



St John's College
University of Cambridge



Vision Document

February 2020

Land at Dodford Lane/High Street, Girton



St John's College
University of Cambridge

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Produced by Savills Urban Design Studio
for St John's College



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e:



DODFORD LANE

HIGH STREET

GIRTON

M11

HUNTINGDON ROAD



01. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This document has been prepared by Savills Planning & Urban Design Studio on behalf of St. John's College, Cambridge.

The purpose of this document is to support the submission of representations to inform the joint Local Plan for SCDC and the City, for the delivery of a residential development on land at Dodford Lane/High Street, Girton.

The site totals approximately 3.519 hectares (8.695 acres).

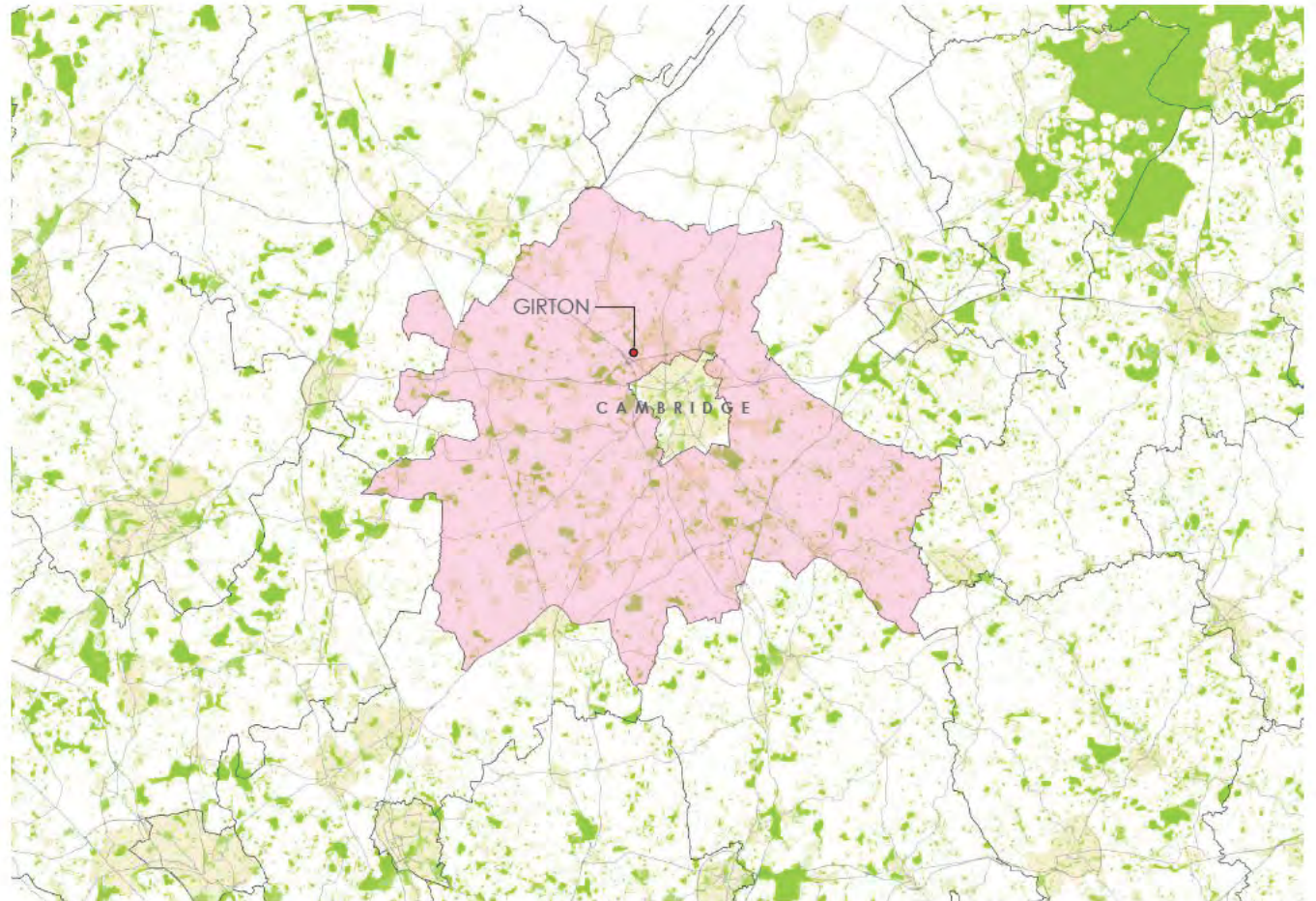


Figure 1.1: South Cambridgeshire District boundary.

