



South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council (Greater Cambridge) Call for Sites Broader Location Consultation 2019

Proposed Innovation Technology Centre on land between A428 and St Neots Road, Hardwick (1).

Prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of [REDACTED]

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Site Name:	Land between A428 and St Neots Road, Hardwick
Client Name:	[REDACTED]
Type of Report:	Representation to Call for Sites
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of our client, [REDACTED] in relation to South Cambridgeshire District Council 'Call for Sites' consultation on the preparation of the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The purpose of the consultation is to invite potential sites or broad locations for development in Greater Cambridge which comprises of the administrative areas of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2 The land is being promoted by a single landowner for a new innovation technology/business centre to provide incubation space/facilities for start-up and small to medium enterprise.
- 1.3 This representation has been prepared in accordance with the requirements set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In particular, it has been prepared having regard to the tests of soundness as set out within paragraph 35, which sets out a requirement for Local Plans to be:
 - a) **Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the areas objectively assessed needs, and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet needs from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development.
 - b) **Justified**- an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence
 - c) **Effective**- deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
 - d) **Consistent with national policy**- enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework
- 1.4 This report will provide a detailed overview as to why the site is a suitable site for a new innovation centre and therefore why it should be allocated in the new local plan

2. Site and surrounding context

- 2.1 The site is located on land that is situated to the north- west of the village of Hardwick. Importantly, it is located outside of the Cambridge Green Belt.
- 2.2 The site is very well enclosed, being bound by to the north by the A428 and St Neots Road to the south. Historically the site formed part of an agricultural holding which was "orphaned" by the building of the A428 around ten years ago, which left the plot unsuitable for agriculture due to the fact that it had been used as a construction yard for building the road.



Figure 1: Aerial View of the Site

- 2.3 Currently, the site is sparsely under used vegetated scrubland. Beyond the southern boundary of the site and St Neots Road is a group of low density housing, which extends along most of the southern boundary of the site. These houses are outside the settlement framework of Hardwick, which is located to the south-east. There is also a fuel filling station on St Neots Road before the roundabout. The settlement of Highfield Caldecote and Hardwick are located to the south of the site. To the north the site is well screened by structural landscape planting to the north, which is to the south of the A428. This planting is set on a bund and is therefore very well screened from the A428.
- 2.4 The site is located approximately 10km from the centre of Cambridge which is to the east, and 4km to from Cambourne which is to the west. The A428 is an arterial route into Cambridge from the west and form part of the main link between Bedford and Cambridge via St Neots. The site is also located within walking distance of Bourn Airfield, which has been allocated for residential development of up to 3,500 new homes. An outline planning application (S/3440/18/OL) is currently under consideration for this.
- 2.5 The site is located between Highfields Caldecote and Hardwick but outside their settlement boundaries. Below is an extract from the District Wide – North-West Quadrant – Map with the site indicated with a red dot.

