



Phase 2

Greater Cambridge Local Plan – First Proposals

Preferred Options 2021 Consultation

Representations in response to:

Regulation 18 stage of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

Land to the West of Station Road, Meldreth, SG8 6ND (Council Ref: 40088)

On Behalf of

The landowners

December 2021

Our Ref: C20010

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Quality Assurance

Site Name: Land to the West of Station Road, Meldreth, SG8 6ND (Council Ref: 40088)

Client name: The Landowners

Type of Report: Local Plan Representations

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Signed



Date: December 2021

Reviewed by: Lisa Skinner

Signed



Date: December 2021



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1. Introduction and Background

1.1 These representations have been prepared on behalf of the five landowners, (the “owners”) detailed below:

- Sally McGeachie, [REDACTED]
- Mark Burlton, [REDACTED]
- Michael Burlton, [REDACTED]
- Andrew Dummett, [REDACTED]
- Suzie Abrey, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

1.2 The representations relate to Land to the west of Station Road, Meldreth, SG8 6ND, (the “Site. This site was put forward for consideration to the Call for Sites in March 2019 as a potential housing allocation with some employment use.

1.3 This land was promoted for development at an earlier stage of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, (GCLP), process, and was assigned the reference: 40088. Our clients have two land holdings that have been submitted to the Council as part of the call for sites in March 2019. Representations were also made in response to the publication of the Issues and Options Consultation in January and February of 2020. The site subject to this report is referred to as Land to the west of Station Road, (Land to the east of Station Road, ref: 40089, is subject to a separate representation).

1.4 This Report provides our clients response to the Regulation 18 stage of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, Preferred Options of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. This was published for consultation between 1st November to 13th December 2021. We provide responses to the matters of principal interest to our client’s interest.

2. The Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 These representations relate to a reduced area of the site previously identified and promoted as an opportunity for development at the Issues and Options stage of the GCLP process.
- 2.2 The previously-submitted representations set out the range of services and amenities that are present at Meldreth and Melbourn. The two villages have a range of facilities including schools, retail and leisure facilities as well as areas of open space. Most significantly, Meldreth is among the few locations in the GCLP area outside of Cambridge itself where access is provided to the rail network. Meldreth Station provides direct access to Cambridge, London, Royston and a range of other destinations.
- 2.3 The extent of the Site which is the subject of these representations is clearly shown hatched in the map extract below. The red shaded area, which includes land to the south-west of the hatched area, was the subject of representations made in response to the previous stage of the plan-making process is also shown below. The previously-submitted representations promoted the development of either entire site or a part of it, although it is evident that the site has been assessed in its entirety.
- 2.4 While it is still considered that the wider site is suitable for development and would represent a sustainable addition to the existing settlement, regard has been had to the Councils' assessment of its development potential, and in response to this the focus of these representations is on the northern part of the Site closest to Station Road.

