

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

3rd September 2008

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

S/0951/08/RG3 - CAMBOURNE

Construction of 21 Additional Car Parking Spaces and Associated Landscaping Works at South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, for South Cambridgeshire District Council

Recommendation: Approval

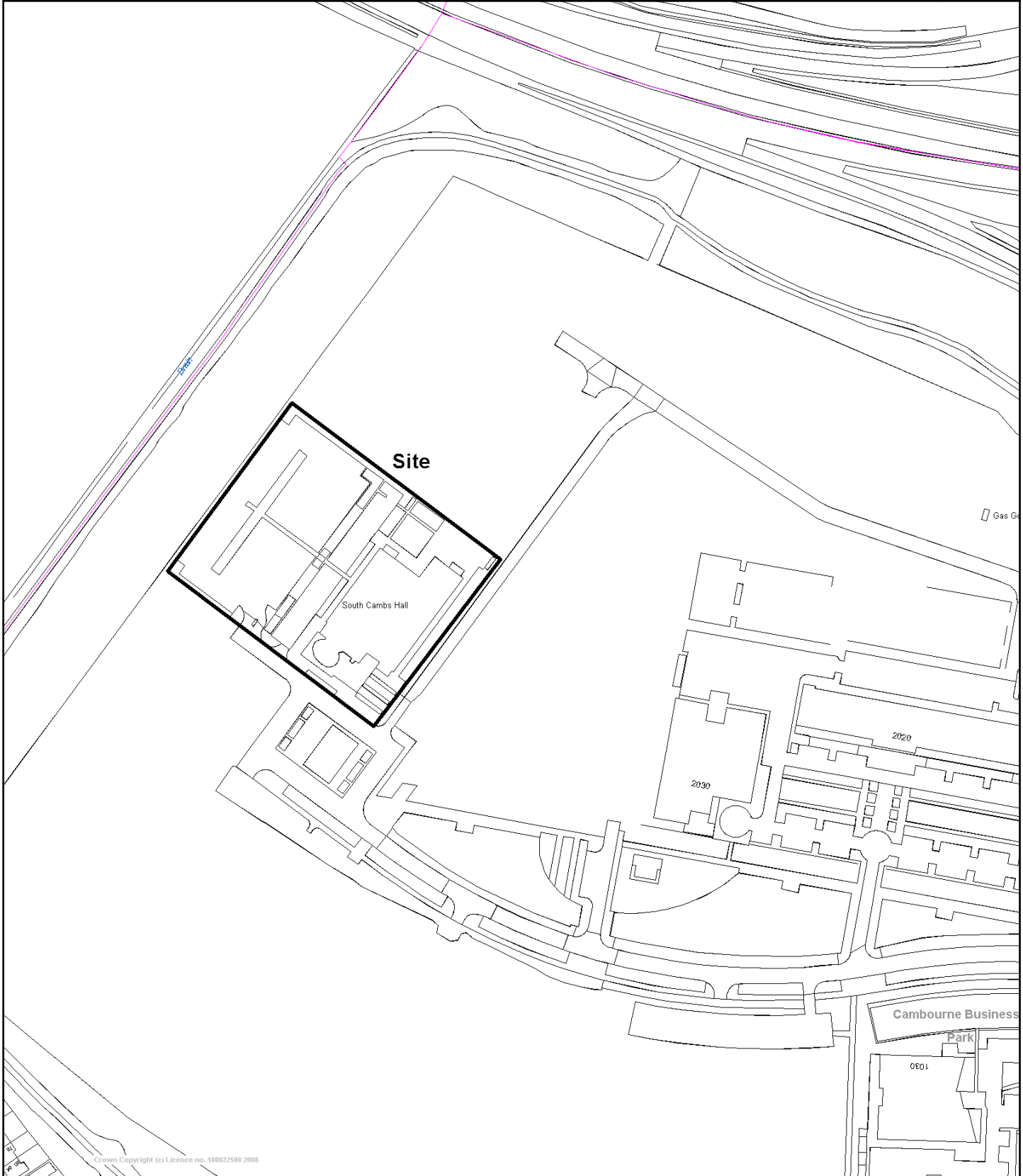
Date for Determination: 29th July 2008

Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because the application is submitted by the District Council.

