

12<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Re: Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 16 consultation**

**Context**

These representations provide the response of Nightingale Land and The Hill Group to the current consultation held by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) on the submission version of the Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan (SGSNP) under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

Nightingale Land has land interests in the Neighbourhood Area at Land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane. The site is identified as a preferred option for development at the “First Proposals” stage of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan under site reference “S/RSC/HW” for approximately 100 dwellings.

Nightingale Land are working in partnership with the Hill Group to bring the site forward for residential development and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the development proposals with the Great Shelford Parish Council and Stapleford Parish Council and invite them to contact us in this regard.

Through this response, Nightingale Land provide an analysis of the SGSNP and the land use policies promoted within the draft Plan. After consideration of the suite of policy choices promoted through the draft SGSNP, we raise a series of concerns related to several policies and their ability to meet the neighbourhood plan basic conditions as required by paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended). In summary, the basic conditions that the SGSNP are required to meet are outlined as follows:

- a) Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the order.
- d) The making of the order contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- e) The making of the order is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area).
- f) The making of the order does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.

## **National Planning Policy and Guidance**

The latest version of the Framework was recently updated on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024. However, the transitional arrangements at paragraph 239 of the Framework (2024) make clear that the policies contained in the Framework (2023) will apply to neighbourhood plans if submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

The Framework (2023) makes clear that neighbourhood plans give communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area to help shape, direct and deliver sustainable development. Paragraph 29 makes clear that neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.

In accordance with paragraph 13, neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in Local Plans or spatial development strategies, and should shape and direct development that is outside these strategic policies.

The Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG) further supplements the requirements of the Framework. It states plans should be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable.

The PPG makes clear neighbourhood plans can be brought forward ahead of an emerging Local Plan. Although a draft neighbourhood plan or Order is not tested against the policies in an emerging local plan, the reasoning and evidence informing the local plan process is likely to be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested. For example, up-to-date housing need evidence is relevant to the question of whether a housing supply policy in a neighbourhood plan or Order contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Where a neighbourhood plan is brought forward before an up-to-date local plan is in place, the qualifying body and the local planning authority should discuss and aim to agree the relationship between policies in:

- The emerging neighbourhood plan
- The emerging local plan (or spatial development strategy)
- The adopted development plan

Neighbourhood plans should consider the allocation of reserve sites to ensure that emerging evidence of housing need is addressed and to help minimise potential conflicts to ensure that policies in the neighbourhood plan are not overridden by a new local plan<sup>1</sup>.

While there are prescribed documents that must be submitted with a neighbourhood plan it should be supported by proportionate, robust evidence to support the choices made and the approach taken. The evidence should be drawn upon to explain succinctly the intention and rationale of the policies in the draft neighbourhood plan. A local planning authority should share relevant evidence, including that gathered to support its own plan making, with a qualifying body.

Whilst Neighbourhood plans are not obliged to contain policies addressing all types of development, where they do contain policies relevant to housing supply, these policies should take account of latest

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<sup>1</sup> PPG Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 41-009-20190509

and up-to-date evidence of housing need. In particular, where a qualifying body is attempting to identify and meet housing need, a local planning authority should share relevant evidence on housing need gathered to support its own plan-making<sup>2</sup>.

In setting out policies, neighbourhood plan policies should be clear and unambiguous. It should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence. It should be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared<sup>3</sup>.

The PPG also makes clear that a wide range of settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas, so blanket policies restricting housing development in some types of settlement will need to be supported by robust evidence of their appropriateness<sup>4</sup>.

The above paragraphs taken from the PPG are clear. Whilst the Plan will not be tested against the emerging Local Plan, the evidence which supports that Plan is relevant to whether the neighbourhood plan is consistent with the basic conditions to which it will be tested against. A number of policies contained within the draft plan act to stymie growth opportunities identified in the emerging Local Plan and therefore are inconsistent with national guidance and basic condition (a). Accordingly, modifications to the neighbourhood plan are required to ensure compliance with the basic conditions.

## **Development Plan**

### Adopted Development Plan

As referred to above, the SGSNP will need to be found in conformity with the Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions to which the plan will be tested against. The adopted Development Plan relevant to the preparation of the SGSNP is the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan adopted in September 2018. The adopted Development Plan covers the period 2011-2031 and requires provision for 19,500 new homes.

The adopted Local Plan identifies Great Shelford and Stapleford as a Rural Centre along with 4 other settlements. Rural Centres are the largest, most sustainable villages of the district having good access to a secondary school (either within the village or good public transport), employment opportunities, variety of services and facilities together with good public transport services to Cambridge or a market town.

### Emerging Development Plan

SDDC and Cambridge City Council (CCC) are preparing the Greater Cambridge Local Plan (GCLP) which will replace the existing development plan once adopted. At the time of writing, the GCLP will set out

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<sup>2</sup> PPG Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 41-040-20160211

<sup>3</sup> PPG Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 41-041-20140306

<sup>4</sup> PPG Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 67-009-20190722

policies for future land use and planning for the area until 2041. However, this time period may change on account of the recent planning reforms.

