

# SCDC Planning Application S/4329/18/OL

## Hinxton Parish Council Response to Quod's "Response to Issues Raised by the Parish Councils, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018 [sic]" (Revised 27 September 2019)

We have the following comments on the above document, which was uploaded to the SCDC Planning Application website on or about 30 August 2019, on a section-by-section basis:

### 1. Compliance with the SCDC approved 2018 Local Plan

Wellcome/Quod present a five-point argument as to their compliance with the approved SCDC 2018 Local Plan. No matter how you cut it, however, the proposed Wellcome Genome Campus (WGC) expansion is not at all consistent with said Local Plan. Approval of the planning application as it currently stands would make a mockery of the Local Planning process.

### 2. The Transport Mitigation Package

In 2.1 it states that the current Campus Travel Plan has resulted in 55% of Campus employees arriving by single-occupancy vehicle, indeed much better than the 75% that is more typical in South Cambridgeshire.<sup>1</sup> In 2.2 a future target of no more than 40% is identified. This sounds good, but it is specious and misleading, since it is due simply to having employees living on Campus, with no net reduction in modal share for those that would still commute to work on the Campus from elsewhere. More importantly, the total number of vehicles arriving in the morning and leaving in the evening would more than double. Of further note, the added traffic from spouses/partners of Campus-Related Workers living on Campus but working elsewhere – i.e., leaving in the morning and coming back in the evening – or shopping trips, school runs, etc. has apparently not been considered. Deliveries to the expanded Campus businesses and to the residences (e.g., Amazon) may likewise have been underestimated. Based on the target 1,500 homes, these would result in a highly substantial addition to traffic. (See also the comments in our Viability Statement review below regarding potential future non-Campus-related residents.)

Further, we continue to question what considerations have been given to maintaining the flow of traffic along the A1301, the major north-south highway linking Cambridge and Saffron Walden. This is a major route used by commuters working in the local areas, as well as by people seeking to access the north-bound M11 and key railway stations for links to London and elsewhere. Wellcome's proposed mitigations are focused entirely on the needs of an expanded campus and completely ignore the local community. Turning the A1301 into a "village road" through the campus, with multiple roundabouts and pedestrian crossings, will severely impede north-south traffic flow and turn local commuter

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<sup>1</sup> We note, however, that the 55% achieved has not changed much over the last several years, despite the Campus's aggressive transport program, and that it is nowhere near the 40% objective stated in the 2002 and 2006 S106 agreements related to the Campus's "South Field" expansion.

journeys into nightmares. The only realistic mitigation for this is that Wellcome pay for the revision of Junction 9 on the M11, to enable northward on and southbound off access.

Comments on the roads/junctions modifications proposed as mitigations are provided below in Item 4.

### **3. Local Transport Impacts and Rat Running**

There is no indication of what, specifically, Wellcome would do to mitigate rat-running problems, should this become more of a problem than it is already. Wellcome is doing precious little about it, even at present.

### **4. Independent Audit of the Transport Assessment**

No details are provided. We remain concerned about the significant queuing on the A1301 at peak times, which is not consistent with the traffic model developed by Vectos in support of the Wellcome planning application. It is also very hard to believe that the proposed relatively simple changes to the McDonald's roundabout and the A505 and M11 J10 to the west would mitigate even the current traffic problems, much less a future substantially increased, Campus-related traffic flow.

### **5. Proposed Building heights**

Reduction of maximum building heights from 16 and 20 m to 11 and 16 m, respectively. (We note that these maxima do not include rooftop utilities, flues, etc.) This is welcomed, but the number and location of the new buildings on the open greenfield farmland opposite the current Campus is still a major concern in terms of landscape. The 15m buildings on the current Campus are not a good comparison, as the current Campus lies generally hidden from view behind mature vegetation (trees and shrubbery) or berms. In addition, the weasel-wording in Item 5.5, "as far as possible" is not particularly reassuring.

Of further note, the proposed new tree belts and screening vegetation are a nice thought, but would take 20 to 25 years to grow enough to provide adequate screening. There is also no apparent consideration whether such vegetation would be evergreen or deciduous; the latter quite clearly would not be particularly effective during winter months.

Item 5.4. We note that the area of open field just to the SE of Hinxton village that lies on the NW side of the Expansion Land is now planned as sports fields (with lights, fencing, changing rooms, parking, etc.), which are rather different from the farmed ground or fallow meadow that we were originally assured would be the case.

