

SITE PROMOTION DOCUMENT

FOR



REGARDING

**LAND AT BRACH ROAD AND LONG ROAD,
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 our clients, [REDACTED], who are promoting their land at Branch Road and Long Road, 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 120 and 130 dwellings and would be able to achieve a principle highway access off Long Road alongside proposals for 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 significant landscaping that would help to integrate the development into the rural landscape and help to better define the northern boundary of the village.
- 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 west of Long Road and south of Branch Road. Presently there is an agricultural access to the north off Branch Road. The site itself measures approximately 5.7ha and has well defined, hedged boundaries on all sides. To the north and west, the site abuts the adopted highways of Branch Road and Long Road respectively with an informal highway verge between the two. To the west the site abuts another, larger agricultural field. The land to the south includes a gated access to an area of allotments to the north of residential properties on Fox's Way.
- 2.2 To the east of Long Road there is the Highfield Farm Caravan Touring Park that extends eastwards and is bound on three sides by agricultural fields. The Caravan Park opens between March and October and includes a small shop providing basic convenience goods. The nearest residential properties are those to the south of the site on Long Road and Fox's Way, some of which have long rear gardens extending north towards the site. To the west of the site there are two isolated dwellings at Grace Farm and Windle Farm that have accesses onto Branch Road.
- 2.3 Other than a single tree in the north of the site and the semi-mature trees interspersed with the southern boundary hedge the site is void of trees of any significance. Between the eastern boundary hedge and the highway there is a ditch that extends northwards until the junction with Branch Road where it is culverted.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan

- 2.4 Fox's Way forms part of the Harbour Avenue area of Comberton that comprises a late twentieth century housing estate that is defined principally by two-storey, detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellinghouses.
- 2.5 The Comberton village development framework ends just north of 69 Long Road and extends westwards dissecting the longer residential gardens of properties in Fox's Way. As a result of the development framework boundary, the entire site falls within the countryside and forms part of the Cambridge Green Belt.

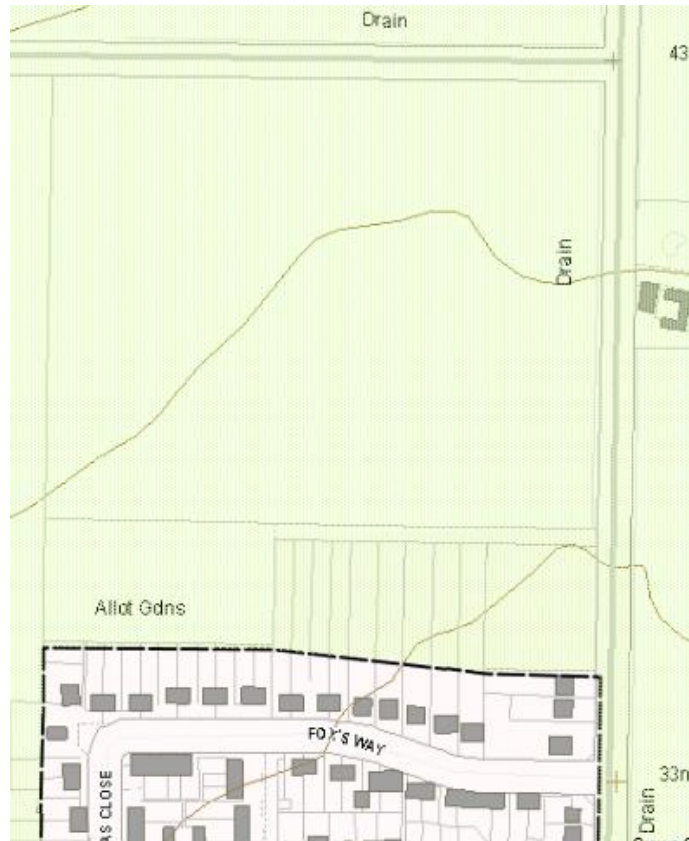


Figure 2: Showing the northern development framework boundary of Comberton and surrounding Green Belt

