

**LAND TO THE WEST OF  
CAMBRIDGE ROAD,  
MELBOURN  
GREATER CAMBRIDGE  
LOCAL PLAN – ‘FIRST  
PROPOSALS’  
PREFERRED OPTIONS  
CONSULTATION 2021**

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# Quality Assurance

**Site name:** Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn  
**Client name:** Countryside Properties Plc  
**Type of report:** Greater Cambridge Local Plan – Preferred Options Consultation 2021

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**Signed**



**Date** December 2021

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**Signed**



**Date** December 2021



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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 These representations have been prepared by Bidwells on behalf of Countryside Properties (UK) Limited (hereafter 'Countryside') in response to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan First Proposals Preferred Options 2021 consultation.
- 1.2 Countryside is a leading national housebuilder and has established a strong reputation for delivering high-quality mixed-tenure housing developments and award winning places to live and are committed to delivering development to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn (hereafter "the site") that meets the policy aims and objectives of the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.3 These representations follow those previously submitted in respect of this site to the 2019 Call for Sites and 2020 Issues & Options consultations. Submissions were made for two development options for the site, a Phase 1 option (to deliver up to 160 homes) and a Phase 1 and 2 option (to deliver up to 300 homes across both phases).
- 1.4 The Phase 1 land has been identified as a new allocation in emerging the Greater Cambridge Local Plan in the rest of the rural area (ref: S/RRA/CR) for a mixed use development for approximately 120 homes and 2.5 hectares of employment uses (HELAA Reference: 40490).
- 1.5 The site represents a sustainable location for development which will help to meet the identified housing and employment needs of Greater Cambridge in the next Local Plan period. The land is available, achievable and suitable and the development proposals will bring a number of benefits to support the delivery of a sound and sustainable spatial strategy as part of the Local Plan, including:
- Delivery of affordable housing;
  - The early delivery of housing within the early years of the plan period on a suitable and logical site for growth at a Minor Rural Centre.
  - Locating residential development adjacent to one of the village's largest employment sites, Melbourn Science Park and within walking and cycling distance of the village's services and facilities;
  - The opportunity to expand or support Melbourn Science Park, providing further employment opportunities for new and existing residents in a sustainable location;
  - The delivery of an on-site walking route which is easily accessible to current and future residents and employees of the village. This will create a new recreation asset for the village and deliver ecological benefits;
  - The delivery of a pedestrian route from the West of the site along 'the Drift' which links to Moat Lane. This will provide new residents with enhanced pedestrian connectivity to the adjacent Science Park and the Melbourn High Street, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport;
  - A scheme that is evidenced as being deliverable through the planning application and appeal process, with an enhanced level of certainty to its delivery; and
  - Supporting Melbourn's economy, including local shops and services.
- 1.6 These representations support the proposed allocation of the site and give further certainty on the deliverability of a mixed-use proposal. They also provide further clarification on technical points addressed in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) proforma

and provide comments on a selection of proposed strategic and development management policies.

1.7 These representations are accompanied by the following documents:

- Illustrative Framework Plan;
- Transport Advice Letter;
- Ecology Walkover Report;
- Indicative Biodiversity Net Gain Statement.

1.8 In addition to the proposed allocation (ref: S/RRA/CR) and the site's HELAA proforma, these representations respond to the following proposed policies in the Preferred Options consultation document:

- S/DS: Development Strategy;
- CC/NZ: Net Zero Carbon New Buildings;
- CC/WE: Water Efficiency in New Developments;
- CC/DC: Designing for a Changing Climate;
- BG/BG: Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- WS/HD: Creating New Healthy Developments;
- GP/PP: People and Place Responsive Design;
- H/AH: Affordable Housing; and
- H/BR: Build to Rent Homes.

## 2.0 Proposed Site Allocation

### Policy S/RRA: Site Allocations in the Rest of the Rural Area

- 2.1 Countryside support Policy S/RRA that allocates sites for homes and employment in the rural area. The Local Plan should seek to allocate a component of its housing needs towards growth at existing villages. Sustainable development in rural areas makes an important contribution to ensuring the vitality of villages and supporting existing rural services and facilities. This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (2021, NPPF), which at paragraph 79 states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.
- 2.2 The allocation of Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn makes an important contribution to this component of the spatial strategy through providing an opportunity to deliver affordable and market housing, alongside employment opportunities in a sustainable location. Melbourn is classified as a Minor Rural Centre and is one of the most sustainable villages in Greater Cambridge and lies outside of the Green Belt around the City. The site presents a prime opportunity to grow the village, sustaining existing and delivering new facilities and infrastructure, supporting local shops and businesses and meeting affordable and market housing needs.