SDDC and CCC consulted on the First Proposals Local Plan with consultation ending 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021. The consultation document identified land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane (site ref: S/RSC/HW) as a preferred allocation for 100 dwellings. The site is considered to be well located in relation to existing railway station and provides excellent access to Cambridge and Cambridge Biomedical Campus once the new Cambridge South Station is open.

Given the existing status of the site as a preferred allocation for development in the emerging GCLP, it is imperative that sufficient flexibility is built into the SGSNP to ensure that the plan is capable of meeting basic conditions (a) and (d).

### **Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan**

This section of the representations focusses on the key points that Nightingale Land wish to raise with regard to the content of the SGSNP as currently proposed.

#### The ability of Stapleford and Great Shelford to support future growth

The Government has outlined its growth agenda and the Framework seeks to promote sustainable development to meet identified housing need. The adopted Local Plan recognises the sustainability of Stapleford and Great Shelford given their designation as Rural Centres which are considered to be the largest and most sustainable settlements within the local authority area. Indeed, paragraph 2.5 of the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan outlines the sustainability credentials of Stapleford with access to its own primary school and nursery, shop, 2 pubs, art centre, café, builder's merchant and a number of other local businesses. It goes on to explain that Great Shelford has a wide range of amenities including, primary school, business centre, library, pharmacy, healthcare centre, post office, pubs, cafes, restaurants, garden centre and a number of independent and national grocers. Further, the neighbourhood area is connected to Cambridge via several public transport services including rail and bus services as well as access to the national cycle network providing a choice of active travel options.

Given the level of existing services and facilities it is important that the neighbourhood plan supports future growth opportunities so that these services continue to serve the local community and maintain their viability for future generations. It should be recognised that the opportunity to improve some services, facilities and community assets can be maintained and enhanced so they are not lost as a result of a lack of support and out-migration of existing residents due to a lack of available housing. Accordingly, the SGSNP needs to support new opportunities for growth to meet the objectives of the plan such as increasing affordable home ownership and infrastructure that the plan seeks to deliver.

#### Vision and Objectives

The overall aim of the vision and objectives is supported in principle, particularly reference to provision of new development which addresses identified housing needs within the local community.

However, the aims of the vision and suite of policies set out within the SGSNP seek a protectionist approach to landscape setting. As such, a more flexible approach is required to ensure that existing landscape character of the settlement is 'enhanced' and should be reflected in the plan's vision.

Regarding objective 10, it is questionable whether the Countryside Enhancement Strategy set out in the Landscape Character Assessment is a deliverable objective given the Greater Cambridgeshire's Authorities decision to allocate Land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane for approximately 100 dwellings to meet the housing needs of the settlement as outlined in the emerging Local Plan. More clarity is required within this objective and supporting policies to ensure any future allocations made by the Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan are not precluded from coming forward because of the proposed landscaping policies.

### **Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

#### **Policy S&GS1: Housing mix (type, size affordability and design)**

##### *Housing Mix*

In principle, Nightingale Land support this aspect of the policy which seeks to provide a range of housing types to meet housing needs in accordance with the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) undertaken by AECOM consulting. The focus of the policy requires at least 50% of the total housing mix to be 3 bedroom properties for any sites coming forward over the plan period for the remaining properties being 1, 2 and 4 bedroom homes.

It is important that the Plan recognises that housing mix can be altered over the course of the plan period and therefore a degree of flexibility is required going forward. As housing needs can change over time, referencing specific dwelling requirements can potentially become out of date or even superseded as new evidence of housing need comes to light. The following wording is therefore put forward for consideration:

*"In terms of size...new housing developments will be supported where they provide a range of housing types, sizes and tenures which have regard to the most up-to-date assessment of housing needs."*

##### *First Homes*

It is accepted that the Neighbourhood Plan will be tested against the requirements of the Framework (2023). However, following the publication of the revised Framework (2024) the requirement to deliver a minimum 25% of affordable housing as First Homes no longer applies, and that delivery of First Homes can only continue where local planning authorities judge that they meet local need<sup>5</sup>. As such, it is not the place of the neighbourhood plan to implement such a policy when the current national policy makes clear that this is at the discretion of the local planning authority. To ensure flexibility particularly in the context of recent national policy changes, it is recommended that this

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<sup>5</sup> NPPF(2024) Footnote 31.

aspect of the policy is reworded to ensure development provides an appropriate level of affordable housing as defined by Annex 2 of the Framework (2024).

#### *M4(2) Standard*

The policy requires all development to be built to M4(2) standard. Whilst this is a laudable aim and was expected to be made mandatory on account of reforms to Part M to the Building Regulations, these changes were never implemented.

The Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) to parliament dated 25<sup>th</sup> March 2015 made clear that qualifying bodies preparing neighbourhood plans should not seek to apply additional technical standards relating to construction, internal layout or performance of new dwellings and this should only be implemented via an up-to-date Local Plan based on a robust assessment of need and viability. It is therefore a matter for the Greater Cambridgeshire Authorities to undertake necessary evidence to implement these standards through the emerging Local Plan.

