



Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Call for Sites and Broad Locations

Response March 2019

Planning Policy Overview and Analysis

Site: **Girton Golf Club practice ground – land west of Oakington Road, Girton**

Site size: **2.83 hectares**

Potential development: **30-40 dwellings, community building, car park, public open space**

Having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance the following information has been presented in order to assist the Council in considering the suitability, availability and achievability of residential development taking place at this site.

Suitability

Within the Adopted Local Plan (2018) Girton is classified as a Minor Rural Centre (via Policy S/9). This represents the second tier of the settlement hierarchy. Policy S/9 confirms that developments of up to 30 dwellings will be permitted within the settlement boundary of such a Minor Rural Centre. This confirms that Girton is, on the Council's previous assessment as part of the 2018 Local Plan, a sustainable location to accommodate new housing.

The 2011 census confirms that the parish of Girton has a population of 4,559. The dwelling stock was estimated to be 1,820 in mid-2012¹.

The proposed site is considered suitable for all types of residential development (market housing; private rented; affordable housing; self and custom build; and housing for older people). The site could also accommodate an element of community use with reference to identified uses set out below.

The principal use for the site is therefore residential (30-40 dwellings) and at present it is suggested that the site would be most suitable for the development of a conventional market housing lead development with policy compliant affordable housing. Either the market or policy compliant affordable housing would be capable of accommodating an element of private rented; self or custom build; or housing for older people.

¹ Cambridgeshire County Council source – taken from South Cambridgeshire District Council's Services and Facilities Study (March 2014)

The District Council previously assessed the proposed site within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2013) and considered that whilst the site merited further consideration it was, at that time, not taken forward for allocation within the Local Plan due to the anticipated harm in relation to the Green Belt.

In addition to the Green Belt we also consider the position in respect of Flood Risk.

Green Belt: as set out within the RPS *Landscape and Visual Statement* the proposal would not create any significant harm on the landscape or the Green Belt.

The land is situated between existing development to the north and south. To the south is residential development in the form of a housing estate. To the north of the site is a pumping station; residential use (6 Oakington Road) and a Business Park (B1 and B8 uses). The existing site also accommodates an overhead power line and thus visually the land has few typical features such that it would be considered to be a countryside location befitting of Green Belt.

The land itself is presently part of the Golf Club and was most recently used as a practice ground. Accordingly the land does constitute previously developed land as it is used as part of a leisure based land use.

The former practice ground is land locked (in terms of its relationship with other land which is owned by the Golf Club) with the only access to it taken from Oakington Road. The land is not presently maintained by the Golf Club other than via an occasional ad hoc cut of the grass.

In the context of the Green Belt as a whole the Council's previous studies highlight the importance of a gap between Girton and Cambridge. This proposed site is situated towards the northern edge of Girton and therefore it would not diminish any gap between those two settlements.

Paragraph 141 of the NPPF refers to the desire to provide for opportunities to provide access and recreation within areas of Green Belt. The delivery of this site would facilitate around 1.5 hectares of public open space land. That area would also provide opportunities for biodiversity benefits.

Paragraph 145 of the NPPF lists appropriate development within the Green Belt as including: limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land; and the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation.

The development can therefore be considered to be an appropriate use within the Green Belt but in any event any impact in visual terms would be limited as confirmed by the RPS report.

Flood Risk: according to the Environment Agency flood maps the land is within Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3. As confirmed by the Amazi *Technical Note on Flood Risk* the flood zone maps are based upon a 2003 model and therefore their accuracy is in some doubt. We will continue to assess the position further through discussions with the Environment Agency. We anticipate that the site will be able to accommodate new housing within the area currently suggested as being Flood Zones 1 and 2 (on the Environment Agency maps).

In relation to other indicators of suitability the Council's previous assessment of the site and the

village more generally have confirmed that the village is a sustainable location for further housing growth and that the land previously scored positively in relation to factors such as: access to services and facilities within the village; access to public transport; and the provision of sport and allotment facilities within the village. The Golf Club of course contributes towards sport provision and provides a local amenity for the community. The Club though requires ongoing maintenance and any sales received from the delivery of housing development at this site would be used to maintain the facility at a time when new memberships are sought in order to sustain the future of the facility.

We note further that the District Council previously recognised the following deficiencies within the village in terms of community facilities:

- 1) Play Space shortfall (-2.91 ha)²
- 2) Informal Open Space shortfall (-1.6 ha)²
- 3) Retail offer limited³
- 4) Lack of community facilities⁴

The proposal is capable of providing facilities in order to seek to address or at least improve existing deficiencies subject to further discussions with the District and Parish Council's. For example a significant amount of additional open space could be provided to facilitate a walking route around the site and/or a community building could be provided. This is illustrated on the site masterplan.

Availability

The site is available and [REDACTED] are promoting the land's redevelopment.

The Council's previous assessment noted the position of the overhead power lines which cross the land to the western part of the site. The promoters are investigating the ability to underground these cables or relocate them elsewhere within the site. The overhead lines are not considered to be a significant constraint to new development at the site.

The land is evidently available and subject to gaining Planning Permission the land would be sold to a developer. The promoter is aware of interest within the site from house builders.

Achievability

The development of between 30 and 40 dwellings at the site together with community facilities is considered to be fully achievable at this site. The promoter has experience of delivering such sites (such as the Brampton Park Golf Club Practice Ground in Huntingdonshire) which is currently being developed by a national housebuilder.

Both the Golf Club and the promoters are confident that the value from a site sale, taking account of the requirements for affordable housing, infrastructure and mitigating the overhead line, would not make the development unviable.

² South Cambridgeshire District Council Recreation and Open Space Study 2013

³ South Cambridgeshire District Council Village Classification Report 2012

⁴ Scott Wilson (for South Cambridgeshire District Council) Community Facilities Assessment 2009

Conclusion

We consider that the site's redevelopment for a housing led development is a suitable, available and achievable opportunity to deliver additional housing stock within a sustainable location.

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