

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee      2<sup>nd</sup> November 2005  
**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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**S/6310/05/RM - Cambourne**  
**Erection of 35 Dwellings and Ancillary Works at area GC23, Bullrush Lane, Great Cambourne, for Westbury Homes (Holdings) Ltd**

**Recommendation: Refusal**  
**Date for determination: 7<sup>th</sup> December 2005 (Major Development)**

### **Site and Proposal**

1. The 2 hectare site lies on the east side of Great Cambourne, between the established housing in Bullrush Lane and Tithe Way and the land designated as golf course in the Cambourne Master Plan. A ditch and mature hedgerow define the west and north sides of the site, while the south boundary has isolated mature trees bordering the greenway. The land slopes gently down from northwest to southeast (although no survey plan was submitted to show the land levels). The landforms in the golf course area may be altered as part of the spoil disposal strategy in due course.
2. The reserved matters application received 7<sup>th</sup> September 2005, proposes 35 dwellings comprising 2 two-bedroom houses, 2 three-bedroom plus study, 2 four-bedroom, 22 five-bedroom, and 7 six-bedroom houses. All but 2 would be detached. The density is 17.5 dwellings per hectare. A design statement is submitted with the application which describes some of the principles which the applicant hoped to include in the development; most significantly, the design is intended to create an integrated network of travel by all modes, to provide large formal detached houses facing the golf course with landscape segments to reduce the impact, two local areas for play (LAPs), and a medium density area on the west side of the site. The applicant states that parking provision is planned within the plots, often behind gates to improve security and reduce vehicle related crime. Siting, design, means of access and landscaping are included in the application.
3. The layout shows a collector road from Bullrush Lane, bridging the ditch and breaching the hedgerow. This links to a central spine access road from which 5 private drives serve 16 houses on the east side and 16 on the west side. Three houses are served from a drive off the collector road which would link to site GC26 to the north (allocated for affordable housing). Most of the car parking is served from these semi-private spaces, with gated hardstandings leading to double garages set well to the rear of the main house facades. Two casual visitor parking spaces are proposed. On the east side of the site parking spaces are accessed from the rear, so that the eastern fringe is unaffected by vehicular access, having footpath access to the front doors.
4. The western boundary of the application site is drawn to exclude the ditch and hedgerow, and also excludes the new footpath link shown on the Briefing Plan and Master Plan, so no provision is made for the path in this development. Because of the large amount of parking hardstanding and access ways, there is limited scope for tree planting of any substantial size. Two LAPs are proposed adjacent to the spine road, but there is no indication of boundary treatment or seating to make the areas suitable

for children's play or general social intercourse. Bin standing areas are shown alongside each of them.

5. Because of the rear parking provision, the garden spaces are relatively small, and eccentrically shaped. The layout includes many dwellings which, because of their size, are in close proximity to other buildings, giving window-to-wall distances in many cases of 10 metres or less. The houses range in height from 1½ to 3 storeys. There are garage buildings in various combinations, and two garages with office first floor mainly within the roof space.
6. The application was amended by drawings franked 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005 in response to highway matters.

### **Planning History**

7. **S/1371/92/O** Outline planning permission for the new settlement of Cambourne granted in 1994 with conditions relating to Master Planning and submission of reserved matters. A Design Guide with associated Briefing Plans forms part of the approved Master Plan.
8. The Briefing Plan for this area shows Medium/Low Density housing on the east side, with large, formal, detached houses overlooking the golf course. On the south side the legend is "2, 2 ½ storey detached houses overlooking the greenway. Estate rail front boundaries with footbridges crossing the ditch to connect to the greenway" On the west side the brief is "Housing to face stream with informal footpath along southern bank of stream. Buildings to relate to those opposite in GC03". Two LAPs are indicated in central locations. 38 dwellings are allocated for this area in the Phasing schedule.

### **Planning Policy**

9. **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: P1/3** Sustainable Design in Built Development, **P5/4** Meeting Locally Identified Housing Needs
10. **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**  
**HG10** – housing mix to include a range of types and sizes, including 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings, making the best use of the site and promoting a sense of community which reflects local needs. The design and layout should be informed by the wider character and context of the local townscape and landscape.  
**EN5** – retention of natural features, new planting appropriate to the character of development, its landscape setting and the biodiversity of the locality.  
**Cambourne 1** – Development in accordance with Cambourne Masterplan  
**Cambourne 2** – Development in accordance with Cambourne Design Guide  
**SE7** – Development in accordance with Cambourne Masterplan and Design Guide.  
**TP1** – Promotion of sustainable transport choices, restriction of car parking to the maximum levels in appendix 7/1.

### **Consultations**

11. **Cambourne Parish Council** - Recommends approval subject to the footpath link being extended to link with the footpath to the Vine School, and made into a cycleway. The suggested route is along the boundary between GC23 and GC26.
12. **Local Highways Authority** – requested minor amendments which have been incorporated.