### S/RRA/CR Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn

- 2.3 Countryside support the allocation of Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn. The site presents an opportunity to deliver homes in a Minor Rural Centre and allows for development to expand or support the adjacent Melbourn Science Park.
- 2.4 The application and appeal process for residential development on the site have established a clear and strong position that the site is deliverable (achievable, available, suitable) and a sustainable location for development. There are no technical reasons for the site not to come forward for development and Countryside is committed to working with the Local Planning Authority to develop a proposal that best supports the objectives of the Local Plan and its policies.
- 2.5 The development of the site could deliver numerous tangible social, economic and environmental benefits to Melbourn and the local area that meet the aims for the Plan, including:
- Delivery of affordable housing, including the potential for an element of build to rent. This would allow people to upscale and downsize subject to their needs over time whilst also meeting affordable housing need within the District;
  - Locating residential development adjacent to one of the village's largest employment sites, Melbourn Science Park. Melbourn Science Park is delivering a recently granted permission for a substantial extension to the Park and provides a unique employment source which is of great importance to Melbourn and the surrounding area. Furthermore, the site presents an opportunity to expand or support the Science Park, providing additional local employment opportunities. The development would provide people with the opportunity of living and working in the same village and encourage sustainable modes of transport;

- Countryside has recently committed to becoming a net zero company by 2030 and have released a report 'Pathfinder: Marking out the route to Net Zero'<sup>1</sup> which sets out the principles that Countryside will follow to respond to the global call to arms for climate action. Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn will benefit from the action plan set out within the Pathfinder report.
- The delivery of a walking route which is easily accessible to current and future residents and employees of the village. It will create a new recreation asset for the village and provide a walking opportunity for those that may have otherwise considered the need to travel to SSSIs for that activity, therefore protecting nearby SSSI's from increased recreational pressure. Cambridge Road is also of the route of the proposed Melbourn Greenway, which will be an active travel route to make it easier for walkers, cyclists and horse riders to travel from Melbourn into Cambridge;
- The delivery of a pedestrian route from the West of the site along 'the Drift' which links to Moat Lane. This will provide new residents with enhanced pedestrian connectivity to the adjacent Science Park and the Melbourn High Street, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport; and
- Supporting Melbourn's economy, including local shops and services. The Economic Benefits Statement submitted with the outline application for the previous residential scheme, found that there would also be a significant and positive impact upon Melbourn's economy with residents of the new development supporting existing local shops and services within the village. This benefit is recognised in the Delegation Report at page 30. As a result of the proposed development, approximately £248,000 per annum is expected to be spent at local shops and services, potentially supporting an additional three jobs. This assessment was based on a residential only scheme of up to 160 dwellings, nevertheless a mixed-use scheme which delivered approximately 120 homes and 2.5ha of employment land would still provide comparable and substantial economic benefit locally.

2.6 The proposed site allocation identifies that development of the site should accommodate the following constraints:

- Note that deliverability for employment has yet to be confirmed
- Ensure integration of any employment uses within the existing science park

2.7 The site presents a suitable location to support and expand the adjacent Melbourn Science Park, building on the success of an established science park and providing an opportunity to further enhance this science and tech/R&D cluster. The site can deliver jobs in a sustainable location, by reference to its access to public transport and key services and facilities whilst being in close proximity to existing homes and new homes proposed as part of the allocation. It is one of only a few village locations that has access to a train station. It is also on the A10 corridor and the Melbourn greenway will build on the existing pedestrian and cycle network enhancing connections to the planned Foxton Travel Hub. Initial technical assessments demonstrate that the provision of employment floorspace as part of a mixed-use proposal is deliverable.

