Objections to planning application by RLW ref S/0791/18/FL

While in principle I can see that a new town of some 12000 to 15000 houses may need a new station this does not need to lead to the closure of the existing station. There are significant problems with this application.

a) The only road access to the site in the current application is through Waterbeach (Denny End Road/Bannold Road/Cody Road or even Denny End Road/Bannold Road/Bannold Drove) to the new link road to station. This latter route is not suitable for the construction traffic to build the station, it is already busy (particularly since houses were built between Bannold Road and the old “MOD married quarters” and construction traffic for these developments has caused chaos at times.) If it is really intended to take construction traffic down Bannold Drove it is not clear that the applicants have the right to do so as green lanes are normally owned by the adjacent landowners where they are not adopted highway. Any deterioration of access to the sewage works during the construction phase could have serious consequences as tankers remove sewage daily and without this there is a significant chance that there could be overflow of sewage into the nearby ditch. It is not clear the green lane could ever be suitably reinstated after such usage.

b) Before the application can be approved there needs to be a revised access plan with vehicular access direct from the A10 (and preferably two routes: one from the roundabout at the Cambridge Business Park and one from the second roundabout with A10 envisaged in the U and C application). This would restrict access via Cody Road to local village traffic and even that could be unnecessary if a spur to the southern link road were put in off Denny End Road.

c) The current location of the car park and the disabled access to the London platform is unacceptable. Blue badge holders can struggle to walk 100 yards and yet the lift is at the very far end of the proposed platform and likely to involve a distance of more than 100 yards overall.

d) An unmanned station having only lift access to one of the two platforms and no alternative access is not acceptable. There has to be emergency access to the London-bound platform for ambulances etc for when the lift is broken.

e) It is stated that many houses will be nearer the new station, but that will not be until a significant number of new houses have been built in the RLW area, many houses in the U and C area will be no closer. Therefore while the station can be built as part of the preliminary infrastructure together with access roads the station should not be commissioned until at least 1500 houses have been built in the new town that are closer to the new station than the old one as otherwise there will be no advantage in respect of vehicular travel movements and considerable disruption to the many existing users of Waterbeach station.

f) By the time the new station is commissioned the operation of the Kings Lynn line will have changed with trains crossing over at Littleport and not Downham. This means that in the timetable currently planned for 1 to 2 years time there is adequate time for trains to stop at BOTH Waterbeach and New Town stations without causing additional delays for passengers journeying to Kings Lynn.

g) Thus there is no justification for closing and relocating Waterbeach station. An additional New Town station can be built and the old station retained without disrupting the train journey times to Kings Lynn. In fact if even half the new town dwellings have commuters then together with the potential ease of access from the A10 for commuters from north of Waterbeach there would be better access to rail travel for all local inhabitants and a choice of station.

h) Moreover an important aspect of the approved planning application for the Rowing Lake is the proximity to Waterbeach station meaning that retaining the existing station will be important to reduce cars travelling to events at the Rowing Lake complex.

i) The proposed plans do not provide an adequate transport plan for access through Waterbeach and a condition must enforce that any construction traffic must access the site directly from the A10.

j) The current plan takes Bannold Drove, a short stretch of metalled road and a green lane and turns it into a cycle route incorporating pedestrian traffic, lighting etc completely changing the rural nature of that end of the village. Such a change takes no account of the current and ongoing usage by sewage tankers, farm vehicles and residents driving to access their property. Without a separate footway it will be very dangerous mixing heavy vehicles with pedestrians as the farm vehicles currently need the full width. It is doubtful that there is sufficient width for a 1.5m minimum footpath along the metalled part of Bannold Drove (which should be on the west side so it does not interfere with the IDB ditch. Nor are all the existing accesses off Bannold Drove being
retained in drawing 104 which is unacceptable. 104 also shows an inappropriate siting of the vehicular restriction and how the current usage of farm vehicles from the fields to the west and north can be accommodated is not at all clear.

k) The current Cody Road/station link shows only a narrow separation from the current edge of development in Waterbeach. This needs to be expanded into a much larger open public space for informal leisure activities and providing a clear separation from existing dwellings and the road.

l) Given the potential for just adding a station rather than relocating the existing station the proposed new station should be significantly further north than the proposed site. If it was nearer to Cross Drove some emergency access to the London platform could be incorporated in the scheme for if the lift malfunctions and results in a more balanced position for the new developments.

m) The current landscaping proposals are inadequate given the significant changes proposed to Cody Road/access road and Bannold Drove. There is an opportunity for the proposal to include a significant “green lung” of open public space, tree planting and screening and the creation of a transition area between Waterbeach and the new development. This is not achieved by cramming the road in close proximity to the “married quarters” and is no longer justified by the need to bring it as close to the existing village as possible given there is a potential to have 2 stations one serving existing passengers and one the new development.

Given all these issues which have not been adequately addressed in the application I do not see how the application can be approved by SCDC. Trying to enforce planning conditions to address the serious highway issues is unlikely to be effective (as has been shown with other development off Bannold Road). I would therefore seek to register strong objections to this planning application.

Dr C R Grant

Waterbeach Resident (writing in a personal capacity)