

7 March 2025
436380/A3/LV



Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA



Dear Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service,

**RESPONSE TO GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN CALL FOR SITES
LAND WEST OF HOWELLS WAY, OLD ST NEOTS ROAD, HARDWICK**

Savills (UK) Ltd is instructed by Pigeon to promote Land West of Howells Way, Old St Neots Road, Hardwick, for residential allocation within the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, relating to South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City areas.

Pigeon is a multi-disciplinary property company based in Bury St Edmunds and operating across the Eastern region and beyond which specialises in high quality landscape and design led sustainable development.

Savills (UK) Ltd supports the approach taken by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council to merge together and create a new single Greater Cambridge Local Plan. Both Local Planning Authorities are intrinsically linked through both social and economic means. This in turn has resulted in patterns of commuting and travel into Cambridge from the surrounding villages within South Cambridgeshire for employment, leisure, culture and retail. Creating a single Greater Cambridge Local Plan offers a positive context within which the two Councils can evaluate and prioritise the competing needs for growth and mitigation that will no doubt be needed in this exercise.

As part of a balanced and deliverable growth strategy, our view is that there should continue to be modest levels of growth in sustainable locations beyond the Green Belt that benefit from sustainable transport and other key infrastructure, and can reasonably accommodate growth without generating unsuitable levels of traffic. Hardwick in particular is a sustainable village, located circa. 8 km to the west of Cambridge, and just outside of the Green Belt.

Land West of Howells Way, Old St Neots Road, Hardwick (The Site) was originally submitted in response to the Call for Sites in 2019. It is submitted again to highlight the continued suitability and availability of the site as a whole. We wish to highlight this opportunity for further enhancement of Hardwick, particularly in the context of the recent development immediately adjacent to the site to the east, as well as separate proposals for transport enhancements including East-West Rail and Cambourne to Cambridge travel route.

This Site extends to circa. 6.7 hectares and is promoted for residential development of 150 dwellings, public open space, biodiversity enhancements with associated infrastructure. This Site represents a suitable opportunity to secure sustainable residential development comprising both market and affordable homes at the settlement of Hardwick. Taking the adopted policy requirement for 40% affordable housing, this proposal would deliver 60 affordable dwellings.

The Site is available now and can deliver housing from Year 1 of the new Local Plan.



Hardwick

Hardwick is a medium-sized village circa. 8km to the west of Cambridge and circa. 6km east of Cambourne. Within the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) Hardwick is classified as a 'Group Village'. The settlement benefits from the following community facilities and services: Hardwick Primary School; Hardwick Play Park; Post Office / Convenience Store; and a series of local shops, hairdressers, a restaurant, a cafe, and a gym. The proximity of the site to these facilities is provided in Table 1 below and mapped in the supporting Context Plan and Vision Document.

In terms of accessibility, Hardwick benefits from suitable access to Cambridge City Centre and the surrounding area. The village is currently served by a regular bus service, Stagecoach 4. This provides buses every 20 minutes from 6.12am until 8.12pm followed by a hourly evening service through Monday to Saturday running between Cambourne and Cambridge. There is a reduced service on Sundays. This bus service can be used for commuting and access to major retail and leisure destinations both in Cambourne and Cambridge. The Cambridge Rail Station has trains running to London, Ely, Peterborough, and by connection to the rest of the country.

The Greater Cambridge Partnership are currently proposing a new travel route between Cambourne and Cambridge, to include a bus route via Hardwick (amongst other locations); a new travel hub at Scotland Farm, Dry Drayton; and, a new path for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The Scotland Farm travel hub is located circa. 450 metres from the site, across the A428. According to the Greater Cambridge Partnership, the Scotland Farm site will host 2,000 car parking spaces, 300 cycle parking spaces, a small building providing shelter, seating, passenger information, and toilets, and LED lighting will be integrated throughout the site. There is an existing 'Local Cycle Route' to the north of the site, along St Neots Road.

