

Greater Cambridge - Call for Sites (March 2025)

Telephone Exchange & Car Park, 109-117 Long Road, Cambridge, CB2 8HG

Introduction

As set out in the corresponding Call for Sites form, our client, Telereal Securitised Property GP Limited, is the sole landowner of the Telephone Exchange & Car Park, 109-117 Long Road, Cambridge, CB2 8HG ("the site"), which is deemed *deliverable, suitable, available* and *economically viable* for residential-led redevelopment (in line with the definition of deliverable housing sites set out in **NPPF Paragraph 72** and its Glossary). Whilst currently operational as a telephone exchange (*sui generis*), it is anticipated to become surplus to BT's operational requirements over a new Local Plan period (assumed after 2031) which requires a forward-thinking strategy to ensure this brownfield site is effectively used once vacated by the current occupier and therefore avoids a long-term period of vacancy.

In light of the Call for Sites, the site is considered to be capable of making a significant contribution towards the Council's housing targets, particularly as the site constitutes previously developed, brownfield land to which **Chapter 11** of the NPPF seeks to direct future development (and intensification) with a view of making as much use as possible of previously developed land and giving substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs (**Paragraph 124**). As noted in the Government's recent consultation on 'Brownfield Passports', brownfield land should remain the first port of call for new development to meet identified needs which highlights the importance of making most effective use of land such as the site.

It is noted that the site has been allocated in the **Cambridge Local Plan 2018** for 76 dwellings (**Site R14**) and has previously been assessed in the **HELAA (November 2021)** under site refs. **OS034** and **40101** (assumed a duplication). This submission confirms that the site remains available, although it is considered that a housing-led scheme is capable of yielding more than the 76 dwellings currently identified in the adopted Local Plan, especially in light of the above direction of national policy to optimise brownfield land in order to meet the expected growth for Greater Cambridgeshire.

Our client is willing to engage with the Council in order to refine this target, but considers that the site can take a **minimum of 100-125 dwellings (in the form of [semi-detached/terraced] town houses)** which would be aligned with the average density levels in the City (according to the 2023-24 Annual Monitoring Report published in February 2025). Subject to robust layout testing and placemaking this may be improved upon at planning application stage.

Further information is provided in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Achievability of the Site

Existing use	<i>Telephone Exchange (Sui Generis)</i> Note: The site provides limited on-site employment. Whilst most telephone exchanges (including this site) are a key part of the UK's communication infrastructure via their copper and fibre networks and have historically provided ancillary offices and related accommodation (such as catering facilities), the ancillary office elements have not been (or only been in limited) active use. This is also the case for the this Telephone Exchange. Openreach engineers and other Communication Providers who
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	have equipment located at site simply attend the property to maintain, upgrade or install their equipment (in irregular or regular intervals). Any office-based staff are located in separate fit-for-purpose office buildings. The site is therefore much more similar to a data centre accommodating communication equipment (racks, cable chambers, plant, etc.). With Openreach withdrawing copper-based technology in favour of fibre in the coming years, it will result in a consolidation of BT's Exchange portfolio, including the decommissioning and closure of this Telephone Exchange. As such, the site has been underutilised and mostly empty in terms of (ancillary) office use for a significant amount of time, not accommodating any regular on-site employment. Any redevelopment of the site, due to the reasons set out above, will therefore not result in a loss of active or existing employment floorspace.
Is the site suitable for residential development?	Yes, no significant constraints affect the suitability of the site for residential-led redevelopment. The site is: – located in a sustainable development location; – constitutes brownfield land; – has good links to the strategic transport network (Long Road being an A-Road; various bus stops in close proximity on Long Road and High Road); and – is well-served by other social infrastructure (including schools, such as The Perse Preparatory School, Fawcett Primary School, St Mary's School and Homerton College, etc.; public services, including Clay Farm Centre and others; leisure and sports facilities, including Trumpington Sport, Skatepark, various sports club, etc.; open space including Darien Meadow, Hobson Hill, etc.; and shops). It is therefore in a suitable location for residential-led redevelopment. Existing main servicing access is provided from Long Road and can be utilised in any redevelopment scenario. The site is in Flood Risk Zone 1 (with a low probability of flooding), and is neither locally nor statutorily listed. There are no sensitive heritage assets in close proximity to the site affecting its redevelopment. There are a number of protected trees along the site's western boundary which will be considered as part of a future redevelopment scenario. There are no known contamination constraints (which could otherwise not be overcome via a suitable remediation strategy). The site further has access to key utility services.
Is the site deliverable?	Yes, the site is subject to a strategic asset review undertaken by our client and expected to become available / surplus to BT's requirements beyond 2031 but during a new Local Plan period.

	To avoid a situation whereby the site becomes vacant and no longer serves any meaningful purpose once the current operations on site cease, thereby resulting in a significantly underutilised brownfield site in a sustainable development location, it is strongly recommended to retain the site's allocation for future residential-led redevelopment.
Estimated site capacity	When taking the existing site area alongside scale/massing (and topography) of the Telephone Exchange into account as well as the key constraints, designations and opportunities associated with a redevelopment of the site, it has the potential to deliver a minimum of 100-125 new homes (in the form of townhouses). Subject to robust layout testing and placemaking this may be improved upon at planning application stage. As such this should be set out as a flexible (or minimum) target. If optimised in line with the NPPF's expectations for brownfield land, the site is therefore capable of making a significant contribution towards the Council's new housing target. As noted above, our client is willing to engage with the Council during the next stages of the plan-making process to ensure a refined site allocation is both flexible and ambitious to enable the best outcome for the site and allowing it to maximise on the public benefits it is capable of delivering.