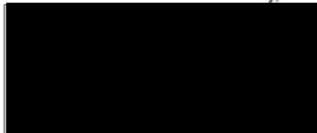


**LAND TO THE SOUTH
OF STATION ROAD,
HARSTON
GREATER CAMBRIDGE
LOCAL PLAN -
PREFERRED OPTIONS
CONSULTATION 2021**

Quality Assurance

Site name: Land to the south of Station Road, Harston
Client name: Jesus College
Type of report: Greater Cambridge Local Plan – Preferred Options Consultation 2021

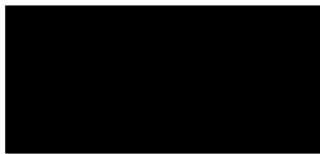
Prepared by: John Dudding MPlan (Hons)



Signed

Date December 2021

Reviewed by: Alison Wright MRTPI



Signed

Date December 2021

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 These representations have been prepared by Bidwells LLP on behalf of Jesus College who own land to the south of Station Road, Harston (“the Site”) in response to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Regulation 18: First Proposals 2021 consultation. Please refer to **Appendix 1** for site location plan.
- 1.2 These representations follow those previously submitted to the March 2019 Call for Sites and February 2020 Issues & Options consultation.
- 1.3 The First Proposals consultation document sets out the Councils preferred approach to the level of growth that should be planned for, and where it should be planned over the plan period to 2041. It also describes the planning policies proposed to shape development and guide planning decisions. The First Proposals consultation is particularly seeking views on the emerging development strategy, the direction of travel for policies and issues the Councils should be considering as policies are prepared.
- 1.4 The Greater Cambridge Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) lists and maps sites within Greater Cambridge that may have potential for residential and economic development. A ‘Red, Amber, Green’ (RAG) scoring system was used to carry out the assessment. Sites were deemed to be unsuitable if they were assessed as ‘red’ against any of the criteria used.
- 1.5 The HELAA forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan and the outputs of the HELAA will assist the Councils in identifying the choices available for site allocations to meet development needs. Specifically, it has been used to inform the choices made at the First Proposals consultation stage, alongside a range of other evidence exploring the development needs of the area and how they should be met.
- 1.6 Land to the south of Station Road, Harston is identified in the HELAA under site reference 40303. It scores green for being available and achievable but red for suitable on the basis of Landscape and Townscape and Strategic Highways Impact. As such, the Site is not identified as an allocation within the First Proposals consultation document.
- 1.7 These representations respond to the sites’ assessment within the HELAA and also the draft policies of the First Proposals consultation document. Jesus College are still at an early stage in considering potential development concepts for the site but currently consider that residential development could be appropriate on the site.
- 1.8 These representations should be read alongside the following documents submitted previously in response to the Issues and Options consultation in 2020, namely;
- Emerging Concept Proposal (Bidwells);
 - Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (Applied Ecology) and
 - Highways and Access Transport Appraisal (EAS).

2.0 The Site

- 2.1 The Site is in a central village location and within 100m of the High Street (A10). The Site lies to the south of Station Road, Harston and extends to approximately 1.2 hectares. It is currently in agricultural use as a horse paddock. The Site is relatively flat, comprising an open field with trees and hedges along its boundaries, together with post and wire paddock fencing. The frontage with Station Road comprises an evergreen hedge that extends to two metres in height.
- 2.2 The Site lies immediately adjacent to existing residential development along Station Road to the west and Baggot Hall Farm to the east. It therefore represents a small gap between existing built development.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan

- 2.3 Linden House lies to the south-west of the Site, accessed from Station Road via a single track. Linden House is a former farmhouse now in private residential use and has had several significant extensions and alterations. Baggot Hall Farm extends along the entire eastern boundary of the site and includes a large number of agricultural buildings. Baggot Hall farmhouse is located towards the front of the farm and is Grade II listed.
- 2.4 To the north of the Site lies recreational land associated with Harston and Newton County Primary school and open countryside lies to the south.
- 2.5 The site is currently accessed from agricultural land to the south, on land also owned by the College.
- 2.6 The site is within the Environment Agency defined Flood Zone 1 in terms of flooding from rivers (very low risk of flooding). The majority of the site is also within a 'very low' risk of flooding from surface water.

