

Oakington and Westwick Parish Council Response to the Updated Northstowe Planning Application 20/02171/OUT

Oakington and Westwick Parish Council has examined the latest documents provided by Homes England regarding the planning application 20/02171/OUT . We find minimal changes from the original outline planning application and retain our objections and request for the conditions proposed in our original response.

In this response, we would like to comment on four areas of the revised planning application:

The Oakington Edge
The Southern Access Road East and Related Traffic Issues
Drainage
Construction Issues: Noise and Pollution

Oakington Edge and Green Separation

We thank Homes England for providing a specific Oakington Edge document that seeks to respond to our comments on the Planning Proposal (*Oakington Edge Landscape Setting & Military Lake Setting*). However, we do not accept that it meets our concerns.

We reiterate our opposition to the construction of houses at the South East and South West of Phase 3a along the 'Oakington Edge'. Specifically, we are concerned about:

- (i) location of the proposed housing and its proximity to existing housing;
- (ii) the heights of the proposed housing and the lack of adequate screening from existing houses in Oakington.

Location of Housing (*South East*)

We stated in our original comments that Homes England had ignored the advice of Sport England to locate the playing fields on the extreme edge of the development in such a way as to form a buffer between Northstowe and Oakington. We note that in their latest comments, Sport England have continued to press for the playing fields to act as a buffer.

"It is noted that original discussions with the applicant sited the sports facilities as a buffer between the new housing and the village of Oakington to the south. However, there is now new housing between the eastern sports hub and the existing housing within Oakington....."

It should be noted that this is an outline application, full details of siting and layout will be submitted under Reserved Matters, so this is not necessarily the final layout. I'm sure there will be further negotiation in the months to come. **We did feel that having the sports facilities as a buffer would be beneficial.**"

(Source: *Homes England Planning Application Comment 15/02/2021*)

We support the position of Sport England, subject to any related changing facilities and parking being located away from the Oakington Edge.

Location of Housing (South West)

We continue to oppose the location of the housing on the South West edge of the site where it is nearest to Lowbury Crescent and Longstanton Rd. The proposed buildings are too near the existing village of Oakington and all new housing should be contained within the existing airfield boundary road within the site. The proposed buildings are inadequately shielded from existing properties (see comment below) and be built within 40 metres of existing houses Longstanton Rd.

Housing Heights on the Oakington Edge

We continue to oppose the housing directly along the Oakington Edge but if we are unable to prevent permission given for housing here, then we maintain that all the proposed 'blocs of housing South West and South East of 3A should be two storey. This is not currently proposed by the applicant.

The applicant claims that their proposals:

Limit building heights to 'up to 2 storeys' where development is closest to Oakington. These new homes will be located behind substantial existing tree belts. (Page one: Oakington Edge Landscape Setting & Military Lake Setting)

However, this is a misleading claim.

There would appear to be a small amendment in the re-submitted planning application, as the applicant now states that the housing at "sensitive" points on the Oakington Edge will be two storey and elsewhere three storey.

The two storey housing would consist only of one row of houses to the South East, whilst (almost) all the other new housing in the South East and South West will be three storey. Indeed, all the housing in the South West will be three storey, despite it being approximately 40 metres away from existing housing.

The justification for three storey housing supplied by the applicant rests upon the fact that the houses will be screened by the tree line.

However:

- (i) the illustrations provided in the Oakington Edge document exaggerate the density of the screening provided by the trees.
- (ii) inadequate attention is paid to the fact that the trees screening the development are all deciduous and therefore will not provide screening for six months of each year.

Green Separation

The concept of the green separation in our understanding is to provide a clear separation between the town of Northstowe and the village of Oakington.

The proposed plans for the 'green separation' indicate that it functions, in fact, solely to provide facilities for the Northstowe, which should actually be contained *within* the boundaries of the new town itself. The green separation actually includes roads; a large attenuation pond, which serves Northstowe housing and roads; play areas – formal and informal; equestrian trail/footpaths; running track and allotments.

The following statement is contained within the *Oakington Edge* document:

The landscape area between Northstowe Phase 3A and Oakington varies in width between 45m and 210m and the likely space between new and existing buildings generally exceeds 100 metres. In some locations, the separation between new and existing buildings exceeds 200m. This is sufficient to achieve valuable 'breathing space' between the settlements and maintain the identity of Oakington. Generous open space and retained trees will provide important amenity space for new and existing residents ((Page three: *Oakington Edge Landscape Setting & Military Lake Setting*)

We suggest this is a misleading statement for the following reasons:

Inclusion of land not owned by Homes England in the Green Separation

A significant section of the claimed green separation is, in fact not owned by Homes England and is outside the ownership of Homes England. We refer to the large field behind Church View/Manor Farm Close/Days Meadow (Highbury Meadow) which we regard as misleadingly included in the measurements of the green separation. This meadow is the focus of interest for development and therefore cannot be viewed as a permanent 'green' area.

We therefore dispute the measurements provided in *Oakington Edge* document and argue that the green separation should include additional land **within** the boundary of the Northstowe development. Partly this could be achieved by following the suggestion earlier under the heading *Location of Housing*.