Whilst no application has yet come forward for the East-West Rail, the proposed route is located within close proximity to the south of the site, and a new East-West Rail Station is proposed at Cambourne, less than 5km from Hardwick, approximately 15 minute cycle ride from the Site. The proposals for both East-West Rail and Cambourne to Cambridge will complement each other, providing more travel options for those travelling west of Cambridge; therefore enhancing existing accessibility of Hardwick.

Hardwick is also well positioned in relation to the existing highway network with links to the A428, and then beyond to the A1, A10, A14, and M11.

Given that Hardwick has a range of key local services and facilities, is easily accessible to Cambridge to the east, and is one of the focal locations for forthcoming major transport and infrastructure projects, it is considered that Hardwick can support additional residential development within the emerging plan period, specifically at Land West of Howells Way, Old St Neots Road, Hardwick.

Land West of Howells Way, Old St Neots Road, Hardwick

The Site comprises circa. 6.7 hectares of paddock / scrub land on the western edge of Hardwick, adjoining Meridian Close and adjoining frontage residential development along this length of St Neots Road. The site lies approximately 8km to the west of Cambridge.

The site is situated just outside of the existing settlement boundary of Hardwick, to the west, and is located beyond the Green Belt that surrounds Cambridge. The site is well-related to the existing built form of the village. To the northwest, north and east, it adjoins housing within the existing area of Hardwick village. Immediately adjacent, to the east, is the Hill Residential scheme of 155 dwellings which was granted outline planning permission in August 2018, and has subsequently been built out. This development is discussed in more detail below. To the southwest and south are extensive agricultural fields.

The site comprises generally flat land and the Site is well contained in landscape terms; with mature boundaries comprising hedgerow and belts of deciduous trees to the south, east and west.

Previous Engagement

Land West of Howells Way, Old St Neots Road, Hardwick was originally submitted in response to the Call for Sites in 2019.

Pre-application advice was also sought from Greater Cambridge Shared Planning in late 2023 for an alternative scheme which is not being pursued. For clarity, this Call for Sites submission relates to the proposal for 150 dwellings at the site.

Through this Call for Sites submission, we seek to further highlight the benefit of the proposal and the sustainability of the site as a logical extension to the existing settlement of Hardwick, with the ability to utilise both existing and forthcoming infrastructure.

Adjacent Scheme – ‘Capstone Fields’, Howells Way, Hardwick

In November 2016, in response to the Council’s shortfall in housing land supply, an outline planning application (LPA Reference: S/3064/16/OL), was submitted for:

“a residential development of up to 155 dwellings following demolition of two existing dwellings with areas of landscaping and public open space and associated infrastructure works with all matters reserved except for access”, at Land South of 279 St Neots Road, Hardwick.

This application was granted permission in August 2018 and has since been built out. The layout, as prepared by Hill Residential and Latimer by Clarion Housing Group, is appended to this submission.

The Capstone Fields site also located outside of the settlement boundary of Hardwick. Given that Capstone Fields was deemed to be both appropriate and sustainable development by the Council, and given the existing facilities and public transport connectivity it is our understanding that Hardwick can support further development.

Land west of Howells Way presents a logical extension to the village of Hardwick, that is suitable, available, and deliverable.

Site Access and Transport Links

The northern-most point of the site adjoins St Neots Road, where there is an existing agricultural access. The supporting Transport Note, prepared by Rossi Long (February 2020) demonstrates that safe vehicular access can be provided to the site. There are also opportunities for new pedestrian and cycle access into the site.

There is the potential for pedestrian / cycle access to Land West Howells Way through the adjacent scheme, via Lofty Close. This route would provide a direct route to the village of Hardwick, in particular along Laxton Avenue to the Hardwick Community Primary School. This potential connection point and pedestrian / cycle route is illustrated on the appended Context Plan, and would avoid the need for residents to travel north to St Neots Road before travelling west into the village. This would reduce the cycle and walking times listed at Table 1.

Enclosed is a Context Plan identifying the potential access for the site and proximity to local facilities, also summarised at Table 1.

