

Subject: GCLP Regulation 18 Consultation  
From: Vistry  
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## VISTRY

# POLICY S/RRR/CR: LAND WEST OF CAMBRIDGE ROAD, MELBOURN

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### **Object**

Vistry supports the allocation of this Site under Draft Policy S/RRR/CR: Land west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn. However, we request changes to the Draft Policy wording for accuracy and clarity.

### **Summary**

The Site presents an opportunity to deliver homes in a Minor Rural Centre. 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, thereby supporting economic growth in a sustainable location. Melbourn is classified as a Minor Rural Centre, is one of the most sustainable villages in Greater Cambridge and lies outside of the Cambridge Green Belt. The Site presents a prime opportunity to grow the village, sustaining existing services, delivering new facilities and infrastructure, supporting local shops and businesses and meeting local housing needs.

### **Full Response**

Vistry supports the allocation of S/RRR/CR, Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn. The Site is a sustainable location to deliver homes in a Minor Rural Centre.

The previous 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 Vistry remains committed to working with the Local Planning Authority to develop a proposal that best supports the objectives of the Local Plan and its policies.

### ***Delivering Homes to meet Local Need***

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 Local Plan. This includes:

- Delivering a range of housing, including affordable housing, to meet local housing need.
- Locating new residential development adjacent to one of the village's largest employment sites, Melbourn Science Park, therefore a sustainable location for new housing to support local jobs and economic growth.

- Adjacent to Cambridge Road, the Site benefits from direct access to the Melbourn Greenway, a shared route for walkers, runners, cyclists and other active travel users. The Greenway will provide a direct connection from Melbourn into Cambridge (northwards) and into Royston (southwards).
- The Site is well located to promote sustainable transport options, including public transport via both the local bus network and Meldreth Railway Station.
- The delivery of a walking route which is easily accessible to local residents and employees in the village. This will create a new recreation asset for the village and provide a local 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 delivery of a pedestrian route from the west of the Site along 'the Drift' which links to Moat Lane. This will provide residents with enhanced pedestrian connectivity to the adjacent Science Park and Melbourn High Street, encouraging active travel modes within the village.
- Supporting the vitality of Melbourn's community and economy, including local shops and services in this Minor Rural Centre.

### ***Employment Use***

Draft Policy S/RRA/CR includes specific reference to **"8,000 square metres gross internal area of floorspace for employment uses"** with the stated policy requirement that it **"(a) any employment uses must be integrated with the existing Science Park"**.

The Site lies directly adjacent to Melbourn Science Park and therefore geographically presents a suitable location to support the expansion of the existing campus if that was needed.

However, Melbourn Science Park has already expanded its footprint in recent years, with the TTP campus developed as a westward expansion of the original site. Additionally, Melbourn Science Park (Bruntwood Sci) benefits from a more recent planning permission which allows for an intensification of employment use within the original campus area. Hence, a substantial increase in employment floorspace has planning consent and is available to be built out within the Melbourn Science Park's existing campus footprint. On this basis, it is highly unlikely that there will be a need or demand for further spatial expansion of the Melbourn Science Park in the foreseeable future.

There is no evidence of need for additional employment floorspace in Melbourn in the Local Plan or its accompanying documents.

Independent of the needs and capacity of the adjacent Melbourn Science Park, up-to-date evidence demonstrates that there is a good supply of employment land in the local area too. This representation is supported by an occupational report prepared by Bidwells Space Agency (**Appendix 1**), which provides an overview of the commercial property market in Melbourn and the surrounding villages, set within the wider Cambridge context. This concludes that there is no occupational need for any additional employment floorspace in the Melbourn area.

### ***Mixed Use or Housing Allocation***

We note that the Site Allocation is identified as **"Mixed Use"**.

Vistry is willing to accept the "Mixed Use" allocation and retain the possibility of including some employment floorspace within the development. However, evidence is clear that there is unlikely to be any demonstrable need or demand for employment space in this location during the plan period. By comparison, there is a strong need for new homes and the Site offers an ideal opportunity for early delivery within the plan period. Hence, if the "Mixed Use" allocation is

retained as such then the wording of Policy S/RRA/CR and supporting text must be amended to provide increased flexibility, to support the prospects of the delivery of the Site Allocation and not create an unevidenced and unnecessary policy position to unduly constrained the site that could hinder the viability or deliverability of the site.

The draft policy wording says:

- *“Capacity for approximately 120 homes and 8,000 square metres gross internal area of floorspace for employment uses.”*

To account for the uncertainty on the need for employment space over the plan period in this locality, the policy wording must be changed to:

- Capacity for up to 8,000 square metres gross internal area of floorspace for employment uses, subject to the submission of evidence confirming a demonstrable need at the time of a planning application submission
- Capacity for around 120 homes if provided alongside 8,000 square metres gross internal area of floorspace for employment uses, or a greater number of homes if no or a lesser amount of employment floorspace is needed

Vistry would support the identification of the Site Allocation for **“Housing”** rather than “Mixed Use”. This approach would delete the Draft Policy S/RRA/CR references to employment use and the adjacent Melbourn Science Park.

### ***Landscape Setting at the edge of Settlement***

Vistry has objected to Draft Policy S/DE (Defined development extents), specifically with reference to the defined development extent indicated on the Draft Policies Map at the northeastern edge of the village of Melbourn (Minor Rural Centre). We consider that the defined development extent at the northeastern edge of Melbourn should be amended to include Site Allocation S/RRA/CR, Land to the west of Cambridge Road, Melbourn within the defined settlement envelope. The northeastern and northwestern boundaries of the Site would therefore become the new edge of settlement.

