

CAXTON PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Extra-ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held in the Village Hall
on Thursday 12 February 2015 at 7.45 pm**

Present: Councillors: K Howard (Chairman), E Blair, K Human, L Post, H Barbour, J Molloy and R Millard.

In attendance: 13 members of the public, Mr Ed Durrant (Principal Planning Officer, South Cambridgeshire District Council) and Mrs A Griffiths (Minutes Secretary, LGS Services).

1. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

1.1 To receive written apologies for absence and reasons

Apologies had been received from Cllr Millard for possible late arrival. Cllr Millard arrived at 7.48 pm.

1.2 To receive declarations of interests from councillors on items on the agenda

None.

1.3 To receive written requests for dispensations including requests and to grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate

None.

Comments & observations from members of the public and reports from District & County Councillors

Ed Durrant, Principal Planning Officer for South Cambridgeshire District Council, arrived at 7.51 pm.

A resident commented that Cambourne Parish Council had agreed to support the proposals as it was felt more advantageous to work with the developers rather than see development take place in a piecemeal and unplanned manner.

The need for a development of this size was queried by a resident. The Chairman explained the background to the application, which was currently at the outline planning stage, and that it was the role of the District Council to decide whether there was a need. Mr Durrant explained the process whereby the District Council would consider the application on its merits, view the consultation responses and make a recommendation to the Planning Committee, who would make the decision.

Residents felt the officers at the exhibition had given the impression that the development would go ahead regardless. Mr Durrant explained that the officers were neither for nor against the proposal.

Concerns were expressed about sustainability and potential damage to the environment; a huge increase in traffic movements, with no additional supporting road infrastructure; and a potential increase in crime. Residents were apprehensive about a second large settlement on their doorsteps.

Fears were raised about speeding vehicles, lengthy journey times, and the absence of public transport.

Comparisons were drawn with the experience of the Cambourne development. Residents felt that promises had not been fulfilled and outcomes differed from those originally promised.

2. Planning Applications

2.1 S/2903/14/FL – Land to the West of Cambourne – Development of up to 2350 homes and associated infrastructure services and facilities – to consider residents’ comments and views on the proposed development by McAlpine, the recent exhibitions, and to agree a response by the Parish Council

A draft response recommending refusal of the application, had been prepared and previously circulated as a discussion document. Members supported the views of the public, and expressed their opposition to the proposals on the following grounds:

- increased traffic and lack of transport infrastructure
- Previous experience of broken promises
- A lack of facilities
- The doubling in size of the initial proposals, with plans coming forward piecemeal and unplanned, resulting in a development the size of a town.
- The likelihood of it being a dormitory or commuter town
- Potentially impossible to get into Cambridge
- No provision for an increasing elderly population and underprovision of doctors, dentists and mental health facilities. With the move of Papworth Hospital to Addenbrookes, emergency facilities would no longer be close by and ambulances might struggle to adhere to Government target response times.
- The use of Grade A arable land
- The lack of industry or work provision.

In response to a query regarding water supply infrastructure, Ed Durrant confirmed that SCDC would consult with all utility companies for their comments. Preliminary discussions of archaeological aspects had been held with the County Archivist. The need for adequate facilities for the young was raised.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council unanimously recommended refusal of the application. ^(Prop KHo, 2nd JM)

RESOLVED to approve the draft response as circulated and read out at the meeting, with the following amendments: to add to the section on Health Facilities after the word “completed,” the sentence “We have an ageing population which will itself bring further pressures,” and to move the section on Flooding to the end of the document. ^(Prop KHo, 2nd JM)

The text of the response was agreed as follows:

S/2903/14/OL – West Cambourne development of up to 2350 houses - Caxton Parish Council response

Caxton Parish Council recommends refusal on the grounds that:

This outline plan greatly exceeds in terms of area and number of dwellings the current proposal of SCDC for West Cambourne in their Local Plan currently before the Inspector.

This represents a cynical attempt by the developer to get this proposal before the Council, and probably to appeal, whilst SCDC is unable to prove a ‘Five Year Housing Supply’ and thus increase pressure on the Inspector to approve ‘West Cambourne’.

The Site

This development is in the wrong place as there is little local employment. Opportunities for employment are mainly at Cambridge, St Neots and Huntingdon, all requiring a minimum 8 to 10 mile commute. There is a token attempt at local employment by including a small area of ‘Employment Land’ to the north west of the site. Even this is outward facing and cannot be accessed from within West Cambourne and requires one to exit onto the A1198 and re-enter near the Caxton Gibbet roundabout. The proposal is for a ‘commuter town’ as it is not sustainable with regard to employment.

Infrastructure

The local infrastructure is currently woefully inadequate as witnessed by anybody who needs to travel to or from any of the local towns during the rush hour. The proposed solutions to this are:

- 1) Dualling of the A428 from Bedford to Caxton Gibbet, a Ministry of Transport funded proposal not yet 'signed and sealed' and probably dependent upon the outcome of the forthcoming General Election. It is, however, Government policy that the A428 should be used to relieve traffic problems whilst the A14 is being re-routed.*
- 2) A busway/high quality bus priority – West Cambourne to Queen's Road, Cambridge, with a 1000 Park and Ride on the A428 in the Bourn Airfield/Cambourne area.*

If and when these proposals are completed the additional traffic generated by the developments of many thousands of houses already going ahead to the west of Caxton will no doubt join the inevitable queue where buses share the road but have priority. No doubt the 'local' Cambourne West residents with their 4000 or 5000 cars will quickly learn the best routes via our villages, turning them into 'rat-runs'.

Sewage

This developer has proved to be less than able to plan adequately for the necessary infrastructure to deal with the pumping and disposal of sewage.

Health Facilities

There is already a serious shortage of Doctors and Dentists in Cambourne, which is beginning to impact on surrounding villages. Some are already having to go as far afield as St Neots to get a Doctor's appointment and the Upper Cambourne development is not yet completed. We have an ageing population which will itself bring further pressures. This problem has not been resolved during the past ten years so what chance is there with another 5000 plus residents?

The Land

This site is grade A arable land, a commodity which is in short supply in our country and should not be defiled by development.

Flooding

Whilst it is acknowledged that development does not necessarily mean additional flood risk if properly planned and implemented, it must be borne in mind that with global warming the incidence of 'one in a hundred' floods becomes ever more frequent – two already this century, which caused substantial flooding in Caxton, Bourn and other villages to the east. Caxton and Bourn are downhill from Cambourne West and are at a higher risk from such events which would be exacerbated by this development.

A resident felt it would be desirable to stipulate that the developers should recruit a proportion of those employed on the development from the local area.

3. Closure of meeting

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8.37 pm.

SignedChairmandate.