- 2.6 The B1046 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

- 2.7 Two outline planning applications for the residential development of the site were refused in February 1970 (ref. C/0839/70/O) and January 1969 (ref. C/0757/68/O). These two applications clearly have little relevance to the present proposals for the development of the site.
- 2.8 A recent full planning application for four large, two-storey dwellinghouses on land to the north of 69 Long Road was refused in March 2019 (ref. S/0058/19/FL). This refusal principally related to the fact that the dwellings would be located outside the development framework, within the Green Belt and no special circumstances were provided. The design of the dwellinghouses was also a reason for refusal.
- 2.9 In 2012 the site was submitted as part of the call for sites process and was consulted upon by the Council through its Issues and Options for delivery of new homes across the District.
- 2.10 The site did not progress any further due to concerns that the site forms part of the Green Belt and was not considered to relate well to the amenities of the village. Concerns were also expressed about the accessibility of the site for pedestrians and cyclists.

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 superseded the documents of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007. Adopted 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 boost the supply of housing and the achievement of 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 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 development of brownfield sites, predominantly former airfields.
- 3.4 Given that the new Local Plan will also cover the Cambridge City area and there are no other large brownfield sites in the district or City, it is clear that the future development strategy for the Greater Cambridge area 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 Branch Road is located approximately a kilometre and a half from the shops and facilities at the centre of Comberton. 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	1.38 km 16 minute walk 4 minute cycle
Primary School	Meridian Primary School, 15 Harbour Avenue, Comberton, CB23 7DD	0.8km 10 minute walk 5 minute cycle
	Barton Primary School, School Lane, Barton CB23 7BD	2.73km 9 minute cycle
Secondary School	Comberton Village College, West Street, Comberton, CB23 7DU	1.77km 22 minute walk 6 minute cycle
Sixth Form College	Comberton Sixth Form College, West Street, Comberton, CB23 7DU	1.77km 22 minute walk 6 minute cycle
GP Surgery	Comberton Surgery, 58 Green End, Comberton, CB23 7DY	1.6km 5 minute cycle
Dentist	Apple Tree Dental Practice, 1/3 West Street, Comberton, CB23 7DS	1.38 km 16 minute walk 4 minute cycle
Hospital	Addenbrooke's Hospital, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ	9.97 km 31 minute cycle 63 minute bus (plus 9 minute walk to bus stop)
<i>Shops and Services</i>		
Convenience stores /Supermarkets	Budgens, 12 Barton Road, Comberton, CB23 7BP (including Post Office)	9.97 km 15 minute walk 4 minute cycle

	Sainsbury's 27 Eddington Avenue, Cambridge, CB3 1SE	7km 9 minute drive
	Tesco Extra, 15-18 Viking Way, Bar Hill, CB23 8EL	15.1km 16 minute car
	Morrisons, Broad Street, Cambourne, CB23 6EY	10.9 km 11 minute car 38 minute bus (plus 9 minute walk to bus stop)
Banks	Cambridge Building Society, 15 High Street, Cambourne, CB23 6JX	10.9 km 11 minute car 38 minute bus (plus 9 minute walk to bus stop)
	Barclays, 9-11 St Andrews Street, Cambridge, CB2 3AA	8.85km 27 minute cycle 38 minute bus (plus 9 minute walk to bus stop)
	Barclays, 63-64 St Andrews Street, Cambridge, CB2 3BZ	8.85km 27 minute cycle 38 minute bus (plus 9 minute walk to bus stop)
Pharmacy	Lloyds Pharmacy, 9 High Street, Cambourne, CB23 6JX	10.9 km 11 minute car 38 minute bus (plus 9 minute walk to bus stop)
Public House	The Three Horse Shoes, 22 South Street, Comberton, CB23 7DZ	1.44km 17 minute walk 5 minute cycle
	The Hoops, School Lane, Barton, CB23 7BD	2.57 km 9 minute cycle
Restaurant / Café / Takeaways	Burwash Manor, New Road, Barton, CB23 7EY	3.05 km 10 minute cycle
	The Three Horseshoes, High Street, Madingley, CB23 8AB	4.18 km 14 minute cycle
	The Plough, 2 High Street, Coton, CB23 7PL	3.86 km 12 minute cycle
<i>Recreation & Leisure</i>		
Playing Fields	Comberton Recreation Ground, Heinz Lane, Comberton	0.96km 10 minute walk 5 minute cycle
Allotments	Long Road, Comberton	Adjacent to the site 1 minute walk

