

MONKFIELD (INSET 102)

5 objections as listed in appendix 1

MAIN THEMES OF THE OBJECTIONS

- (1) More reference should be made to the need to create a sustainable mixed community with an appropriate mix of dwellings of different types, sizes, and levels of affordability.
- (2) Alterations are required to the boundaries of an SSSI and a CWS.
- (3) Completions at Cambourne may fall short of the expected level by 2006.

INSPECTOR'S ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

102.1 Referring to theme 1, I have no information (beyond the provision of affordable housing) about the residential densities or the mix of house types provided for in the outline planning permission and the S106 agreement relating to Cambourne. I agree with the City Council that the recent increased emphasis on crucial issues of sustainability, social inclusiveness, and wider issues of affordability need to be taken fully into account in progressing this major long-term project. Planning objectives have changed significantly since the concept of Cambourne was incorporated in the Structure Plan in 1989. It is therefore vital that the themes of PPG3 are taken on board in dealing with reserved matters applications for the detailed planning of future phases of the settlement or any applications for departure from the outline permission. Consequently I recommend that references to PPG3 be incorporated in Policies Cambourne 1 & 2.

102.2 Turning to theme 2, the Pre-Inquiry Changes appear to correct the boundary of the CWS but not that of the SSSI.

102.3 I have dealt with theme 3 in my consideration of the housing land supply (policies HG1 & HG2).

RECOMMENDATIONS

R359 Modify Policy Cambourne 1 by adding at the end ‘...and by the issues of sustainability, social inclusiveness and wider mix and affordability embraced by PPG3.’

R360 Modify Policy Cambourne 2 by adding at the end ‘...and by the themes embraced by PPG3 relating to the creation of sustainable residential environments’.

R361 Modify Inset Map 102 in accordance with the Pre-Inquiry Change and, in addition, include the relevant part of the Elsworth Wood SSSI.

Cambourne

9.71 Cambourne is an existing new settlement established in the 1980's under previous Structure Plan provisions, with an intended capacity of around 3,300 dwellings. It is located on the A428 some 14.7 kms west of Cambridge. Around 700 dwellings have already been constructed and the development of a business park and shopping centre started.

9.72 Cambourne was not among the new settlement locations considered by the SPAs in their selection process but was included in the long list of potential locations assessed by the Buchanan Study. At that time, it was included in the 'lower priority' category of sites, as against the options listed as 'higher priority' (Longstanton/Oakington, Waterbeach, Great Abington and Childerley Gate), principally because of dwelling capacity constraints. However, the Study recognised that Cambourne had some claim to be considered as a 'higher priority' site in view of its decisive strength in terms of being relatively close to Cambridge, landscape and environmental suitability, good access to park and ride facilities and relative ease of development. It was left in the 'lower priority' category because of perceived design and sustainability problems inherent in expanding from its present envelope to the 6,000-10,000 dwelling range required by a new settlement.

9.73 At the EIP it emerged that the expansion of Cambourne was being promoted not so much as a straightforward alternative to Longstanton/Oakington as a complementary development capable of contributing more effectively to the housing requirements of the Cambridge Sub-Region in the medium term. This was based on the premise that it was unlikely that the new settlement at Longstanton/Oakington will be capable of delivering 6,000 dwellings by 2016 due to the lengthy planning processes involved, potential delays in completion of transport improvements and unrealistic build rates. It was suggested that Cambourne might also be a more reliable alternative to some of the other strategic development sites involving Green Belt releases to the east of Cambridge.

9.74 A number of propositions for the expansion of Cambourne were included in the documentation put to us. These included the intensification of the existing Masterplan proposals by increasing the density of development (already the subject of a planning application) which would involve an increase from the design size of 3,300 up to 5,000 dwellings. In addition, there were three proposals for physical expansion of the site: to the east on to the disused Bourn Airfield, to the west of the present development, and to the north of the A428. We have not regarded it as part of our remit to examine the respective merits of these proposals but rather to consider the general principle of an expansion of Cambourne as part of strategic development for the Sub-Region. We note, however, that development on Bourn Airfield is an option that has already been subject to previous testing at public inquiry (in 1992) and was found to be a suitable development site in principle by the Secretary of State.