- 2.7 In terms of heritage protection, the Site is not within a Conservation Area but Baggot Hall lies to the east of the Site and is Grade II Listed.
- 2.8 Harston is inset within the Green Belt with its own defined development framework. The Site lies immediately to the south of the current development framework for Harston and within the Cambridge Green Belt.
- 2.9 The Station Road frontage of the Site, together with the Station Road frontage of Baggot Hall farm to the east, are currently subject to the 'Important Countryside Frontage' Policy of the adopted Local Plan (Policy NH/13). Policy NH/13 confirms that Important Countryside Frontages are defined 'where land with a strong countryside character either:
- a) Penetrates or sweeps into the built-up area providing a significant connection between the street scene and the surrounding rural area; or
 - b) Provides an important rural break between two nearby but detached parts of a development framework'.
- 2.10 Policy NH/13 advises that planning permission for development would be refused if it would compromise the above purposes.
- 2.11 Land to the north of the Site (the recreation ground associated with Harston and Newton County Primary school) is currently subject to the 'Protected Village Amenity Area' (PVAA) designation under Policy NH/11. This states that development will not be permitted within or adjacent to these areas if it would have an adverse impact on the character, amenity, tranquillity or function of the village.
- 2.12 The recreation ground associated with Harston and Newton County Primary school is also designated as a 'Local Green Space' (LGS) under Policy NH/12. Policy NH/12 advises that LGS will be protected from development that would adversely impact on the character and particular local significance placed on such green areas which make them valued by their local community.

The Opportunity

- 2.13 Harston is a Group Village in the settlement hierarchy within the adopted 2018 Local Plan.
- 2.14 Group Villages are the third most sustainable settlement type within the hierarchy and perform a role in terms of allowing residents to meet some of their day to day requirements without having to leave the village. The adopted Local Plan confirms that limited development would help maintain remaining services and facilities and provide for affordable housing to meet local needs.
- 2.15 National Planning Policy also advises that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It adds that planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services (Paragraph 79).

- 2.16 A variety of facilities and services are currently available within walking distance of the site including Harston and Newton County Primary school (immediately north of the site), a doctor's surgery, a post office, village hall, public houses and a convenience store.
- 2.17 The nearest bus stop to the Site is located approximately 250m north, along the High Street (A10). There is a bus stop on both sides of the A10 serving north bound and southbound services through to Royston to the south, the Trumpington Park and Ride site and Cambridge to the north, as well as national express coach services to Gatwick airport.
- 2.18 Off-road cycle ways connect the Site to Foxton railway station approximately 2.5km to the south which offers services to Cambridge (and beyond) and London. The proximity of the Site to this transport interchange makes it readily accessible by active modes of travel, particularly cycling.
- 2.19 Furthermore, the A10 runs through the village, which is a strategic transport corridor within Greater Cambridge, where numerous transport improvements are planned to deliver a high-quality public transport corridor, including:
- Improved transport hub at Foxton railway station (3km from the site);
 - Proposed improved transport interchange at Trumpington A10/M11 junction (3.2 km from the site);
 - Park and ride site at Hauxton;
 - Off road cycle links along the A10;
 - Walking and cycling links to Melbourn and Bassingbourn Village Colleges.
- 2.20 In addition to the above, Harston falls within the 'Preferred route option' area of the proposed East-West rail alignment which would deliver faster and improved frequency of trains to Cambridge and in turn to London.
- 2.21 As such, the Site is well located to reduce the need to travel by car and can promote sustainable travel. Further public transport enhancements are also proposed that will improve connectivity to Harston by sustainable and active modes of transport.

The Emerging Concept Proposal

- 2.22 An emerging concept proposal has been prepared by Bidwells LLP which accompanied the Issues and Options consultation in 2020. This was informed by a suite of technical assessment work and in response to the four big themes of the consultation document.
- 2.23 The emerging proposal is for a residential development of approximately 10 dwellings, with a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached houses.
- 2.24 In order to protect the significance of the adjoining Baggot Hall and its setting, the proposed layout seeks to incorporate significant areas of retained open space within the centre of the Site and along its eastern boundary. This will ensure that views of Baggot Hall are retained from Station Road to the north and open countryside to the west. The total amount of public open space currently proposed extends to circa 0.31 hectares. The eastern boundary also incorporates a proposed drainage attenuation feature.