Sports Facilities	Comberton Recreation Ground, Heinz Lane, Comberton (tennis and bowls)	0.96km 10 minute walk 5 minute cycle
	Comberton Leisure, West Street, Comberton, CB23 7DU	1.85km 23 minute walk 6 minute cycle
<i>Employment Uses</i>		
Employment sites	Horizon Park, Barton Road, Comberton, CB23 7BN	1.28 km 15 minute walk 5 minute cycle
	Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne Cambridge, CB23 6EA	10.46 km 31 minute cycle 36 minute bus (plus 9 minute walk to bus stop)
	Addenbrooke's Hospital and Biomedical Campus, Cambridge	9.97 km 31 minute cycle 63 minute bus (plus 9 minute walk to bus stop)

Table 2 – Public Transport Connections

<i>Public Transport Links</i>		
Bus	Bus stop on Barton Road (no. 18 bus serving Cambridge and Cambourne)	0.8 km – to bus stop 9 minute walk 3 minute cycle
	Madingley Road Park and Ride, Madingley Road, Cambridge	5.47 km 21 minute cycle 6 minute drive
Train Links	Cambridge Station, Station Road, CB1	9.97 km 32 minute cycle 47 minute bus (plus 9 minute walk to bus stop)

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.
- 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 future 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 3km 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 Branch Road, Comberton contributes to the five purposes.

Checking unrestricted sprawl: At the local level the proposed development will form a physical outward extension to the northern 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 roads that abut the site to the north and east.

The site benefits from good levels of physical enclosure to the east, north and south from the adopted highways of Long Road, Branch Road and the residential development on Fox's Way and Long Road. 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 Hardwick (circa 3km to the northwest of the site). Between the site and Hardwick there is agricultural land with several isolated farmhouses and 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 Hardwick.

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

Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment: Highfields Touring Caravan Park and the dwellings at Grace Farm and Windle Farm are the northernmost residential properties in the village. The development of this site will not extend north of Branch Road, 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.

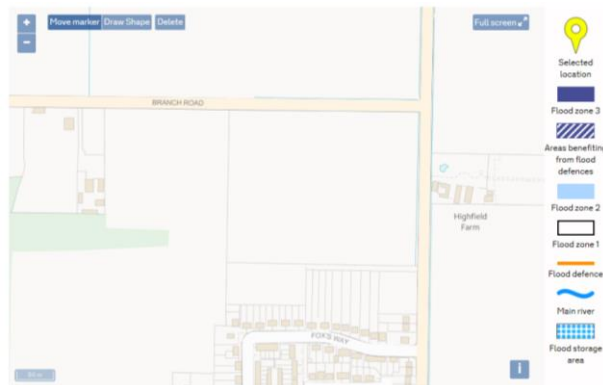


Figure 3: GOV.UK Flood Mapping

Highways

- 6.1 The most logical vehicular access to the highway network is onto Long Road. There is also the potential for a secondary access to be achieved onto Branch Road, though this would have to be subservient in design and use so as not to encourage traffic down Green End. Other than the ditch to the east of the site, that can easily be culverted, there is no physical impediment to providing a safe and secure vehicular access into the site with the necessary visibility splays.

Cycle and pedestrian connectivity

- 6.2 To the south of Long Road there is a dedicated pedestrian and cycle path that connects 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 are also proposals to enhance the existing bridleway further north of the site, which would give residents another option of a largely off-road cycle route into Cambridge.

