

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

---

**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

1 April 2015

**AUTHOR/S:** Planning and New Communities Director

---

**Application Number:** S/0320/15/FL

**Parish:** Cambourne

**Proposal:** The provision of new solar photovoltaic (PV) canopy system, amendments to car park layout to accommodate the system and 10 additional parking spaces. Upgrade to existing cycle storage facilities and provision of roof mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) systems to existing cycle and refuse ancillary buildings

**Site address:** South Cambridgeshire Hall, 6010, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne

**Applicant(s):** South Cambridgeshire District Council

**Recommendation:** Approval

**Key material considerations:** Principle of Development  
Design  
Landscaping  
Ecology  
Level of parking

**Committee Site Visit:** No

**Departure Application:** No

**Presenting Officer:** Edward Durrant

**Application brought to Committee because:** South Cambridgeshire District Council is both the applicant and also the Local Planning Authority

**Date by which decision due:** 14<sup>th</sup> April 2015

### Planning History

1. S/0951/08/F - Reconstruction of existing and construction of additional staff parking and associated landscaping works – South Cambridgeshire. Hall - Approved.
2. S/6147/02/RM - Council Offices, associated works and civic square - Approved

3. S/6136/01/O - Erection of three storey building for offices (B1 Use) or Council Offices for South Cambridgeshire District Council (Sui Generis Use)

### **Planning Policies**

4. **National Planning Policy Framework (Adopted March 2012).**
5. **Local Development Framework, Development Plan Document, Core Strategy (Adopted January 2007)**
6. **Local Development Framework, Development Control Policies (Adopted July 2007)**

DP/1: Sustainable Development  
DP/2: Design of New Development  
DP/3: Development Criteria  
NE/2: Renewable Energy  
NE/6: Biodiversity  
NE/11: Lighting Proposals  
TR/1: Planning for More Sustainable Travel  
TR/2: Car and Cycle Parking Standards  
TR/3: Mitigating Travel Impact

7. **Supplementary Planning Documents**

District Design Guide SPD  
Biodiversity  
Landscape in New Development

8. **Draft Local Plan**

CC/3 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy in New Developments  
CC/4 Sustainable Design and Construction  
HG/1 Design Principles  
NH/4 Biodiversity  
SC/10 Lighting Proposals  
TI/2 Planning for Sustainable Travel  
TI/3 Parking Provision

### **Consultations**

9. **Cambourne Parish Council** is supportive of the proposals but initially deferred making a recommendation pending consideration of the Council's new travel plan.
10. The **Trees and Landscape Officer** supports the proposal subject to the addition of condition requiring a scheme of landscaping. Questions have also been raised about the drainage into the landscaped areas.
11. The **Ecology Officer** supports the proposals and has requested that an informative be attached to any consent granted identifying habitat conservation regulations and conditions to secure a scheme of ecological enhancement and control the removal of vegetation during the bird nesting season.

## **Representations**

12. A site notice was put up and notification letters were sent to Development Securities, the company that manages the Business Park, and McA, the consortium of Cambourne house builders that owns the land to the north. No representations were received.

## **Planning Comments**

### **13. Site and Proposal**

14. The site edged red includes the car park, ancillary buildings and cycle shelters to the west of South Cambridgeshire Hall, which is a three storey office building on the westernmost plot of Cambourne Business Park. The building primarily accommodates District Council staff as well as officers from the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner. To the west of the car park the boundary is well screened by semi-mature landscaping that was planted some fifteen years ago. The other side of the landscaping there is the access road that leads to the secondary school and then open agricultural land. To the north and south the landscaping is less dense and less mature as it was planted at the time South Cambs. Hall was built. The parcels of land to the north and south were identified as employment land under the original Cambourne masterplan, neither of which has as yet been developed.
15. The site is located within the Cambourne Village Framework and in addition to the perimeter landscaping there are two strips of semi-mature landscaping between rows of parking spaces within the car park, and a further area of landscaping between the ancillary buildings and the cycle shelters. The two cycle shelters are located to the north and south of the ancillary buildings, which have a covered walkway separating the reserved parking spaces nearest to the office from the main car park.
16. Presently there are arrays of photovoltaic panels on the roof of South Cambs. Hall. These were funded by Cambourne Parish Council from Section 106 payments secured from the additional 950 homes at Upper Cambourne.
17. The proposal seeks consent for the erection of a series of canopies that would extend over the majority of the parking spaces in order to accommodate photovoltaic (PV) panels. The works would also result in a minor reconfiguration of the car park to include a further 12 spaces as well as the retention of a number of 'sacrificial' parking spaces to the north and west of the site. Some PV panels are proposed on the roofs of the cycle shelters and ancillary buildings as well as improvements to the cycle shelters themselves.
18. Although the application description refers to 10 additional spaces the relocation of some of the disabled spaces, to an area nearer to the public entrance previously used for overflow parking, has resulted in a further 2 spaces. Therefore the total increase is 12 spaces.
19. The proposal also includes charging points for electrical vehicles. There is mention of charging points for electrical points for electric cycles in the Design and Access Statement but this is unlikely to form part of the proposals. The inclusion of these charging points does not require the consent of the Local Planning Authority so the Design and Access Statement does not need amending.

