by sustainable modes of travel.”

29. TR /1 Planning for more sustainable travel requires that in considering planning applications the Council will seek to ensure that every opportunity is taken to increase integration of travel modes and accessibility to non-motorised modes by measures including public transport improvements, cycling provision, and minimising the amount of car parking provision in new developments, compatible with their location, by, among other things, restricting car parking to the maximum levels. This is emphasised in Policy TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards. Policy TR/3 Mitigating Travel Impact sets out requirements on the preparation and implementation of Travel Plans.
30. The supporting statement accompanying the application emphasises appreciation of these policies; work on a new travel plan is proceeding with full support of elected Members and senior management. Because of this, the provision of additional car parking is regarded only as a short-term option to sustain the Council's community role while developing effective solutions for the long term. The 12 month period is a challenging timeframe and the Council's project steering group is aware of the urgency of introducing effective alternative measures during this period.

Timescale and Travel Plan

31. The Council will review its car parking arrangements as part of its overall review of the Travel for Work Plan. This will include investigating the development of a permanent dual-use staff amenity / overflow parking area on site, to accommodate occasional additional parking required to support the Council's enhanced role as a community and partnership facilitator.
32. The Council is seeking a 12 month period of use of the temporary car park, as occasional overflow parking, from April 2008, for the following reasons:
- a) The Council wants to address the current breach of planning conditions and other difficulties caused by parking around the Civic Square and elsewhere, as soon as possible - an early date would add impetus to the Council in progressing this.
 - b) The start date of April 2008 reflects the planning application timetable and allows time to implement the necessary operational arrangements.
 - c) The Council is committed, as a matter of urgency, to working with Cambourne Business Park Limited, Development Securities Limited and Wrenbridge in joint Travel for Work initiatives across the business park.
 - d) The 12 month period would provide the Council with a "breathing space" in which to develop and implement new Travel Plan initiatives to address the above challenges and opportunities. The updated Travel Plan is currently being prepared in the light of the responses to the staff and Member travel survey.

Safety and security

33. The car park is well lit and is close to the Business Park spine road. There are overlooking windows in the adjacent office block. As the use is proposed to cater for particular events, it is likely that users would arrive and leave at similar times. It is therefore considered that the location remote from the users' destination would not be contrary to Policy DP/2.1.i) which requires design to create an "inclusive environment which is and feels safe". Disabled parking spaces are provided at South

Cambridgeshire Hall close to the staff access and the level access to the public entrance.

Landscape, biodiversity and amenity

34. The proposal affects only a small strip of the frontage landscaping which had been trampled along a desire line from the car park to the footway; this has now been gravel surfaced so that there is a single path, thus protecting the remainder of the shrub beds from damage. The existing linear landscaping alongside the spine road forms a strong feature such that parked cars to the south of it would not be intrusive in the street scene. The proposal thus complies with Policy DP/2. 1.j) of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007. As the area is already hard-surfaced, there would be little additional impact on biodiversity within the site, and the occasional nature of the use would keep disturbance of the nearby habitat for birds and other creatures to a minimum, in compliance with Policy NE/6 of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007. The appearance of the bollards and temporary signs at the entrance would not be intrusive in the street scene, as they should be located south of the shrub beds in order to be clear of landscape maintenance operations.

Recommendation

35. Approve the use and the proposed bollards and signage until 31st March 2009, subject to details of the proposed bollards and signage being submitted for approval prior to their first use, and subject to the bollards and signage being removed on or before 31st March 2009, and subject to the measures in paragraph 7 above being implemented.

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: saved policy P1/3 (Sustainable Design in Built Development)**
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.saved policies**
 - **Local Development Framework Core Strategy adopted January 2007**
 - **Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007**

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

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: saved policy P1/3
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.saved policies
- Local Development Framework Core Strategy adopted January 2007
- Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007
- Planning file references S/1371/92/O, S/6136/01/O, S/6147/02/RM, and S/6103/00/F

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