



# CLAREMONT

PLANNING CONSULTANCY

Greater Cambridge Issues and Options Consultation  
Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Policy Team  
c/o South Cambridgeshire District Council  
Cambourne Business Park  
Cambourne  
Cambridge  
CB23 6EA

24 February 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

**SOUTHERN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS (WILLINGHAM): SUBMISSION OF REPRESENTATIONS TO THE GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION IN RESPECT TO LAND AT PRIEST LANE, WILLINGHAM**

On behalf of Southern and Regional Developments (Willingham), Claremont Planning have been instructed to submit representations to the Issues and Options Consultation of the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The representations made relate to the site under their control at Priest Lane, Willingham which is available, suitable and deliverable as a site for residential development. It is the position of Southern and Regional Developments (Willingham) that the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan should consider the site for residential allocation given its sustainable location that will provide a material benefit in meeting the strategic residential need of the new Plan period.

The site has been previously submitted to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan through the Call for Sites exercise conducted in March 2019. The representations made to the Issues and Options Consultation maintain that the site should be considered for allocation as part of a review of the spatial strategy of the emerging Plan. The new Plan should ensure it engages with all options in achieving new development so that it is able to identify sufficient land to meet strategic requirements. The submission comprises of the following documents which provide a broad commentary to the consultation:

- Covering Letter;
- Completed Response Forms;
- Site Location Plan for the wider site

**The Priest Lane Site**

The site is located to the south of Priest Lane, east of Willingham village. The site covers a total area of 3.4 hectares. The site includes a frontage site to the south of Priest Lane covering an area of approximately 1.8 hectares of developable land along with a southern field. The site has a strong northern boundary which is formed by Priest Lane; this will form the direct frontage and primary vehicular access into the site. The entirety of the site is well bound by existing tree and hedgerow cover, with a wooded area in the central portion of the site. The existing landscaping and planting are of a substantial height which will contribute towards the softening of the development's edge and allow for a more sympathetic transition from the edge of the village into the countryside when travelling along Priest Lane.

The attached Site Location Plan shows, areas to the southern and western areas of the northern parcel of the site comprise of a range of buildings and structures relating to horticultural and nursery use, along with areas of hardstanding. As this part of the site has been developed through horticultural nursery use previously it should not be considered as undeveloped greenfield land.

Although the site does have substantial screening along its boundaries, the existing buildings remain clearly distinguishable from public vantage points and cannot be considered to have blended into the landscape. This site is well located to Willingham village as it is immediately adjacent to existing built form to the west and the settlement boundary sits adjacent to the development boundary. The location and existing built form found upon the site requires the site to be considered as sequentially preferable over greenfield sites located elsewhere at the fringes of the village. The existing natural features, such as the hedgerows and vegetated boundary treatments, provide robust screening to the site which will diminish any landscape impact that may arise as a result of the site's development. This will also contribute towards softening the edge of the development and creating a more sympathetic, transitional character to this edge of settlement location.

The site is unconstrained by environmental and heritage designations and relates well to the settlement edge of Willingham. It also abuts residential dwellings fronting onto Priest Lane and Southern and Regional Developments (Willingham) believe that the promotion site would represent a natural extension to the existing development along the highway. The site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 and has flat topography that is typical of the Fen-edge landscape of South Cambridgeshire. The site does not include any designated heritage assets and is located over 150m from the Willingham Conservation Area.

The site is located approximately 5 minutes' walk from the settlement centre with a range of services based along Church Street and High Street to include at least three public houses, two food stores, as well as a medical practice and post office a further 5 minutes' walk from the village centre. The village primary school is located 0.5 miles to the south, an 11-minute walk from the site. The site is well located to a range of services without requiring the use of a car and thus demonstrates an appropriate location to make best use of the range of services available within Willingham.

### ***The Site's Development Potential***

There is a strong basis for the site's developability, given its robust relationship with the settlement edge of Willingham and its sustainable, accessible location to the village's main services. The site is unconstrained in respect of statutory designations and as such offers an excellent opportunity for residential development.

It is advanced to the Local Planning Authority that this site is an appropriate location for development and that it is suitable for accommodating new residential dwellings. The delivery of the site will also contribute to securing the long-term robust position of the Local Planning Authority's housing land supply, which is a key consideration as the Council moves to review its Local Plan.

It is considered that Willingham is an appropriate settlement that can suitably accommodate additional levels of growth to be identified through the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The services available within Willingham establishes a degree of sustainability that should be recognised within the emerging policy and as such, the site at Priest Lane should be considered against this context of sustainability.

## **The Emerging Spatial Strategy**

It is vital that the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan robustly considers the findings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review. The review has identified that the economic growth of the region has significantly outstripped all forecasts. This will have direct implications on the approach of the new Plan in addressing the associated increases in housing demand and impacts on development requirements for the new Plan period. If the new Plan does not appropriately engage with these considerations, it risks allowing an unmanaged increase in housing need which will exacerbate the significant cost of housing in Cambridgeshire. As such, the new emerging spatial strategy will need to consider all development options if it is to achieve the growth required to meet this unprecedented demand.

Southern and Regional Developments (Willingham) consider that the new emerging spatial strategy must approach the distribution of development comprehensively and not preclude any options that are clearly suitable. This should include options that can achieve sustainable development towards appropriate settlements such as Willingham and other villages within South Cambridgeshire that are able to accommodate moderate levels of growth. This approach can assist in providing a substantial housing quantum towards the strategic residential need of the new Plan period.

The site at Priest Lane, Willingham represents an appropriate location for development that can take advantage of the sustainability credentials of the village. It is of a moderate size that can provide a level of development that is suitable and commensurate in scale to the size of the village but will be able to provide a material contribution to the Plan. The emerging Local Plan should allocate sites at villages such as Willingham to ensure that it delivers the requisite housing need for the plan area.

## **Conclusion**

The site at Priest Lane, Willingham under the control by Southern and Regional Developments (Willingham) demonstrates an appropriate and sustainable location to achieve new residential development. The site should form part of a wider and comprehensive assessment of opportunities to secure new residential growth within suitable villages such as Willingham through the implementation of a new spatial strategy. It is considered that the new Plan must allocate sufficient residential sites to support demand as a result of unprecedented economic growth.

The representations made by Southern and Regional Developments (Willingham) in respect of the site under their control at Priest Lane, Willingham are commended to the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Policy Team for consideration. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

**Katherine Else MRTPI Bsc Hons PG Dip**  
Managing Director

---