Site and Proposal

1. The application site is land to the west and north (rear) of South Cambridgeshire Hall, the District Council headquarters office at the west end of Cambourne Business Park. To the west of the building there is a row of 7 hornbeam trees which are to be retained, and a block paved parking area which provides parking spaces for disabled people, car sharers and key staff and Members. This is separated from the main area of staff and visitor car parking by a 5 metre wide bed of shrubs and substantial trees, at each end of which are shelters for secure bicycle parking. To the rear of the building is an amenity area with a grass square, paving with picnic tables, and a gravelled walk beneath an avenue of hornbeams. There were formerly 2 smoking shelters. The north and east boundaries have mixed native species hedges for shelter, whilst the west side of the grass square is separated from the car park by low shrubs and 3 trees.
2. The proposal is to create a new area of car parking to the rear of the building by extending the block paved area through to the grass square to form 6 spaces on either side. This area would be the same type of stone surface as the main car park, or block-paved to match the adjacent surface. Five block-paved spaces would be formed around the entrance to this new area, and 4 more would be made, close to the front of the building near the meeting rooms, separated from the pedestrian and fire exit paths by bollards.
3. The works to the rear of the building involve re-landscaping the amenity area following the removal of the smoking shelters. The proposal is to retain the view of the paved garden northwards from the indoor atrium, but to provide more seating sheltered by planting along that axis. A hedge of shrubs and planter beds would screen the new parking and provide additional shelter on the west side of the amenity area. The loss of 5 trees from the north side would be compensated by additional trees closer to the building, and a further 3 to add to the avenue/glade in the northeast corner of the garden. To link this area to the grass along the east side of the building, a new lawn would be added adjacent to the avenue, with additional



Crown Copyright (c) Licence no. 100022500 2008



Reproduced from the 2008 Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's stationary office (c) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Scale 1/2500 Date 19/8/2008

Centre = 531459 E 260076 N

September 2008 Planning Committee

seating facing south by the back hedge. Further tree and shrub planting in the northeast corner would turn the corner to the east side of the building, and provide more shelter for additional seating.

4. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement which sets out the background to the proposal and describes the process undertaken to cater for the car parking necessary for the Council's additional public and partnership service role, whilst improving the landscaping as a setting for the building, outlook from the building, delineating the spaces in different uses, and maintaining or increasing biodiversity. The amended submission has been altered in an attempt to minimise the disruption of existing established planting. Road access is unaltered, and the volume of traffic on the Business Park is not anticipated to increase, because the car park would be only catering for traffic which already comes to the site but leaves again if no parking space is available, to park either in the temporary car park opposite the marketing suite or in the "civic square" at the front of the building.
5. Consultation with staff at an early stage of design identified that the main areas of interest are that there should be a pleasant outlook from the building, a clear separation between parking and green space, more, better-sheltered and smaller areas to sit outside, and that parking should not be over-provided thus diverting efforts from implementing Travel Plan actions on car-sharing and working from home. There were also 2 requests for cycle access at the northeast corner of the site.

Planning History

6. **S/1371/92/O** Outline permission for the settlement of Cambourne, including a business park, and subject to conditions requiring approval of a Masterplan. This comprises a number of documents, of which the Business Park Masterplan 2000 constitutes one approved part.
7. **S/6136/01/O** outline planning permission for erection of a three storey building for offices (B1 use) or Council offices for South Cambridgeshire District Council (sui generis use).
8. **S/6147/02/RM** reserved matters approval of erection of three storey building for Council offices, associated works and civic square on Plot 6010, Cambourne Business Park, approved with conditions including Condition 21- The building hereby permitted shall not be occupied until a green travel for work plan has been submitted to, and agreed in writing with the local planning authority. The plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details, and Condition 25 - No development shall commence until a plan has been submitted indicating the "sacrificial" car parking spaces (minimum 24 spaces) which over time, will be converted into landscaping with the implementation of the green travel for work plan detailed in condition 22. [22 of the outline permission **S/6136/01/O**, 21 of reserved matters]
9. An acceptable plan for the "sacrificial" spaces at the northwest corner of the car park was received and approved. Compliance to be achieved "over time" will be dependent on the adjustment of work journeys and where staff live following the relocation of the Council offices from Cambridge.
10. **Travel for Work Plan 2004** tailored to the circumstances of the relocation from Cambridge to Cambourne, and establishment of a public office in a new, unfinished settlement.

