

Policy S/SH: Settlement Hierarchy

Do you consider the Local Plan is:

- **Legally Compliant – YES**
- **Sound – NO**
- **Complies with Duty to Cooperate – YES**

We are writing on behalf of our client, Rosconn Group, with regard to Site: 115179 (HELAA Site: 40256) known as Land North of Pampisford Road, Great Abington. Our client wishes to **OBJECT** to Policy S/SH for the following reasons:

While there is a need for policies that set out and inform the appropriate level of growth within a defined settlement hierarchy, our client objects to the limitations of growth placed on the village of Great Abington under S/SH (9) and (10). This policy does not positively support growth in sustainable locations. The range of services and facilities across the 'Group Villages@ varies, particularly in respect of access jobs and employment. Great Abington has the benefit of close proximity to Granta Park, as well as sustainable transport links to a secondary school and medical facilities. The limitation being applied is too generalised and does not recognise the unique individual merits of certain locations.

Furthermore, to limit the number of homes deliverable within the 'development extent' of the village is largely irrelevant if the defined 'extent' is so tightly drawn as to leave nothing within that village that could be developed. This approach is argued as a positively framed policy but in practice will continue to constrain growth in a village like Great Abington, that is highly sustainable, to the detriment of its vitality and viability and the contribution and support it could offer in the short term to the growth of Granta Park.

In conclusion, Policy S/SH is not **justified**, as it is not the appropriate strategy taking into account the alternatives, and will not be **effective**, failing to deliver the minimum level of growth over the plan period. The plan is therefore not sound, contrary to para 36 of the NPPF.

What changes do you think need to be made to the plan? Please try to be clear and concise as to what you would like this part of the plan to say:

The Council is encouraged to remove the arbitrary limitations for the scale of development that might take place in Group Villages. If they are to be maintained then they should be greatly increased, as a limitation of 8 dwellings in a village such as Great Abington is not justified.

We would argue that the limitations applied to other settlements in the hierarchy should also be removed. As all sites should be evaluated on their own merit against an assessment of site sustainability and the capacity of existing facilities and services to accommodate growth. Arbitrary limits on development are inconsistent with Government policy on promoting a step change in growth.

Furthermore, please see our comments on policy S/DE. If limits are to be retained, subject to their justification, then the spatial limitations placed on settlements by the Development Extents effectively make the policy redundant, as if there is no space to grow inside the defined extent of the settlement, then the village will stagnate. Harming its long-term vitality and viability.

It remains our preference, that the Local Plan should tackle growth in a more proportionate manner, and we would suggest that where there is no neighbourhood area, the plan properly examines growth in those villages and directly allocates sites for development. Great Abington is a Group Village but not a Neighbourhood Area, and yet it sits adjacent to Granta Park, a major employment area, and is a sustainable location for development that can support economic growth at this important employment site. As we have highlighted, our clients' site at Land North of Pampisford Road is situated on the edge of Great Abington (Site Id: 115179) and is an ideal candidate for allocation through a change in policy.