

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

CALL FOR SITES SUBMISSION

SITE 40274 – Land off Water Lane, Melbourn

Prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of Cala Management Limited

07 March 2025

Site Name:		Land off Water Lane, Melbourn
Client Name:		Cala Management Limited
Type of Report:		Call for Sites Supporting Statement
Prepared by:		LW
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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2 VILLAGE ASSESSMENT	7
3 SITE ASSESSMENT	9
4 CONCLUSIONS	17

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This supporting planning statement has been prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of Cala Management Limited, to support the submission of a site at Land off Water Lane, Melbourn (herein after referred to as “the site”) as part of the current Greater Cambridge Call for Sites consultation.
- 1.2 The site extends to an area of approximately 7.49ha and is proposed for a residential development of approximately 100 dwellings, plus a significant quantum of open space, a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) and other associated infrastructure. The site is available for development now, is achievable, being capable of delivering new housing within 5 years and therefore, is considered to be suitable.
- 1.3 The submitted plans demonstrate the proposed parameters, including the access from Water Lane. In support of this statement and Call for Sites submission, the following documents are provided:
- Site Concept Plan
 - Site Location Plan
 - Transport Technical Note
- 1.4 These should be viewed in conjunction with the documents and plans submitted to the previous Call for Sites process and the 2021 First Proposals consultation.
- 1.5 This statement briefly explains the background to the site, and considers relevant context, including the previous assessment made in the Greater Cambridge Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) 2021.

Background

- 1.6 The promotion site, at Water Lane, Melbourn, was submitted to the previous Call for Sites exercise and evaluated in the HELAA 2021 (reference 40274 – Land off Water Lane, Melbourn). At the time, despite being found to be Available and Achievable as shown in the table below, the site was discounted.

Criteria	Outcome (HELAA 2021)
Suitable	Red
Available	Green
Achievable	Green

- 1.7 As outlined above, the site was scored ‘Red’ for Suitability, meaning that the site was not carried forward as a proposed allocation. A detailed response to the analysis is included in the Site Assessment section of this statement.
- 1.8 The factors which led to it being determined that the site was both Available and Achievable remain accurate and correct at the time of this submission.
- 1.9 For clarity, updates since the previous submission have been made to the red-line site boundary, in order to confirm the access extends to the public adopted highway north of

the site. These changes have been made primarily to demonstrate that the access is suitable for the development proposed, in response to comments raised in the HELAA 2021.

- 1.10 Since the previous submissions were made, the scheme has evolved to address comments raised in previous rounds of the Plan preparation. This statement highlights changes in both the context and the proposals which have been implemented since the last consultations in 2021.

Site Description

- 1.11 The site comprises a large field, currently in agricultural use, on the southern edge of Melbourn. The site is to the immediate south-west of the H/1(e) allocation (Land off New Road and rear of Victoria Way), which was allocated in the 2018 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan for 65 dwellings.
- 1.12 The northern boundary of the site adjoins the southern edge of Melbourn, to the rear of the employment units on Saxon Way, which are separated from the site by an established tree and hedge row. The eastern boundary adjoins the westernmost edge of the H/1(e) allocation, alongside the Melbourn New Road Cemetery, whilst to the south-east, south and west is open countryside.
- 1.13 The site is relatively flat, with a gentle rise to the south and east. The southern, eastern and western boundaries are made up of thin hedgerows, which are incomplete in places and in varying condition, in stark contrast to the strong and established hedgerow which runs along the northern boundary.

Greater Cambridge Housing Need

- 1.14 In February 2025, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning released a statement confirming that, as a result of the Government’s changes to the Standard Method for determining Housing Need, the Councils can no longer demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.
- 1.15 The below table shows the significant increase in Local Housing Need as a result of the 2024 Standard Method – which represents an increase of 634 dwellings per annum when compared to the housing requirements outlined in the Adopted 2018 Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Plans.