### **6. Additional Landscape Visual Viewpoints**

Item 6.2. Further analysis of three of the additional viewpoints requested is stated to be contained within the Revised Volume III of the Environmental Assessment. The view of the expansion land from

Coploe Hill provided by Hinxtton last Spring (below) has apparently not been considered. In this northward-looking photo the buildings on the left are on the current Genome Campus, and the highway on the right is the A11. The proposed Campus expansion would be on the large swathe of field and tree belts between the two. The visual impact would be considerable. (We note that S Cambs' own landscape consultant considered that it would be impossible to mitigate the impact of the Campus expansion from surrounding higher viewpoints.)



Also with regard to landscape, the grounds for S Cambs' rejection of the SmithsonHill AgriTech business park are equally applicable to the Wellcome project.<sup>2</sup>

## **7. Biodiversity**

The appearance of weasel-words such as “where feasible” is not reassuring.

## **8. Flood control and aquifer protection beyond the site boundary**

We continue to believe that construction of a compound weir on the River Cam would provide flood protection for the historic Mill and Miller's Cottage as well as upstream flood protection for the

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<sup>2</sup> See representation ZZFMRLW, file reference 1154450-854439.pdf, submitted to this planning application on or about 22 January 2019.

existing Genome Campus itself (which has not been immune from flooding over the years). Such construction on the part of Wellcome would also be well received by Hinxton village as a gesture of good will, as was the recent replacement of Wellcome’s “Iron Bridge” upstream of the Mill (although it took three years to convince Wellcome that they should do it).

## **9. The change in the balance of activity on the Genome Campus**

With the development of the small Biodata Innovation Centre as an incubator for commercial start-up companies, a creeping commercialization of the Campus has begun. With the proposed Campus expansion to include in large measure not only more “grow-on” companies but also larger, established commercial entities, that creeping commercialization becomes a galloping one, turning the predominantly charitable and non-profit academic nature of the Campus into a genome-focused commercial business park. Indeed, we have been told that a “large multinational corporation” has expressed great interest in establishing a major presence on an expanded Campus. John Sulston and Fred Sanger, were they still alive, would be horrified. Such on-site co-location of similar businesses, as noted by South Cambs in the recent AgriTech appeal hearings, is not necessary for commercial success; the concept of a regional cluster of such technology and businesses, on the other hand, is more appropriate and very highly effective, as has been amply demonstrated in the cases of biotechnology clusters in the San Francisco, San Diego, and Boston areas.

## **10. The proposed housing**

The sheer size of the development – 1,500 homes and 3,000-odd people– would dwarf Hinxton (about 150 homes and 300 residents) and would be larger than the three local villages (Hinxton, Ickleton, and Duxford) combined, comprising about 900 homes and 2,800 people. This is by far the largest proposed development impact on any such villages known in Cambridgeshire; it is unclear how Hinxton and local villages would survive such massive change, or in what form they would continue.

It is worth noting, moreover, that a good share of the new homes in Helixton (an appropriate moniker for the new Campus town, we think) would house Campus-Related Workers with short (e.g., 2-year) contracts, resulting in a relatively transient population. How does this help to establish a sense of community? There also continues to be virtually no discussion in the planning application as to the impact on the governance of Hinxton Parish. Indeed, we note that – in a meeting some months ago between Hinxton Parish Council, Wellcome’s Director of Planning and SCDC’s Planning Officer – Wellcome’s Director of Planning commented that the “usual” thing under such circumstances would be that a new Parish was formed. This suggests that Wellcome has no intention to integrate the campus community with local parishes, and is indeed focused on creating a genomics ghetto in our local countryside.

Wellcome (through Quod) makes a big deal out of the fact that “100% of the new housing” would be dedicated to Campus-Related Workers, i.e., at least one person in each residence having to work on Campus. However, on reading the proposed “Draft Lettings and Sale Policy” (referred to but not included in the Draft Section 106 Heads of Terms, and provided to us only as an afterthought upon request) one finds that this “100%” statement may be disingenuous. There appear to be gaping

loopholes that would allow families or individuals not meeting the Campus-Related Worker criterion to live on Campus. Additional evidence of such loopholes appears buried in the Quod Viability Statement, Appendix D, where it says “a restriction will be applied to require that on resale, units must be offered within the Campus for 6 weeks **prior to being offered to the wider market**” (emphasis ours).

