

Greater Cambridge Local Plan – Preferred Options 2021
Land at Papworth, Parcel C
Varrier Jones Foundation, Cambridge
December 2021

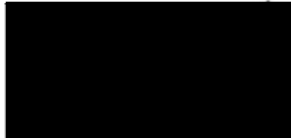


**LAND AT PAPWORTH
GREATER CAMBRIDGE
LOCAL PLAN -
PREFERRED OPTIONS
CONSULTATION 2021**

Quality Assurance

Site name: Land east of Papworth Everard
Client name: Varrier Jones Foundation and Papworth Trust, Cambridge
Type of report: Greater Cambridge Local Plan – Preferred Options Consultation 2021

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Signed

Date December 2021

Reviewed by: Guy Kaddish



Signed

Date December 2021

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 These representations have been prepared by Bidwells on behalf of the Varrier Jones Foundation, Cambridge (hereafter 'VJF') in response to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Preferred Options, "First Proposals" 2021 consultation.
- 1.2 These representations add to those previously submitted in respect of land at the VJF estate, Papworth for land east of the Papworth Business Park and south of Farm Lane (hereafter "the site") to the 2019 Call for Sites and 2020 Issues & Options consultations.
- 1.3 These representations promote the site for commercial development through the Preferred Options consultation for a landscape-led development option and seeks to give further certainty on the deliverability of the site. They also provide further clarification on technical points addressed in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) proforma and respond to the following proposed policies in the Preferred Options consultation document:
 - Policy S/DS: Development Strategy; and
 - Policy S/RRA: Site Allocations in the Rest of the Rural Area.
- 1.4 The representations build on technical evidence supplied as part of the 2019 Issues and Options consultation and are accompanied by the following documents:
 - Vision and Delivery Study which responds to technical points in the HELAA proforma (produced by Bidwells Urban Design Studio);
 - Village Assessment Addendum (produced by Bidwells); and
 - Updated Highways and access assessment (produced by EAS).

2.0 The proposed sites

- 2.1 VJF is submitting three parcels of land at Papworth for consideration as site allocations in the Greater Cambridge Local Plan preferred options 2021. This representation addresses the third of those sites, being:
- **Site C** – located on the eastern side of Papworth the site is currently greenfield land adjacent to Papworth Business Park and east of Stirling Way.
- 2.2 Site C is considered suitable for a landscape-led development which provides a sensitive and contextually appropriate commercial extension to Papworth with numerous benefits to the community and enhancements to local biodiversity. The site is located adjacent to the existing business park and with demand for growth at the Park there is an opportunity to bring forward an allocation to help meet this demand.
- 2.3 As a registered charity, VJF has a deep and intertwined legacy with the history of Papworth Everard (Papworth). A unique and large custodian in the village, VJF is able to approach development collaboratively and holistically, with the capacity to provide facilities and beneficial development for the community throughout the village. The Village Assessment submitted to the earlier rounds of the Local Plan seeks to inform a conversation about how a development could be beneficial for the village with targeted enhancements to those identified areas of the village that would benefit the most. This representation is accompanied by an Addendum to the main Village Assessment to highlight where contextual changes have taken place and earmark that an updated Village Assessment could be useful once the Census statistics become available in 2022, to ensure that development benefits remain to be targeted where they can have the most beneficial impact.

3.0 Economic Context

National Planning Policy

- 3.1 National Planning Policy (NPPF, Paragraph 8a) identifies the economic objective of the planning system:

“...to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types 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...”

- 3.2 NPPF Paragraph 81 builds upon this:

“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. 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.” (emphasis added).

- 3.3 NPPF Paragraph 82 states that planning policies should:

“a) set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;

b) set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;

c) seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and

d) be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.”

- 3.4 NPPF Paragraph 83 then states that;

“planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries”

Sub-Regional Context

- 3.5 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) set a target of doubling the regional economic growth (GVA) over a 25 year period as part of the Devolution Deal in 2017. This requires the area going beyond what it has achieved in the past (to double an economy over twenty-five years requires an average annual growth rate of 2.81%; historically, since 1998, the local economy has only grown at around 2.5%). Achieving this requires employment growth and more importantly productivity growth, as we are already at comparatively high levels of employment.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) (2018)

- 3.6 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) (2018) has outlined ambitious plans for growth over the next 20 years. Growth relies on increases in employment and productivity and the CPIER emphasises the need for productivity growth in this region as employment rates are so high. Economic growth is therefore essential for the next Local Plan.