It has been estimated that the site has the potential to deliver up to 63 new homes, although this is subject to further, more detailed technical analysis and consultation.

The new scheme would promote active lifestyles and a sense of wellbeing through the provision of new public open space, which will create an attractive setting for the new homes.



Aerial photograph showing site boundary.



View along the eastern boundary of the site looking south west across the site.



02. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Planning policy context

Girton is defined as a Minor Rural Centre in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 in recognition of its level of services, facilities and employment. It also has good access to Cambridge by public transport and cycle. Whilst new housing developments were identified as extensions to Comberton, Melbourn and Willingham, there were no extensions to Girton proposed as part of the current Plan.

As part of a new blended housing strategy including developments of varying scales and a review of the existing Green Belt boundary, Girton provides a logical opportunity to help meet the housing need for the Greater Cambridge area in a sustainable location due to its existing good level of services, facilities and employment and good accessibility to/from Cambridge. Development on the site would also deliver much needed affordable housing to help meet local needs.

The site has existing development on two sides and along part of the other two sides. The site is not within a conservation area. There are no listed buildings adjacent to the site, with the nearest being to the southeast at the junction of High Street and Cambridge Road. The part of the site on which development is proposed is in Flood Zone 1, and there are opportunities to enhance biodiversity. The site lies within the Green Belt.

The frontage is identified as an Important Countryside Frontage in the Local Plan 2018, but the layout can be designed as proposed to retain an open, green frontage with development set back from High Street, and incorporating key views westwards towards proposed public open space within the western part of the site. The new Local Plan also provides the opportunity and imperative to review such designations in order to identify all the land required to meet the housing need and balance impacts against other objectives.

The Green Belt serves five purpose:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

In considering this site in relation to these purposes, development of this site would result in “encroachment” into the countryside (i.e. beyond the existing village boundary as identified in the 2018 Local Plan). It is noted that the site already has some development on all four of its sides. This also significantly limits the extent to which it would lead to ‘sprawl’, the degree to which neighbouring settlements would merge into one another if this development was permitted, and its impact on the setting and special character of Girton and Cambridge.

This development could form part of a blended strategy that included urban regeneration within Cambridge to meet the identified need.

It is proposed that new Local Plan will include new development areas previously protected from development, and which would provide social, economic and environmental benefits to outweigh any harm.

