



Emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan

Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Call for Sites and Broad Locations

Overview Statement

in respect of

Land to the west and east of Duxford
Road, Whittlesford, South
Cambridgeshire District

on behalf of

Grosvenor Britain & Ireland

March 2019

Emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan
Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability
Assessment – Call for Sites and Broad Locations





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ATTACHMENTS

- Urban Place Lab drawing no. 17002_ID02_B : Employment and Infrastructure Context.
- Urban Place Lab drawing no. 17002_ID03_B : Development Opportunity Plan



1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Andrew Martin – Planning (AM-P) are instructed by Grosvenor Britain & Ireland to submit information and details of land that they are promoting through the current Call for Sites and Broad Locations consultation, as input into the evidence base for preparation of the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- 1.2 Due to space limitations on the Call for Sites Response Form, this document provides an overview of the site put forward within our submission, and provides further technical detail in support of a potential allocation for a residential led mixed-use development at Whittlesford, within the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.



2.0 THE SITE

- 2.1 The site is located to west and east of Duxford Road, Whittlesford, as identified on the attached plan produced by Urban Place Lab drawing ref: 17002_ID03_B. The site comprises a total of 109.8 ha, which includes 21.3 ha of land that is controlled by, Grosvenor Britain & Ireland (identified in deep pink colour), together with surrounding land of some 87 ha owned by Cambridgeshire County Council (identified by a lighter pink colour) and a further 1.5 ha owned by Wedd Joinery (shown by the smaller pink area between the two Grosvenor parcels).
- 2.2 Whittlesford is a village located in the south of South Cambridgeshire District, close to the boundary with Uttlesford District Council. It is situated on the Granta branch of the River Cam and lies some 7 miles south of Cambridge City. Whittlesford Parkway Railway Station serves the village offering excellent rail links to Cambridge and London Liverpool Street. The village is well connected to key centres of employment including Stansted Airport, the Cambridge Science Park, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, the Wellcome Genome Campus and Great Chesterford Research Park. Urban Place Lab drawing ref: 17002_ID02_B, attached, shows the site in the context of Cambridge City and key employment and infrastructure.
- 2.3 The existing settlement is geographically and physically divided into two parts:-
- ‘Whittlesford Centre’ to the north where the village store/post office is located, which lies within the Green Belt;
 - The other part of the village to the south, known as ‘Whittlesford Bridge’ where the railway station is located, lies predominantly outside the Green Belt.

Development of the site would seek to integrate the existing dispersed village through a comprehensive masterplan which delivers supporting physical, social and community infrastructure which can be shared by new and existing residents.



3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The proposal for development at Whittlesford, is to deliver a sustainable residential led mixed-use development with excellent sustainable connectivity to Cambridge and key employment centres, whilst stitching together the village’s existing disparate built form through the provision of connected routes and high quality supporting community and social infrastructure.

There are no detailed proposals at this stage, however, we are confident that both the Grosvenor land and Cambridgeshire County Council land are suitable for a sustainable residential led mixed-use development to support the growth of South Cambridge. Although land controlled by Grosvenor alone would be capable of delivering significant new housing, there are much greater benefits in this land being delivered as part of a larger comprehensive scheme to include the CCC land.

These benefits arise from the economies of scale that would create a much wider range and overall greater level of benefits than could be delivered by smaller incremental development, as advocated at paragraph 72 of the NPPF 2018. Thus a larger comprehensive expansion of Whittlesford to form a consolidated community would have significant sustainability credentials compared with many other alternative locations.

- 3.2 Comprehensive development at Whittlesford could deliver:

- Circa 1,200 new homes for sale and for rent (mix could complement local need i.e. market and affordable housing, key worker housing, older persons housing and/or residential care home.)
- 40% affordable housing
- Primary and pre-primary education facilities
- Community, retail, leisure and medical facilities
- Accessible open space and recreation spaces, with the intention to target biodiversity gain
- Walking and cycling routes within and beyond site boundaries, including safer links to the railway station
- Enhanced social links between existing parts of the village through the provision of new services, facilities, jobs and open space which are centrally accessible to all.