Policy requirement (b) set out in Draft Policy S/RRA/CR makes reference to the Site Allocation’s boundaries facing the rural setting. Whilst noting that this should be corrected to refer to the northeast and northwest of the Site, we acknowledge that these frontages will require sensitive landscape treatment taking into account views from the countryside towards the village. We can reassure Officers that all necessary and relevant landscape assessment and landscape design technical work will be undertaken as part of the preparation of a future planning application, to inform the proposals for the Site.

### ***Heritage Considerations***

Policy requirement (c) under Draft Policy S/RRA/CR makes explicit reference to **“nearby Grade II listed buildings and Melbourn Conservation Area”**. This is unnecessary given this relates to a wider site context and there are general Development Management policies that will appropriately and properly consider heritage matters as part of any planning application for the site.

We note that the Site’s HELAA Assessment (Reference 40490) states as follows regarding the Historic Environment:

*“Development of the site would have either a neutral or positive impact, but importantly not have a detrimental impact on any designated or non-designated heritage assets.”*

On this basis and taking account of the distance between the Site Allocation and the Melbourn Conservation Area and nearest Listed Assets, there is no reason why heritage matters are identified in the wording of the Draft Policy. Any future planning application would include for a consideration of the Site’s context, including archaeological and heritage

matters. But there are no exceptional built heritage considerations that merit highlighting in the Policy so we request that these references should be deleted.

### **Minimum Required Policy Amendments:**

Minor changes to the wording of Policy S/RRA/CR are required as a minimum; these are set out below. Proposed deletions to the draft policy wording are shown as strikethrough text and additions to the policy wording are shown in bold text.

This approach retains a “Mixed Use” Site Allocation, but ensures an appropriate level of flexibility within the policy wording regarding the possible inclusion of employment floorspace.

#### **Mixed Use**

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

- Site area of 6.65 hectares
  - Capacity for approximately 120 homes **if provided alongside 8,000 square metres gross internal area of floorspace for employment uses, or a greater number of homes if no or a lesser amount of employment floorspace is needed and**
  - **up to 8,000 square metres gross internal area of floorspace for employment uses, subject to the submission of evidence confirming a demonstrable need at the time of a planning application submission.**
4. Development proposals must demonstrate how they will meet the following requirements:
- a. Any employment uses must be integrated with the existing Science Park;
  - b. Boundaries facing the rural setting, at the ~~south~~**north**east and northwest of the site, must be strengthened to mitigate unacceptable adverse impacts on the surrounding landscape;
  - c. Building design in terms of building heights, mass and materials ~~must ensure no unacceptable adverse impacts on the wider setting of the nearby Grade II listed buildings and Melbourn Conservation Area~~ **should be appropriate to the edge of settlement context of the Site, building heights should not exceed local prevailing building height of c.2-3 storeys; and**
  - d. Development proposals must be accompanied by an appropriate archaeological assessment including extent, character and condition of the archaeological resource and the likely impact of the development on the archaeological remains identifying mitigation measures where necessary.

#### **Supporting information**

3.5.35 The site provides an opportunity to ~~expand Melbourn Science Park and~~ provide homes in a Minor Rural Centre **with the potential for employment use.** The **adjacent** Science Park is an important local employer and forms part of the wider Greater Cambridge science cluster. The development requirements in the policy responds to the landscape ~~and heritage~~ sensitivities of the site and that proposed mitigation measures are required to ensure no unacceptable adverse impacts are created through development. This includes ~~limiting building heights~~ **the contextually appropriate design** of any proposed development and undertaking further archaeological investigation.

## **Requested (Preferred) Policy Amendments:**

The below changes to the wording of Policy S/RRA/CR are requested as a preferred approach; these are set out below. Proposed deletions to the draft policy wording are shown as strikethrough text and additions to the policy wording are shown in bold text.

This approach changes Policy S/RRA/CR to be a “**Housing**” Site Allocation.

### ***Housing Mixed Use***

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

- Site area of 6.65 hectares
- Capacity for **a minimum of** approximately 120 homes ~~and 8,000 square metres gross internal area of floorspace for employment uses.~~
- 4. Development proposals must demonstrate how they will meet the following requirements:
  - a. ~~Any employment uses must be integrated with the existing Science Park;~~
  - b. Boundaries facing the rural setting, at the ~~south~~**north**east and northwest of the site, must be strengthened to mitigate unacceptable adverse impacts on the surrounding landscape;
  - c. Building design in terms of building heights, mass and materials ~~must ensure no unacceptable adverse impacts on the wider setting of the nearby Grade II listed buildings and Melbourn Conservation Area~~ **should be appropriate to the edge of settlement context of the Site, building heights should not exceed local prevailing building height of c.2-3 storeys; and**
  - d. ~~Development proposals must be accompanied by an appropriate archaeological assessment including extent, character and condition of the archaeological resource and the likely impact of the development on the archaeological remains identifying mitigation measures where necessary.~~

#### ***Supporting information***

- 3.5.35 The site provides an opportunity to ~~expand Melbourn Science Park and~~ provide homes in a Minor Rural Centre. The ~~adjacent~~ Science Park is an important local employer and forms part of the wider Greater Cambridge science cluster. The development requirements in the policy responds to the landscape ~~and heritage~~ sensitives of the site and that proposed mitigation measures are required to ensure no unacceptable adverse impacts are created through development. This includes **limiting building heights the contextually appropriate design** of any proposed development and undertaking further archaeological investigation.