

Cambridge City Council

Development Control Forum

Date: Tuesday, 23 July 2024

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Committee Room 1 & 2, The Guildhall, Market Square, Cambridge, CB2 3QJ

Contact: democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk, tel:01223 457000

Agenda

- 1 Introduction by Chair to the Forum
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Declarations of Interest
- 4 Application and Petition Details (24/01354/FUL - 137 and 143 Histon Road)
Application No: 24/01354/FUL
Site Address: 137 and 143 Histon Road
Description: Erection of 70 dwellings including access, car parking, cycle storage, substation, landscaping and associated works.

Applicant: Hill
Agent: Carter Jonas LLP
Address: One Station Square Cambridge CB1 2GA
Lead Petitioner: Resident of Canterbury Street, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB4 3QF

Case Officer: Aaron Coe
Text of Petition:

Title: Save Histon Road Playground

Statement: We the undersigned petition the council forego their plans to create any form of new access points whatsoever into the Histon Road Children's Recreation Ground (henceforth 'HRCRG') from the proposed development at 137-143 Histon Road (henceforth 'The Development'). Whilst we do not object to the building of houses on the land in principle, we take objection to the access points being created to offset green space and amenity land.

Justification:

1. The planning concerns are the following:

Safety: At present the children's playground is a safe, intimate space for the local community. Any public access point(s), cutting across it, creates a thoroughfare which shall impact negatively on the safety of the children. One of the advantages of the way the HRCRG is landscaped is that the long wooded area along the northern border is an unique adventure "jungle" that children can disappear into without their parents worrying that they can emerge onto city streets or wander into traffic. Any access points compromise this.

Pollution: both traffic and light pollution. There are 53 allocated car parking spaces within the development, with the very likelihood of rising to 70+ cars based and parking in the area. That is not to mention the visitors vehicles, the delivery trucks, the food vans, and the Deliveroo motorbikes.

Likewise, light pollution from The Development will disturb the wildlife, especially, but not least, the bats.

Flooding. Development, as we know, causes severe flooding issues. As we already have drainage problems in the park, any significant development will likely negatively impact existing properties around the park (particularly Canterbury Close, Canterbury Street, and part of Richmond Road) by flooding.

Loss of amenity land. Creating access points into a children's playground is a cynical and immoral act and sets a terrifying precedent to incorporate public land for the sake of offsetting amenity land, which should be calculated within any proposed development site from the start. Developers should make and contribute their own green spaces - as well as children's play areas, rather than poach them from the existing community.

Protected space. HRCRG is within the Castle and Victoria Road Conservation Area and is listed as one of Cambridgeshire's green spaces that property developers cannot touch:

<https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/protected-green-spaces-cambridgeshire-developers-15782350>.

As we understand it, Mrs Florence Emily Heath had already provisionally secured the land as a Recreation Ground specifically for children for the city, before she sold it to the Cambridge City Council in 1932; we therefore understand it is under covenant.

Pressure on local infrastructure. The Development puts pressure on local infrastructure such as doctors' surgeries and schools before the area has been prepared for it. 111 secondary school children are being sent out of Cambridge into the neighbouring villages because the city doesn't have enough secondary school infrastructure (BBC article March 2024). The Development will add to tensions in the area, due to the stark contrast of wealth/economic background. There is already crime in the area, which rarely sees a police presence; yet more green space in a city is linked with lower crime rates.

Over-development and pricing out for Cambridge locals. Both the buying and rental market in Cambridge has become largely unaffordable precisely because of the kind of 'luxury' property CIP are proposing to build. Subsequently, locals are being forced out into the surrounding villages. Houses priced from half a million plus are not "affordable homes" for the benefit of locals, but are blocks of profit for developers. The financial divide between the haves and have-nots is becoming ever more polarised - and will continue to be so with a development proposal of this kind.

Unsatisfactory development plans and notes. The 'Boards' document of November 2023 wrote 'We are also currently considering options for a potential pedestrian link through to Histon Road Recreation Ground.' The Design & Access Statement of April 2024 also barely mentions the existence of a playground.

'The existing railings that separate the playground from the rest of the park' (page 17) are listed as a 'constraint' but no mention is made of the fact that the whole perimeter of the playground is bordered by railings. The plan on the same page (17) also highlights the railings separating the playground from the rest of the park, but the rest of the perimeter railings are conveniently omitted.