2.8 The Illustrative Framework Plan demonstrates one way that the site is capable of accommodating a deliverable mixed-use scheme comprising up to 120 dwellings and up 2.5ha of employment.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.countrysideproperties.com/sites/default/files/2021-11/Pathfinder%20-%20Marking%20out%20the%20route%20to%20net%20zero.pdf>

- 2.9 The Masterplan includes two ‘character’ areas, split by the existing central hedge that runs through the site. These accommodate the residential area to the north and the proposed commercial uses, that could support the expansion of the science park, to the south. The residential and commercial uses are connected by several pedestrian/cycle links to provide connectivity and integration between the two. The masterplan includes for landscaping that provides separation between the uses and culminates in a large central green space which includes for a LEAP. A natural/semi-natural green space with SuDS features is within the north-west of the site and green buffers run along the Cambridge Road frontage and the western boundary.
- 2.10 The Masterplan includes for two main access routes off Cambridge Road. There will be a clear legible road network including shared surfaces, and dwellings of a range of sizes and typologies. A pedestrian link is proposed in the west of the site along ‘the Drift’ which links to Moat Lane, providing enhanced connectivity and integration for new residents to access the existing and expanded Science Park and the High Street.
- 2.11 Delivery of affordable housing is a key element of the development proposals. It is proposed that build to rent apartments and houses could be delivered as part of this offering. These dwellings would be retained to provide long term rental opportunities. This would include holding a range of housing to offer a variety of rental properties, allowing people to up scale and downsize subject to their needs over time. This would provide a greater opportunity for people to remain in the village.
- 2.12 The proposed additional mitigation in relation to ecology comprises a walking route around the site and within the field adjacent to the north west of the site. The walking route is approximately 2km in length and is easily accessible to future residents of the proposed development. The route includes linked loops which take pedestrians around areas of public open space within the site and then around the perimeter of the adjacent field, allowing opportunities for trained dogs to walk off the lead. Dog waste bins and signage will be provided where appropriate.
- 2.13 The walking route would not be for the sole use of residents of the proposed development but will be open to the public; it therefore generates the benefit that it will create a new recreation asset for the village and provide a walking opportunity for those that may have otherwise considered the need to travel to SSSIs for that activity. The delivery of this route would therefore address the effects of increased recreational pressure on the nearby SSSI’s and has been the subject of on-going consultation with Natural England.
- 2.14 Whilst fully supportive of the mixed use allocation in light of the site’s proximity to the neighbouring and successful science park, if through further assessment and discussions the Local Planning Authority determine that the final allocation for the site should be a residential-only scheme, Countryside would also support this approach and consider that such a proposal is a deliverable prospect and would still realise the numerous tangible benefits that have been identified. A residential-only scheme would deliver up to 160 residential units, including 40% affordable housing, landscaping, vehicular and pedestrian access and formal and informal open space.
- 2.15 The boundary for the proposed allocation should reflect that shown in the Site Location Plan included at Appendix 1. The Site Location Plan includes for an area of land known as ‘the Drift’ which connects the site to Moat Lane in the west. This will deliver a pedestrian route, providing enhanced connectivity to the Science Park and Melbourn High Street. The allocation currently refers to a site area of 6.5ha and this should be updated to 6.84ha to reflect the inclusion of the Drift.



- 2.16 The Phase 2 land, which lies to the north-west of the proposed allocation site, was submitted for consideration as part of the Issues and Option consultation and remains available for development as a suitable and deliverable site should there be a need to deliver additional housing. The proposals for the Phase 2 development could deliver up to a further 140 dwellings, including 40% affordable housing, landscaping, vehicular and pedestrian access and formal and informal open space. The land is located immediately adjacent to the recent expansion of the Melbourn Science Park and could provide linkages between the two. The Phase 2 land would be accessed through the Phase 1 site and will ensure that there is pedestrian connectivity to the proposed link through the Drift.

## 3.0 HELAA Proforma

- 3.1 An assessment of the site has been undertaken as part of the HELAA (Site reference: 40490). Overall, the HELAA assessment of the site is favourable, rating the site green on several technical matters including landscape and townscape, open space/green infrastructure, historic environment, air quality and strategic highways. A selection of items within the assessment are rated as amber and responses to those matters are set out below. These responses and the relevant supporting technical information demonstrate that these matters can be rated as green, further evidencing the site's suitability and deliverability for a mixed-use scheme.

### Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 3.2 **HELAA Comment:** All new housing developments will require assessment of increased visitor pressure on nearby SSSI, and any residential development above 100 dwellings will require consultation with Natural England. There is a ditch which lies adjacent to the northwest boundary that has a known population of water vole, this will require survey and probable mitigation. There are no apparent priority habitats within the site; however, there are standing trees, grasslands, hedges, and wooded boundaries on site that are likely to have ecological value. Applications may find provision of a 10% net gain in biodiversity difficult within their red line boundaries and may need to find offsite compensation to comply with up-coming National legislation and developing local policies. A reduction in housing density would be required to provide this within the boundary.
- 3.3 Development of the site may have a detrimental impact on a designated site, or those with a regional or local protection but the impact could be reasonably mitigated or compensated.
- 3.4 **Countryside Response:** As part of the proposals, a walking route which is easily accessible to current and future residents and employees of the village will be delivered on-site and in the adjoining field to the north west, which is in the control of Countryside. The walking route will create a new recreation asset for the village and provide a walking opportunity for those that may have otherwise considered the need to travel to SSSIs for that activity, therefore protecting nearby SSSI's from increased recreational pressure. The walking route will also incorporate habitat creation, in the form of field margins, meadow grassland and woodland copses which will provide important habitats for a range of wildlife and plant species. The proposal has been the subject of consultation with Natural England during the application and appeal process and Natural England and the Planning Inspectorate found the mitigation to be acceptable.
- 3.5 An indicative biodiversity net gain assessment has been undertaken taking into account the proposed development highlighted within the 'Framework Plan' which has concluded that the development can deliver an overall gain of 10.02% for habitat units, a 11.15% gain for hedgerows/linear features and a gain of 59.10% for 'river' units. The development is expected to deliver more of a gain when 'material' enhancements are included at a more detailed design stage, such as bird and bat boxes.
- 3.6 The proposals therefore will not result in increased pressure on nearby SSSIs and can readily deliver 10% biodiversity net gain on-site. The site is acceptable in terms of biodiversity and geodiversity and should be rated as green.

## Archaeology

- 3.7 **HELAA Comment:** Archaeological evaluation has identified significant archaeology of Roman date.
- 3.8 **Countryside Response:** Archaeological evaluations of the site, comprising 20 trenches based on features shown on a geophysical survey, were carried in September and October 2017. In the officer's delegation report on the outline application, at pages 24 and 25, it states that archaeological evaluation of the has been undertaken and that subject to a condition preserving any remains found during the construction phase of development, the scheme is considered acceptable.
- 3.9 The site is therefore acceptable in archaeology terms and should achieve a green rating in the HELAA proforma.

## Site Access

- 3.10 **HELAA Comment:** The proposed site is acceptable in principle subject to detailed design. There are potential access constraints, but these could be overcome through development.
- 3.11 **Countryside Response:** The accompany Transport Advice Letter includes a Preliminary Access Design drawing which provides details of the proposed accesses onto Cambridge Road. These accesses are designed to meet the County Council requirements and an initial investigation indicates that the appropriate visibility splays can be achieved based on the current speed limits, however it would be proposed to extend the 30mph speed limit further north to reduce vehicle speeds along the site's frontage. Further details are provided in the letter that demonstrate that the required accesses are deliverable and that any constraints can be overcome. Site access should therefore achieve a green rating in the HELAA proforma.

## Transport and Roads

- 3.12 **HELAA Comment:** The development will have to consider cumulative impacts at local junctions. Improvements would be required to the signalised junction in Melbourn and possible improvements required at junctions on the A10 and A505. Contributions towards the Melbourn to Cambridge Greenway would be required to support sustainable travel to Cambridge.
- 3.13 Any potential impact on the functioning of trunk roads and/or local roads could be reasonably mitigated.
- 3.14 **Countryside Response:** A comprehensive study would be undertaken in the form of a Transport Assessment to accompany any future planning application. An up-to-date assessment of local junction capacity in Melbourn has not been undertaken, however, it is known from historic planning applications that during peak periods the Station Road / High Street / Mortlock Street junction can be busy. However, the approved development located off New Road, to the south of the village, was required to provide funding to improve capacity levels at this junction.
- 3.15 As set out in the Transport Advice Letter, a review of historic planning applications and comparison of local traffic volumes has shown that traffic has likely reduced significantly through the village and the proposed development is not likely to have a significant or severe impact.

Section 106 contributions to the Melbourn Greenway and Public rights of Way improvements are considered appropriate.

