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GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 18 PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION 2021 – GREENHEDGE FARM, STAPLEFORD

These representations have been prepared by Bidwells on behalf of Peterhouse, Cambridge (hereafter 'Peterhouse') in response to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Preferred Options, "First Proposals" 2021 consultation. These representations relate to land at Greenhedge Farm, Stapleford (hereafter "the site") which is within Peterhouse's ownership.

The site is located within the village of Stapleford, outside of the village's Development Framework and within the Cambridge Green Belt. Representations were submitted to the Issues and Options 2020 consultation to present the initial case for the site's removal from the Green Belt and were accompanied by a commentary note that provided an initial consideration of the site's contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt.

These representations relate only to the site's Green Belt designation and continue to support the case for the site's removal from the Green Belt.

Policy GP/GB: Protection and enhancement of the Cambridge Green Belt

The proposed policy direction of Policy GP/GB seeks to protect land within the Green Belt in accordance with national policy. It also identifies the established local purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt. In addition to the five purposes of the Green Belt, which are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) at paragraph 138, the Cambridge Green Belt has particular purposes and was established to protect the historic city and its setting.

The purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt, are to:

- Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre;
- Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting;
- Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.

As part of the preparation of the Local Plan, all land within the Green Belt should be thoroughly examined to assess whether land within the Green Belt still serves the five purposes as set out in the NPPF and the three local purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt. Where it is demonstrated that land no longer meets these national and local purposes, or the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy, which is to prevent urban

sprawl by keeping land permanently open (NPPF paragraph 137), the Green Belt boundaries as shown on the Proposals Map should be altered in the emerging Local Plan accordingly.

Representations regarding Greenhedge Farm's compliance with the NPPF's purposes of the Green Belt were submitted as part of the Issues and Options 2020 consultation. These representations were accompanied by a commentary note (Appendix A) that provided an initial consideration of the site's contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt. The note identifies the following preliminary considerations:

- The existing built form and surrounding mature planting provides an opportunity to reconsider the Green Belt boundary in this location;
- The site should not be assessed in isolation, the Green Belt review should also consider the adjoining land. However, it is considered that the southern parcels have a stronger connection to the surrounding built form which lessens their contribution to the Green Belt;
- Discrete areas within the site, particularly the southern parcels, have different degrees of enclosure due to built form and tree cover. As such, they have less 'visual openness';
- The site is not located between villages nor does it contribute to the separation of settlements;
- The site, due to its location and scale, is not considered to relate to the contribution of the Green Belt to the setting and character of Cambridge.

This initial analysis begins to demonstrate that the site may no longer contribute to the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy nor the five purposes of the Green Belt. The note strongly recommended that a full Green Belt review is undertaken and that the site's contribution to each purpose of the Green Belt is assessed.

It is also considered that the site:

- Does not check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas – it is surrounded on all four boundaries by built development, with three of those boundaries comprising the development framework of Stapleford. The removal of the site from the Green Belt would therefore not lead to unrestricted sprawl;
- Does not prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another – the site is not located between towns or villages and is enclosed by the existing built development of Stapleford. The removal of the site from the Green Belt would not result in the coalescence of adjoining settlements;
- Does not contribute to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment – the site is surrounded on all four boundaries by built development and whilst located outside of the development framework, is not considered to encroach on the countryside that is beyond the settlement pattern; and
- Does not preserve the setting and special character of a historic town – it is considered that the removal of the site from the Green Belt would not impact on the setting and character of the Stapleford Conservation Area given the distance and intervening built form between the site and the Conservation Area. Furthermore, due to its location and scale, the site is not considered to relate to the contribution of the Green Belt to the setting and character of Cambridge.

The evidence base for the Preferred Options consultation includes the Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment 2021. The Green Belt Assessment is a comprehensive study, which provides a robust assessment that:

- Identifies variations in openness and the extent to which land contributes to the purposes of the Green Belt; and

- Uses this to determine variations in the potential harm to those Green Belt purposes of releasing land within Greater Cambridge from the designation.

Appendix B of the Green Belt Assessment includes a detailed contribution and harm assessment of all land within the Cambridge Green Belt. Greenhedge Farm has been assessed as part of the study as site reference GS 10. The assessment of the site is included at Appendix B of these representations.

The assessment of the site presents supportive evidence for its removal from the Green Belt. In relation to the site's contribution to the Cambridge Green Belt purposes, it finds the following:

- Purpose One: Land is open and is adjacent to Great Shelford, which is contiguous with Cambridge but which retains a degree of distinction from the main City area. There is weak distinction between the parcel and the urban area, which decreases the extent to which development would be perceived as diminishing Cambridge's compact character. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1. **Contribution: Relatively limited.**
- Purpose Two: Land has a weak distinction from the edge of Great Shelford/Stapleford, meaning it has a strong relationship with the inset area. However, it is open and land use within the majority of the parcel is not associated with the urban area, and therefore has some rural character. It has a use to the north-east (Stapleford/Jubilee Pavilion) and south (allotments) that associate with the inset area and weaken its rural character. It does not form or contain any specific features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2. **Contribution: Limited /no contributions** and
- Purpose Three: Land is too closely contained by the settlement of Great Shelford to contribute to its separation from Cambridge. **Contribution: Limited / no contribution.**

The Council's assessment concludes with the following statement regarding the overall harm of releasing the land from the Green Belt.

Parcel GS10 makes a relatively limited contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be negligible. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Cambridge, would be low.

Overall, the Local Plan evidence clearly demonstrates that the site makes at best a relatively limited or limited contribution to the Cambridge Green Belt and in terms of purposes two and three it makes no contribution at all. In addition, its release would have negligible harm on the adjacent Green Belt and a low harm overall. The Council's own evidence, alongside that prepared by Peterhouse, clearly points in favour of releasing the site from the Green Belt.

It is important that any retained Green Belt fulfils the purposes of the Green Belt in order to have a robust, long-term and defensible Green Belt. The Green Belt Assessment undertaken as part of the Councils' evidence base clearly demonstrates that the site makes little to no contribution to the national or local purposes of the Green Belt. In this case the Local Plan process must take the opportunity to review and amend the Green Belt boundary to remove the site from the Green Belt in the preparation of the Proposals Maps. A more appropriate designation for the site would be that of open countryside outside of the village's Development Framework. As such, it would act to strengthen a more logical and defensible Green Belt boundary to Stapleford.

Should you require any further information regarding the site or these representations please do not hesitate to contact me.



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Enclosures:

Appendix A: Green Belt Initial Commentary – Greenhedge Farm

Appendix B: Green Belt Assessment Appendix B – Parcel GS 10 Assessment