- 2.25 The proposed layout responds appropriately to its rural location by retaining views of the countryside beyond and protecting the existing rural character of the site. The internal road layout is gently curved, in a similar design to that serving Linden House to the south-west of the Site, and the dwellings are loosely arranged within the site, with the larger units proposed to the south designed to respond to the adjoining agricultural buildings at Baggot Hall farm.
- 2.26 There is an existing two-metre-tall evergreen hedge along the length of the Station Road frontage that prevents visual access to the countryside. This will be retained with the exception of two small sections to be removed in order to accommodate access. A pair of semi-detached dwellings are proposed along the Station Road frontage, to continue the existing residential building line to the west. The remaining units are proposed to be sited off the internal road. The loose grain of development and low density proposed will enable views of the open countryside beyond to be retained from Station Road.
- 2.27 Existing boundary vegetation will be retained where possible and enhanced in order to provide a defensible boundary to the Green Belt edge.
- 2.28 A suitable vehicular access can be achieved off Station Road, together with an adequate visibility, in line with the Manual for Streets parameters for a road with a 30mph speed limit, such as Station Road. The existing footway on the south side of Station Road can also be widened to 2m and tactile paving added to the existing informal crossing to Harston and Newton County Primary School.

3.0 Impacts and Potential Mitigation

- 3.1 A site-wide ecological appraisal and background desk study was completed by Applied Ecology Ltd in January 2020 and accompanied the Issues and Options consultation. The key findings from the appraisal are summarised below:
- There are no overriding ecological constraints to development of the Site;
 - There are no statutory or non-statutory designated sites within or directly adjacent to the Site;
 - The nearest statutory designated sites are Whittlesford-Thriplow Hummocky Fields SSSI and Barrington Chalk Pit SSSI, both of which are circa 2.5km from the Site. It is therefore not considered that statutory designations from an ‘in principle’ constraint to development;
 - The nearest non-statutory designated sites to the Site are Harston Orchard County Wildlife Site (CWS), located 390 to the north and the River Rhee County Wildlife Site (CWS) 700m to the west. Both are separated from the Site by suburban infrastructure and roads and as such neither are likely to be adversely impacted by development of the Site;
 - The habitats within the Site are of limited intrinsic ecological interest;
 - The capacity for future development within the Site to achieve a biodiversity net gain has been provisionally assessed using Natural England/DEFRA’s Biodiversity Metric 2.0 calculator (beta version). 10% net gain can be achieved on site through the through the proposed emerging concept proposal;
 - The Site offers potential opportunities for badgers, bats, water voles and otters. As such further surveys are required, however, there is good scope for providing habitat enhancements as part of any development proposal; and
 - An off-Site pond that held standing water at the time of the survey was present 51m to the east of the Site in the grounds of Baggot Hall and had the potential to support great crested newt and as such further surveys are required. No standing water suitable for great crested newt was however present on the Site itself.
- 3.2 Impacts relating to landscape and townscape and the highways network are referred to below in response to the sites’ assessment within the HELAA.
- 3.3 The HELAA scores the site ‘red’, and therefore not suitable, on the following topics;
- Landscape and Townscape;
 - Strategic Highways Impact
- 3.4 Commentary in response to the above is provided below:

Landscape and Townscape

- 3.5 The HELAA states the following:

“National Character Area 87 – East Anglian Chalk. This is an open, rolling, arable landscape running s-w to n-e along a wide chalk ridge to the south and east of Cambridge The area has generally sparse tree cover, but wooded avenues and hilltop hangers of Beech are a notable features. The area is cut by many river and stream valleys, and the stream valley villages and

landscape are often more far detailed and intermate than the open upland areas. District Character Area: Chalklands landscape character area. Village form is often strongly linier, following streams or valley bottoms, and features a detailed, enclosed series of paddocks and fields at the village edges.

Landscape Character Assessment (2021) Landscape Character Area - 3D: Cam & Granta Tributaries Lowland Farmlands.

The station road frontage is an Important Countryside Frontage (NH/13). Development upon this site would have a significant adverse impact upon the Important Countryside Frontage and compromise all or part of its purpose. It would also permanently erode the open buffer space between existing built form, encroach into the landscape and urbanise the rural characteristics. Even with a reduction in residential numbers the harm to the Important Countryside Frontage would still be significantly adverse and unacceptable."