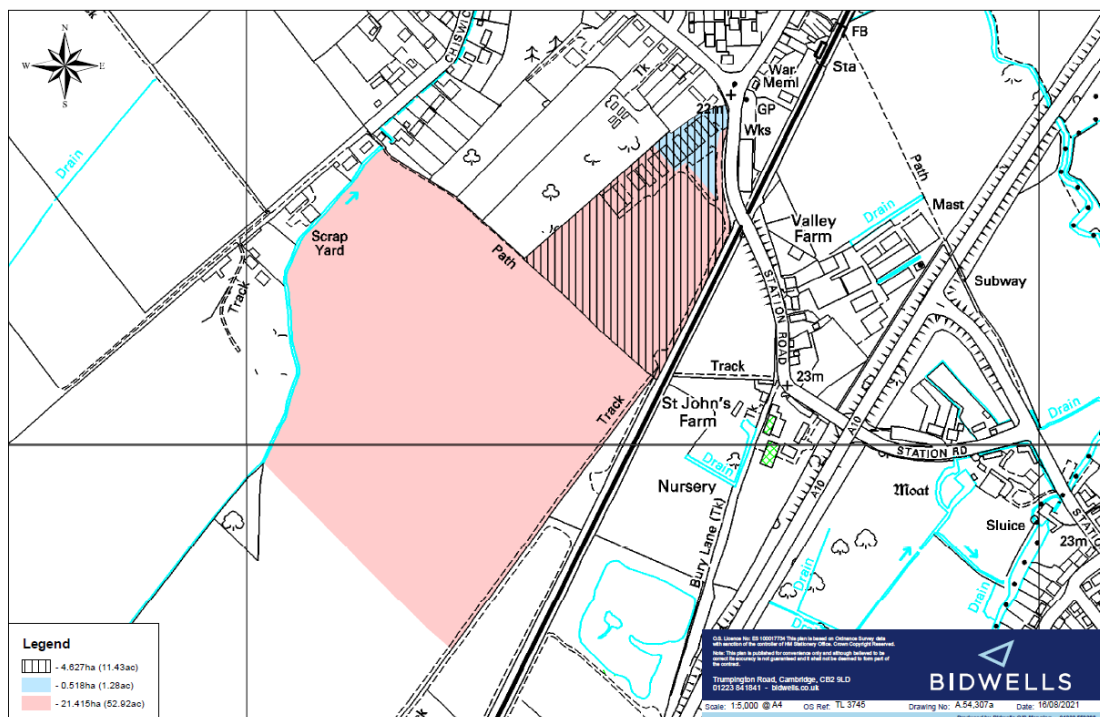


Figure 1: Map showing the extent of the Site (hatched black) and the area previously promoted for development.

- 2.5 The site which is now being promoted (and which is the subject of these representations), comprises approximately 4.6 hectares of land directly to the west of Station Road, and to the Cambridge to London (via Royston and Stevenage) railway line. The northern area of the site adjacent to Station Road is currently occupied by several former agricultural buildings which have now been converted to commercial uses. This part of the site can therefore be considered as previously developed land. The remaining area of the site is greenfield land comprising of arable fields.
- 2.6 In planning terms, the 'Development Framework Boundary' which marks the extent of the settlement of Meldreth, includes an area in the north-western corner of the site which is currently occupied by existing buildings. The Development Framework Boundary also excludes land now developed for housing at 'Melrose' directly to the north-east of the site. The remainder of the site falls outside the Development Framework Boundary. This is shown in the map extract from the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (SCLP), Policies Map included at Figure 2 below.

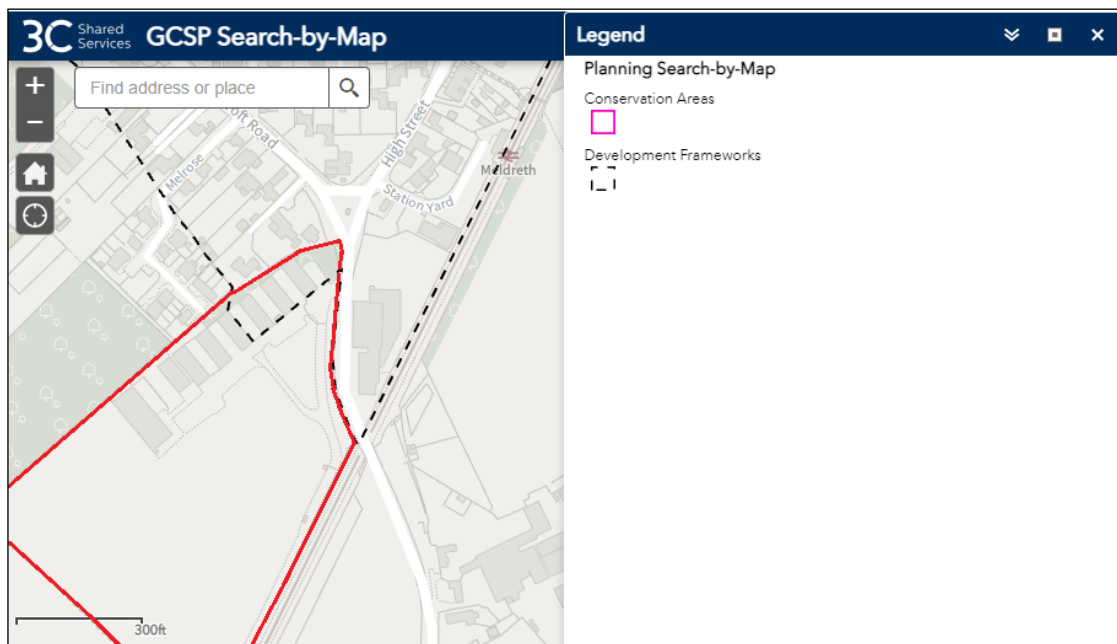


Figure 2: Extract from SCLP Policies Map with the Development Framework Boundary plotted and shown relative to the site boundary.

- 2.7 As is evident in Figure 1 and Figure 2 above, the site is particularly close to Meldreth Railway Station which is approximately 200 metres to the north-east of the site entrance. This provides frequent, direct services between London and Cambridge and links to Royston by rail. There are also regular bus services between Meldreth, Melbourn and Royston.
- 2.8 Meldreth Primary School is 500 metres to the north of the site while additional amenities including a convenience store and 'The British Queen' public house are all within 800 metres of the site entrance. Station Road also provides access to a wider range of amenities in Melbourn. The village centre is approximately 1 km to the south-east of the site entrance.

