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GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 19 PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION 2021- OAKINGTON ROAD, COTTENHAM

These representations have been prepared by Bidwells on behalf of Christ's College, Cambridge in response to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Preferred Options "First Proposals" 2021 consultation. These representations relate to land at Oakington Road, Cottenham (hereafter "the site") which is within Christ's College ownership.

The site was submitted to the earlier Issues and Options Consultation in 2020 and through the Council's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) was given the site reference 40296. Alongside the HELAA the site was part of the Green Belt Report as an evidence document to support the First Proposals consultation. The site was referenced as CH10 within the Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment.

The earlier submissions to the Local Plan, made by Christ's College, in support of the site remain up to date and relevant. This representation adds to the suite of submission material, but with a focus on the Green Belt.

Policy GP/GB: Protection and Enhancement of the Cambridge Green Belt

The direction of emerging Policy GP/GB is to protect land within the Green Belt in accordance with paragraph 138 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) which sets out the long-standing five purposes of the Green Belt:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The purpose of the Cambridge Green Belt has been considered as part of the Local Plan review, which finds it has three main purposes:

- preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre

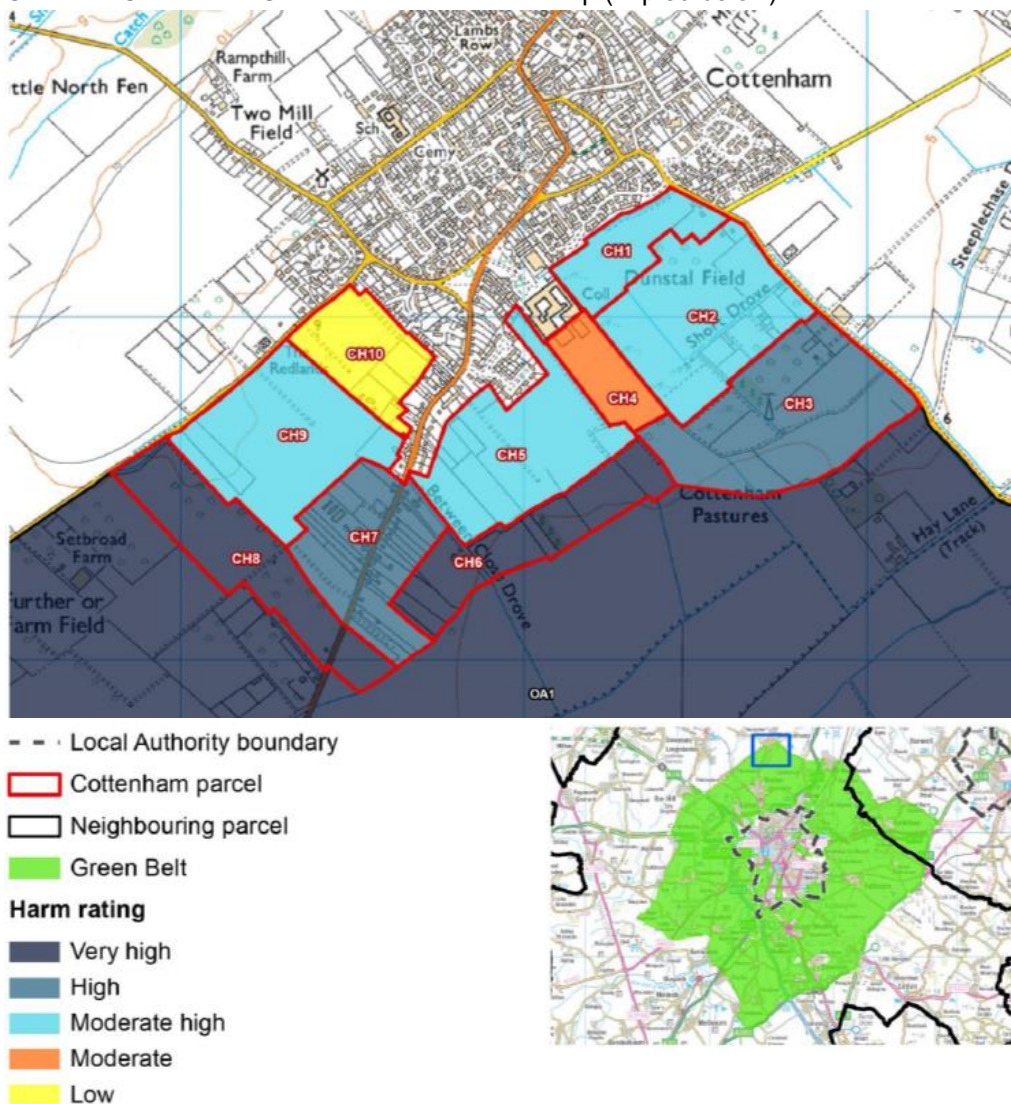
- maintain and enhance the quality of its setting
- prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.