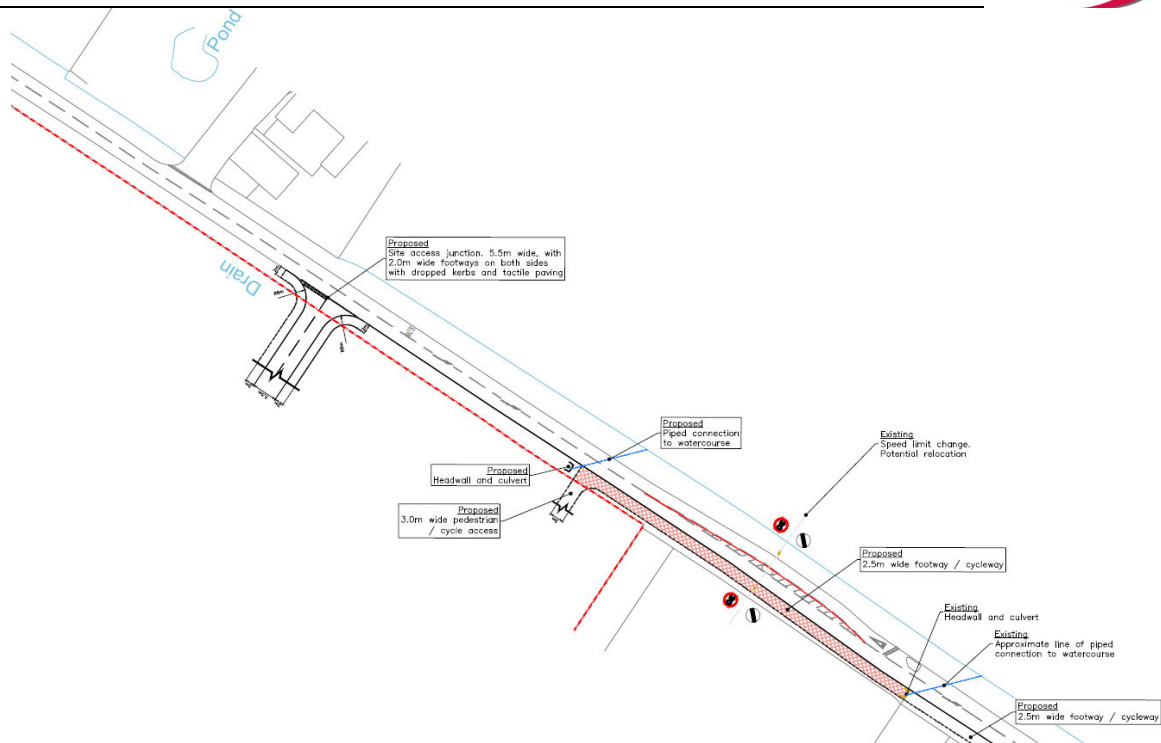


Figure: 5 Proposed footway extension to the west of Long Road (TPA)

6.4 From the Long Road boundary of the site, a parent would be able to accompany a younger child to school, with a walk time of c.9-10 minutes. This would provide for improved connectivity to the village too, with the onward walk time to the Budgens store, and other local facilities such as the dentists and hairdressers, of around 15 minutes.

Public transport

6.5 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 north of the site Long Road provides connectivity along the A1303 to the Madingley Road Park and Ride site and the new neighbourhood of Eddington. Both of these sites are well served by buses that connect them with central Cambridge.

6.6 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 easy reach of 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.