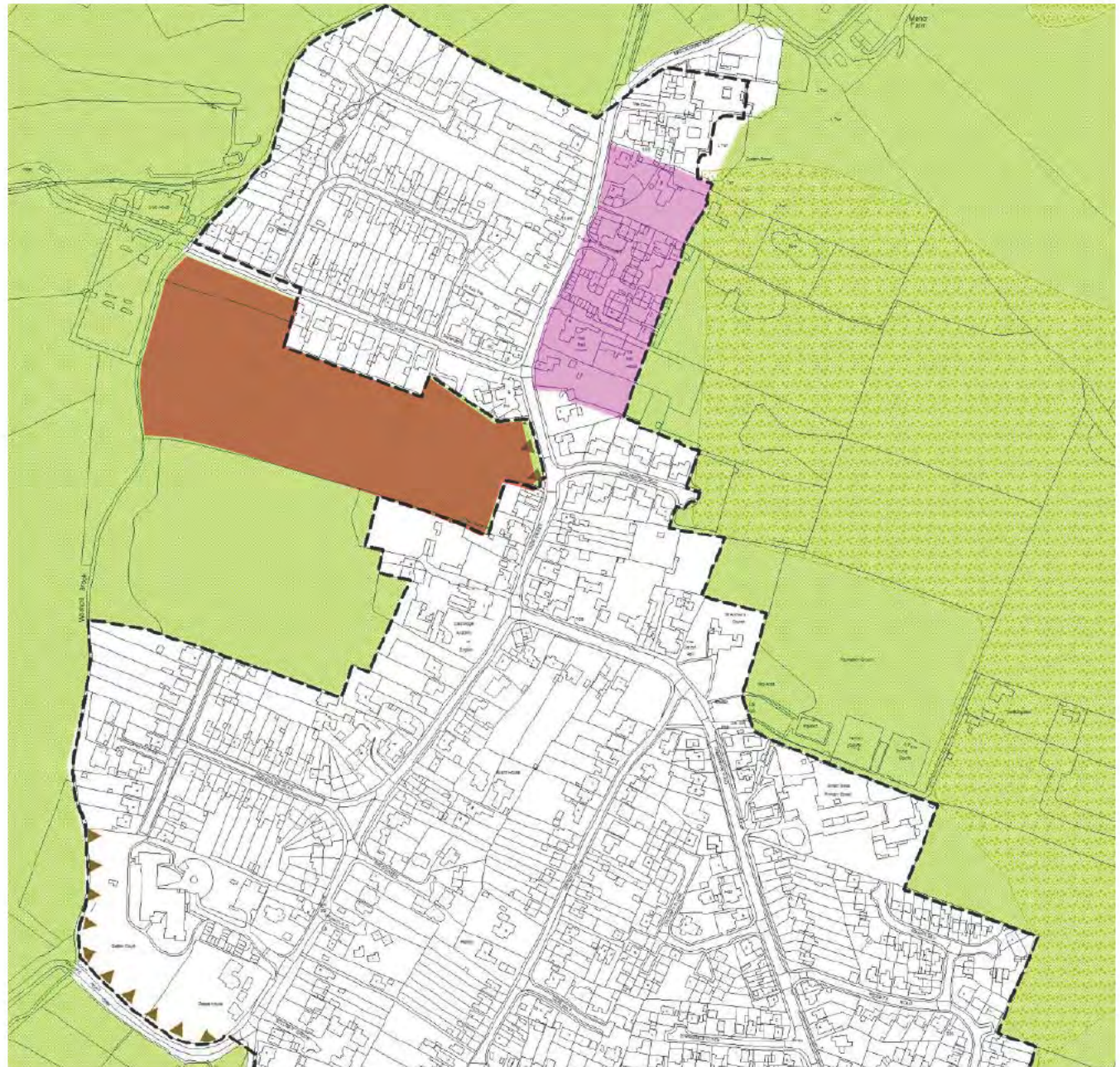


Figure 2.1: Suggested new residential allocation added to extract of South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 Girton Inset Plan.












03. ASSESSMENT

3.1 Wider context

Girton lies about 2 miles (3.2 km) to the north-west of Cambridge, with the A14 located in cutting under the bridge which lies approximately 0.5 mile (0.8 km) to the south of the centre of the village.



The Parish Church of St Andrew, Girton

-  The site
-  Railway stations
-  Cambridge airport
-  National & Regional roads
-  Local roads
-  Watercourse
-  Rail line
-  Woodland
-  Green space

