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Date: 20/03/2019

Planning Policy Team
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

Dear Sir/Madam

GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN CALL FOR SITES CONSULTATION – LAND TO THE WEST OF CAMBRIDGE ROAD, MELBOURN PHASES 1 AND 2

I write to you on behalf of my client, Countryside Properties Plc, in relation to the submission of land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Call for Sites consultation. This submission relates to 'Phases 1 and 2' of the development which comprises the field that lies adjacent to Cambridge Road and an additional field to the rear, as indicated in the submitted Site Location Plan. An additional submission is being made for the Phase 1 development only which comprises field adjacent to Cambridge Road. The remainder of this letter provides a site description, sets out the context and background of the site, describes the potential development proposals that the site could accommodate and lists the benefits associated with the development.

An outline application for up to 160 units on the site was submitted by Countryside to SCDC in 2017. The application was subsequently refused on two grounds, prematurity and ecology. This decision has subsequently been appealed by Countryside. The prematurity reason for refusal has been overcome following the adoption of the Local Plan in October 2018 whilst the ecology reason for refusal has been fully addressed through the preparation of additional information and further consultation with Natural England.

Following the grant of consent, Countryside intend to deliver units on the site immediately. It is considered that the development proposals would deliver numerous benefits to the village and surrounding area through locating homes next to a major employment site in the village, providing new and enhanced walking routes and public open space and delivering affordable housing, including an element of built to rent.

Site Description

The site is located immediately to the north-east of Melbourn and lies within South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC). The site measures approximately 13.4 hectares (ha) and is currently in agricultural use.

The site is bound to the north west by arable farmland, to the north by Cherry Park Farm including Urban Plastics Commercial Buildings, to the east by Cambridge Road with farmland beyond, and to the south by the Melbourn Science Park with the village of Melbourn beyond. Planning permission has recently been granted for an extension to Melbourn Science Park (ref: S/2941/18/FL). The expansion will deliver

an additional 10,974 square metres of employment floorspace, providing approximately an additional 200 jobs.

The Melbourn High Street, with its range of services and facilities, is located approximately 900m to the south west of the site whilst Meldreth Station is located approximately 1km to the west of the site.

Royston is located approximately 6km to the south-west and Cambridge approximately 16.5km to the north-east. There is existing field access.

There are a number of mature trees located along the site's northern, eastern and western boundaries. To the southern boundary, where the land abuts the settlement boundary of Melbourn, there is a hedgeline and some tree planting. The site is bisected in a south-east to north-west direction by a broken hedgerow.

The site is not subject to any environmental designations and is located within Flood Zone 1, as indicated by the Environment Agency's Flood Maps, and therefore has a 0.1% chance (low probability) of flooding.

The site is not located within a Conservation Area, nor are there any Listed Buildings within close proximity.

Melbourn

Melbourn is classified as a Minor Rural Centre in the settlement hierarchy within the adopted Local Plan. Minor Rural Centres are the second most sustainable settlement type within the hierarchy and perform a role in terms of providing services and villages for a rural hinterland.

The Village Classification Report (2012) prepared by SCDC reaffirms Melbourn's position in the settlement hierarchy and ranks Melbourn as the ninth most sustainable village in South Cambridgeshire, a district which comprises over 100 villages. This is by reference to an assessment of the extent of services, facilities and shops. The Report found that Melbourn, at the time, had 19 shops and services and one of the highest workplace to population ratios in the District. Melbourn is therefore one of the largest and better served villages in the District.

Whilst the Report was prepared in 2012 it still demonstrates the general range of facilities and services in Melbourn and that it is one of the better served, and therefore more sustainable, villages in the district.

Relevant Planning History

An outline application for "*The erection of up to 160 residential units, including affordable housing provision, public open space and associated access, infrastructure and landscaping. All matters reserved except for access*" was refused by SCDC on 23 February 2018. The decision notice sets out the following reasons for refusal:

1. The Local Plan examination is at an advanced stage. The development proposed, of itself and when considered cumulatively with other development is such that its effect would be so significant that to grant permission would undermine the plan-making process by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development that are central to the emerging Local Plan. As such, to grant planning permission would be premature in the context of the current stage of the local plan process. This adverse impact individually as well as when taken together with the nature conservation harm identified in reason for refusal below, significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development, including in terms of delivery of housing (including affordable housing).

2. Insufficient information has been submitted within the application to ascertain the impact on the nearby SSSI's consequently it is not possible to establish what mitigation may be necessary

to ensure that the proposal would not have an unacceptable adverse impact, either directly or indirectly on the SSSI's known as : L-Moor Shepreth, Fowlmere Watercress Beds and Whittleford - Thriplow Hummocky Fields contrary to policy NE/7 Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance of the adopted Development Control Policies DPD and Policy NH/5 Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance of the emerging local plan South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Submission (March 2014)

The delegation report which accompanied the decision notice sets out the consultation responses to the application, the planning assessment and concludes with the planning balance. The Report systematically works through the planning assessment finding the scheme acceptable on all matters, with the exception of a potential impact on ecology and an impact to the local plan-making process. The delegation report found that with appropriate mitigation, to be secured through condition or planning obligations, the development would be acceptable in terms of:

- Housing Mix (at outline stage);
- Affordable Housing;
- Proximity to Services and Facilities;
- Health Impact Assessment;
- Loss of Agricultural Land;
- Landscape Impact;
- Highways Safety and Parking;
- Archaeology;
- Design and layout (at outline stage);
- Trees; and
- Flooding and Drainage.

