

Northstowe good or bad

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In this study, I will endeavour to discover if Northstowe is the answer to Cambridge's problems and if anything has been learnt from development of earlier settlements, such as Bar Hill, Cambourne and Arbury. This means I am going to review the circumstances that were there when the settlements were built and see if the move made by the planners at the time was best for what happened in terms of the growth of the population and people wanting to live and work in the Cambridgeshire area, this has caused a lack of houses. This has meant huge price rises in houses making them unaffordable for first time buyers in the area.

As people cannot move into Cambridge directly because of the lack of housing, they have to move into the surrounding villages and towns making them also full, this is producing a lot of traffic moving in and out of Cambridge everyday which is a huge problem as the roads cannot handle the amount of traffic as Cambridge is a medieval town and was meant for horse and carts. This has created a lot of problems such as congestion and pollution. I went to Cambridge, Arbury, Oakington, Cambourne and Bar Hill to compare the housing, layout of the settlement, the environment and the services and jobs available. I was looking for open spaces, good sized houses and houses in good condition and overall a nice environment to live in. I collected my data from what I observed and my thoughts of the visited location.

Chapter 1

Just after the Second World War men were coming home and having spent years with the officers who were previously thought to be way above their

class discovered that they weren't so different and so there was a huge demand for housing as men and their wives began to want houses of their own away for the family.

Bar Hill began to be planned for in 1952 after the Development plan tried to contain growth, including the industrial growth inside the city of Cambridge and to limit the population to 100, 000. Growth was instead to be encouraged in a ring of key villages around Cambridge. By 1964 these villages had grown so fast that the villagers were concerned that the character of the villages would be lost, so other villages further away were encouraged to grow. Also the idea of developing six new villages was put forward. Bar Hill was the only site to be developed. It met the three basic criteria, single ownership, marketable location, and well related to the existing development pattern.

Bar Hill was designed to have 1, 250 houses, shopping and social facilities and a light industrial estate. It used the " Radburn" design principle which is where vehicles and pedestrians are segregated by having a perimeter road which has residential cul-de-sacs inside, linked by pedestrian routes leading to the village centre. Bar Hill was divided into 12 parts residentially and it was up to private developers who would meet some of the cost of village infrastructure and services. Developers needed to sell houses at a competitive price and soaring caused several developers to sell out, and slowed development. The village centre didn't get built soon enough and so this discouraged people to buy houses more. The council had to eventually

pay for a new fly over to encourage development, something that should have been paid for by the developers.

A local plan was made that made the final population 5, 000 and demanded higher quality housing as produced originally, before developers tried to cut costs. During the 70's houses building was slow but once the remaining land was sold off in parcels, construction speed up, although many low quality houses had already been built.

More warehousing and office floorspace was put forward to decrease the commuting in and out of the village and create a more inwardly motivated community. The parish council promoted community facilities and in 1980 the village hall was finally built.

A lot of progress was made when Tesco gained permission to build a superstore and petrol station, although Tesco bought the land and controlled what shops were allowed to operate. Tesco continued to grow, developing its floorspace and range of goods, it provides many jobs, although it reduced the number of smaller shops and services in Bar Hill. Industrially the land was taken up steadily, in 1985 there were 6 units vacant for a total of 56. Bar hill has attracted firms from abroad, other parts of the country and local companies wishing to expand in the area.

In 1994 South Cambridgeshire District Council granted outline planning permission for the settlement of Cambourne, 9 miles west of Cambridge and south of the A428 in the parishes of Bourn and Caxton. It is planned on 1000 acres of land to be an almost self contained community. When completed it

will be 3, 300 houses planned around three villages with traditional village greens, a local shopping centre, a 50 acre business park, shops, community facilities, such as a health centre, library and community centre, two primary schools, a public open space including a country park and recreational facilities such as a golf course. In 1998 construction began on the infrastructure of the first housing areas as well as the site entrance and roundabouts.

The first residents began living in Cambourne in August 1999, with 75 homes including low cost housing, occupied by the end of the year. More roads were built as more houses were built. Work began on the first phase of the business park, building two units. Landscaping started and the country park began. Construction began on the sewage system and balancing lakes.

More houses and roads completed in Great Cambourne in 2000 and work started in on lower Cambourne, with 170 families living there by the end of June. Monkfield park primary school completed along with the first children's play area. The first phone box, post box and notice board were provided. Footpaths built in the Eco Park and country park. Structural landscaping continued on the outskirts of the site and Great Cambourne village green, and the five balancing lakes were finished.

Morrison's supermarket opened in 2003. Planning permission for 1774 more houses was refused. By Easter 885 houses were occupied.

90 houses were built in 1999 and 300 more are being built per year over a further 11 years. 900 of the approximate 3, 300 houses are to be rented. The

homes are meant to be for all ranging from one to six bed roomed apartments and houses, retirement homes and affordable housing. The 50 acre business park, 5 acre industrial estate and village shops and services will provide at least 3, 000 jobs so many villagers can live and work in Cambourne. Two primary schools will eventually be provided at Cambourne. Secondary education will be provided at an expanded Comberton village college. Once the 1000th house has been occupied the community centre has to be built.

