

# **SITE PROMOTION DOCUMENT**

**FOR**



**REGARDING**

**LAND AT BENNELL FARM (NORTH), WEST STREET, COMBERTON (SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE)**

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**PLANNING** | **DESIGN** | **ENVIRONMENT** | **ECONOMICS**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Pegasus Group, on behalf of [REDACTED], who is promoting his land at Bennell Farm (north), West Street, Comberton. This document has been produced in response to the South Cambridgeshire District Council's call for sites process that seeks land to meet the future housing needs of the district.
- 1.2 The call for sites process is the first stage of the early review of South Cambridgeshire District Council's and Cambridge City Council's Local Plans, that were both formally adopted in September 2018. This early review is a requirement of Policy S13 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and will result in a single Local Plan to direct development proposals across both the District and City Council areas.
- 1.3 Given the District's previous reliance on strategic scale residential led developments that have taken years to deliver, there is clearly a need for smaller scale development sites in sustainable locations to meet future housing need.
- 1.4 It is estimated that our client's site currently has an indicative capacity of between 30 and 40 dwellings and would use the highway existing access onto West Street that is due to be upgraded as part of the approved development at Bennell Farm. These approved works will result in greater pedestrian and cycle connectivity with the rest of the village. As the site presently forms part of the Cambridge Green Belt the Concept Framework Plan makes provision for an enhancement of the existing landscaping to the north to help integrate the development into the rural landscape and better define the northern boundary of the site.
- 1.5 This document demonstrates how the site is capable of achieving one of the fundamental objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF), sustainable development, through the delivery of homes in one of the District's more sustainable rural settlements.

## 2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site lies to the east of the existing dwelling to the north of the Bennell Farm site. Presently there is an agricultural and residential access from the south off West Street. The site itself measures approximately 1.5ha and has well defined, hedged boundaries to the north and east. To the east of the site there is a large tree lined pond that separates the site from the curtilage of the nearby farmhouse. To the south the existing agricultural land has detailed planning consent for 90 dwellings and work is due to start on site imminently. To the east the site abuts another agricultural field.
- 2.2 To the south of West Street there is the secondary school and sixth form of Comberton Village College. Whilst the school and the site physically relate to the village of Comberton they both fall within the Parish of Toft. Other than the two residential properties on the Bennell Farm site the nearest residential properties are those to the southeast on West Street. The other side of the farmhouse there is a collection of single-storey, converted farm buildings that are in a business use. These buildings are called Bennell Court and are accessed off a second vehicular access further west.
- 2.3 Other than the trees surrounding the existing pond to the west of the site a copse of trees to the north of the site the site, and the interspersed trees along the site boundaries the site is void of trees of any significance.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan

2.4 The Comberton village development framework was extended to include the consented Bennell Farm development area under policy H/1(h) of the adopted Local Plan. As this site is to the north of the extended village framework it falls within the countryside and therefore forms part of the Cambridge Green Belt.

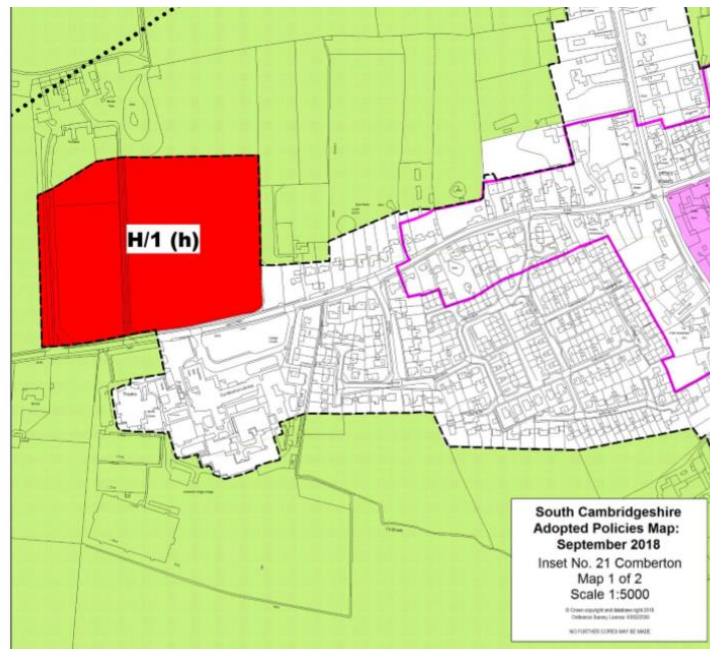


Figure 2: Adopted policy H/1(h) showing the extended Comberton village development boundary

2.5 The B1046, to the south of the site, runs east to west through Comberton connecting it with the villages of Barton to the east and Toft to the west. The road also provides links to Cambridge to the east and the new town of Cambourne to the west. Long Road connects to the A428 and A1303 that in turn link to the M11 and A14 and the wider transport network.