Greater Cambridge Employment Land and Economic Development Evidence Study (November 2020)

- 3.7 The Greater Cambridge Employment Land and Economic Development Evidence Study explores the characteristics of each key economic cluster including the challenges and opportunities that they face. The Study confirms that there is a particular need for additional floorspace in Life Science, ICT and Professional Services and Advanced Manufacturing sectors.
- 3.8 The Study confirms demand is particularly high for wet labs, as space is highly specific, and companies seek flexible high quality floorspace. There is currently a reported lack of flexibility in floorspace arrangements as most existing buildings are purpose-built fitouts. South Cambridgeshire is reported as having a notional supply of R&D floorspace of just one year, with Prime Central and the Rest of Cambridge City areas having very little or no advertised R&D floorspace.
- 3.9 In addition, there remains a requirement for a wider array of employment generating commercial activities across high-to-low skilled employees.
- 3.10 In terms of future employment needs, the Study considered that the most likely future level of jobs growth, is for 58,500 jobs between 2020 and 2041 (referred to as the 'central' scenario). However, the Study also identified a 'higher' scenario, placing greater weight on fast growth in the recent past, particularly in key sectors. The Study subsequently recommends that the 'higher' scenario is planned for to accommodate the lack of supply, set against the consistent demand.

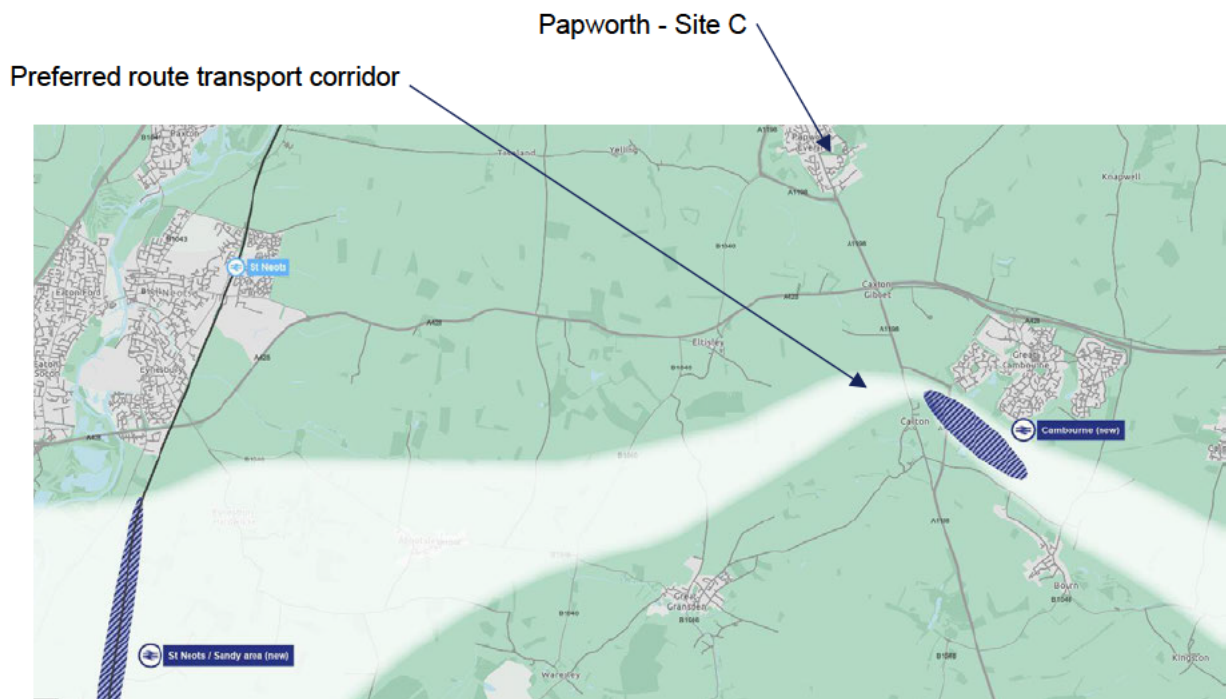
4.0 Opportunity

- 4.1 There has continued to be an encouraging level of consistent demand for commercial space despite recent changes resulting from COVID -19, particularly within the laboratory and office sectors with office and laboratory demand reaching its highest level since 2015.
- 4.2 Data collected by Bidwells LLP confirms that overall demand in Cambridge stood at 1.7m sq ft at the end of the first half of 2021, an increase of 30% since the end of 2020 and 45% ahead of levels in mid 2020. The demand for office space of sufficient quality and specification to enable opportunities for collaboration spaces and creative practices whilst also providing the highest sustainability standards is also likely to remain high.
- 4.3 Land east of Papworth business park represents a significant opportunity to provide additional capacity into the available employment floorspace. In particular, such a location can offer commercial accommodation to those occupiers that do not need or can afford the floorspace that is closer to Cambridge. While there can be a focus on the R&D market, there is a wider commercial sector providing jobs across the skill base of the local population and would naturally address the Council's emerging policy on affordable commercial floorspace.
- 4.4 The 'Greater Cambridge Employment Land and Economic Development Evidence Study' supporting the Council's evidence base to the First Proposals says that 'Villages in Greater Cambridge play an important role in providing for local employment and for supporting local clusters, particularly industrial floorspace relocating out of the city in accessible locations'. To bolster an established Business Park is an appropriate way to deliver against the is policy direction; to build on the market confidence set within the existing Stirling Way Business Park. In a location set to become more sustainable with significant transport infrastructure committed to the south of the village.
- 4.5 VJF is committed to delivering a well-designed, high quality development that could form an extension to the existing business Park. The Site is capable of accommodating a landscape-led commercial development with access via Stirling Way for a range of potential employment uses or supporting facilities.
- 4.6 There is also significant opportunity to ensure delivery of a 20% Biodiversity Net Gain.

5.0 Spatial Strategy

Policy S/DS: Development strategy