It is fifteen years since the government recognised that developers receiving planning permission should be expected to make a contribution to the local community from the uplift in value which occurs when planning permission is granted. This policy was enshrined in section 106 of the Town and Country planning act 1990 which introduced a system of planning obligations enforced by contract between the local authority and the developer. At the same time the provision for affordable houses became a material consideration. This means that permission could be refused unless an appropriate contribution was agreed in areas where there was an identified need for additional affordable housing, which encompassed the vast majority of areas in England.

Providing affordable housing in this way has the potential for meeting thereof the government's main affordable housing objectives.

Ensuring land is made available for that housing and does not have to be bought by housing associations on the open market. Providing a financial contribution from developers to expand the supply of affordable housing that

can be obtained given available government funding. Supporting the mixed communities agenda both by putting as much as possible of the supply on the same sites as market housing and mixing what is provided between social renting and intermediate tenures to ensure that a range of household groups are on the site.

This relates to the Greenbelt because if anything is going to be built on the Greenbelt, it has to be sent to the government to be approved which if it is given shows a true cause and it will also be a good thing for the place where it is being built.

Chapter 2

In this section I have included annotated photos of the sites that went to and graphs to show the results of the neighbourhood survey.

I am going to discuss how well each site was designed to be a residential environment, whether it has a well designed environment and whether or not the facilities are adequate whether self-contained or not and whether there are any problems for example parking or traffic and whether it helps to solve Cambridge's problems.

Accordia, Brooklands Avenue

Catherine Square, Arbury

Oakington

Bar Hill

Cambourne

Brooklands Avenue, as you can see in photo 1 the site was clean, the traffic was light and the houses were in good condition but the houses were not very spacious, there was a lack of privacy as well as a lack of open space and a lack of parking. As the graph 1, 2 and 3 show Brooklands Avenue although the housing isn't spacious show that the environment around is nice and it's in Cambridge and so there is not far to go to get into the centre.

This suggests that it could have been planned better as the houses are not very private and are quite small, this maybe because the flats were built on a brownfield site so the planners did the best they could also there is a lack of parking which is a problem because people will have to park on the street outside, creating the traffic problem worse. From my analysis you can see that the recent high density like Accordia near the centre of Cambridge are bad because they create more traffic problems and there isn't enough room to house the cars. This supports the suggestion that settlement growth should be in new settlements like Northstowe because it takes the parked cars off of the roads in Cambridge making the traffic move more swiftly.

Arbury, as you can see in photo 2 the site is clean, the traffic was light, the houses were in a good condition, there was open space, it was more private than in Brooklands Avenue and the houses were more spacious and there was off street parking. As graph 1, 2 and 3 suggest the environment is well planned because there is open space, it is clean, and the housing is spacious and private. From my analysis you can see that recent low density developments like Catherine Square on the outskirts of Cambridge are good

because it takes people out of Cambridge but bad because they have to commute into Cambridge to work. This both supports and doesn't support the suggestion that settlement growth should be in new settlements like Northstowe because although it would be getting people out of the centre of Cambridge they would want to commute back into Cambridge to work so the traffic problems would worsen.

Oakington, as you can see in photo 3 the site is clean, the traffic was light, there is off street parking, there was a variety of housing styles and the landscape was nice. As graph 1, 2 and 3 suggest the environment was well planned, the houses were in good condition, the houses appeared spacious, there appeared to be amenities and the privacy was good, unlike Brooklands Avenue. This suggests the environment is well planned because the houses were in good condition, there was no vandalism, the houses had privacy, the area was clean and the place was well landscaped.

From my analysis you can see that old low density developments like Oakington outside of Cambridge are good because the housing is much better and the area is generally nicer, this supports the suggestion that settlement growth should be in new settlements like Northstowe because it is out of the city so better housing can be built and the landscaping will be better, however the commuting traffic will still be a problem inside the centre of Cambridge.

Bar Hill, as you can see in photo 4 the housing is small, and the style is unvaried and there is a lack of landscape, but the environment is clean and the houses are in good condition, but as graph 1, 2 and 3 suggest the poor

housing outweighs the good environment and the closeness to services and jobs. This suggests the environment was well planned but because it was built in the 50's the planners didn't think ahead and so the houses are too small and all the same style because they were built to budget. From my analysis you can see that the recent development of Bar Hill outside Cambridge is good because it is possible to never leave Bar Hill because you can work, shop and eat there but people commute to other places to work because the work there is all the same, this is a problem because of the traffic going into Cambridge causing pollution and congestion.

Cambourne, as you can see in photo 5 has open spaces, spacious houses, the houses have amenities, the houses are styled differently, there private and there all in good condition. As graph 1, 2 and 3 show this was probably the best place we visited as I had the highest average score, also the area was clean, it was quiet, well landscaped and the traffic was light. This suggests the environment is well planned because of the good roads, the off street parking, the open space and the pavement for pedestrians. From my analysis you can see that the recent development of Cambourne outside Cambridge is good because it has made a place to live that u can live and work in without having to go elsewhere.

