

Local Development Plan: Comments from Cllr Hawkins to All Members

We are being called upon to make a decision that will have an irreversible and life changing effect on parts of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC). I wish to draw your attention to issues regarding the proposals for the A428 corridor, issues I am sure you have heard before. However, there are key points that I wish to draw to your attention.

1. Bourn Airfield Development Planned Capacity

The draft plan proposes to build 3,500 houses together with associated primary and secondary schools, employment areas, doctor's surgery, retail shops, leisure facilities, and landscaping on 141.7 hectares of land. The overall Area Action Plan (AAP) will apparently cover 282 hectares.

Please refer to the attached diagram, obtained from SCDC showing the proposed West Cambourne and Bourn Airfield Development (BAD) alongside Cambourne, Highfields Caldecote and Bourn villages.

I have outlined the framework boundary for BAD in orange and the AAP in blue. The development framework of Highfields Caldecote is in Red and contains circa 600 dwellings. The Caldecote village amenity/sports field, playing grounds is in Green.

It is obvious that when viewed on the same scale, it is difficult, if not impossible to see how 3500 dwellings and all non-residential uses that are planned could be made to fit within the orange boundary – unless of course the dwellings will be built at double the 30-35dph that is claimed, ie greater than 60dph.

The SCDC formula of using 40% of the AAP for residential, means 3500 dwellings will be built on 112 hectares within the orange area, which is 79% of the development framework of 141.7 hectares. All the non-residential uses and strategic landscaping will be fitted in the remaining 21% or 29.7 Hectares. Is that feasible?

It is obvious the numbers do not add up here and the site is just not big enough for what is proposed.

2. Coalescence Risk

The SHLAA Report which was amended by SCDC in August 2013 following the discovery of "omissions, clearly states that " *...the scale of the development and likely mix of buildings would still be seen above the horizon, particularly from the A428 viewed towards Bourn and the development would begin to link Upper Cambourne and Highfields visually*". The solution proposed is "strategic landscaping" and a "buffer zone".

The separation between the dwellings at the top of Bourn Road and Cambourne has all but disappeared.

Given the experience of Northstowe where the promised buffer zone between it and Longstanton has also disappeared, this authority cannot give a guarantee that the promised separation between BAD and Highfields Caldecote will ever be maintained as history keeps repeating itself.

3. Transport Infrastructure Deficiency

The Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (TSCSC) drawn up by the County Council Highways does not include any plans to increase road capacity. This is in stark contrast to the Highway Authority comment in the SHLAA document that states that there is *“potential for around 29,750 daily trips from the development sites along the A428 corridor”*

Where are all these cars going to be going? The document identifies Cambridge as a main destination. Which means there is very high risk of serious congestion, and rat running through the villages of Highfields Caldecote, Hardwick, and those along the Bourn Valley such as Toft and Comberton.

Madingley Rise is an existing pinch point which does not get a mention for improvement.

The main focus of the TSCSC is to keep car traffic levels at the same level in 2031 as they are now!! Is that a reasonable premise on which to base a strategy such as this.

To achieve this, the County proposes provision of High Quality Public Transport (HQPT). This HQPT consists of a dedicated bus lane from West Cambourne, through Cambourne and Bourn Airfield, onto St Neots Road Hardwick, and then down the existing Madingley Rise into Cambridge. It will be supported by a network of cycle paths and footpaths. Calculations by Dr Jack Lang (well known Cambridge academic and co-founder of Raspberry Pi) indicates that buses will need to run every 2 minutes if all those potential 29,000 car trips are to be avoided. The County has also mentioned possibility of a guided bus way along this route

The County Council has admitted a large funding gap exists between its “aspirational plans” and what it can realistically obtain from developer contributions. It is pinning a lot of its hopes for funding on the City Deal, but as yet, has not provided any alternatives to plug the gap if both these sources do not provide enough funding.

The health and well being of the residents who live along the main roads in affected villages will be severely compromised, and this part of South Cambridgeshire will no longer be one where people will be proud to live, work or study if they can't get out and about with freedom.

4. Drainage and Flooding in Bourn Valley

There are very serious concerns about the implication of surface water run off from the proposed A428 developments on Bourn Brook which runs through the Bourn Valley.

There is real (not anecdotal) evidence from residents who have lived in Toft for 30 years and use the fields at the bottom of Brookside as a paddock for horses, that the flood line which was previously about 100m back from the road is now about 10 meters. In addition, the fields that rarely flooded now floods at least 3 times a year. When the brook floods, it covers the B1046 at the point where it crosses the road, which makes the road impassable. Traffic is diverted for several miles through Bourn or Caldecote to the St Neots Road Hardwick, and then back down through Hardwick or Comberton to get back on the B1046.

This situation will only worsen with new developments, especially if holding ponds are built and not maintained as seem to be the case with Cambourne.

5. Housing Need Assessment

The potential job creation for the plan period is 22,000 for South Cambridgeshire and 22,000 for Cambridge City. However, the needs assessment allocates 14,000 homes for Cambridge City and 19,000 for South Cambridgeshire.

SCDC has not fully explained the discrepancy between the housing allocations for both authorities except to say it has been “objectively assessed using an accepted model”.

There is considerable doubt as to the veracity of these figures, and this throws into doubt the need to build any more houses along the A428 corridor.

Conclusion

In view of the above, I find there is considerable doubt in my mind about the soundness of the proposals for the developments A428 corridor. The need for two new developments along this corridor is not proven, especially when Northstowe has not delivered.

