

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

3rd February 2010

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S/1524/09/F – TOFT

**Construction of a Three Storey Sixth Form Block, Construction Design Facility,
Gymnasium and Drama Building and Demolition of Existing Gymnasium for
Comberton Village College, West Street**

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 11th February 2010

Departure Application

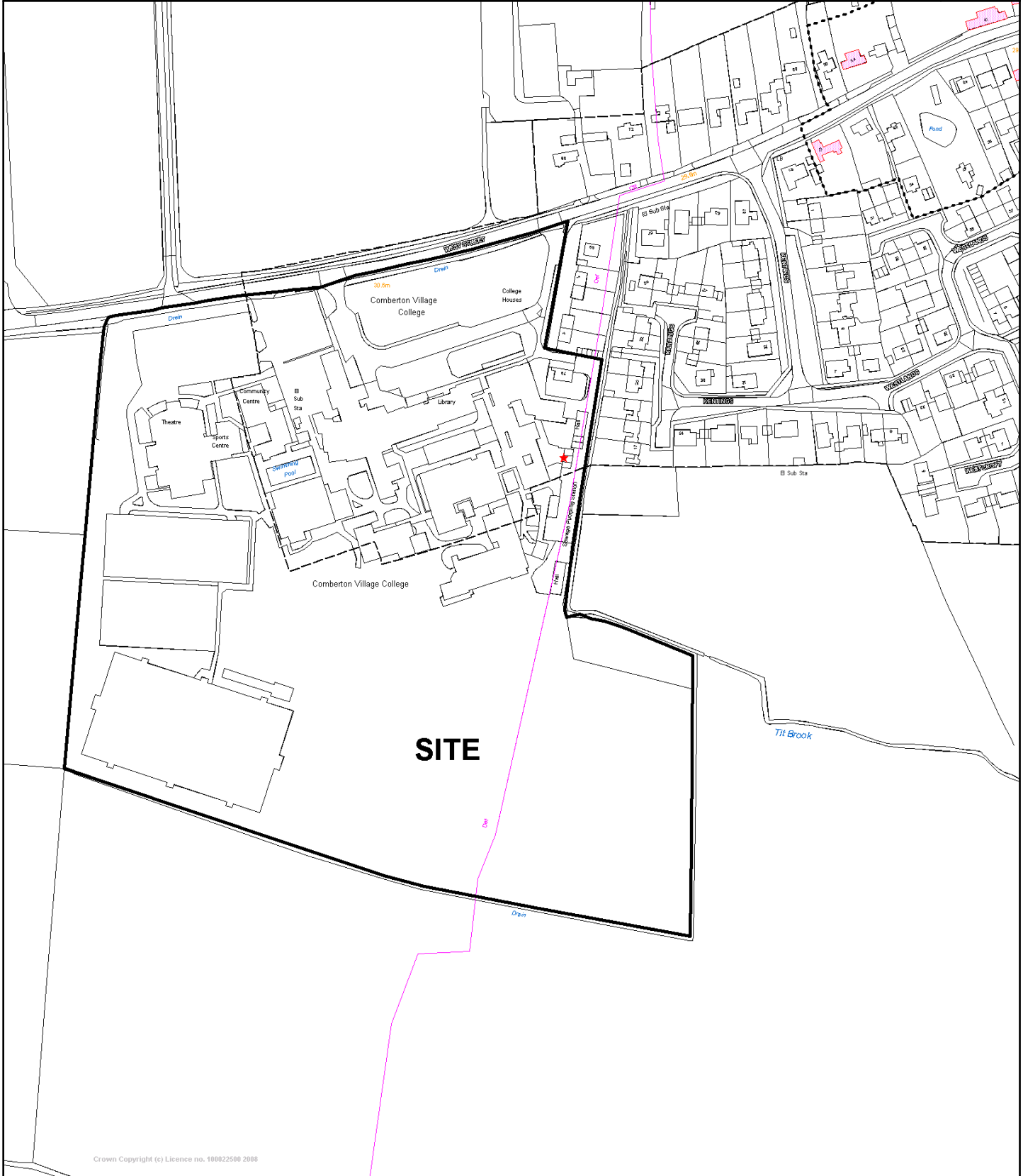
Members will visit this site on 3rd February 2010.

Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination as the recommendation to approve conflicts with the recommendation of the Parish Council.