This supports the suggestion that settlement growth should be in new settlements like Northstowe because it keeps the villages which the greenbelt was founded to protect. Commuting people from villages who work in Cambridge have been severely affected by these developments because everyone is now trying to get into Cambridge the traffic is piling up and

because Cambridge was not built to hold the vast amount of traffic that there is there are daily jams when people are trying to get in and out during peak times.

Chapter 3

My analysis of the 2 Cambridge sites and the 3 out of Cambridge sites reveal that although the housing is better quality and the places are of better standard outside they are producing huge amounts of traffic going into Cambridge where there is nowhere for them all to go, whereas the Cambridge sites make Cambridge easy to walk to making the traffic problems less but at a reduced niceness of house.

Advantages of Cambridge site

Disadvantages of Cambridge site

- * Easy to get into town
- * Can do things in town without having to worry about getting transport back
- * Doesn't increase traffic problem
- * Not far from the centre of Cambridge
- * Not far from a train station
- * Not far from work
- * Not very much space

- * Can be loud
- * Can be impossible to get out of Cambridge because of the traffic
- * If there are road works you can still be late because of the traffic jams from the other cars
- * Houses small and expensive

Advantages of non Cambridge site

Disadvantages of non Cambridge site

- * Open spaces for parks and play areas
- * Cleaner environment
- * The area is well landscaped
- * Quiet environment
- * The traffic is light
- * There is off street parking
- * Pedestrians are well served for as well as cyclists
- * Good roads for motorists
- * Can be far away from Cambridge
- * Commuting causes huge traffic problems by large amounts of people all needing to get in at the same time

* There might not be any public transport routes in where the new village is.

The alternatives being suggested are new villages/towns, new business parks next to old settlements, re-use land inside Cambridge or to use land on the edge of Cambridge's greenbelt like Milton or King's Hedges. These are not likely to happen in the near future because Northstowe is currently being planned, also the new town idea is Northstowe, and it will be a new town when built. The best choice would be to use brownfield sites in Cambridge itself or to revitalise places by building business parks next to old settlements providing more work out of Cambridge.

Chapter 4

6, 000 new homes to be built at Northstowe by 2016, with an expansion to approximately 8, 000 new homes by 2021 and beyond, there is going to be another boom in traffic in the centre of Cambridge and it won't be able to cope so the pollution level will increase and so will the vandalism and crime in Cambridge. The way to reduce impact on the city of Cambridge when Northstowe is built is by making Cambridge easily accessible by bus, guided bus or train, this would reduce the traffic in the centre of Cambridge. To make this settlement work, in my findings, there should be open spaces, spacious good quality housing, a variety of style of housing, the houses should have amenities and they should have privacy.

Also the area should be quiet, well landscaped and should be suited for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists. There should be nearby schools, leisure

facilities, shopping facilities, and a business park and also it should be well served by public transport.

Doing this would reduce Cambridge's problems by making jobs outside of the centre of Cambridge, reducing the commuting, likewise with the good public transport. The schools would mean that people wouldn't have to do a school run into Cambridge making the traffic even less. Having open spaces makes people stay in a village because they can go and relax there and also it means there can be clubs held which get the village together. Leisure facilities such as a swimming pool, cinema or a gym would give the people an alternative nearby instead of having to go into Cambridge for these. Also a village hall would be good for hosting parties or clubs such as a youth club that would keep youths out of Cambridge and keep them off the streets.

Conclusion

I agree that lessons have been learnt from Bar Hill and Cambourne but I doubt that these lessons will be used to full effect, because although Bar Hill's circular outer road has been abolished from Cambourne and from what they expect Northstowe to look like (see diagram 1) it was quite a clever idea. Also from Bar Hill we have learnt that just because there are jobs that are in the village/town you are in, it doesn't mean that the people will work there, they are more likely to commute to either Cambridge or London from a nearby train station.

The lessons learned from both of these new developments are saying the same thing that Cambridge cannot cope with the traffic that is pouring in

from all the new settlements and from all the older ones. Also they have learnt that schools must be built nearby or in the town to help cope with the children because they cannot fit into the existing schools and the commuting to school would also put huge amounts of traffic on the road and this is what we are trying to stop. I don't believe that Northstowe is the answer to Cambridge's problems but other than flattening it and starting again from scratch, which is not do-able I believe it is the best way forward.

Another thing that should be built is a church of some kind because people commuting into Cambridge or nearby villages to go to church could also be seen as a problem to some people especially in a town like Northstowe had to move into the surrounding villages it would spell disaster for these quiet country villages.

Evaluation

If I did this project again I would improve it by going at a better time of day where there are more people about to complete the survey, and by visiting there more than once, to go back on a variety of occasions to see what exactly happens there. I think I'd need more time to get better feel for the survey and I could use more information on Northstowe to truly discover what they will be building.