Relevant Planning History

- 2.6 Prior to the 2018 Local Plan being adopted two outline planning applications were submitted and subsequently approved for the development of land within the then proposed allocation area for 90 dwellings.
- 2.7 The first outline application (ref. S/2204/15/O) included sports pitches and parking on land to the west of the existing access road in accordance with the detailed wording of the then emerging Policy H/1(h). This application was approved in October 2016. A subsequent outline application (ref. S/1812/17/OL) was submitted in May 2017 and approved in October 2017. This second application dealt with the requirement for sports pitches by way of a commuted sum and did not include any development of the land to the west of the access road.
- 2.8 Pursuant to the second outline consent a reserved matters application for all 90 dwellings (ref. S/4552/17/RM) was submitted in December 2017 and approved in October 2018. A Section 73 application (ref. S/0351/19/VC) to amend the design of some of the house types is presently being considered by the Council. Work is due to commence on site later this year.



Figure 3: Approved detailed layout plan for Bennell Farm

### **3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

#### The Development Plan

- 3.1 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 superseded the documents of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007. Policy S/9 of the Local Plan identifies Comberton as a Minor Rural Centre. Minor Rural Centres are some of the largest, most sustainable villages in the district where, in accordance with Policy S/9, development of up to 30 dwellings will be permitted within development frameworks.
- 3.2 Minor Rural Centres are the second highest classification of villages in the Local Plan reflecting their relative sustainability. Directing development to the larger and better served villages of the district is an important element of the sustainable development strategy for the district. It is expected that this strategy will continue though to the new Local Plan in accordance with the overachieving aims of the NPPF to achieve sustainable development.
- 3.3 The present development strategy for the district is heavily predicated on the provision of new homes at strategic scale residential developments at on the Cambridge fringes, Cambourne West, Bourn Airfield, Northstowe and Waterbeach. The experiences of Cambourne and Northstowe have shown that this scale of development can take years to go through the planning process and for the necessary infrastructure to be provided before new homes can be built. A number of these sites also rely on the redevelopment of brownfield sites, predominantly former airfields.
- 3.4 Given that the new Local Plan will also cover the Cambridge City area and that there are no other large brownfield sites in the district, it is clear that the future development strategy will need to rely more on smaller scale sites. This would accord with paragraph 68 of the NPPF that identifies the important contribution that small and medium size development sites can make to meeting the housing requirements of an area.

#### 4. SITE SUSTAINABILITY

- 4.1 As Comberton is designated as a Minor Rural Centre it is one of the more sustainable villages in the district with primary and secondary schools and good cycle and public transport connectivity with Cambridge. Accordingly, it is an appropriate village for the District Council to focus new residential development.
- 4.2 The site at Bennell Farm is located less than a kilometre from the shops and facilities at the centre of Comberton and immediately opposite the Village College. Accordingly, the site benefits from good access to a wide range of services and facilities including doctor's, dentist's, a convenience store, public houses and recreational facilities.
- 4.3 Tables 1 and 2 below provide a schedule of key local services and their approximate distance from the site.

Table 1 - Local Services and Employment

Service	Facility	Distance from Site and Journey time.
<i>Social Infrastructure</i>		
Pre-School	Comberton Playgroup, Green end, Comberton, CB23 7DY	0.97 km 13 minute walk 4 minute cycle
Primary School	Meridian Primary School, 15 Harbour Avenue, Comberton, CB23 7DD	1.60 km 19 minute walk 6 minute cycle
	Barton Primary School, School Lane, Barton CB23 7BD	3.8 km 13 minute cycle 7 minute car 13 minute bus
Secondary School	Comberton Village College, West Street, Comberton, CB23 7DU	0.64 km 8 minute walk
Sixth Form College	Comberton Sixth Form College, West Street, Comberton, CB23 7DU	0.64 km 8 minute walk
GP Surgery	Comberton Surgery, 58 Green End, Comberton, CB23 7DY	1.44 km 18 minute walk 5 minute cycle
Dentist	Apple Tree Dental Practice, 1/3 West Street, Comberton, CB23 7DS	0.97 km 12 minute walk 3 minute cycle
Hospital	Addenbrooke's Hospital, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ	13.52 km 21 minute car
<i>Shops and Services</i>		