11. **Travel for Work Plan 2008** reworked to give more challenging targets following cessation of the staff minibuss service and to facilitate use of other travel modes than solo car use. To be reported to Cabinet on 11th September.
12. **S/6103/00/F** temporary use of the Business Park overflow car park by South Cambridgeshire District Council, granted by Planning Committee 2nd April 2008 for a period of one year to 31st March 2009, subject to management measures being implemented as follows:-
 - a. Update and actively implement the SCDC 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 car parking provision on site at South Cambridgeshire Hall by around 30 additional car parking spaces, to the west and north of the building, subject to separate planning permission,
 - e. Operate the temporary car park so that it can only be used for pre-programmed events such as full Council meetings or training/conferences which are attended by members of the public.

Background

13. SCDC Cabinet, meeting on 13th September 2007, considered a report on car parking provision at South Cambridgeshire Hall, prompted by the incidence of car parking on the Civic Square at the front of the building, which is contrary to the requirements of the Business Park owners, detrimental to visual amenity, and potentially inhibits the bus circulation. Cabinet resolved to:-
 - (a) authorise relevant officers to re-organise how the Council allocates / manages the existing level of provision within its parking area;
 - (b) authorise relevant officers to re-invigorate and re-launch its Travel for Work Plan and monitor the state of overspill parking for a six-month period after these two measures have been implemented (costs to be included within budgets), by:
 - (c) requesting Cambourne Business Park Limited (CBPL) to upgrade the 'no parking' signage on the Civic Square, with the possible inclusion of double yellow lines (Conservation Area grade);
 - (d) making the signage to the SCDC car park more obvious, clearer and welcoming;
 - (e) leaving the main SCDC car park barrier in the 'up' position during office hours;
 - (f) requesting any members attending meetings, seminars, training or any events other than committee and Council meetings, to contact Democratic Services in advance to confirm attendance and book a parking space;
 - (g) monitoring car parking on a regular basis for a trial period of six months;

- (h) with the agreement of CBPL, undertaking limited 'policing' of the Civic Square with notes under windscreens;
- (i) arranging staffing for monitoring and policing from within existing facilities management resources;
- (j) authorise appropriate officers to rent some additional temporary parking from CBPL, the rental, etc., costs of £12,500 to be financed from 2007/08 underspends, and to find a more permanent solution, either the re-design of land within the boundaries of South Cambridgeshire Hall for dual-use, or the purchase of a small area of land adjacent to the existing staff car park, the associated costs to be included in the capital programme; and
- (k) seek the following planning permissions:
 - (l) temporary planning permission for the overflow car park;
 - (m) development of more parking on-site, to be available in a dual-use capacity, or to use a piece of land adjacent to the staff car park for additional parking.

The current application is made pursuant to resolution (d)(ii) above, and Members will note that the other resolutions have been or are being implemented..

Planning Policy

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, adopted January 2007.

- 14. **STa-k Objectives** – arising from the Strategic Vision for South Cambridgeshire.
 - 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**, including making efficient use of land and minimising the need to travel and reducing car dependency.
 - 17. **DP/2** requires the **design of new development** to be of high quality, with criteria listed including (a) preserve or enhance the character of the local area, (h) provide high quality public spaces, (i) provide an inclusive environment that is created for people, that is and feels safe, and (j) include high quality landscaping compatible with the scale and character of the development and its surroundings.
 - 18. **DP/3** sets **development criteria**, including (f) safe and convenient access for all to public buildings and spaces, and to public transport, including for those with mobility impairment.
 - 19. **NE/4** development shall **respect the local character of the Landscape Character Area**.
 - 20. **NE/6** requires positive **biodiversity gain**.

21. **NE/9 water and drainage infrastructure** requires adequate surface water drainage.
22. **NE14 lighting proposals** shall be the minimum for public safety, and avoid undue impact on the surrounding countryside.
23. **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**, including implementation of **Travel Plans**, and **TR/4** which encourages **use of non-motorised modes**.

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 saved policies

Cambourne 2 – Development in accordance with Cambourne Approved Masterplan and Design Guide.