- 3.6 There is a two-metre-tall evergreen hedge along the site frontage that prevents visual access to the countryside. As such, residential development on Land to the south of Station Road could be brought forward without compromising the purpose of Policy NH/13.
- 3.7 The site has potential for a high-quality landscape led development which respects the setting of the important countryside frontage and wider character area and improves on the existing hedgerow screening which already acts as a natural barrier to the countryside frontage. The loose grain of development and low density proposed will also enable views of the open countryside beyond to be retained from Station Road.

Strategic Highways Impact

- 3.8 The HELAA states the following:

"Within Highways England Zone 8 - M11 North

No capacity for growth. Sites would need to ensure no net increase in vehicles trips on the Strategic Road Network."

- 3.9 The Councils collaborated with Highways England to agree an approach to assessing the impact of proposals on the strategic road network. This assessment was based upon the capacity of junctions and a catchment area was drawn around each junction. The HELAA states that Zone 8 is scored 'red' but that this does not rule out sites at this stage. It follows in reporting that to be acceptable in planning terms development proposals will need to demonstrate, through a Transport Assessment, no net increase in vehicle trips on the strategic road network.
- 3.10 In response to the above very generalised approach to impact on the strategic highway network, it should be noted that Land to the south of Station Road, Harston is considered to be a sustainable location to accommodate further residential development and the site offers a number of following transport connections and opportunities for sustainable travel. The Transport Appraisal prepared for the site which accompanied the Issues and Options consultation in 2020 concluded;

- **Trip Generation** - The number of vehicle trips generated would be imperceptible upon the surrounding highway network;
- **Rail Connections** - Harston is located in the A10 corridor which is well served by trains and buses. Off-road cycle ways connect the site to Foxton Train station approximately 2.5km to the south. Foxton station has two platforms providing north bound routes to Cambridge and Southbound Routes to London King Cross at half hourly frequencies Monday to Friday and hourly frequencies at weekends. The proximity of this transport interchange makes it readily accessible by active modes of travel, particularly cycling;
- **Bus Services** - There are bus services which connect Harston to Royston, Melbourn, Shepreth, Foxton, Hauxton, Trumpington park and ride site and Cambridge, as well as national express coach services to Heathrow airport. The nearest active bus stop to the site is located approximately 250m north of the site along the A10 which is served by three routes offering regular services to St Ives and Cambridge;
- **Cycle Connections** - The A10 is also part of the strategic cycle network between Royston and Cambridge and there are good quality and continuous off-road cycleways along the A10 passing through Harston. To the south, the cycleways extend to Foxton train station, approximately 2.5km from the site. To the north the cycleways extend to Trumpington Park and Ride, approximately 3.9km from the site. Both the station and the park and ride site have cycle parking facilities;
- **Footway Improvements** - The existing footway on the southern side of Station Road is proposed to be widened to 2.0m to improve pedestrian connectivity and provide safe pedestrian access to the site. Tactile paving will also be added to an existing informal crossing adjacent to the access road assisting crossing to Harston and Newton County Primary school as well as at the site access. The indicative footway improvements and informal crossing points are also indicated on drawing SK01;
- **A10 strategic transport corridor** – the corridor is due to feature the following numerous transport improvements to deliver a high-quality public transport corridor which will benefit connectivity to Harston by sustainable and active modes of transport including the following:
 - Improved transport hub at Foxton train station (3km from the site);
 - Proposed improved transport interchange at Trumpington A10/M11 junction (3.2 km from the site);
 - Park and Ride site at Hauxton (M11);
 - Off road cycle links along the A10; and
 - Walking and cycling links to Melbourn and Bassingbourn village colleges.

3.11 As such, the Site is well located to reduce the need to travel by car and can promote sustainable travel. Further public transport enhancements are also proposed that will improve connectivity to Harston by sustainable and active modes of transport.

4.0 Policy S/DS: Development strategy

- 4.1 Policy S/DS sets out the proposed strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places created in Greater Cambridge, not only for the plan period but beyond to 2050.
- 4.2 The proposed development strategy for Greater Cambridge is to direct development to where it has the least climate impact, where active and public transport is the natural choice, where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development, and where jobs, services and facilities can be located near to where people live, whilst ensuring all necessary utilities can be provided in a sustainable way.
- 4.3 The development strategy is broadly **supported**.

