

**Joint Development Control Committee (Cambridge Fringes)  
Development Control Forum: Bell School Site  
Committee Room 1 and 2, the Guildhall, Cambridge**

**Notes of a meeting on 21 May 2008  
2.30pm to 4.00pm**

**Bell School Site, Babraham Road, Cambridge**

Application No: Application 06/0795/OUT  
Site: Land to the south of Greenlands, south west of the Bell School and west of Babraham Road, Cambridge  
Proposal: Residential development not exceeding 347 dwellings (comprising houses and apartments, including affordable and key worker housing), 100 bed student living accommodation for the Bell Language School and public open space, with vehicular access from Babraham Road and associated roads, footpath/cycleways and drainage infrastructure  
Applicant: The Bell Educational Trust Ltd

**Present:**

**For Applicant**

John Hopkins PBA Northampton  
Geoff Bolton SSR Northampton

**For Petitioners**

Dr N A Silverston BRAG  
(Rachel Crew BRAG)  
James Woodburn Cambridge Cycling Campaign  
Frances Cullen BRAG

**Members of Joint Development Committee**

Cllr Baker – Cambridge City Council  
Cllr Blair – Cambridge City Council  
Cllr Blencowe – Cambridge City Council  
Cllr McCraith – Cambridgeshire County Council  
Cllr Turner – Cambridgeshire County Council

**Declarations of Interest by Members**

None raised

**Officers**

Peter Studdert – Director of Joint Planning: South Cambs District Council  
Sharon Brown – Major Development Manager: Cambridge City Council  
Toby Williams - Major Sites Case Officer: Cambridge City Council  
Huw Nicholas – Cambridgeshire County Council  
Ian Dyer – Cambridgeshire County Council  
John Blunt – Committee Manager: Cambridge City Council

**Text of Petition**

The text of the petition was as follows: I believe the proposed junction on Babraham Road giving access to the proposed housing estate on land owned by the Bell Educational Trust contains many design faults that render it dangerous to all users, unfit for purpose and should be deleted from the application.

## **Case by Applicants**

Mr Bolton spoke to the application and outlined the planning and technical issues which were set out in appendix 1 attached.

Mr Hopkin then spoke about the discussions the applicants had held with the Highways Authority beginning in 2004 resulting in the first Draft Transport Assessment. There were two broad options:

The provision of a splitter island below the site access and the creation of a cycle way; or Retention of the cycle way on the road, resulting in a narrower footpath, a further variation offered (option C) was to provide a cycle way on the footpaths on each side of Babraham Road.

Discussions with the Highways Authority following submission of the application had led to preparation of the access on this basis.

## **Case By Petitioners**

Dr Silverston presented the case for the petitioners, attached as appendix 2.

James Woodburn spoke on the case on behalf of cyclists, for the petitioners:

- The Cambridge Cycling Campaign did not oppose the development, but it opposed the proposals for the access on Babraham Road.
- A census of cyclists using the road demonstrated usage, including commuting and local cyclists, and the unsuitability of the proposals.
- There was a case to be made for shared usage of the footpath in this instance; normally the Campaign regarded shared use as unsatisfactory.
- The perceived lack of permeability through the site was also opposed

## **The Highways Authority Officer's comments**

Mr Nicholas gave a summary of the Authority's reasoning on its view on the access proposals and referred to the County Council's Cabinet consideration of the issue.

The County Council viewed the initial location for the access was not seen as viable. The current proposal was considered as viable subject to further discussion about the details of the junction.

## **The Case Officer's comments**

Mr Toby Williams, the Case Officer's report on the current status application is attached as appendix 3.

## **Members questions and comments**

**Q1** Given the concerns of the petitioners on the safety aspects of the access site – is the provision of an acceptable access possible in this location?

**A** The Committee will need to be satisfied that an acceptable solution at this location will be deliverable

The final proposal needed to be acceptable to members, the detailed application was near completion although option C might not be the access solution offered.

Option C was seen as the response to the Highways Authority's concerns, the design was evolving to provide the best solution to the problems identified. The access had to be seen in the context of its location, the growth of Addenbrookes and the other applications in the south of the City.

Dr Silverston said that his long association with Addenbrooke's Hospital and familiarity with the locality convinced him that the road would not be sufficient to carry the burden of the traffic and that the safety of road users was being sacrificed to provide an access.

**Q2** What information would the Committee need in the officer's report, and what level of detail would be necessary to provide a basis to make a decision on the access? There was not sufficient information as yet to do so, particularly on the concerns of existing residents who would be adjacent to the access and have difficulty entering and leaving their homes.

**A** Members had had a site visit and the applicants would be willing to peg out the proposed access to illustrate it more clearly. More detailed and clearer designs drawings would be provided.

The petitioners concern was understood and the opposition to the junction was noted, it was hoped that a solution acceptable to all parties could be achieved.

