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Greater Cambridge Shared Planning
South Cambridgeshire Hall,
Cambourne Business Park,
Cambourne,
Cambridge, CB23 6EA

29th January 2026

BY EMAIL

Dear Sir/Madam,

**GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN 2024-2045 (REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION) –
ASHWELL AND MORDEN**

This representation is made on behalf of an emerging Landowner Consortium that has begun working on a collaborative basis to explore the potential of forming a stand-alone new settlement adjoining and either side of Ashwell & Morden Railway Station. The respondent is herein referred to under the abbreviation of “AMLC”, reflecting that they comprise an emerging Ashwell & Morden Landowner Consortium.

The draft National Planning Policy Framework (herein referred to as “the emerging Framework”) contains a new signature policy to drive housing growth around railway stations. The policy serves to enable homes to be channelled to suitable railway station locations either as an essential component of a Development Plan’s spatial strategy, or effectively as a form of housing “windfall” additionality, over and above what might be delivered through Local Plans. This policy has prompted the AMLC to explore the potential of their combined landholding, in response to a clear direction from Government to endorse railway station related development at railway stations like Ashwell & Morden, where the existing infrastructure is underutilised.

The AMLC are commencing a process of exploring the feasibility of such a project over the coming months and therefore a Call for Sites submission has not been made through the current consultation. Furthermore, given the plan making authority’s intention to work expeditiously to submission of the Development Plan to the Secretary of State in 2026 under the NPPF transitional arrangements, it is considered that at this stage, irrespective of the merits of any future development concept that could begin to emerge, the development is unlikely to be able to form a central component of the Local Plan spatial strategy and the representation is not seeking this outcome. However, the AMLC does wish to draw Greater Cambridge Shared Planning’s (GCSP’s) attention to the emerging Framework’s position on Development Plan conformity and policy weight, with its advice at Annex A that a new Development Plan’s policies should be only given “very limited weight” if they are in any way inconsistent with national decision-making policies in the new Framework. Furthermore, the AMLC wishes to highlight the Framework’s policy approach to railway station growth, which effectively classifies such development as a new source of “windfall” housing additionality that should have a development presumption, even if it is unallocated in the Development Plan.

Given the above, this representation has been prepared to highlight the value of the Plan recognising the potential for additional development in the form of railway station growth within the plan period, and the importance of the Plan creating a flexible and positive policy framework that responds positively to the locational opportunities for station related development in Greater Cambridge within the Plan period.

If a due diligence exercise is to establish the availability, suitability and developability of a stand-alone settlement surrounding Ashwell & Morden station in the coming months, the AMLC would welcome the opportunity to discuss the multitude of planning issues associated with the planning of such a settlement. In particular, the AMLC is cognisant of the many infrastructure issues associated with such

a development in Greater Cambridge and the great efforts made by GCSP to plan positively in response to the development constraints of the area.

a. The imperative for national policy consistency

GCSP will be aware of the current emerging Framework consultation. While the emerging Framework will have no weight until the final version is published, the proposed approach outlined in Annex A states that from the date of the Framework publication, local plan policies that are in “...any way inconsistent with national decision making policies in this Framework should be given very limited weight, except where they have been examined and adopted against this Framework”.

Whilst the Local Plan will be assessed for soundness under the December 2024 version of the Framework and therefore need to be demonstrated to be consistent with the existing Framework, the Greater Cambridge Plan has the challenge of also needing to be consistent with the decision making policies of the new version of the Framework, else inconsistent policies will be of “very limited weight” upon adoption, thus undermining the primacy of the Plan. Accordingly, it is contended that Greater Cambridge should strive for a Local Plan that is in full alignment with the emerging national policies for decision taking and positively prepared in this regard.

b. Railway Station Growth and Ashwell & Morden Railway Station

Framework Policy S5

Emerging Framework Policy S5 (Principle of development outside settlements) criterion (1)(h) states: [inter alia]

1. *Only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements, as set out in the following list. These should be approved, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework:*

- h. Development for housing and mixed-use development which would be: within 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 Framework defines well-connected rail stations as:

- those stations in a top 60 Travel to Work Area by Gross Value Added (GVA)
- those stations which, in the normal weekday timetable, are served (or have a reasonable prospect of being served due to planned upgrades or through agreement with the rail operator) throughout the daytime by four trains or trams per hour overall, or two trains per hour in any one direction.