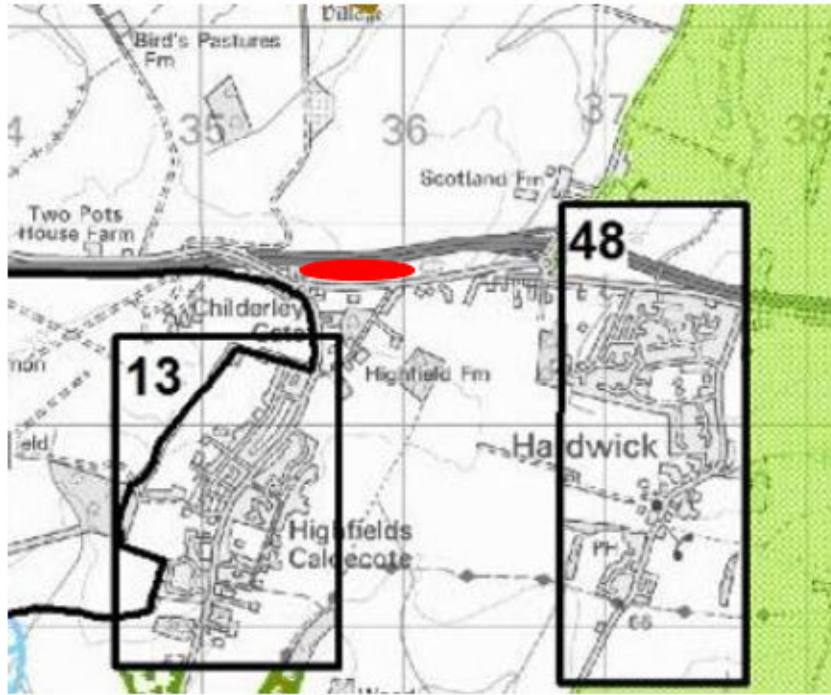


Figure 2: Extract from the adopted South Cambridgeshire Proposals Map 2018

3. The Proposed Development & Background to the Scheme

- 3.1 The proposal is to comprehensively redevelop the existing 4.6 hectare site for an 'technology innovation park' for small to medium size enterprises including incubator units including associated car parking and landscaping. Indicative details of an illustrative site layout are shown on the accompanying plans, prepared by Fielden & Mawson.
- 3.2 A separate representation, has also been made for an additional area of land that the applicant controls to the east of this application site.
- 3.3 The proposed technology innovation centre would provide 8,000sqm of employment space. The proposed allocation of this site would provide a purpose built facility for the growing economy of small and medium tech-start-ups which have different timescales and requirements to established businesses. Furthermore, the site is ideally located on the western edge of Cambridge and adjacent to two large housing sites/allocations (Cambourne and Bourn Airfield) as well as the established settlements of Highfield Caledcote and Hardwick. Hardwick is the closest settlement to Cambridge that is outside of the Green Belt. The site is therefore accessible to these settlements and so would intercept traffic flows into Cambridge which would help to reduce congestion.
- 3.4 As shown on the Illustrative Masterplan, prepared by Fielden & Mawson, the tech-innovation park would provide hybrid workshops/offices in a range of sizes including shared workshop spaces which are equipped with light machinery to particularly assist start-ups. A percentage of space would be dedicated to [REDACTED] to provide virtual offices, co-working spaces, meeting rooms and workshops space. The site would also include an ancillary café use to serve the park.
- 3.5 [REDACTED] is currently based at Cambridge Innovation Park and has already proved to be a runaway success with large numbers of start-ups, mentors, trainers, service providers and investors extremely keen to get involved. Partnerships and collaboration agreements with very many locally based organisations and influential individuals have been agreed or are under discussion.
- 3.6 The site would also complement the existing and successful Cambridge Innovation Park at Waterbeach which is home to 40 companies. The existing innovation park consists of Stirling House, which is a modern fully serviced 4,800sqm office building, and Blenheim House, which is a 3200sqm self-contained office building specifically designed for growing high-tech companies. The site also contains a range of social and leisure uses to provide additional complementary benefits such as wine bar, café, gym and on site nursery. The landowner has also submitted plans for a new building offering 6460sqm of additional space on the existing site in order to meet demand.
- 3.7 The same model is proposed to be replicated at the Hardwick site. The benefit of the Hardwick site to the existing site is that it would enable the existing innovation park to

- 3.14 The range of employment and business sectors already served by the [REDACTED] group of companies is extremely wide and diverse. Start-ups on the [REDACTED] pilot at the moment include Electro-mechanical devices, green energy, IT software and hardware, social enterprises and robotics. Other businesses that the group currently provides facilities for includes a number of food and beverage businesses, small contractors, manufacturing, online sales, export and leisure businesses. A similar wide and diverse range of businesses would be able to fulfil a desperate need for facilities around Cambridge and create considerable numbers of new jobs over and above those already in the pipeline.
- 3.15 From experience gained from operating other sites, [REDACTED] know that small businesses are more likely to grow and prosper if they present a clean, organised and professional image and we therefore intend to provide high quality, light, bright and modern facilities.
- 3.16 For this reason, [REDACTED] need properly designed bespoke premises and cannot make do with poor quality vacant accommodation. Nor do the applicants wish to attempt to modify an existing building which has not been purpose designed.
- 3.17 Many of the start-up companies are "bootstrapped", which means that they are operating on small budgets and therefore cannot afford to pay commercial levels of rent. This site will provide an opportunity for businesses to be located within easy access to Cambridge, and benefit from the knowledge and agglomerations around the City, but within a space where rents will be more affordable.
- 3.18 The proprietors of these start-up businesses will mostly live within Cambridge and the surrounding settlements. Many will be riding bicycles and using public transport which means that the site needs to be within easy reach of Cambridge in order for it to succeed. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Rapid Transit Route from Cambourne to Cambridge, which is already a committed development as identified within the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018), will provide a cycle route from Cambourne to Cambridge alongside it, with direct access to the proposed innovation park.
- 3.19 [REDACTED] operates on a business model that requires ownership of the freehold interest in order to ensure that we are free to design and build exactly what is required, and to keep ongoing costs low, which will ensure long term sustainability.