Site and Proposed Development

1. Comberton Village College occupies a site at the Western end of the village of Comberton on West Street, however it is located across the parish boundary within the parish of Toft. The site accommodates both the existing secondary school as well as the village library and buildings housing Comberton Leisure which provides leisure facilities for members of the public. Part of the site is within the Green Belt, including the car parking area to the front of Comberton Leisure, the Comberton Leisure buildings themselves and tennis courts, sports pitches and playing fields to the rear of the site. The Northern boundary of the site is with the main road and further to the North is Bennell Farm and the Bennell Court commercial units. To the West of the site is a single residential dwelling and further West and South of the site is open land. To the East of the site are the residential properties on Kentings.
2. The full application, registered on 29th October 2009, proposes the following:
 - (a) Erection of an extension to the front (North) of the site in place of the existing gym to provide the main block of Sixth Form accommodation. The building is three storeys in height and would provide accommodation comprising a lecture hall, library, classrooms, staff offices and a reception area. In total 2590 sqm of accommodation is provided in this building.
 - (b) Erection of a single storey building to the rear (South) of the site, to provide approximately 300 sqm of drama and performing arts accommodation.
 - (c) Erection of a single storey building to the East side of the site, to provide approximately 160 sqm of design and construction accommodation.



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February 2010 Planning Committee

- (d) Erection of a gym building to the rear of the Comberton Leisure buildings providing a double height gymnasium space as well as changing facilities, classroom, office space and stores over two floors and a single storey element housing weight training equipment.
- (e) The provision of additional areas for car and minibus parking on site as well as extending the existing drainage capacity on site and landscaping.

Relevant Planning History

- 3. The planning history for the site is extensive, however many of the applications relate to small extensions and developments which are not significant with regard to the determination of this application. The planning history for the major developments on site is as follows:
- 4. **C/57/371** – Planning permission granted for the erection of the Village College.
- 5. **S/1631/00/CM** – Planning Committee recommended to the County Council (the determining Authority), that the application for the creation of the dual-use sports facilities (now known as Comberton Leisure) was granted, subject to the application being referred to the Secretary of State. The application was subsequently granted by Cambridgeshire County Council.

Planning Policy

- 6. South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007:

DP/1 – Sustainable Development
DP/2 – Design of New Development
DP/3 – Development Criteria
DP/6 – Construction Methods
DP/7 – Development Frameworks
GB/1 – Development in the Green Belt
GB/2 – Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt
GB/3 – Mitigating the Impact of Development Adjoining the Green Belt
NE/1 – Energy Efficiency
NE/3 – Renewable Energy Technologies in New Development
NE/6 – Biodiversity
NE/11 – Flood Risk
NE/12 – Water Conservation
NE/14 – Lighting Proposals
TR/1 – Planning for More Sustainable Travel
TR/2 – Car and Cycle Parking Standards
TR/3 – Mitigating Travel Impact

- 7. **Circulars**

Circular 11/95 (The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions) – Advises that conditions should be necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

Circular 05/2005 (Planning Obligations) – Advises that planning obligations must be relevant to planning, necessary, directly related to the proposed development, fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind and reasonable in all other respects.

Consultation

8. **Toft Parish Council** – has recommended refusal on the following grounds:
 - (a) The Travel Plan is considered to be inadequate as it allowed for insufficient parking for the increased number of staff and pupils.
 - (b) The poor quality of local bus services and their gradual erosion would not be able to meet the increased demands of the enlarged college and the resultant traffic increase would adversely affect local people.
 - (c) The Parish Council also commented that the design of the proposed development was considered to be good and in character with existing development.

9. **Comberton Parish Council** – has recommended refusal as it considers that the proposed development would result in an adverse impact on the community which would not be outweighed by the benefits of a sixth form. The Parish Council does not object to the principle of a sixth form provided it is accompanied by necessary infrastructure improvements. The specific concerns of the Parish Council are as follows:
 - (a) The parking provision on site is currently inadequate, causing overspill parking in the surrounding streets and congestion and inconvenience to residents and visitors to the college.
 - (b) The proposal would remove more or less the same number of parking spaces as it would create. There would appear to be little or no net increase in parking provision.
 - (c) All of the parking on site is stated as being for Comberton Village College use, however no allowance has been made for the parking needed for the leisure centre.
 - (d) Sixth Form students would be more likely to drive than existing pupils and will tend to arrive and leave at different times. This would encourage car use and proposed parking would not meet the probable need.
 - (e) Many more parking spaces would be required than are proposed. These would need to be additional spaces and must not include spaces needed by Comberton Leisure.
 - (f) Existing modal splits for transport for years 7 to 11 are not comparable to Sixth Form students for the above reasons (see 5).
 - (g) School buses would be less convenient than other forms of transport for students with varying start and finish times.
 - (h) More than half of students would live more than three miles from the college and would be unlikely to walk or cycle. The most convenient method of travel would be the car.
 - (i) Relatively few pupils cycle to school and cycling from most of the catchment area is considered dangerous. It is unrealistic to expect that many Sixth Form students would cycle.