3.16 The proposed development will not generate sufficient traffic volumes to affect a specific Trunk Road of the National Highways network.

3.17 At this stage of the process there is no evidence to suggest that the site would lead an unacceptable or severe impact on transport and roads and should achieve a green rating in the HELAA proforma.

## Contamination and Ground Stability

3.18 **HELAA Comment:** Potential for historic contamination, conditions required.

3.19 **Countryside Response:** A Desk Study and Ground Investigation Report for the site accompanied the outline application and concluded that the risk level of contamination across the site is low. This is confirmed through the Environmental Health Officer's comment to the application, which states the site comprises an agricultural field, posing a low risk of contamination being present. Whilst the proposed end use (residential) is particularly sensitive, no elevated concentrations of contaminants were identified and though the number of samples is low for a site of this size, the site is relatively low risk. The officer recommended an informative be attached to the consent which required that if contamination were found during construction development should pause until a remediation strategy is agreed and implemented.

3.20 The site is therefore acceptable in contamination and ground stability terms and should achieve a green rating in the HELAA proforma.

## 4.0 How Much Development, and Where?

### Policy S/DS: Development Strategy

- 4.1 Countryside support the principle of the proposed development strategy for Greater Cambridge and the approach to directing development to locations where active and new public transport is the natural choice, where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development, and where jobs, services and facilities can be located near to where people live. This approach is consistent with the NPPF, which at paragraph 11.a) states that all plans should promote a sustainable form of development.
- 4.2 Countryside support the inclusion of allocations for housing and employment in the rest of the rural area as part of the proposed development strategy. The Local Plan should seek to allocate a component of its housing needs towards growth at existing villages. Sustainable development in rural areas makes an important contribution to ensuring the vitality of villages and supporting existing rural services and facilities.
- 4.3 This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which at paragraph 79 states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.
- 4.4 Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn aligns with approach taken to the development strategy and will support the objectives of the Local Plan through:
- Delivery of affordable housing, including the potential for an element of build to rent. This would allow people to up scale and downsize subject to their needs over time whilst also meeting affordable housing need within the District;
  - Locating residential development adjacent to one of the village's largest employment sites, Melbourn Science Park. Melbourn Science Park is now delivering a recently granted permission for a substantial extension and provides a unique employment source which is of great importance to Melbourn and the surrounding area. Furthermore, the site presents an opportunity to expand or support the Science Park, providing additional local employment opportunities. The development would provide people with the opportunity of living and working in the same village and encouraging sustainable modes of transport;
  - Countryside has recently committed to becoming a net zero company by 2030 and have released a report 'Pathfinder: Marking out the route to Net Zero'<sup>2</sup> which sets out the principles that Countryside will follow to respond to the global call to arms for climate action. Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn will benefit from the action plan set out within Pathfinder report .
  - The delivery of a walking route which is easily accessible to current and future residents and employees of the village. It will create a new recreation asset for the village and provide a walking opportunity for those that may have otherwise considered the need to travel to SSSIs for that activity, therefore protecting nearby SSSI's from increased recreational pressure;

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.countrysideproperties.com/sites/default/files/2021-11/Pathfinder%20-%20Marking%20out%20the%20route%20to%20net%20zero.pdf>

- The delivery of a pedestrian route from the West of the site along 'the Drift' which links to Moat Lane. This will provide new residents with enhanced pedestrian connectivity to the adjacent Science Park and the Melbourn High Street, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- Locating development in a sustainable location, whereby future residents would not be reliant on the private car for their daily needs. Melbourn is one of the largest villages in the District and has a wide range of services and facilities, including Meldreth station, which are within walking and cycling distance of the site; and
- Supporting Melbourn's economy, including local shops and services. The Economic Benefits Statement submitted with the outline application, found that there would also be a significant and positive impact upon Melbourn's economy with residents of the new development supporting existing local shops and services within the village. This benefit is recognised in the Delegation Report at page 30. As a result of the proposed development, approximately £248,000 per annum is expected to be spent at local shops and services, potentially supporting an additional three jobs. This assessment was based on a residential only scheme of up to 160 dwellings, nevertheless a mixed-use scheme which delivered approximately 120 homes would still provide a comparable and substantial economic benefit locally.