[REDACTED] Business Model

- 3.20 Freehold ownership is essential to the business model as the company will invest significantly (several millions of pounds) into the site and needs therefore to use the added capital valuation in order to raise funds to continue to invest. Additionally, the company needs to have direct control over the development without the need to obtain approval from any superior landlord in order to be flexible and quickly adaptive to changes. Also freehold ownership helps to protect the development from unsustainable future rent rises and other complications.

3.21 Even if sites with residential permission were suitable for commercial use, the higher value residential developments will always elevate the value of the land to a level where it is not financially viable to develop it for commercial occupation.

4. Planning policy and Need for Employment Growth

- 4.1 This part of the report will provide an overview and analysis of the relevant national and local planning policy position in terms of employment based development and expand on the responses provided in the questionnaire which forms part of this Call for Site consultation.
- 4.2 As detailed within this section, there is a clear and identified need for substantial additional employment land to be allocated within South Cambridgeshire. Particularly in well located, sustainable locations outside of the Green Belt, but in close proximity to Cambridge.

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)

- 4.3 Paragraph 16 states that plans should (**my emphasis**):
- a) be prepared with the objective of **contributing to** the achievement of **sustainable development**;
 - b) be **prepared positively**, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable;
 - c) be **shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement** between planmakers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees;
 - d) contain **policies that are clearly written and unambiguous**, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals;
 - e) be accessible through the use of digital tools to assist public involvement and policy presentation; and
 - f) serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area (including policies in this Framework, where relevant).
- 4.4 The NPPF also sets the criteria against which all Plans must be judged in order to be 'sound'. As stated within paragraph 35 of the NPPF, Local Plans and spatial development strategies are examined to assess whether they have been prepared in accordance with the legal and procedural requirements. And whether they are 'sound'. Plans are 'sound' if they are:
- Positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the areas objectively assessed needs, and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
 - Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on a proportionate evidence;

- Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross- boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
- Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with policies in this framework.

Economic Growth

- 4.5 Paragraph 80 of Chapter 6 states that “Planning policies and **decisions should help** create the conditions in which **businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight** should be placed on the **need to support economic growth** and productivity taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where **Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation**, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.”
- 4.6 Paragraph 81 states that planning policies should set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth; set criteria or identify strategic sites for local and inward investment; address potential barriers to investment such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing; and be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

Green Belt

- 4.7 The site is located outside the Green Belt and within close proximity to Cambridge. Paragraph 136 and 137 of the NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances. As set out in paragraph 137 before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy- making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development.
- 4.8 In order for the Local Plan to be considered as sound in planning terms, it is important that growth within South Cambridgeshire is focused on settlements that are located outside of the Cambridge Green Belt.

Evidence Base for the South Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan (2018)

- 4.9 The current South Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan was adopted in 2018. The application site, was not promoted as part of this Local Plan and this representation is the first time it has been promoted.

4.10 The evidence base that was used to support the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) which relates to employment and economic development is set out below:

- Economic Assessment and Strategy Phase 2 dated July 2010;
- Employment Land Review Update and Review of Selective Management of Employment Policies dated July 2012;
- Cambridge Cluster at 50: The Cambridge Economy Retrospect and Prospect dated March 2011;
- South Cambridgeshire Economic Development Strategy 2010-2015 dated 2010;

4.11 Most of these documents are either approaching or are over 10 years old. It is appreciated that the above documents will be updated as part of this Local Plan process, to provide an up to date position on the employment needs over the plan period.

4.12 In the absence of up to date evidence base information supporting the currently adopted Local Plan, it is considered that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Economic Independent Review (CIPER¹) (September 2018) provides a good overview of the employment need within the County. This reviewed amongst other matters housing and employment/economic trends, which is a useful and up to date reference point which I will refer to below. Nevertheless, I set out first a brief overview of the conclusions and recommendation from Employment Land Review, which is the most up to date study used to inform the current Local Plan.