- (j) Traffic in Comberton is already considered to be hazardous to school children and a high proportion of traffic is generated by the college. Additional young drivers would significantly increase this hazard.
 - (k) Measures would be needed to counter the increased traffic hazard created by the Sixth Form.
 - (l) Some of the proposed development would be within the Green Belt and may also generate the need for further expansion of facilities such as parking and playing fields. This encroachment into the Green Belt would be regrettable and the Parish Council is unhappy with further encroachment into the Green Belt.
 - (m) The proposed development would cast a shadow on the swimming pool, which is a community facility. This would be detrimental and the Parish Council is unhappy with any proposal which diminishes the amenity of the swimming pool.
 - (n) The prominent North elevation would be clad in wood. The long term appearance and durability of that cladding is a concern.
 - (o) The advertising and consultation on the application has been criticized by some residents. Very few residents received direct notices and street notices were not placed near the most affected streets.
10. **Local Highways Authority** – raises no objections, but has requested the upgrading of pedestrian safety features and vehicle speed reducing features in the immediate vicinity of the college.
11. **Environment Agency** – was consulted on the proposed development, however no comments have been received from the agency to date. The Council's Drainage Manager has been consulted and his views are reflected in the conclusions drawn in the Drainage and Flood Risk section (below).
12. **SCDC Ecology Officer** – has no objection to the proposed development, but wishes to see a condition applied to any permission to ensure a scheme of ecological enhancement (as recommended in the Ecological Assessment submitted with the application) can be secured.
13. **SCDC Landscapes Officer** – has no objection to the proposed development but expresses disappointment that no designated outdoor space has been provided for the informal recreation of Sixth Form students. A detailed landscape plan showing areas which provide the setting for recreation areas should be requested from the developer.

Representations

14. Representations have been received from 22 households in the village of Comberton as well as from three of the companies occupying units in Bennell Court.

Kentings

- (a) No. 1 – objects to the proposed Sixth Form college on the grounds that it would lead to an increase in traffic congestion and nuisance on street parking in the surrounding area. The traffic survey submitted with the scheme did not properly address this issue.

- (b) No. 6 – Objects to the proposed development on the grounds of highway safety on the B1046, flood risk to residential properties, additional on street parking in Kentings and Westlands. In addition concern is expressed regarding the principle of a Sixth Form college in Comberton and the inadequacy of public consultation on the proposals.
- (c) No. 12 – raises concern regarding traffic management on site and in the wider area and that it would be difficult to enforce the proposed permit scheme and that it may be open to legal challenge. Off site parking in neighbouring streets may result, impacting on residential amenity and emergency access. Also expressed concern with regard to flooding in the area and the potential for the Sixth Form to worsen that problem.
- (d) No. 14 – raises concern that the existing traffic and parking issues would be worsened by the proposed Sixth Form college. Concern is also raised regarding the lack of community consultation by the college and its agents.
- (e) No. 17 – Raises concern regarding overspill parking on the B1046 and Kentings, the accuracy and assumptions of the Transport Assessment, the level of parking to be provided on site and the drainage information within the application. Concludes that the provision of a Sixth Form college should be part of a coherent education plan, a secondary school in Cambourne would ease pressure for parking on site, that insufficient parking has been shown on site, that a vehicle pass for Sixth Form students should be implemented and questions what sanctions would be in place for those students who park in adjacent streets.
- (f) No. 22 – Objects to the proposed development on grounds of increased traffic, increased need for parking for students and that the application relies on the legal age for driving being raised to 18 and the worsening of drainage problems in the area. Believes that Sixth Form college should be located in Cambourne. Concerned about the lack of involvement of the Village College in the local community.
- (g) No. 24 – No objection to Sixth Form college in principle, however concerned that should overspill parking could occur in Kentings and arrangements should be made as part of the development that would ensure emergency access to Kentings. Would like to know what can be done to ensure driveways are not blocked. Assurance needs to be given that the drainage facilities would be adequate to cope with development and that ditches would not overflow and flood houses.
- (h) No. 27 – Raises concern regarding exacerbation of existing parking issues in the area which overspill onto B1046 and Kentings, limiting access for emergency vehicles, refuse lorries and oil tankers.
- (i) No. 34 – Objects to the proposed Sixth form on the grounds that on street parking in the area and pedestrian safety.
- (j) No. 36 – Objects to proposed development on grounds of lack of motorcycle parking for students, exacerbation of existing parking problems, increased traffic on B1046 and impact on local drainage. Believes that Sixth Form college should be located in Cambourne.
- (k) No. 37 – objects to the Sixth Form college on the grounds of inadequate parking provision.