Accordingly, this aspect of the policy is not in accordance with basic condition (a) and (d) and reference to optional technical standards should be removed.

#### Policy S&GS 2: Prioritising local people in the allocation of affordable housing

In principle, Nightingale Land support the rationale to prioritise local people in the allocation of affordable housing. However, this is not a land use policy; it is a statement of intent and should therefore be removed from the policy body of the SGSNP and instead included as an appendix to the neighbourhood plan as an aspirational goal to achieve.

#### Policy S&GS6: Development and design in Stapleford and Great Shelford

Nightingale Land support the principle behind this policy which seeks to ensure new development proposals provide high quality design. The SGSNP is supported by a design code which provides a local framework for the creation of well designed places and is in accordance with the requirements of national policy. Notwithstanding this, the policy requires some form of flexibility to respond to site specifics and the character of the local area. Indeed, there will not be a 'one size fits all' approach in relation to design principles and sites need to be considered on an individual basis with consideration to the guidance.

Although criteria H is supported in recognising development on the edge of settlements, the rural hinterland character applies to all land outside of the settlement limit and therefore results in some internal inconsistency within the policy wording as it would expect all development on the edge of settlements to 'comply' with the design principles set out in RH.11 which requires development to be low density to prevent urbanising development. This fails to recognise the proposed allocation at Land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane which is identified to provide 100 dwellings. A distinction should therefore be included within this policy to make clear that development proposals on the edge of settlements within the rural hinterland are exempt from the principles set out in RH.11 of the local design code.

### Policy S&GS 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate through building design

Nightingale Land recognises the concerns of the local community who seek to ensure development proposals provide innovative approaches to the construction of low and net zero harms to increase energy efficiency.

As referred to in response to S&GS1, the WMS 2015 makes clear that neighbourhood plans should not set out any additional local technical standards on the construction of new homes. Whilst the policy wording does not reference specific standards it requires the submission of a sustainability statement to support any future application. The supporting text at paragraph 7.31 outlines as a minimum what should be included in the Sustainability Statement. In regard to water consumption, the supporting text reads as policy in effect requiring development proposals to adhere to 110l per day/per person and ideally 80l per day per person. Any reference to technical standards relating to energy efficiency and water standards should be deleted from the supporting text. Accordingly, this aspect of the policy is not in accordance with basic conditions (a) and (d) and should be deleted.

Notwithstanding the above, the neighbourhood plan requires the submission of specific documents across several policies to support future applications. The neighbourhood plan cannot dictate what documents are required to be submitted as part of a planning application. As determined in the Examination of the Semington Neighbourhood Plan, the Examiner found at paragraph 94 that this is the role of the Local Validation Checklist as specified by the Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure Order 2025.

### Policy S&GS 10: Mitigation hierarchy and biodiversity net gain in Stapleford and Great Shelford

Policy S&GS10 sets out the neighbourhood plans approach to biodiversity net gain (BNG). The requirement to provide 10% BNG is a statutory requirement. Criteria 2 should be deleted as it merely replicates the requirements of the Framework and therefore results in unnecessary duplication of planning policies<sup>6</sup>. This aspect of the policy is therefore inconsistent with basic condition (a).

### Policy S&GS 12: Protecting Stapleford and Great Shelford's landscape character

The above policy seeks to protect and enhance Stapleford and Great Shelford's landscape character. It includes a range of measures including the creation of an area of separation on the edge of Cambridge, the designation of Visually Important Open Land and retention of existing features and views.

The policy should include an additional criterion under criteria 1 which recognises that where the loss of biodiversity assets is required to facilitate the delivery of the wider development i.e. for access then development will be supported subject to mitigation being provided.

### Policy S&GS13: Important Views

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<sup>6</sup> NPPF – Paragraph 16

The policy identifies a total of 29 key views and vantage points around the neighbourhood plan area. The policy states that development proposals must maintain or enhance the key features and their settings. Development which has an impact on views must be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

The supporting text at paragraph 8.20 states that “Protecting these is therefore, vital to maintaining residents sense of place and sense of identity...”. The views identified are largely general in nature and cover the vast majority of land outside the defined settlement limits of Stapleford and Great Shelford. In accordance with legal judgments on the matter of what constitutes an important view, for a view to be identified for protection it needs to provide a demonstrably physical attribute that elevates its importance above that of an ordinary view of the countryside. Important views cannot be identified simply due to their pleasant sense of place of which are based solely on community support. A total of 5 views are identified which cross the proposed allocation at Land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane. However, the views selected do not provide any landscape significance as demonstrated in the landscape note attached at appendix 1 to this report. The views selected appear to apply equal weight and importance to relatively ordinary views which in-effect dilutes the views of most importance within the neighbourhood area. Moreover, these views in combination have the potential to prevent the emerging Local Plan allocation which would not be in accordance with PPG which makes clear the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process is likely to be relevant to the consideration of basic conditions against which the Plan will be tested against.

