

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning

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Dear Sir/ Madam,

Greater Cambridge Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation - Cambridge Edge Business Park

On behalf of our client, Orchestra Land, Ceres Property hereby submit representations to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation in relation to a site located to the east of Shepreth adjacent to the A10 and which provides a significant opportunity for employment development. This submission is provided alongside a Vision Document for the site prepared by Carter Jonas.

The Site

The Site is located along the A10 and to the north of Shepreth Road. The Site is located to the east of Shepreth and south of Foxton. It is approximately 24ha and is currently in agricultural use.

The Site is extremely well connected by all methods of transport. It is less than one mile from Shepreth train station (a 15 minute walk) which provides frequent connections into London and Cambridge. There are bus stops immediately adjacent the Site on the A10 which provide services to Cambridge, Trumpington and Royston. The Site also has access onto the A10 which provides direct connections to the south, including Melbourn and Royston, and also to the north to Trumpington and Cambridge.

Unlike many sites in and around Cambridge the Site here is located outside of the Green Belt and would thus not require any land to be released from the Green Belt in order to be developed. Furthermore, the Site is in a strategic and well connected location which is particularly suited for providing employment opportunities.

Proposed Use

The intention is to develop the Site for mid tech uses. The Site is to include a mix of offices, manufacturing and tech facilities to create an all encompassing holistic location for new and existing businesses to grow. It is also intended that the Site will include an EV hub, retail, leisure and hospitality uses in order to create a sustainable destination for users of the Site. This will also be supported by a mobility hub which will integrate pedestrian and cycle networks, E-scooter and bike provision, cycle parking, car club provision, lockers, and information boards.

A mid-tech business park is a type of commercial development designed to accommodate businesses that require a mix of office, research, and light industrial space. These parks are particularly suited for companies in sectors like research and development, technology, and life sciences. They offer flexible, high-quality spaces that can be easily reconfigured to meet the specific needs of different businesses.

In order to assist the Council in terms of meeting housing needs, particularly with the standard method introduced by the 2024 NPPF, there is also an opportunity to develop the site to include some residential development alongside the employment provision. For South Cambridgeshire the annual housing requirement has increased from 975 homes to 2,295 homes. The NPPF confirms that the standard method figure represents the minimum number of homes needed. Our client is thus willing to discuss alternative opportunities for the development of this sustainable site to assist the Council in meeting its housing requirements.

The Demand for Mid Tech

Paragraph 86 of the NPPF confirms that local planning authorities should set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, paying particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy. Paragraph 87 also confirms that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors, this includes making provision for *"clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries"*.

The emerging Local Plan recognises a growing demand for mid-tech space, which sits between laboratory/office R&D and heavier industrial uses. These are often:

- Prototype production
- Advanced manufacturing
- Hardware development
- Clean-tech/light-industrial hybrid uses

Mid-tech space is important as the innovation economy generates many firms that outgrow lab or office space but which do not fit traditional industrial estates. Prototype manufacturing and scale-up activity requires a hybrid of R&D and light-industrial characteristics which is not often readily available. Cambridge also lacks sufficient mid-tech capacity today whilst demand is growing faster than supply.

As part of the evidence base to the emerging Local Plan Iceni Projects Limited were commissioned to produce the Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Evidence Update (2022). This report also confirms that demand has risen for manufacturing, light industrial, warehousing and mid-tech space acknowledging in terms of the latter that mid-tech is a phenomenon arising in recent years. It also states that in Greater Cambridge the mid-tech market is growing and the production / clustering of the sector is happening in the area.

The report also confirms that as a result of the high demand for mid-tech, existing stock is increasingly being taken on by this sector which is crowding out space for warehousing and light industrial, both of which also have strong requirements. As such providing dedicated mid-tech sites offers the benefit of providing much needed space for this sector whilst leaving existing stock to be utilised for warehousing and light industrial.

The emerging Local Plan recognises the need for mid-tech space with paragraph 2.72 of the Regulation 18 Draft confirms, confirming as part of the employment strategy, that there are *“emerging needs for mid-tech space (Use Classes E(g)/B2/B8), particularly where companies develop prototypes emerging from our knowledge intensive sectors”*. Whilst the Council are proposing allocations on the edge of the urban area, including at Eddington and Cambridge East, with longer term provision at an expanded Cambourne, it is considered that our client’s Site offers an additional suitable and deliverable site for mid-tech space to meet these emerging needs.