Westlands

- (a) No. 10 – Raises concerns over the impact of parking that would occur around Kentings and Westlands by students attending the Sixth Form which could disrupt access for emergency services and deliveries. Notes parking levels at Hills Road Sixth form as a indication of what could happen.
- (b) No. 19 – raises concern regarding the level of parking provision on site and the potential for off site parking to result in congestion and inconvenience.
- (c) No. 20 – objects to the application on the grounds of the lack of on site parking provision which would result in parking on residential streets and problematic drainage of the site.
- (d) No. 21 – raises concern regarding parking in the surrounding streets impacting on access and highway safety. Suggests that more parking be provided on site, in the area currently grassed and treed to the front of the school entrance.
- (e) No. 23 – objects to the proposed development on the grounds that the net increase in parking spaces is 7 rather than 30, the lack of control of on street parking, the issue of flooding in the local area.
- (f) No. 25 – expresses concern regarding the lack of public consultation, the potential drainage problems and the increase in congestion and parking problems in the area.
- (g) No. 30 – expresses concern regarding the level of proposed on site parking and a resultant increase in congestion and parking on local streets.
- (h) No. 32 – raises concern regarding parking provision and on street parking in the surrounding streets, additional traffic in the village as well as the problem of cyclists on the pavements.

West Street

- (a) No. 70 – raises concern over the impact on the road network and parking in the area which is already problematic, the issue of students without parking passes from parking in nearby streets and suggests the secondary school at Cambourne should be built first.
- (b) Bennell Farm – objects on the grounds of impact on the amenity of Bennell Farm and Bennell Court and highway safety in the area. In addition, it is suggested that it would be inappropriate to grant the application in the absence of a wider review of the Green Belt in the area which could allow the creation of car parking area and potentially other enabling development to meet the needs of the villages of Comberton and Toft.

Green End

- (a) No. 39 – objects citing concern that students will not stay on college grounds for all of the day and may choose to congregate around the village pond.

Bennell Court

- (a) Nos. 3 & 4 – Overspill car parking on West Street opposite Bennell Court entrance making access difficult and inconveniencing staff. The Sixth Form college would worsen the problem.
- (b) No. 6 – Visitors to college have been parking on the driveway to Bennell Court in the evenings for functions at the college and at afternoon school pick up time. Hopes that Sixth Form College would not mean a continuation or increase of that problem parking.
- (c) No. 7 – Overspill parking on both sides of West Street and the driveway to Bennell Court is preventing business staff and deliveries gaining access to units on Bennell Court.

Planning Comments

- 15. The main planning considerations in this case are the impact on the Green Belt; design and visual impact; sustainable modes of transport, parking and highway safety; residential amenity; drainage and flooding; renewable energy and energy efficiency; ecology and landscaping.

Impact on the Green Belt and Countryside

- 16. The majority of built development on site falls within the Village Framework, including the areas proposed for the main Sixth Form block, the Drama and Performing Arts building and the Design and Construction building. However the Comberton Leisure buildings, the car parking in front of them and the sports courts and pitches to the rear of the site are all outside of the framework in the countryside and also within the Green Belt. This is also true of the area of land where it is proposed to site the replacement gymnasium and the area proposed for car parking on the Western boundary of the site.
- 17. The impact of the proposed buildings which are within the Development Framework and not in the Green Belt are considered to be acceptable in terms of their impact on the openness and character of the Green Belt and are therefore considered to comply with the requirements of policy GB/3 – Mitigating the impact of development adjoining the Green Belt. The buildings to the North and East of the site are generally separated from the Green Belt by existing buildings on site and are considered to be far enough away from it that they would not adversely impact on its character or openness. Given the character of the element of Green Belt within the Western boundary of the site has already been affected, it is not considered necessary or practical to require further landscaping in addition to the tree line which exists down the Western boundary.
- 18. The building closest to the Green Belt boundary which is not screened by existing buildings is the Drama and Performing Arts building. This is a single storey building which, when viewed from the Green Belt would sit against the existing two storey buildings behind it, and it is therefore considered that it would not significantly impact on the character of the Green Belt. Again, as part of the developed site is within the Green Belt, it is not considered necessary to further

divide the site with additional landscaping to provide additional screening in excess of that provided by the existing tree line to the West.