New development opportunities, such as land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane, are often able to come forward on the edge of settlements without adversely affecting existing views and more often provide new open space opportunities which results in the creation of new views and recreational spaces to the benefit of existing and future residents.

Notwithstanding the above, it will be difficult for a decision maker to apply this policy consistently and with ease. For instance, the views referred to above are not clearly defined on Map 7. In addition, there is no need to reference the need to a LVIA as this is already set out in the Local Validation Checklist and applicants will be required to submit this evidence when necessary in any event.

Nightingale Land consider that views which do not provide an important view should be deleted from the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### Policy S&GS14: Important Countryside Frontages

A further landscape policy is included to protect important countryside frontages (ICFs). It is acknowledged that two have already been identified by the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the SGSNP proposes to allocate a further three ICFs. One of the ICFs includes land between number 27 and 31 Mingle Lane. Its reason for designation is that it provides a break along Mingle Lane and in the steering group’s opinion provides a sense of place for the wider landscape.

The policy states “where a development proposal compromises these purposes, planning permission will be refused”.



Whilst it is accepted that precedence is set by the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan for the use of such a policy tool, if this parcel of land contained any landscape significance, then it would have already been allocated as such in the adopted Development Plan. The policy wording is overly restrictive considering the proposed allocation identified by the Greater Cambridgeshire authorities and will likely prevent the delivery of housing within the emerging Local Plan.

Indeed, the landscape note at appendix 1 considers that the proposed designation does not provide an important countryside frontage due to existing built form and that it is much weaker and experienced for a very short section of the residential road extending 20m in comparison to other frontages selected. Accordingly, this designation should be deleted.

Nightingale Land consider that the proposed ICF relating to the land between no 27 and no 31 Mingle Lane should therefore be deleted.

#### Policy S&GS 17: Delivering community infrastructure priorities alongside new development

Nightingale Land support the above policy which seeks to ensure development proposals contribute towards infrastructure priorities where they are necessary and directly related to the development they serve. As such, the neighbourhood plan should seek to support new development opportunities which offer the ability to contribute towards key services ensuring the viability of key services and vitality of the neighbourhood area is maintained.

#### Policy S&GS21: Delivering Stapleford and Great Shelford's Improved Landscape Area

The above policy requires development proposals to implement countryside enhancement measures within the proposed Improved Landscape Area. The improved Landscape Area covers a vast swathe of land to the north of the settlement.

Paragraph 16 of the Framework makes clear that plans should be positively prepared, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable. Whilst this policy is indeed aspirational, paragraph 11.30 makes clear that this is subject to site studies and collaboration between stakeholders including landowners, parish councils and statutory bodies. Despite the assertion, no engagement with Nightingale Land has taken place on this matter concerning our land interests at Land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane. Notwithstanding this, the policy is contingent on landowner agreement and cooperation and therefore it is questionable whether these improvements can be delivered on third party land without any firm commitment they can realistically be delivered. As such, it is more akin to an aspiration of the plan.

Rather than stipulate specific measures which are currently outside the neighbourhood plans control it would be best if this policy was modified so that it ensures development within this location seeks to support the delivery of new biodiversity features within the neighbourhood plan area where necessary.

## Site Submission

### Land between Hinton Way and Mingle Lane, Great Shelford

Nightingale Land and The Hill Group are working in collaboration to promote the site identified by SCDC and CCC for residential development. There are no technical constraints preventing the site from being delivered. Nightingale Land own a further 3 acres of land to the north east of the proposed allocation which is planned be used as land for additional public open space in support of the local communities wishes to increase open space provision within the neighbourhood plan area. The site being promoted by Nightingale Land and The Hill Group is illustrated at figure 1 below.

