

Cambourne Town Council

South Cambridgeshire District Council report: Tuesday 6th October 2022

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This is our fourth report to the town council since being elected as district councillors in May 2022. We have continued to work on various matters raised to us either by residents or by local groups, and have reported any new information that we have to the council in this report.

1) Uplands Place road crossing

Cllr Drew has continued to work on this crucial matter for residents of Uplands Place and Cambourne as a whole. In our last report we detailed how we hoped that it could be shown that the decision to allow the requirement in the planning consent for McCarthy Stone to fund a road crossing to be removed was flawed.

On Friday 16th September Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, met with residents of Uplands Place in order to better understand their concerns in relation to this matter as part of a wider set of discussions.

Following a further exchange of emails earlier in September, Cllr Drew met with representatives of the planning service on Thursday 29th September.

This is the email that Cllr Drew sent to the planning service regarding this matter and requesting the meeting that took place:

"I would like to come back to the matter of the decision to remove the requirement for the construction of a pedestrian crossing related to the construction of the Uplands Place development in Cambourne. In your email of 23-05-2022 you stated the following:

"The planning permission included a condition (condition 25) which referenced provision of a pedestrian crossing. Further details regarding the highways works were submitted to the Council under application (S/1685/19/CONDC) which were discharged. These plans were agreed in consultation with the County Highways Team noting that no pedestrian crossing was included. Instead a scheme of pedestrian refuges have been implemented at the junction with Broad Street, School Lane and High Street as a means of intervention in the public highway to support pedestrian movement. County Highways have advised that the level of pedestrian movement in this location would not require a pedestrian crossing."

Since this exchange of emails, and further emails into mid-June, I have heard nothing more in relation to this. I have a series of questions that I would like to discuss with the appropriate officer in relation to this decision.

1. *Who initiated the decision not to enforce this condition of the planning permission? Was this an appeal made by McCarthy Stone against the original planning permission, or was this initiated by the planning service of the county council?*
2. *What consultation with residents, the town council, district councillors or the county councillor was carried out before the decision was made to allow the discharge of this condition?*
3. *What consultation with stakeholders is required when this specific type of condition is being considered for discharge?*
4. *How was the decision to discharge Condition 25 communicated to residents, the town council, district councillors or the county councillor?*
5. *Does the view of the County Highways that it is safe for pedestrians to cross the road outside of Uplands Place take into account the fact that the residents of Uplands Place are older and that many have restricted mobility?*
6. *What further review to validate the decision to not build the pedestrian crossing has been carried out since the decision to discharge this condition?*

To be frank, residents of Uplands Place, and Cambourne in general, are appalled by the fact that they were promised a specific and safe crossing would be provided as part of a development that was opposed by the town council as inappropriate in the first place. The High Street at this point is a dangerous road. Residents of Uplands Place have to cross the road in order to access all of the shopping and leisure facilities that Cambourne has. They have no choice. Many residents are now simply not going out of their flats at Uplands Place because it is too dangerous for them to cross the road. They have spoken to the widest possible range of councillors (town, district and county) as well as seeking to communicate their concerns to their MP and others, to no avail. At first we as the elected representatives of the people of Cambourne were not even aware that the promised pedestrian crossing had been discharged and would not be built. Therefore we were left in an invidious position and our ability to represent our residents was compromised. This decision looks to Cambourne residents as if their safety has been compromised without any actual reference to the reality of their situation and the residents who have moved into Uplands Place.

Therefore please can we arrange to meet to discuss this matter and consider what can be done to deal with the situation that residents find themselves in."

The meeting on Thursday 29th September provides clarity, disappointment and possible routes forwards. Answers were obtained to the first four of Cllr Drew's questions, and it will now be necessary to investigate further to get answers to the remaining two.

1. *Who initiated the decision not to enforce this condition of the planning permission? Was this an appeal made by McCarthy Stone against the original planning permission, or was this initiated by the planning service of the county council?*

The challenge to the condition in the planning permission requiring the building of the crossing was made by Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Department on the grounds that the data from their previous surveying of traffic and footfall in the area did not support the building of a crossing. They also said that the proposed location of the crossing was not safe. McCarthy Stone was not involved in this process.