Of particular note in the planning assessment section is the conclusion drawn in relation to the site's location. On page 23 the report states "However, given the sustainable location of the site for residential development...". This statement clearly indicates that SCDC consider the location of the site to be sustainable, and therefore acceptable for residential development.

The delegation report, in the planning balance section at page 30, sets out a number of benefits that would result from the development. However, it concludes that the harm arising from prematurity and impacts on SSSIs significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefits to housing land supply and other benefits of the scheme.

An appeal against this decision was subsequently made to the Planning Inspectorate (ref: APP/W0530/W/18/3209856). At the time of writing, a start letter for the hearing is still yet to be received. In relation to the reasons for refusal, the first reason for refusal has fallen away following the adoption of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) whilst additional mitigation is being proposed to overcome the second reason for refusal. Further information regarding the additional mitigation is set out in the following section.

Development Proposals

The proposal involves the landscape design-led residential development of the site. It is considered that up to 300 residential units, including 40% affordable housing, landscaping, vehicular and pedestrian access and formal and informal open space could be delivered. The Illustrative Masterplan, the purpose

of which is to demonstrate one way that the site is capable of accommodating the proposed quantum of development, provides an indicative layout for the site.

In brief, the main features of the Masterplan include a main access route which runs along the existing central hedge and arrives to a central green space, a natural/semi-natural green space to the north-west and green buffers along the Cambridge Road frontage and the western boundary. There will be a clear legible road network including shared surfaces, and dwellings of a range of sizes and typologies. A pedestrian link is proposed in the west of the site along 'the Drift' which links to Moat Lane and runs through the recently consented Science Park expansion, providing enhanced connectivity for new residents to access the Science Park and the High Street.

Delivery of affordable housing is a key element of the development proposals. It is proposed that build to rent apartments and houses could be delivered as part of this offering. These dwellings would be retained to provide long term rental opportunities. This would include holding a range of housing to offer a variety of rental properties, allowing people to up scale and downsize subject to their needs over time. This would provide a greater opportunity for people to remain in the village.

The proposed additional mitigation in relation to ecology, comprises a walking route within the field adjacent to the north west of the site. The walking route is 2km in length and is easily accessible to future residents of the proposed development. The route includes two linked loops which take pedestrians around areas of public open space within the site and then around the perimeter of the adjacent field, allowing opportunities for trained dogs to walk off the lead. Dog waste bins and signage will be provided where appropriate.

The walking route would not be for the sole use of residents of the proposed development but will be open to the public; it therefore generates the benefit that it will create a new recreation asset for the village and provide a walking opportunity for those that may have otherwise considered the need to travel to SSSIs for that activity. The delivery of this route would therefore address the effects of increased recreational pressure on the nearby SSSI's and has been the subject of on-going consultation with Natural England.

Delivery

Countryside Properties is a major and established developer and housebuilder with a reputation for building homes of quality. It has the site under contract to deliver homes following the granting of consent. Assessments of the site have not identified any abnormalities that would add to or delay the delivery and construction programme.

Benefits

It is considered that the development proposals could deliver numerous tangible social, economic and environmental benefits to the local area, including:

- Delivery of affordable housing, including an element of build to rent. This would allow people to up scale and downsize subject to their needs over time whilst also meeting affordable housing need within the District;
- Locating residential development adjacent to one of the village's largest employment sites, Melbourn Science Park. Melbourn Science Park has recently been granted permission for a substantial extension and provides a unique employment source which is of great importance to Melbourn and the surrounding area. The development would provide people with the opportunity of living and working in the same village and encourage sustainable modes of transport;
- The delivery of a walking route which is easily accessible to current and future residents and employees of the village. It will create a new recreation asset for the village and provide a walking

opportunity for those that may have otherwise considered the need to travel to SSSIs for that activity, therefore protecting nearby SSSI's from increased recreational pressure;

- The delivery of a pedestrian route from the West of the site along 'the Drift' which links to Moat Lane. This will provide new residents with enhanced pedestrian connectivity to the adjacent Science Park and the Melbourn High Street, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport; and
- Supporting Melbourn's economy, including local shops and services. The Economic Benefits Statement submitted with the outline application, found that there would also be a significant and positive impact upon Melbourn's economy with residents of the new development supporting existing local shops and services within the village. This benefit is recognised in the Delegation Report at page 30. As a result of the proposed development, approximately £248,000 per annum is expected to be spent at local shops and services, potentially supporting an additional three jobs.

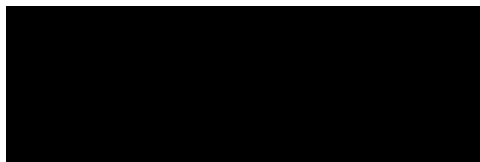
Conclusion

The submission has been prepared by Bidwells on behalf of Countryside Properties Plc to submit land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Call for Sites. The site is located immediately to the north west of Melbourn, one of the largest and most sustainable villages in South Cambridgeshire and lies adjacent to the recently expanded Melbourn Science Park, one of the largest employment sites in the villages. The development proposed is a landscape-led residential development, comprising up to 300 homes of which 40% would be affordable. A walking route is proposed through the site and on the field to the north-west and would be accessible to current and future residents and employees of the village, providing tangible environmental benefits. Furthermore, the development proposals would also provide social and economic benefits to the local area.

If you have any queries regarding this submission or require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Yours faithfully



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Principal Planner, Planning

Enclosures **Call for Site Forms**
 Site Location Plan
 Illustrative Masterplan
 Recreational Strategy