## **Principle of Development**

20. Both the existing and emerging Local Plans have policies aimed at promoting the use of renewable technologies and making development more sustainable in terms of energy usage and generation on site. Although the Council's offices were built at a time when different policies were in place it still achieves a good level of sustainability in terms of reducing the energy needed to run the building. With the inclusion of further PV the building has the potential to achieve an even higher level of sustainability due to the increased energy that would be generated during the daytime, when the energy requirements of the building are at their greatest. Any additional electricity generated during the week, and at the weekends when the building is not normally occupied, would be fed back into the grid. The electric charging points would also help promote the use of alternative fuelled vehicles by Council staff and visitors and could hopefully charge electric pool cars as part of the Travel Plan proposals.
21. As the majority of the energy generated would be used on site the proposals comply with Policy NE/2. A condition shall be attached to any approval requiring the removal of the PV panels should they cease to be operational.

## **Visual Amenity**

22. The site is very well screened from views to the west by the wide tree belt that was part of the original strategic landscaping for Cambourne. At the pre-application stage it was questioned whether the canopies could be accommodated without the loss of some of the more mature trees within the landscaping to the north and south of the site and the landscaping strips within the car park. The only way to achieve this would have been to reduce the number of parking spaces as the supports for the PV need to be accommodated within the landscaping areas. Given the existing pressures on the car park any significant reduction in the number of parking spaces would have resulted in the scheme not going forward.
23. The loss of the existing landscaping around the perimeter of the site would have a negative visual impact in the short term until new landscaping establishes itself. In the longer term the landscaping that is proposed would help to screen the parked cars but would not be allowed to grow tall enough to obscure the PV. However, the site has to be seen in the context of the sites to the north and south being developed in the future. Development that would potentially screen the canopies from distance views and would almost certainly include boundary planting. The land to the north is included within the site for the proposed development of land to the west of Cambourne for 2,350 homes and associated development (S/2903/14/OL). In accordance with the original masterplan for Cambourne it is proposed as employment land. Pre-application discussions are taking place with Development Securities about the development of the remaining land on the Business Park for a mix of small scale employment uses and residential.
24. Although the proposals for Cambourne West do not include a vehicular link through the Business Park this is something that officers are pursuing with both McA and Development Securities. The exact route of any link through is not yet defined but the lower scale landscaping that is proposed would form an appropriate boundary treatment from passing traffic if a route through is proposed.

## Appearance

25. At this stage the final details of the canopy system is not known. Therefore the proposed elevations show a worst case scenario in terms of their height so the visual impact can be assessed. A condition shall be attached to any consent requiring full details of the canopies before development commences. The proposals are likely to include some low level lighting and security cameras under the canopies for increased security. The lighting is not considered to result in an unacceptable visual impact on the adjacent countryside due to its low level and the level of screening on the western boundary.