9.75 Although Cambourne did not figure in the SPAs' selection process it does appear to have a number of strengths when assessed against the same criteria. It is only a little further from the centre of Cambridge than either Longstanton/ Oakington or Waterbeach and has reasonably good access via the A428/Madingley Road. It is close to the expanding University sites in west Cambridge and has good access to other employment locations north of Cambridge via the A14. The dualling of the A428 from Caxton Common to Hardwick, due to be completed by 2006, will improve the approach into Cambridge and provide an opportunity to introduce a high quality public transport system along the old A428 alignment. There is no flood risk and further technical investigation undertaken by the promoters indicates that previous concerns identified by the Buchanan Study about Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan EIP Panel Report Chapter 9 New Settlement

foul water drainage and surface water drainage are not serious and can easily be resolved. There are no environmental or other designations affecting the site, nor any Grade 1

agricultural land. Development on Bourn Airfield would involve some use of previously developed land.

9.76 The SPAs and South Cambridgeshire District Council were, however, strongly opposed to any significant enlargement of the Cambourne site, although it was recognised that a modest re-assessment of capacity within the existing Masterplan envelope might be acceptable. The principal concerns were that a major expansion introduced at this stage of Cambourne's growth would be disruptive to the carefully planned evolution of the community, its environment and facilities and would break assurances given to incoming residents and those in nearby villages that Cambourne would not expand further.

9.77 Whilst the Panel understands these arguments it is clear from all that we heard at the EIP that there is a general recognition that Cambourne as conceived at present does not represent a particularly sustainable community. The densities on which it is designed (around 15-20 dwellings per hectare) do not meet PPG3 requirements and although the settlement will provide a range of facilities, its size is insufficient to support the full range and quality of services required by the resident population, notably a secondary school and a wider range of employment opportunities. The proposed relocation of the South Cambridgeshire Council offices to the business park suggests that Cambourne could be set to become the administrative heart of the District. It was suggested that instead of being a modest new village expansion Cambourne could aspire to become a small sustainable Market Town with a wider range of services, jobs and facilities.

9.78 We can see the force in these arguments. The planning environment in which Cambourne was originally conceived has changed and it would be wrong to leave the settlement as it is if a more sustainable community can be achieved. Expansion might provide not only a wider range of facilities for residents but also the critical mass to support a high quality public transport system to Cambridge, achieved through developer contributions via a renegotiated Section 106 agreement.

9.79 A key question is whether further development at Cambourne is needed in order to meet the housing and related requirements of the Sub-Region. In terms of the sequential approach to the choice of locations it comes lower in the priority list than development in and around Cambridge itself, including the Green Belt release sites on the edge of the city. We are also satisfied that it is not an alternative to the new settlement at Longstanton/Oakington. In our proposed changes to the housing allocations in Policy P9/2 (see Chapter 7) Cambourne would count as a previously established new settlement alongside Market Towns and rural centres. This provides South Cambridgeshire District Council with the opportunity to review the scale of growth at Cambourne in the context of the overall allocation to the District under this heading. It seems at least possible that expansion at Cambourne may be more sustainable than some of the existing commitments in villages elsewhere in South Cambridgeshire.

9.80 In addition, there may be scope for Cambourne to provide both flexibility in the event of any shortfall in the delivery of housing later in the Plan period at other strategic sites, including the new settlement, and an opportunity for contributing to the continued growth of the Sub-Region in the longer term, alongside the possibility of a second new settlement. The precise scale and phasing of development will be a matter for South Cambridgeshire District Council to determine in the context of preparing the next Local Plan or Local Development Framework. This should be done in consultation with partner LPAs and other stakeholders.

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Overall Conclusions on New Settlement

9.81 To summarise the Panel's conclusions on the location for the new settlement, we are satisfied that the SPAs have made the optimum choice in Longstanton/Oakington.

Together with Waterbeach it is clearly superior to the other locations when measured against the key RPG6 criteria and the additional criteria taken into account by the County

Council. The detailed appraisal we were able to undertake of the competing proposals has served, if anything, to reinforce this position. In comparison with Waterbeach, Longstanton/Oakington has the distinct advantage of benefitting from the CHUMMS transport proposals whereas Waterbeach suffers from doubts raised by the Strategic Rail Authority concerning deliverability of the proposed rail shuttle, as well as some uncertainty about the feasibility and effectiveness of the other transport improvements.

