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South Cambridgeshire District Council
Call for Sites Consultation,
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Dear Sirs,

CALL FOR SITES SUBMISSION – LAND AT GRANGE FARM, CAMBRIDGE

GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN

Savills (UK) Ltd Planning Team are instructed by St John's College, Cambridge to provide planning consultancy advice in respect of their landholdings across the country including those landholdings in the city of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.

In such a context, we are instructed to make the necessary representations to the various stages of consultation as it relates to a review of the currently adopted Local Plans. To this end we welcome the Council's embarking on a review of those Plans to create a new Greater Cambridge Local Plan for the next plan period. We certainly consider that there is great merit in a single plan covering the Cambridge area because there is a very clear relationship between the City and the area surrounding it.

The application of previous planning policies has been part of a planning strategy which has sought to control growth on the edge of the City which in turn has led to a more dispersed pattern of development requiring settlements within South Cambridgeshire District Council's administrative area needing to accommodate new development whilst looking at Cambridge to mainly provide for the main focus for employment, retail, leisure and cultural needs.

Consequently, a significant amount of commuting takes place within and across South Cambridgeshire's administrative area in to and out of Cambridge. A series of initiatives remain in the pipeline to address the issue of influencing patterns of travel to encourage alternative modes of transport other than the private motor car. Whilst such programmes are welcome, it remains the case that a development strategy that analyses all possible options should be taken forward within the next plan period.

The development strategy within the recently adopted Local Plans for the City and South Cambridgeshire acknowledge that Cambridge remains the most sustainable location for new development – that strategy identified the urban area as the starting point for new development. The next most sustainable location for new development was the edge of Cambridge in terms of a development sequence and this part of the strategy has seen significant new developments at Trumpington Meadows, North West Cambridge, land between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road, north of Newmarket Road and land north of Cherry Hinton. Whilst significant in terms of numbers, such development in our view, has not had a significant adverse impact on the qualities that the City seeks to protect and accordingly there is certainly potential for further growth on the City's edge within the next plan period.

After the City edge, the Council's took the view that new settlements were the next most sustainable options for growth – Waterbeach, Cambourne West and new development at Bourn Airfield form part of the current planned growth and indeed further growth at such locations may form part of any new strategy in the next plan period.

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Thus the development strategy within the current adopted plans was part of a mixed approach having regard to the development sequence although such a strategy was heavily skewed in number terms towards new settlements and expansion of Cambourne. A number of representations were made to the Inspectors on this point and the Council's responded on these specific issues during the course of the Examination.

It is our view that it remains the case that the development strategy to be adopted in any single plan review across both local planning authority's areas should consider a range of development options and allocations within the urban area, on its urban edge, at new settlements and within the villages. There is no single location for growth in such a context.

Land at Grange Farm

Overview

The land which is the ownership of St Johns College is shown in red on the accompanying plan... The land within the boundary extends to some 44 hectares.

The site lies on the western edge of Cambridge within the current Green Belt designation and comprises a number of large fields south of the University of Cambridge's West Cambridge site and south of the Coton footpath. The eastern edge of the site is formed by the allocation for student accommodation in the recently adopted Cambridge Local Plan 2018. (Site reference U3)

The site is in a highly sustainable location. It is adjacent to the University's West Cambridge site which is subject to major redevelopment proposals to increase employment densities and thus become an even greater focus for jobs in this location. The Site also lies adjacent to the University Sports complex at Wilberforce Road (which offers access to the wider community including academic staff and students and provides for recreation opportunities adjacent to the Site). The City Centre is less than 2km away and is linked by a well used pedestrian/cycle network including the Coton footpath which runs on the northern edge of the Site.

The site is in a location closest to the city centre when compared to other alternative strategic sites that were put forward in the context of the last Local Plan review and consequently is uniquely positioned to deliver new residential development within the next plan period.

The area shown within the red line is greater than that area put forward for residential development within the review of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018. It now includes that western field south of the West Cambridge site and east of the M11. This does not assume that all of the land within the red line is available for development but it is the case that it provides the flexibility to enable new housing to come forward with adequate structural landscaping in place to ensure there is an appropriate relationship with surrounding land uses and the need to provide a strong edge to a new Green Belt boundary.

The main vehicular access to the Site is proposed from Clerk Maxwell Road, with an appropriate crossing of the West Cambridge to Coton cyclepath.

A second point of access in the form of a Secondary "Emergency and Sustainable Transport" access can be explored for part of the development via Adams Road and/or Herschel Road. This could be shared with the existing University sports ground access, upgraded to adoptable standard to provide public transport, emergency vehicle and walking / cycling access.

The nearest current bus service is the Citi/Uni 4 service, which stops on Charles Babbage Road and is within 400m of the northern part of the Site. Further discussions will be required with CCC and the Citi/Uni 4 operator (Stagecoach) to identify the preferred option for bus delivery. Due to the range of options available, bus accessibility is considered to be viable.

It is clear that the site can provide good bus based public transport accessibility with new bus stops within the site and upgraded pedestrian links to existing bus stops)). Further discussion would be required with Stagecoach and the County Council's Passenger Transport Team to agree the detail of any changes to services.

It is notable that the site lies in a strategically important location with regard to a number of projects within the Great Cambridge Partnership proposals which seek to improve journeys times for non car modes from trips into and out of this side of the City.