19. The proposed gymnasium building would be located in an area that is designated as Green Belt and is outside the Development Framework. As regards the Development Framework, whilst the proposed area is designated as being in the countryside, it actually relates entirely to the school complex in visual terms due to the present of the Comberton Leisure buildings further to the West. Although the gym would not comply with policy DP/7 – Development Frameworks, it is considered that the erection of the gym would not conflict with the purposes behind that policy. The purposes are to protect the countryside from gradual encroachment and to prevent development in unsustainable locations. Given that the area proposed for the gym is on the existing college site, located between two other buildings on the site and as the site is no more or less accessible by public transport than the existing college and Comberton Leisure, it is not considered that the erection of the gym would compromise the aims and objectives of policy DP/7.
20. The proposed gym building would be situated on part of the site close to existing buildings however that land is within the Green Belt. The applicant has submitted a statement of justification for the gym building with regard to its location in the Green Belt.
21. In terms of Green Belt policy, only development for agriculture, forestry and essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation are considered to be appropriate. Whilst the gym is for the purposes of recreation and sport it is largely indoor and the proposed development is therefore considered to be inappropriate by definition.
22. In addition to the harm by virtue of its inappropriateness any harm to the character and openness of the Green Belt also has to be considered. Although the gym is within the Green Belt it is situated in an area with existing buildings on either side and would relate closely to them. Whilst the erection of the building would result in the loss of the openness of the physical footprint of the building it is considered that it would have a negligible impact on the openness and character of the Green Belt in the immediate area around the site.
23. The applicant's statement of justification seeks to show that very special circumstances require the building to be located in the Green Belt and that these circumstances outweigh the harm caused by virtue of its inappropriateness. The statement details the need for the new gym due to the inadequacy of the current facilities to meet the demands of the schools current curriculum, the provision of a sports science laboratory to satisfy the requirements of the new Diploma in Sports and Active Leisure following the recent award of Specialist Sports College status and the fact that the demolition of an existing gymnasium to the front of the college to make way for the Sixth Form block would lessen the available gym and changing facilities on site. Other parts of the college site have been considered for the siting of the gym, however the other two possible locations were not considered feasible. The development of the grassed area to the front of the school would have a serious harmful impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area and the area currently occupied by the squash club buildings would negatively impact on the provision of those facilities to the school and local community.
24. Given the above, it is considered that the need for the gym has been demonstrated and the need to locate the building on the part of the site currently proposed has also been adequately demonstrated. Although there is harm by virtue of the inappropriate development in the Green Belt, on balance, it is

considered that the need for improved gymnasium facilities and the lack of another feasible location on the site are sufficient very special circumstances to outweigh such harm, particularly as there is no significant additional harm to the character and openness of the Green Belt caused by the building given its location between two existing buildings on the site.

25. The proposed development also proposes a small amount of additional hardstanding for car parking in the Green Belt in the area currently given over to the pedestrian access and bicycle storage. It is considered that the additional operational development required for this car parking is so small and the impact of the car parking on the character and openness of the Green Belt so minimal that the development is not inappropriate by definition and the impact on the Green Belt would be negligible.

Design and visual impact

26. *Main Sixth Form building* – This building would be the most prominent when viewed from the public domain and would also provide the bulk of the accommodation for the Sixth Form College. The building is three storeys high with projecting first floor elements to the front and side. The projecting element to the front would be semi-circular in appearance and would house the lecture theatre. The element to the side would house the library and provide a covered area in front of the revised entrance to the building. The materials specified would be brickwork and cedar boarding with some rendering. The main roof covered in a 'green' sedum roof while the smaller elements of other parts of the building would be covered in zinc.
27. The proposed building would replace the existing gym and changing rooms and overall it is considered to be a more interesting design than the buildings it would replace. Broadly the design is considered to be in scale and character with the existing school buildings, whilst incorporating some more interesting design features such as the projecting first floor elements, curved lecture hall, light wells on the top floor and sedum roof. The building would provide a more obvious focal point for the entrance to the school and it is considered that it would enhance the overall impact of the school on the surrounding area.
28. It is considered that it may be possible to revise the North elevation of the library element somewhat, in terms of the fenestration and the way in which that ties in to the existing school buildings and this will be investigated with the applicant and reported as a verbal update to the planning committee. It is considered that the design would be acceptable in any case, although it could be improved by incorporating slight revisions.
29. *Drama and Performing Arts building* – The design of this element is a simple single storey building in yellow brick and metal roof which is in keeping with the character and appearance of the existing buildings against which it would be seen. The area is not highly visible from the public domain and the impact of the building on the character and appearance of the area is considered to be acceptable.
30. *Design and Construction building* – The design of this building is a simple single storey building with a glazed canopy to the Northern end and an additional element on the roof providing a North Light to the work area. The appearance of the building is considered to be functional with points of interest which refer well to the surrounding classroom areas. The materials would largely match those used on adjacent buildings, being yellow brick, zinc roof and cedar boarding and samples of these materials would be controlled by condition. The proposed design and construction building would not be particularly visible in long distance

views and the design would therefore be mainly appreciated in oblique glimpses, however it is considered to be acceptable in terms of its design, its relationship to other buildings around it and its overall impact on the character of the area.