- 2.9 The absence of any physical constraints is also a feature of the site which should influence its suitability for development. It is well outside of the Sewage TW odour zone (a constraint to development in other areas of the village, located in Flood Zone 1, is not within or adjacent to any local wildlife site and is located outside of the Green Belt.

Previous Assessment of the Site

- 2.10 The site assessment records in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), relating to the land to the West of Station Road provide a brief summary of the constraints (or otherwise), to the development of the site. A 'traffic light' system has been used for assessing the suitability of sites for development. This has identified Landscape and Access as two key factors which could limit or prevent development of this site from being realised. Both have been assessed as 'Red' in terms of how these influence the suitability or otherwise of the site for residential development.
- 2.11 It is notable that the assessment of the suitability of the site for development has highlighted 'landscape and townscape' as factors that weigh against the site being allocated for development. However, it is noted that the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan does not identify the site as having any particular landscape designation. The wider area is identified as part of the East Anglian Chalk National Character Area and within the Chalklands area of the South Cambridgeshire District. This area is described as *"a broad scale landscape of large fields, low trimmed hedgerows and few trees with occasional shelterbelts around settlements."*
- 2.12 In their assessment of the landscape impact of the potential development of the site contained within a Landscape Character Assessment (2021), the Council consider that development throughout this site (our emphasis), would have "a significant adverse impact" on the wide and local landscape character and views. This goes on to state that development would represent "an encroachment into the landscape", the result of which would see the urbanisation of the rural countryside and the potential amalgamation of the villages of Meldreth and Melbourn.
- 2.13 Despite this assessment, it is notable that that the assessment of the site in the Landscape Character Assessment suggests that some limited development may be possible in the area adjoining the Station Road frontage.
- 2.14 The underlined passage above notably highlights the fact that the previous assessment of the impact of this site being allocated for development was on the basis of the entire area (extending across approximately 22 hectares), being allocated for development. However, it is now acknowledged that the developable area of the site in the short-to-medium term would need to be limited to the area which extends from Station Road to the public footpath which runs north-west to south-east across the existing fields.
- 2.15 In landscape terms, the presence of an area of mature woodland immediately to the north-west of the area now promoted for development, provides further containment and limits the extent of any visual impact arising from its development. It is also notable that the wider area

of land is enclosed by mature hedgerows and small clusters of trees, while the presence of the railway line to the south-east and the solar farm further to the south of the site also limit the visibility of the area and any potential visual impact of development.

- 2.16 It is maintained that the site now promoted for development lends itself particularly well to residential development and this represents a deliverable housing site with the capacity to accommodate approximately 140 dwellings (on the basis that housing would be provided at a density of 30 dwellings per hectare).
- 2.17 In terms of access, the reduced scale of the proposed allocation would reduce the extent to which concerns about the vehicular access to the site would be applicable. The existing access should therefore be considered suitable in its current form or following enhancements or improvements to the junction at the northern edge of the site. It is acknowledged that there are limitations with this access at present and that the current arrangements would need to be improved in order to facilitate development of the scale envisaged. However, it is evident that land is available to provide for a new or remodelled access to the site from Station Road. This would have the added benefit of providing traffic calming to vehicles travelling north along Station Road into Meldreth.
- 2.18 It is anticipated that any development would also provide for enhancements in its value for wildlife. Given that it is currently in use as an arable field, there is significant scope for the provision of measures to deliver a substantial uplift in biodiversity as required by the Environment Act.
- 2.19 It is notable that site also benefits from existing utility connections and despite the presence of existing buildings on part of the site, the nature of their construction means that there would not be a need for lengthy clearance or remediation of the previously developed site. As such, the land could be brought forward for development within five years.

3. Planning Policy

- 3.1 The South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) was adopted in September 2018. The Plan included a policy that made a commitment to an early review of the Local Plan. This forms part of the commitment to the City Deal agreement with the Government established in 2013.