- 5.1 VJF support the principle of the proposed development strategy for Greater Cambridge and the approach to directing development to locations where active and new public transport is available, where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development, and where jobs, services and facilities can be located near to where people live. This approach is consistent with the NPPF, which at paragraph 11.a) states that all plans should promote a sustainable form of development.
- 5.2 Significant transport investment is planned around Papworth, which will further support the proposed sustainable expansion of the village. Transport connections to Papworth are set out in more detail within the accompanying Transport Appraisals prepared by EAS. There are several strategic schemes coming forward which will improve mobility in the area and better connections with key service centres. Furthermore, bringing forward development in Papworth would act as a catalyst and a source of additional investment to further improve local infrastructure to connect Papworth to the south and increase the opportunities and likelihood for Papworth residents and workers to travel, at least in part, by sustainable modes of travel:
- The completion of the A14 re-alignment and improvement works;
 - The East-West rail preferred route has been announced which will link with Cambourne which is just 4km south of Papworth (see figure 1 below);
 - A428 Highways England improvement proposals which includes new footpath and cycleway connections at the Caxton Gibbet junction and the re-alignment of the junction to reduce congestion in the area and improve journey times along this key transport route;
 - The Greater Cambridge Partnership's Cambourne to Cambridge Transport project which will improve transport connections. As part of these proposals, the proposed Scotland Farm Park and Ride is currently the preferred option. Scheme completion is currently forecasted in 2024; and
 - The Combined Authority Mayor committing to enhanced bus provision to better connect villages.



(Figure 1: East west rail preferred option route)

- 5.3 In its current form the village of Papworth is not providing a strong opportunity to existing residents to reduce car trips; however, the provision of links to the south will improve this. New development could be part of the solution to promote and help deliver more sustainable travel links for the benefit of all.
- 5.4 VJF support the principle of including allocations for employment in the rest of the rural area as part of the proposed development strategy.
- 5.5 The Local Plan should seek to allocate a component of its commercial development needs towards growth at existing commercial village sites.
- 5.6 Sustainable development in rural areas makes an important contribution to ensuring the vitality of villages and supporting existing rural services and facilities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.
- 5.7 The emerging Local Plan makes very few additional allocations in the rural area and VJF objects to this approach. This approach threatens the vitality of villages within the rural area and stifles opportunities for further growth and supporting local services.
- 5.8 It is important that any additional allocations accord with the principles of the proposed development strategy. Land at Papworth accords with the proposed development strategy as follows:
- Directing development to where active and public transport is the natural choice:

- Future transport links with the east-west rail link will enhance sustainable travel for Papworth.
- Where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development:
 - The proposed development of the site would be landscape led with potential for benefits to the green infrastructure that exceed policy requirements.
 - The site is predominantly agricultural land and is currently be of low ecological value. Through enhancements the proposals present an opportunity to deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least 20%.