31. *Gymnasium* – The gymnasium has been designed to reflect the form and proportions of the existing Comberton Leisure building further to the West. The materials used, yellow brick and metal roof covering would again match those on the surrounding buildings. The roof of the building would be seen from the public domain to the front of the site over the existing slightly lower buildings, however it is considered that its curved form, reflecting that of the adjacent main Comberton Leisure building, is an acceptable addition to the streetscene and would not cause any harm to the overall visual amenity of the area. The proposed building is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact on the character of the area.
32. Some concern has been expressed that the gym would overshadow the swimming pool in the evenings and while the siting of the gym approximately 10 metres from the pool would have the potential to create some overshadowing of the pool, the height of the facing wall of the gym (approximately 6.5 metres) is not considered to be so high that it would cause any serious overshadowing to the pool.

Transport, parking and highway safety

33. The impact of the proposed Sixth Form on parking in the area immediately around the college is the single biggest concern raised by local people. It is accepted that overspill parking from the existing school use as well as the Comberton Leisure facility does cause an overspill of cars onto West Street in front of the college and also onto roads immediately adjacent to the site, most notably Kentings but also Westlands and the accesses to Bennell Court and Bennell Farm opposite the site. This overspill parking, which appears, albeit anecdotally, to be at its worst when there are evening events on at the college but also occurs during school arrival/departure times and at other times of the day, can cause congestion on the main road outside the college and inconveniences local residents especially those on the streets listed above.
34. Given the existing issue with overspill parking, it is therefore important that the application demonstrates that the proposed development would not worsen the existing situation. It is not reasonable to require measures to ease the existing problem as part of this application, but it can be required not to make the existing situation worse. In addition, the application needs to demonstrate that it would be accessible by sustainable methods of transport and would mitigate its travel impact on the environment, noise, pollution and amenity. Policy requires that the College formulates and adopts a suitable Travel Plan which demonstrates how these aims would be achieved on an ongoing basis.
35. The application proposes the rearrangement of some of the existing parking areas and the creation of some additional bays on the Eastern and Western fringes of the site (as shown on drawing 3903 Rev P). This would result in a net increase of 37 car parking spaces. This is in excess of the maximum parking standards set by the Council for Non-Residential Colleges of 1 space per 2 staff and 1 space per 15 students which would equate to a maximum of 30 spaces. It is also in excess of the stated aims in the written information supplied with the application. Although it is considered, for reasons detailed below, that 30 spaces would be adequate to address the additional impact of the proposed Sixth Form, given the strength of local concern as well as those of elected members for Comberton and Toft regarding the existing parking problem, it would seem

sensible to allow the additional parking which is in excess of the maximum standard to remain part of the application.

36. To ensure that parking spaces are available to those for whom they are intended, they would be clearly marked. Whilst it has not been formally suggested in the application, it would make sense to restrict the parking for staff and student use up to a certain time in the day, for example 3pm or 4pm for student spaces, which would allow the spaces to be occupied by others in the evenings and at weekends. This arrangement would help to alleviate some of the existing parking problems at other times of the day, which would be an additional benefit of the scheme. The implementation and enforcement of this approach by the College would be conditioned as part of the Travel Plan.
37. As parking available to students on site is less than the total number of students who may conceivably wish to drive to the site, the college has proposed a permit system for students wishing to park on site, such permits being allocated based on the students need to drive and their willingness to car share. The concern expressed locally regarding the impact of the Sixth Form College centres around the likelihood of students of legal driving age, who do not have parking permits, driving to college in any case and parking on the surrounding streets creating a harmful impact on highway safety, residential amenity and access of emergency and delivery vehicles. To mitigate the potential for such disruption, the college is proposing that students enter into an agreement with the school, effectively making it a condition of their attendance that they do not drive to college unless they are allocated a pass. The college has undertaken that they will enforce the observance of this contract, by monitoring travel themselves and by working with any local residents affected by on street parking to identify those students not adhering to their agreement. In the first instance, a student travelling by car without a permit would receive a written warning and should that warning be ignored they would be required to leave the Sixth Form. This procedure would be conditioned to be included in the College Travel Plan and adopted in practice.
38. Whilst car use would be discouraged through the above measures, sustainable transport such as bus travel, would be encouraged and provided, to allow a high proportion of Sixth Form students to travel by bus, as is currently the case among Secondary School pupils. The Transport Assessment calculates that in addition to using larger buses for the existing services, three additional bus services would be required to meet the increase demand. In addition, the college would also propose to run minibuses to locations which are not easily accessed by the main school and public bus services. These positive measures, in concert with the restriction on students driving to the college, are considered to be satisfactory in ensuring that the current high level of bus use continues across Years 12 and 13 at broadly the same level that is currently achieved for Secondary School Pupils. This provision of public transport would be conditioned to be included in the College Travel Plan and adopted in practice.
39. Some additional car trips to the site would be generated by the Sixth Form in the form of parents/guardians bringing Sixth Form students to the site. Given the bus provision and on the basis of the Transport Assessment, it is not considered that this is likely to be at a higher level than at present and the additional vehicle movements would not result in a significant impact upon highway safety in the area (subject to the additional provisions for highway safety set out below).
40. Significant concern has been expressed locally regarding the additional traffic flow and pedestrian and cycle trips to the site that would be generated by the proposed development and the potential for an increase in the conflict between vehicles and pedestrians and cyclists close to the site. The Local Highways Authority is of the view that the new development could impact on highway safety