Existing Planning Policy - South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (SCDCLP)

- 3.2 The adopted Local Plan acknowledges that South Cambridgeshire is a mainly rural district but is significantly influenced by the city itself. Sustainable development and a comprehensive approach to encouraging the use of more sustainable modes of travel are seen as critical for the future.
- 3.3 Within the Local Plan, the strategy for the rural area classifies the villages into 4 groupings that aims to direct housing to the most sustainable locations. The villages were classified following a review of the services and facilities, education, public transport and employment available at each settlement.
- 3.4 In relation to the site the subject of these representations, Meldreth is currently classified as a 'Group Village' under Policy S/10 where there are some services and facilities allowing only some of the basic day-to-day requirements of their residents to be met without the need to travel outside the village. The policy currently allows proposals providing up to 8 dwellings, and exceptionally up to 15 dwellings where these relate to brownfield sites within the Development Framework for the village.
- 3.5 Other key policies from the adopted Local Plan that are relevant to the site are as follows:
- 3.6 Policy S/6 sets out the development strategy to 2031 in relation to the need for jobs and homes with the following order of preference for development:
- a. On the edge of Cambridge;
 - b. At new settlements;
 - c. In the rural area at Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres.
- 3.7 Point 4 of the policy states:

“Development in the rural area will be limited, with allocations for jobs and housing focused on Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres, and rural settlement policies providing for windfall development for different categories of village consistent with the level of local service provision and quality of public transport access to Cambridge or a market town.”

- 3.8 Policy TI/2 refers to Planning for Sustainable Travel. Development must be located and designed to reduce the need to travel, particularly by car, and promote sustainable travel appropriate to its location. Reference to walking and cycling between home and nearby centres of attraction, and to bus stops or railway stations, to provide real travel choice for some or all of the journey, in accordance with Policy HQ/1.

Environmental Matters

- 3.9 In late 2018, SCDC declared a 'Climate Emergency' and backed a motion of support for a transition to zero carbon by 2050 in the next Local Plan. However, the need to reduce carbon and address climate change is generally growing in public awareness. Whilst the policies for implementing zero carbon by 2050 are not yet fully detailed, it is clear that the Council is moving forward on its commitment to be a leader in the transition to zero carbon.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published in March 2012, and subsequently updated in 2018, 2019. The current iteration of the Framework was issued in July 2021. The NPPF stresses the main purpose of the planning system is to help achieve sustainable development and sets out three dimensions to sustainable development: an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective.
- 3.11 There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and local authorities are expected to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area and local plans are expected to meet objectively assessed needs with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change. Paragraph 81 of the NPPF confirms that:

“significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.”

- 3.12 The NPPF sets out the required approach to Plan-making in paragraphs 15 – 37. Each Planning Authority should set out the strategic policies for the area in the Local Plan including the homes and jobs needed in the area. Crucially, Local Plans should:

- *be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development;*
- *be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable.*
- *be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees;*

- *contain policies that are clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals;*
- *be accessible through the use of digital tools to assist public involvement and policy presentation; and*
- *serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area (including policies in this Framework, where relevant).*

3.13 Paragraph 31 seeks to ensure that the Local Plan is based on adequate, up to date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area.

[Soundness of the Plan](#)

3.14 Paragraph 35 of the NPPF states that during a Local Plan examination, an independent inspector will determine the soundness of that Plan in accordance with the four tests listed below:

- Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- Justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
- Effective** – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
- Consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.

3.15 In preparing these representations we have had full regard to the National Planning Policy Framework’s (NPPF) policies on the soundness of emerging Local Plans. Our representations on the specific policies are made with reference to these tests.

[Other Relevant areas of the Framework](#)

3.16 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF relates to support for a prosperous rural economy. While it states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites may have to be found in areas beyond existing settlements, it is noted that the Paragraph also goes on to state that:

In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

- 3.17 The proposed allocation of land at Meldreth for residential use would be consistent with the relevant areas of this Paragraph. The Site would be well-contained and would relate well to its surroundings, while allocating it for development would enable substantial improvements to the local highway network both to ensure that access is provided to the site in a suitable and safe manner, and also to deliver improvements to road safety more generally at what is a key gateway location, particularly for vehicles approaching Meldreth from the south.
- 3.18 It is also notable that development of this site would achieve the objective of making the location more sustainable, by ensuring that prospective residents of any dwellings constructed in this area have safe and convenient access to public transport links. Development at the southern edge of Meldreth also limits the distance that pedestrians or cyclists would have to travel to access retail and other amenities, as well as employment opportunities, both in Meldreth and in Melbourn. As Paragraph 85 states, development of these sites should be encouraged. It is considered that this represents such an opportunity for a sustainable addition to the existing settlement.

4. Response to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan (GCLP) - First Proposals

4.1 We have reviewed the GCLP: First Proposals draft and have identified a number of areas where there is significant scope for the Plan to better reflect the objectives of the NPPF and achieve a more sustainable form of development, particularly in relation to the role of Meldreth and Melbourn and how residential development here would deliver new homes with convenient access to rail links to Cambridge, London and a range of other destinations.