	Adopted Local Plan Housing Requirements (and difference versus 2024 Standard Method)	Previous Standard Method LHN (and difference versus 2024 Standard Method)	December 2024 Standard Method LHN	Proposed Housing Requirement in Emerging Plan (and difference versus 2024 Standard Method)

Combined Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire	1,675 dpa (-634)	1,726 dpa (-583)	2,309 dpa	2,111 dpa (-198)
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- 1.16 Whilst it is true that the majority of the 5-year housing land supply shortfall is as a result of the increased Standard Method Housing Need figure, the shortfall has been exacerbated by difficulties in delivering the large-scale strategic sites which are expected to deliver the overwhelming majority of housing across both districts. To-date, since the adoption of the 2018 Plans, both Councils have relied heavily upon large-scale new settlements (including Northstowe, Bourn Airfield and Waterbeach) and strategic sites on the edges of Cambridge, many of which have suffered from widely publicised difficulties in the delivery of the necessary infrastructure. Bourn Airfield for instance is constrained by the delays in the Cambridge to Cambourne busway which is still awaiting a Transport and Works Act Order. As a result, many have experienced delays to delivery, with many large sites now running significantly behind their expected delivery rates as outlined in the Housing Trajectory.
- 1.17 Accordingly, it is necessary for Greater Cambridge to re-assess the strategy for delivering the quantum of housing required by the new Standard Method. Logically, to minimise the amount of time in which Greater Cambridge cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, it would be prudent to focus on smaller and medium-scale sites which are located in sustainable villages and can come forward quickly without the need to provide significant additional infrastructure prior to delivery.
- 1.18 The fastest, and most cost-effective method of boosting supply in the short and medium term, would be a focus on locations which benefit from existing and committed infrastructure. This includes villages such as Melbourn, which benefits from significant investment as part of the Greenways project, meaning it now benefits from excellent connectivity to Meldreth Railway Station. The village also benefits from ample employment opportunities within the village itself, alongside a good range of shops and services. The case for development in Melbourn is outlined further in section 2 of this statement.

2. VILLAGE ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 As of the 2021 Census, Melbourn had a population of approximately 4,900, which represented a modest increase of just 0.43% since the 2011 Census. This is in stark contrast with the wider South Cambridgeshire district, which grew 8.9% in the same timeframe.
- 2.2 The Adopted Local Plan (2018) classifies Melbourn as a Minor Rural Centre in Policy S/9 (the second tier of settlements). Policy S/9 allows for residential development and redevelopment up to an indicative maximum of 30 dwellings within the development framework. The supporting text to Policy S/9 states that Minor Rural Centres have “a lower level of services, facilities and employment than Rural Centres, but a greater level than most other villages in South Cambridgeshire”.
- 2.3 The Adopted Plan also allocated a single new development site in Melbourn – H/1(e) (Land off New Road) for 65 dwellings. Recent years have also seen development east of New Road which was granted at appeal in 2015 for 199 dwellings. Both developments are now understood to be substantially complete.
- 2.4 Melbourn is a sustainable settlement, and benefits from an excellent range of amenities including the following, which have been measured from the proposed access at the north-eastern corner of the site with Google Maps:

Little Hands Nursery School	1.8km 5 minute cycle 25 minute walk
Melbourn Primary School	900m 3 minute cycle 12 minute walk
Melbourn Village College Secondary School	1.7km 5 minute cycle 22 minute walk
Orchard GP surgery	600m 2 minute cycle 8 minute walk
Convenience Store and Post Office	1.1km 3 minute cycle 15 minute walk
Public Houses (The Black Horse)	650m 2 minute cycle 8 minute walk
Recreation spaces	950m 3 minute cycle 12 minute walk
Melbourn Hub (incorporating the Village Library, Citizens Advice and a Café)	1.3km 4 minute cycle 16 minute walk