Employment Land Review Update and Review of Selective Management of Employment Policies dated July 2012

4.13 The purpose of the review was to reconsider and update the findings from the previous 2008 review and to focus on the period 2011 to 2031, and review existing Selective Management of Employment policies in the Cambridge area. However, given the age of the review, it does not provide an update projection of what the future need/demand for employment land will be. Nevertheless, the key findings from the review found the following:

In terms of demand:

- According to the data available at the time of the review, the projections were more cautious than the previous review in 2008 which assumed the need to accommodate 40,000-50,000 jobs between 2001-2021). The projections in the update review however assumed a job growth to be between 34,000-40,000 for 2011-2031. The update review concluded that there was “very little” employment growth.
- The update review also suggested that less additional space would be needed to accommodate each job created;

- The 2008 review identified a need for 550,000-600,000sqm of employment space over the period 2001-2021 whereas the 2012 updated review identified potential demand for 220,000-240,000sqm of employment space over the period 2011-2031;

In terms of supply:

- The review finds that there is currently sufficient overall provision of employment land within the city and district;
- However, the review forecasts a shortage of B1a space;
- Market signals indicate that increasing provision outside the city centre and northern fringe around Cambridge Science Park areas will not on its own solve the problem of supply and more has to be done to provide locations where firms most want to be;
- The review acknowledges that old manufacturing and storage sites are often unviable for office redevelopment due to developers securing housing on them;
- Even redevelopment of office sites are unlikely to be viable unless significant intensification of use is allowed;

In terms of the selective management of employment policies:

- The review states that the shortage of offices with open B1 permissions in Cambridge will adversely affect projected employment growth unless it is addressed through a combination of intensification and provision of more land in more attractive locations;
- The policy protection of best manufacturing land in and around Cambridge has had little effect due to viability issues.

4.14 The review makes several recommendations of which the following are pertinent to the applicants site:

- There is considerable pressure for B1a space within the city due to lack of available land;
- The loss of employment land within the city needs to be reduced otherwise additional allocations will become essential;
- There is an increasing importance of hybrid buildings to enable flexibility of use;

4.15 The report highlights the changes in economic dynamics from the more traditional industries and changing requirements, particularly for new tech industries in terms of their locational requirements. Small to medium tech-firms tend to require shorter leases to provide flexibility which fits the with my client's business model.

- 4.16 South Cambridge District Council's Annual Monitoring Report (January 2019) states that in South Cambridgeshire there has been a year-on-year increase in jobs created in the District. This growth has been constrained by lack of suitable employment sites. The AMR has recorded a year-on-year loss of land on allocated employment site (in 4.40 hectare was lost in 2017-2018) to alternative uses. Whilst the Council has allocated several employment sites within the District and Cambridge, these sites are generic spaces to meet generic needs and more often than not require businesses to enter into long term lease agreements. The allocation of the site for an innovation centre would provide bespoke and flexible spaces on lease agreements that suit. In addition, it is located in closer proximity to Cambridge, where the demand for new employment allocations is significantly higher.

Cambridge and Peterborough Independent Economic Commission (CPIEC)

- 4.17 CPIEC is a body that has been established by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority in June 2017 and is chaired by Dame Kate Barker. The purpose of CPIEC is to provide strategic economic advice and guidance to inform decision making, policy development and investment locally. They have produced a The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER). CPIER is an independent assessment of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy and its potential growth. One of the main purposes of CPIEC is to deliver the recommendations in CPIER by bringing high level strategic economic advice in assessing the evidence and views of local partners in order to produce a review that meets the objectives of the key stakeholders.
- 4.18 CPIER states that employment growth has not been matched by house-building or developments infrastructure which has consequently pushed up house prices and increased journey times which has intensified congestion. This has meant many have been forced to ensure unpleasant commutes as they've been priced away from the city due to unaffordability. The report states this is bad for people and businesses and is unsustainable in terms of growth.
- 4.19 The report also identifies that we are rapidly approaching the point where high-value businesses may decide that being based in Cambridge is no longer attractive. This is a stark reality of success; the need to continue to grow and improve to meet the daily needs to people and businesses. The report goes on to state that if nothing is done, the damage to society from continuing drift away of less well-paid workers may become irreplaceable. Furthermore, the aging of the city, will threaten dynamism and the cost of people's mental health of commuting-induced stress and housing insecurity will rise.

"Cambridge is at a decisive moment in its history where it must choose whether it wants to once again reshape itself for growth, or let itself stagnate and potentially wither. We believe the latter would be disastrous for its people and the UK economy. Therefore, we conclude that improvements in infrastructure, and further development, must start in and around Cambridge."

(CIPER 2018)

- 4.20 The reality of the situation is that in order to achieve sustainable continued growth more development is required in and around Cambridge. Focus should therefore be on utilising sites that benefits from being close to settlements with good public transport links.
- 4.21 CPIER states that there is evidence relating to the need for web-labs by scientific businesses. It also states that there is insufficient supply of space for new start-ups and early stage firms which has led to both start-ups and expansions being delayed. Another fundamental constraint is that the technical and exacting requirements of labs makes construction expensive and time-consuming. Such issues raise viability issues. The key issue from a property point of view is that incubator space and space for companies with highly variable growth patterns is not economic or well suited to conventional commercial funding. Therefore, a lack of this space could be a real deterrent to continued growth.