Sites that are more suitable have been overlooked, for example those near to the existing guided busway and along the A14 into which substantial funds is being invested to improve it. Surely, concentrating infrastructure funding on one new settlement is more sustainable than spreading it across three.

The threat of speculative applications from developers if the draft plan is not submitted this summer, is in my opinion being used as a weapon of forced compliance. The draft plan is still an emerging plan with a significant number of new proposed dwellings. The removal of BAD (3500 dwellings) from the plan cannot imply that there will not be a 5-year housing land supply otherwise it calls into question the models that were used to create the plan.

The destruction of the rural character of the A428 corridor by this planned ribbon of development and the adverse effect on the health and wellbeing of those that live in this area due to the infrastructure issues identified cannot be justified.

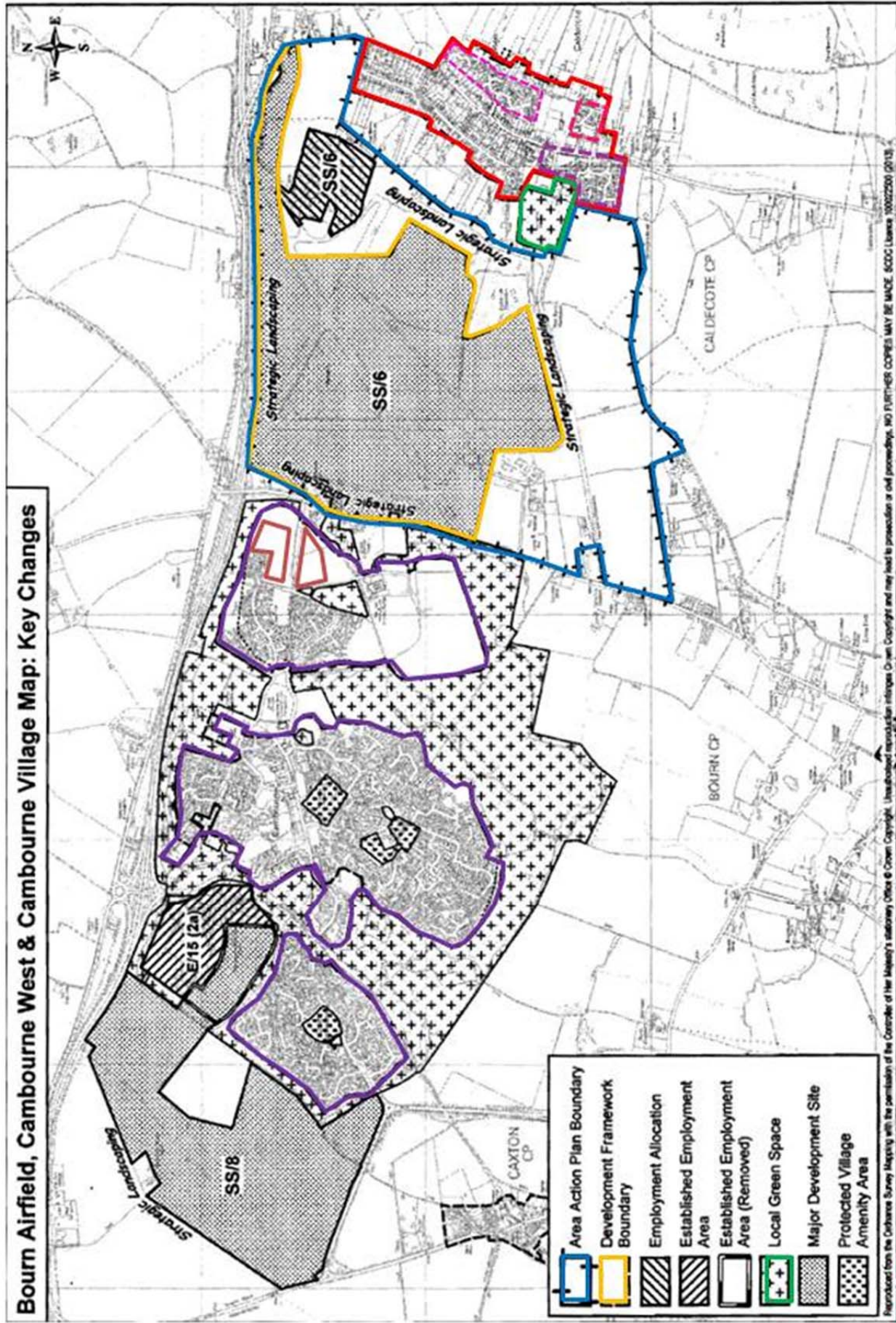
The Bourn area has had its fair share of housing development in the last decade and residents of Highfields Caldecote must be protected from becoming a suburb of BAD. The rural character of the A428 corridor must not be destroyed any further for the sake of expediency.

If, as Cllr Pippa Corney said on 11th February 2014 “it was not in the gift of previous administrations, councillors or officers to keep promises made years ago to residents of Bourn” in relation to the development at Cambourne, then please I implore you, do not make any more promises now that cannot be kept by future administrations, councillors or officers.

The draft plan as it stands today will be extremely detrimental to the vision of continuing to make this district, and especially the A428 corridor, a place where people are proud to live, work and study as what will be left will be dormitory villages.

Please think carefully before casting your vote.

Bourn Airfield, Cambourne West & Cambourne Village Map: Key Changes



- Area Action Plan Boundary
- Development Framework Boundary
- Employment Allocation
- Established Employment Area
- Established Employment Area (Removed)
- Local Green Space
- Major Development Site
- Protected Village Amenity Area

Caldecote Village Framework
 Cambourne Villages

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