- 2.5 Melbourn is also home to Melbourn Science Park (an approximate 6-minute cycle / 23 minute walk from the site entrance), which hosts several quality science and technology employers, and was granted permission in January 2025 to expand and redevelop the site to increase floorspace further, alongside the provision of additional amenities for both workers and local residents. Melbourn therefore not only benefits from an excellent array of shops, community facilities and services, but also a good range of quality employment opportunities.
- 2.6 In addition, Melbourn has recently benefitted from the Melbourn Greenways project, which is being led by the Greater Cambridge Partnership. The Greenways project aims to improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure between the villages of Melbourn, Meldreth and Shepreth and provides connectivity to Cambridge in the north and Royston to the south. To date, this work has included the provision of a new high-quality, safe and segregated pedestrian and cycle route from Station Road in Melbourn to Meldreth Railway Station.
- 2.7 From Meldreth Railway Station, which is now easily reachable within an 8-minute cycle of the promotion site, future residents can access Royston in a further 7 minutes, or Cambridge in under 20. Residents will also be able to commute directly to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus and Addenbrookes Hospital from early 2026 – providing excellent connectivity to the largest employment site in Cambridge. Residents of Melbourn therefore have excellent access to employment opportunities across the Greater Cambridge sub-region via quality public transport.
- 2.8 In addition to convenient rail links, Melbourn also benefits from a regular bus service providing further connectivity to Royston which provides approximately hourly bus services at peak times.
- 2.9 In terms of sports and recreation, it is understood that in early 2024 the Melbourn Sports Centre closed suddenly as a result of the management company going into liquidation. Since then, the Sports Centre has slowly begun to recommence operations under the CAM Academy Trust. Cala believe that this is an essential facility for Melbourn and would be delighted to make a contribution to further refurbish or improve areas of the Sports Centre if required following conversations with the CAM Academy Trust.
- 2.10 It is concluded, therefore, that Melbourn is a highly sustainable location, which can readily support residential development in the next Local Plan period. This would have the effect of both safeguarding existing infrastructure, and capitalising on existing and planned investment which is being brought forward by the Greater Cambridge Partnership. It is deemed that the quantum of development proposed is commensurate with the village's role as a sustainable settlement.

3 SITE ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 Land off Water Lane, Melbourn provides an opportunity to deliver up to 100 dwellings, including policy compliant affordable housing, substantial open space and potentially a children's play area. The site is located in a highly sustainable location adjoining the existing settlement boundary. The concept plans demonstrate that approximately 100 dwellings can be delivered by developing a low-density scheme, which is in keeping with the character of this edge-of-village location, alongside the enhanced landscaping, open space and children's play space.
- 3.2 The development land is controlled by Cala Homes and is not subject to any legal constraints, ransoms or tenancies that could preclude development of the site within the anticipated timeframes, meaning that the site could be made available within years 0-5 of the Plan, enabling it to contribute to the Council's 5-year housing land supply position. The access is proposed on the existing Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) which is maintained by Cambridgeshire County Council Highways. This is confirmed in the First Proposals representations and the 2022 submission. Further details of the proposed access and the site's accessibility are set out in the accompanying Highways Technical Note.
- 3.3 The indicative Site Concept Plan, which accompanies this submission, illustrates how the southern boundary is regarded as an opportunity to enhance the naturalistic setting of the site, through the extensive early planting of new native hedgerows and trees to strengthen this southern boundary of Melbourn. Established planting along the southern edge of the site would serve to minimise the impact of the development on the wider landscape. It should be noted that from more distant views from the south, the site would be viewed against the backdrop of the existing built-up part of the village. The landscaped buffer along the southern and western edges of the site would provide a soft transition to the open countryside. The proposed landscaped buffer would provide a much gentler transition between the open countryside and the built-form of Melbourn than is currently the case.
- 3.4 The Concept Plan shows that the site could deliver approximately 100 dwellings, a significant quantum of open space and landscaping, and a potential children's play space.
- 3.5 Previous representations, including those submitted in support of the Call for Sites process and the subsequent First Options consultation in 2021 have demonstrated that the site is both Available and Achievable. Both representations remain accurate as of March 2025.
- 3.6 In terms of concerns raised through the HELAA 2021, it is considered that the findings of the assessment were broadly positive. The HELAA confirmed the site was available and achievable, however it did conclude that the site was not suitable. Reasons for this outcome are addressed in the table below.