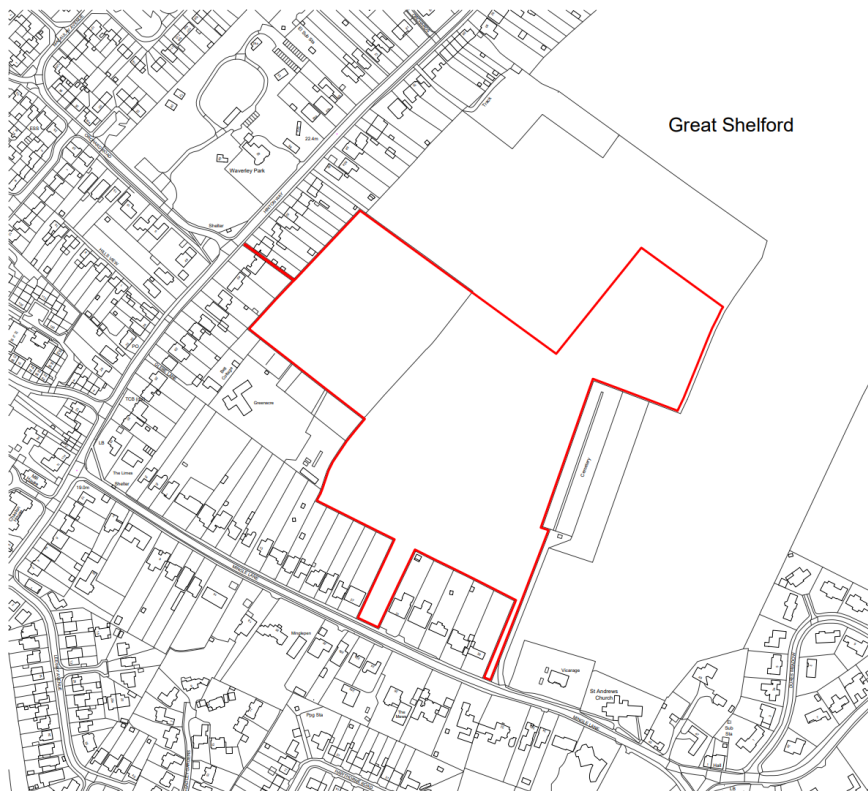


Figure 1: Location plan

## Conclusion

Nightingale Land and The Hill Group welcome the opportunity to comment on the Regulation 16 Neighbourhood Plan consultation. As set out in these representations, we broadly support the aims and aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan but consider there are a number of policy changes required to ensure compliance with the neighbourhood plan basic conditions and to ensure that the policies contained in the neighbourhood plan do not stifle the ability of sustainable development coming forward.

I trust that you will find these comments constructive. If the Neighbourhood Plan Examiner considers it necessary to undertake an examination in public, then we request to be afforded the opportunity to discuss the matters raised at examination.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

John Fleming  
Development Manager

Nightingale Land

## Appendix 1

### Landscape Briefing Note

## Landscape Briefing Note

Mingle Lane, Great Shelford, February 2025

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*This Landscape Briefing Note has been prepared by CSA Environmental on behalf of Nightingale Land in relation to land off Mingle Lane, Great Shelford which is being promoted for residential development (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). It accompanies representations in relation to the Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan consultation. A Site Location Plan and Aerial Photograph showing the Site in context are appended to this Briefing Note.*

### 1.0 Landscape Policy and Designations

- 1.1 The Site is not covered by any designations for landscape character or quality and there are no TPOs covering any tree within, or along the boundaries of the Site. It does lie within an 'Improved Landscaping' policy area as identified in the adopted South Cambridgeshire Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan. This policy seeks to enhance the area through new planting, management and access to the countryside.
- 1.2 At a Neighbourhood Plan level, the draft Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan includes several draft policies of relevance, including:
- 1.3 **Policy S&GS 13: Important Views**, which states '*Development proposals must maintain or enhance the key features and the setting of the views into and out of the settlement area, listed below, described in Appendix 7 and shown on Map 7. Development proposals which have an impact on views must be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment or a Landscape and Visual Appraisal*'. The Important Views of particular relevance to the Site are discussed further in Section 3 below.
- 1.4 **Policy S&GS 14: Important Countryside Frontages**, which states '*The areas shown on Map 8 are identified as Important Countryside Frontages where land has a strong countryside character because it either penetrates or sweeps into the built-up area and provides a significant connection between the street scene and the surrounding rural area, or provides an important rural break between two nearby but detached parts of the development framework. Where a development proposal compromises these purposes, planning permission will be refused.*'

- 1.5 Three proposed Important Countryside Frontages are identified on the accompanying Map 8; the frontage between 27 and 31 Mingle Lane (at the southern edge of the Site); the frontage between 41 Gog Magog Way and Chalk Hill; and the frontage east of Haverhill Road. It is worth noting that all of these frontages are also covered by 'Important Views', thereby duplicating the layer of protection to these three locations.
- 1.6 As discussed further below in relation to View S, the gap between 27 and 31 Mingle Lane comprises a short break (equivalent to a single plot width) in built form. It could not be described as an '*important rural break between two nearby but detached parts of the development framework*' as outlined in Policy S&GS 14, nor does it provide a '*significant connection between the street scene and the surrounding rural area*'. By contrast, the Important Countryside Frontage along Haverhill Road is circa 200m in length and clearly provides a strong connection with the countryside, compared to circa 20m length on Mingle Lane where the connection to the countryside is much weaker and experienced for a very short section of a residential road.
- 1.7 We do not support the inclusion of the frontage between 27 and 31 Mingle Lane as an Important Countryside Frontage, as we do not agree that it fulfils the functions set out within Policy S&GS 14.