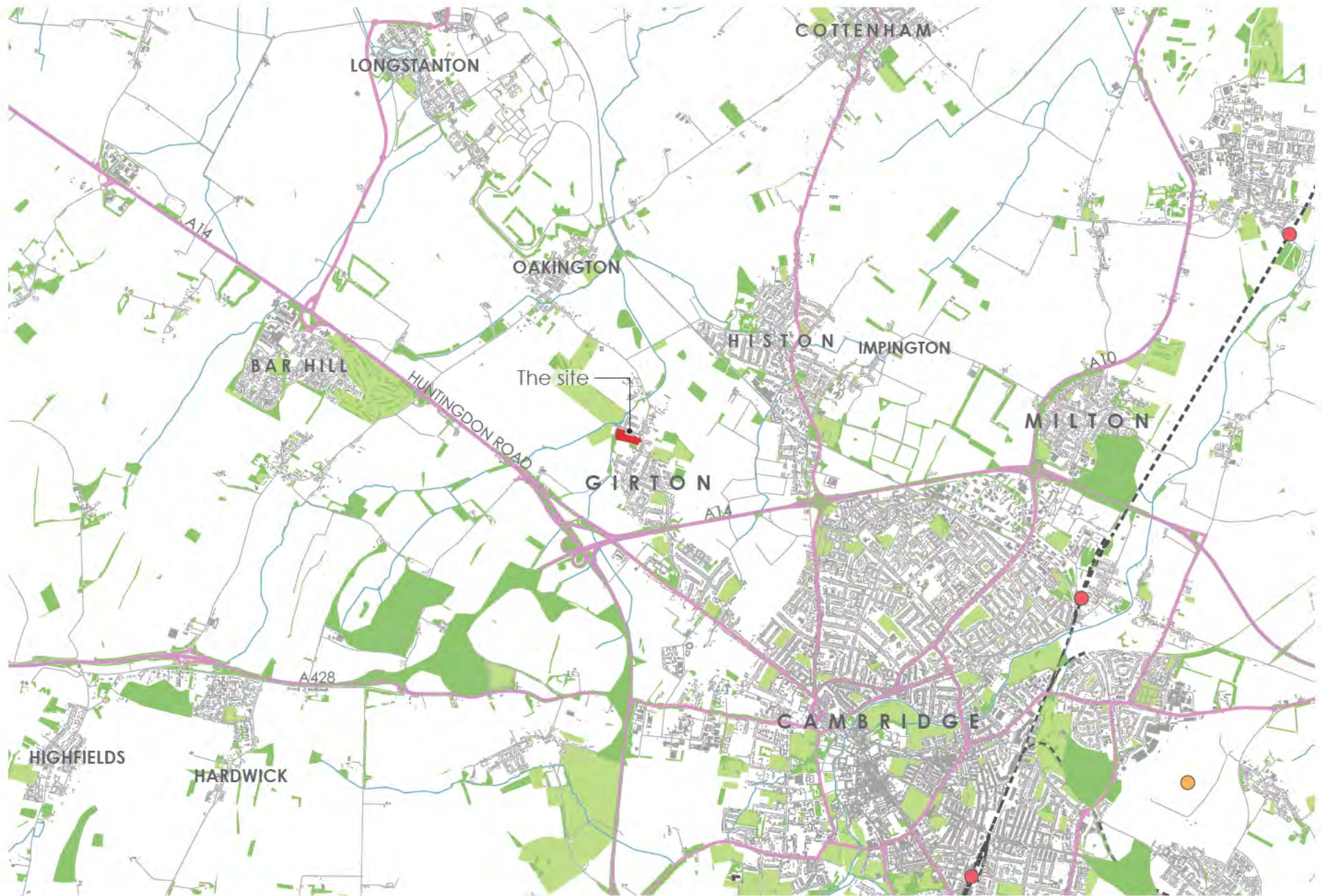


Figure 3.1: Wider context plan.



3.2 The site

The site totals approximately 3.519 hectares (8.695 acres) and occupies an irregular shaped land parcel to the south of Dodford Lane, Girton.

The southern boundary of the site is defined by the existing mature trees and hedgerows which separate the site from the adjoining field to the south. However, a small portion of the central part of this boundary is undefined by any vegetation. Washpit Brook delineates the western boundary of the site together with the existing mature trees.

A thick strip of mature vegetation occurs to the south of the western portion of the northern boundary of the site while the central portion is defined by the fences of the rear gardens of the existing properties along Dodford Lane. The eastern portion of the northern boundary of the site is formed by the existing mixture of mature trees and hedgerows which separate the site from the Old Crown.

High Street runs along the eastern boundary of the site where the boundary meets the road. The rear of properties on the High Street also form part of the boundary of the site in the south-west corner.

 Site boundary



Figure 3.2: Aerial photograph showing site boundary and photo location.

Mature trees which separate the site from the existing properties along High Street

Site's western boundary

Old Crown

High Street



1 - View along the eastern boundary of the site looking north west.

3.3 Architectural context

Girton has originally developed along High Street to the west of the site. Examples of how the combination of architecture, streets and public and private spaces creates place can be found along the historical core. A rich palette of architectural detailing, materials, colours and variation in buildings types, scale and height all combine to create sense of character and place.

As we move away from the historical core towards the north and the south, the pattern and form of development changes.

We have considered the character of several of the village's residential areas in more detail, in order to inform the layout and design of the development proposals.



-  Site boundary
-  Character area



Figure 3.3: Girton figure ground plan.

Character area A: High Street/ Historic Core



Buildings are mostly 2 and 2½ storey detached, and they are traditionally set back from the pavement with small front gardens. Painted brick is the predominant building material with more traditional architectural features include sliding windows, pitched roofs, thatched roofs and plain dark roof tiles.

Roofscape is rhythmically animated by chimneys of varying heights and, occasionally, dormer windows.

Character area B: Woodlands Park



Predominantly 2 storey semi-detached dwellings which are constructed from rendered brick with red brick for the lower half of the first floor. Dwellings are set back behind deep gardens to allow for on-plot parking.

Roofs are generally pitched with red pantiles and chimneys of varying heights.

Architectural features include white uPVC windows and front doors arches. Boundaries generally marked by low timber fences with some vegetation present.