Cambridge Ahead

- 4.22 Cambridge Ahead is membership organisation of consisting of several business disciplines that focuses on promoting sustainable economic growth and quality of life. It has 41 members representing approximately 39,000 of the working population in Cambridge.
- 4.23 Cambridge Ahead has produced a publication called 'Cambridge Incubator Space: Engineering, IT and Digital' dated October 2017, and it concludes that

'both incubator and follow-on space are required – not one or the other – and a sense of community matters as much as the co-location of buildings. The closer the co-ordination between the ownership/management of the incubator and related buildings suitable for fast-growth firms, the more likely is effective transition from one to the other'

Growth Arc

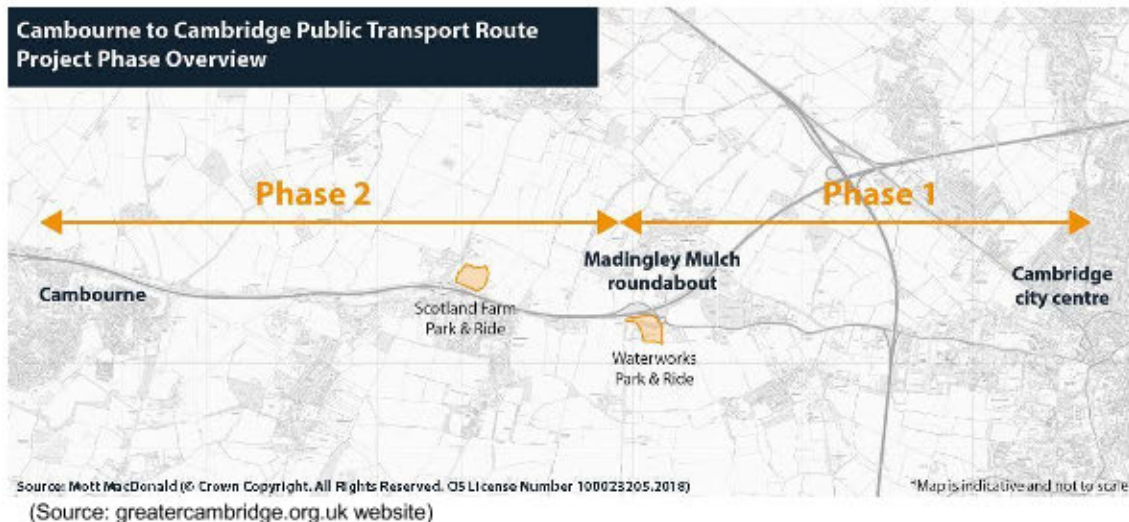
- 4.24 At a national level, the government has supported plans for major and strategic commercial and residential development between Oxford and Cambridge. The corridor between Oxford and Cambridge would include a new East-West Railway line by 2030 which would serve up to 1 million new homes and include a new expressway. The arc would link together the fast growing technology hotspots. Therefore, the allocation of the site as an innovation centre/park to the west side of Cambridge would contribute toward providing a high quality employment site in a sustainable location with excellent links into Cambridge.
- 4.25 The latest government document - Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc Study: government response dated 29 October 2018 – states that it supports the National Infrastructure Commission's ambition to build up to one million high quality homes by 2050 to maximise the economic growth of the Arc. This ambition will require a **step change** (my emphasis) how development can be accommodated through vibrant new and expanded settlements. This ambitious growth strategy would be delivered alongside

the East-West rail and Expressway which will be essential to reduce congestion within the arc.

- 4.26 With the right interventions and investment, the government believe there is a transformational opportunity to amplify the Arc's position as a world-leading economic place and support the government's Industrial Strategy aim to boost the productivity and earning power of people across the UK.
- 4.27 The document also highlights and recognises the areas within the central part of the Arc (between Bedford and Cambridge) contain some of the highest levels of entrepreneurship in the UK, with a strong presence of companies prototyping new products and services in the aerospace and automotive technology sectors. This precisely relates to my client's business model and would help to encourage further growth in the innovation industry.

