
Development Control Panel

**Report of the meetings held on 21st April, 19th May
and 16th June 2008**

Matter for Decision

1. **DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION –
DEVELOPMENT OF NEW COLLEGE CAMPUS AND ACCESS
WORKS, ASSOCIATED PARKING AND SPORTS PITCHES, PART
OF SPORTS GROUND, CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY,
HINCHINGBROOKE PARK, HINCHINGBROOKE PARK ROAD,
HUNTINGDON**

Enclosed at Agenda Item No. 5 for the Council meeting is a report by the Head of Planning Services containing details of an outline application considered by the Panel for the erection of a new college campus, car parking, a multi-utility games area (MUGA) and a football pitch on a site previously used as a sports pitch, owned by Cambridgeshire Constabulary and located on land west of Brampton Road and north of Hinchingbrooke Park Road, Huntingdon. Matters relating to the appearance, layout and scale of the development are reserved subject to the determination of the outline application. The applicant, Huntingdonshire Regional College, has submitted a transport assessment, proposed access arrangements from Hinchingbrooke Park Road and an indicative layout plan.

The application is placed before the Council as a departure because land which was previously designated as open space in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan, 1995 would be reclassified as building land if the proposal was to be supported.

When considering the application, the Panel received representations from District Councillors P J Downes, T D Sanderson and M F Shellens, objectors Mr K Nancekievill and Dr Cracknell and from Ms A Constantine on behalf of the applicant. The Team Leader, Transportation addressed the Panel to assist in its understanding of the traffic management projects proposed in the vicinity of the development.

During its deliberations, the Panel considered whether there are any material planning considerations which justify supporting the development as a departure from the adopted Development Plan. Government advice provides that facilities such as those for a college should be within town centres or in sustainable locations. The Panel was of the view that the proposed site meets this criteria in that it is accessible by various modes of transport, has pedestrian/cycle links to the town centre and will benefit from the new guided bus way. In

addition, the proposed development would retain a large open space as part of the site, accords with emerging policy for the development of the Huntingdon West area and presents an opportunity to secure a 'fit for purpose', modern college in the District.

The Panel was satisfied that the transport assessment reflects the demands of existing and projected traffic flows and addresses the implications of the A14 improvements. Therefore, having considered the balance of the arguments put forward and taking into account the relevant material considerations, the Panel

RECOMMEND

- (i) that subject to conditions to be determined by the Head of Planning Services, the application for the erection of a new college campus and access works, associated parking and sports pitches on land that forms part of the sports ground, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Hinchingsbrooke Park, Hinchingsbrooke Road, Huntingdon be approved;**
- (ii) that, if the application is approved by the Council, the Government Office for the Eastern Region be invited to consider whether they wish to call in the proposal; and**
- (iii) that, in the event that the proposal is not called in by the Government Office, the Director of Environmental and Community Services be authorised to advertise the application as a departure from the Development Plan.**

Matters for Information

2. DESIGN SCORING EXERCISE

In Item No. 18 of its Report to the meeting of the Council held on 20th February 2008, the Panel reported its intention to review four housing schemes in Huntingdon using a design review methodology to assess completed developments with a view to improving the planning application and design process for the future.

This exercise was undertaken in February and whilst useful, the Panel was of the view that the scoring mechanism required improvement to more accurately differentiate between variations in the scores attributed to each site. It was also considered that additional training in the use of the scoring mechanism would have improved the outcome, that additional Members should, in future, be encouraged to participate and that consideration should be given to the creation of a team of advisers, including representatives from the Police and Environmental Management, to accompany the site visits to contribute to the debate on design from alternative viewpoints. Notwithstanding these comments, the Panel has indicated its support

for the continuation of the design scoring initiative and requested that visits to St. Ives and St. Neots be arranged in due course.

3. SOMERSHAM CONSERVATION AREA: BOUNDARY REVIEW AND CHARACTER STATEMENT DOCUMENTS

The District Council is committed to the production of Conservation Area Character Statements which provide an analysis of the special interests of all 60 Conservation Areas in the District. These documents guide decisions on planning matters and other changes to the fabric of the Conservation Areas to ensure their character and appearance is not diminished. The boundary of the Somersham Conservation Area was first designated in 1974 and the proposed new boundaries will better reflect the historic interest of the settlement, the wider setting of the village and significant views and vistas within the parish.

Having commented on the importance of the work which is considered essential to protect the village from development pressures, the Panel has recommended the Cabinet to adopt the Somersham Conservation Area Boundary Review and Character Statement documents as Council policy.

4. DESIGN BRIEF – FORMER HEALTH AUTHORITY OFFICES, PRIMROSE LANE, HUNTINGDON

Further to Item No. 21 of its Report to the meeting of the Council held on 16th April 2008, the Panel has been able to consider early responses received to consultation on a Design Brief which examines the redevelopment opportunities presented by the site of the former health authority offices, south of Primrose Lane, Huntingdon.

Comments received thus far support the retention of one of the two victorian/edwardian buildings on the site to maintain some of the historic fabric of Huntingdon town. Although the period of consultation with local and statutory bodies has yet to expire, the Panel has advised the Cabinet that it would prefer to retain the Primrose Building as part of future development of the site at Primrose Lane but that consideration should be given to its demolition in the event of a submission of a scheme of high quality for planning consent.

5. DESIGN BRIEF – MAYFIELD ROAD, HUNTINGDON

The views of the Panel have been requested on the development opportunities presented by an area of open space along Mayfield Road, Huntingdon. The site is currently in the ownership of the District Council and discussions have taken place with registered social landlords to deliver a high quality, sustainable, eco-friendly, affordable residential development on the site. Although the Design Brief still is subject to a period of consultation with local and statutory bodies, the Panel has endorsed the content of the Brief and recommended the Cabinet to adopt the document as Interim Planning Guidance subject to the retention of approximately one third of the site as open space.

6. ENFORCEMENT ACTION

Having regard to the continuation of an unauthorised use, the Panel has authorised the Head of Legal and Estates to take appropriate enforcement action to secure the cessation of a wood shaving line operation at Sundown Straw Limited, Station Road, Tilbrook or the implementation of the access arrangements for which planning consent has previously been approved within six months of the date upon which the enforcement notice is served.

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

In receiving a statistical report on the performance of the Development Control Section over the period 1st January – 31st March 2008, the Panel was pleased to note that the Development Control Section has met all national performance targets for the determination of major, minor and other applications over the period.

8. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

In addition to the application discussed at Item No. 1, the Panel has determined, over three meetings, a total of thirty seven development applications of which twenty two were approved, thirteen refused and two deferred.

9. THE EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN – THE REVISION TO THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND

The Government Office for the East of England has issued the East of England Plan – The Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England. The Strategy contains a vision and objectives for the period to 2021 and beyond and refers in particular to climate change, housing, the region's economy, quality of life and environmental conservation. As part of the statutory Development Plan, the Panel has noted that the East of England Plan will guide and influence all strategic development and planning decisions in the region and therefore have a fundamental impact upon the future character of Huntingdonshire. In practice the East of England has superseded the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan and its policies will, in future, be relevant in the determination of development applications.

P G Mitchell
Chairman