Character area C: Fairway



Predominantly 2 storey detached dwellings which are constructed from a mixture of brown and buff brick. Front gardens are deep providing the opportunity for plants and hedgerow planting to mark boundaries between properties.

Roofs are generally pitched with brown pantiles and chimneys of varying heights.

Architectural features include white uPVC windows and a mixture of brown and buff brick at some frontages.

3.4 Community facilities & services

Girton benefits from a number of local services and facilities including community centre, doctors surgery, public house and a local shop.

In addition, the village also has a primary school, a specialist school, and a nursery, all within a convenient and acceptable walking and cycling distance of the proposed site. Cambridge Academy of English is located to the south of the site, within a 5 minute walk. Gretton School is a specialist school for autistic children and young people and is located to the north east of the site, within a 5 - 10 minute walk.

The Old Crown (public house/restaurant) is located immediately to the north of the site along High Street.

There are also a number of businesses to the north of the village along Oakington Road.

Key services and facilities are highlighted on Figure 3.4 opposite.



Girton Glebe Primary School is located to the south east of the site, within a 10 - 15 minute walk.



Cambridge Academy of English is located along High Street to the south of the site, within a 5 minute walk.



The George Pub & Thai Restaurant is located on High Street adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site.



Gretton School is located on Manor Farm Road to the north east of the site, within a 5 - 10 minute walk.

- Site boundary
- 1 The George Pub & Thai Restaurant
- 2 Public house (Old Crown Girton)
- 3 Peter Graves Florist
- 4 Co-op Food
- 1 Cambridge Academy of English
- 2 Cottontails Preschool
- 3 Girton Glebe Primary School
- 4 Scallywags Day Nursery
- 5 Girton Social Club
- 6 Gretton School
- 1 Girton Baptist Church
- 2 Saint Andrew's Church Girton
- 3 Sheltered housing and services
- 4 St Vincent's Community Centre
- 5 The Doctors Surgery
- 1 Girton Parish Council Pavilion Hall
- 2 Girton Golf Club
- ✱ Existing allotments site



Figure 3.4: Girton key services and facilities.



3.5 Movement

Highway network

Girton is located to the north and south of the A14 which provides a main strategic highway route east-west. Cambridge Road runs north south through the village providing link to Girton Road in the south. Girton Road links to Huntingdon Road which provide a direct access to Cambridge City Centre.

The site has frontage with High Street which is a single carriageway road subject to a 30mph speed limit.



Walking & cycling accessibility

In addition to the existing adopted pavements which run along the main vehicular routes throughout the village, there are a number of dedicated Public Rights of Way around the village providing access to the wider countryside.

The closest Public Rights of Way run to the north of the site leading to a wider network of public footpaths.

High Street is part of Regional Cycle Route No. 24, connecting the site with the wider comprehensive cycling network to the north and Cambridge City Centre to the south.

Accessibility to public transport

The site has good public transport accessibility, with the Citi 6 bus service calling at stops immediately along the site frontage with High Street. This provides services into Cambridge City about every 30 minutes from early morning to late evening.

The Citi 5 bus service also calls at these stops in the evening. These services mean that future residents would not need to rely on use of the private car to access the City Centre and its key employment uses and other services and facilities.

Cambridge train station is located approximately 3.5 miles (5.3km) to the south of Girton and provides regular services to London Kings Cross, London Liverpool Street, Brighton, Norwich, Stansted Airport, Peterborough and Birmingham New Street.





Figure 3.5: Existing bus routes, bus stops and Public Rights of Way.



04. EVALUATION

3.6 Baseline site analysis

The opportunities and influences associated with the proposed development have been identified following the assessment of the site and its surroundings.

These are listed below and illustrated on Figure 4.1 opposite. This assessment of the site and its surroundings has informed the design proposals.

Opportunities

- Provision for a range of high quality housing with associated green infrastructure.
- Create a sensitively designed new development in a location that is closely related to the existing settlement.
- Provision of new vehicular access point from High Street.
- To retain and strengthen the boundary vegetation along the southern boundary of the site, to create a soft development edge and to filter views of development from the adjoining countryside.
- The opportunity exists for a new children's play provision within an area of public open space.
- To create a new natural area along Washpit Brook for ecological benefit and informal recreation.