While Cambridge itself has seen strong demand for mid-tech buildings, Shepreth/Foxton presents an attractive alternative due to its affordable land values, strong transport links, and increasing investor interest. Over the past decade, niche developers have responded to this demand by delivering high-quality mid-tech industrial space within business park settings. With limited planned industrial developments in the area and Phase 2 of Bourn Quarter set for completion in Q1 2025, availability will remain constrained, creating opportunities for Shepreth/Foxton to emerge as a key industrial hub.

Site Assessment

Although part of the northern boundary of the Site is located within Flood Zone 3, the remainder of the Site is in within Flood Zone 1 and can thus be developed without placing any potentially vulnerable elements of development in areas at risk of flooding. Similarly, whilst there are several TPOs along the northern and southern boundaries, the Site can be developed without adversely impacting upon these existing trees. The Site also has significant opportunities to create a new network of green spaces increasing the biodiversity value of the Site.

It is anticipated that direct access into the Site can be taken from the A10. From the roundabout junction, a new access road will connect through the development area. This will offer the potential opportunity, subject to discussions with the County Council, for the western section of Shepreth Road to be downgraded to a pedestrian / cycle route, thereby reducing vehicle movements to the existing A10 / Shepreth Road crossroad junction. It is also intended that any proposals to come forward will also improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to and from Shepreth and Foxton whilst the Site will also incorporate a mobility hub to ensure wide sustainable connectivity.

The below extract from the Regulation 18 Draft indicates the existing and proposed major transport projects across Greater Cambridge, the Site sits strategically in close proximity to committed walking/cycling improvements and proposed public transport improvements thus placing it in a highly strategic location (the Site is indicated by a star).