Greater Cambridge Partnership/Mayoral Transport Plans

- 4.28 At a more local level, the Greater Cambridge Partnership, which is a local delivery body made up of four partners (Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and University of Cambridge) as part of the City Deal to facilitate investment to improvement in infrastructure and support the creation of 44,000 new jobs and 33,500 new homes within the County. More than 8,000 new homes are planned in the Cambourne to Cambridge Area by 2031 and a further 3,700 in St Neots. This significant planned growth, will place significant pressure on the existing road network which, if nothing is done, would increase journey times between Madingley Mulch roundabout and Cambridge from 23 minutes currently to 45 minutes in 2031.
- 4.29 Therefore, one of the fundamental projects is the Cambourne to Cambridge (C2C) busway which would provide a dedicated, regularly, reliable and fast bus link which would help to reduce the amount of journeys by private cars. Parts of the current Cambourne to Cambridge road network, in particular the A1303/Madingley Road, suffer heavy traffic congestion at peak times. Without action, by 2031 car trips into the city are set to increase by up to 70%, with already lengthy journey times expected to double.
- 4.30 The GCP acknowledge that something has to be done as traffic congestion is damaging to the environment, public health and local economy. The Cambourne to Cambridge Rapid Transit Route is already a committed development within the adopted South Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan (2018), with the Bourn Airfield allocation required to provide the Rapid Transit Route through their development site.
- 4.31 Currently, Phase 2 is open to public consultation which passes the site. The recommended alignment of Phase 1 has been agreed following detailed site evaluation and assessment. Three route options are proposed and all three pass either the northern or southern boundary of site. There C2C is expected to be completed by 2023 which should coincide with the adoption of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.



- 4.32 The current approach is for the rapid transit route to pass along the site and terminating at a bus Park and Ride in Madingley. This ongoing work to improve the public transport links between Cambourne and Cambridge further reinforces the suitability and attractiveness of the site for allocation as an employment site. The allocation of this orphaned site would make a significant contribution toward providing an accessible and well related commercial site in a major growth corridor into Cambridge.
- 4.33 As part of the Rapid Transit Route, an off- road cycleway will be provided the full distance from Cambourne to the west and Cambridge to the east. The provision of this cycle route will result in the proposed application site at Hardwick having very good access to the key populations of Cambourne, Cambridge, Bourn and Caldecote by cycling. In addition, the applicants would be supported of a bus stop for the Rapid Transit Route being provided adjacent to the application site, to provide ease of access for employees.

5. Justification for proposal site allocation (availability and delivery)

- 5.1 This section sets out the main benefits and opportunities of the site, which would justify it being allocated for employment use (B1 use) as an innovation centre. It sets out why the allocation of this site would be sound in planning terms and the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the alternatives.

Site and context:

- 5.2 The site is approximately 4.6 hectares and located approximately 10km west of Cambridge City Centre.
- 5.3 The site is located outside the Green Belt and following an extensive search is the only site of this size that is available and located on the western side of Cambridge which is rare. Whilst the site is not within an existing settlement boundary, it is located between Highfield Caldecote and Hardwick, close to Cambourne and on the edge of a major new housing developments at Bourn Airfield.
- 5.4 The site is also located on an important corridor into Cambridge from the west and is located between the A428 and St Neots Road. The C2C is also plans to run past the site, which would provide additional high speed public transport link into Cambridge. The C2C route would also provide cycling and pedestrian links into Cambridge. Therefore, the site not only represents land outside the Green Belt boundary, but is also well-related to existing and future housing settlements.
- 5.5 Most of the business parks are located either to the north (Cambridge Science Park), east (Peterhouse Technology Park) and south (Genome Campus) of Cambridge. There is very little provision on the western side of Cambridge which is located outside the Green Belt and well related to existing settlements and between major road links into Cambridge.
- 5.6 The site is also located to the north-east of Cambourne is north of the two established settlements of Highfield Caldecote and Hardwick. Bourn Airfield is located to the south and allocated within the Local Plan (2018) for 3,500 new homes. An outline planning application (S/3440/18/OL) has been submitted by Countryside Properties for this which includes a village centre, primary schools, health facility, hotel, and community facilities. Therefore, the site is ideally located in terms of a catchment area for potential users of the employment site. According to the Cambridge Ahead website there are a significant number of small to medium size businesses within these villages that mainly operating from homes. The proposed allocation would provide these businesses and new businesses with a dedicated workspace that is located on a main link into Cambridge from the west.
- 5.7 The site is located between the A428 and St Neots Road which lead into Cambridge. The A428 is an arterial route into Cambridge from the west which provides vehicular access link between Bedford and Cambridge via St Neots. St Neots Road connects with the A1303 which leads into Cambridge. The proposed use would therefore help to capture some of the traffic entering Cambridge which would help to reduce congestion in Cambridge which is a major problem during peak hours.