Influences

- New dwellings should respect the privacy and amenity of existing homes along Dodford Lane.
- New boundary vegetation to include new thicket and hedgerow planting which will create a landscaped edge to the development. In particular along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site, setting the entire site in a landscaped framework.
- The site frontage on High Street is identified as an Important Countryside Frontage in the Local Plan 2018. The new layout should be designed to allow for green frontage with development set back from High Street.
- Part of the site along the western boundary is prone to flood risk from the existing watercourse. This area of the site should be kept undeveloped as a natural area to accommodate any flood risk and to enhance the site ecology and biodiversity value.

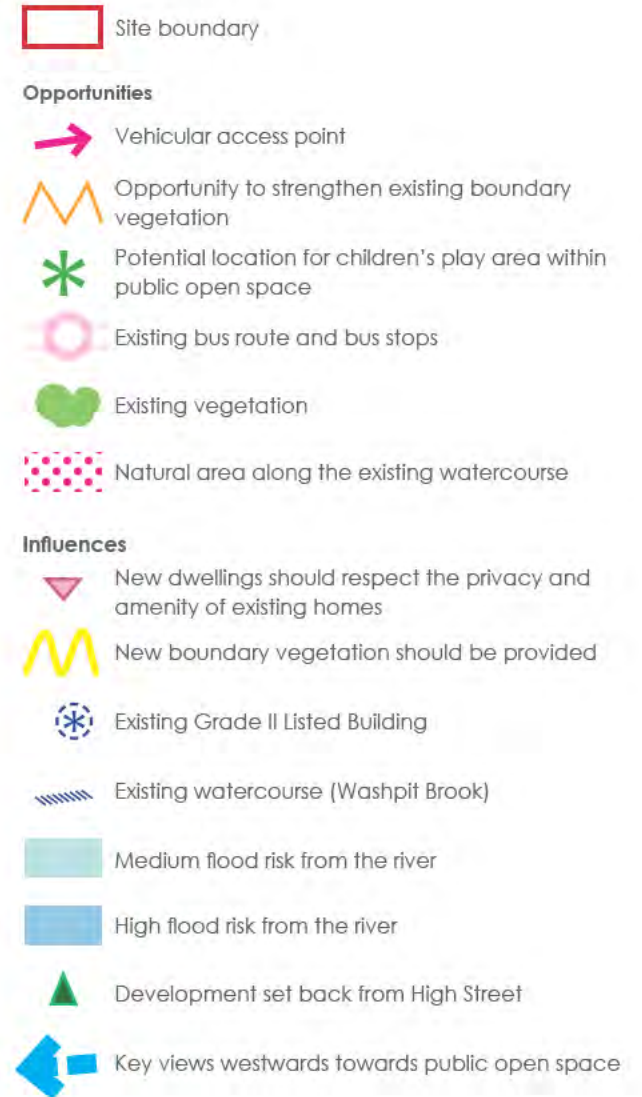




Figure 4.1: The opportunities and influences plan.



05. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS


5.1 Vision - Place making approach

The vision is to create a sustainable new living environment, with new homes that are accessible to everyone, an inclusive place which makes everyone feel comfortable, safe and secure, a place where people want to live, which promotes an active lifestyle and sense of wellbeing. The proposals will provide ready access to public open space and the wider countryside. It will deliver a wide range of choice of new, sustainable, high quality housing, including affordable housing.

The proposed development will deliver a high standard of housing design irrespective of price or tenure. The scheme will focus on establishing a strong sense of community.

- **Positive identity** to ensure that the new development responds to the site and contextual opportunities, so fully integrating with its surroundings and defining new spaces.
- **Viable and sustainable place**, which is deliverable and contributes in a positive way to the long term economic viability of the area.
- **A connected place** which links and integrates with the existing community of Girton.
- **Welcoming place** which helps to foster a strong scene of place and community.
- **Delivering best practice** in development which is responsive to the environmental constraints, including the existing mature vegetation.
- **Quality homes** for a wide range of local needs, space to live and play, good access to facilities, public transport and a place people can be proud of.

A placemaking approach has been adopted to ensure that the development responds positively to the context and opportunities of the surrounding area and the site. Building on this, a strong vision has been developed which brings new site-specific ideas into play, as well as drawing on best practice. The concept is driven by the objective of creating a strong sense of place and community, fully integrated and linked into the immediate surroundings and the village of Girton.

A stack of three books is shown on a desk. The top book has a red cover with the text "Creating successful masterplans:". The middle book has a light yellow cover with the text "THE HOUSING DESIGN HANDBOOK" and "A guide to good practice". The bottom book has a green cover with the text "Start with the park". In the foreground, there is a black pen and a piece of paper with architectural drawings, including circles and dashed lines.