13. **County Archaeology** – no further investigation required at this site.
14. **Landscape Officer** – there is limited scope in the layout for trees other than small ornamental species, the LAPs are ill-defined, and there are too many problem areas for planting where enhancement is needed but the space is insufficient.
15. **Ecology Officer**- satisfied with the ecological enhancement proposals subject to the quality of installations.
16. **Environmental Operations Manager** – too many of the houses lie beyond the 20 metre distance between dustbin stores and 4 metre width roads. (On-street “bin standing areas” have been shown on the proposed layout).
17. **Police Architectural Liaison Officer** – the layout incorporates exposed rear gardens associated with semi-private driveways linking to footpaths leading to house frontages not overlooked other than by the proposed golf course. Consideration should be given to connecting rear garden boundaries and increasing activity to frontages by directing vehicles to front entrances. Utility meters should be externally mounted at the front.
18. **Cambourne Developers Project Director** – no reply.
19. **Environment Agency** – no objection subject to satisfactory surface water drainage and adequate sewerage by Anglian Water.
20. **Anglian Water** – no reply.

### **Representations**

21. One letter of concern regarding pedestrian access to the proposed golf course – there should be a more direct walking and cycling route through to the Vine School. The existing hedgerow along the west boundary should be protected from disturbance of the wildlife habitat

### **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

22. The key issues are the housing mix, the design and layout, access and security, landscaping and ecology, and residential amenity.
23. The proposal only includes one pair of semi-detached two-bedroom houses to cater for the Structure Plan requirement for smaller dwellings. The remainder of the houses are large detached dwellings. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policy P5/4 of the Structure Plan, Policy HG 10 of the Local Plan, and Cambourne 1 which requires adherence to the Masterplan and guidance on social inclusiveness and wider mix.
24. The size of the houses, and their disposition on limited plots, leads to a uniformity of spacing which disguises the difference between the medium- and medium/low density areas of the site. The character of the whole development would therefore appear medium density because of the amount of built footprint on each plot. This would conflict with the Briefing Plan and therefore with Policy Cambourne 2 which requires compliance with the design guide.
25. The applicant's desire to locate car parking behind gates set back from the street frontage has pulled a large amount of garaging, hardstanding and private driveway to

the rear of the dwellings. There is thus little of the site which remains free from the disturbance of vehicle movements, or secure from intrusion by strangers. It also reduces the available private garden space, and gives limited outlook from the dwellings apart from facing garages. The car parking provision on most plots exceeds the Council's maximum standard of two spaces per dwelling. The proposal is thus contrary to the principles of the Structure Plan, and Policies TP1 and Cambourne 1 & 2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

26. The layout has been designed so that there is a "soft" frontage to the golf course, thus no vehicular access is proposed on the east side. This should allow for the development to integrate with the surrounding landscape. However, only three substantial trees are proposed for this area, the remainder being small ornamental types which would appear as suburban elements in the wider landscape. The limited gaps and views from the east would be impeded by the proximity of buildings (the maximum gap is 12 metres) and the village edge would present a fully built-up frontage. Along the spine road, ornamental trees are proposed in front gardens, but only the LAPs have any scope for larger trees. This would conflict with Policy EN5 of the Local Plan.
27. The proposals for ecological enhancement by provision of bird and bat boxes are welcomed, and would comply with the Master Plan and Cambourne 1 principles. The nearby trees and hedgerows are excluded from the application site, apart from the access, and therefore unaffected. However, implementation of the footpath link on the west site should be integrated to minimise disturbance to the hedgerow and ditch.
28. It is not considered that there would be adverse impact on the established residential area to the west, by reason of the distance across the hedgerow, ditch and planned path. The relationship with the planned properties to the south is acceptable. However, it is considered that the proposal for a large proportion of substantial houses on relatively small plots has led to the above design difficulties. The implications are that an unsatisfactory residential environment would be created with poor outdoor space, lack of seclusion and outlook, and little scope for planting to alleviate these impacts. This would conflict with the policies for Cambourne and the design principles for the settlement. Refusal is therefore recommended.

### **Recommendation**

29. Refuse for the following reasons:
  1. The development would provide only two small dwellings and therefore would not contribute to meeting local housing need as required by Policy P5/4 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003, and Policy HG10 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.
  2. The design, layout and character of the development would not correspond in character with the density gradation required by the Briefing Plan in accordance with the Cambourne Design Guide. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policies SE7, Cambourne 1 and Cambourne 2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.
  3. The provision of car parking spaces in excess of two per dwelling conflicts with Policy TP1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.
  4. The proposed layout is dominated by vehicular access and parking areas to an extent which would be detrimental to residential amenity and would diminish

seclusion and security. It therefore conflicts with Policy P1/3 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003, and Policy Cambourne 2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

5. The proposed layout makes inadequate provision for substantial landscaping and play/social areas. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policies EN5 and Cambourne 2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

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

**Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003**  
**South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.**

S/1370/92/O Outline planning permission for Cambourne  
Cambourne Master Plan  
Cambourne Design Guide  
GC Phase 5 North Briefing Plan  
Reserved Matters application file ref: S/6310/05/RM

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