4.0 EVIDENCE BASE STUDIES

- 4.1 Grosvenor has commissioned a number of studies to assess the suitability of the site for development. A summary of the findings is outlined on the submitted Call for Sites response form, but further detail is elaborated upon below:

Transport – General Principles

- 4.2 The site is located in South Cambridgeshire, adjacent to the strategic road network. It borders the Cambridge to London rail corridor and, most importantly, it is close to one of the UK's most important existing and growing job markets – the life science campuses. Drawing ref: 17002_ID02_B shows the site in its sub-regional context and connectivity to key employment and infrastructure.
- 4.3 It is an essential function of spatial planning to consider travel patterns and to seek to discourage longer distance travel by locating homes, jobs, services and facilities in convenient proximity to one another. The ability to reduce travel distances and increase opportunities for more sustainable travel should wherever possible be maximised. Therefore, locating housing with good accessibility to key employment areas and other facilities is both logical and represents sound planning.
- 4.4 Furthermore, the economic pull of the Cambridge job market has seen commute distances increase significantly between 2001 and 2011, with ever more journeys being made from further south and longer commutes being made to access this employment. Longer distance commuting has an economic, social and environmental cost that policy makers must strive to address. Delivering new housing and supporting infrastructure at Whittlesford, in close proximity to existing and potential new jobs will result in shorter commuter trips.
- 4.5 The presence of the railway station is integral to support the delivery of sustainable development by providing homes within cycling and walking distance of the station. The Greater Cambridge Partnership has already identified a need to enhance the capacity and connectivity of Whittlesford Parkway to help facilitate sustainable growth in the local area and reduce the impacts of car-based travel into Cambridge. Whittlesford Parkway has consequently been identified as a Rural Travel Hub.
- 4.6 The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) recommended that a blended spatial strategy approach should be adopted when it comes to housing growth, one strategy of which includes development situated along transport corridors.
- 4.7 There is clearly support for this type of development as exemplified by the announcement of the Communities Secretary on 10 April 2016 to support the construction of 10,000 homes around rail stations.
- 4.8 Development at Whittlesford would encourage the use of non-car modes of transport and help to reduce travel distances to both existing local sources of employment and potential new job opportunities, thus helping to reduce longer distance travel from the rural heart of the



district and adjoining districts. This would create a more sustainable transport strategy than currently exists in the southern part of South Cambridgeshire and the potential best prospect of success by creating critical mass and density around jobs, services and transport hubs. Strategic scale development has significant advantages in transport terms since services, facilities, employment and leisure opportunities can be provided on-site, meaning a significant amount of travel will occur only within the site itself.

Accessibility

Rail

- 4.9 The site has access to excellent public transport services compared to alternative sites, being located within easy walking distance of Whittlesford Parkway Railway Station. From here, Cambridge Station is just an 11 minute journey which provides access to the Station Road area and City Centre. Cambridge North is just a 16-minute journey, which provides access to Cambridge Science Park and the Innovation Park. A new station in South Cambridge has also been confirmed and this will serve Addenbrooke's Hospital, AstraZeneca Cambridge Biomedical Campus and the new Papworth Hospital. This station would be within an 8-9 minute journey from Whittlesford.

Walking/ Cycling

- 4.10 A public footpath (Footpath 257/8) runs through the western part of the site (CCC land). No other PRow pass through the site.
- 4.11 Local routes offer pedestrian links from the site into Whittlesford village centre to the existing primary school, village hall, Post Office, pubs and recreation ground. Station Road to the south-east of the site provides access to Whittlesford Parkway Station.
- 4.12 Existing National Cycle Route (NCR11) passes through the site and connects the site to Sawston Village College, Sawston centre, to Duxford and south to Ickleton. Local cycle routes are also provided off road from the access to the Station to Granta Park along the A505 as well as the A1301, providing access to the Wellcome Genome Campus.
- 4.13 New walking and cycling routes will be incorporated within and beyond the site boundaries, to enhance connectivity with the railway station and nearby science parks and villages. These will connect in with existing routes, some of which improvements will be incorporated.

Bus Services

- 4.14 Whittlesford is currently served by bus services which run to Trumpington Park & Ride to the north and Saffron Walden to the south. Local bus services could be improved as part of this comprehensive development.