Creating successful masterplans:

THE HOUSING DESIGN HANDBOOK
A guide to good practice

Start with the park

5.2 The Development Framework plan

The Development Framework plan has been produced to help illustrate the potential for development with adequate green infrastructure, public open space and children's play provision. The concept is based upon the analysis of the site and local surroundings.

The Development Framework plan shows the site boundary, the means of access into the site, the areas of retained and new landscaping and the location and extent of the proposed land uses, including the amount of built development.

A number of design principles have influenced the development proposals for the site, including:

- The development will be set within an attractive landscape framework and has been structured to create a new natural area along Washpit Brook to accommodate the flood risk and to enhance the site ecology and biodiversity value. Informal footways and informal areas for play and recreation will be included within this area of public open space for informal recreation.
- The design of the layout will allow for a small area of public open space to the south of the proposed access. This will accommodate a Local Area for Play (LAP) which will benefit the existing and future residents.

- The existing trees and hedges along the site boundaries will be retained and enhanced to filter views of the development and to create an attractive edge to respect the adjoining countryside.
- New boundary vegetation will include new tree and hedgerow planting which will create a landscaped edge to the development. In particular along the northern boundary of the site, respecting the privacy and amenity of the existing homes along Dodford Lane.
- As previously mentioned, the frontage with High Street is identified as an Important Countryside Frontage in the Local Plan 2018. The layout will be designed as proposed to retain an open, green frontage with development set back from High Street. In addition, the new design will allow key views westwards towards the proposed public open space within the western part of the site.
- Provision for new vehicular, cycle, and pedestrian access point from High Street.

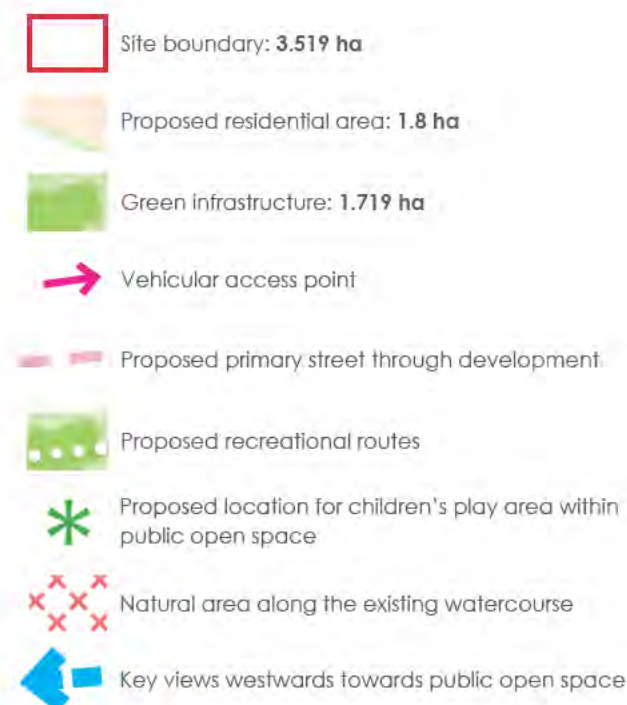




Figure 5.1: The Development Framework plan.



5.3 The Concept Masterplan

The initial Concept Masterplan provides a vision for how the design principles could be realised to create a sustainable, high quality and distinctive development that fits with the existing community.

The initial Concept Masterplan shows how the proposed primary road will connect to High Street to create a development that will form an integrated part of the wider Girton village.

It is envisaged that the new homes will overlook the new internal road to provide attractive aspects as it passes through the site.

New homes will back onto the existing properties along Dodford Lane with deeper rear gardens and additional tree and hedgerow planting to respect the privacy and amenity of these dwellings.

The development within the site comprises 1.8ha of green infrastructure. Therefore, approximately 50% of the site will comprise areas of retained trees and hedgerows and public open space including a children's play area in the form of a Local Area for Play (LAP).

As illustrated previously on the opportunities and influences plan, the area along the western boundary of the site is prone to flood risk from the existing watercourse. This area of the site will be kept undeveloped as a new natural area to accommodate the flood risk and to enhance the site ecology and biodiversity value. Areas of public open space will provide a new community asset for informal recreational activities, including walking, picnicking and informal play.