This policy strand of the new Framework introduces an explicit spatial planning policy that has not formed national planning policy previously. Framework Policy S51h introduces a presumption for development on land well related to existing qualifying train stations, irrespective of the development need position or the land’s Development Plan status and careful thought should be given as to how a positively prepared Plan should respond to this element of national planning policy.

The policy amounts to a highly logical approach to channelling growth to locations where prized infrastructure is already in existence and where the requisite connectivity to economic centres is in place. In this way, the policy enables homes and associated infrastructure to be delivered in locations that will support the continued economic growth of successful centres in a highly sustainable way.

Ashwell & Morden Assessment

Given the new proposed Decision Making policy S5 and the opportunity to secure well-located growth over and above the minimum housing figure, the plan making authority should be considering identifying and notating within the Plan those locations where railway station related windfall growth could be delivered through Policy S51h (and its Green Belt counterpart GB7h1).

Greater Cambridge falls within a top 60 GVA Travel to Work Area and so all railway stations within the plan area are engaged by the policy, whilst Ashwell & Morden is one such station that is served throughout the daytime by four trains per hour overall, meaning the location conforms to Policy S51h. The location benefits from a number of additional key locational and site characteristic credentials that would suggest that the site could be successfully developed, including:

- Adjacent A505 connectivity to provide excellent local road connectivity, as well as rail connectivity to the economic growth poles of Cambridge and London;
- Scope to provide strategic cycle routes between Letchworth, Baldock, Ashwell & Morden and Royston to strengthen local connectivity and support highly sustainable travel behaviours;
- Developable land, located entirely within Greater Cambridge with the scope to create an exemplar development that can deliver significant societal benefits;
- An operational quarry to provide key materials for the construction of infrastructure at source; and
- A relatively small existing local community at the location, with the railway station serving only a handful of existing homes despite being a fully functioning station on the London-Cambridge Thameslink line

Notwithstanding the location's compliance with Policy S51h, the location's existing transport infrastructure and the land attributes that would indicate development could be delivered in this location, the AMLC recognise that there are a multitude of issues that will determine whether growth in this location is feasible or not. Accordingly, the AMLC has begun exploring the availability, suitability and developability of the land in this location through engaging with the market to identify a prospective development partner. However, it is recognised that there are a multitude of matters to explore with the authority if a development appears to be technically feasible and viable, not least the infrastructure impact of unplanned development in this location and its implications for the Greater Cambridge emerging Spatial Strategy. The AMLC would therefore welcome discussions with GCSP to explore how and to what extent the Plan might be developed in a flexible way that can facilitate railway station growth at Ashwell & Morden within the plan period.

c. Housing growth in Cambridge

Policy S/JH establishes that the housing requirement for the Greater Cambridge area in accordance with the Standard Method requirements for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District. Whilst the Plan approach is supported, national policy is clear that meeting an area's objectively assessed needs should only be a minimum (i.e. Paragraphs 11b, 36a & 62 of the existing Framework and Policy PM2 1.b, Policy S1 1.a, and Policy PM14 2.a of the emerging Framework) and that Plans should be prepared positively. The housing additionality that can be achieved through the Government's railway station policy should be considered through the Plan strategy and the infrastructure implications associated with unlocking this growth should be factored in and reflected, if possible.

d. Conclusion and Next Steps

The AMLC welcomes the opportunity to engage through the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan Regulation 18. The AMLC is supportive of the Plan strategy, but considers that the Plan should be consistent with both the existing Framework (in order to be consistent with national planning policy

and be found sound) and the emerging Framework (in order to ensure the Plan policies are given more than very limited weight upon adoption and to ensure the primacy of the Plan).

The AMLC considers that the Greater Cambridge Plan should carefully consider the implications of all the emerging Framework's decision taking policies, including the railway station growth policy (S5 1.h) and the need to positively plan for the potential additionality of housing growth that can be secured at key locations within Greater Cambridge through this policy.

It is not known whether Ashwell & Morden can feasibly accommodate a development around the railway station at this time and therefore the AMLC is not seeking a Plan alteration for a particular quantum or arrangement of growth through the Greater Cambridge Plan. However, if the land does prove to be available, suitable and viable for a railway station development, the AMLC and its prospective future development partner would welcome the opportunity to engage with GCPS during the Plan process to consider if and how the Plan might consider this scenario, and how such a development could be reflected in infrastructure strategies that support the Plan.

Should you wish to discuss this or require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED] or jwaterhouse@iceniprojects.com, or my colleague Oliver Ricketts on [REDACTED] or oricketts@iceniprojects.com.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

James Waterhouse
Director