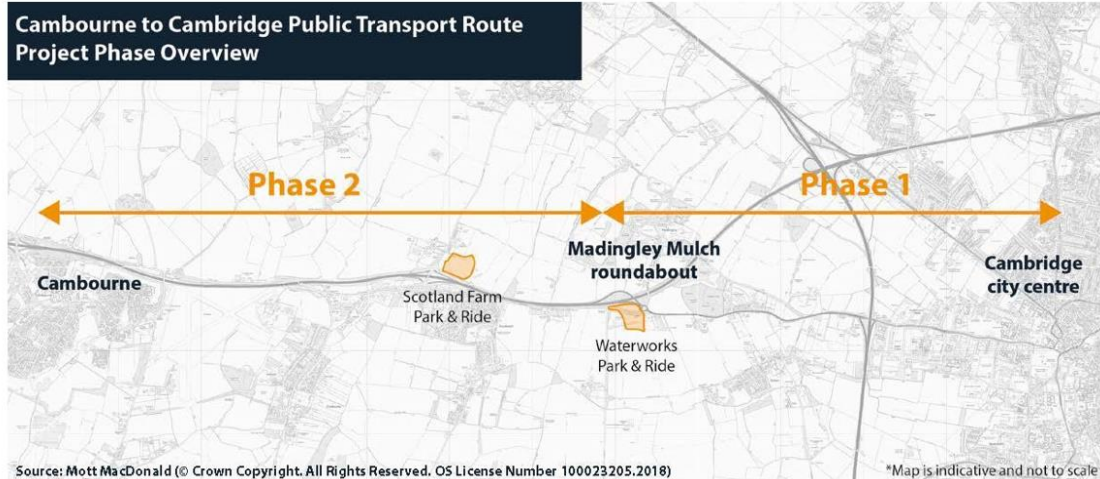


Figure 6: Proposed locations of new Park and Ride site to serve the Cambourne to Cambridge route

Ecology

6.7 At this stage a comprehensive ecological assessment of the site has not been carried out. 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.

6.8 The existing boundary hedges and the trees within them would all be retained other than at the points of access. The habitats within these hedges would be enhanced by the soft landscaping, 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

6.9 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

6.10 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 120 and 130 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.

