

Children on the West Cambridge Site
28 October 2004

Present at the meeting: Dr P Brooks (Chair), Dr J Blunt, Mr A Gordon, Dr M Vinnell, Mr A King and Mr W Hudson.

Attending: Mrs K Ross

1. Background

The issue of having children on the West Cambridge site has been raised at various committees and groups over the past ten years, but now the issue has become a reality. Many people are worried about the roads around the site, the relatively open access to the vet school, departments and the equipment on the site.

2. Safety related to the new flats and the nursery.

Currently in the flats there are 29 pre-teens and 7 teenagers. The 2 and 3 bedroom flats are now full and the 1 bedroom flats are half full, although the latter are unlikely to add many more children to the site. There are 88 children in the nursery, although these children are thought to be less of an issue for us as they stay in the nursery all day but there was concern about collection and delivery. The extent of the University's liability towards the occupants of the flats should be no more than any landlord although there are additional risks posed by the specialist equipment and buildings.

There are a lack of play facilities for the children who live on site. There were originally plans, but they have not come to fruition. There is a small fenced off area in the nursery. It is felt that this lack may encourage children to play in hazardous areas.

One area of concern is that University First Aiders may be called to administer first aid to a child from the flats. Although our insurance does not cover members of the public who are on University premises while not on University business, children of University members are covered. Our insurance also covers trained and untrained persons acting in good faith.

The children in the nursery are not likely to need the assistance of University First Aiders as the staff there are trained in first aid. However, as the roads are covered by the Health and Safety at Work regulations, consideration is needed for accidents on the site. The nursery is run by external operators. If something happens in the residences it is worth noting that normally landlords are not expected to provide first aid. The most likely event would be a child having an accident on one of the roads and being taken to a nearby department (or someone asking for help). This raises additional problems for First

Aiders in terms of training. CPR for children is different from the procedures for adults and is not covered by the standard First Aid at Work certificate but University First Aiders are covered by the University insurance. There is also a child protection issue. It may be necessary to do police checks on people who may have to administer first aid, particularly in departments where children regularly come in for open days. The University is currently developing a child protection policy.

3. Road safety

There are no lay-bys for buses, they were not designed into the site. People tend to park in the lay-bys which reduces visibility, particularly near the car park at the Computer Laboratory. However this is probably due to a lack of clear signage on the site as a whole. Double yellow lines and clear signage would help people to know what they can and cannot do.

There is also a lack of white lines on the roads. This is particularly critical at junctions as it is not clear who has right of way or even what the speed limit is. EMBS have failed to take this point seriously in the design. As the roads on the site are covered by Health and Safety at Work regulations, we need to ensure that they comply. The safest procedures would be to copy those used on the Public Highway. The lack of clarity will be even more of a problem as the evenings become darker. This can be done in a clear and simple fashion without filling the site with signs.

This needs to be taken up with EMBS and they need to be told what they should be doing under safety law. There have been delays due to taking things to committees. If legal requirements are not met we are in danger of an enforcement order once the site is completed. Building projects should always include safety regulations and this is currently being overlooked. Recommendations for line markings and appropriate signage need to be drawn up. Andrew Gordon will pass these on to the site engineers.

Visibility is also reduced by some of the design features such as hedges and stones. It should be considered in the design of the site. Andrew Gordon will investigate remedial action for existing problems.

The cycle ways are still under construction and so are unsafe in some places. They will be linked up as the site is completed. More of an effort is needed to separate cars and cyclists.

An up to date map in the lay-by at the entrance to the site is needed. This will help visitors to the site and particularly emergency vehicles. Site maps have been circulated to the ambulance service which should enable ambulances to find a caller without having to send someone to direct it. This has been a particular problem in the past as the roads on the site are not on general maps.

4. High Cross

The high cross site is shared between six departments and non-university groups. The area is often used as a dumping ground for waste and obsolete equipment. The area is hard to manage because it is not just one group. The High Cross Users Group should be encouraged to arrange fencing and CCTV to make the site more secure. The area could be very tempting for children to play in. There should be notices warning people to take care.

5. Water Safety

There are several areas of particular concern; the Coton ditch, the Paynes pond, the athletics drainage pond and the surface water drainage pond. Notices are only needed where there is hidden or unexpected danger, so is not needed where the edges are shallow.

People have been seen swimming in and ice-skating on the athletics pond. Even though it is private property we would still be liable. We need to look at fencing requirements and better signage.

The Paynes pond is surrounded by reeds and is not deep at the edges. It is thought to be less of a hazard, but a few warning signs may be appropriate at the weir, where there is unexpected deep water.

The Coton ditch should be maintained by the council. It is not a hidden danger.

The surface water drainage pond has a wire marker fence. Although this is not designed to keep anyone out, it is a clear indicator. The pond is not always filled and therefore may take children by surprise by suddenly being deeper.

The danger posed by the water hazards is not limited to children on the site. Visitors, including people who regularly walk through the site, may be in danger too. Good signage is required. We should also check what the rights of way actually are.

6. Proposed West Cambridge Safety Site Committee

It is felt that we need to look at the problems at the residences end of the site before extending the remit to the whole site. Possibly someone from the residences should be invited to voice any concerns they have. Also we need to hear from the nursery management, the vet school and the Whittle Lab.

7a Vet School

The nearby vet school, particularly the horses, may prove a great temptation to the children. The stabling and paddocks are an open plan site although the buildings themselves are secure. A good fence and clear signage should be sufficient. A high security fence will just attract attention.

Along with all the other safety issues it would be useful to liaise with the accommodation to add to the information given to tenants. A list of the potential dangers to children on the site perhaps with guidelines for where they should not go.

7b Cavendish Lab

The Cavendish Laboratory has particular risks associated. It needs to be made clear that it is private property and that climbing over it is trespass. It would be useful to have a walk around and evaluate the risks.

The goods area with its gas cages may present hazards to children, particularly with regard to vehicles turning up in the dark. It needs to be clearly signed that this is a private area.

There is a CAPE remit meeting on 9 November.

7c Poor lighting

There is poor lighting on the site which will become more of an issue as the nights get darker earlier. More lighting is planned, the sufficiency of the extra provision will have to be evaluated.

7d Winter weather/gritting

EMBS have a system for gritting although they do not do footpaths. The Coton footpath is under Council responsibility although they do not seem to do it. Apparently the Council gritting service is under review and footpaths are beginning to be considered. It is worth our while gritting near our departments to prevent accidents which then tie up department First Aiders. It is not practical to grit everywhere, around entrances and on corners are the priorities.

7e Address

Addresses need to be clarified. Should everyone just be 'West Cambridge'? The roads on site are not recognised on official maps and may therefore confuse deliveries and ambulances, although ambulance control now has a map of the site. We need to check that information to emergency services stays up to date.

8 Date of next meeting

A birdcage will be sent out when the development meetings are organised.

Actions

- 1 List of workplace regulations that need to be complied with (including road safety/ white lines and signs). This may include a map of the site with recommended actions.
- 2 A list for tenants on the subject of children's safety on site.
- 3 Signage around the various ponds.
- 4 Lighting needs to be checked
- 5 An approach to the council about the gritting around the site.