Issue	Assessment	Response [comments in bold are our emphasis]	Amended Assessment
Adopted Development Plan Policies	Amber	The site abuts Melbourn's Development Framework immediately to the south of the Saxon Way employment area. The Development Framework for Melbourn has remained relatively unaltered since the Adopted Proposals Map Published January 2010, with only a small alteration in relation to a site for 65 dwellings (H/1 (e)). This tight Development Framework has artificially constrained development in a village from growth even though it has a good range of services and facilities to support it. It is considered that the site would form a logical extension to Melbourn, resulting in a site that is well related to the existing village, and that would not create amenity issues for existing residential properties. The site is within 20 metres of the allocation H/1 (e). This is viewed as an advantage, as it would allow new development to be concentrated in one area, away from the historic centre of Melbourn, which is protected by a Conservation Area.	Green
Flood Risk	Green	No flood risk issues identified.	No change
Landscape and Townscape	Amber	TPO 0017, is located to the north of the site and is considered unlikely to be affected by development of the site.	Green

		The site is not within the Green Belt or any protected area and is well related to the existing settlement. Any development would respect the Local Character and Landscape Character of the area. For example, in relation to the nearby H/1 (e) site The adopted South Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan required the 'creation of a significant landscape buffer along the boundary of the site where it adjoins or could be seen from open countryside to provide a soft green village edge'. A similar approach could be adopted at this site, which would provide a much gentler transition between the open countryside and the built-form of Melbourn than is currently the case. In addition, the local topography screens the site from long-range views from the south. It is considered that a sympathetic approach to the site, including appropriate densities and design, would result in an excellent development which would enhance the character of the area.	
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Amber	The site is wholly within Flood Zone 1, and a suitable Surface Water Drainage Strategy based on sustainable drainage systems would be produced at application stage. The nearest SSSIs are Holland Hall (Melbourn) Railway Cutting, approximately 1.5 kilometres	Green

		west of the site, and Fowlmere Watercress Beds approximately 2 kilometres east of the site. It is considered that the increased visitor pressure on nearby SSSI associated with 100 new dwellings would not be significant, and if necessary mitigation could be provided. In terms of existing habitats, initial surveys have shown that the existing site is comprised of Cereal crops, Bramble Scrub, Bare Ground and Native Hedgerow, whilst following enhancements proposed through the development, the scheme will ultimately include the addition of modified grassland, trees and enhanced hedgerows. Furthermore, initial biodiversity net gain assessments indicate that the site can accommodate a BNG in excess of 10%, and significantly more for habitat units. As acknowledged, any impact on designated sites, or those with a regional or local protection could be reasonably mitigated or compensated. For the above reasons it is considered that the site cannot be considered unsuitable for reasons of biodiversity or geodiversity.	
Open Space/Green Infrastructure	Green	The site has the potential to provide open space to serve	No change

		the new and wider local community.	
Historic Environment	Green	It was acknowledged that the site would have either a neutral or positive impact on designated or non-designated heritage assets.	No change
Archaeology	Amber	The presence of a Saxon cemetery and prehistoric trackway in the area are considered to be matters which can be dealt with at the application stage. As this site is limited in size and would only be delivering up to 100 dwellings, any delays associated with archaeology would be unlikely to be significant and would not undermine the overarching housing delivery strategy.	Green
Accessibility to Services and Facilities	Amber	The site has good accessibility to key local services, community facilities, transport links and employment opportunities. The development of the site would therefore not require the delivery of accompanying key services. However, the development would contribute towards the improvement of existing services and facilities in Melbourn. For these reasons it is considered that the location of the site should weigh in its favour.	Green
Site Access	Red	As set out in our Call for Sites submission (Technical Note, dated 2 January 2018 reattached), a safe access to the site can be provided. An updated Transport Technical Note has been prepared which includes a speed survey to determine	Green

		the visibility splays required which can be achieved and the provision of a 5.5. metre carriageway and 2-metre wide pedestrian footpath on the western side linking the site to the adoptable highway on Water Lane. A proposed design including the quantum of development has been reviewed by Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Development Management who have agreed in principle that the design is suitable to support a proposed development of up to 100 units. A further detailed design and a Transport Assessment would be provided as part of any future planning application. An assessment of Red in this context is therefore considered unjustified and on the evidence provided should be made Green.	
Transport and Roads	Amber	As acknowledged, any potential impact on the functioning of trunk roads and/or local roads could be reasonably mitigated. Contributions arising from any development could be used to help improve transport and roads in the area.	Green
Noise, Vibration, Odour and Light Pollution	Amber	As acknowledged, noise from nearby industrial/commercial activities could be considered and mitigated at detail design stage. As mentioned above, the site is not located in close	Green

		proximity to existing residential properties, so difficulties are unlikely to arise with regard to residential amenity.	
Air Quality	Green	No issues identified. The site is located in a sustainable location with good access to services and is not within an Air Quality Management Area.	No change
Contamination and Ground Stability	Amber	The site has been in agricultural use. If any contamination is detected this could be suitably dealt with following the grant of planning permission.	Green