**Q3** Has the Red Cross Lane and Greenlands route been considered as an alternative access?

**A** The applicants had given that route consideration but had come to the conclusion that the solution offered provided the most acceptable alternative.

**Q4** Is the suggested cycle way footpath part of the current outline application?

**A** the southern footpath forms part of the application, which is still evolving. The intention was to cater for a significant flow of cycle and traffic use not only from Addenbrookes but also from the Park and Ride Car Park.

**Q5** Will the development comply with the key worker and the low cost housing requirements

**A** The development and all other developments will have to comply with the 40% Affordable Housing quota.

### **Summing Up by the Applicant**

The access has formed a significant part of the discussion in preparing the applications, and the it us understood that the principle of the proposal was acceptable and it remained to resolve the design issues.

### **Summing Up by the Petitioners – against the application**

The residents concerns were centered on the existing heavy use of the road by all categories of users and the impact of another junction which they felt did not address the safety issues. There were also individual concerns about safe access and egress from existing houses on Babraham Road adjacent to the proposed access.

### **Final Comments of Chair**

The Chair reminded members and others of the offer of a site visit.



## Dr Silverston's SPEECH TO JDCC

21 MAY 2008

Mr Chairman

My name is Neville Silverston. I'm a retired general medical practitioner. I'm also Chairman of the Babraham Road Action Group (BRAG) which was established in 1998. I founded the medical rescue service MAGPAS 37 years ago and hence my interest, indeed, my obsession, with road safety. I attended 3½ thousand accidents in MAGPAS before I retired.

BRAG is opposing the location, design and geometry of the proposed access to this housing estate which we believe to be located at a stupid and very dangerous location on Babraham Road when there are other suitable and safer locations and these were set out in the Inspector's Report following the Public Inquiry in 2006.

Babraham Road is the main trunk road south out of Cambridge. It is **without any doubt the** most beautiful entrance into the City from any direction.

### **SLIDE 1 (Babraham Road in sunlight)**

Here is a satellite view of Babraham Road.

### **SLIDE 2 (Satellite Picture including P & R site)**

One of the unique features of Babraham Road is that it has to accommodate a large number of people – mainly hospital staff, who leave their cars at the Park & Ride and walk and cycle to work. Over 400 bicycles are left overnight at the P & R.

BRAG has carried out 4 surveys of these people at the peak morning and evening hours. These revealed that between 250 and 300 cyclists and pedestrians walk/cycle along Babraham Road every morning and evening. About 13% of cyclists don't use the combined footpath – they cycle on the road.

BRAG drew the Highway Department's attention to these statistics which, amazingly, they hadn't surveyed and we pointed out that, with the expansion of Addenbrooke's 20:20, the number of site employees will increase from its present 7K to 18K within 10 years. Extrapolating from these figures, it can be anticipated that the number of cyclists and pedestrians coming from the P & R will increase to 800 – 1,000 twice a day and that the single footpath on the access road could not possibly cope with this mass of people. The Case Officer, I believe, proposed a second Toucan Crossing 100m to the south to compensate for this ridiculous deficiency in the junction design. Many residents strongly oppose this second crossing leading into a field bridleway alongside and across a City Wildlife Site and thence into the estate. It is proposed to be 5m wide and highly illuminated.

### **SLIDE 3 (Second Satellite picture)**

(Show the access track)

Here is the applicant's plan of the proposed junction

SLIDE 4 (Junction Plan)

**EXPLAIN IT!**

It has had numerous reincarnations since its first design in 2001. This is the last one submitted by the applicant only last month.

Now to our main criticisms of the junction design. I appreciate that members of the JDCC are not highways engineers and usually rely on the advice given them by Officers on the CCC Highways Department. But I want you to think independently and you will soon appreciate that all you need to understand the serious shortcomings of this junction and its inherent dangers is simple commonsense – not rocket science.

**(Point to Eastern pathway)**

I have been knocked flying once and hit a further two times by cyclists. In winter they are blinded by car headlights coming over the rise.

**SLIDE 5 (Cyclist overtaking group of pedestrians)**

Present situation showing cyclist overtaking pedestrians. Note the position of the street lightposts.

**SLIDE 6 (Junction Plan)**

The 1.7m grass verge has been removed and the through carriageway is right adjacent to the footpath. No buffer for minor collisions or errors.

**POINT TO TINY TACTILE PAVING**

**SLIDE 7 (Group of people waiting)**

**SLIDE 8 (Junction Plan)**

**POINT TO TURNING LANE**

Turning lane is only 3m wide and 17m long

**SLIDE 9 (Coach)**

**SLIDE 10 (Fire Engine)**

**SLIDE 11 (Refuse Cart)**

**SLIDE 12 (TNT lorry)**

**SLIDE 13 (Junction Plan)**

1. Through lane is only 3.3m wide
2. Pinchpoints – Dr Woodburn
3. No intervisibility at the stop lines

**PROBLEM OF NO'S 6 AND 6b**

**SLIDE 14 (Plan of road at entrance to 6. Show tactile paving)**

Point out that leg is on wrong side of tactile area and only one button

**SLIDE 15 (View up my drive from garage)**

**SLIDE 16 (View of people waiting at top of drive – my reversing)**

**SLIDE 17 (Frances exiting)**

**She can't see vehicles in access road waiting to exit because of fence.**

**SLIDE 18 (My car at top of drive showing position of tactile paving etc)**

The occupants of 6b, visitors, delivery vehicles and tradesmen have to reverse through pedestrians waiting area and then reverse on to the main carriageway – even backing on to the access road. The previous grass verge on which to turn has been tarmaced over.