4.5 The site will therefore support active and public transport being the natural choice of travel, deliver on-site green infrastructure and provide homes close to jobs, services and facilities.

## 5.0 Climate Change

### Policy CC/NZ: Net Zero Carbon New Buildings

- 5.1 Countryside support the inclusion of a policy to control energy usage, utilise renewable energy sources and account for whole-life carbon emissions in new developments. Such a policy will be an important tool in ensuring energy efficient developments are delivered and that objectives regarding the mitigation of climate change impacts can be realised.
- 5.2 Whilst the policy should set clear and evidenced based requirements it should also provide flexibility to include for site-specific circumstances and changing standards, legislation and technology. This can ensure that the most suitable approach can be taken for each site at the point in time that it comes forward, supporting delivery but also climate change objectives. The policy should also recognise the important contribution that a ‘fabric first’ approach to the design of new buildings can make to achieving energy efficiency.
- 5.3 Countryside has recently committed to becoming a net zero company by 2030 and have released a report ‘Pathfinder: Marking out the route to Net Zero’<sup>3</sup> which sets out the principles that Countryside will follow to respond to the global call to arms for climate action. Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn will benefit from Countryside’s action plan set out in the Pathfinder report to deliver its commitments. To achieve their targets Countryside are examining their construction and manufacturing operations and also the design of their homes and development. Measures include improving fabric efficiency, installing renewable energy and recovery systems, switching from diesel to hydrotreated vegetable oil for on-site plant machinery, using suppliers with similar climate change targets, increasing tree planting and reducing embodied carbon by using timber frame homes. Such measures can be incorporated into the proposals at the site to satisfy the direction of this policy.

### Policy CC/WE: Water Efficiency in New Developments

- 5.4 Countryside recognise the importance of protecting water resources in Greater Cambridge and support the proposed policy to set standards for water efficiency. Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn can incorporate a range of measures to ensure the delivery of a water efficient development, with homes and buildings using water efficient fixtures and fittings. Water re-use measures will be explored for the site and could include for the implementation of surface water and rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling.

### Policy CC/DC: Designing for a Changing Climate

- 5.5 Countryside support the proposed policy and agree that developments should take a holistic approach to their design to account for climate change and weather events. This approach is consistent with the NPPF which requires Local Plans to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.countrysideproperties.com/sites/default/files/2021-11/Pathfinder%20-%20Marking%20out%20the%20route%20to%20net%20zero.pdf>

- 5.6 Countryside has recently committed to becoming a net zero company by 2030 and have released a report 'Pathfinder: Marking out the route to Net Zero'<sup>4</sup> which sets out the principles that Countryside will follow to respond to the global call to arms for climate action. Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn will benefit from the action plan set out in the Pathfinder report to deliver its commitments. A key element of the approach is to follow a fabric first approach to the design of dwellings to achieve high levels of efficiency through improving window glazing, air tightness, roof insulation, wall thickness and improved floor insulation and underfloor heating.
- 5.7 In addition to adopting a fabric first approach to reduce heating demand, Countryside will also apply the principles of their energy hierarchy to help reduce both regulated and unregulated energy usage. This includes supplying only A-rated energy efficient appliances, using smart meters and smart thermostats to reduce energy consumption by learning living and heating patterns, developing a suite of e-learning packages and support material to help households reduce consumption and live more efficiently.
- 5.8 The site also presents an opportunity to provide significant landscaping as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan. This can contribute to urban greening and increasing tree canopy across the site, which is currently an arable field, reducing climate risks through landscape design. In relation to sustainable drainage, it was confirmed through the previous outline application that a suitable drainage system can be delivered as part of the proposals that incorporates the use of SuDS doesn't increase the risk of flooding on or off site and accounts for climate change allowances.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.countrysideproperties.com/sites/default/files/2021-11/Pathfinder%20-%20Marking%20out%20the%20route%20to%20net%20zero.pdf>