in the vicinity, but that the potential harm could be effectively mitigated by the implementation of additional highway safety measures close to the school. This would include improving the existing pedestrian access facilities to the school including a pedestrian refuge on West Street close to the Eastern entrance to the site. In addition, 'wig-wags' (school warning signs with flashing amber lights) and potentially other speed reducing features would be required to be installed on West Street, close to the North Eastern and North Western corners of the site. This would be required by condition through any planning permission and the applicant would have to agree a scheme with the Local Planning Authority and the Local Highways Authority and fully implement it in order to comply with the condition. Were these additional safety measures to be implemented, it is considered that the impact of the development on highway safety is acceptable.

41. On the basis of the information submitted and the additional undertakings to which the College has committed, it is considered that the impact of the Sixth Form College on the local highway network and highway safety in the area is acceptable. In addition, given the measures to control off site parking, it is considered that the proposed development would not result in a significant increase in congestion in the area or nuisance or inconvenience to local people. The necessary measures detailed above would be conditioned to be provided as part of a revised Travel Plan and the highways improvements would be achieved through the requirement for a legal agreement to be entered into by the college.

Residential amenity

42. The proposed buildings are considered to be far enough away from neighbouring properties that they would not result in any loss of light or overshadowing to neighbours or be visually intrusive. Nor would they result in any significant overlooking of neighbouring properties.
43. Concern was raised by one resident regarding the level of noise pollution which could be generated by use of the covered area outside the Design and Construction building close to the Eastern boundary of the site. It is considered that the existing buildings and trees to the East would be likely to screen the noise created by the use of this area, but that there is potential for the use of power-operated machinery in the covered outdoor area to have some impact on the amenity of neighbours in Kentings. The Council's Environmental Protection Team Leader has recommended taking a precautionary approach and has requested a condition be applied to any permission restricting the use of power operated machinery in the outside area. It is considered that this condition would mitigate any harm to the residential amenity of neighbours to the site.

Drainage and flooding

44. Although the site lies within Flood Zone 1 (low risk), during the course of the public consultation on the application, several residents raised the issue of occasional flooding in the area, particularly in relation to the ditch adjacent to the Eastern boundary of the site. The surface water drainage implications of the Sixth Form college have been considered and the applicant has submitted a drainage statement which describes the existing system and the impact of the proposed development.
45. The statement explains that the existing surface water drainage is handled by a traditional gravity surface water drainage system running in various diameter pipework which discharges, via a flow control with associated balancing pool, to the existing Award Drain to the southeast of the built area.

46. The Council's Drainage Manager is of the view that the existing downstream systems are at or close to capacity and that they would not be able to handle increased flows generated by the proposed Sixth Form College. It has therefore been proposed that the existing surface water drainage infrastructure be extended and adapted to accommodate the proposed extensions and the existing balancing facility extended, as required, to accommodate surface water runoff from increased impermeable areas. The existing flow control would remain unaltered to maintain the current surface water discharge rate and to mitigate potential downstream impact from any increased flows generated from the proposed development.
47. This method has met with the approval of the Council's Drainage Manager and precise details of the required work would be secured by planning condition.
48. The applicant's drainage consultant has confirmed that it is not proposed that any surface water drainage systems discharge directly onto any of the adjacent open watercourses and the proposals would therefore not increase any flood risk to adjacent properties.
49. With regards to foul water drainage, the drainage statement explains that the new buildings would be connected into the existing system which would be adapted and extended on site to accommodate the increased demand. Some concern was raised during the consultation process as to the capacity of the foul water drainage systems in the village to cope with the increased demands that the Sixth Form College would place on them, based on anecdotal evidence of capacity issues in relation to the pumping station in the village. Whilst it is not anticipated that there would be a capacity issue which could not be resolved, Anglian Water has been consulted and its comments will be presented as an update to the Planning Committee.