2. *What consultation with residents, the town council, district councillors or the county councillor was carried out before the decision was made to allow the discharge of this condition?*
3. *What consultation with stakeholders is required when this specific type of condition is being considered for discharge?*
4. *How was the decision to discharge Condition 25 communicated to residents, the town council, district councillors or the county councillor?*

All three questions can be taken as one at this point. When a condition is considered for discharge by the planning service, there is no requirement or process for reconsulting or informing the original consultees or stakeholders. The decision to discharge a planning condition is a technical matter based on changed data or circumstances which planning officers review with the person/s or organisations that ask for the review and discharge. The information of the discharge of the requirement for the crossing was published on the planning service website as an update.

5. *Does the view of the County Highways that it is safe for pedestrians to cross the road outside of Uplands Place take into account the fact that the residents of Uplands Place are older and that many have restricted mobility?*

This is the next step in our view with regards to this situation. The county highways team must review the data from before the building of Uplands Place that led them to oppose the building of the crossing. With the additional people now crossing the road, and their vulnerabilities, consideration needs to be given if the original decision is still valid. In addition the planning application for the change of use for two of the retail units in the Upland Place building to be a dentist surgery will increase pedestrian traffic crossing the road at that point, and will include large numbers of children.

In addition the forthcoming plans for the building of the final stage of the High Street needs to be considered in a holistic fashion that takes into account the whole road layout and pedestrian access in the area from the pedestrian crossing outside Monkfield School on School Lane down to the Priory Lane junction on Monkfield Lane. A forward planning approach that recognises what is already happening and what is coming will be much better for Cambourne than simply rejecting required improvements based on situations that are rapidly no longer valid as changes occur in the centre of our town.

6. *What further review to validate the decision to not build the pedestrian crossing has been carried out since the decision to discharge this condition?*

We believe the answer to this is none.

2) South Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

Cllrs Leeming and Drew attended a briefing from the CSP given to all district councillors in South Cambs on 15th September where we were informed that Cambourne was recognised as providing four “flags” related to antisocial behaviour impacting on the lives of residents. This means that within the South Cambs district Cambourne is at the top of the focus areas for Cambridgeshire’s police service. Further questions were asked about what this actually means for residents who face the impact of criminal and antisocial behaviour on their lives in our town. The CSP representatives were able to report that whilst the summer had not seen a total absence of such behaviour, the actions of the police and other agencies had helped to see a quieter period than had been feared.

Cllr Leeming attended a Cambourne Community Support Partnership meeting on Tuesday 20th September. Wide ranging discussions about the situation in Cambourne and the work that the CSP and police can do to support the town were held. A positive outcome of the meeting was that the summer was not very eventful in terms of antisocial behaviour. Well done to all involved.

There were also discussions in the meeting about provision of youth services including counselling sessions for young people in the Cambourne Soul building. Following the meeting Cllr Leeming wrote to Cllr O’Dwyer, chair of the town council, regarding the concerns expressed by the Romsey Mill organisation about their access to the building. Cllr Leeming and Cllr Drew are concerned that issues with the provision of services may exist. However, as the town council was not present at the meeting it was not possible to hear both sides of the situation explained. We are sure that both Romsey Mill and Cambourne Town Council are continuing to do

excellent work and provide important support for young people in our town, but would like to know that nothing is causing any blocks to this service being provided.

3) Cambourne High Street development plans

At this point in time there is nothing specific to report regarding timescales. We still await the developer choosing to submit their application to the planning authority. However, Cllr Leeming has asked the CRO, Anne Ainsworth to provide an update. Cllr Drew also discussed this during his meeting with planning officers on Thursday 29th September and has asked them to investigate any information they can find out.

4) The building of the new pub and restaurant next to the Holiday Inn Express

Residents have approached Cllr Leeming and Cllr Drew regarding the perceived delay to the building of the pub and restaurant on the “Cambourne Gateway” site next to the Holiday Inn Express.

Cllr Drew contacted the planning service seeking information about this and asking if they were aware of any delays or withdrawal of plans. The response received says there is no formal evidence of this. Cllr Drew will continue to seek to find out more and report back to residents and the town council.

“Planning permission was granted in July 2018 (Reference: S/0383/18/FL) for the hotel and separate pub/restaurant. It appears at the time of the application it was proposed to be a pub within the Chicken and Grill pub chain (based on the approved drawings).

I and other colleagues in planning are not aware as to whether it is still proposed to go ahead with this operator.

The planning permission has been implemented by virtue of the construction of the hotel and therefore, remains an extant planning permission for the construction of the restaurant/pub as per the approved drawings and subject to any discharge of conditions requirements.”