## **2.0 Site Context**

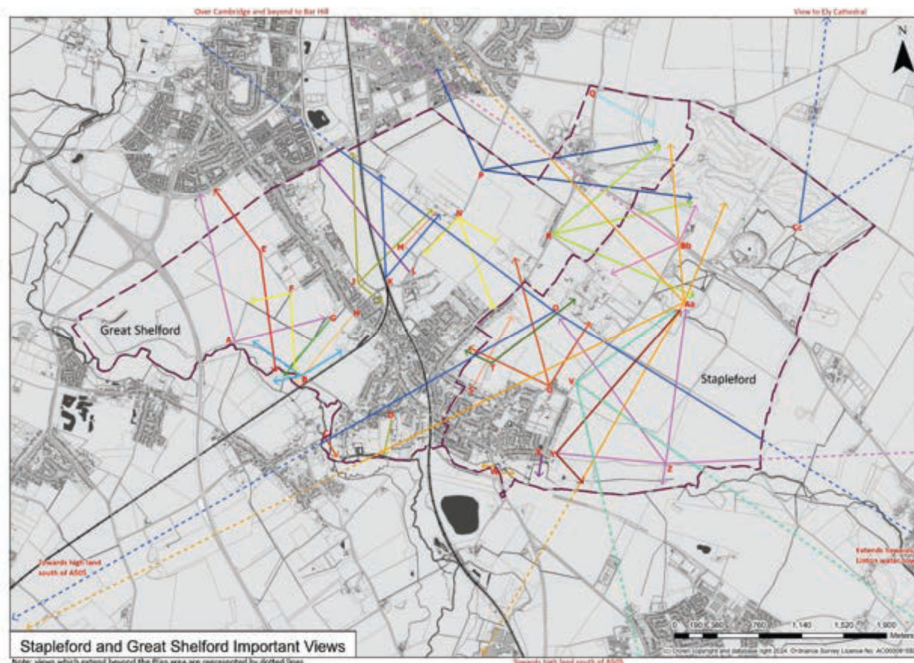
- 2.1 The Site comprises a square shaped field to the rear of properties on Hinton Way together with the southern part of the adjacent wider field to the rear of properties on Mingle Lane and to the west of Stapleford Cemetery (see appended Aerial Photograph). Farm access to the Site is currently served off a strip of land off Mingle Lane, between no's 27 and 31.
- 2.2 The Site is relatively well contained from the surrounding landscape by vegetated boundaries along Stapleford Cemetery to the east, as well as by established field boundaries to the Site's western field. Views of the Site are possible from the neighbouring dwellings along Mingle Lane and Hinton Way which back onto the Site, as well as from the adjacent cemetery. A framed view into the Site is also possible at the existing Mingle Lane access point, and partial middle distance views are possible from Magog Down to the north east, from where panoramic views of the area are possible.
- 2.3 The Site is relatively ordinary in character, comprising flat arable land with structural vegetation confined to its field boundaries. Its character is influenced by its adjacency to the settlement edge, including large 2 and 2½ storey dwellings to its south and west.



*Photograph 1 – from within the Site looking west*

### **3.0 Identified 'Important Views'**

- 3.1 The draft Neighbourhood Plan identifies a series of 29 'Important Views' within the parish, which are illustrated on Map 7 (extract below) with accompanying descriptions for each view set out in Appendix 7 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Those of relevance to the Site are discussed below, together with a commentary on any potential impacts of residential development at the Site, on the identified views and how these could be mitigated.
- 3.2 The general approach taken in relation to Important Views appears overly inflated and seeks to apply equal weight, or importance, to relatively ordinary views from roads, and those from clear public recreational vantage points (such as the Magog Downs). This results in a disproportionately high number of identified 'Important Views' within a relatively small parish area, and far more than are typically included within a Neighbourhood Plan of this nature. This approach appears to in-effect protect all areas of land on the edges of Stapleford and Shelford and prevent any future growth of the settlements, rather than seeking to safeguard those views of most importance.
- 3.3 It is also worth noting that several of the views (including View O) apply weight to the consented countryside park (associated with the Strawberry Fields retirement village) which is yet to commence construction and currently remains as private farmland.



Extract from *Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan – Map 7*

3.4 The identified views of relevance to the Site are as follows, and are discussed in turn in the subsequent paragraphs:

- **View O** – high point of new countryside park between Haverhill Road and Hinton Way
- **View S** – gap between 27 and 31 Mingle Lane, Stapleford
- **View T** – Stapleford Cemetery, to the N of Mingle Lane
- **View U** – gap between 41 Gog Magog Way and homes at Chalk Hill, Stapleford
- **View Aa** – Little Trees Hill, the high point at Magog Down

#### View O

3.5 This viewpoint is located on land that is currently private agricultural land with no public access, although planning permission has been granted for a new countryside park associated with the Strawberry Fields retirement village off Haverhill Road. As such there are currently no public views from this land, until the countryside park is implemented and opened to the public. Key contributing features to sense of place are described as: elevated 180 degree views to high land well beyond the plan area; a landmark viewpoint giving a new publicly accessible perspective; view that illustrates the connection between villages and surroundings; and a strong sense of topographic variation.

3.6 From our own assessment we would note that the Strawberry Fields retirement village development is clearly visible from this vantagepoint, as is residential built form on the northern edge of Great Shelford and Stapleford. It should also be noted that there are plans for a new guided busway which, if consented, would run across the intervening land



between the Site and the new countryside park and would be visible in the foreground of views.