Further Constraints

Issue	Assessment	Response
Constraints to development	-	No issues identified.
Strategic Highways Impact	Green	No issues identified.
Employment	-	No issues identified.
Green Belt - Assessment of Harm of Green Belt Release	-	N/A

- 3.7 In terms of the proposed vehicular access, for absolute clarity, it is confirmed that Cala's approach is to extend the road southwards from the junction of Greengage Road to the eastern boundary of the site. Accordingly, the Site Location Plan and Concept Plan have been updated to include the full connection up to the adopted highway.
- 3.8 Pre-Application discussions with Cambridgeshire County Council, which took place ahead of the First Proposals Consultation confirmed that Water Lane is presently classified as a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) 15, however is highway maintainable at public expense and capable of being upgraded to an appropriate standard for its subsequent adoption by the highway authority to serve the proposed housing development.
- 3.9 The BOAT is presently rough-surfaced and lightly maintained, with boundary hedges encroaching significantly into the highway. Its current condition does not preclude Cambridgeshire County Council from entering into a Section 278 agreement to upgrade the lane in order to serve the site.

- 3.10 The 2021 Technical Note includes the results of a speed survey carried out in November 2021 75m north of the access to Greengage Rise. The results concluded an average northbound speed of 24mph and a speed of 25mph southbound. As a result, based upon the Manual for Streets guidance, the required visibility splays are 31.4 metres to the south for northbound traffic, and 33 metres north for southbound traffic. These splays can be comfortably achieved within the highway land.
- 3.11 Pedestrian access was amended since the original Call for Sites submission and is now proposed along the western side of Water Lane. A 2-metre wide footpath along the western side of the site within the highway boundary can be achieved and provision to two crossing points has been included. Therefore, safe pedestrian access can be achieved into the village, providing connectivity with the Greenways scheme.
- 3.12 In terms of Ecology, this submission is accompanied by an Ecology Technical Note, prepared by Ethos Environmental confirms that the site is capable of delivering an on-site biodiversity net gain in excess of the 10% national requirement through the delivery of additional habitats including modified grasslands, trees and enhanced hedgerows.
- 3.13 In summary, as the principle of a safe and adoptable access can be provided from the site to the adopted highway including a 2-metre-wide pedestrian link, this should be more-than sufficient to overcome the access concerns with this site. The next stage would involve preparing detailed concept plans in agreement with GCSPS and the Highways Authority before preparing a detailed application. Beyond the application process, further work would be required to finalise details of the highway design through a S278 agreement. Developer funding through an obligation in the S106 could be used to make a contribution towards the highway improvements.
- 3.14 Furthermore, the submitted Site Concept Plan illustrates Cala's ambition to deliver a significant landscape buffer within the site, particularly to strengthen and enhance the existing tree and hedgerows to the eastern, western and southern boundaries. Whilst technical works are ongoing, it is anticipated that the site will be capable of delivering ecological enhancements which meet or even exceed requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Melbourn is clearly a sustainable location for further residential development. This Supporting Statement has demonstrated that alongside key amenities, facilities and services within Melbourn itself, residents have direct, fast and segregated cycle/pedestrian access to Meldreth, including the Railway Station. Accordingly, residents can now reach the full range of shops, services and employment opportunities in Royston and Cambridge in around 20 minutes via rail.
- 4.2 The site at Water Lane, Melbourn, remains **Available** and **Achievable** for residential development within the first 5 years of the local plan. The clarifications and rebuttals contained within this statement further demonstrate that the site is **Suitable** for the development proposed. There are no known constraints which would preclude development of this site if allocated.
- 4.3 To conclude, the proposed site at Water Lane, Melbourn, should be allocated for a residential development of up to 100 dwellings.