24. **SE7** – Development in accordance with Cambourne Masterplan and Design Guide.

Consultation

25. **Cambourne Parish Council** – resolved that the application be deferred as there was no Travel to Work Plan or appraisal of existing provision to justify reconstruction and extension of the existing car park. The under use of available space in front of building was questioned.
26. The revised parking proposals, along with a copy of the draft implementation action plan for the new Travel for Work Plan to be considered by Cabinet in September, have subsequently been provided to the Parish Council. Any comments received from this further consultation will be reported verbally to the Committee.
27. **SCDC Ecology Officer** – advised that care should be taken within the works area to ensure that no nesting birds or protected species are present.

Representations

28. Owners of the Business Park, Development Securities plc – no objection in principle; queried what would be the impact on the remainder of the Business Park with reference to highways, surface water drainage infrastructure and car parking ratios. Also drew attention to the possibility of Great Crested Newts within 500 metres of the development.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

29. The main issues in this instance are:- the adequacy of the proposed provision of car parking in relation to the Cabinet resolution of 13th September 2007, the capacity of the site to accommodate the proposed increase, the provision of drainage and lighting for the proposal, retention of trees and landscaping, amenity within the building and the staff recreation area, and compliance with planning policies and the requirement to implement a Travel for Work Plan for the premises.
30. The Cabinet resolution in 2007 was not specific with regard to the amount of car parking required to meet the public function of the Council headquarters. During the monitoring of the Civic Square unauthorised parking (prior to provision of the temporary overflow car park), a maximum excess demand of 22 vehicles was counted. Observation of the use of the temporary car park since it came into use in May 2008 indicates that this number has rarely been exceeded. The significant peaks were the District Council Election count day, and a training course. Both of these events are of a pre-planned type for which it would be possible to make special transport arrangements. It is therefore

considered that the provision of 21 new spaces is adequate to meet the development criteria of safe and convenient access to public buildings required by Policy DP/3 (f) of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007.

31. The application for additional spaces has been amended in the light of consideration of the environmental impact of the proposal, so that the number is a little less than envisaged when the temporary car park was approved. By this means the retention of significant trees adjacent to the offices has been assured, and the alterations to the area to the north of the building make better provision for a sheltered amenity area for staff. In comparison with the maximum and average figures for overflow car parking the amended proposal is now considered to be a more proportionate response to parking requirements. No change is proposed to the area which is visible from the Civic Square, other than to delineate the paved area adjacent to the front meeting rooms so that the pedestrian circulation space is kept clear of parked vehicles. The trees and shrubs which screen the building and the main car park are to be retained. The amenity area to the rear of the building would be reduced in extent, but would remain sufficiently extensive to accommodate the sport, recreation and relaxation functions which it currently fulfils. This would be facilitated by the arrangement of new planting, seating and lawn areas. It is therefore not considered necessary to create a "dual use" area for recreation and parking (one of the options considered by the Cabinet); indeed, it is preferable to ensure that any amenity area is kept free from any potential damage or contamination by motor vehicles, albeit that the stone surfacing would not preclude some recreational uses such as keep fit classes. Since the proposal keeps the development within the original site for South Cambridgeshire Hall, it is considered that it complies with Policy DP/1 (c) by making efficient use of land, and is compatible with the location in terms of scale and siting in accordance with Policy DP/2 (f) of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007.
32. Surface water run-off from the additional hard-surfaced area would be very little changed. The overall increase in hard paved area would be +54 m². No new lighting for the additional parking area is proposed, but the low level lighting bollards would be repositioned. It is thus considered that the proposal would not be contrary to the requirements of Policies NE/11 and NE/14 of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007.
33. The existing trees on the west side of the building are important to the setting of the building within the Business Park and in the wider setting of Cambourne, and therefore their retention was a significant factor in the re-design of the parking proposal. At the rear of the building the thriving boundary hedges and the Cambourne structural landscaping which surrounds the main car park are the main features which contribute to the character of the area. Therefore the altered layout of trees and shrub beds is not considered to be detrimental to the setting of the building and the locality. The number of semi-mature trees would be increased overall by 4, and the planting beds by an area of 121m². The proposal therefore complies with Policy DP/2 (b) and (j) of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007.
34. The staff amenity area outside the rear of the building is an important asset, and may become increasingly well-used if reduced car use for work journeys promotes lunchtime recreation at South Cambridgeshire Hall. The area of grass to be taken up by the additional parking spaces is not the best-used part of the garden, since the picnic tables are normally placed on the paved area, and the various keep-fit activities predominantly involve exercises which require a flat paved surface. The arrangement and use of seats is currently inhibited by the overhanging hedge on the north side, and by the lack of shelter from wind in this exposed location. It is considered that the re-landscaping of the whole of the area to the north of the building offers a significant