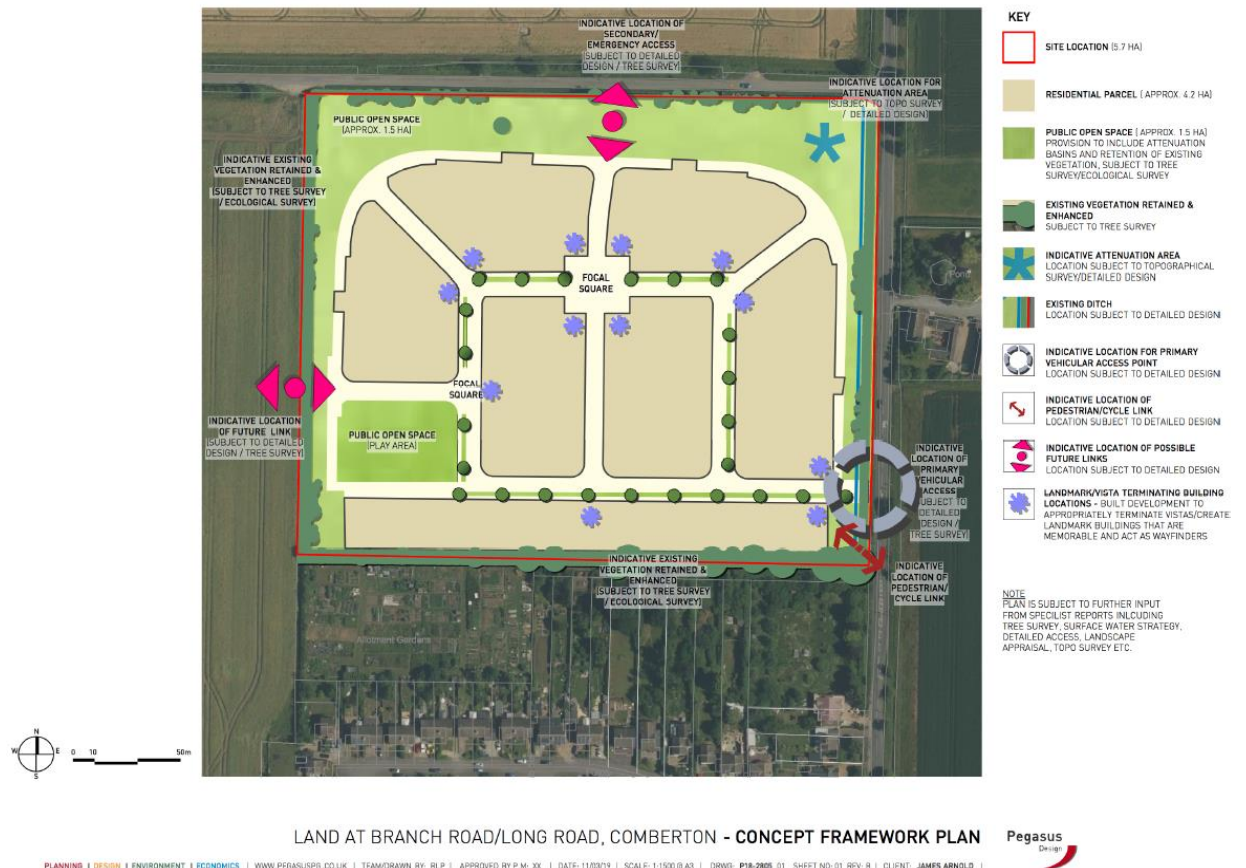


Figure 7: Concept Framework Plan

Indicative Layout

7.2 The Concept Framework Plan indicates how the residential areas would set back from the northern boundary of the site to allow for additional landscaping and an area of green buffer. This would soften views of the site from the north and result in the proposed dwellings being well located to access the pedestrian and cycle route to the east of the site down Long Road.

7.3 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.

- 7.4 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.
- 7.5 Table 3 shows the indicative land use budget for the site.

Table 3 – Indicative Land Use Budget

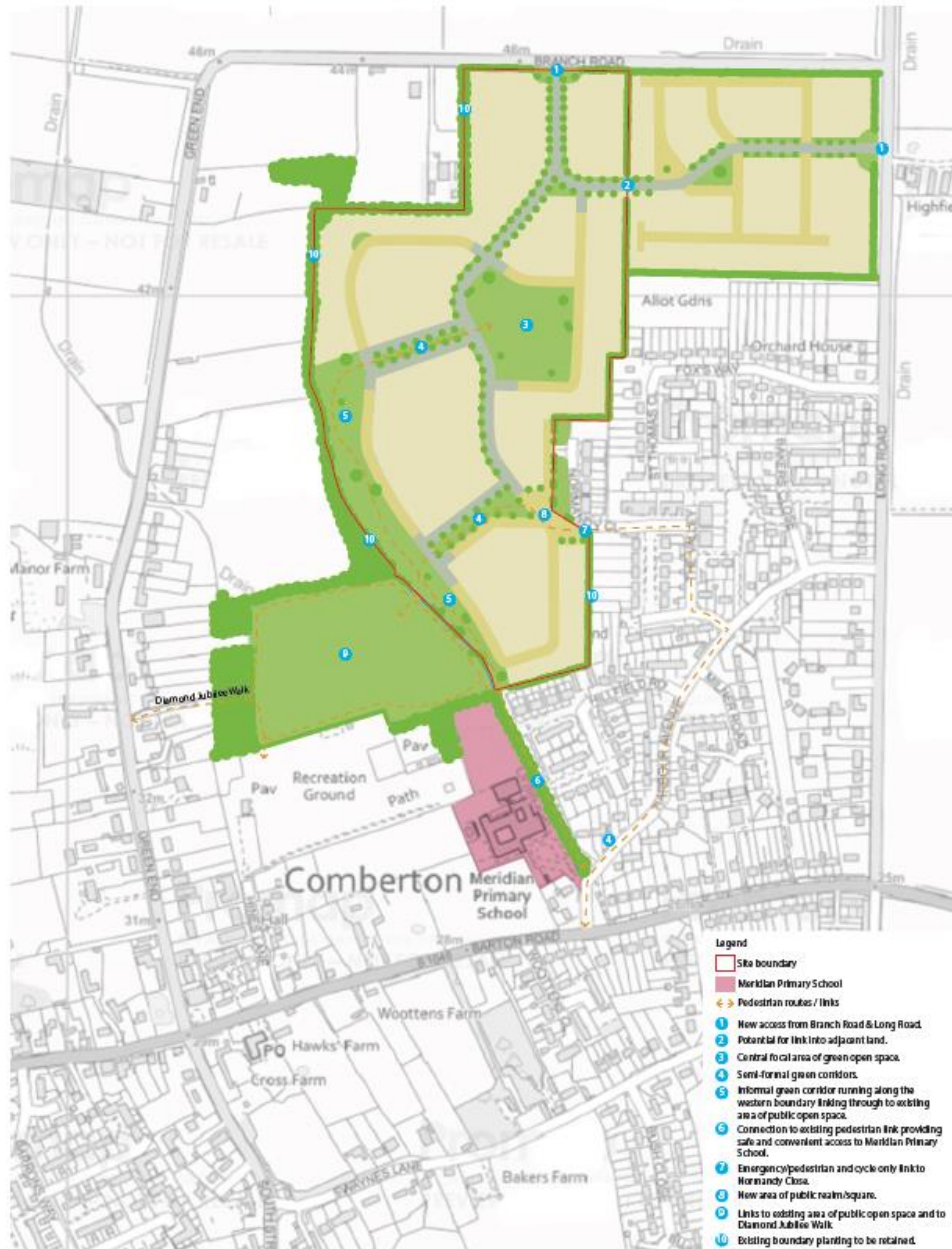
Site Area	Area
Total site area	5.7ha
Net developable area	4.2ha
Open Space/landscaping (Inclusive of Landscaping and Central Green – LEAP, LAPs and SUDs features)	1.5ha

