

## **Policy S/DS – Development Strategy (P29)**

We support the proposed development strategy for Greater Cambridge in seeking to “direct development to where it has the least climate impact, where active and public transport is the natural choice, where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development, and where jobs, services and facilities can be located near to where people live, whilst ensuring all necessary utilities can be provided in a sustainable way.”

We do not agree however that this necessary dictate that a ‘very limited amount of development’ come forward in rural areas. The development strategy as proposed is overly reliant on strategic allocations. It does not consider what may happen to 5 year housing supply if these limited locations encounter delivery issues.

Whilst the plan allows for the development of sites of up to 8 and possible 15 in exceptional circumstances it is anticipated that these will come forward on a windfall basis. It is considered that the plan should be more proactive spatially in terms of ensuring that a proportion of housing need generally is used to underpin and safeguard the vitality of village locations going forward.

Indeed, on this the strategy goes on to state that ‘we have identified a limited number of new sites for housing at our more sustainable villages’. This appears to demonstrate that proactively planning for growth in village locations is beneficially however it is not then clear why these villages have been deemed appropriate for allocated development whilst villages such as Fowlmere are not.

Fowlmere continues to be classified as a Group Village within the emerging Local Plan, and whilst this is not necessarily considered the focus for strategic growth, modest growth is important in supporting, sustaining and enhancing local amenities and services.

Delivering extensions to existing communities and continuing to build on the strong cultural and social aspects of the larger settlements is vital in the progress towards achieving healthier communities. Proposing modern homes that create improved sustainable credentials and add vitality to existing neighbourhoods is not only a requirement of local and regional policy, but one that is adopted within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Limiting growth to larger settlements presents risks with regards to disproportionate settlements that could leave smaller villages, such as Fowlmere, with stagnated growth and poor support for local facilities.

Much of south Cambridgeshire is protected by Green Belt. Fowlmere falls outside of the Green Belt and the accommodation of development there offers the added benefit of not needing to remove further parcels of land from Green Belt designation.

It is considered that the development of Land off Long Lane, Fowlmere can valuably contribute to the Greater Cambridge housing requirement whilst supporting and contributing to the Fowlmere local community. In this respect a site that is immediately developable, with minimal site-specific constraints, presents a positive opportunity for residential development that should be fully considered.

The site was submitted in response to Greater Cambridge’s call for sites (ref: 40012). In response Greater Cambridge concluded that that whilst the site was available and achievable it was not suitable. Much technical assessment of the site has subsequently taken place. As shown on the concept plan, submitted alongside these representations, it is considered that all technical issues relating to

development of the site can be overcome and in this respect the site is considered suitable for development. This is expanded on below in the context of some of the key obstacles identified by the Council:

- **Adopted Development Plan Policies:** Assessed Amber on the basis that the site sits outside the development framework for Fowlmere as currently defined. The purpose of the emerging Greater Cambridge Plan however is to identify what sites are needed to meet housing supply have regard to the need to proactively identify sites and remove policy constraints as necessary. Within an emerging Local Plan therefore a settlement boundary need not be a barrier to suitability;
- **Flood Risk:** Again this has previously been assessed amber. It is acknowledged that part of the site is in flood risk zone 2 and 3. However, as shown on the attached concept plan technical analysis has confirmed that the site can come forward for development outside of these areas. In short flood risk does not prejudice the sites suitability for development;
- **Landscape and Townscape.** This was assessed to be Red given the potential impact on the village form and townscape of Fowlmere. Much design work has been undertaken to consider how residential development could come forward on the site in a manner that is sensitive to both the built form of Fowlmere and the streetscene itself. The Council's assessment appears to pre-judge the site solely on the principle of its location outside of the existing settlement framework. In design terms it is considered that the site could come forward without significant impact in both landscape and townscape terms. This is not considered an issue that should cut to the principle of development on the site and not an issue therefore that can at this initial stage i.e. without consideration of detailed proposals, deem the site to be unsuitable;
- **Bio-diversity and Geo-diversity:** Again this has been assessed Amber but it is not clear on what basis. As the concept plan submitted alongside these representations shows the site allows for ample provision of green space. The delivery of new and enhanced open space within the site will include areas of native planting, wildflowers and trees and will assist in strengthening biodiversity in this location. The site is currently arable and as such offers only limited ecological value. Development of the site will deliver a net bio-diversity gain, in line with policy aspirations;
- **Historic Environment.** This has been assessed Amber on the basis that the site is within 100m of a listed building. The Concept Plan attached to these representations however shows that this relationship can be treated sensitively, in this instance a buffer is shown between and development and the sited asset. Again this is not considered an issue that need cut to the principle of development but rather one that can be handled sufficiently sensitively through the consideration of detailed proposals;
- **Accessibility to Services and Facilities:** This has been assessed as Red and as such a major issue in terms of the suitability of the site. All of the Local Amenities within Fowlmere are within a 10 minute walk and as such are accessible. Furthermore, development of the site offers the opportunity to provide important economic support to safeguard these facilities and the potential, in this respect, to provide support for further services.
- **Site Access:** It is not clear why this has been assessed as orange when the assessment concludes that access to the site is 'acceptable in principle'. Technical work has further confirmed this. Development of the site can be appropriately accessed;

- **Transport and Roads:** Fowlmere, as a village, is sustainably located and benefits from a number of facilities and amenities within a 10-minute walk of the site. With regards to transport connections Fowlmere is served by two bus services with the 915 bus service passing directly in front of the site connecting Fowlmere with Cambridge and Royston. In terms of village locations the site is fully accessible. This is not a barrier to development and indeed it is considered that the ability to use the development of this site to help contribute towards and safeguard these transport services should be reviewed further.

Overall, given the village's sustainable location, combined with the district's growth targets and housing delivery requirements set out within the new Local Plan, it is considered that land off Long Lane, Fowlmere, presents an appropriate location for additional housing. The site is bounded by logical and permanent boundaries and lacks substantial constraints. Further, the site is capable of delivering enhancements to open space and biodiversity. We strongly urge the Council to review the opportunity presented by the site.

**Recommendation:** Village locations can provide sustainable locations for growth coupled with an ability to support existing communities, services and facilities. This should be acknowledged within policy. The need for growth in these places to sustain and help these existing settlements thrive should also be acknowledged.

The Spatial Strategy should seek to proactively plan for growth in village locations and should make clear that growth will be encouraged in village locations where it is shown appropriate to support and enhance the village moving forward.

Land at Long Lane Fowlmere be identified as a site suitable for the development of up to 130 new homes.