Policy S/RRA: Site Allocations in the Rest of the Rural Area

- 5.9 VJF supports the principle of policy S/RRA in allocating sites for homes and employment in the rural area. Sustainable development in rural areas makes an important contribution to ensuring the vitality of villages and supporting existing rural services and facilities.
- 5.10 To fully support the rural area and develop a sound spatial strategy with a mixture of deliverable and suitable rural allocations, Land at Papworth should be identified as an allocation for commercial development. The site represents a sustainable location for development which will help to meet the needs of Greater Cambridge in the next Local Plan period. The land is available, achievable and suitable and the development proposals will bring a number of tangible social, economic and environmental benefits to support the delivery of a sound and sustainable spatial strategy as part of the Local Plan, including:
- Locating commercial development in a sustainable location, within close proximity to existing and proposed services, facilities, infrastructure and employment opportunities.
 - A landowner who wishes to work with the local community in order to shape a proposal which meets the needs of and can provide wider benefits to the village;
 - Delivery of a substantial amount of open space which would be accessible to new and existing residents and would provide connectivity with the allocated recreation ground extension;
 - Supporting Papworth's economy, including local shops and services;
 - Enhancing biodiversity levels across the site. The site is predominantly agricultural land and can currently be considered to be of low ecological value. The proposals present an opportunity to deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least 20%; and
 - An informed position through the submitted Village Assessment to help shape how best the development can bring the widest and far reaching benefits to the village and local community

6.0 HELAA Proforma - Site Reference: 40429

- 6.1 An assessment of the site has been undertaken as part of the HELAA (Site reference: 40429). Overall, the HELAA assessment of the site is good, rating the site green on availability and achievability and green on the technical matters of open space/green infrastructure, air quality and ground contamination with several matters highlighted amber which can be readily mitigated as part of any application and master planning process. These responses demonstrate that these matters can be rated as green, further evidencing the site's suitability and deliverability for a mixed-use scheme. Issues suggested as being 'red', the landscape and townscape and site access, have been addressed below.

Adopted Development Plan Policies

- 6.2 **HELAA Comment:** Outside Development Framework Within 20m of an Employment Allocation
- 6.3 **VJF Response:** The site lies outside the development boundary but directly adjacent to it and is ideally situated next to the existing business park. For these reasons it is appropriate to promote the site for commercial development. The submission demonstrates how a strong landscape-led approach can be accommodated.

Flood Risk

- 6.4 **HELAA Comment:** The assessment for flood risk identifies:
- Flood zone: Wholly in Flood Zone 1
 - Surface water flooding: 1% lies in a 1 in 30 year event
 - 2% lies in a 1 in 100 year event
 - 10% lies in a 1 in 1000 year event
- 6.5 **VJF Response:** The flood risk to the site is low and there are suitable methods of disposal for both the foul and surface water drainage. This is explained further in the Vision and Delivery Study.

Landscape and Townscape

- 6.6 **HELAA Comment:** NCA 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands District Area; The Western Claylands; The site is typical of the landscape character. Landscape Character Assessment (2021) Landscape Character Area - 4A: Croxton to Conington Wooded Claylands

The site lies outside the settlement framework and comprises a hard-standing car park with large open agricultural fields. Wide and local views are high due to lack of intervening vegetation particularly from the east of the site. Development upon this site would have a significant adverse impact to the landscape character and views. It would be an encroachment into the countryside and an urbanisation of the rural landscape. With a significant reduction in employment footprint the harm would be reduced subject to landscape mitigation measures.

