

Your ref: 115896  
Our ref: Land North of Mill Lane Sawston  
DD: 07442 968343  
E: sophia.nitschke@bidwells.co.uk  
Date: 29/01/2026

Planning Policy  
Greater Cambridge Planning

Dear Sir / Madam,

**REG 18-DRAFT GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION - LAND NORTH OF MILL LANE, SAWSTON, CB22 3BY (HELAA SITE ID: 115896)**

**DRAFT POLICY S/RSC – OBJECTION**

On behalf of our client, Northwest Biotherapeutics Capital Limited (hereafter “NWBio”), we are responding to the Regulation 18 consultation on the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan (hereafter “the Plan”). This representation objects to the Council’s failure to allocate land north of Mill Lane, Sawston CB22 3BY (hereafter “the Site”) (HELAA Site ID: 115896) within the rural southern cluster policy area (ref: S/RSC).

The Site was submitted through the 2023 Call for Sites with a proposed capacity of up to 225 dwellings. The Site was subsequently assessed as having an overall suitability rating of ‘Red’, principally due to perceived concerns relating to encroachment into the countryside, potential impacts on a protected tree belt within the Site, and the identification of a single point of access.

We consider that these matters do not represent overriding or insurmountable constraints and that, with appropriate mitigation, the Site is suitable, available and deliverable. The failure to allocate the Site reflects a broader shortcoming in the Development Strategy.

**The Development Strategy**

The Councils have not identified any new housing allocations within the Rural Southern Cluster. This approach fails to support the vitality, resilience and long-term sustainability of rural centres such as Sawston, despite their recognised role in the settlement hierarchy.

The Development Strategy appears to rely disproportionately on large-scale strategic allocations while excluding sustainable, edge-of-settlement opportunities in highly accessible Rural Centres. This unbalanced approach reduces flexibility and choice in housing delivery and increases reliance on a limited number of complex sites coming forward as anticipated.

Whilst we do not object in principle to the allocation of large new housing developments, it strongly objects to the absence of a more diversified spatial strategy that allows sustainable growth within Rural Centres to complement strategic scale development. The failure to do so undermines the effectiveness and resilience of the Plan over the plan period.

A separate representation on behalf of NWBio has been submitted in respect of draft Policy S/DS, setting out concerns with the overall Development Strategy in greater detail. This objection should be read in conjunction with that submission.

## **The Site**

Sawston is identified as a Rural Centre in the settlement hierarchy, reflecting its high level of sustainability, accessibility and range of services. The draft GCLP continues to recognise Sawston as a Rural Centre and confirms that there is no limit on the number of dwellings that may be delivered on a single site within the village framework. Although the Site lies immediately outside the existing settlement framework, it represents a logical, contained and defensible extension to the village, well related to the existing built form. Its allocation would make a meaningful contribution to meeting the Plan's significant housing needs in a location expressly identified as suitable for growth.

The Site benefits from strong public transport connectivity. Whittlesford Parkway and Shelford railway stations are approximately 3km and 4km away respectively. Sawston is also served by the Stagecoach Citi 7 bus route, with a bus stop within 1km of the Site providing frequent services (every 20 minutes) between Saffron Walden, Sawston and Cambridge city centre.

As a Rural Centre, Sawston offers a wide range of services and facilities within close proximity of the Site, including food retail, a Post Office, pharmacy, and other village amenities. Several primary and nursery schools and Sawston Village College are also within walking distance, reinforcing the Site's sustainability credentials.

Employment opportunities are available locally, including at South Cambridge Business Park and Unity Campus. The Site also has good access to open spaces, recreation and leisure facilities, supporting healthy and active lifestyles.

## **Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) Response**

The 'Red' suitability rating attributed to the Site does not reflect a proportionate or balanced assessment. The identified constraints are typical of edge-of-settlement sites and are capable of being appropriately mitigated through sensitive masterplanning, landscape design, retention and enhancement of the tree belt, and the delivery of suitable access arrangements.

An updated Call for Sites (CfS) submission has been prepared and submitted to the Council alongside this representation as part of the Draft GCLP consultation. The submission provides a comprehensive and robust package of supporting information to assist the Council in its assessment of the site's suitability, availability and deliverability.

An independent Green Belt Assessment has been undertaken by Bidwells. This assessment concludes that whilst the site is not previously developed land, development of the Site would not fundamentally undermine the functions of the Green Belt taken together across the Plan as a whole. The Site is considered to meet the definition of Grey Belt land, satisfies the 'Golden Rules' for Grey Belt release, and is therefore suitable for development.

## **Summary**

The updated Call for Sites submission demonstrates that the Site is suitable, available and deliverable, representing a sustainable Grey Belt opportunity adjacent to a highly accessible Rural Centre supported by a comprehensive range of services, facilities and employment opportunities.

By failing to allocate this land, the Plan misses an opportunity to deliver sustainable growth in an appropriate location. Allocation under Policy S/RSC would ensure a more balanced, flexible and effective Development Strategy.

The Call for Sites submission contains:

- Full Green Belt Assessment for the site demonstrating its relationship to the Green Belt and its contribution against the relevant assessment criteria
- Highways technical information addressing access, capacity and the potential impact on the local highway network
- NWBio intent statement evidencing future investment in Cambridge and the availability of the site for development and its sustainable relationship with NWBio's Research Centre (employment) on Sawston Business Park
- Location Plan

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

**Sophia Nitschke**

Senior Planner