## 6.0 Biodiversity and Green Spaces

### Policy BG/BG: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 6.1 Countryside support the inclusion of a policy to secure measurable biodiversity net gains as part of new developments. The policy should set a minimum net gain percentage target based on evidence, legislation and national guidance. Whilst a preference can be set for net gains to be delivered on-site, there should also be sufficient flexibility in the policy to allow for off-site solutions to delivered as well, to not unduly restrict development and to release the benefits that can be delivered through strategic and coordinated initiatives.
- 6.2 Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn presents an opportunity to deliver biodiversity net gains. The site is currently arable fields of low ecological value and the development proposals, through a landscape-led approach, will seek to deliver open space that is functional whilst also creating resilient habitats. The proposed scheme will seek to preserve and enhance existing boundary vegetation where practical to do so through the development of the site. In addition, the walking route to be delivered will incorporate habitat creation, in the form of field margins, meadow grassland and woodland copses which will provide important habitat for a range of wildlife and plant species.
- 6.3 An indicative biodiversity net gain assessment has been undertaken taking into account the proposed development highlighted within the 'Framework Plan' which has concluded that the development can deliver an overall gain of 10.02% for habitat units, a 11.15% gain for hedgerows/linear features and a gain of 59.10% for 'river' units. The development is expected to deliver more of a gain when 'material' enhancements are included at a more detailed design stage, such as bird and bat boxes.
- 6.4 The proposed walking route will also create a new recreation asset for the village and provide a walking opportunity for those that may have otherwise considered the need to travel to SSSIs for that activity, therefore protecting nearby SSSI's from increased recreational pressure.

## 7.0 Wellbeing and Social Inclusion

### Policy WS/HD: Creating New Healthy Developments

- 7.1 Countryside support the inclusion of a policy which seeks to ensure that health considerations and principles are applied to new developments. Health and wellbeing is a key issue and high quality new development can contribute positively to the physical and mental health of individuals through delivering high quality housing, well designed and laid out streets and spaces and access to transport, shops, community services and facilities and green and open space.
- 7.2 Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn presents an opportunity to deliver a healthy new development. The site is located adjacent to one of the largest employment sites in the village, the Melbourn Science Park, and is within walking and cycling distance of a range of services, facilities and public transport modes. Future residents and employees will benefit from easy access to employment, on-site green space, shops and education and community facilities, maximising opportunities for positive influences on their overall health and lifestyle.
- 7.3 The proposals also seek to deliver affordable housing which would be tenure blind, providing a significant amount of affordable housing in a sustainable location.
- 7.4 In addition, as part of their sustainable business approach, Countryside have developed a 'Building Communities'<sup>5</sup> strategy, which Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn will benefit from. This approach seeks to create places where people love to live, with sustainable communities built to last. It looks beyond building houses to also thinking critically about social and digital infrastructure and transport and green spaces to meet local needs, engaging and empowering communities.
- 7.5 The strategy incorporates four principles: Engagement; Empowerment, Partnership and Stewardship, which are followed from masterplanning through to building and aftercare. The principles enable Countryside to:
- Build a stronger sense of community by delivering solutions tailored to the local area
  - Increase local economic growth and maximise social value
  - Improve community prosperity and resilience
  - Foster better public and community relations which are based on trust
  - Facilitate the management and nurturing of the communities over the long term
- 7.6 The approach helps in delivering inclusive, vibrant and sustainable communities which positively impact on the health and wellbeing of residents.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.countrysideproperties.com/sustainable-business/building-communities>