Vehicular Access

- 4.15 The site is located to the south of Whittlesford Centre and fronts onto Duxford Road which joins the A505 via a staggered priority junction. Duxford Road is a straight road with residential frontage and a 40mph speed limit. Direct vehicular access to the site can be achieved via Duxford Road, details subject to further design work. Secondary access can be provided via Royston Road.
- 4.17 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has committed to funding a full detailed A505 study to identify major improvements to this important strategic road. Funding has also been set aside to contribute to the delivery works in the medium-long term.
- 4.18 M11 Junction 10 provides an all movement access to the M11 and therefore to the strategic road network, and is located approximately 2.5km to the west of the site.

Ecology

- 4.19 An Extended Phase 1 survey was carried out in July 2018 in order to identify any potentially significant ecological constraints and opportunities to development of the site. The survey found that there are no statutory designations of International/European value either at, or within a 5km distance of the site.
- 4.20 There are four statutory designations of National value within 2km, all with wetland features likely supported at least in part by groundwater inputs. However, the site is situated outside Natural England's Impact Risk Zones around the SSSIs for residential development. The SSSIs are not publicly accessible and are not vulnerable to increased visitor numbers. Therefore, the proposed development is considered unlikely to affect adversely these designations.
- 4.21 The site comprises predominantly arable fields and poor semi-improved grassland, with a hedgerow network at various degrees of condition, including species-rich intact hedges along the western boundary. There is a small area of broadleaved plantation woodland at Orchards Farm and there appear to be five ponds off-site within 250m of the site, the nearest of which is a large waterbody 50m from the site's northern boundary at Orchards Farm.
- 4.22 The site has no significant ecological constraints and the habitats present on site are low in their intrinsic value and are unlikely to support unique or exceptional species populations/assemblages.
- 4.23 Opportunities exist to deliver a net biodiversity gain to include:
- New native tree/shrub/hedgerow planting to enhance the existing boundary network;
 - Creation of Lowland Meadows-equivalent grassland within informal greenspace, and other 'wildflower mix' grassland in formal greenspaces;



- Creation of ponds;
- Creation of wetland habitats along the River Cam floodplain;
- Installation of durable, good-quality bird and bat boxes on or within the walls of new buildings;
- Wildlife-sensitive lighting scheme with particular regard to foraging bats;
- Appropriate design of SuDS features to increase biodiversity value;
- Ongoing management of existing and newly created habitats in accordance with management plan; and
- Creation of a circular 'nature trail' which includes a walk along part of the River Cam.

Heritage

- 4.24 There are no designated Heritage Assets within the site, although there are several in the wider area including 57 Listed Buildings, 2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and 1 Registered Park & Garden. There are a number of Conservation Areas including Whittlesford, Sawston and Duxford, including part of Duxford Airfield.
- 4.25 The closest designated asset is Whittlesford Conservation Area, the southern boundaries of which are located in proximity to the northern boundaries of the site, where they interact with the existing edge of the settlement. The setting of Whittlesford Conservation Area and the listed buildings within it will be carefully considered through a detailed heritage setting assessment.
- 4.26 New development will be sympathetic to the appearance and character of the existing village. Appropriate design and layout of any future development scale will ensure that designated heritage assets in the vicinity will not be adversely affected. The site is of sufficient size to provide a high quality framework of landscaping and green infrastructure. This can be designed to provide spacious green buffers to protect and enhance designated heritage assets and their settings.



5.0 GREEN BELT RELEASE CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Cambridge and the wider area will see significant additional growth in jobs and housing over this latest plan period and beyond. The new NPPF advises local authorities to be flexible in terms of planning for rapid change, including significant growth needs in housing. The next stage of plan-making needs to look for strategic sites for growth and development along transport routes and around transport hubs. Comprehensive development at Whittlesford, in close proximity to the railway station would offer a sustainable opportunity for growth.

5.2 As the NPPF 2018 advises:

“once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they can endure beyond the plan period”. (paragraph 136)

Due to the significant growth anticipated in the sub-region, we consider exceptional circumstances exist for an amendment to the Green Belt to allow for development at Whittlesford. There is a need for homes and facilities in South Cambridgeshire to support local growth and minimise congestion. Given the presence of Whittlesford Parkway Station, an appropriate level and disposition of high quality development, public open space and new landscape fabric across the site is considered appropriate, and does **not compromise the essential functions of the Green Belt**, does **not bring the village any closer to its closest neighbour** Sawston and can present **strong defensible boundaries to any future development** in this area.