Convenience stores / Supermarkets	Budgens, 12 Barton Road, Comberton, CB23 7BP	1.25 km 15 minute walk 4 minute cycle 2 minute car
	Toft Shop, 6 High Street, Toft, Cambridge CB23 2RL	1.77 km 22 minute walk 5 minute cycle 3 minute car
	Sainsbury's 27 Eddington Avenue, Cambridge, CB3 1SE	8.70 km 15 minute car
	Morrisons, Broad Street, Cambourne, CB23 6EY	12.39 km 14 minute car 35 minute bus
Banks	Cambridge Building Society, 15 High Street, Cambourne, CB23 6JX	12.87 km 15 minute drive 37 minute bus
	Barclays, 9-11 St Andrews Street, Cambridge, CB2 3AA	13.04 km 23 minute drive 39 minute bus
Pharmacy	Lloyds Pharmacy, 9 High Street, Cambourne, CB23 6JX	12.87 km 14 minute car 37 minute bus
Public House	The Three Horse Shoes, 22 South Street, Comberton, CB23 7DZ	1.13 km 15 minute walk 4 minute cycle 3 minute car
	The Hoops, School Lane, Barton, CB23 7BD	3.86 km 13 minute cycle 6 minute car 11 minute bus
Restaurant / Café / Takeaways	Tai Yuen, 2 High Street, Toft, Cambridge CB23 2RL	1.77 km 6 minute cycle 3 minute car 8 minute bus
	Burwash Manor, New Road, Barton, CB23 7EY	4.18 km 14 minute cycle 7 minute car 15 minute bus
	The Blue Lion, 74 Main Street, Hardwick, Cambridge, CB23 7QU	4.02 km 12 minute cycle 4 minute drive
<i>Recreation &amp; Leisure</i>		
Playing Fields	Comberton Recreation Ground, Heinz Lane, Comberton	1.29 km 15 minute walk 5 minute cycle

Allotments	South Street, Comberton	Adjacent to the site 2 minute walk
Sports Facilities	Comberton Recreation Ground, Heinz Lane, Comberton (tennis and bowls)	1.29 km 15 minute walk 5 minute cycle
	Comberton Leisure, West Street, Comberton, CB23 7DU	0.32 km 4 minute walk
<i>Employment Uses</i>		
Employment sites	Horizon Park, Barton Road, Comberton, CB23 7BN	2.4 km 8 minute cycle 4 minute car 10 minute bus
	Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne Cambridge, CB23 6EA	12.23 km 14 minute car 28 minute bus
	Addenbrooke's Hospital and Biomedical Campus, Cambridge	12.23 km 16 minute car 59 minute bus

Table 2 – Public Transport Connections

<i>Public Transport Links</i>		
Bus	Bus stop on West Street (no. 18 bus serving Cambridge and Cambourne)	0.48 km – to bus stop 6 minute walk
	Madingley Road Park and Ride, Madingley Road, Cambridge	8.85 km – to bus stop 30 minute cycle 15 minute car
Train Links	Cambridge Station, Station Road, CB1	10.78 km 35 minute cycle 23 minute car 45 minute bus

Summary

- 4.4 Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that residents of any development would have convenient access to a range of shops and services that can be reached via sustainable modes of transport. The site is also very well related to the facilities on the Village College campus and the facilities that it offers.

- 4.5 The village is also served by a direct bus link to Cambridge city centre and Cambourne. The public transport hubs of Madingley Road Park and Ride and Cambridge Central Station offer excellent connections to other sustainable travel options to major employment hubs and recreation/leisure destinations in Cambridge and further afield.
- 4.6 Comberton is a settlement capable of accommodating further development at the scale put forward through this and other call-for-sites submissions. The potential re-location of the Madingley Road Park and Ride site to within 4km of the site as part of the Greater Cambridge Partnership proposals and the enhanced pedestrian and cycle connectivity that can be achieved would further strengthen the site's sustainability credentials.