Site Access

- 7.6 The main vehicular access serving the site would be to the southeast connecting with Long Road. This area is also identified as the most appropriate place to accommodate a pedestrian and cycle connection through to Long Road.
- 7.7 If required a secondary access could be provided to the north onto Branch Road. Given the lack of footpath along Branch Road pedestrians and cycles would be encouraged onto Long Road.

Development as part of a wider allocation

- 7.8 Our client has been approached by, Endurance Estates, the promoter of the land to the west of the site with the aim of the site forming part of a larger allocation. Whilst there is merit in this proposal this document demonstrates that the site could be delivered in isolation or as part of a wider allocation.
- 7.9 As the site benefits from a boundary abutting Long Road it could easily deliver a vehicular access onto the adopted highway that connected up with an internal layout that could accommodate pedestrian, cycle and vehicular links to the adjacent site to the west.
- 7.10 The pedestrian and cycle connectivity through the Endurance site would result in safe and convenient access to the facilities at the heart of the village.



Land off Branch Road, Comberton
Proposed development opportunity
Development Framework Plan

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Figure 8: Proposed Endurance Estates allocation

8. DELIVERY

- 8.1 In terms of implementation and delivery, it is estimated that development at the site could be completed in 36 months following the formal allocation in the Local Plan and the subsequent approval of all necessary planning applications.
- 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.).
- 8.3 Construction traffic would be routed so it accessed the site from the north, which would prevent construction traffic coming through the village.
- 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 Branch Road and Long Road 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 reasons why the site did not progress further in the previous local Plan process in part related to concerns about connectivity. These issues can easily be overcome through the provision of a footway down Long Road to connect with the existing footway network. This work, in combination with further traffic calming measures would create a safe environment that encourages walking and cycling.
- 9.3 Whilst the site works in isolation it could also form part of a wider allocation with land to the west that is being promoted separately through the call for sites process. Whilst the site falls within the Green Belt the sensitive landscaping of the site boundaries means that any visual impact on the wider landscape can be limited.
- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 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.