-  Site boundary: **3.519 ha**
-  Proposed residential development
-  Proposed public open space
-  Vehicular access point
-  Proposed location for children's play area within public open space
-  Proposed tree and hedgerow planting



Figure 5.2: The Concept Masterplan.



5.4 Access strategy

The site has frontage with High Street which is a single carriageway road subject to a 30mph speed limit. An appropriate site access junction from High Street into the site can be delivered in the form of a simple priority T-junction, and a preliminary layout has been prepared to demonstrate that this would meet highways design standards.





-  Site boundary
-  Proposed access



Figure 5.3: The access strategy.



5.5 Land uses and density

The site covers an area of 3.519 hectares. The proposals within the site encompass the following uses:

Residential Development Area - up to 63 dwellings (net 1.8 hectares)

The development accommodates a residential development area measuring approximately 1.8 hectares, providing for up to 63 dwellings. The average net density for the development area is 35 dwellings per hectare (dph).

The housing mix will include a range of house types, sizes and tenures. 40% of the homes will be affordable and these will be fully integrated within the market housing, and be of a type and size that meets local needs.

-  Site boundary: **3.519 ha**
-  Proposed residential area: **1.8 ha**
-  Green infrastructure: **1.719 ha**
-  Proposed location for Local Area for Play (LAP)



Figure 5.4: The land use plan.



Green infrastructure (1.719 hectares)

As shown on the Land Use Plan (Figure 5.4), the proposals for the Site include 1.719 hectares of green infrastructure within the site. The green infrastructure will have a range of functions and provide a range of benefits, including:

Landscape: The proposals will include new native hedgerow and tree planting along the site boundaries, to respect the amenity of the existing adjoining homes and to provide an attractive green buffer along the southern boundary of the site to filter views of the development.





-  Site boundary
-  Proposed recreational routes
-  Proposed location for Local Area for Play (LAP)
-  Natural area along the existing watercourse



Figure 5.5: Green infrastructure plan.

Recreation and Play: To accommodate the potential site of a new Local Area for Play (LAP) for young people. This area of public open space is proposed to the south of the proposed access and will serve both new and existing residents.

Natural area of green space: Part of a network of public open space designed to accommodate the flood risk from the existing watercourse and to enhance the site ecology and biodiversity value. Informal footways and informal areas for play and recreation will be included within this area of public open space.



Areas of public open space will be overlooked by new homes



A flexible green space for informal recreation.

5.6 Creating a Safe and Secure Environment

The Concept Masterplan has been designed to adhere to the following principles of designing out crime:

Permeability: a choice of routes within the layout will encourage walking and cycling, therefore reducing car dependency for local trips and maximising the presence of 'eyes on the street'.

Natural surveillance: dwellings will front onto the streets and public spaces with entrances and windows fronting onto the public realm to maximise overlooking.

Animated street scenes: building frontages have been designed to be as 'active' as possible, particularly at ground floor level. Windows to active rooms, such as living room and kitchen windows, will face the public realm.

Car parking: the majority of cars will be accommodated within the curtilage of the dwellings to provide optimum surveillance.

Recreational routes: new housing will front onto open spaces containing pedestrian routes to maximise natural surveillance.



Figure 5.6: Illustrative section A - A.



Figure 5.7: Illustrative section B - B.



06. DELIVERY

6.2 Delivery

The land at Dodford Lane/High Street, Girton has the potential to deliver up to 63 new homes together with associated green infrastructure, walking, cycling and vehicular access, public open space and landscaping.

6.1 Next steps

St. John's College is committed to undertaking consultation and engagement with the Councils, other key stakeholders and the general public prior to submission of any planning application.



07. CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary

In considering the site in relation to the aforementioned five purposes which the Green Belt serves, development of this site would result in introducing residential built form into the countryside (i.e. beyond the existing village boundary as identified in the 2018 Local Plan) whilst acknowledging that the site already has some development on all four of its sides. This also significantly limits the extent to which it would lead to 'sprawl', the degree to which neighbouring settlements would merge into one another if this development was permitted, and its impact on the setting and special character of Girton and Cambridge. Clearly the review of the Green Belt and its existing boundaries will be integral to the consideration of this site as an allocation.

This is a high level early stage visioning document. Early assessments have informed our thinking and the next stages would allow for more detailed assessment, analysis and design.

This work can be the starting point of refinement and detailing, based on further assessment of potential constraints and technical feasibility.

We invite the Councils and other key stakeholders to consider the clear merits of this development opportunity.



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