opportunity to improve the quality of the outdoor environment for staff, and to make better use of the pleasant area to the east of the building. This complies with Policy SF/9 of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007. Apart from the atrium, there are no north-facing windows on the building, which is dominated by the two fire escape staircases. Views out from the building will be unaltered on the main (east and west) window elevations to working areas. The view from the atrium would be of new planting which is intended to be tall but light to allow continued views through to the wildlife wall. The side of this view would be defined by the new planting east of the parking area. Those few work areas which currently have an aspect overlooking the grass square are at the north end of the east side of the building. This outlook would be changed to a view along the new lines of trees on the east and south sides of the parking area.

35. The Cabinet in 2007 committed the Council to re-invigorate and re-launch its Travel for Work Plan, and will receive a report on the outcomes of the redrafting process on 11th September. The target of reducing solo car journeys to the Council offices could be undermined by overprovision of car parking spaces at the premises. However, the public and community functions carried out at South Cambridgeshire Hall have been taken into account in assessing the current need for parking space, as have the impacts of relocation to a new settlement. Therefore the provision of this small amount of additional parking space should not deter the implementation of positive incentives to use alternative travel to work modes, and does not alter the longer term intention to take spaces out of use. The logical sequence for this would be to remove first those spaces furthest from the building, on the west side of the car park, which are not currently stone surfaced, so that the benefits to biodiversity from additional planting near the structural landscaping would be maximised. The programme for removal of these “sacrificial” spaces should be considered as part of the annual monitoring and review of the Travel for Work plan to enable actions to reduce on site car parking to be incorporated in the implementation action plan when appropriate, in compliance with Policies DP/3 (c) and TR/3 (5).

Recommendation

36. Approve as amended 18th August 2008, subject to the following

Conditions

1. Standard detailed time limit
2. Drainage details
3. Plant details
4. Lighting details

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - a) **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 saved policies**
Cambourne 2 – Development in accordance with Cambourne Approved Masterplan and Design Guide.

SE7 – Development in accordance with Cambourne Masterplan and Design Guide.

- b) **Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2007 adopted January 2007**
ST/4 Rural Centres including Cambourne
 - c) **Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007**
 DP/1 sustainable development
 DP/2 design of new development
 DP/3 development criteria
 SF/7 protection of existing recreation areas
 NE/4 local character
 NE/6 biodiversity
 NE/9 water and drainage infrastructure
 NE14 lighting proposals
 TR/1 planning for more sustainable travel
 TR/2 parking standards
 TR/3 mitigation of travel impacts.
 TR/4 non-motorised modes
3. The proposal recommended for approval is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material considerations, which have been raised during the consultation exercise: - the adequacy of the provision of car parking in relation to the Cabinet resolution of 13th September 2007, the capacity of the site to accommodate the proposed increase, the impact on parking ratios across the Business Park, the provision of drainage and lighting for the proposal, retention of trees and landscaping, amenity within the staff recreation area, and the requirement to implement a Travel for Work Plan for the premises.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, adopted January 2007
- Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007
- Planning files ref: S/1371/92/O Outline permission for new settlement of 3,300 dwellings
- S/6136/01/O outline planning permission for erection of a three storey building for offices (B1 use) or Council offices for South Cambridgeshire District Council (sui generis use).
- S/6147/02/RM reserved matters approval of erection of three storey building for Council offices, associated works and civic square on Plot 6010, Cambourne Business Park
- S/6103/00/F temporary use of the Business Park overflow car park by South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Cambourne Masterplan Revision 30
- Design Guide 1995
- Cambourne Business Park Masterplan 2000
- Travel for Work Plan 2004
- Draft Travel for Work Plan 2008

Contact Officer: Pam Thornton – Senior Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713099