5.3 There have been in past and current adopted Development Plans, alterations and release of Green Belt land in and around the City to facilitate housing and employment growth. In order to facilitate sustainable and balanced growth across the District, we consider the Local Plan must review the Green Belt boundary at Whittlesford to explore the provision of homes and infrastructure to support the key employment centres in the south.

5.4 There is deliverable and sustainable justification for growth at Whittlesford, and this can be summarised as follows:

- Site in close proximity to existing railway station with fast connections to Cambridge and London Liverpool Street.
- Whittlesford to be designated as a Rural Travel Hub, with planned improvements to the station facilities and existing rail services, with priority on linking the station to non-car modes of travel.
- Location on the south side of Cambridge where a new station is proposed.
- Good accessibility to major centres of employment, both existing (Cambridge Science Park and NHS hospitals, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Wellcome Genome Campus and Stansted Airport) and proposed (further expansion of Biomedical Centre and NHS campus).
- Highly accessible site in terms of immediate site access and connection with the wider



strategic road network, including direct bus connectivity

- Opportunity to develop comprehensively, providing homes for a variety of needs, local employment opportunities, education / healthcare / leisure facilities, community spaces and publically accessible open space.
- Growth would enable the village to be self-sustaining in terms of its services and facilities. It would be comparable to other proposed new settlements in the adopted plan for South Cambridgeshire such as Waterbeach, Bourn Airfield and the urban expansion of Cambourne.
- Disjointed form of the existing settlement that could benefit from the creation of a new community 'heart' and pedestrian and cycle links to the station.
- Opportunity to offset the loss of Green Belt by compensatory improvement to remaining land and scope to ensure the permanent separation of Whittlesford from surrounding villages.
- Complies with the emphasis of government guidance for development in the Green Belt to take place around transport hubs.
- Outside areas at risk of flooding.
- No other major environmental obstacles to development.
- This development could help meet a number of ambitions set out in the Whittlesford Neighbourhood Plan by:
 - Increasing social links between existing parts of the village through the provision of new community facilities, jobs and open space which are centrally accessible to all
 - Providing new bicycle lanes and improving footpath connections, including safer links to the railway station
 - Providing new leisure facilities to complement existing offer, including facilities especially for teens and young people.
 - Increasing local employment opportunities within the village, through jobs in the new primary school and other retail / office facilities



6.0 JUSTIFICATION IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL POLICY AND OVERALL CONCLUSION

6.1 The foundation of the NPPF 2018 is that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. As stated in paragraph 8:

“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and
- c) **an environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

6.2 The above objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the applications of the policies in the NPPF. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:-

- a) plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of that area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;
- b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:
 - i. the application of the policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance (as listed in footnote 6) provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of developments in the plan area, or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

6.3 Additionally, the NPPF sets out the guidance in Section 5 for identifying land for homes and maintaining supply and delivery over the plan period. As stated above in paragraph 3.1, paragraph 72 of the NPPF states that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities.



- 6.4 Section 6 of the NPPF provides guidance on building a strong, competitive economy. Policies should help create the conditions to which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Particular importance and emphasis is given to where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation. This is especially relevant in the City of Cambridge sub-region, which plays a vital role in its contributions to innovation and the national economy.
- 6.5 Section 8 of the NPPF sets out guidance on promoting sustainable transport. Such issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making, taking advantage of opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure. Significant development should be focussed on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes (paragraph 103). By supporting an appropriate mix of uses across an area and within larger scale sites, there is the opportunity to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.
- 6.6 The guidance in the NPPF relating to the review and alterations of Green Belt boundaries is summarised in paragraph 5.2 above, which should be considered together with paragraph 5.3 that outlines the case and evidence to justify that exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated for the growth and consolidation of Whittlesford to meet future needs.

Conclusion

- 6.7 It is the view of Grosvenor that the proposals for comprehensive development at Whittlesford, as outlined in this submission, are fully consistent with national policy. Consequently, for the reasons set out in this Call for Sites response, the proposals represent sustainable development and should be included in the emerging Local Plan as a proposed strategic allocation.