4.2 Our comments on the specific areas of the Plan set out in the consultation documents are set out below.

Vision and Development Strategy

4.3 While the general principles associated with the growth of the Greater Cambridge area are supported, it is considered that there are aspects of the strategy which fail to recognise the potential of areas in the south of this area for accommodating sustainable growth, particularly where this utilises existing infrastructure and access to rail links to London and Cambridge.

4.4 Policy S/DS: Development strategy sets the principles and general policy direction of the GCLP in order to meet the vision of the Local Plan. The proposed policy direction seeks to direct development where it has the least climate impact and where alternative means of transport to private cars are the 'natural choice'.

4.5 While the general principles are supported, it is arguable whether the development strategy makes the most of the opportunities that exist to utilise the proximity to existing public transport nodes in the rural areas beyond the Rural Southern Cluster. It is considered that the strategy currently relies too heavily on the strategic sites and large-scale developments towards the north of the Greater Cambridge area. A more balanced approach would be to recognise the potential of areas where existing public transport links, including Meldreth Station, can be realised in order to deliver sustainable extensions to existing settlements.

4.6 The policy direction currently seeks to provide "a very limited amount of development" in the rural areas. This would be achieved through the provision of:

- *Small new sites for housing and employment at villages that have very good public transport access, to help our rural communities thrive;*
- *New employment sites in the countryside meeting specific business needs; and*
- *Windfall development - an allowance for homes on unallocated land, which would need to be consistent with policy requirements in the Plan, including Policy SS/SH: Settlement Hierarchy, which sets out scales of development in different categories of village.*

- 4.7 The approach to meeting development needs, and providing for growth has generally been to allocate land for the provision of large scale developments. However, this does not allow existing areas to improve or account for the fact that there is a need for new homes to be provided across the GCLP area.
- 4.8 The opportunity to support development within existing communities that would improve the impact on climate change should be considered within the Local Plan. The current focus on larger-scale development, including new settlements, does not necessarily result in the benefits of new housing being distributed among existing communities, and the fact that new development also addresses issues and brings with it other benefits, including environmental enhancements, and the contribution that new development makes towards sustaining and enhancing local services. It is therefore considered that there is a need to balance the growth strategy to ensure that the needs of existing settlements are met, alongside the larger strategic elements in Cambridge and in the main growth areas.
- 4.9 As far as the Settlement Hierarchy is concerned, the identification of Melbourn as a Minor Rural Service Centre is supported, although this does not fully recognise its potential for sustainable growth.
- 4.10 The definition of Meldreth as a Group Village is regarded as a significant missed opportunity to provide for growth in a sustainable location with good access to rail services. There is considerable potential for both Melbourn and Meldreth to contribute towards the sustainable growth of the area, both in the form of new housing and through the provision of new employment opportunities, building on the success of the cluster of high-technology employers at Melbourn Science Park.
- 4.11 It is proposed that the potential of these two settlements should be recognised and that these should both be afforded greater prominence and appear higher in the Settlement Hierarchy so as not to limit the scale of what would be regarded as the maximum scheme size for development in these areas.
- 4.12 More generally, the limits on the size of scheme that will be considered acceptable in settlements of a particular size are not considered necessary or appropriate. While it is acknowledged that these policies reflect the approach in the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan which was adopted in 2018, placing specific limitations on the scale of development that would be acceptable does not provide flexibility or recognise that circumstances may change during the Plan Period. This approach may also result in development being promoted which fails to make efficient use of land (contrary to Paragraphs 124 and 125 of the NPPF), and which may result in artificially low levels of development in sites which would otherwise have the potential to accommodate development in a sustainable manner and form.
- 4.13 It is proposed that the policy approach is amended to recognise that some smaller settlements which benefit from public transport links have the potential for growth and are able to accommodate levels of development that would not be consistent with the settlement hierarchy.