Distances between buildings: inappropriate additions and selected examples

Further to the misleading inclusion of privately owned land in the green separation, the *Oakington Edge* document also provides possible misleading distance measurements between selected buildings in the proposed development and those existing in Oakington. It is not possible to judge the accuracy of the measurements from the online documents accessed by the Parish Council, however the 'building to building' measure of distance, used by the applicants, artificially extends the green separation measurements by including;

- (i) the access road for houses on the southern edge of Northstowe,
- (ii) the extensive back gardens of the nearest Oakington houses.
- (iii) the field (Highbury) referred to earlier.

The applicants have included the tree belt to the southern edge of the Northstowe site in the green separation, counting the green separation as starting from the southern most

houses in Northstowe, whereas we contend that the green separation should start from the southern edge of the tree line. The tree line is, incidentally, the boundary between Northstowe Town and the Parish of Oakington and Westwick.

The *Oakington Edge* document gives “selected” (sic) examples of the width of the green separation, providing measurements from ‘building to building’ (see above). However, the examples provided can best be described as **selective** rather than **selected**.

For example, they have excluded from their selection, the narrowest point between Northstowe and Oakington, i.e., the proposed buildings to the SW edge of the site and the existing buildings in Longstanton Rd, Oakington.

We also note that no tree screening will exist between the existing house on Station Rd nearest the proposed new public transport entrance to the South East of the development.

Seven Storey Buildings at the Military Lake

As the applicants include discussion of the military lake within The Oakington Edge document, our response is also under this heading.

We oppose the seven storey buildings located within 30 metres of the Military Lake.

- (i) We regard these as dominating the skyline in an essentially flat fen-edge location.
- (ii) We note that the land where these are to be located is 5 metres higher than Oakington, thereby being visually obtrusive.
- (iii) The buildings are located too near the Military Lake, with one set of apartments lying within 20 metres of the lake and the other apartments within 30 metres. The apartments will be overbearing on the lake
- (iv) The proximity of buildings, people, and associated noise levels will be detrimental to any wildlife on or living near the lake.

The Southern Access Road East (SARE) and Related Traffic Issues

The core of our objection to the proposed SARE is based on the *Northstowe Action Plan* (2007).

There are two key sections that are relevant in considering the outline planning application:

- (i) **Regarding traffic flows**, Policy NS/3, C1.6 requires that:
access roads avoid traffic passing through the two villages or in close proximity to existing properties.
- (ii) **Regarding the location of the SARE**, Policy NS/10, 3 states that:
Northstowe will be accessed by existing and new roads which may include the following:..... A new road from the A14 or its parallel distributor road in the vicinity of the existing Dry Drayton junction into the southern end of Northstowe

Regarding Traffic Flows

The relatively unaltered proposal for the SARE contained in the updated planning application document cannot be considered as an improvement.

The applicants review of its original transport assessment, contained in the latest document, has been undertaken because Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Department considered that the originally assessment, submitted by the applicants did not reflect expected traffic flows.

The re-assessment has actually increased the amount of traffic expected to flow into and out of Oakington. This will not only negatively impact the residents of Oakington but also further burden the already overloaded junctions served by through-traffic from the proposed SARE in the vicinity of the Oakington Business Park using Cambridge Road and Water Lane to other destinations.

The applicants own figures show that 70% of traffic flowing out of Northstowe using the proposed SARE will travel towards Oakington. This will be in addition to the existing traffic loading using Dry Drayton Road under normal conditions – clearly this is contrary to the policy statement C1.6 of the NAAP highlighted above.

Regarding the location of the SARE

We suggest that the applicant is failing to comply with policy NS/10 3.c which calls for the SARE to come *from the A14 or its parallel distributor road in the vicinity of the existing Dry Drayton junction into the southern end of Northstowe.*

The proposed SARE:

- (i) does not come from the A14 or the parallel distributor road, the A1307.
- (ii) does not come directly, or even in the vicinity of the Dry Drayton Rd junction.

Alternatives to the Applicants Proposals

SARE is not built at all:

(a) post pandemic, more homeworking is likely to occur. Additionally, according to the Greater Cambridge Planning Response document, the applicants are called upon to include greater opportunities to work and live in Northstowe. Both of these may limit future traffic flow (see: *Planning Policy, Strategy and Economy Policy* Response 16/02/2021)

(b) To discourage traffic to use local villages all out-bound traffic should be forced to use the SARW and thence onto the A1307 (the local distributor road) or the much-improved A14 with its link to central and west Cambridge and westwards towards Huntingdon and beyond.

If the SARE is required

then it should follow the proposal made in 2007 which is supported by Cambridgeshire County Councils Highways Department and would be acceptable to Oakington residents. This would guide traffic away from Oakington and Westwick and onto the improvements afforded by the local distributor road (A1307). (*Northstowe Revised Travel Assessment* paragraph 4.2.22)

Additional traffic-related issues

According to the application:

(i) Part of the footpath and cycle path at the Dry Drayton Junction (Oakington side) is to be removed to facilitate mitigation of this junction being over capacity at peak times due to the traffic loading from Phase 3A. *(See Revised Traffic Assessment Appendix N drawing 10019646-AUK-NS-P3-DR-IE-9)*

This is particularly disadvantageous to pedestrians and cyclists. This junction is used by parents walking their children to the village school.

