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Re Wren Park, Whittlesford

Dear 

I write further to your request for planning advice regarding the potential for the above referenced site.

Having visited the site and undertaken a desk-top study I can confirm that the site a sustainable and suitable location for development; subject to its removal from the Green Belt. I therefore recommend that you promote it as part of South Cambs District Council Call for Sites.

Whittlesford is identified in the adopted Local Plan as a group Village:

*“Group villages are generally less sustainable locations for new development than Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres, having fewer services and facilities allowing only some of the basic day-to-day requirements of their residents to be met without the need to travel outside the village. All Group Villages have at least a primary school and limited development will help maintain remaining services and facilities and provide for affordable housing to meet local needs. Development will not be permitted on sites capable of accommodating scheme sizes significantly larger than 8 or exceptionally 15 dwellings in Group villages.”*

However, Whittlesford is encompassed by Greenbelt and there are limited infill sites available that could provide sufficient land to allow growth. Therefore, the growth of the village will necessitate Green Belt release and without growth this will cause the population of the settlement to stagnate and age.

NPPF Paragraph 78 states:

*“To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will **enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities**. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.”*

It is therefore important that growth is allocated to settlements like Whittlesford in order to support local services.

Given that this will necessitate the release of Green Belt the Council will need to undertake a fine grain appraisal of the contribution the Green Belt around Whittlesford makes towards its purposes of the Green Belt set out at NPPF Paragraph 134:

*“Green Belt serves five purposes:*

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

The majority of it is well contained by existing vegetation and its development would appear in character with the existing development pattern. Further the development of your site would provide an opportunity to improve the defendable boundary of the settlement and the transition into the open countryside. The settlement edge in this location is currently quite harsh and additional planting to screen existing development would be improve this.

In this regard your site currently makes a very limited contribution to the five purposes and would seem a logical contender for release from the Green Belt.

The site itself is relatively unencumbered and there are no constraints that would restrict development.

- The site is within Flood Zone 1;
- It benefits from an existing access onto West End, which has suitable site lines and can be upgraded to provide a suitable access;
- It benefits from road frontage to Hill Farm Rd, which could provide an alternative/ or second access to the site;
- The site is not contaminated, with the exception of a bunded diesel tank that would need removing;
- There are no Public Rights of way across the site;
- There are no historic buildings within its immediate vicinity; the nearest Listed Building is Oak Tree House to the north that would not be impacted by the redevelopment of this site.
- Landscape: The properties along West End Road currently present a stark and unscreened edge to the settlement. Therefore, there is potential to enhance the visual impact by creating a new a defendable boundary that would screen both the new and existing development.

For these reasons I consider that your site is suitable development and in a sustainable location. I would therefore recommend that it is promoted within the Council Call for Sites.

Should you require an assistance with this going forward please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Samuel Bampton