Site Allocations: Rest of the Rural Area

- 4.14 Policy S/RRA allocates sites for homes or employment that support the overall development strategy within the rural area beyond that identified as the rural southern cluster. This includes allocation of 8 sites including two in Melbourn, including (site ref) S/RRA/ML: The Moor, Moor Lane, and S/RRA/CR: Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn, which would provide 20 and 120 dwellings respectively. It is also envisaged that the latter (i.e.S/RRA/CR), would provide 2.5ha of land for employment use.
- 4.15 It is considered that there is considerable scope in both Melbourn and Meldreth to provide for additional growth which takes into account the access that residents (existing and prospective), have to a range of facilities and amenities, as well as its excellent public transport accessibility. There is clearly potential to better-utilise the land in close proximity to Meldreth Station and make effective use of this area. Unlike outlying areas of these settlements land in such close proximity to the station will ensure that public transport represents the most convenient means of accessing employment and for journeys to Cambridge, Royston and London (as well as other destinations served by the railway network). Outlying areas of the villages beyond 800 metres from the Station may result in commuting by private cars which would add to pressure on the existing station car park.
- 4.16 While it is noted that while two sites in Melbourn are proposed for development, these areas would not necessarily provide convenient access to Meldreth Station. Indeed, these may result in additional journeys being undertaken via private transport and would be more likely to increase pressure on the station car park rather than providing for new housing where there is fast and convenient access to public transport. The relative merits of the sites where residential development is proposed in Melbourn and the land to the east and west of Station Road are examined in greater detail below.
- 4.17 The two sites where development is currently proposed at The Moor (ref: 40215), and the larger site to the West of Cambridge Road (ref: 40490), are a significantly greater distance from Meldreth Station. Residents of these areas requiring those wishing to access rail services on foot or by cycling, having to travel a minimum of 2km.
- 4.18 Furthermore, development in Meldreth would also provide significant opportunities for enhancements to the existing access to the railway station from Melbourn. The land owner of the Site promoted for development to the West of Station Road is able to make provision for enhancements to the existing east-west linkages between Meldreth and Melbourn for pedestrians and cyclists. Development on the land in close proximity to the station provides an opportunity to deliver significant enhancements to these pedestrian and cycle links between Melbourn and Meldreth. While a direct pedestrian link from the eastern edge of the station is currently provided to Melbourn, this is only possible via an underpass beneath the A10 which does represent an inviting or attractive route for pedestrians or cyclists. There is significant scope for the enhancement of this key link (across land owned by our client), between the two villages which would increase the ease of access to rail services for residents of Melbourn and thus make this form of travel more convenient and attractive.

- 4.19 Moreover, the proposed allocation of land to the West of Cambridge Road would result in the provision of housing within an otherwise contiguous area of well-established commercial premises. This has the potential to limit the extent of land that would otherwise provide an opportunity for the expansion of Melbourn Science Park. While it is noted that this site is currently proposed for allocation as ‘mixed-use’ providing 2.5 hectares of employment land alongside housing, this would effectively represent the limit of the Science Park and prevent further growth of the high-technology sector which is an important part of the local economy. The risk in allocating part of this land for residential development would be that future investment in related businesses and/or research and development facilities may not be realised, or it may be the case that the presence of housing limits the range and extent of investment in the Science Park.
- 4.20 It is also unclear why the assessment of the two sites proposed for allocation in Melbourn has led to greatly different conclusions being drawn in terms of the impact of development on the landscape. In the assessment of Landscape and Townscape in the HELAA the Councils have concluded that *“Residential development with open space is seen to be appropriate here when considering the immediate surroundings of existing residential and commercial properties.”*
- 4.21 It is unclear how the assessment of landscape impact has resulted in greatly different conclusions being drawn in relation to the potential landscape impact resulting from the allocation of land to the West of Station Road, and at The Moor, where similar findings have been reported about the extent of any impact on the landscape. It is also notable that the HELAA assessment of both of these sites at the north-eastern edge of Melbourn suggests that both would require landscape mitigation and strengthening of the boundaries between the sites and the wider countryside as part of any development. It is unclear how or why the assessment of development on these sites is vastly different to that of the site which is the subject of these representations when these all share similar characteristics and are within the same broad classification of landscape typologies.

Climate Change

- 4.22 The Local Plan is one of many elements in the overall development process that is required to work effectively to help achieve net zero carbon by 2050. The Local Plan influences the location and scale new development but it can also ensure that development that would improve the sustainability of existing settlements is considered in a more favourable light.
- 4.23 As previously noted, we agree with the approach that in order to achieve net zero carbon by 2050 it is essential to reduce energy usage, promote renewable forms for energy and encourage the use of sustainable forms of transport to reduce the reliance on the use of the private car. We support the pro-active approach of promoting the planting of trees and the use technology such as carbon capture and storage. Proposals that are able to bring land into a more efficient and effective use that capture these elements should be considered favourably in the Local Plan.

- 4.24 In light of the overarching objective of preventing or reducing carbon emissions, and mitigating against the impact of climate change, it is clear that development which clearly promotes, and effectively encourages, the use of public transport, particularly where there is direct access to rail services in particular should be supported. The current development strategy delivers new development in the north of the Greater Cambridge Area but fails to maximise the opportunities for sustainable development in the southern areas where the areas in close proximity to public transport links are not allocated for growth.