- 6.7 **VJF Response:** The masterplan strategy has been refined following the HELAA comments and a revised Vision and Delivery Study is enclosed which proposes a stronger landscape-led development which provides a sensitive and contextually appropriate addition to Papworth, responding to the site's sensitive heritage and landscape constraints. Developable Areas have been carefully considered, to ensure they sit well within the existing landscape features, sensitively extending the built form of Papworth Everard. Gaps and views would be maintained where appropriate and harm carefully managed to remain minimal.
- 6.8 It is not the intention to fully develop Parcel C as built-form, indeed a significant part of the site would be for provided or retained landscaping to ensure a layout could respect the views in and out of the village, as well as the heritage settings. The HELAA should be an 'Amber' to reflect that, clearly, an amount of development is capable to the east side of the village; it is only a matter of how much and where that built development goes to bring a long-term and secure vision to the land.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 6.9 **HELAA Comment:** Within 200m of a SSSI Within 400m of an Ancient Woodland All non-householder planning applications will require consultation with Natural England. There are no apparent priority habitats within the site; however, there are grasslands, woodland areas, hedges and wooded boundaries on site that are likely to have ecological value. Development of the site may have a detrimental impact on a designated site, or those with a regional or local protection but the impact could be reasonably mitigated or compensated.
- 6.10 **VJF Response:** VJF is committed to delivering a scheme which can achieve a 20% net gain.

Site Access

HELAA Comment: The proposed site does not to have a direct link to the adopted public highway. No possibility of creating a safe access.

VJF Response: The assessment is factually incorrect. An Updated Access Appraisal has been undertaken by EAS (enclosed), the following provides a summary of the report:

- Vehicular access will be via a continuation of Stirling Way into the site and via Stirling Way onto Ermine Street using the existing signal junction. The access is in the ownership of VJF, as the land promoter. Access onto Parcel C is a continuation of the established commercial access across VJF land.
- Papworth Everard has good existing pedestrian and cycle provision and the site can link to existing footways and cycleways via Stirling Way and could provide for enhancements through s106 obligations (either to County Highway controlled land or that owned by the Charities).
- All new vehicle trips generated by the development will use the Stirling Way/Ermine Street signal junction. This has significant existing capacity and is expected to be able to operate within capacity with the new development. The majority of new vehicle trips will access Papworth Everard bypass and these will be travelling against typical peak traffic and so will not significantly impact on existing peak hour local congestion.

- 6.11 Site C has good connections to the village and its facilities. The proposed business park extension will help further bolster internalisation within Papworth Everard. The additional trips associated with the extension are expected to be able to be accommodated on the Stirling Way signal junction. Site C is therefore a sustainable location suitable for the proposed business park extension.
- 6.12 All other assessment criteria highlighted amber could reasonably be mitigated through the planning and design process.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 VJF is an integral part of Papworth Everard and wish to continue discussions with the local authority to establish and develop aspirations for the delivery of a beneficial legacy development for the village. All to be done in a manner with the involvement and contributions from key stakeholders and the community to best shape what the development could be and how it could benefit the village.
- 7.2 An assessment of the HELAA site assessment proforma has been provided along with responses to the Local Plan Strategic Development Policies. Principally to highlight that access is wholly achievable across land in VJF ownership and to confirm that only part of the site is proposed for built development, with the significant remainder to be for landscape/open space/ecology.
- 7.3 The representations highlight there is a pressing need for commercial floorspace across Greater Cambridge, including at Papworth where there are more affordable rates than at Cambridge and can provide for a wider type of 'B Class' operation to cater for a wider sector of the commercial market across low-to-high skilled jobs.
- 7.4 The site has good connections to the village and its facilities. The proposed business park extension will help further enhance local commuting with Papworth Everard. The additional trips associated with the extension are expected to be able to be accommodated on the Sterling Way signal junction. Site C is therefore a sustainable location suitable for the proposed business park extension.
- 7.5 VJF support the general development strategy but also recognise the need to bring forward appropriate village developments to support the village community.
- 7.6 All of the issues raised by the HELAA assessment to the site can be effectively managed or mitigated to ensure delivery of a site that will benefit the village, bringing forward a legacy development with a broad range of benefits.
- 7.7 VJF is committed to working with the Greater Cambridge Shared Authority to advance discussion on the proposed development and ensure that a shared vision can be delivered.