- 3.7 Whilst residential development at the Site would be visible in the middle distance of these views, a strong landscaped boundary to the northern edge of development would soften views and integrate the new housing into the existing settlement edge. The key contributing features as set out above would also all still remain with development at the Site in place, including panoramic 180 degree views across villages and surrounding countryside.

#### View S

- 3.8 This viewpoint is located on Mingle Lane and framed views look northwards between the gap in houses along the road (see photograph 2 below). Key contributing features to sense of place are described as: a sheltered, flat, lowland area with long open views over arable fields towards gentle chalkland hills; and an otherwise poor relationship between village and countryside in the vicinity makes this view very important.



*Photograph 2 – illustrating View S*

- 3.9 Whilst this view does provide a short break in the built form lining Mingle Lane, it is not a view that users would likely stop to appreciate for any great length of time in the same way that one might when walking along a public footpath or within a country park. It clearly does not have the same level of importance as the view from Magog Down for example. The view is also experienced from a residential street, framed by large suburban properties which narrow the field of view.
- 3.10 Notwithstanding the above, were residential development proposals to come forward at the Site, opportunities to experience views northwards to the countryside would be provided, from new areas of open space and through the alignment of streets. This would maintain the visual connection between village and countryside.

#### View I

- 3.11 This viewpoint is located at the northern end of Stapleford Cemetery looking north across open countryside (see photograph 3 below). Key contributing features to sense of place are described as; a strong sense

of countryside with extensive views of countryside; a tranquil location partly screened by trees and hedgerows; characteristic estate at Fox Hill to the north east; and visual link between the village and new countryside park.



*Photograph 3 – illustrating View T*

- 3.12 Views looking west from the cemetery look across the Site, with properties along Hinton Way visible beyond the arable field which makes up the Site. It should be noted that the key features of View T as described in the Plan are focused on views northwards, rather than looking west across the Site, and these views are partially restricted by hedgerows and trees to the cemetery boundary.
- 3.13 Were residential development to come forward at the Site, views from the cemetery would form a key consideration in the design of the layout and could include a suitable offset comprising open space and structural planting along the eastern Site boundary to soften views of the housing from the cemetery. Views looking north from the cemetery, including the key contributing features to sense of place as outlined above, would remain unaffected with appropriately designed development at the Site in place. It is worth noting that the parcel of land included within the Site to the immediate north of the cemetery is intended to be used for biodiversity enhancements, with no built form anticipated within this area.

#### View U

- 3.14 This viewpoint is located on the eastern edge of Stapleford at a gap between residential properties and provides a view across open countryside where gaps in the fragmented roadside hedgerow allow (see photograph 4 below). Key contributing features to sense of place are described as; long and broad views giving a strong sense of tranquillity and countryside; strong connection between village and countryside; visual link between village and new country park; and characteristic view of wooded Fox Hill.



*Photograph 4 – illustrating View U*

- 3.15 This view looks across several fields to the east of the Site, with vegetation around the boundaries of the cemetery providing effective screening of the Site from this point. Properties along Hinton Way are visible in the middle distance, to the north west of the cemetery. Were residential development to come forward at the Site, it would be contained by the cemetery planting and where visible, the new housing would be seen alongside the Hinton Way properties. The characteristic features of this view would all remain, with residential development at the Site in place.

#### View Aa

- 3.16 This viewpoint is located from a highpoint within the Magog Down recreational open space, offering one of the highest vantagepoints in the area with panoramic views across Stapleford, Shelford and towards Cambridge. Key contributing features to sense of place are described as; elevated views of Cambridge, Stapleford and high ground beyond; distinctive historic site and local landmark; strong sense of tranquillity, countryside and topographic variation with uninterrupted views; Stapleford settlement largely hidden from view nestled amongst trees; and widely accessible viewpoint linked by public rights of way.