As part of the preparation of any local plan, all land within its Green Belt should be thoroughly examined against the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in the NPPF and the three purposes set out in the Local Plan. The outcome of such an assessment should direct if any land should be released from the Green Belt designation if it does not perform well against the purposes.

The site has been assessed within the Council’s Green Belt Assessment 2021 under site reference CH10, which concludes that across all three Green Belt Purposes specifically written for Cambridge, the site provides limited or no contribution to the Green Belt. It concludes:

“The site makes a relatively low contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge’s setting, and a limited contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge form merging with one another. The additional impact on the adjacent Green belt of the release of the parcel would be minor. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Cottenham, would be low.”

The site is the only parcel of land at Cottenham to receive the lowest rating of ‘low’; as shown in the Council’s Cottenham Green Belt Assessment Map (copied below).



The map helpfully shows that the site (shown in yellow) is more related to the urban form of the village, than to the Green Belt. In addition, there have been planning consents, which are largely constructed, for major new residential development running further south west along along the north side of Oakington Road. This is recently constructed development and the OS base has not yet been updated in the Council's work. These developments serve to strengthen the position that the site has a greater connection to the village, than to the Green Belt.

In addition to the assessment provided by the Green Belt Assessment, these further representations are submitted in support of the release of the site from the Green Belt, pursuant to the Council's evidence.

- Cambridge Purpose 1- to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.

Cottenham is located 6 miles north of Cambridge City Centre and will have no impact on the historic centre and surrounding areas.

- Cambridge Purpose 2- to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting

This parcel of land follows the urban form of Cottenham and does not encroach the built line any further into the countryside; this is now more so the case following the construction of new homes further west to the north side of Oakington Road. While the site is currently arable land, it does not provide any function in relation to the rural setting of Cottenham and views into and out of the site are limited by the extensive hedgerows providing screening. Therefore, the site has a very limited contribution to Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3- To prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.

The site is surrounded to the North, East and West by the existing settlement of Cottenham. To the south the site is bordered by open countryside and the nearest settlement is Histon, 3 miles to the south. Therefore, the site provides little or no contribution to Purpose 3 when considering the existing separation from the nearest community.

Overall, the Local Plan evidence clearly demonstrates that the site makes at best a relatively limited contribution to the Cambridge Green Belt and in terms of purposes one and three it makes no contribution at all. For purpose two, the site's contribution is very low given the urban form of the village already extends further south west, into the wider Green Belt, than the site. As such, the release of the site from the Green Belt would have negligible harm. The Council's own evidence, alongside that prepared by Christ's College, clearly points in favour of releasing the site from the Green Belt.

It is important that any retained Green Belt fulfils its defined purposes in order to have a robust, long-term and defensible Green Belt. The Green Belt Assessment undertaken as part of the Councils' evidence base clearly demonstrates that the site makes little to no contribution to the national or local purposes of the Green Belt. In this case the Local Plan process must take the opportunity to review and amend the Green Belt boundary to remove the site from the Green Belt in the preparation of the Proposals Maps. A more appropriate designation for the site would be that of open countryside outside of the village's Development Framework. As such, it would act to strengthen a more logical and defensible Green Belt boundary to Cottenham to respond to the new development along Oakington Road, which was constructed after the previous Green Belt Assessment to support the 2018 Local Plan.

Should you require any further information regarding the site or these representations please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards



Guy Kaddish
Planning Partner

Enclosures:

Appendix A: Green Belt Assessment – Parcel CH10