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South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridge City Council
Call for Sites Consultation,
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South Cambridgeshire District Council,
Cambourne Business Park,
Cambourne,
Cambridge, CB23 6EA

Direct Dial:

Email:

Our Ref:



Park Farm/195648

25th March 2019

Email: 

Dear Sir or Madam

Greater Cambridge 'Call for Sites and Broad Locations' consultation: Land north-east of Villa Road, Impington.

I write on behalf of our client, NIAB Trust, in relation to the above consultation which forms part of the commencement of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. As part of the 'Call for Site' consultation, please find attached a red line site plan. I can confirm that the NIAB Trust as landowner fully support this submission.

The site has a site area of 2.19 hectares and is located adjacent to an area of public open space associated with a recent housing development adjacent to the south-east boundary. To the north-west of the site is an electricity substation beyond which is NIABs research facilities at Park Farm. To the north-east is the guided busway and beyond this is Vision Park, an employment campus which accommodates a range of small to large businesses from an MOT garage to pharmaceutical research and development.

The site is being put forward for consideration as an employment allocation for B1 (a & b) use classes within the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The focus of the site allocation would be to attract high-tech firms to the area to compliment the established firms that are located within Vision Park and also NIAB's crop research facilities at Park Farm. This would help to boost the local economy by attracting high-tech firms to the area and create job opportunities.

There is also an opportunity through the redevelopment of the site to provide a cycle and pedestrian link into the site directly from the guided busway to the bus-stop to the east for people to access the site. The site is also within walking and cycling distance of the local area which would reduce the need to travel by car.

The site is located in the Green Belt but it does not perform any strong Green Belt functions. It is enclosed on three sides by development and Villa Road provides a defensibly boundary to the west. It does not provide any views through to countryside. To the north NIAB have secured planning permission to expand their existing research facilities which are currently under construction. The Green Belt context between Villa Road and the guided busway is now that of developed land with this site being the only undeveloped parcel. Furthermore, the site is ideally located in terms of proximity to other employment sites and its connection into Cambridge which can be access on foot, cycle and public transport.



This site has been put forward alongside two other sites which are being promoted for predominantly residential lead development (edged red on the figure below) by NIAB on the land at Park Farm. This site could be developed in isolation to the other sites or as part of a more strategic proposal utilising other land within NIAB's control. We are also aware that other land to the south of Villa Road and not in NIAB's ownership, is being put forward by Kings Gate (edged blue below) and logically could also be included as part of the any Green Belt relaxation. All three sites are located within the Green Belt and therefore the Council will need to amend the boundary to accommodate each proposed site allocation. Paragraph 136 of the NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation and updating of plans. The preparation of the new Local Plan therefore represents an opportunity to review the Green Belt boundary for this and the other sites being put forward by NIAB. The sites being put forward are located between Girton, Histon and Impington which are settlements located on the edge of Cambridge and have excellent public transport links into the centre, which is also easily accessible by cycling and walking. Therefore, we are of the view that a strategic case for the allocation of all these site can be made which would provide additional housing and employment space within compatible sites and in a sustainable location.



Paragraph 138 of the NPPF states promoting sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account when reviewing Green Belt boundaries. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should channel sustainable development towards urban areas within the Green Belt boundaries and the impact of removing land from the Green Belt should be offset through compensatory improvements. NIAB own a significant amount of land between these settlements. Therefore, the release of this site and the other two sites that are being put forward could facilitate the creation of a significant strategic green wedge that links into the green space on Darwin Green, located on the opposite side of the A14. The southern part of the green wedge could be utilised in part as a country park which this part of Cambridge currently does not

benefit from. This would not only provide a large area of public open space, it could also include flood mitigation measures to reduce flood risk in the surrounding settlements. This area would maintain openness and be retained as Green Belt. This would reinforce its Green Belt function preventing the coalescence of the settlements and enhance their setting. It should also be noted that most of the southern boundary of NIAB's land is delineated by the A14 which is currently undergoing significant upgrades which will change the overall character of this part of the Green Belt, having a more urbanising effect along this boundary. Additional, landscaping could mitigate some of these negative impacts and introduced both visual and biodiversity improvements.

The principle of the compensatory improvements would provide significant environmental and accessibility enhancements to the Green Belt. Whilst at this stage we have not conducted a sequential test of other alternative sites, it is clear that suitable land within settlements is a diminishing asset. We would therefore work with the Council to undertake research to justify amending the Green Belt boundary in this particular location. We would be confident of being able to argue that all the sites form well-related extensions to the existing settlements which could be reinforced through additional landscaping. Furthermore, that they play a limited role in respect of the openness of the Green Belt and the proposals would reinforce and safeguard the settlements from coalescence and would enhance their setting.

According to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Review (CIPER) Final Report 2018, which is a critical review document of the key employment, housing, infrastructure and, wellbeing and education profiles and requirements in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The review has been produced by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Cambridge Ahead. The document states:

"In the Greater Cambridge economy, businesses have brought about revolutionary advances in a wide array of fields, transforming lives around the world. The impacts of business growth have not been entirely positive, however. Growth in employment has not been matched by corresponding house-building, or developments in infrastructure. Consequently, house prices have soared and journey times have increased as congestion has intensified. This has meant that many have been forced to endure unpleasant commutes, or been priced away from the city altogether due to the unaffordability of rents. This is bad for both people and businesses, and we believe is an unsustainable approach to growth. We are rapidly approaching the point where even high-value businesses may decide that being based in Cambridge is no longer attractive. If nothing is done, the damage to society from the continuing drift away of less well-paid workers may become irreparable, the ageing of the city (whose housing ladder's bottom run is out of reach of the vast majority of the young) will threaten its dynamism. Cambridge is at a decisive moment in its history where it must choose whether it wants to once again reshape itself for growth, or let itself stagnate and potentially wither. Therefore, improvements in infrastructure, and further development must start in and around Cambridge."

Whilst the report is not a material document for the plan-making process, it highlights the significant cross road that the region and particularly Cambridge is at, and the importance of making the right next step in the regional and local growth strategy. Therefore, to continue the momentum of growth that Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire has been experiencing will be important and doing nothing or restricting/constraining sustainable development should not be an option. The rising house prices and lack of affordability issues due to disproportionate rate of wage growth to house prices are putting constraint on many if not most firms to find and retain staff. Therefore, there needs to be a focus on looking favourable on sustainable sites for housing alongside making further provision for expansion of jobs. We consider that supporting these three allocations would represent sustainable development, the scale of this particular employment allocation would be complimentary to the housing proposals and associated environmental benefits which could be delivered through a more comprehensive approach to allocations.

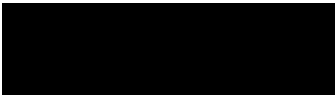
We have not undertaken any specific technical studies/reviews of the site at this stage. However, we believe the site is suitable for a sympathetic, sustainable and proportionate development to provide additional land for employment without any harmful impacts on the Green Belt. It is ideally located on the edge of



Cambridge with excellent transport links into the centre via public transport, cycling and walking. In view of this, with the support of an allocation, we would encourage our client to bring forward a development that takes advantage of these links to reduce the amount of private car journeys into and around Cambridge.

If you have any queries in relation to the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



**Associate Director
Cambridge Planning & Development
Strutt & Parker**

Encs – Red line site plan
Call for Sites Form
Confirmation of support email