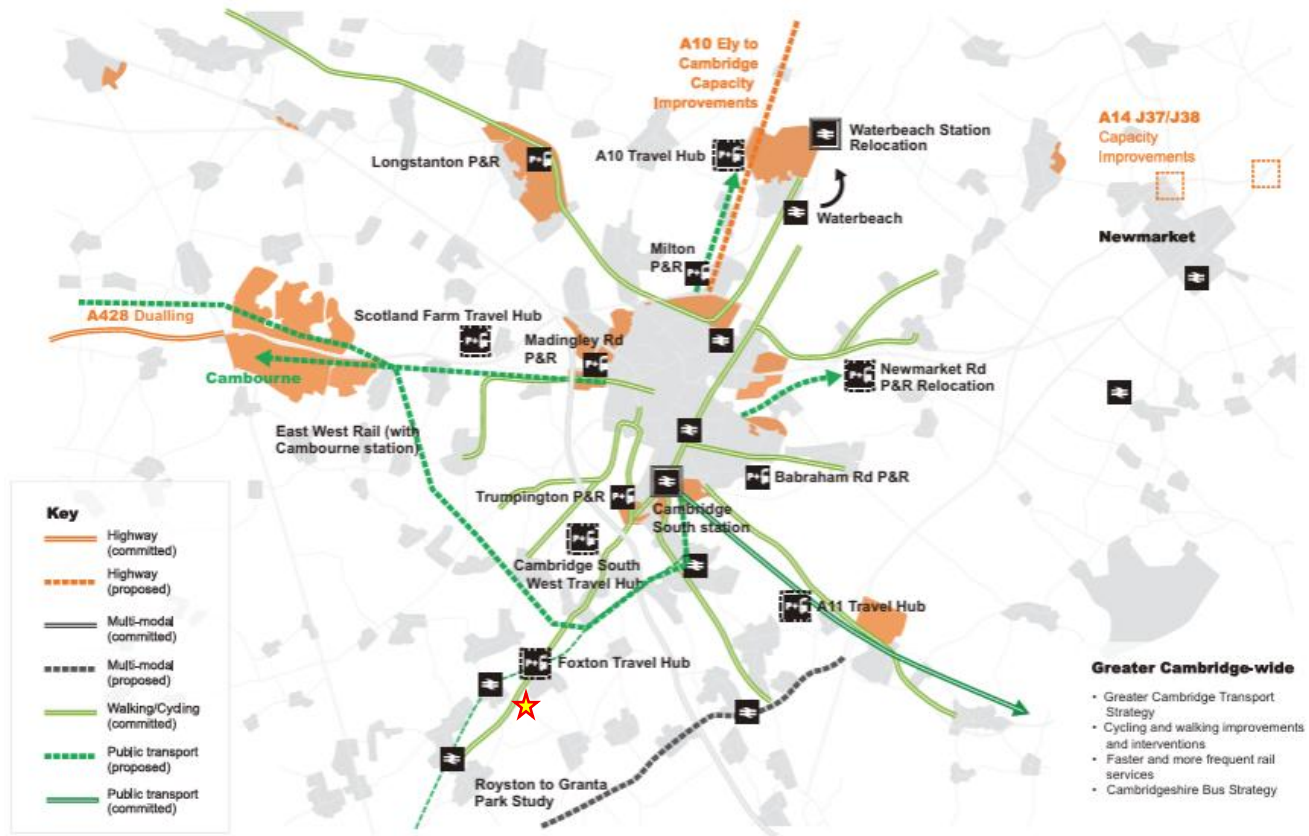


Figure 13: Map of existing and proposed major transport projects

It is also relevant to note the Government's direction of travel within the emerging NPPF (December 2025 Draft). Draft Policy S5 sets out when the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies to development outside settlement boundaries (as the Site currently is), it supports the provision of housing and mixed-use development outside settlements where all the following criteria are met:

- reasonable walking distance of a railway station which provides a high level of connectivity to jobs and services
- physically well-related to a railway station or a settlement within which the station is located
- is of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure
- and where the development would not prejudice any proposals for long-term comprehensive development in the same location

The Site would be able to meet all relevant criteria, given its location within a reasonable walking distance of both Shepreth and Foxton railway stations. It is thus relevant to note therefore that the Site is located within an area which has recognition as a sustainable location for growth.

Two options for the Site have been considered within the Vision Document submitted alongside this representation. Option 1 incorporates a series of key open space, biodiversity, access and movement and mobility features including a large area of open space along the north eastern boundary which could also incorporate SuDS features. Option 2 incorporates a proportion of residential development to the north west of the Site (up to 100 dwellings) but also retains the open space area as indicated within Option 1. These options demonstrate how the Site can be successfully developed to provide a well designed, high quality scheme.

The proposals for the Site would be particularly well located in relation to existing development, infrastructure including road and rail connections. They would also benefit from being located in close proximity to other promoted land such as that by Axis Land Partnerships at Stations Fields, Foxton; and the DCO process and connectivity improvements through the East West Rail improvements. The Site is thus suitably located in terms of the type of facilities that it intends to provide, supporting the economy of the local area.

Development of this Site will provide a number of significant benefits including providing a strategic location for mid tech use which is close to similar business and industrial parks in the locality thus providing a focus for such facilities. Although having good transport links by private car through its connectivity to the A10 the Site is also extremely well connected via public transport and there are opportunities to provide improvements to pedestrian and cycle connectivity along with improvements to the local bus services.

There are also significant opportunities within the Site for ecological and landscape enhancements which could include new woodland, wetland habitat areas along with open mosaic grassland. There are also opportunities to incorporate street trees within green spaces and green roofs whilst walking trails are proposed to provide connectivity throughout the open spaces. Any proposals will also explore BREEAM opportunities along with the potential for other energy and sustainability enhancements including the incorporation of solar panels and EV charging.

Ultimately the Site will lead to job creation and will thus make a significant contribution to the local economy. It is estimated, based upon employment density figures set out in the Greater Cambridge Employment and Housing Evidence Update (2022), that Option 1 could generate between 1,068 (B2) and 1,595 (R&D) jobs and that for Option 2 the scheme could generate between 870 (B2) and 1,299 (R&D) jobs¹.

Orchestra Land, as the Site promoters, are keen to work alongside the Council and other parties including the local community to bring forward this development. An application is able to be progressed quickly whilst talks with commercial developer partners are underway. The Site is available now and development can thus come forward within the next five years.

¹ These figures are a minimum estimation based upon a single storey GEA for each unit, in reality a number of these will likely have more than one floor and the GEA for each will thus be higher. Furthermore, the figures do not include employment generated by the retail facilities.

Yours sincerely



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Partner

Mobile: 

Enc Vision Document

