

MATTER SC6C – Comments from Cllr Dr Hawkins

Policy SS/6 New Village at Bourn Airfield - South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, Chapter 3, Strategic Sites

This site does not represent a sustainable location in respect of the proximity to key centres of employment – there are no major employment centres on the west side of Cambridge. Majority are in Cambridge City, Science Park and Business Parks South of the City, requiring significant commuting from the new village.

The proposal of the new village will result in an over intensification of relatively closely knit settlements south of the A428 creating a form of ribbon development. In particular, it would cause **Harm to Village Character and Identity for Highfields Caldecote**

The settlement of Highfields Caldecote, which is currently designated a group village in a rural setting is in danger of losing its rural character and village identity if the proposed new development goes ahead.

Building a new *urban* settlement so close will result in significant harm to the rural character of the village, and contradicts SCDC's own aims of protecting village character. Policies NH/13 and NH/14 are relevant considerations.

The original proposals for the new village make mention of providing “green separation” of about 300m between the new village and Highfields. I had already considered this buffer insufficient to protect the rural character of Highfields, as experience elsewhere (e.g. Northstowe and Cambourne) has shown that the creep effect can very quickly erode any planned separation.

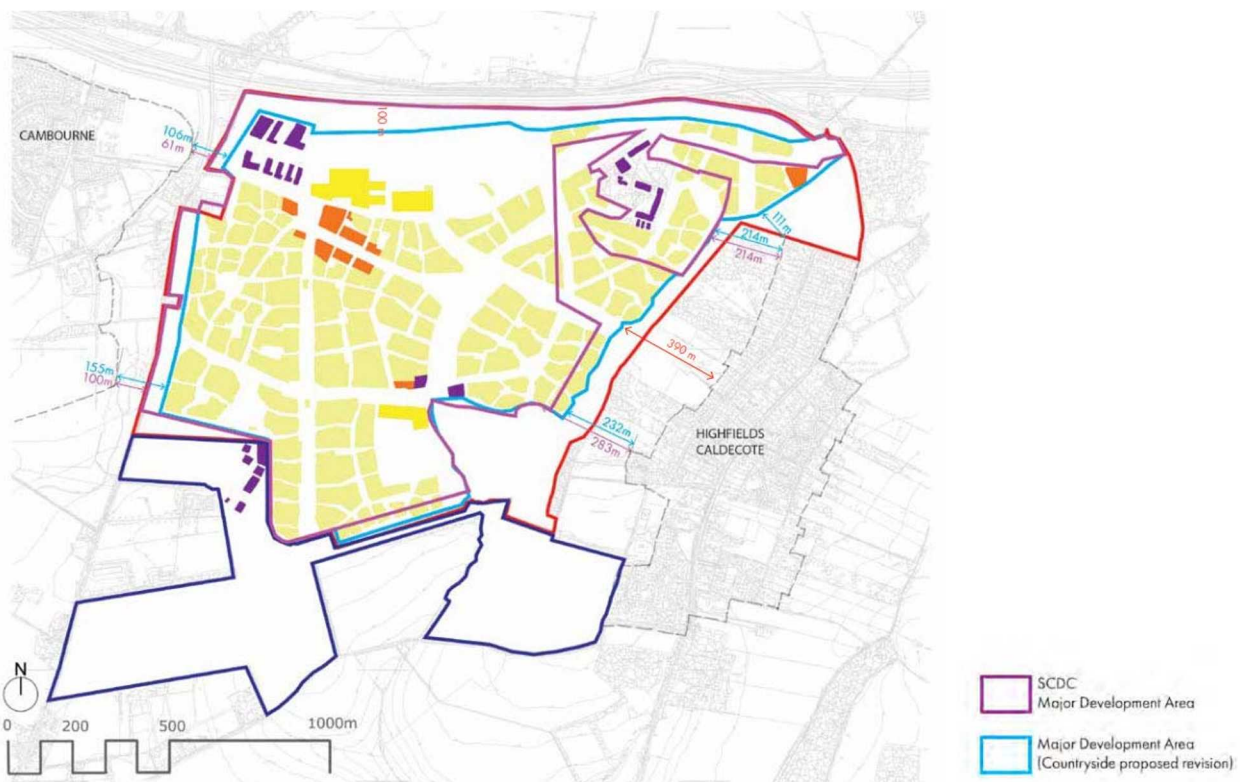


Diagram 1. Source: <http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s98400/App%20C%20-%20App%201%20Landscape%20led%20settlement%20Part%202.pdf>

The Council's calculation of 300m turns out to be from the Eastern boundary of the new village to the western edge of the Development Framework boundary of Highfields.

The bulk of this buffer land is not within the proposed new village boundary and is not under the control of the applicants. It is mostly the rear gardens of the properties on West Drive, Highfields Caldecote, such land being used for various purposes. Therefore, it is not acceptable that this land is included in the "green separation" proposed in this plan.

As Diagram 1 above shows, the further modifications proposed by the Council in November 2016 moved the boundary of the new village from the purple line to the blue line 50m east toward Highfields, further reducing the green separation that had been promised.