**SLIDE 19 (Stage I Audit)**

**SLIDE 20 (Wheel tracks of Matthews exiting)**

The occupants in No 4a have a nigh impossible challenge exiting their drive and wishing to turn right on to the through carriage way.

**What do the Officers of the HD really think about this junction?**

**SLIDE 21 (Exchange of emails between Huw Nicholas and Ian Dyer)**

**SLIDE 22 (Email from Mr Nicholas to the applicant)**

I have sent all members of the JDCC independent reports from Cambridgeshire Police Road Safety Unit, Cambridge Road Safety Advisory Council, David Rutherford and Cambridge Cycling Campaign. They all independently make serious criticisms of various aspects of the junction design.

**SLIDE 23 (Police Report)**

**SLIDE 24 (Cambridge Road Safety Advisory Council)**

Lastly, Mr Chairman I would draw your Committee's attention to the 40 - 60 emergency ambulances travelling unimpeded along Babraham Road.

**SLIDE 27 (Ambulance coming over rise)**

**SLIDE 28 (Ambulance down Babraham Road)**

**SLIDE 29 (JUNCTION PLAN)**

**SHOW LARGE ISLAND**

In short, Mr Chairman, your Committee should without any hesitation and in the interests of road safety refuse this application on the grounds that the access junction is dangerous to all users and not fit for purpose. You'll have blood on your hands.

**Member Briefing Note for Development Control Forum (DCF)  
21 May 2008: The Bell School Site**

This is a short briefing note in relation to the DCF that is arranged for 21 May in relation to the Bell School Planning Application.

The application seeks outline planning permission for residential development not exceeding 347 dwellings, 100 bed student living accommodation for the Bell Language School and public open space, with vehicular access from Babraham Road and associated internal roads, footpath/cycleways and drainage infrastructure.

The application has been subject to considerable objection from local residents. One of the main issues relates to the proposed point of access from Babraham Road and the implications of its likely design in terms of highway safety for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

All detailed matters are reserved for later approval, although various illustrative detailed layouts of the junction with Babraham Road have been prepared in order to demonstrate that access to the development can be provided in a safe and acceptable manner (options A, B and C). The final details of the access are a reserved matter and will be considered at a later stage.

An access in this location is shown in the Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Development Framework. The point of proposed access utilises an existing track from Babraham Road that runs between two residential properties nos. 4a and 6. All of the illustrative access options include the widening of Babraham Road to incorporate a signalised junction and the provision of two Toucan crossings. The first crossing is over the proposed access road into the development. The second crossing is over Babraham Road in the form of a two-stage crossing with a central island immediately to the south of the proposed access point. There are various alterations to pathways and shared used pedestrian/cycle paths.

Numerous third-party technical objections have been raised to the various illustrative access options, which include, but are not exclusive to: the lack of a pathway on the south side of the access; sub-standard intervisibility; the creation of pinch-points for cyclists; the necessity for a two stage crossing; and dangerous access arrangements for properties 4a, 6 and 6b Babraham Road. In particular, 6b Babraham Road has a tight turning head within its grounds that results in the occupier reversing out onto the existing verge. Occupiers of 6 and 6b would have to access and egress from their properties over a shared area of tactile paving. The applicants have attempted to address the lack of a footpath on the south side of the access by proposing an additional 3m wide pedestrian/cycle link into the south of the site, which follows an existing permissive path, to the south of 16 Babraham Road together with another Toucan crossing.

As a result of the objections, other potential vehicular access points have been suggested by third parties. These include running a vehicular access through the Bell School grounds to create a new 4-arm junction with Wort's Causeway and running a vehicular access to the south of the site to create a roundabout with Granham's Road. However, the Bell School grounds is designated as protected open space under policy 4/2 of the Local Plan and has numerous TPO'd trees within it. An access at this location would sever the Bell School

grounds. An access to the south of the site would be over green belt land that is owned by the County Council. Neither option has been explored in any detail by the applicants.

Attached is the latest illustrative option C put forward by the applicants, together with the latest version of the masterplan. Option C is currently the subject of plans out for formal consultation. The County Council will be present at the DCF to address technical questions and advise with regards to the various options put forward and concerns raised. There is no formal Officer recommendation with regards to the application, which is targeted for the 11 June Joint Planning Committee.