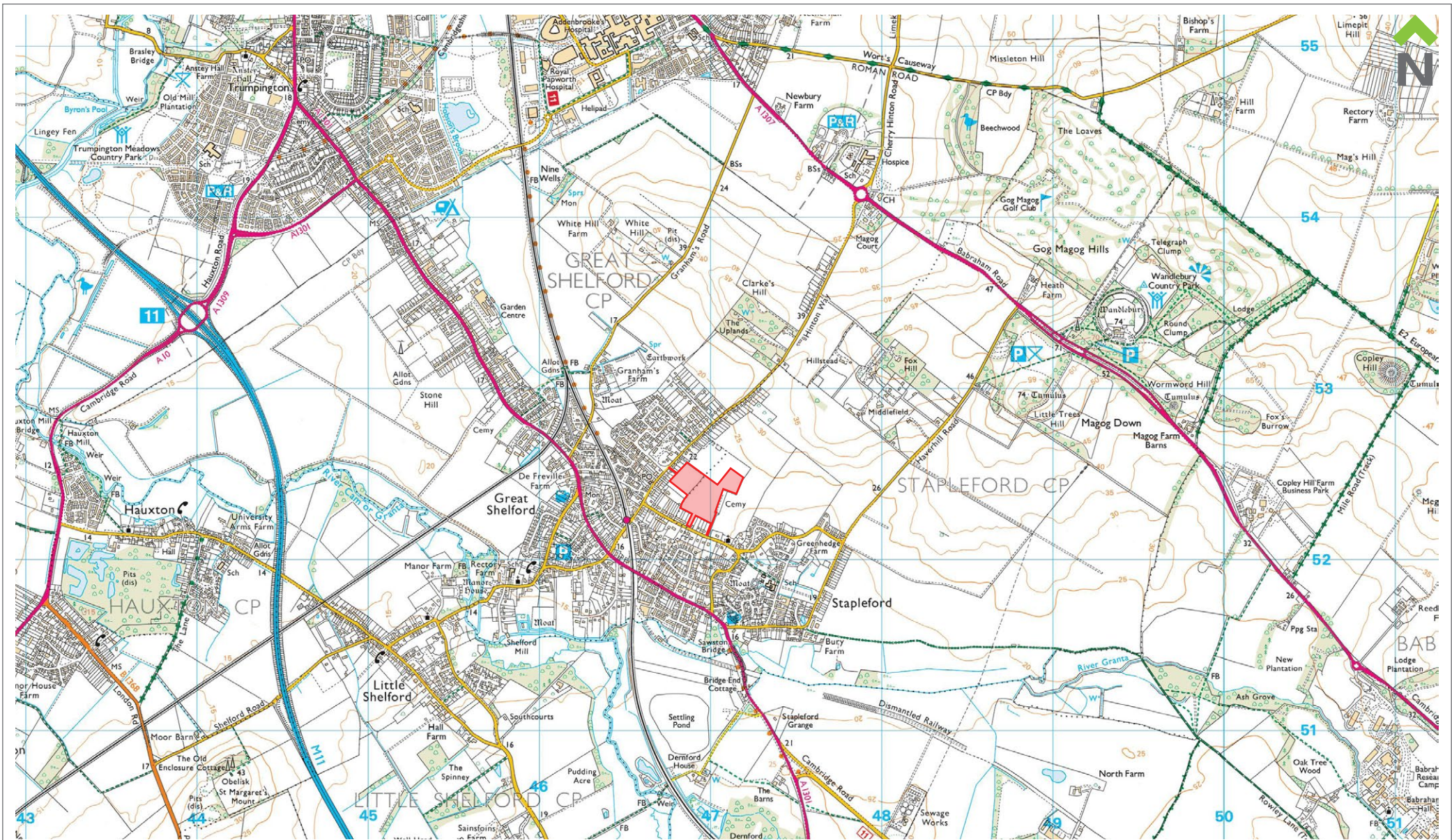
*Photograph 5 – illustrating View Aa*

- 3.17 From our own assessment we would largely agree that this is a key viewpoint within the area offering panoramic views. Whilst the majority of built form in Stapleford is concealed by surrounding vegetation, the recent development at Strawberry Fields on the eastern edge of the village is more prominent.
- 3.18 Views of the Site from this point are partial in nature, with vegetation along the cemetery boundary and intervening vegetation around the Fox Hill estate, providing partial screening of the Site. Were residential

development to come forward at the Site, it would be well contained in views from here by existing vegetation, and a strong landscaped boundary to the northern edge of development would provide further containment. Development here would not form a dominant element in views from Magog Down and all of the characteristic features would remain unaffected.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 The draft Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan includes a series of 29 'Important Views' within the parish under Policy S&GS 13. This approach is overly inflated within a relatively small parish area, with far more identified views than are typically included within a Neighbourhood Plan of this nature. This approach appears to in effect protect all areas of land within the parish, applying equal importance to relatively ordinary views from residential roads, and those from clear public reactional vantage points.
- 4.2 Notwithstanding the above, appropriately designed and well landscaped residential development could come forward at the Site without compromising any of the identified Important Views.
- 4.3 The draft Neighbourhood Plan also includes Policy S&GS 14 - Important Countryside Frontages, which identifies three proposed. All of these locations are also covered by Important Views, thereby duplicating the level of protection to these areas unnecessarily. We would also not support the inclusion of the gap between 27 and 31 Mingle Lane as an Important Countryside Frontage, given its circa 20m length along a residential street. Clearly this short break in built form provides a much weaker connection to the countryside, than the proposed Important Countryside Frontage along Haverhill Road which extends to circa 200m in length.



 Site Boundary



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**Project** Mingle Lane, Great Shelford

**Drawing Title** Site Location Plan

**Client** Nightingale Land

**Date** January 2025

**Scale @ A4** NTS

**Drawn** TV

**Drawing No.** CSA/6171/100

**Rev** -

**Checked** BS



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**Project** Mingle Lane, Great Shelford  
**Drawing Title** Aerial Photograph  
**Client** Nightingale Land

**Date** January 2025  
**Scale @ A4** NTS  
**Drawn** TV

**Drawing No.** CSA/6171/101  
**Rev** -  
**Checked** BS