Unsatisfactory advertising campaign for The Development and notifying of local residents. Hundreds of local residents were totally unaware of it. Even Street Association members hadn't been notified. The meeting on 3rd April was by invitation only, and, between 2-3pm on a weekday, at a very inconvenient time for most people to attend. There is also a 35m frontage on the Histon Road and nowhere on it has there been a notice about the development details.

2. What changes could be made to the development to overcome your concerns

Change 1. Eliminate any new access points into HRCRG.

Although we are not against a development of some kind on this land, we are against any access points from The Development into any part of the HRCRG. The HRCRG is listed as one of Cambridgeshire's protected green spaces and we understand it is under covenant. In its current form, it is a safe space for children. There is no reason why the HRCRG should be diminished for an access point, especially since the only reason to do so is to maximise building plots and profits for CIP, by avoiding having to provide any green space or playground of their own. Eliminating any new access points will also protect any covenant in place.

Change 2. Reduce the number of houses on The Development.

We completely understand the need for new houses, however, they should take the form of homes and should be in balance with the existing infrastructure, affordable and sustainable. A reduced number of houses means that CIP can fulfil their own legal requirement of allocating amenity land and an appropriate playground and would help satisfy our environmental concerns regarding The Development. It would also put less of a strain on existing infrastructure in the community (schools, GP surgery etc).

Change 3. A play-area/ playground should be designed as an integral part of The Development.

The Development should provide their own playground. The contribution of their own green space and playground will positively impact BNG in the area and not put stress on an already over-run playground and park. The opportunities for children to play outside is under threat in the UK. Statistics attest to a closing of playgrounds in the UK, and general unsatisfactory funding and overcrowding where they do exist, including in Cambridgeshire.

Change 4. Trees to be planted down The Development side of the boundary with HRCRG.

We suggest that CIP plant at least one, possibly two, rows of trees all along their side of the boundary, as a further means of contributing to their own biodiversity. It would also help shelter light and traffic pollution from the HRCRG playground directly adjacent.

Change 5. Consider building a community school on this land, rather than dwellings.

The Council could contribute to the community infrastructure we have

concerns about, and build a secondary or Forest school on the land.

Whilst CIP might not want to provide any amenities of their own (green space, a playground, not to mention a school, GP surgery or dentist), a document ePetition such as this exists so that there is a historical trail of objection, representing the feelings of the local community. We strongly object to any access points into the HRCRG and feel that the act, if executed, would be morally wrong.

Development Control Forum Members: Baigent, Bennett, Carling, Dryden, Gilderdale, Lokhmotova, Porrer, Smart and Thornburrow

Information for Petitioners' and Applicants' Representative The aims of the Forum are to allow early discussion of the planning issues and to explore the scope for agreement and compromise between all sides.

Up to three representatives of the petitioners and up to three representatives of the applicants may attend and speak for a total period not exceeding 20 minutes.

The applicants' presentation is heard first and applicants are asked to start their presentation with a brief description of the application proposals.

For further information on the conduct of the Forum or the petition process, please see the Development Control Guidelines, a copy of this is available on the Council's website at <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/petitions-and-development-control-forum> or contact the Council's Committee Section (01223) 457000.

Please let the Committee Manager know if you would like a briefing on the procedures at the Forum, if you have any other queries, or if you require any special facilities.

Format of the Forum

The format of the Forum will be as follows for each application:

- Introduction by Chair and declaration of Councillor interests – up to 5 minutes
- Presentation of the application by the applicant/agent (up to 3 representatives) principally to address the issues raised by petitioners – up to 15 minutes
- Presentation of the views of the petitioners against the application (up to 3 representatives) – up to 15 minutes
- Presentation by the planning officer – up to 10 minutes
- Member questions and issues arising – up to 30 minutes
- Summing up by the applicant/agent – up to 5 minutes v
- Summing up by the petitioners against the application – up to 5 minutes
- Final comments of the Chair

Information for the public

The public may record (e.g. film, audio, tweet, blog) meetings which are open to the public. For details go to: www.cambridge.gov.uk/have-your-say-at-committee-meetings

For full information about committee meetings, committee reports, councillors and the democratic process:

- Website: <http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk>
- Email: democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk
- Phone: 01223 457000