- 5.8 In 2011, Cambourne became the largest settlement in South Cambridgeshire with over 8,000 residents and over 3,500 new homes. In addition to the houses there are four primary schools, a supermarket as well as 16 small retail units, hotel, various community facilities, police station and business park.
- 5.9 Highfields Caldecote and Hardwick are identified in the adopted Local Plan as 'Group Villages'. These villages are also serviced by local shops and services including a regular bus service into Cambridge. The major housing development at Bourn Airfield is also proposed to contain local shops and services including schools to support local residents. This would further reinforce the sustainability of the site in terms of accessibility to local shops and services.
- 5.10 Therefore, the site represents an ideal location for a new employment allocation as it is well connected to existing and future settlements and has good existing transport links to Cambridge via the A428 and A1303. The site would also help to capture some of the traffic entering Cambridge and encourage cycling and walking

Transport links

- 5.11 Aside from the existing bus service that serves Cambourne, Highfield Calacote and Hardwick, the Greater Cambridge Partnership is currently at an advanced stage of consulting on the Cambourne to Cambridge Rapid Transit Route, which is to provide an off road bus service into Cambridge via a new Park and Ride site at Madingley Mulch roundabout. The route of the service would travel beside the site along the A428. There is therefore an opportunity for a bus stop to be created on the site to enable future occupier to access the site via public transport. The busway is also proposed to include a pedestrian and cycle link which would be of particularly benefit local residents. [REDACTED] is in favour of providing a connection to the site which facilitates sustainable transport and access to and from the site to service local residents and those from further afield.
- 5.12 There are also ambitious plans from the government to deliver significant growth between Oxford and Cambridge in terms of housing, employment and infrastructure.

Landscape impact

- 5.13 The southern boundary of the site is defined by a robust looking hedgerow and appears to be set on lower ground level compared to the St Neots Road and relatively flat. The site is not visible from the A428 as views into the site are blocked by an earth bund with vegetation on top. There are some dwellings along St Neots Road which are set well back from the road and screen by front boundary landscaping. Therefore, views of the proposed development from existing occupiers is unlikely to be harmful, however additional landscape enhancement could be installed to further mitigate any impact. In terms of the impact on the wider landscape, this will need to be subject to consideration of the design process and is not for now.

- 5.14 The applicant would be willing to work with the Council to provide a landscape strategy that would not only mitigate the appearance of any buildings on the immediate and wider landscape but that which would also enhance the site and development.

Availability of alternative sites

- 5.15 As set out within paragraph 35 of the NPPF, there is a requirement for local planning authorities to demonstrate why their strategy and site allocations are the most appropriate, when considered against the alternatives. In this regard, the starting point for this consideration is to account for the fact that the proposed site is located outside of the Cambridge Green Belt. Having regard to paragraphs 136 and 137 of the NPPF, in sequential terms Local Plans should only seek to allocate new employment sites within the Green Belt, if all other alternatives options have been assessed. As detailed above, the site is situated in a very sustainable location and would provide a logical site for a new Innovation Park. It is the first available site to the west of Cambridge that is outside of the Cambridge Green Belt. It should therefore in sequential terms be allocated above any sites within the Green Belt. One of the key benefits of this site is its proximity to Cambridge and the agglomerates of scale associated with its proximity.
- 5.16 Cambourne Business Park is the closest allocated employment site to the site, being approximately 4-5km further than Cambridge than the site. The site offers a range of modern employment floorspace. The range of suites range of 930sqm to 9sqm serviced offices. However, these are generic spaces that serve a range of needs. The proposed innovation park would offer a more bespoke and targeted need for firms that at either at an early stage and want to take the next step within a collaborative environment. In any event it is considered that adequate demand will exist for both this Innovation Park as well as Cambourne Business Park over the new plan period.
- 5.17 Seven other existing sites have been assessed for their suitability for the type of use that [REDACTED] are proposing to offer. A schedule of the sites assessed is contained in Appendix 1. None of these sites were considered suitable for the following range of reasons:
- Too remote from Cambridge;
 - Properties at to let and not for sale;
 - Unsuitable design and size of units;
 - No workshop facilities;
- 5.18 [REDACTED] have been searching for suitable sites across Cambridge for more than five years and reviewed most if not all suitable available sites. The site therefore represents an ideal location for [REDACTED] to establish a new innovation park following a long and comprehensive search.
- 5.19 The merits of the Hardwick site significant override the benefits of the existing sites that have been assessed for the following reasons:

