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RE: Greater Cambridge Call for Sites – March 2025
Land to the Rear of Old House Road, Balsham – HELAA Reference 40438

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This supporting statement has been prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of Endurance Estates to support the promotion of Land (herein after referred to as “the Site”) to the Greater Cambridge Call for Sites update process which is running until the 7th of March 2025.
- 1.2 The Site extends to 1.17ha and is promoted for a residential development of approximately 23 dwellings.
- 1.3 The site has been consistently promoted to previous rounds of consultation relating to the emerging Local Plan for Greater Cambridge and was assessed in the 2021 HELAA under Site reference 40438.
- 1.4 In line with the guidance published by Greater Cambridge Planning, this note seeks to address the evolving context which have materially improved the suitability of the site for residential development.
- 1.5 To support future representations and potential planning applications, technical investigations are ongoing, however these are not available at the time of this consultation

Greater Cambridge Housing Need

- 1.6 As a result of the changes to the NPPF in December 2024 and associated updates to the Standard Method for calculating Local Housing Need (LHN), it is common ground that Greater Cambridge Shared Planning cannot, as of February 2025, demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. Whilst it is accepted that the Call for Sites submission does not directly relate to the 5-year housing land supply issues, it should nevertheless feed into the emerging Local Plan in terms of strategy, and represents a material change in the circumstances for development in Greater Cambridge.
- 1.7 The new Local Housing Need (LHN) calculated in accordance with the updated Standard Method results in a combined increase of 634 dwellings per annum for Greater Cambridge when compared to the housing requirements as outlined in the Adopted 2018 Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Plans. This is detailed in the Table below.

	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)

- 1.8 Whilst it is true 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 undoubtedly been exacerbated by difficulties in delivering the large-scale strategic sites which Greater Cambridge are reliant upon to deliver the majority of the housing need across both districts. Since the adoption of the 2018 Plans, both Councils have become increasingly reliant upon significant housing delivery at Northstowe, Bourn Airfield and Waterbeach, alongside strategic sites on the Cambridge Fringe. Many of these sites have regrettably suffered from widely publicised difficulties in the delivery of the supporting infrastructure necessary to mitigate their impacts. As a result, many large sites now running significantly behind their expected delivery rates as outlined in the Housing Trajectory.
- 1.9 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 that are located in sustainable locations and can come forward quickly. Crucially, smaller and medium sized sites can often come forward without the need to provide significant additional infrastructure prior to delivery commencing.
- 1.10 The fastest, and most cost-effective method of boosting supply in the short and medium term, would be to focus on locations which benefit from existing and committed infrastructure, or do not require additional infrastructure to be provided. This includes sites such as Land at Old House Road, Balsham, which not require significant additional infrastructure and could come forward quickly.
- 1.11 It is the view of Endurance Estates that a balanced portfolio of small, medium and large-scale sites should be allocated to both deliver the quantum of housing required in the next plan period, whilst also ensuring choice and competition for land and robustness in the housing trajectory, enabling a rolling 5-year housing land supply to be maintained.
- 1.12 Capitalising on this existing and committed infrastructure investments is clearly the most effective method of boosting housing supply in the short-term, however this must be balanced with a need to support smaller villages which risk stagnation and decline without controlled growth.

2. SITE ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 The site has been previously submitted and assessed in the 2021 HELAA document under Site Reference 40438. The assessment concluded the following:

Criteria	Outcome of HELAA
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Suitable	Red
Available	Green
Achievable	Green

- 2.1 Since this assessment was made, there have been material changes in the circumstances which improve the suitability, availability and achievability of the site for residential development. These representations aim to outline these material changes in circumstance and demonstrate that the site represents a sustainable location for residential development.