## Parking Provision

26. In addition to the PV several areas of the car park are to be redesigned to increase the number of spaces. A similar B1 building of this floor space (6750 sqm) would need to provide up to a maximum of 225 spaces to comply with Policy TR/2. As South Cambs. Hall is a public building it is a sui generis use and it is not quite so straightforward to apply the parking standards for a standard B1 building, which would not be expected to experience the same level of visitor numbers as South Cambs. Hall. Presently there are 257 parking spaces within the main car park, side parking area and the car park extension approved in 2008. These parking areas are regularly at capacity when large numbers of public attend the building for events such as planning committee meetings, local plan hearings etc. The proposed increase in the number of spaces to 269 would not prevent the overspill of cars onto the Civic Square that often occurs when large numbers of public attend meetings but it would help in the Council's aspirations to maximise the use of the building by renting out floor space. The level of disabled parking spaces complies with the Council's policies.
27. The outline and reserved matters approvals for South Cambs. Hall had conditions requiring a travel plan to be produced and implemented. A condition also required a plan to be submitted "*indicating the 'sacrificial' car parking spaces, (minimum of 24 spaces) which over time, will be converted into landscaping with the implementation of the green travel to work plan*". These spaces have never been converted into landscaping and this application seeks their permanent retention in addition to the further 12 spaces that are proposed. Given the extent of the Council's property ownership it is unlikely that any additional land would be available for further extensions of the car park. The increase in the number of parking spaces, and the retention of the sacrificial spaces, is only considered acceptable alongside the promotion of sustainable modes of transport for Council staff and other visitors to the building to reduce the impact upon the car park. Therefore a condition is to be attached to any approval requiring the submission and approval of a new Travel Plan for South Cambs. Hall. The Travel Plan will promote more sustainable, and hopefully healthier, modes of transport to reduce the high numbers of staff (approximately 70%) who presently drive to work alone.
28. When South Cambs. Hall was originally occupied it had 100 cycle parking spaces, in accordance with a scheme that was submitted to comply with a condition of the 2002 consent. Although the cycle parking was to be retained in accordance with the approved scheme over the years a number of the spaces have been lost primarily down to the storage of bins and a large sports store that occupy over half the space within the rear cycle shed. Presently there are 29 Sheffield stands that equate to 58 cycle spaces. Under Policy TR/2 cycle parking provision for would require 1 space per 30m<sup>2</sup> for B1 use, which equates to 225 spaces.

29. Approximately 5% of staff cycle to work and the majority of these cyclists live in Cambourne. There are several staff members who commute further distances with numbers of these longer distance cyclists increasing slightly during the summer months. The existing cycle parking spaces are regularly monitored and there have never been capacity issues. Although the application description refers to an upgrade of the cycle shelters this would come about due to a need to reroof them to accommodate the PV. Part of the update to the Council's Travel Plan will look at improvements to the cycle shelters to ensure that the northern one is lockable and weather tight, to encourage more staff to use it.

### **Travel Plan**

30. The last version of the Council's Travel Plan was for the period 2008-2010 and has not been updated since then. Given the increasing pressures on the car park it is accepted that further extending the car park is not an option. Therefore the Council needs to increase the promotion of alternative modes of travel to work and on Council business for Council staff, and alternative ways of working that would reduce the need for staff, members and visitors to travel to South Cambs. Hall.
31. A draft of the new Travel Plan for South Cambs. Hall is well advanced and the clerk of Cambourne Parish Council has confirmed that the Parish Council would support the application subject to an updated Travel Plan being secured through a planning condition. The draft copy has already been forward to the Parish Council for their information.

### **Trees and Landscaping**

32. Specific comments have been raised about the proposed species to be planted and their spacing. A condition shall be attached to any consent agreeing a scheme of landscaping.

### **Drainage**

33. The Trees and Landscape officer has questioned how the drainage will work with the reverse cantilever panel areas. A condition shall be added to any consent granted to require details of the drainage to be submitted and agreed in writing prior to works commencing on site.

### **Ecology**

34. The proposal would not result in any significant harm to ecology as the landscaping has not yet established to such an extent as to create a habitat for great crested newts, which are known to be located nearby. An informative has been requested in addition to conditions requiring a scheme of ecological enhancement, which would consist of bird and bat boxes being located in appropriate places across the site, and no clearance of vegetation during the bird nesting season.
35. The Council's Ecologist has raised concerns that if the removal of vegetation needs to be done during the bird nesting season than an independent ecologist may need to be employed to oversee the works.

## Conclusions

36. Having regard to applicable national and local planning policies, and having taken all relevant material considerations into account, it is considered that planning permission should be granted in this instance.

## Recommendation

37. Approval as amended by plans stamped 27/02/2015

## Conditions

- (a) Time Limit
- (b) Approved Plans
- (c) Details of canopies
- (d) Landscape Scheme
- (e) Landscape Implementation
- (f) Ecological Enhancement
- (g) Clearance of vegetation
- (h) Drainage
- (i) Travel Plan
- (j) Removal of PV panels

## Informatives

1. Great crested newt and Habitats Regulations 2010

## Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents
- Draft Local Plan 2013
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012

**Report Author:** Edward Durrant – Principal Planning Officer  
Telephone: (01954) 713266