The diagram above purports to show 390m as the longest separation, but it ignores the properties at No. 72 West Drive and No. 90 West Drive which are outside the village development framework, making the separation more like 200m to those properties. These are shown for clarity in the Diagram 2 below. No. 72 in red and No.90 in blue.

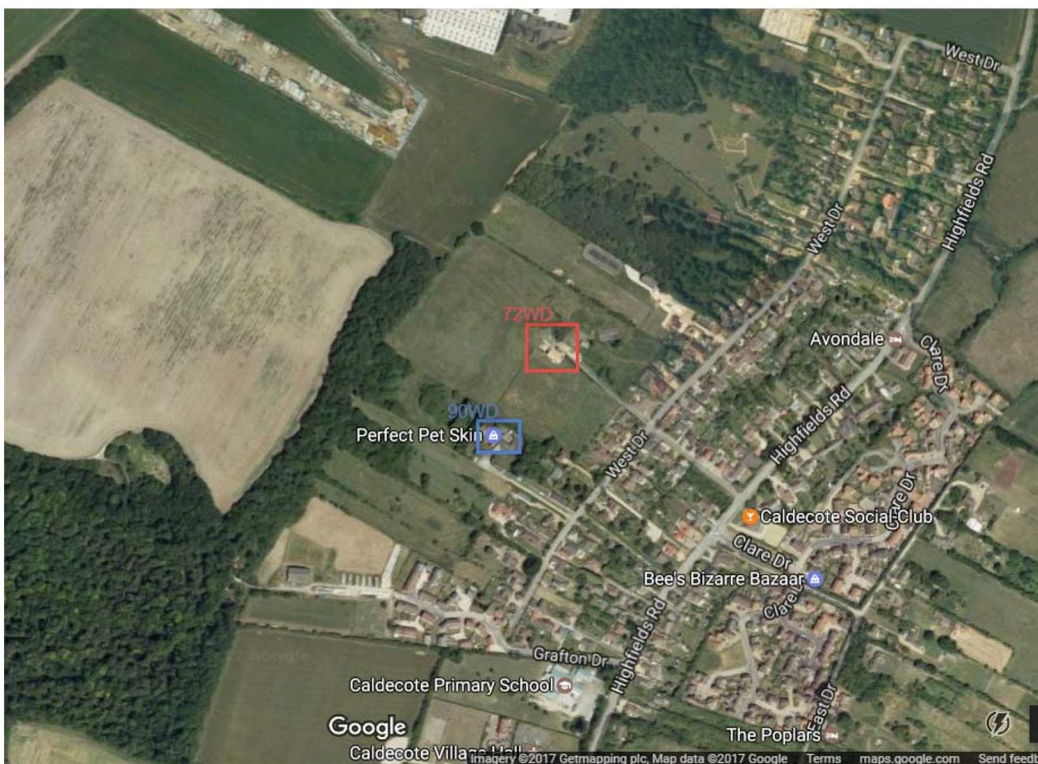


Diagram 2: Source Google maps

The modifications proposed by the site owners, and partly accepted by the Council, seemed to have been devised as an expediency to ensure the Plan could be made sound. The modifications shown in the documents submitted to the council show the planned layout, confirming the viability of the plan relied on having more land.

Those changes completely ignore the increase in significant harm being caused already to Highfields Caldecote, even though I brought this to the Council's attention.

The proposers of Bourn Airfield CANNOT therefore guarantee there will be a proper separation between the new Village and Highfields Caldecote and that coalescence will occur.

The new village will cause significant harm to the character of Highfields and to its identity as a separate settlement especially with the closed tight urban development so close to it physically and visually.

In the event that the new village is considered viable, parcel 4 which was added by the Council in November 2016 should be mandated to be planted with trees and vegetation in perpetuity, never to be built on.

Access to the employment centres in the city and south of it for commuters west of Cambridge is currently via the A1303 Madingley Road, a known congestion hotspot at peak times and public transport is currently inadequate.

The policy SS/6 is reliant on the provision of extensive off-site transport infrastructure to mitigate the impact of the expected increases in traffic. Since the LDP was submitted, the Greater Cambridge City Deal project was launched and its focus seems to be to create a Cambourne to Cambridge Busway, as the only means of mitigating this traffic impact. It ignores the fact that bus transport usage on the existing No.4 service is low for various reasons – but more importantly because such journeys are inconvenient to get to major centres of employment due to a lack of an integrated bus service.

The options being considered by the City Deal board for the proposed busway is Option 3/3a which has no support whatsoever from any of the communities along the route, and has in fact hit significant opposition. It is as an off-road proposal, ploughing through open countryside, including a Site of Scientific Interest in Caldecote and the Hardwick Woods.

The proposal also requires a Park and Ride site along the route, and the current site nominated for it sits near Chrome Lea, on top of the highest point along the A1303, and is strongly opposed by the nearby communities.

Estimates for its construction of the busway and associated park and ride range from £140 million to over £200 million, and only partly funded by the City Deal which has £100m to spend on this and other infrastructure projects. The remaining funds would need to be found from other sources, including potentially contributions from the proposed development.

It is unlikely that the transport proposal can be delivered cost effectively or in a timely fashion, nor is it likely that the “modal shift” required to make it viable will happen.

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