## 5. GREEN BELT RELEASE

- 5.1 The adopted development plan confirms that the site is currently located in the Cambridgeshire Green Belt.
- 5.2 Paragraph 136 of the NPPF confirms that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans.
- 5.3 In light of the rising demand for market and affordable housing in South Cambridgeshire, the availability of development sites in urban areas and the rural nature of South Cambridgeshire, it is deemed essential and inevitable that the Council will need undertake a thorough Green Belt review process as part of the Local Plan Review. The release of suitable and sustainable sites from the Green Belt will allow the Council to address the rising demand for housing in the district, as reflected in the Government's standard methodology figures, and cover the demand arising from the extended plan period covered by the Plan. The need for housing growth, particularly in the most sustainable locations, is an exceptional circumstance which warrants a review of the Green Belt.
- 5.4 Paragraph 133 of the NPPF sets out the five purposes of Green Belt. Below is an initial assessment that identifies the extent to which the site at Bennell Farm, Comberton contributes to the five purposes.

**Checking unrestricted sprawl:** At the local level the proposed development will form a physical outward extension to the western edge of Comberton. The site does not perform a role in preventing the sprawl of Cambridge and its development can be contained by a new defensible Green Belt boundary defined by the existing hedgerows that abut the site to the north and east.

The site benefits from good levels of physical enclosure to the east, north and soon from south as a result of the consented residential development. These established site boundaries form a clear 'barrier' to prevent unrestricted sprawl further beyond the site boundary.

**Preventing neighbouring towns from merging:** The nearest neighbouring settlement to the site is Toft (circa 1km to the west of the site). Between the site and Toft there is agricultural land and the Meridian Golf Course with several isolated agricultural buildings. All this land forms part of the Cambridge Green Belt. The extent of these fields, and their

designation as Green Belt, mean that they would act as a significant barrier between the development site and the closest neighbouring settlement of Toft.

The development of the site for residential purposes will not therefore result in neighbouring settlements merging.

**Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment:** The consented development at Bennell Farm is already well screened by the existing hedgerows, which are to be retained. The development of this site will not extend north or east of the existing hedgerows, which presently forms a defensible boundary for restricting further growth and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

**Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns:** In this case, the Cambridge Green Belt preserves the setting and character of the historic city of Cambridge. Consequently, the site plays little purpose in preserving the setting and character of Cambridge. Conversely, its development will potentially relieve pressure for greater development within and around the city of Cambridge itself. In relation specifically to Comberton, the site's visual containment together with a sensitively design scheme at the application stage will ensure the impact of the new built form upon the existing character of the village will be minimal.

**Supporting urban regeneration:** In this case the urban regeneration relates to Cambridge where there are relatively few opportunities for regeneration (where opportunities do exist, these have been identified in the Council's planning policies and/or are currently being progressed by developers). In South Cambridgeshire the pressing need for housing necessitates expansion beyond existing developed urban land and some Green Belt sites.

- 5.5 The development site performs poorly against the NPPF's Green Belt purposes, as such, when coupled with the need to deliver new housing growth at the most sustainable locations in the district it should be considered for release from the Green Belt as part of the Local Plan review process.

## 6. OTHER SITE CONSIDERATIONS

### Flooding and Drainage

- 6.1 The GOV.UK flood mapping extract (Figure 3) confirms that the all the site falls within Flood Zone 1, as such, it is at a low risk of flooding. Therefore, risk of flooding will not be a constraint to the development of the site.