In such a context, the site presents a unique opportunity to contribute to two major elements of the programme which are of direct relevance to Grange Farm and which have been the subject of ongoing consultation. The first of these is the "Cambourne to Cambridge – better bus journeys" project which is considered to be a high priority scheme for the CGP programme. Of particular reference to the site is the Phase 1 preferred route between Madingley Mulch and Cambridge where a new dedicated bus route crosses the M11 at a new bridge and runs through the Grange Farm site then connects on to Grange Road through Rifle Range Road. The connectivity that the Grange Farm site possesses and the ability of the site to accommodate new housing development alongside a major new public transport route should be a real opportunity for the Councils to secure such important development in this sustainable location.

The other elements of the City Deal programme that impact upon this area of Cambridge and thus the site, are the Western Orbital route proposals. These proposals seek to intercept car trips from the south/west of Cambridge into key City destinations. They include consideration of potential linkages with orbital capacity including public transport priority between Cambridge North-West (Madingley Road) and the Biomedical Campus (Hauxton Road/Trumpington Park and Ride). Such proposals are intended to be compatible with the schemes emerging from the A428 Cambourne to Cambridge transport proposals. The College supports a dedicated bus route on the eastern side of the M11 connection, North-West Cambridge to Darwin Green.

Both of these highways schemes affect that area to the west of Cambridge. The College's proposals are uniquely placed to accommodate both schemes given the College's land ownership in the area, and the ability to serve the proposed new residential development at Grange Farm.

Green Belt Review

The development pressures that were evident in the past two Local Plan review remain. The principles of sustainability and the need to create development settlement patterns which seek to reduce the distance between home and workplace, also remain equally relevant today. Coupled with the damaging effect of the increase in house prices and the inability to secure sufficient affordable housing, the Councils must look to the Green Belt to make provision for new housing numbers. As stated at the beginning of this representation , it is agreed that in sustainability terms, development in or close to Cambridge is the most sustainable pattern of development for the Cambridge area and this clearly brings in the Green Belt boundary as a focus in the context of any plan review.

Cambridge remains key to the national economy and it remains the case that the City possesses a dynamic, buoyant economy and a proven track record of high value accelerated growth. It is imperative that growth supports Cambridge's position on the world's commercial stage as a result of its strength and skills in science, technology and entrepreneurship. New housing must service this important economic function and that means the provision of both market and affordable homes at prices that people can afford.

Importantly, sites for new housing growth must be located in sustainable locations and consequently a balance of planning considerations must be made, having regard to a host of influencing factors, not least transport and sustainability issues which remain key to accommodating growth in the Cambridge area.

The site is uniquely placed to address all of these matters given its location close to the City Centre and the excellent footpath and cycle connections it can demonstrate to link into the wider network. As expressed above

the site is adjacent to key employment centres. It is strategically placed to exploit the major transport proposals referred to above.

In the consideration of site issues, the site is clearly greenfield but it is evident as part of a review of the two currently adopted Local Plans that greenfield sites are required to accommodate new growth. The only real constraint is the Green Belt designation which is subject to exceptional circumstances which apply here in the context of the City's exceptional role in the national economy and the unique position of the site in terms of accommodating new growth in the most sustainable location.

There are public views from the rights of way that run around parts of the perimeter. The most extensive views are from the cycleway/footpath 39/31a on the northern edge. There are some views to a few landmark buildings travelling east, but set within the mature vegetated edge of the western edge of Cambridge, the most notable being the University Library which is the tallest and closest landmark building to the site. Views to the Library could be retained within a suitable development layout.

Public footpath 55/9 runs west of the Grange Farm site. Boundary hedges screen most views to the east, with very limited glimpses of landmark buildings. The main visual attraction points are the prominent buildings at the West Cambridge site.

It is accepted that development on the site would have an impact but it is the case that the original historic core is well contained beyond the 20th Century development which has occurred between the Backs and Wilberforce Road – the experience of enjoying the historic core and the Backs derives more from being within that area, than enjoying distant views towards it.

The circumstances affecting Cambridge are exceptional, owing to its particular qualities and difficulties. The site offers the opportunity to significantly contributing to housing numbers within the next plan period and it is uniquely well placed to integrate with sustainable strategic transport proposals. Having regard to the area shown with the red line boundary on the accompanying plan, the land could accommodate some 750 dwellings including affordable dwellings with appropriate structural landscaping areas as well as accommodating the existing playing fields. In view of the scale of the site and the College being the landowner, it has the ability to offer a varied range of house types and tenures. Additionally, it is important for the Council to acknowledge that the College takes a long term view regarding their development portfolio and seeks a level of high quality housing to come forward to ensure that their legacy is continued. Whilst we are aware that land to the south (known as Land North of Barton Road) may also be promoted as part of this current consultation on the Call for Sites, it is the case that the Grange Farm site can be delivered as a discrete development. In the circumstances where the Councils as part of their consideration of the Call for Sites process consider there is merit in a larger site at West Cambridge coming forward then the Grange Farm site can be combined with the land south of Barton Road as a single major strategic allocation.

Conclusion

The College fully acknowledges that the site falls within the Green Belt but in the case where sustainable patterns of development must emerge as part of a new plan review, it is vital that locations on the edge of the City must come forward in the development sequence. Cambridge remains a vital contributor to the national economy, and consequently has a unique role in accommodating growth to stimulate investment and provide both market and affordable housing.

The Grange Farm site provides the opportunity to secure some 7500 dwellings including affordable housing together with all necessary open space, landscape, infrastructure etc.

We look forward to being kept informed of plan progress and should you have any queries please contact me at this office.



Yours sincerely



Garth Hanlon
Director