Table 1 – Proximity of the site to existing local facilities

Local Facility	Distance from the Site (measured from site entrance unless stated)	Approximate Walking Travel Time	Approximate Cycling Travel Time
Hardwick Primary School	Approximately 1,600m	19 minutes	6 minutes
Hardwick Play Park	Approximately 1,600m	22 minutes	5 minutes
Post Office / Convenience Store	Approximately 1,500m	19 minutes	5 minutes
Hairdressers – The Hair Care Bunch	Approximately 1,130m	15 minutes	4 minutes
Restaurant – The Blue Lion	Approximately 2,500m	32 minutes	8 minutes
Café – Frankie's	Approximately 1,000m	13 minutes	4 minutes
Gym – Amor Training	Approximately 1,000m	13 minutes	4 minutes
Bus Stop – Scotland Road	Within 400m	4 minutes	1 minute
Bus Stop – Millers Way	Approximately 800m	10 minutes	3 minutes

As informed by Google Maps as accessed on 3rd March 2025.

As highlighted above, Hardwick is currently served by a regular bus service. There are proposals for new public transport schemes, which when delivered would further improve the public transport and active travel accessibility of the Site.

There is an existing footway from Hardwick, near to the Millers Way bus stop, over the A428 to connect to Fen Drayton (Footpath number 66/17). As such the Site would be approximately 15 min walk and approximately 5 min cycle to the proposed Travel Hub, to the north of the A428. The site is well related to the new proposals and when brought forward, they would further enhance the accessibility of the site to both Cambourne and Cambridge.

Landscape / Open Space

The Site is located beyond the Green Belt and is not subject to any landscape designations. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal was prepared by Liz Lake Associates dated February 2020. This identifies that the Site is well contained benefitting from existing boundary hedgerows along the south, east and western boundaries of the Site.

The LVA states the Site “...lies in an area of relatively low value quality, comprising paddocks at the edge of the settlement, which is otherwise surrounded by vegetative features from the wider landscape, and according has a low sensitivity to change in landscape terms. As a consequence, the Site has a high capacity to accommodate residential development.”

The development of this site, on the western edge of Hardwick, responds well to the extent of the built development in the immediate surroundings. It is considered that that residential development can be accommodated at the site which will incorporate an appropriate landscape strategy to mitigate the impact as necessary.

This site is considered to a logical extension to Hardwick for residential allocation, particularly given the recent development known as Capstone Fields (LPA reference: S/3064/16/OL) which was granted permission for 155 dwellings immediately to the east of the site.

Regarding open space, Policy SC/7 of the South Cambridgeshire Adopted Local Plan (2018), outdoor sport should be provided at 1.6 hectares per 1,000 people, open space at 1.2 hectares per 1,000 people, and allotments and community orchards at 0.4 hectares per 1,000 people. Pigeon are willing to meet these open space requirements, and are happy to work with the Parish to develop open space on site that would respond to local needs and support the local community.

Ecology / Biodiversity

The site is located within proximity of the following designated sites:

- Hardwick Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (1.4km to the south west of the Site)
- Caldecote Meadows SSSI (1.8 km to the south west of the Site),
- Madingley Wood SSSI – Impact Risk Zone only (3.1km east of the Site),
- Overhall Grove SSSI – Impact Risk Zone only (4k northwest of the Site)
- Jason Farm Grassland County Wildlife Site (1.4km south west of the Site)
- Bucket Hill Plantation County Wildlife Site (1.9km south west of the Site)
- Madingley Slip Road RSV County Wildlife Site (1.9km east of the Site).

Whilst recognising that SSSI's are key conservation designations that need to be protected, development proposals would provide justification that development at the site would not have a detrimental impact on these SSSIs in respect of recreational pressure. As the site is not in close proximity to any SSSI or County Wildlife Site, there are no predicted direct impacts upon these designated sites.

