

Cambridge Past, Present & Future. Statement to Cambridgeshire County Council Planning Committee on 24 Feb 2022 regarding an application for a 2500 space car park in the green belt countryside at junction 11 of the M11.

CambridgePPF believes that this is the wrong scheme in the wrong place. It is also a short-term solution that will create a long-term impact. We object to this application because it will result in building over the green belt countryside in order to create a giant car park and associated roads and other intrusive infrastructure.

The officer's report highlights that we have not been given an opportunity to respond in writing to the additional information supplied. In the short time I have, I would like to raise 5 points for you to consider.

1. This proposal is contrary to national and local green belt policy because it has not demonstrated that a green belt location is needed.
2. The solar ports are inappropriate development in the greenbelt and there are no planning grounds for approving them.
3. That demand levels have changed due to the pandemic and therefore planning conditions should be imposed which result in a phased development to meet demand only when it is needed.
4. We encourage you to impose a planning condition in relation to the Country Park.
5. That contrary to much of the information presented to you, this is not in any way a sustainable development.

Firstly, this proposal is contrary to national and local green belt policy because it has not demonstrated that a green belt location is needed. The optioneering process for this scheme demonstrated that a viable option was to provide increased car parking capacity at the existing Trumpington P&R site by creating a multi-storey car park. This is not in the green belt. A decision was made to rule out this option, which would have been compliant with green belt policy, in favour of a green belt location. This was a decision that was contrary to national and local green belt planning policy and is grounds for refusal.

Secondly, in relation to the solar car ports. These are inappropriate development within the green belt and are thus contrary to national planning policy and Local Plan Policy S/4. They do not meet any of the exceptions listed in National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 149 or 150. We acknowledge the applicants' reasoning for wishing to provide renewable energy to offset the carbon

emissions that will be generated by this development. However, there is no justification to achieve this through development in the Green Belt, when the applicant could purchase land beyond the Green Belt for this purpose if they wished. There is no evidence that the applicant has considered other non-greenbelt locations for generating renewable energy. In planning terms, it is irrelevant whether the electricity generated by the solar ports is supplying the site or the national grid. If the committee is minded to approve this application, then it must be on the basis that the solar ports are removed from the scheme because of the negative impact they will have on the openness of the greenbelt and because they are contrary to planning policy. Vegetation will not grow sufficiently high to screen car ports for 15 years. At that point it might be appropriate to consider their installation.

Thirdly, it is clear that the pandemic has led to a permanent change in working practices. I am an employer and 80% of my office-based staff have requested to work at home at least one-day per week. This is consistent with employment surveys and is likely to lead to a reduction in commuter traffic of around 20%. Based on the data in paras 5.2 and 5.3 of the officers report, in October the usage of Trumpington P&R was down by 40%, given that additional parking has been provided, this means it was operating at only 50% capacity. If there is a 20% fall in demand, then the predicted requirement for 2,500 spaces would be reduced to 2,000. The application is to provide 2,100 spaces.

We have serious reservations about some of the traffic modelling used to predict demand and some of the statements provided in the officer's report, which do not seem to recognise that the construction of Cambridge South Station will enable a larger number of people to reach the Biomedical Campus by train, particularly along the M11 and A10 corridors which will also serve this P&R. And also that new development proposed in the next Local Plan is intended to reduce commuting. And also that the applicant themselves are proposing to radically improve rural bus services to reduce the need for car commuting.

It is clear that, at the present time there is no need for an additional car park. If the committee is minded to approve this application then we ask you to impose the following conditions:

The first condition is that development does not proceed until the use of the current P&R returns to a level that justifies the construction of a new car park. In other words, once an agreed trigger point is reached.

The second condition is that the construction of the new P&R is phased, with subsequent phases only allowed to proceed when the level of use justifies expansion, again at an agreed trigger point.

The applicant has indicated that this could be phased into three sections of 700 spaces each. We would recommend that the unused land is sown with wildflowers in order to provide temporary habitat until they are needed for development.

The fourth point we wish to make is that 3.3 of the officer's report recommends that a condition is imposed for the monitoring of visitor numbers at Trumpington Meadows and that if visitor numbers significantly increase, a review of mitigation is undertaken, and remedial actions taken. We strongly support this and ask the committee to insist upon this condition. However, it will be essential that the condition sets out what is considered as significant and what the consequences would be if remedial action is not adequate. This area of the Meadows has very low visitor use and therefore it is highly likely that significant increase will occur based on a % increase.

Our final point is that the documents from the applicant, and the planning officers report, gloss over the fact that park & rides encourage car travel and that in total, parking spaces will be provided for 3,600 cars. You have to use a car to get to them and the majority of the person's journey will be made by car. It is therefore misleading to claim that they reduce car travel and are somehow a form of sustainable transport. They generate traffic and carbon emissions. We need people to get onto public transport earlier not encourage them to drive, which in turn reduces the viability and frequency of rural bus services. When making your decision it is important that you understand this.

To sum up, contrary to the officer's report this scheme has not demonstrated that a green belt location is needed. The solar ports are inappropriate development in the greenbelt and there are no planning grounds for approving them. Demand levels have changed due to the pandemic and therefore, if you are minded to approve, we ask that planning conditions are imposed which result in a phased development to meet demand only when it is needed.