



CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL

REPORT OF PANEL MEETING

Scheme: Bourn Airfield New Village - Development Framework Draft Document

Date: Wednesday 29th June 2016

Venue: Monkfield Room, South Cambridgeshire District Offices, Cambourne

Time: 09:45 – 16:00

Quality Panel Members

Robin Nicholson (Chair)

Nick James

David Taylor

Kirk Archibald

Oliver Smith

Simon Carne

Panel secretariat and support

Stuart Clarke – Cambridgeshire County Council

Alokiir Ajang – Cambridgeshire County Council

Local Authority Attendees

Trovine Monteiro - Team Leader, Consultancy Unit, South Cambridgeshire District Council

Ed Durrant – Principal Planner - South Cambridgeshire District Council

Caroline Hunt – Planning Policy Manager - South Cambridgeshire District Council

Ashley Heller – Transport Projects Team Leader - Cambridgeshire County Council

Jon Finney –Highway Engineer - Cambridgeshire County Council

Applicant and Representatives

Mike Lambert – Director – Head of Planning, Countryside

Jo Clark – Associate Director (Planning), Countryside

Robert Rummey – Managing Director, Rummey Design (Masterplanners)

David Orr – Associate Director, Rummey Design

Ian Mitchell – Head of Strategic Projects, Mayer Brown (Transport)

Colin Morrison – Director, Head of Sustainability, Turleys (Sustainability)

Jonathan Gimblett - Associate Director (Development), Countryside

Beth Deacon - Assistant Planner, Countryside

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1. Scheme description and presentation

Architect/Designer Rummey Design
Applicant Countryside Properties
Planning status Pre-Application

2. Overview

The proposed settlement at Bourn Airfield lies to the north of Bourn Village and to the east of Cambourne. The A428 and de-trunked old A428 lie to the north of the site and the Broadway lies to the west of the site, between Bourn Airfield and Cambourne, travelling southwards towards Bourn village.

The principal entrance to the airfield and existing commercial uses, located to the northeast of the site, is via the roundabout on the old A428. This roundabout also serves the village of Caldecote that extends in a linear form to the south. To the southeast there is an area of woodland that is designated as a SSSI (Bucket Hill Plantation). There is a second, ancillary vehicular access to the airfield to the northwest of the site off the Broadway and opposite of this access there is a greenway between two Cambourne land parcels that has been identified as a bus link onto the Broadway which will provide direct public transport and cycling links to Cambourne.

Any development comes forward in the context of the City Deal transport proposals for the A428 corridor, which may see a bus rapid transport scheme.

The original intention of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) was to prepare an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the site to add detail to Local Plan policy SS/6. However, due to timescales associated with the Local Plan process, it is proposed that a 'Development Framework Document' (DFD) will be produced to guide development at this site. The preliminary advice to the LPA is that the DFD should be prepared as a Supplementary Planning Document.

The applicant's vision for the development is one of sustainability, custodianship and socialness and adds a fifth 'C' of Collaboration to the Quality Panel's existing 4C's.

It is envisaged that a planning application will be submitted later this year (2016).

3. Cambridgeshire Quality Panel views

Introduction

The Panel's advice reflects the issues associated with each of the four 'C's' in the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter. The comments below include both those raised in the open session of the meeting and those from the closed session discussions.

The local authority briefing was attended by the applicant on this occasion and all parties set out the context of how the development has come forward so far and the aspirations for the site as a new settlement in South Cambridgeshire.

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Community



The applicant explained that the settlement would be a new vibrant place and not a commuter village; one which residents would choose to live in and not have to live in because of circumstances. It will be a place that will have functions of its own, complementary to those of neighbouring Cambourne and beyond and include a range of uses including work, live, shop and play.

The settlement will provide 2 primary schools and a secondary school which could include shared facilities and community access. There will be 6.4Ha of employment space as well as up to 3,500 new homes and 31% of the site will be designated for open space and recreation. The Panel welcomed the emerging work on community provision but considered that further thought should be given to the community framework; they noted that the Parish Council arrangements seem to work well at Cambourne and so that model could be developed for Bourn Airfield. It was recommended that a governance and landscape management strategy be devised as part of the DFD.

The Panel discussed the importance of strong relationships with the neighbouring communities of Bourn, Cambourne and beyond. Thought should be given into how the development and neighbouring communities might derive mutual benefit and create a sense of ownership; for example, through shared business space or community provision. The Panel recommended forming strong connections with neighbours through consultation and with sensitivity towards Bourn Village - it was recognised that this would be a challenging yet essential process and needs to identify the benefits to local residents.

The Panel were supportive of the approach taken to the three centres within the settlement and recommended further work into their exact location and how these places will feel as well as how they will look.

Connectivity

Linkages to the development were discussed which include a greenway (for a bus link only to Cambourne), pedestrian and cycle links to Caldecote Highfields, the main vehicular access points are from the old A428 roundabout and the Broadway. The Panel encouraged the applicant to explore opportunities for further pedestrian/cycle linkages to reduce car reliance and encourage sustainable options.