Practical Ecology produced a 'Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' dated February 2020, which identifies that the Habitat of the Site is not similar to the SSSIs; and as such the development of the site has been assessed to be '*...highly unlikely to impact upon species associated with them...*'. Additionally, it is noted that the adjacent scheme at Capstone Fields (Howells Way, Hardwick), which is also situated within this SSSI Impact Risk Zone, was deemed to be acceptable.

Regarding Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) requires developers to deliver a mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10%, meaning that a development will result in more or better quality natural habitat than there was before the development. Pigeon is aware of this requirement and the development proposal would comply with these requirements.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The Government's Flood Risk for Planning Map, as accessed on 28th February 2025, illustrates that the site is located within Flood Zone 1, the lowest risk of flooding from rivers.

The Government's Surface Water Map, as accessed on 28th February 2025 identifies that there are limited pockets of the site which are at risk from surface water flooding. At this stage it is envisaged a design approach, directing development to the areas with the lowest risk of flooding, would be taken at the site.

An initial 'Flood Risk and Foul and Surface Water Drainage Statement' was produced by Rossi Long Consulting in February 2020. This identifies a Surface Water Strategy Plan for the site, incorporating an attenuation basin.

In respect of foul drainage, it is proposed the residential development would connect into the existing drainage network along St Neots Road without the need for a pumping station at the Site.

Heritage Assets

There are no heritage assets on the site or in the surrounding area.

Utilities

As demonstrated within the Rossi Long Consulting 'Utility Assessment Report' dated February 2020, there are existing utility assets located along St Neots Road, to the north of the site. Rossi Long Consulting conclude that the proposed scheme can connect to the required range of domestic utilities and therefore utility infrastructure does not present a constraint to delivery of the Site.

In addition, the development immediately to the east of the site is particularly noteworthy, having been granted permission in August 2018 (application reference: S/3064/16/OL), and subsequently built out.

Summary

Land West of Howells Way, Old St Neots Road, Hardwick is promoted for residential development of 150 dwellings, public open space, with associated infrastructure on behalf of Pigeon.

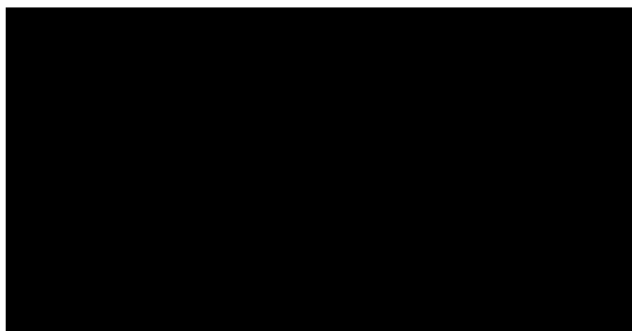
This site extends to circa. 6.7 hectares and is promoted for residential development of 150 dwellings, public open space, biodiversity enhancements, with associated infrastructure. This site represents a suitable opportunity to secure sustainable residential development comprising both market and affordable homes at the settlement of Hardwick. Taking the adopted policy requirement for 40% affordable housing, this proposal would deliver 60 affordable dwellings. The site is available now and can deliver housing from Year 1 of the new Local Plan.

Given that the adjacent scheme at Capstone Fields was deemed to be an acceptable and sustainable extension to the village of Hardwick, it is encouraged that a similar approach is taken to assessing this site at Land West of Howells Way, which proves to be a logical extension to existing settlement, utilising existing infrastructure. This would be further enhanced by proposed transport infrastructure.

For the reasons stated, it is requested that the South Cambridgeshire District Council allocates Land West Howells Way, Old St Neots Road, Hardwick within the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on the details provide to discuss any aspect of this submission.

Yours sincerely

**Enclosures:**

Context Plan;

Vision Document (Pigeon, February 2020);

Site Layout of adjacent site 'Capstone Fields', Howells Way, Hardwick

Flood risk and Foul and Surface Water Drainage Statement (Rossi Long, Feb 2020);

Landscape and Visual Appraisal (Liz Lake Associates, February 2020);

Transport Note (Rossi Long, February 2020);

Utilities Statement (Rossi Long, February 2020).