Biodiversity and Green Spaces

- 4.25 The policy approach to biodiversity and green spaces is supported. There is significant potential to enhance the biodiversity of the areas proposed for development in Meldreth and Melbourn. The creation of new residential areas would replace existing areas of agricultural land which currently have low levels of biodiversity. It is therefore anticipated that there is significant potential for enhancements to biodiversity and opportunities for net gain of 10% or greater to be achieved as part of development proposals.

Wellbeing and Inclusion

- 4.26 The GCLP promotes a cohesive society and healthy communities. This is supported. A key factor in achieving this is a thriving economy, including a supply of market and affordable housing in a range of areas and where this benefits residents of all areas of the CLP area. At present, the absence of any proposed allocations in Meldreth does not promote or support the objective of delivering wellbeing and inclusion by ensuring that there is access to housing, and that new residential areas are provided where prospective residents have access to public transport. The allocation of land at Meldreth would contribute towards achieving these objectives and would be consistent with this overarching policy.

Great Places Policies

- 4.27 The Great Places Policies in the GCLP are generally supported. The proposed policy approach towards the enhancement of landscape character is supported, although it is important to recognise that there are variations within broadly defined landscape character areas. Many areas, particularly those on the edge of existing settlements, or which are well-contained by existing physical features, will have a much more limited visual impact than areas which are also subject to the same broad landscape designation. Provided these policies enable the site-specific circumstances are taken into account when assessing the visual impact of any particular location, these policies would represent an important aspect of maintaining high quality environments in the GCLP area.

Jobs Policies

- 4.28 As highlighted above, the proposals to promote mixed use development, including residential uses on land towards the east of Melbourn would potentially reduce the prospect of further

growth or expansion of the successful employment areas where high-technology, research and development and related facilities are now well-established.

- 4.29 Unlike more conventional employment premises, the research and development sector is one where there is significant potential for growth and one where growth would support and fund additional development.
- 4.30 It is evident that the proposed allocation of the land adjacent to the existing Science Park for mixed use development (with only 2.5 hectares of the total site area of 6.5 hectares identified for employment use), would potentially restrict the future growth and expansion of this key sector. The proposed allocation represents a unique source of land for the expansion of the Science Park while it is not necessarily the most suitable site for residential development in Melbourn or Meldreth.

Homes Policies

- 4.31 The general approach to the provision of housing is supported. It is recognised that affordable housing is an important component of major development schemes, and that the rate of affordable housing proposed is appropriate in the context of the GCLP area where affordability is a key issue.
- 4.32 The inclusion of a specific policy relating to rural exception sites is supported. This should recognise that where there is evidence of need, schemes which provide new homes to meet this address this issue should be supported even where these may be contrary to other policy objectives. Any policy approach should ensure that particular weight is given to the provision of housing which addresses a specific need for housing, particularly where it is possible to demonstrate that this represents sustainable development and access is provided to a range of facilities and transport links.

Infrastructure Policies

- 4.33 It is noted that the most significant investment in infrastructure will be associated with the larger-scale development areas towards the north of the GCLP area. It is acknowledged that with the scale of growth there is a need for investment in the infrastructure to support this and that this will inevitably be the focus of development and infrastructure provision during the Plan Period.
- 4.34 It is noted that the provision of infrastructure to facilitate new development and to ensure that this can be accommodated in the target locations (primarily in the large-scale growth areas and new settlements to the north of Cambridge, at Northstow and at Cambourne). However, it is not considered that sufficient attention has been given to the role of existing infrastructure and how locations in the GCLP area which are currently well-served by public transport links can contribute to sustainable growth.