With this plus other comments above and below is it any wonder that the local villages have lost trust in the Wellcome Trust? We would have hoped for more honest and forthright representations at this stage of the proposal.

For clarification, Hinxtton Parish Council continues to take the view that the Wellcome Genome Campus should follow the model operated successfully by the Stanford University campus (California, USA), under which all housing is sold or let to campus workers only. Wellcome has made the case that the housing is necessary to continue to attract the best international scientists. Any proposal that in some circumstances housing could be offered on the open market is therefore contrary to one of the fundamental principles that Wellcome has put forward for expansion of the campus and shows just how disingenuous Wellcome has been in this application.

We question how SCDC can validly make a determination on this application when a key document that appears to undermine the fundamental rationale for housing development on campus (i.e., the “Draft Lettings and Sale Policy”) has not been included in the materials submitted by Wellcome and uploaded to the SCDC Planning Portal.

Additional comments on the proposed housing are included in our separate Response to Quod Viability Statement.

What is the real intention as to housing policy, and how, exactly, would it be managed and enforced?

## **11. Meeting community needs and engaging with the local community**

Issues of transience and local governance, as noted above, are still not addressed in the planning application. This is a major failing.

Contrary to earlier promises, the proposed Fitness Centre now appears to be off-limits for non-Campus people such as residents of Hinxtton. This is an appalling indicator of Wellcome’s intentions.

Item 11.5 says nothing about how Hinxtton village is to be integrated into Helixton (or vice versa) in a social sense. We have commented above that Wellcome’s intention may be to create a campus that is quite separate from and not at all integrated into the local community.

11.6 “The existing Campus already includes spaces and services that **may** (*emphasis added*) provide for opportunities to accommodate the needs of early phases of the development, avoiding some of the challenges of isolation that can be experienced by new communities where there is no existing infrastructure in place.” Again, some weasel-wording. Also no mention of Hinxtton village. The statement as a whole (and “challenges of isolation” in particular) could be a bit disconcerting for potential residents on the expanded Campus.

11.4 The size of the potential “community hall” is “up to 350 sqm GEA.” This seems rather inadequate. The current Hinxtton Village Hall, serving about 300 residents, is about 160 sqm and often struggles to

handle larger village functions. Helixton will comprise ten times more people and might need something larger . . . (Do the maths.)

## **12. Public Consultation**

The public consultation process on the proposed Campus expansion over the past year or so has been well attended; many deep concerns about the scale and type of expansion, particularly landscape, traffic, and the commercialization and new housing aspects, were expressed from residents of Hinxton and surrounding villages. Few of those concerns have been addressed in any meaningful way. The general impression has been that Wellcome (London)<sup>3</sup> will do whatever they want to do in Hinxton and that Hinxton, the local villages, and South Cambs can't stop them. Their general arrogance and condescension toward us, as well as their seemingly bullying attitude, is remarkable and not befitting a charitable organization of their reputation.

Many of us acknowledge and deeply respect the contribution that the Sanger Institute and the EBI have made to genomics research and knowledge and, in addition, to science and humankind in general. Their worldwide reputation is well-deserved. The charitable support from the Wellcome Trust in this regard is exemplary. We take vicarious pride in having those institutes at our doorstep.

We believe that the local villages are not opposed per se to a modest expansion of the Campus involving an increase in size of the current charitable non-profit genome-related research as exemplified by the Sanger and the EBI and/or a third such research institute. A modest increase of space for fledgling commercial start-ups would also be within reason (all of which, of course, with appropriate attention to and improvement of local infrastructure, in particular roads/transport, pedestrian/bike paths, landscape, biodiversity, etc.). The third research institute has indeed been mentioned by Wellcome from the beginning of the Campus expansion project, although there has been little information as to what this might entail. There has instead been much more excitement on their part about the proposed massive increase in commercialization of the Campus and the associated new housing.

### **Other comments**

We are in full agreement with and support the views of the Ickleton Parish Council as outlined in Terry Sadler's representation of 6 September 2019 and the views of the Little Abington Parish Council of 17 September 2019.

For and on behalf of the Hinxton Parish Council

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<sup>3</sup> We note here that, in contrast, our relationship with the staff on the current Campus has in general been quite cordial and cooperative.

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