The settlement is projected to benefit from the City Deal proposals to provide a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along part of the A428 corridor from West Cambourne/Cambourne to Cambridge which may, depending on which option is chosen later this year, pass through the proposed development site. The applicant had envisaged that the BRT route would traverse a segregated route from the greenway near the Broadway, along a principal road through the main centre and exit at the old A428 roundabout. Discussions with the County Council's City Deal Officers have focused on the need for a faster route which could skirt the school sites on the boundary of the settlement site. Both options would serve the main centre.

The Panel welcomed and supported the provision of broadband connections and BRT. However, they were firmly of the view that any BRT route should pass through the site to provide for good place making and an integrated transport solution.

It was highlighted that the BRT should be rapid between settlements, but when within urban settings, it needed to slow down and be accessible to users. It was recommended that BRT is treated more as a rail service in terms of access.

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Character

The applicant set out how the local settlement patterns had emerged over time and the relationship of the neighbouring communities with the proposed new settlement. Bourn Airfield is a landscape led proposal and reflects local features such as Runway 36, Bucket Plantation and topographical features, all of which are influencing the emerging plans.



The Panel discussed the tension between the wider rural/urban context and the place as a separate settlement and understood the desire for separation. The settlement cannot be seen from Bourn itself, and is closer to Cambourne and Caldecote Highfields. Building height had not been considered as an issue at this stage; however the Panel was keen to see this explored.

Further thought should be given to developing the character and a sense of place. The Panel were impressed by the existing landscape infrastructure and this could be manipulated to develop the character of the settlement further. The positioning of the 3 centres and runway well considered, however they were not yet convinced that the main centre was in the right place. The Panel were concerned there may be too much articulation of Runway 36; Tempelhof (Tempelhoer Feld) was cited as an example to consider.

The applicant explained that the main centre will have a space similar in size and scale to that of Market Square in central Cambridge. The Panel explained that Bourn is not of comparable size to Cambridge and thus the space may be too big. Barrington Village was considered to provide a more useful comparison.

There is a need to carefully position the "heart" of the development so the neighbours can benefit and contribute to it. Whilst the Panel considered the main centre should be in the northern area of the settlement, it was questioned whether it should not be more central. The applicant responded that they had considered many solutions and felt the proposed location was the best.

Climate

The Panel encouraged the applicant to be ambitious with the mitigation and adaptation strategies for the site and to reflect the standards coming forward on other developments, such as the University of Cambridge's North West scheme. There is an opportunity to do something special and build on the landscape led infrastructure. There is a need to investigate climate resilience, since winters will become wetter and summers dryer, and therefore features such as swales need to allow for such change in future years.

The Panel asked whether Passivhaus standards will be employed in the development. The applicant responded that features such as district heating would not be viable for Bourn and that PV would work better in meeting the renewables target than alternatives such as wind turbines.

4. Conclusion

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review the scheme at this early stage and comment on the initial proposals. They were impressed by the start but slightly overwhelmed with the significant amount of information presented on the day and encouraged the applicant to raise their ambitions. It was felt the plan should identify what are the 'fixed' elements.

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The following recommendations were made (further details can be found above):

- Form good connections with neighbouring settlements – consultation needs scrutiny.
- Consider public realm and community facilities and develop this as a part of a network with Cambourne and Caldecote Highfields.
- Supportive of the 3 self-contained centres, each with their own character
- Need for studies into how large the main centre is and how it feels.
- The Panel encouraged forming legible journeys through the site to avoid everything looking the same.
- Analyse the development's relationship with the A428 and the BRT and how it links to Cambourne.
- General support for emerging Runway36 designs, but careful not to over articulate it.
- Need to ensure the BRT works in an urban sense and serves the development in a properly integrated a manner and ensure that it slows down for pedestrians.
- The Panel encourages the developer to co-ordinate with neighbouring areas to help define connections to nearby destinations residents are likely to use.
- Look at the movement to and from the west and translate this into the phased structure of a plan for greater clarity.
- Consider that streets are more important than buildings for place making. Character depends on streets as much as highways.
- Phases should be divided through blocks rather than down the centre line of streets to ensure streets and open spaces are well designed as places.
- The Panel reflected that they would have liked more context in terms of the regional, local and site factors.
- Make the best use of the incredible existing landscape for this landscape-led scheme.
- Identify appropriate precedents of relative scale and size, for example Barrington Village.
- Consider building heights with variety to help form desirable places.
- Determine how it will become a healthy settlement?
- Need to consider strategic energy options – electricity, PVs, wind turbines – and consider community ownership/management.
- Consider long term resilience for example, how will the material palette cope in 30 years' time?
- Look at water recycling - North-west Cambridge
- Explore smart cities and rapid health systems.

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The Panel would welcome the opportunity to see the scheme again as it progresses. We would like to see how the lessons about community provision have been learned from Cambourne and more on the landscape design and sustainability strategies.