4.35 The role of Meldreth Station and other public transport nodes, particularly those which provide access to rail services, is not given sufficient prominence. As highlighted above, the fact that settlements benefitting from convenient access to the rail network do not have greater prominence as a focus for sustainable development represents a significant missed opportunity. There is an opportunity to address this by recognising the potential of existing infrastructure to accommodate growth which is proportionate to the scale of the settlement.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The councils have acknowledged that greenfield land will need to be developed to meet the housing and employment needs for the plan period. The focus of development remains areas on the edge of Cambridge and large-scale new settlements, predominantly to the north of the city. This has led to a restrictive approach to development with the rural areas irrespective of the level of sustainability of settlements. In respect of the land the subject of these representations, the villages of Meldreth and Melbourn are clearly in sustainable locations and this has been recognised in the assessments undertaken by the councils.
- 5.2 Furthermore, the relevant guidance provided by the NPPF does not necessary limit growth of an appropriate scale in rural areas, but instead seeks to enable these to prosper and for growth to be promoted where it will maintain or enhance the viability of the settlement and/or areas within it as a source of both homes and jobs. The GCLP does not achieve this objective in its current form, and it is maintained that a greater balance needs to be achieved between promoting development in the key target locations, whilst also recognising the growth potential of sustainable locations with good access to public transport links and employment opportunities.
- 5.3 More specifically, it is considered that the Land to the West of Station Road represents a suitable site for the provision of new housing and that its development would deliver new homes in close proximity to a key public transport node in the form of Meldreth Station. The proximity of the site to Melbourn would also mean that the range of services and facilities in the larger settlement are easily accessible by pedestrians and cyclists. The site itself is largely unconstrained, and represents a deliverable site where because of its scale, development could be realised within five years.
- 5.4 Furthermore, the allocation of this site and its redevelopment for predominantly residential use would enable the creation of a more attractive environment at this key gateway to Meldreth. The presence of poor-quality former agricultural buildings in this prominent location fails to capitalise on the locational advantages of this well-located site at the edge of the settlement, where prospective residents would have safe and convenient access to amenities in both Meldreth and Melbourn.
- 5.5 While it is acknowledged that it would not necessarily be appropriate for the entire area currently identified as site: 40088 to be allocated for development, the areas closest to the settlement would represent an appropriate, proportionate and highly-sustainable addition to the existing residential areas of the village. The development of this site would also result in additional public benefits in the form of enhancements to the accessibility of the countryside and improved linkages between the two settlements. The latter would be provided for by the land owner whose wider holding includes key areas of land between the two villages where improvements to pedestrian and cycle links in particular would significantly improve access to the railway station for residents of Melbourn, and connectivity between the settlements more generally.

- 5.6 There are significant public benefits arising from the development of the site to the West of Station Road, which include:
- Provision of housing in a genuinely sustainable location where there would be convenient access to Meldreth Station and where walking and cycling represent the easiest means of travelling to it.
 - Improvements to the vehicular access currently serving the employment site which in its current form does not necessarily provide for a safe and effective junction.
 - Improvements to the accessibility of the footpath network to the south of Meldreth and access to the countryside.
- 5.9 In addition, it is notable that the development of this particular site would be preferable to the use of land on the north-eastern edge of Melbourn for mixed-use (including housing), when it would be better for this to be allocated specifically for the expansion of Melbourn Science Park. By contrast to the land at the southern edge of Meldreth, the proposed allocation of land to the north-east of Melbourn would not necessarily represent the most suitable or appropriate location for new housing, particularly since this would be over 2km from the railway station. Prospective residents of new housing in this part of the village would be more likely to use private cars for commuting, whereas residential development on the Site that is the subject of these representations would promote the use of public transport, walking and cycling, ultimately resulting in a more sustainable form of development.
- 5.10 As well as being particularly well-located to the key public transport links providing access to rail services and buses linking Meldreth to other settlements, it is notable that this site is also within easy walking distance of schools with Meldreth Primary School only 500 metres to the north. The Secondary School at Melbourn Village College is also within walking distance of the site. The distance of 1.6km (one mile), between the site and the school site means that this is within reach for children of secondary school age using existing road and footpath links. There are also opportunities to improve access between Meldreth and the secondary school which would further reduce the prospect of the need for journeys between the two areas by private cars.
- 5.11 It is notable that there are commitments to improve public transport to the village as noted in Figure 22 of the GCLP and provide new and improved walking and cycle routes. Development of the land subject to this representation would lead to further improvements in sustainability and support new housing and employment in a sustainable location. This connectivity represents a key advantage and opportunity to generate significant environmental and connectivity improvements for the two settlements. This will increase the wellbeing and social inclusion and spread the benefits of growth, helping to create healthy and inclusive communities.

- 5.12 On the basis of the above, the site is largely unconstrained, and should be considered suitable for development. Accordingly, it should be allocated for residential development which would maximise the opportunity that exists to provide for the sustainable expansion of Meldreth.
- 5.13 The land subject to these representations is also readily deliverable with no known technical or physical constraints that would prevent the site from being developed within the first five years of the Plan period. There is firm interest from a residential developer which is a further indication that the potential of this site, while the size of the site means that it could be developed without the need for significant additional infrastructure. The benefits arising from the development would therefore be realised within the first five years of the plan period.



Phase 2

PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT
LIMITED