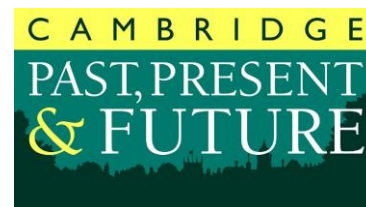


Greater Cambridge Share Planning Service



By Online Planning Register

Cambridge Past, Present & Future
Wandlebury Country Park
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30/03/2022

Dear Katie

Response to 22/00887/OUT; Outline application for the construction of student residential accommodation together with ancillary meeting, office and social space (maximum 14700sqm), auditorium (maximum 1300sqm) replacement buildings and grounds maintenance workshops, one new and relocated sports pitch, additional ball-stop fencing, relocated tennis courts, two new vehicular accesses and replacement car park with some matters reserved except for access. Girton College Huntingdon Road Girton

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

Whilst respecting that planning permission already exists for the development, Cambridge Past, Present & Future raise concerns about development in the Green Belt and lack of evidence of biodiversity net gain.

Although this development has been granted permission in October 2016 which is valid until October 2022, the new application needs to be considered against current planning requirements including the new NPPF, 2018 adopted Local Plan, new evidence supporting the emerging Local Plan, Environment Act and Biodiversity SPD.

The site lies within the Green Belt, where unless special circumstances exist, development is contrary to National Policy as set out in the NPPF paragraph 147 and Local Plan policy S/4. In the previous Local Plan, Girton College was identified as a major developed site in the Green Belt. This notation no longer applies.

The proposed development is not included in the list of what constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt. It is therefore by definition inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Previously, the Council considered that the development would result in 'moderate' harm to the openness of the Green Belt, but that lack of realistic alternative sites and the benefits of the economic role of the university justified very special circumstances and outweighed the harm to the Green Belt and coalescence of Girton and Cambridge.

Since that assessment, the Councils have commissioned a Green Belt Assessment to support the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (LUC, 2021) places Girton College in two parcels, AR1 (the sports fields) and AR2 (college buildings). The Assessment concludes that the overall harm of release of parcel AR1 as high and AR2 as Moderate High (Appendix B Cambridge – Arbury

to Cambridge North). In the light of this more recent Green Belt Assessment, the proposed development is considered to cause moderate to high harm to the purposes of the Green Belt and the Council are asked to assess the special circumstances against this.

One of the justifications to allow the development previously was that there was a lack of alternative sites. Since then, there has been the development of Eddington where Girton College already has some accommodation. The lack of alternative sites is no longer a special circumstance outweighing the harm to the Green Belt and the presence of Eddington to provide accommodation should be a material consideration in determining this application.

Since the previous approval, the Environment Act is now in place, along with the Councils' Biodiversity SPD, declaration of a biodiversity crisis and ambitions to double nature. Cambridge PPF therefore support the response from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Ecology team, requiring submission of a baseline Biodiversity Net Gain assessment with an outline plan of how at least 10%, working to 20% net gain will be achieved.

Girton College currently benefits from mature trees which dominate views of the site from the public realm. The college buildings are glimpsed through the trees. To maintain this character, the height of the proposed buildings should remain below that of the trees.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely
Sarah Nicholas
Principal Planning Officer