5) Road safety at the Vine School

Cllr Leeming has continued her work in relation to the ongoing access safety issues experienced by children and parents / carers at the Vine School. As has been previously outlined in reports, Cllr Leeming is working with the school, police, CSP, Cllr Howell (county councillor) to seek solutions.

Cllr Leeming has been investigating the issue of the access to the school via the gate on Gladiator Road where there is a narrow (2m) pavement and there appear to be no plans for any form of road control to ensure safety of children entering or exiting the school. Following discussion with the planning service which involved identifying the original planning consent issued around 10 years ago, it is clear that the planning consent does not recognise the gate on Gladiator Road as an entrance or exit to the school for children. Therefore there are currently no requirements for any form of road safety design to reflect its use by children each day. Cllr Leeming has identified with planning officers that there may be potential for this to be adjusted before the road is completed and adopted. However, planning officers are referring to Brace Dein as the planned entrance and exit for the school. Therefore this is where the focus of improvements may need to be.

There is extensive communication via email between Cllr Leeming and officers that we will not include here as it would increase this report to a length beyond a sensible length. But we will include some of the questions that

Cllr Leeming has been asking so that readers of this report are clear where the focus is. We believe that although matters remain under review and progress is frustratingly slow, the full details of the picture are emerging and this can only help in the finding and implementing of a solution.

- *“I wanted to check if the original plans showed that there was an active exit from the school please. I cannot tell that they do. I wondered whether they missed the fact that this was an active school gate? Is there any record of consultation with the school back in 2012? (I am aware this may be difficult to find).”*
- *I wondered whether there is a requirement for a size of pavement directly outside a school? Is 2m enough? It feels very narrow. This gate will be used by over 100 children and their families.*
- *I also wanted to ask whether there would be any road markings, street signs, sleeping policemen etc in this area, because it is not the main school gate and drivers approaching this road may not be aware that it is a school gate. (There is however, a small piece of traffic calming infrastructure further up the road, reducing the carriageway to one lane to make drivers give way).*
- *What can we ask the developers to do here before the road is adopted? It may take years and I do not feel this is acceptable.*
- *What options do we have, if any, to improve things for before this road opens permanently, please?*
- *I think the road is due to open in December, but I do not have any clear dates. I would like to find out who I need to speak to get opening dates so the school can adequately prepare parents and children.*

6) Cambourne bus services and Stagecoach’s decision to cancel or amend routes

The recent announcement by Stagecoach of cuts to bus services in Cambourne, and indeed across all of Cambridgeshire, are causing immense worry and distress to many Cambourne residents. Rather than detail all of the cuts that affect Cambourne, we would like to tell the town council and residents what we are doing to seek to reverse the decisions and protect these essential services for residents.

Cllr Leeming posted this statement on various social media in Cambourne encouraging residents to share their concerns with the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority, as well as to express their views through a petition.

Stagecoach, the major bus operator in our district, announced quietly on Friday a number of bus service changes, including removal of some. The No.18 bus on the Cambridge to Cambourne (Longstowe) route is to be withdrawn after 30th October 2022. The 905 will no longer stop in Cambourne. The Citi 4 has an altered timetable. There are many other changes to bus services in our region listed here.

<https://www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and-offers/east/east-bus-network>

These changes will affect bus commuters to both St Neots and Cambridge and 6th form students using the 18 to get to Comberton.

The change is unexpected. Stagecoach has received Government subsidies to keep buses running, and a further 6-month extension was granted in August. But it has decided otherwise.

The Transport Authority in the area is the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority. It is the CPCA’s responsibility to ensure the transport network is good for residents of South Cambs and the rest of Cambridgeshire.

The District Council was not consulted before routes were withdrawn, and is raising the concerns of residents to the CPCA. We will continue to raise this loudly and push for the CPCA to do its best to work with Stagecoach and other available operators so that our No.18 and 905 and others threatened for withdrawal will continue to operate.

The CPCA made a statement this afternoon. The GCP Executive Chair also made a statement. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LibDems have also made a statement and started a campaign across our county, with many of our county neighbours also affected.

Contact the CPCA via their website to send your views / complaints.

Join the campaign to "Save our Bus Services" at:

https://www.cambridgeshirelibdems.org.uk/save_our_bus_services

In addition we have written to the CEO of South Cambridgeshire District Council who is collating specific information regarding the impact of the cuts to services to support the council's attempts to get these reversed through work with the CPCA.