Suitable

- 2.2 The 2011 HELAA gave the site a 'Red' rating for suitability. The biggest contributing factor to this rating was accessibility to services and facilities.
- 2.3 Balsham is classified as a Group Village by Policy S/10 of the South Cambridgeshire Adopted Local Plan 2018. As a result, development up to an indicative maximum of 8 dwellings is permitted with up to 15 on an exceptional basis.
- 2.4 Balsham has a population of 1,623 as of the 2021 Census, a roughly 1% decrease on the 1,641 residents at the 2001 Census. This is in stark contrast with South Cambridgeshire¹ which grew by just under 25% in the same time period. This represents a stagnation in the village and does not reflect the need to protect the vitality of the village and to secure the ongoing provision of shops and services. Without additional growth in villages such as Balsham, their range of shops and essential services is likely to continue to deteriorate.
- 2.5 Indeed, the Meadow Primary School in Balsham reports 212 pupils on roll versus a capacity of 300 – indicating the school is at just 70% capacity.
- 2.6 Other services in the village include:
- the Black Bull Inn,
 - The Bell Inn,
 - the Old Butchers Coffee Shop and
 - a Village Hall.
- 2.7 In addition, Balsham is approximately 6.4km from Linton or an approximate 17 minute cycle. Linton offers a GP surgery, Pharmacy, Co-Op convenience store, a Secondary School, Library and Early Years provision.
- 2.8 Further residential growth in Balsham and indeed surrounding villages is considered to be essential to securing the long-term viability of the school and other key services in Balsham.
- 2.9 Beyond the range of shops and services in the village, the HELAA also noted other areas of concern, brief responses to which are below:
- In terms of Flooding, the site is within Flood Zone 1, and whilst it is acknowledged that small areas of the site areas are subject to an elevated Surface Water risk, this can be fully mitigated through the

¹ 130,100 at the 2001 Census, 162,100 in 2021

design of the site.

- In relation to landscape impact, the HELAA notes that “the development will have a negligible impact to the landscape character due to existing mature boundary planting”. However, it is intended that this boundary planting will be retained and incorporated into the design of the scheme and that this will help to minimise views of the Site in the wider landscape, avoiding any significant impacts. In addition, Endurance Estates confirm that any application will be accompanied by a landscape and visual impact assessment to demonstrate any potential impact and ensure that adequate mitigations are included in the detailed design.
- In terms of Biodiversity, the site is not thought to contain any priority habitats, however the proposals for the site could be accompanied by significant landscape planting to enhance the existing features of the site and provide a Biodiversity Net Gain in line with current and emerging policies.
- The site will be accompanied by a Heritage / Archaeological assessment as part of any application, and follow up trenching can be secured by condition if necessary.
- The HELAA notes that “the proposed site access is acceptable in principle subject to detailed design” and that “potential access constraints... could be overcome through development”. Further technical work and access details will accompany any future application to provide further comfort on this matter.
- In terms of transport and roads, “any potential impact of the functioning of trunk roads and/or local roads could be reasonably mitigated”. Further traffic and transport assessments will accompany any future application.
- In terms of noise/vibration/light pollution, the HELAA notes “the site is capable of being developed to provide a healthy internal and external environment”. Further technical works will be undertaken to support any application.
- The HELAA also notes that conditions will be required relating to ground contamination as a result of the agricultural use.

- 2.10 Accordingly, none of the issues raised are significant enough to preclude development of the site and can be adequately address through further, detailed information at application stage or through design and mitigation. We would emphasise that growth in Balsham is essential for the continued vitality of the village itself and to safeguard the existing shops and services therein.

Available

- 2.11 As confirmed in previous representations, the site is in agricultural use, and Endurance Estates (a site promoter) control the site for the purposes of the proposed development. There are no known legal or ownership impediments to the development of the site.
- 2.12 There are no planning permissions relevant to the site which would preclude the development, or which would cast doubt upon the intentions of the landowner or promoter.
- 2.13 The site is available to commence development immediately upon of the grant of detailed permission, i.e., within years 0-5 of the plan period.
- 2.14 Endurance Estates may pursue a speculative application ahead of, or in tandem with the later stages of, the Local Plan process. As such, the site could begin delivery of dwellings within the first years of the plan period, helping to ensure the Councils are able to maintain a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- 2.15 The site is therefore **Available** for development.

Achievable

- 2.16 The details previously submitted still stand. The site is in agricultural use and accordingly has a low existing use value. At present, there are no known viability constraints which would preclude development in line with

both adopted and emerging planning policies.

2.17 The site is therefore **Achievable**.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.2 Land to the Rear of Old House Road, Balsham, is promoted for a residential development of approximately 23 dwellings alongside associated infrastructure.
- 3.3 The site remains **Available and Achievable** as outlined in previous representations and confirmed in the HELAA 2021 document. In addition, the responses to the HELAA items outlined in this letter, in addition to an evolving context demonstrates that the site can be considered **Suitable**.
- 3.4 It is anticipated that the site will be available for development in the first five years of the new Local Plan period, delivering against the pressing need for new market and affordable housing in Greater Cambridge and helping to maintain a 5-year housing land supply . There are no known constraints which could conceivably preclude the development of the site.
- 3.5 Endurance Estates therefore hope that the site will be given further consideration as part of the updated HELAA. The Site could help meet unmet Local Housing Needs over the Plan period and we hope it will be considered for a housing allocation in the new Local plan.

Yours sincerely

