

Input to the Draft Local Plan -

A Joint Submission by Boxworth, Elsworth and Knapwell Parishes

We recognise that for some of our residents, businesses and other bodies, benefits could flow from the location of a station for Cambourne and the creation of a new centre for the town north of the A428 (hereinafter referred to for convenience as ‘Cambourne North’).

It would be surprising if we did not also have concerns about the potential impact that these developments will have on our villages. Principally these are as follows:

Traffic

Traffic is the most pressing concern which has two distinct phases:

Construction of EWR, the station & Cambourne North

- Vehicles seeking to access sites during the construction phases of the railway, the station and any housing/commercial/other developments.

Once operational and built

- By vehicles seeking to access the station, the new town centre, schools, etc., particularly from north of our villages.
- Substantial numbers of vehicles being brought into the area by the housing development (at least one vehicle per dwelling¹) and by commercial vehicles making deliveries to the new dwellings and retail outlets. Only a small percentage of the new residents in these dwellings will travel to Cambridge by train for work or leisure each day² and many of these vehicles will regularly go to other destinations; those going north to the A14, Huntingdon, St Ives, Swavesey, etc. will travel through our villages in order to do so.
- The traffic situation would also be exacerbated by other proposed new developments such as the logistics hub near junction 24 of the A14, the proposed employment park near J25, the Lattenburys, Alconbury and Brampton.
- Given the narrowness of many of the local roads (besides their parlous state of repair!) and the absence of pavements in our villages, increased traffic flows must heighten the risk of accidents occurring. Of particular concern are Elsworth School pupils crossing Smith Street; something SCDC Planning Committee failed to address when dealing with the planning application for Frank’s Farm food hub at the Avenue Business Park, Elsworth (22/05065/FUL).

We have seen nothing so far to indicate that any modelling has been undertaken of the traffic flows which will be generated by Cambourne North, particularly to and from the north through the villages of Boxworth, Elsworth and Knapwell. We believe studies

should be undertaken of current traffic flows and the cumulative effect of all the commercial developments along the A14 corridor on these villages.

Water supply and waste water

- The sufficiency of the water supply is a well known issue for South Cambridgeshire and has long delayed the Bourne Airfield development. The Local Plan notwithstanding, Cambourne may eventually expand into a town of some 50k+ people. It is unclear whether schemes for new reservoirs, etc. and foul water discharge will only prove sufficient for the much smaller numbers of additional dwellings envisaged by SCDC. Perversely, Elsworth also suffers from flooding periodically due to run-off from the surrounding fields and villagers are concerned that large scale building on what are greenfield sites will exacerbate this. Further downstream effects also need to be investigated as the run off from the development will flow through into the Great Ouse catchment which already suffers from flooding.

Preservation of the character and the identity of our villages

- Two of our villages (Elsworth and Knapwell) have been deemed conservation areas by SCDC. We would wish to preserve - and imagine that the DC would too - the unique character and identity of our settlements and the surrounding countryside by preserving as much as possible its rural nature while avoiding our villages and their surrounding areas becoming a semi-urbanised and sanitised version of the countryside.
- Much of the area for development sits higher than the surrounding land and villages and we would wish to avoid noise, light and visual pollution to which development will give rise.
- We are also concerned the effect development will have on the natural environment; inevitably, trees and habitat will be lost, while sensitive areas such as Overhall Grove Nature Reserve will see greatly increased footfall.

Mitigation measures

With regard to **traffic**, a number of measures should be considered, including:

- The provision of cycle and pedestrian routes to Cambourne North and the station
- Far better bus services to minimise car travel
- Traffic restrictions and calming in our villages

However, it has to be recognised that such measures will only give partial relief and are impracticable for people travelling from further afield (or indeed wishing to leave Cambourne North).

Therefore before building starts consideration must be given to measures to address the issues highlighted earlier, such as:

- The creation of new access roads to the station and Cambourne North³; we would therefore welcome detailed information on how planners/developers envisage the station and town centre would be reached, particularly by those not cycling or walking.
- Restricting the size of the station car park and parking prohibitions nearby in order to limit the number of vehicles seeking to access it; again, we would welcome information on the intended size of the station car park.
- Plans for how traffic will be managed during the construction phase (for example through planning conditions).

To deal with environmental issues such as light pollution we want to see measures such as warm light, low spill light fittings being mandated, while provision must be made for addressing the ecological impact, both in the construction phase and longer term, through early evaluation and ongoing management (in which our communities should be involved) and taking remedial action such as the creation of alternative wildlife habitats.

With respect to the housing and commercial **development**, we want geographical ‘separation’ between the villages and Cambourne North. We would hope that this could be achieved through the planning process (with red lines on development, provisions in planning consents that are enforced, section 106 agreements, etc.) and by physical means such as screening with tree planting and the preservation of existing SSIs.

These developments will also give rise to issues of local **governance**. While development will take place within the parishes of Elsworth and Knapwell, Cambourne North will presumably fall under the aegis of Cambourne Town Council. What this mean for the continued existence of the parishes thereafter and how will they benefit from, for example, s106 monies also needs to be clarified at the earliest opportunity.

Of course, we do not only wish to have put in place measures to mitigate the impacts of development. We also want to realise **benefits** for our communities from them, particularly in relation to improvements in infrastructure such as flood management, bus services, digital connectivity, etc.

Continued **engagement** by SCDC with our community/communities is vital. EWR and Cambourne's growth is part of the Oxford to Cambridge corridor national infrastructure project involving stakeholders other than the parishes and the District Council⁴ and also the DCO process. Our small community/communities we have no direct interaction and little influence in these and look to the SCDC to represent our interests and therefore we welcome and wish to continue to have dialogue with SCDC.

Notes:

¹ The long-term trend for car ownership over the last 50 years is that the proportion of households in Great Britain and England with access to one or more cars has steadily increased, from 52% in 1971 to 78% in 2022. Over this period, the proportion of households with one car has remained at around 45% and the proportion with two or more vehicles has increased from 8% to 34%. The East of England has the highest rate of car ownership, with an average of 1.40 cars per household in 2023. [National Centre for Social Research *Car Ownership: Evidence Review* for the Department of Transport, 2024]

² EWR's Economic and Technical Report, Appendix 4, Table 4.1, May 2023

³ A suggestion has already been made for a through road to the station which would avoid traffic coming from Conington, Swavesey, Fen Drayton passing through Knapwell; however, it should be noted that this would provide no relief to Elsworth in respect of traffic coming from Hilton, St Ives, Huntingdon, etc and seeking to reach the station as it does presently to reach the A428.

⁴ Such as HMG, the Greater Cambridge Partnership, the Cambridge Growth Company, the Mayor/the Combined Authority, etc. and possibly even a Development Corporation.