Renewable energy, energy efficiency and water conservation

50. As a Major development, the proposed Sixth Form College would be expected to comply with policies NE/3 – Renewable Energy in New Development and NE/12 – Water Conservation.
51. Policy NE/3 requires that the Sixth Form College includes renewable energy technology capable of providing at least 10% of its predicted energy requirements. The applicant has provided supporting information showing that the proposed buildings would exceed the standards set for new buildings in Building Regulations Part L. This information includes figures showing the amount of energy that would be provided by renewable energy technology exceeds the requirement of the policy. The proposed renewable energy technologies are a Ground Source Heat Pump as well as photovoltaic solar panels. Further information on the location and detail of the technologies has been requested and will be presented as a verbal update to the Planning Committee. The implementation of the technology would be ensured through an appropriate planning condition as part of any permission.
52. Policy NE/12 requires that the Sixth Form College must incorporate all practical water conservation measures. The application provides limited information on water conservation, mainly focusing on the type of sanitary ware used in toilets, stating that it will be specified to reduce water consumption. No rainwater harvesting technologies have been specified in the application, however this would be conditioned to be investigated and implemented where possible through a planning condition, as per the requirements of the policy.

Ecology and landscaping

53. As the proposed buildings are either built on existing hardstanding or areas laid to grass, it is not considered that they would have any significant harmful effect on ecology on site or more widely in the local area. The Ecological Assessment conducted on behalf of the applicant has identified several measures which would benefit wildlife in the area, through changes to the current management of the site. As the development would not harm ecology on site, it is considered to comply with the requirements of policy NE6 – Ecology and it is not, therefore, considered reasonable to require these measures be implemented through the use of a planning condition. However as the measures would be inexpensive and given the college's role in education, an informative would be added to any permission, requesting that the Village College engage with the Council's Ecology Officer in implementing the measures identified in the Ecological Assessment.
54. The Council's Landscapes Officer has requested that areas of informal outdoor recreation for students be identified by the applicant and appropriately landscaped and equipped. Whilst this is considered beneficial, it is not considered that there is a policy requirement on the applicant to provide these areas and it is not, therefore, reasonable to require those areas by condition. An informative detailing the benefits of such areas would be applied to any permission, inviting the applicant to engage with the Council's Landscape Officer in the provision of informal outdoor recreation space.

Other Matters

55. Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service has been consulted and its comments will be presented as a verbal update to the Planning Committee.
56. Concern has been expressed by some local residents regarding the lack of consultation on the proposed development by the applicant and also regarding notification of the planning application by the Local Planning Authority. With regard to the former, a consultation exercise was undertaken by the applicant, however the Local Planning Authority does not have detailed information regarding the breadth of that consultation or the extent to which the scheme was revised in line with the opinions of local people. Whilst it is good practice for the applicant to consult locally prior to the submission of a planning application, it does not form a material planning consideration for the Local Planning Authority.
57. With regard to the publicity of the planning application itself, the receipt of the application was advertised in the Cambridge Evening News on 24 November 2009 and through site notices posted in the local area, namely at either end of the College frontage, at the entrances to Kentings and Barrons Way (which also serve Westlands), as well as on the Village Library noticeboard. Letters of notification were sent out to Barlicia on West Street and to each household in Kentings, as well as each property on West Street between Bennell Farm and the entrance to Kentings. In addition, deadlines for responses from both Parish Council's were extended at the request of local elected members. The Local Planning Authority is content that its publicity of the application more than satisfies its statutory responsibilities.
58. The development proposed in the application represents a departure from Green Belt policy and has been advertised as such. The application has demonstrated very special circumstances and whilst it is a departure application, it is not considered to seriously injure Green Belt policy. Members are therefore free to make a decision on the application without referring it to the Secretary of State.

Recommendation

59. Taking all relevant matters in to consideration it is recommended that delegated approval subject to no new material planning considerations are raised as a result of the advertising of the application as a departure from Green Belt policy and the following conditions:

Conditions

1. Sc1 – Full planning permission time limit
2. Sc5 – Landscaping
3. Sc6 – Landscape Implementation
4. Sc8 – Tree protection
5. Sc12 – Boundary Treatment
6. Sc13 – Materials
7. Sc15 – Car Parking to be provided and retained in accordance with plans prior to occupation of the development
8. Travel plan
9. Highways improvements
10. Drainage details
11. Renewable Energy
12. Water Conservation
13. Sc16 – Cycle parking to be provided and retained in accordance with plans prior to occupation of the development
14. Sc38 – Noise during construction
15. Sc93 – Site waste management plan
16. Highways method statement during the construction period#
17. No power-operated machinery to be used in covered work area of the design and construction building

Informatives

1. Ecology
2. Landscapes
3. Informal Outdoor Recreation Space
4. No Bonfires
5. Demolition Notice required

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

- East of England Plan 2008
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007
- Circular 11/95 Circular (The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions) and Circular 05/2005 (Planning Obligations)

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