- Outside the Green Belt and well related to the surrounding settlement which potentially excellent public transport links into Cambridge;
- The distance from the Hardwick location to Cambridge City Ring Road is around 5 miles. This is the maximum distance that [REDACTED] and its advisors consider viable in order to ensure that the proposal will work as planned and provide the connections to the substantial knowledge base around Cambridge.
- The location is easily accessible from Cambridge via public transport and by cycle. Consider the fact that many of the entrepreneurs will live in Cambridge, will be young, very likely to not own a motor vehicle and be “bootstrapped” (have little or no significant funding).
- It is critical that the new development is close to Cambridge’s Universities, with which it will be closely associated.
- A range of detailed reports and surveys including ecology, highways, flooding etc. have been carried out on the site and none have highlighted any major problems.
- The plot is unsuitable for agricultural use and has not been used in this respect since the building of the A428 around ten years ago.
- The proposal will bring a significant number of high quality jobs to the surrounding villages
- Road connections are excellent. The location has excellent access onto St Neots Road and then directly onto the A428 via a major junction.
- The site is adjacent to the proposed new Park & Ride at Scotland Farm and to the new transit link & cycleway.
- The location is close to West Cambridge, where our other sites are close to North & South Cambridge. This gives entrepreneurs the option to be based at the most suitable site. They will be able to access the facilities offered by all three sites by using shuttle buses which will run between them.
- Cambridge Innovation Park (North) is currently filled to capacity and has enjoyed meteoric success over the last six years.
- Hardwick is well suited to succeed using an extension of the existing business model.
- Being on the fringe of Cambridge, costs are lower and the company expect to be able to offer premium accommodation at affordable rents.
- The financial model for the proposition will ensure that the centre remains financially sustainable without reliance on grants, donations or charitable funding for long term survival.

- The café and other facilities that the site offers will be available to the residents of the local villages.
- No suitable alternative sites have been located despite a comprehensive 5-year search.
- The Hardwick site is ideally located and close to, but not taking up valuable space within, the City. The proposal will therefore not exacerbate the traffic problems that are currently being suffered by the City.

Expression of interest

5.20 [REDACTED] has received a significant level of interest in the site and support from small to large, regional, national and international businesses to collaborate with [REDACTED] and locate to the sites. These expressions of interest and support is based upon the [REDACTED]. A list of the prospective supports is contained in Appendix 2.

Availability and Deliverability

5.21 As set out on the application forms that accompany this representation, the application site is fully available for development and deliverable in planning terms.

5.22 In terms of deliverability, the site is under the option of [REDACTED] and they are committed to the early delivery of development on this site in order to meet the growing need in the type of facility that [REDACTED] offer. Unlike many other sites that have been considered, the site is outside the Green Belt and located along a major growth corridor into Cambridge. Whilst Cambourne has a business park, it does not offer the type of facility that the proposed innovation park would offer in terms of end-user requirements and the commercial flexibility that the [REDACTED] business model would bring. The applicant has received a significant amount of interest from companies that would be willing to occupy the site which demonstrates that not only are these companies looking for specific accommodation but also recognise the locational benefits of the site. The applicants are happy to work with South Cambridgeshire District Council in terms of the type of employment that this facility could provide.

5.23 [REDACTED] would also be happy to provide further information to demonstrate the deliverability of the site as appropriate.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This representation has been prepared by Strutt & Parker, on behalf of [REDACTED] to support the allocation of an innovation park for up to 8,000 square metres of employment space for small to medium size companies including provision for incubator units which will create a significant employment growth in a sustainable location.
- 6.2 The application site has a number of attributes that render it a sound allocation for growth, within the emerging Local Plan:
- It is located outside of the Green Belt;
 - The site represents an available and deliverable site on the western side of Cambridge which lacks dedicated employment parks/sites;
 - It is in a sustainable location in terms of its proximity to existing settlements of Highfield Caldecote, Hardwick and Cambourne which have several shops, services, and a public transport link to and from Cambridge;
 - The site would also be located on the edge of the growth area at Bourn Airfield which is of 3,500 new dwellings;
 - It would be well related to the C2C busway which would provide a high speed, reliable bus route to Cambridge;
 - The applicant would be willing to work with Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership to create a bus stop at the site;
 - The site is being put forward for employment land in B1 use class, which would make effective use of an orphaned site in a well-related location to existing settlements;
 - The site is unconstrained and fully deliverable in planning terms.
 - [REDACTED] are committed to detailed engagement with both Planning Officers and statutory and non- statutory consultees, including working closely with the local community in the evolution of the vision for the site.
- 6.3 In light of the above, it there therefore considered that the site; land between A428 and St Neots Road provides an excellent location for development and would be a sound basis for allocation as part of the emerging Local Plan.