## 8.0 Great Places

### Policy GP/PP: People and Place Responsive Design

- 8.1 Countryside support the proposed direction of Policy GP/PP in seeking to set a strategic vision for achieving high quality design in Greater Cambridge across both urban and rural areas. Countryside support the inclusion of design criteria across the themes of community, connectivity, climate and character, reflecting the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth, which Countryside have a track record of delivering high quality proposals in accordance with. The proposed policy also accords with the NPPF which states that the planning process should achieve high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places.
- 8.2 Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn addresses these design themes as follows:
- **Community** – Through delivering a landscape led development which responds to its context by retaining and reinforcing landscape buffers and delivering high quality open and green spaces. The proposed looped walking route will create a new recreation and landscape asset for the village. The proposals will also provide a range of house types within close proximity to services and facilities, and through applying their Building Communities strategy, Countryside will engage with and empower the community to ensure the development meets local needs;
  - **Connectivity** – The site is in a sustainable location, whereby future residents would not be reliant on the private car for their daily needs. Melbourn is one of the largest villages in the District and has a wide range of services and facilities, including Meldreth station, which are within walking and cycling distance of the site. In addition, the proposals include for the delivery of a pedestrian route from the West of the site along ‘the Drift’ which links to Moat Lane. This will provide new residents with enhanced pedestrian connectivity to the adjacent Science Park and the Melbourn High Street, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport;
  - **Climate** - Countryside has recently committed to becoming a net zero company by 2030 and have released a report ‘Pathfinder: Marking out the route to Net Zero’<sup>6</sup> which sets out the principles that Countryside will follow to respond to the global call to arms for climate action. Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn will benefit from Countryside’s action plan to deliver on its commitments. To achieve their targets Countryside are examining their construction and manufacturing operations and also the design of their homes and development. Measures include improving fabric efficiency, installing renewable energy and recovery systems, switching from diesel to hydrotreated vegetable oil for on-site plant machinery, using suppliers with similar climate change targets, increasing tree planting and reducing embodied carbon by using timber frame homes.
  - **Character** - a landscape-led approach is central to the design and layout of the scheme, as shown in the Illustrative Masterplan which shows how the site could come forward. Furthermore, the promoter, Countryside Properties, are a leading national housebuilder who have won numerous design awards and are committed to delivering a high quality development.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.countrysideproperties.com/sites/default/files/2021-11/Pathfinder%20-%20Marking%20out%20the%20route%20to%20net%20zero.pdf>

## 9.0 Homes

### Policy H/AH: Affordable Housing

- 9.1 Countryside supports policy H/AH in seeking to secure affordable housing provision as part of residential developments and that the 40% requirement will contribute to meeting the affordable housing needs of Cambridge. It is agreed that affordable housing should be distributed throughout new developments, however the policy should also acknowledge that appropriately sized clustering can also assist with the delivery and on-going management of affordable homes.
- 9.2 There is a substantial need for affordable housing across Greater Cambridge due to past under delivery and worsening affordability ratios and new development is needed to help address this unmet need. In relation to Melbourn, there are a significant number of households on the SCDC Housing Register. It is likely that some of this demand will be met through development which has already been granted permission, however there will be existing households that remain on the register, alongside new households that aren't yet identified. Greenfield development where there is a less infrastructure burdens mean that policy aspirations for affordable housing provisions are normally more easily met.
- 9.3 Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn presents an excellent opportunity to deliver a substantial number of affordable homes in a highly sustainable location. Affordable housing would comprise a range of sizes, types and tenures, in a genuinely tenure blind manners, increasing the supply of high quality affordable housing to meet local needs. The proposals could also deliver an element of build to rent, helping to increase accessibility to housing for different sections of the community.

### Policy H/BR: Build to Rent Homes

- 9.4 Countryside support the inclusion of a Build to Rent (BTR) policy within the emerging Local Plan and consider that it has an important role to play in meeting the housing needs of Greater Cambridge. Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn presents an opportunity to deliver BTR homes as part of the overall market and affordable housing provision.
- 9.5 Proposals should seek to avoid large clusters of BTR homes, however the policy should acknowledge and make an allowance for appropriately sized clusters, as these assist with the viability, delivery and on-going management of a high quality BTR proposal.
- 9.6 The policy could seek to set an upper limit for the proportion of BTR homes that can be delivered as part of a development proposal, and if so this level should reflect a proportion that allows for high-quality BTR homes to be delivered and managed. Any proposed upper limit should be properly evidenced and justified. The proposed upper limit of 10%, is unlikely to support the delivery of BTR homes on individual sites across the Greater Cambridge area which are seeking to deliver an element of BTR as part of the overall housing offer. A higher upper limit should be explored to understand what proportion would best support delivery on individual sites. Alternatively, the proportion of BTR homes could be determined on a site-by-site basis to ensure that a proposal would respond to its context appropriately and enable a deliverable proportion of BTR homes.
- 9.7 With regards to affordable housing, Countryside support that BTR homes which are provided at discounted market rent can contribute to the overall affordable housing requirement of 40%. The policy should also include for the flexibility that if the 40% affordable housing requirement of a

development is being met through different tenure types that any BTR element would not be expected to provide affordable housing above the 40% requirement. The supportive text for the policy should acknowledge the following statement made at Annex 9 of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan that Build to Rent:

“...does not cover stock built for sale where a developer/investor or registered provider decides to retain a number of the homes for use as private rented stock. It also does not cover for-sale homes that are purchased on completion of a private for sale scheme.”