9.82 However, should a second new settlement be required to meet the development requirements of the Cambridge Sub-Region, either towards the end of the Plan period or, more likely, beyond 2016, we would regard Waterbeach as the most sustainable of the locations we have examined at the EIP.

9.83 We also conclude that there is a strong case for re-examining the scale of growth planned at Cambourne, since it appears that an increase in capacity would be likely to result in a more sustainable community, as well as providing greater flexibility in contributing to the housing and other needs of the Sub-Region, either within this Plan period or the next.

9.84 In the following sections of this chapter we conclude by looking in more detail at some of the key issues raised during the debate about the deliverability and timescale for the new settlement at Longstanton/Oakington and its wider role in the Sub-Region.

DELIVERABILITY AND TIMESCALE OF THE NEW SETTLEMENT

9.85 A key question is whether it is realistic to expect a new settlement at Longstanton/Oakington to meet the RPG6 requirement of starting construction by 2006⁹ and whether it could deliver 6,000 dwellings by 2016. A number of difficulties were anticipated in achieving these targets:

- delays in the planning processes before development could start;
- constraints on land disposal;
- the timing of provision of the requisite infrastructure;
- the realism of meeting the build rates required.

We deal with each of these issues below.

Planning processes

9.86 We do not accept the suggestion of some participants that taking the new settlement through the normal planning processes will so delay matters that it is unlikely that a start on site can be made by 2006. The promoters of Longstanton/Oakington indicated that

⁹ In an exchange of correspondence before the EIP GO-East clarified that the RPG6 requirement should be interpreted as meaning that there should be a reasonable likelihood that a planning permission for the identified location could be implemented during 2006. There should also be an undertaking that the infrastructure required to support the settlement will be provided (letter from Go-East dated 18 September 2002).

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they were working on the assumption that the Structure Plan will be adopted by late Summer/Autumn of 2003 and that the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Review (which is being prepared in parallel) will proceed to Public Inquiry by mid-2004. A planning application will be submitted during the Inquiry so that the planning authority could issue planning permission as soon as the Local Plan is adopted in 2005. In parallel with the statutory planning processes the developers and LPA will be working on the Masterplan and other details to ensure an immediate start on the site.

9.87 Although this timetable is tight we see no reason why, with co-operation and goodwill on all sides, it should not be achieved. As indicated in Chapter 5, assuming the new Local Development Framework processes are in place the greater flexibility these afford could help to 'fast-track' important planning proposals such as the new settlement.

Constraints on land disposal

9.88 It was also suggested by some participants that delays could be incurred arising from statutory constraints on land disposal by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Defence Estates were able to provide categorical reassurances that there would be no difficulty in making MoD land available at Longstanton/Oakington.¹⁰ 'Crichel Down' rules, which govern the

disposal of property acquired compulsorily or under threat of compulsion, are unlikely to apply and a sale by private treaty to the developers would satisfy the Treasury rules of disposal which apply in special circumstances like Longstanton/Oakington. A letter from the Home Secretary to the Secretary of State for Defence also confirmed that the present temporary use of part of the Oakington site for housing asylum seekers would not hinder the progress of the new settlement.

9.89 A joint statement by Defence Estates and the developers of the Longstanton/Oakington new settlement further confirmed the intention of the two parties to work together to ensure sufficient and timely progress to enable construction to commence in 2006. The developers already own the land required for highway infrastructure improvements between the new settlement and the A14. In the light of these facts it does not appear that land ownership should act as a constraint on delivering the new settlement.

Provision of infrastructure

9.90 A fundamental concern about deliverability is the relationship between the provision of key transport infrastructure and the development of the new settlement. The principal infrastructure required is the Rapid Transit System, improvements to the A14 and other local road improvements, and provision for sustainable modes such as walking and cycling. It was consistently pointed out to us that any hold up in the provision of the Rapid Transit System or the CHUMMS A14 improvements could put back a start on house building and thus undermine the whole Strategy. This was regarded as the real 'Achilles Heel' of the Longstanton/Oakington proposal and a good reason for looking for either an alternative location not so reliant on external funding or a strategic fall-back position, should the fears about delivery of the infrastructure be realised.

9.91 As we have already indicated in Chapters 3 and 6, the CHUMMS Strategy received Ministerial approval in December 2001 and a joint statement to the EIP by Cambridgeshire County Council, GO-East and the Highways Agency indicates that work has been progressing on the major elements of the Plan. A supplementary statement by ¹⁰ Supplementary Statement on the Deliverability and Timing of the New Settlement (Defence Estates, 31 October 2002).