5.0 Policy S/RRA: Site Allocations in the Rest of the Rural Area

- 5.1 Policy S/RRA allocates sites for homes or employment that support the overall development strategy within the rural area, excluding the rural southern cluster.
- 5.2 Jesus College supports the principle of policy S/RRA in allocating sites for housing and employment in the rural area. However, the First Proposals document makes very few additional allocations in the rural area and Jesus College **objects** to this approach. This approach threatens the vitality of villages within the rural area and on the edge of Cambridge and stifles opportunities for further growth and supporting local services. As such, the Development Strategy should include for further allocations in the rural area to ensure that a sound spatial strategy is developed and delivered.
- 5.3 Sustainable development in rural areas makes an important contribution to ensuring the vitality of villages and supporting existing rural services and facilities. This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which at paragraph 79 states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.
- 5.4 Notwithstanding this clear direction in national policy, the emerging Local Plan makes very few additional allocations in the rural area. This approach threatens the vitality of villages within the rural area and stifles opportunities for further growth and supporting local services. The allocation of additional small sites in the rural area will also help to ensure that the housing supply for the Local Plan is balanced and robust, reducing the reliance on strategic sites and the limited allocations in villages.
- 5.5 The ability of new development to support rural communities is especially important given the loss of rural services experienced in recent years. The impact of these service losses on rural communities is accentuated when considering pre-existing low service levels compared to better served, urban areas.
- 5.6 The approach of directing some growth to the villages should also take account of existing and proposed public transport improvements. With reference to Harston, whilst it is a relatively small village, it benefits from being within the A10 corridor, plus close proximity to further facilities and services available in nearby villages.
- 5.7 To fully support the rural area and develop a sound spatial strategy with a mixture of deliverable and suitable rural allocations, Land at Station Road Harston should be identified as an allocation for residential development.
- 5.8 Harston is considered a suitable location for further residential development to support an existing rural community. The site is considered to represent a sustainable location for development which will help to meet the housing needs of Greater Cambridge in the next Local Plan period. With the right design, including a suitable layout and design concept, the proposed development on the site could be accommodated without having a significant impact on the surrounding heritage context of the site or landscape setting.

- 5.9 The land is considered to be available, achievable and suitable and the development proposals will bring a number of tangible social, economic and environmental benefits to support the delivery of a sound and sustainable spatial strategy as part of the Local Plan, including:
- Development in a sustainable location with good transport links north into Cambridge via the A10;
 - Close proximity to existing services including primary school; doctors surgery;
 - Development between existing built development;
 - Development within Flood zone 1;
 - Access to local green space;
 - Contributions to affordable housing in accordance with Local Plan Policy;
 - Improved transport hub at Foxton railway station (3km from the site);
 - Proposed improved transport interchange at Trumpington A10/M11 junction (3.2 km from the site);
 - Park and ride site at Hauxton;
 - Off road cycle links along the A10; and
 - Walking and cycling links to Melbourn and Bassingbourn Village Colleges.
- 5.10 In conclusion, it is requested that Land at Station Road Harston is identified as an allocation for residential development in the Plan.

6.0 Policy GP/GB : Protection and enhancement of the Cambridge Green Belt

- 6.1 Policy GP/GB sets out the framework for consideration of development proposals in the Green Belt.
- 6.2 Notwithstanding the underlying purposes of the Green Belt (Para. 138 of the NPPF), where it can be demonstrated that appropriate development can be brought forward in the Green Belt, sites should be considered within the context of their individual circumstances.
- 6.3 Para. 149 of the NPPF confirms that exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt can include for limited infilling of villages. The adopted South Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan includes for a policy to allow for infilling in the Green Belt (Policy NH/9). Policy GP/GB should equally be clear on the forms of development that would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 6.4 The proposed residential development on Land off Station Road, Harston, is considered appropriate in the context of Para. 149 and would comprise suitable infill development that would extend only as far the existing development line of its neighbouring residential and agricultural properties. The proposed residential development would respect the immediate character and would retain the openness of the Green Belt and purpose of the land to the same extent as existing neighbouring development. Land off Station Road is therefore considered suitable to become a residential site allocation as it would comprise a moderate extension to the village and suitable infill development.

APPENDIX 1

SITE LOCATION PLAN

Land at Station Road, Harston