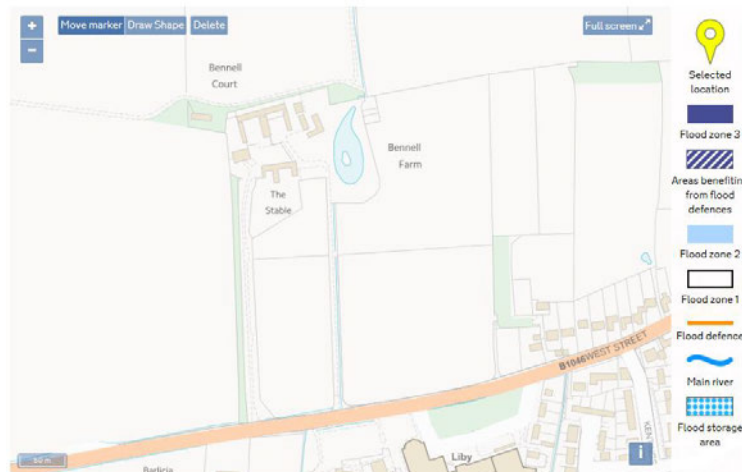


Figure 3: GOV.UK Flood Mapping

### Highways

- 6.2 The site benefits from having a newly upgraded vehicular access onto West Street. This access has been designed to accommodate the 90 approved dwellings and would have the capacity to take the traffic flows from this site and the land to the west of the access road.

### Cycle and pedestrian connectivity

- 6.3 To the south of Bennell Farm there is the existing dedicated pedestrian and cycle path that connects through to Toft to the west. To the east the cycleway stops at the entrance to the Village College site. To the west of the village there is another dedicated, shared use path that connects on through to Barton and then onto Cambridge. As part of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Greenways proposals this route will be upgraded to provide greater pedestrian and cycle priority along the route. There is the potential to extend the existing footway at the front of the site further eastwards in order to provide pedestrian connectivity with the bus stop at the top of Kentings. This will require culverting of the ditch.

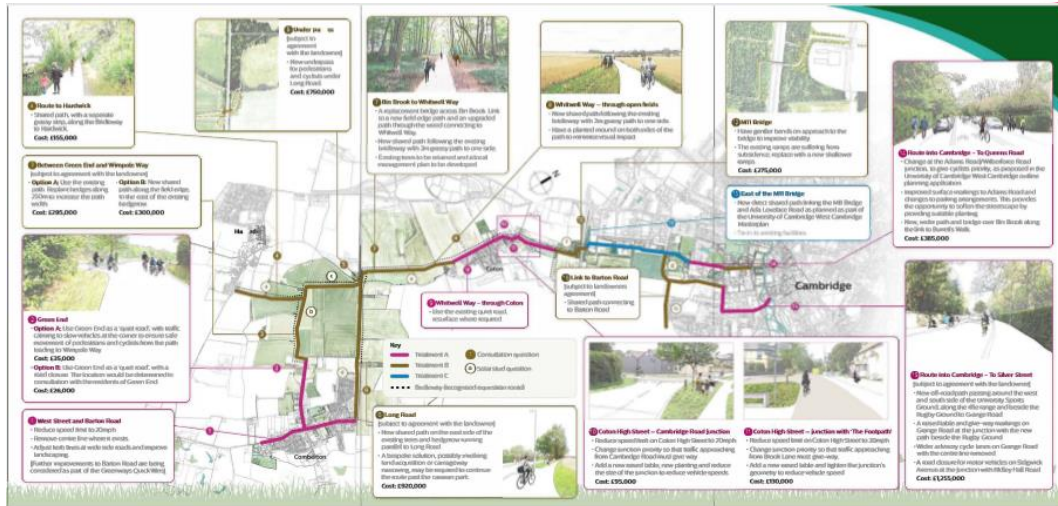


Figure 4: Proposed Comberton Greenway project

Public transport

- 6.1 Presently Comberton is served by the number 18 bus that connects Cambridge with Cambourne. This service runs buses in both directions each hour. To the northeast of Comberton there are the Madingley Road Park and Ride site and the new neighbourhood of Eddington. Both of these are well served by buses that connect them with central Cambridge.
- 6.2 As part of the Cambourne to Cambridge Better Public Transport Project there are proposals to relocate the Madingley Road Park and Ride site near to the Madingley Mulch roundabout or Scotland Farm, Dry Drayton. The more logical location of the two is at Madingley, which would then be within a short cycle or drive from the site. Whichever site is chosen for the new Park and Ride it will form part of a rapid public transport link between Cambourne and Cambridge.



Figure 5: Proposed locations of new Park and Ride site to serve the Cambourne to Cambridge route

### Ecology

- 6.3 At this stage a comprehensive ecological assessment of the site has not been carried out. Though the consented development site has been surveyed extensively. Notwithstanding this, the fact that the site is within an existing agricultural use means that there are few habits that would be lost as a result of the development of the site. Moreover, through a well-designed scheme of ecological enhancement the ecological credentials of the site could easily be enhanced.
- 6.4 The existing boundary hedges and the trees within them would all be retained other than at the point of access to the southwest. The habitats within these hedges would be enhanced by the soft landscaping of public open space and water attenuation areas within the site that would act as a buffer between them and the curtilages of residential properties.