"Dear Liz,

Good morning. The loss of the no18 is a blow to Cambourne residents and I am pleased that is being included in the review. This bus is used by many, but especially those attending 6th form in Comberton VC, Long Road and Hills Road. (We are a town with 12,000+ residents without our own 6th form offering and so this age group are heavy bus users).

However, Cambourne has also been affected by route changes that cut Cambourne residents out of transport options.

1. The Cambourne stop being removed from the 905 St Neots route bus affects those who travel to St Neots to work and the train station. The route to Cambridge will be picked up by the already packed C4, but Cambourne is to the west of our district and also looks towards St Neots for many services and employment.

2. It appears all stops other than those in Great Cambourne have been dropped off the C4. This means the thousands of residents in Lower and Upper Cambourne may have to walk quite a distance to the one remaining stop, up to a mile. This is important when many bus users may find this physically difficult for various reasons. It seems we will have a small number of bus stops concentrated in one small area - perhaps 3(?) for a town of 12,000 people.

3. The re-routing of the C4 affects Cambourne users who have links to the villages to the west of the city. This route change affects Cllr Hawkins' (Caldecote ward) residents most, but it does have an impact on Cambourne residents too because people's lives are not only focused on getting to the city".

Finally at this stage, Cllrs Leeming and Drew attended a briefing from the Communications Director at the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority on Monday 27th September where we asked questions about the bus services in Cambourne and got the agreement of the officer involved to direct these specifically to Mayor Nik Johnson. The CPCA has issued emergency tendering process documents for the 18 services across the county that Stagecoach have elected to completely drop from their schedules. We are hopeful that this can see the saving of route 18. However, this relies on other operators being willing to take on routes that Stagecoach are unwilling to continue to service.

We will continue to put pressure on council leaders at the district, county and CPCA levels to take rapid and decisive actions to save Cambourne's bus services.

9) The Great Cambridge Partnership and the Cambourne to Cambridge Busway

Cllr Leeming spoke at the GCP board in support of the Cambourne to Cambridge busway on Wednesday 28th September, asking the GCP to explain the positive impacts that building the C2C Busway will have for residents of our town.

Meetings of the GCP Board and Assembly over the last few years have generally only seen negative comments about C2C made by residents and campaign groups from other villages who are opposed to the busway. Cllr Leeming sought to represent the positive views about C2C that very large numbers of residents in Cambourne have expressed to us reflecting their need for significantly improved transport options to be provided between our town and Cambridge.

10) Speedwatch

The Speedwatch group is in preliminary stages. There remains an open invitation to all town councillors who may wish to be involved. Cllr Leeming and Cllr Drew are organising a date for a first public meeting to explore setting up this scheme for our town. Cllr Leeming has spoken to various relevant groups such as the Community Safety Partnership, Cambridgeshire Police and South Cambridgeshire District Council about how this can be set up. She has also spoken to councillors and residents in other South Cambridgeshire villages about how they have implemented the scheme and the positive impacts it has had.

11) Dangerous fence on De Havilland Close and Wallis Walk

Following complaints from residents about how the high fence at the end of the row of houses on De Havilland Close that face on to Sterling Way blocks the view of pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, Cllr Leeming contacted Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH) to ask them to consider lowering the final few panels of the fence to open up lines of sight for pedestrians, cyclists and road users.

"I am writing to you in my capacity as a South Cambs District Councillor following concerns raised by a local resident. I understand that your housing association is responsible for the maintenance of De Havilland Close in Upper Cambourne, CB23 6BP.

I would like to establish who is responsible for the fence in the attached photograph please. It runs along the edge of the road to Wallis Walk's parking area, from Sterling Way, down past the edge of 15 De Havilland Close. It is not part of a private garden, but it borders a small shrub/tree area set in front of the drive of 15 De Havilland Close.

Please could you help me understand who is responsible for this fence? It creates significant visibility issues for both pedestrians and drivers at this junction. Neither can see the other on approach. The footpath is busy, on a school route, in a town where many children cycle and walk. I would like to establish who owns the fence so we can take steps to reduce its height in the 2-3 panels closest to the junction for the safety of my residents."

Although a positive response was initially received, and a site visit was organised, MTVH has now decided that they do not see any reason to lower the fence. Cllr Leeming has therefore discussed the matter with Cllr Howell who is going to take on the matter with county officers. We are all in agreement that safety of Cambourne residents would be improved if the final panels of the fence were lowered to 1 metre high rather than the current 2 metres and see no reason why MTVH cannot simply do this.