(ii) The junction with Gatehouse Road is to be altered to widen the carriage way to include traffic lights with left and right turning lanes. *(See Revised Traffic Assessment Appendix N drawing See Revised Traffic Assessment Appendix N drawing 10019646-AUK-NS-P3-DR-IE-1.)*. This will reduce the amount of cycle path, already accepted as inadequate by Cambridgeshire County Council, who are, at the time of writing this response, undertaking work at Gatehouse Lane to make the junction safer for cyclists and who are currently planning additional, extensive works along Cambridge Rd.

(iii) The applicant refers to mitigation work (not described) which could be undertaken at the Dry Drayton Road/Cambridge Road/ Water Lane signalised junction, which is acknowledged will have the effect of reducing waiting times for vehicles, but does impact the *capacity* of the junction.

(iv) The *Oakington Transport Technical Note* mentions a cycle path but seems to be financially promoting the connection of the proposed SARE to the A1307. Whether or not a SARE is built, a cycle path needs to be constructed linking Oakington to the newly constructed cycleways along the A1307.

Drainage of Oakington Catchment

We continue to have significant concerns regarding the proposals for the drainage of the Phase 3a which impact upon Oakington.

We therefore suggest the following conditions be attached to any outline approval:

Condition One

To ensure that the proposed development of the Southern Catchment area does not result in an increased flood risk for Oakington village from the Award Drain 171.

No development shall be commenced until a surface water drainage scheme for the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before any development is commenced in the Oakington catchment and shall include:

- a) Full results of the proposed drainage system modelling for the 1 in 200 year storm (plus 40% allowance for climate change) and details of the surface water attenuation to be provided to limit run-off into the existing watercourse (Award Drain 171) to the mean annual greenfield rate of 3 lit/sec/ha.
- b) Full details of the attenuation measures shall include an attenuation pond of adequate capacity and approved control measures for the discharge flows, including vortex flow controllers (or other approved works) to limit the discharge to the mean annual greenfield rate and the facility to close discharge completely when the level in Oakington Brook is elevated to agreed limits.
- c) Detailed plans of the drained site area including that from green areas, the boundary ditch alongside Longstanton Road and that section of the SARW within the southern (Oakington) catchment, all of which shall discharge into the attenuation pond alongside Longstanton Road prior to joining the Award Drain.
- d) Full details of the long-term maintenance/adoption of the surface water drainage system as it affects the Oakington catchment, particularly the proposed attenuation pond and its associated structures and telemetry.
- e) Confirmation from SCDC Drainage Team that they are satisfied with the condition of the Award Drain 171 and they agree to the proposed discharges into the Award Drain.

Condition Two

To provide a comprehensive drainage solution and greater control overflows in Oakington Brook resulting in a lower flood risk to susceptible properties in the village, many of which have suffered from repeated flooding in recent years due to increased run-off from upstream.

No development shall be commenced in the Southern (Oakington) catchment until a scheme to provide extensive attenuation of flows in Oakington Brook is submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This scheme is to be undertaken on land on which the applicant has an interest, that is adjacent to Oakington Brook upstream of Dry Drayton Road bridge. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before any development is commenced in the Southern Catchment and shall include:

- a) Full results of the modelling for, at least, the 1 in 200 year storm (plus 40% allowance for climate change) and details of the proposed peak flows in the brook resulting from the attenuation pond as they pass Dry Drayton Road and Cambridge Road bridges.
- b) Full details of the proposed attenuation pond and its associated structures, flow controllers etc. to limit the downstream flows in the brook to the agreed levels.
- c) Full details of the long-term maintenance/adoption of the attenuation pond, the structures and the surrounding area.
- d) Confirmation that the Environment Agency are satisfied with the proposal and have consented the works since Oakington Brook is classified as a Main River.

Construction Issues: Noise and Pollution

The Parish Council remains deeply concerned about the impact of the proposed development in terms of noise, pollution and the movement of construction traffic over the 12-year construction period. We have found no improvement in the updated planning application to assuage our original reservations regarding the provisions contained in the *Strategic Environmental Management Plan*.

We would like to remind the Greater Cambridge Planning Department of their own communication with Homes England dated 11th June 2020
Concerns have been previously raised by local residents and Ward Councillors with regard to the dust and noise impact of construction to the amenities of local residents and issues in enforcing site management in accordance with the agreed Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
There has been no concrete action, despite repeated requests, for there to be noise or dust mitigation measures introduced for residents, or any tangible proof of effective site management and engaging with the local communities to mitigate these issues during the Covid period to manage construction impacts.

It is clear then from past experience that the applicants are not to be trusted to conform to the appropriate environmental standards and consequently, we expect strict conditions to be imposed upon the applicants, with a suitable, funded mechanism to ensure that Homes England comply to the *Construction and Environmental Management Plan*.