### Heritage and Conservation

- 6.5 The site is not within or near the village Conservation Area and its development would not have any visual impact upon the setting of any of the heritage assets within the Conservation Area.

### Protected trees

- 6.6 There are no trees with Tree Preservation Orders on them within, or anywhere near the site.

## 7. THE PROPOSAL

- 7.1 The proposed allocation site has the potential to deliver between 30 and 40 dwellings with all the necessary public open space, play spaces and SUDs features within easy access of new residents. The final numbers of new dwellings on the site would be determined based on a design led approach that proposed a housing mix that best meets the needs of the village.



Figure 6: Concept Framework Plan

### Indicative Layout

- 7.2 The Concept Framework Plan indicates how the residential areas would be confined within the existing hedged boundaries of the site and set back from the pond to the west of the site. This would allow the pond area to form part of the amenity space for new residents as well as a water attenuation future with ecological value.
- 7.3 The vehicular access into the site would be from the south western corner and pedestrian and cycle connectivity would also be achieved through this point. Depending on the timing of the development there is the potential for some remodelling of the consented layout to deliver greater connectivity through the site to the southeast.

- 7.4 The layout and density of the site would follow the themes of the consented scheme with a mix of dwelling types and the use of shared surfaces where appropriate. Pedestrian and cycle connectivity would be promoted throughout the site by ensuring the roads are designed to keep speeds low and create a people friendly environment. The design of the dwellings would pick up on the local vernacular and ensure active frontages to provide natural surveillance of the public realm.
- 7.5 The layout of the site could easily accommodate space for self-build and custom build plots in accordance with adopted Policy H/9. The site would also accommodate a policy level of affordable housing on site and a mix of dwelling sizes for both the market and affordable housing.
- 7.6 Table 3 shows the indicative land use budget for the site.

Table 3 – Indicative Land Use Budget

<b>Site Area</b>	<b>Area</b>
Total site area	1.5ha
Net developable area	1.2ha
Open Space/landscaping (Inclusive of Landscaping and Central Green – LEAP, LAPs and SUDs features)	0.3ha

## **8. DELIVERY**

- 8.1 In terms of implementation and delivery, it is estimated that development at the site could be completed in 12 months following the formal allocation in the Local Plan and the subsequent approval of all necessary planning applications. In fact, with development at the main Bennell Farm site the contractors there could easily be retained to build out these additional homes.
- 8.2 There are no significant infrastructure works that would be necessary to enable the development. All potential mitigation measures can either be carried out within the confines of the site (water attenuation, etc.) or could be accommodated within the confines of the adopted public highways (footway improvements, etc.). In fact, the foul and surface water drainage schemes for the consented development have the potential to accommodate the flows from both the proposed allocation sites.
- 8.3 Construction traffic would inevitably have to come through the village but subject to planning conditions the timing of deliveries and access to the site can be controlled. This will limit the impact upon the operation of the Village College opposite.
- 8.4 Our client has been approached by multiple developers interested in the site. Given the popularity of Comberton and the success of the secondary school in particular the new homes are likely to be in high demand.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 In our assessment the delivery of the site at Bennell Farm (north) would result in a significant contribution in the number of new homes needed to meet the Greater Cambridge area's housing needs.
- 9.2 The consented scheme at Bennell Farm will result in a successful new neighbourhood for Comberton and its extension to the north and west will result in a comprehensive development of the wider site. Whilst the northern site falls within the Green Belt it is well contained within the existing hedgerows and its development would not have a significant impact upon the openness of the area.
- 9.3 Comberton is a demonstrably sustainable location with good connectivity to employment sites, services and facilities by sustainable modes of transport. The site is capable of accommodating a policy compliant level of affordable homes as well as sites for self-build plots.
- 9.4 As the district's large brownfield sites are already allocated for development it is inevitable that there will be greater emphasis on providing homes in the more sustainable villages. Comberton is one of the most sustainable Minor Rural Centres and this site can easily deliver the new homes needed to meet the growth forecast for the Greater Cambridge area.