

12/08/2025

**Response to 25/02131/FUL: Change of use from old pub car park for storage of cars at Hill Trees
Babraham Road Great Shelford**

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

Cambridge Past, Present and Future objects to this application because we believe it is fundamentally flawed. The proposal lacks critical information and would have a detrimental impact on the Green Belt and the Gog Magog Hills' iconic landscape.

The site lies outside the development framework which restricts development to that which needs to be located within the countryside (policy S/7), and within the Green Belt on the slopes of the Gog Magog Hills. On the opposite side of Babraham Road to the site is an area identified for a Countryside Enhancement Strategy (Southern Fringe AAP Policy CSF/5 2f-m). To the rear of the site is the Gog Magog SSSI. At the top of the hill, overlooking the site is Wandlebury Country Park and county wildlife site and Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The application fails to provide essential details, making a proper assessment impossible. Crucially, there is no information on the number of cars to be stored on site or the proposed turnover rate. The landscaping plan is limited to drawings that lack sufficient detail to determine if existing trees will be lost or if any new screening will be provided. There is no information whether there will be any security lighting. Most importantly, there is no assessment of whether the scheme would have any ecological impact on the adjoining SSSI.

The Cambridge Nature Network identifies the area of the Gogs as an important habitat for chalk grassland, chalk scrub, arable margins and headlands. The vision is to have a large-scale flower rich chalk downland. This Green Infrastructure initiative is included in the emerging local plan policy BG/GI and the draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy as a priority landscape.

Together all these policies promote the wider area for nature conservation and recreation, and not development. The introduction of an area of land for the storage of cars in this attractive open countryside

which gently rises from the edge of the city towards the Gog Magog Hills would be visually intrusive and detrimental to the character of the area contrary to local policy.

The site is previously developed and therefore may be considered Grey Belt land. However, we still consider that the development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt as it conflicts with the purpose of preserving the setting and special character of the historic city Cambridge. From the slopes of the Gog Magog Hills there are views of the Cambridge skyline with its towers and spires within a setting of open agricultural fields. The introduction of a car parking lot on these slopes would be visually intrusive in the setting of Cambridge. The proposal is therefore contrary to national policy on Green Belt.

Planning application S/0022/20/FL for parking for car sales was refused and an appeal dismissed in February 2022. In determining this appeal, the main issues identified by the Inspector included appropriateness in the Green Belt, effect on character and appearance of the area and effect on ecological interests. We consider that the current application raises the same issues and will harm the character and appearance of the area and the setting of Cambridge and have potentially adverse effects on the Gog Magog SSSI. We therefore consider that there has been no change in circumstances to warrant a different decision.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer