

To:
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Call for Sites Consultation,
Planning Policy Team,
South Cambridgeshire District Council,
Cambourne Business Park,
Cambourne,
Cambridge CB23 6EA

Planning Statement

Land south of St Neots Road, Hardwick

Submitted on behalf of Pigeon Investment Management Ltd and the landowners.

March 2019

Land south of St Neots Road, Hardwick

**Greater Cambridge Call for Sites Consultation
11 February 2019 – 25 March 2019**

Response by Savills (UK) Ltd on behalf of Pigeon Investment Management Ltd and the landowners

Contents

- 1.0 Context
- 2.0 The site and surroundings
- 3.0 General planning background
- 4.0 Conclusions

- Appendix 1 Red line Site Plan.
- Appendix 2 Site Access Plan
- Appendix 3 Supporting correspondence from landowners

1.0 **Context**

- 1.1 Savills Planning Team in Cambridge are instructed by Pigeon Investment Management Ltd on behalf of Pigeon Land 2 Ltd and the landowners to make the necessary and relevant representations to the consultation exercise as it relates to Greater Cambridge's Call for Sites stage which is the initial commencement of the Joint Local Plan Review for the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire areas. This short introductory statement is to support the Call for Sites Response Form 2019 which is attached. The submission is further supported by the accompanying Vision Document which identifies the key merits and potential for development of the site.
- 1.2 For many years now the two local planning authorities have sought to address the growth impact generated by the remarkable success of Cambridge as a centre of educational and Hi-tech business excellence. Success has come at a price with the housing market struggling to meet needs in an affordable way and transport networks coming under huge pressures from commuting. Notwithstanding these pressures, both Cambridge City and the surrounding semi-rural hinterland have managed to absorb economic and housing growth without significant harm to the environmental and aesthetic qualities and attractiveness of the area. The challenge in this next local plan review is to address continuing housing and transport pressures and the demands for additional economic growth, whilst continuing to conserve and enhance the quality of the area.
- 1.3 The creation of a new single Local Plan to cover both Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire administrative areas (Greater Cambridge) is welcomed. This offers the best context within which the Councils can evaluate and prioritise the competing needs for growth and mitigation that will no doubt be needed in this exercise. The development strategy will need to establish how the sequential approach to site identification can deliver a reasonable spread of development at scales that allow for delivery rates to be maintained and community benefits that lead to sustainable living.
- 1.4 As part of a balanced and deliverable growth strategy our view is that there should continue to be modest levels of growth in those sustainable settlements beyond the Green Belt that benefit from sustainable transport and other key infrastructure and can reasonably accommodate growth without generating unsustainable levels of traffic. Such a strategy allows for the ongoing development of the communities of South Cambridgeshire and assists the development industry, and especially small to medium sized builders, to make the best contribution they can to meeting the urgent need for more housing. It reduces the risk to housing delivery that stem from over-reliance on a small number of very large sites or new settlements. There is a strong logic to doing this where sustainable transport corridors have been identified and where there are already substantial commitments to increasing the capacity of public transport, which is the case for Hardwick and our site in particular. The Greater Cambridge Partnership has committed funds to the enhancement of the public transport services between Cambourne and Cambridge, with the alignment of the proposed dedicated route passing close by our site. The proposals also include a potential new park and ride facilities at Scotland Farm which would guarantee the availability of dedicated services into Cambridge and Cambourne from our site.

2.0 **The Site and Surroundings**

2.1 Hardwick is a medium-sized village some 8km to the west of Cambridge and 6km east of Cambourne and close to the proposed new settlement at Bourn. The site, which extends to approximately 6.51 hectares is located on the western edge of Hardwick, adjoining Meridian Close and adjoining frontage residential development along this length of St Neots Road. The area is defined on the plan at **Appendix 1**

2.2 The land comprises generally flat land in paddocks use and is well defined by existing landscaping along its southern and western boundaries. The site is well-related to the existing built form of the village. To the northwest, north and east it adjoins housing within the existing area of Hardwick village. To the southwest and south are extensive agricultural fields. To the east is the site for up to 155 dwellings, the subject of an extant outline planning permission (S/3064/16/OL). This has yet to be implemented.

3.0 **General Planning Background**

3.1 The settlement lies between the urban area of Cambridge City to the east and Cambourne new settlement to the west. The site lies close to the proposed new settlement at Bourn, underlining this as forming part of a growth corridor along the A428. Land between the eastern edge of the settlement and the edge of Cambridge urban area is designated Green Belt.

3.2 From the planning register it appears that circa 250 new dwellings have been given planning permission within the development framework of the village since 2016. The settlement is effectively bounded by the St Neots Road and A428 along its northern edge and by Green Belt to the east.

3.3 Whilst the southern part of village along Cambridge Road and Main Street encompasses a conservation area and a number of listed buildings, the north western part of the village is less sensitive and relatively unconstrained. It is therefore logical to look for expansion opportunities to the north west of the existing settlement.

3.4 The village is currently served by a regular bus service running between Cambourne and Cambridge, such that new residents would have the opportunity to adopt travel arrangements that do not rely on the private motor car and thus do not significantly increase the current levels of congestion on roads into Cambridge. The Councils are currently consulting on their proposals for enhancing the public transport corridor between Cambourne and Cambridge City, which can only serve to enhance the suitability and sustainability of new housing in this location. The commitment of the Greater Cambridge Partnership to achieve major enhancement of the public transport service in the corridor between Cambourne and Cambridge is very clear. This is expected to deliver a dedicated bus route (i.e. not one that shares existing road space) with bus stops close to our site. The ambition includes associated, traffic-free pedestrian and cycleway provision. The Park and Ride site proposed at nearby Scotland Farm will ensure availability of frequent and fast services for residents of the new homes on our site. Hardwick already contains a primary school, shops and other services and facilities to meet day to day needs. The existing and improved public transport facilities also provide good access to a wider range of services and facilities and employment opportunities by means other than the car. The Site is free of any significant environmental or infrastructure constraints and coupled with its sustainable location highlights that this is a suitable site for

Land south of St Neots Road, Hardwick

development. Our confidence about this is reinforced by the Council's recent decision to grant outline planning permission for the erection of up to 155 dwellings on land immediately to the east of our clients' proposed allocation (S/3064/16/OL). We believe that this recent decision recognises the strong benefits of allowing this scale of new housing at Hardwick as described in the accompanying Vision Document. It is clear evidence of the **suitability** of our client's land.

- 3.5 The site is in multiple land ownership but a formal Collaboration Agreement is in place between the landowners with regard to the promotion and development of the site. The landowners have collectively entered into an Agreement with Pigeon with regard to the promotion of the site for development. This is confirmed by the correspondence from the landowners enclosed at Appendix 3. We believe this is clear evidence of the **availability** of the site for development. There are no known constraints on the early development of the site once its suitability for development has been confirmed through the Greater Cambridge Plan process. We anticipate that construction on site could commence around 24 months after the inclusion of the site in the local plan is confirmed, and that the site could be completed within 36 months thereafter. It is therefore eminently **deliverable**. In terms of **viability** the site is greenfield in nature and in an area where there are no anticipated abnormal costs and market demand is such that a policy compliant scheme could be delivered.
- 3.6 In terms of sustainability it should be noted that the site is already well located on a public transport corridor between Cambridge City and Cambourne. However, it should also be recognised that the Greater Cambridge Partnership has significant investment ambitions to enhance and increase the capacity and utility of non-car transport between Hardwick and the City, with consultation underway currently in relation to the proposed dedicated bus route, cycle and pedestrian linkages. This is intended to form the first part of the Mayor's Cambridge Metro proposals and this significant investment will create a key transport corridor between Cambridge and Cambourne.
- 3.7 The attached Vision Document contains a visual and technical appraisal of the site and its suitability for the proposed residential-led development. This, we consider, is intended to give the Councils confidence to include the site as a potential housing location at this stage. Further detailed technical work will be undertaken to refine the details of the proposals and confirm the extent of any mitigation, in time for the next stage of the local plan process.

4.0 **Conclusions**

- 4.1 The Call for Sites provides the opportunity for our clients to put forward this land for consideration. The site is available for development and is not subject to any significant environmental or heritage constraints.
- 4.2 The land offers the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the levels of housing growth needed in the joint planning area by locating an appropriate scale of residential development outside the Green Belt, in close proximity to the urban edge of Cambridge, along a public transport corridor which is due to be significantly enhanced within the next few years in accordance through significant investment in public transport with proposals currently being brought forward by the Greater Cambridge Partnership which will form the first phase of the planned Cambridge Metro.

- 4.3 There is therefore the opportunity to continue the recent pattern of growth within a sustainable village beyond the Green Belt at a rate that can be absorbed by the existing community and infrastructure capacity and without any significant impacts on the environment. In so doing, it will be able to take advantage of and support the significant investment in public transport within the Cambridge to Cambourne growth corridor.
- 4.4 To summarise, our clients have reached agreement with the owners of this land south of St Neots Road to promote it for residential development and potential community facilities and we believe the site should be found to be **suitable, available, viable and deliverable**. It's location on a key public transport corridor between Cambourne and Cambridge means that along with its accessibility to a range of services and facilities ensures that it is located in a sustainable development and that its impact on traffic congestion can be relatively low in terms of a sequential weighing exercise. The scale of development proposed relative to the scale and current infrastructure of Hardwick, makes the proposal highly **sustainable**.