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the County Council to the EIP sets out the indicative phasing and delivery of transport infrastructure in relation to the new settlement (SPA Supplement 2).

9.92 The intention is that the Rapid Transit System will be in place by late 2006/early 2007, in time for the first occupancy of houses in the new settlement. An initial bid for the Rapid Transit System was included with Cambridgeshire County Council's Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report in 2002. The Government's response indicates that, subject to the completion of any additional work which may be necessary prior to the next round of Annual Progress Reports, it would be willing to consider the case for the scheme before the next settlement.¹¹ The prospects for early confirmation of public funding support for the Rapid Transit System therefore look promising. Other possible funding options include private sector contributions from the developers of the new settlement, a Private Finance Initiative scheme and developer contributions through the Section 106 'pooling' arrangements.

9.93 In parallel with exploring funding options, the SuperCam Consortium and the County Council have been working towards the submission during 2003 of the necessary Transport and Works Act Orders. Although some participants suggested that confirmation of these Orders alone could take three years and therefore delay approval of the Rapid Transit System, we are satisfied on the evidence of progress with recent Orders that the County Council's target of a Public Inquiry in late 2003/early 2004 and approval in early 2005 should be achievable.

9.94 In short, although there can obviously be no absolute certainty about the delivery of the Rapid Transit System, we are satisfied that good progress is being made on all the

funding, technical and administrative procedures necessary to ensure that the scheme is operational by late 2006/early 2007.

9.95 Turning to the A14 improvements, the Highways Agency indicated at the EIP that these would be completed by 2011 at the earliest. Many participants, including representatives of the existing villages of Longstanton, Oakington and around, expressed serious concern about the impact of additional traffic on the A14 and the minor roads in the vicinity and questioned whether the new settlement could go ahead until all these issues were resolved.

9.96 The A14 improvements include not only a widening of the road from dual 2 to dual 3 lane standard between Bar Hill and Fenstanton and a new off-line route west of Fenstanton, but also the construction of parallel local roads to the A14 from Fenstanton to Girton and junction rationalisation on the A14 to relieve it of local traffic. Internal and link roads for the new settlement to provide a connection to the A14 and to the parallel local roads at Bar Hill will be delivered by the developer on land in their ownership or control and so will be able to accompany or precede development of the new settlement. No timescale has been set for delivery of the A14 parallel roads but the SPAs suggested that these could be phased at an earlier stage to the main works in order to facilitate development of the new settlement. We understand that the parallel roads will be the responsibility of the County Council and a major scheme bid will be submitted as part of the 2003 Local Transport Programme.

9.97 Although the timetable prepared by the SPAs indicates that not all of the necessary transport infrastructure will be in place prior to commencement of the new settlement, all

¹¹ Letter from GO-East to Cambridgeshire County Council with details of the 2003/4 Local Transport Capital Expenditure Settlement, dated 10 December 2002.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan EIP Panel Report Chapter 9 New Settlement is programmed to be complete at or before the mid point in its development. Clearly, there can be no absolute certainty that the A14 improvements will be delivered fully in accordance with this timetable. However, the Panel has no reason to believe that the management and phasing of infrastructure works cannot be undertaken at a rate which enables the new settlement to commence on time and to be built out in line with the anticipated programme. The essential key to this is the Rapid Transit System, which will need to be in place from the occupation of the first dwellings in order to influence the modal split and minimise the impact of car movements on the road network.

House building rate

9.98 Even if issues connected with the planning processes, land disposal and infrastructure provision can be resolved, it was suggested that the build rates needed in order to achieve 6,000 dwellings by 2016 are highly optimistic and probably unachievable. A great deal of somewhat conflicting evidence was presented to us drawn from developments elsewhere, including the local examples of Cambourne and Hampton (Peterborough), to support the contention that a sustained peak build rate of between 300 and 450 units, after a gradual build up, was the maximum likely to be achievable. The developers of Longstanton/Oakington brought forward their own figures, based on examples in the Thames Valley and elsewhere, to show that much higher rates could be achieved. At Hampton (for which the same developers are now responsible) we were told that there are 11 builders on site producing around 500 units in 2002, in a housing market much weaker