Public consultation response: Proposed Grange Farm new town, Little Abington

We are responding to the consultation on the proposed allocation of land at Grange Farm, next to Little Abington, for a new settlement of approximately 4,500 homes and associated employment space.

We do not support the proposed allocation. In our view, the proposal is not evidence-led, is the wrong scale for this location, and risks causing serious and lasting harm to local communities, the transport network, the landscape, and the water environment.

1. Scale and location

The proposal would place a new town of around 4,500 homes immediately next to Little Abington. This would be many times larger than the existing population of The Abingtons and would fundamentally change the character of the area.

The Abingtons and surrounding villages have welcomed sustainable growth over time. However, this proposal is not a modest or proportionate extension of an existing village. It is a new town beside a small rural community.

The scale of development proposed would place heavy pressure on local services, roads, schools, community facilities, and the rural setting that gives these villages their identity.

2. Impact on local communities

The Abingtons, Hildersham, Pampisford, Babraham and Linton function as connected communities. Residents rely on shared schools, shops, healthcare, clubs, societies and local services. These connections depend on a road network that is already under strain.

The proposal would generate substantial additional car journeys, construction traffic and heavy goods vehicle movements. This would affect not only Little Abington, but communities along the wider A1307 corridor.

The A1307, A11 and A505 already carry school journeys, commuters, buses, businesses, emergency services and everyday village traffic from the villages in the local area, including Shudy Camps, Castle Camps, Camps End, Nosterfield End, Mill Green and Cardinal's Green. These roads are important to daily life and safety. The A1307 beside Grange Farm is already identified locally as a high-casualty route.

3. Transport and infrastructure uncertainty

The proposal appears to rely on significant transport infrastructure and public transport improvements that are not yet fully designed, funded, approved or guaranteed. It is not clear that sufficient certainty exists to justify allocating a site of this size at this stage.

Before this site is allocated, the consultation should clearly show which transport schemes are already designed, costed, funded, approved and programmed for delivery, and which remain indicative, conceptual or subject to further work.

The proposal also appears to rely on later master planning and future planning applications to resolve major delivery issues. That is not good enough for a proposal of this scale. A clear phasing plan should be required before allocation, not left until after the principle of development has been accepted.

Key questions remain unanswered:

- How much of the transport strategy depends on infrastructure that is not yet designed, funded or approved?
- What happens if major public transport schemes are delayed?
- What employment assumptions underpin the transport modelling?
- How would construction traffic be managed?
- How would the safety of existing villages along the A1307 corridor be protected?

4. Water, chalk streams and environmental risk

The site sits in a highly sensitive water environment. Beneath the Abington hills is a chalk aquifer that stores winter rainfall, feeds local springs and supports rare chalk stream habitats. These habitats are internationally important and very vulnerable to changes in water flow, pollution and temperature.

Local drinking water depends heavily on groundwater from this aquifer. Any large development on or near the recharge area must therefore be treated with great caution. The consultation documents should explain clearly where the extra water would come from and how the aquifer and chalk stream system would be protected.

A new town of around 4,500 homes would create very significant demand for water. It would also create risks from wastewater, road runoff, construction pollution, sewage infrastructure, odour, noise and heavy vehicle movements. These impacts should be assessed before the site is allocated, not left to later stages.

At a minimum, the plan should require independent hydrological modelling, long-term groundwater monitoring, a guaranteed water supply, a robust wastewater strategy and enforceable safeguards to protect the chalk aquifer, chalk streams, local wildlife and nearby communities.

Without this evidence, it is not possible to conclude that the proposal is environmentally sustainable or that it would not cause unacceptable harm to a rare and fragile water system.

5. Site selection and landscape harm

The available site assessment evidence raises serious concerns about the suitability of Grange Farm. The HELAA assessment identifies significant constraints, including landscape harm, and records an overall suitability score of red. A red assessment should not be treated as a minor issue. It indicates that the site faces major constraints that must be demonstrably resolved before allocation.

Grange Farm is located on open, elevated chalk hills in the River Granta Valley. Because of its height and visibility, a development of 4,500 homes and employment buildings would be difficult, if not impossible, to conceal within the landscape. The impact would be far greater than development on lower or less exposed land.

The proposal would introduce a large urban settlement into a rural landscape. This would change long views, affect the setting of Little Abington and surrounding villages, and risk permanent harm to local landscape character. The consultation should explain why this harm is considered acceptable and what has changed since previous assessments raised serious concerns.

The policy requirement to respect, protect and enhance the rural setting must be applied in substance, not simply repeated as an aspiration. On the evidence available, it is difficult to see how a new town of this size, in this location, could meet that test.

6. Conclusion

We ask that the Grange Farm allocation be removed from the Local Plan unless and until the councils can provide robust, transparent and independently tested evidence on transport delivery, water supply, wastewater, groundwater protection, landscape impact, community impact and phasing. The current proposal places too much risk on existing communities and on a sensitive rural and water environment. It should not be taken forward in its present form.