



LAND AT
SCOTLAND FARM



GREEN BELT APPRAISAL

Prepared on behalf of:

Dry Drayton Estate Ltd & Hallam Land Management

By:

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Green Belt Appraisal has been carried out for land at Scotland Farm, Cambridge by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd (FPCR). The purpose of this appraisal is to provide an understanding of the contribution the site makes to the role and purposes of the Cambridgeshire Green Belt.
- 1.2 FPCR is a multi-disciplinary environmental and design consultancy established over 60 years, with expertise in architecture, landscape, ecology, arboriculture, urban design, masterplanning and environmental impact assessment. The practice is a member of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and is frequently called upon to provide expert evidence on environmental issues at Public and Local Plan Inquiries.

Site Location

- 1.3 The site is located approximately 6km from the western edge of Cambridge and is situated on the northern side of the A428, covering a linear tract of land which stretches between Hardwick to the south and Dry Drayton to the north east. Figure 1 shows the location of the site in relation to the wider Cambridgeshire Green Belt.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF July 2021)

- 2.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's commitment to delivering sustainable development. Throughout the document the aspirations are generally positive - there is a marked absence of specific restrictive policies. A holistic approach is encouraged, balancing benefits with impacts across all aspects of the development process.

Green Belt

- 2.2 Section 13 of the NPPF covers Protecting Green Belt land. The eastern part of the site lies within the Cambridge Green Belt. Paragraph 137 notes that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The NPPF notes that "*The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.*"

Paragraph 138 sets out the 5 purposes of the Green Belt;

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.3 Paragraph 140 notes that once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans.

2.4 Paragraph 142 states;

When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account. Strategic policymaking authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.

2.5 Paragraph 145 states that once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

2.6 The PPG was first published on 6th March 2014 and is a regularly updated online planning resource which provides guidance on the NPPF and the planning system. The NPPF continues to be the primary document for decision making.

Local Planning Policy

South Cambridgeshire Adopted Local Plan (2018)

2.7 The following policies are of relevance to Green Belt matters:

Policy S/4: Cambridge Green Belt

A Green Belt will be maintained around Cambridge that will define the extent of the urban area. The detailed boundaries of the Green Belt in South Cambridgeshire are defined on the Policies Map, which includes some minor revisions to the inner boundary of the Green Belt around Cambridge and to the boundaries around some inset villages. New development in the Green Belt will only be approved in accordance with Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.8 The Local Plan sets out at para 2.31 the established purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt;

- *Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre;*
- *Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting; and*
- *Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.*

2.9 At para 2.31 the factors which define the special character of Cambridge and its setting are set out;

- Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside;
- A soft green edge to the city;
- A distinctive urban edge;
- Green corridors penetrating into the city;
- Designated sites and other features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting;
- The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages; and
- A landscape that retains a strong rural character.

Other Relevant Strategies, Guidelines or Documents

- 2.10 The existing Green Belt studies, covering the area have been reviewed and are summarised in the following section. These provide an understanding of the origins, purpose, and special character of the Cambridge Green Belt. The documents that have been reviewed are listed below;
- Cambridge Green Belt Study, Landscape Design Associates (2002)
 - South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council, Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study 2015
- 2.11 The relevant findings from these reports are summarised in the following sections.

Cambridge Green Belt Study, Landscape Design Associates (2002)

- 2.12 This study was commissioned by South Cambridgeshire District Council and described and illustrated the “*factors that contribute to the setting and special character of Cambridge, the qualities to be safeguarded to preserve this setting and special character, ...and a vision of the city.*”
- 2.13 The report set out the origins of the Green Belt around Cambridge, going back to the Plan for Cambridge set out by Professor Sir William Holford and H. Miles Wright in the aftermath of the Second World War (Holford W and Miles Wright H 1950). They set out their vision of the city and described Cambridge as
- “one of the most pleasant places on earth in which to live... The Cambridge tradition is cherished by the present inhabitants, not merely as something to be preserved but to be continued. Planners who suggest improvements must therefore be certain either that change is inevitable or that clear advantage is to be gained from it.”*

- 2.14 Holford and Miles also recommended that Cambridge;
"should be kept at a level that will retain the general advantages of a medium sized town and the special advantages of Cambridge, and future development should be compact rather than sprawling." (Para 426 Holford and Miles Wright Report 1950).
- 2.15 The 2002 study also provides some useful analysis of the wider Cambridge Green Belt and how different parts of it contribute to the purposes and qualities. The 2002 study included baseline studies, Setting and Special character (seeking to establish what factors contribute to the setting and special character of Cambridge), the Qualities to be safeguarded, and a Vision for the future city.
- 2.16 The study included a visual assessment. The plan is reproduced at Figure 2.
- 2.17 The assessment identified key views to the city, and the nature of views. Elevated vantage points are also identified, along with distinctive features in the setting of Cambridge. Scotland Farm lies on the very western edge in an area identified as *"rural setting with scattered villages"*, importantly well outside the area identified as *"Approximate area of Green Belt from which Cambridge can be seen."*
- 2.18 The Landscape and Townscape Analysis section of the study included a plan which is reproduced at Figure 3.
- 2.19 This identified the distinctive parts Cambridge and inner *"necklace"* villages and the countryside that separates them. Scotland Farm lies to the west on the edge of the Green Belt, within an area as *"rural land within the Green Belt"*.
- 2.20 The study also investigated Townscape and Landscape role and function, and the findings were shown on the plan reproduced at Figure 4.
- 2.21 This identifies the historic core, and *"distinctive landscape"* which are areas defined as specifically recognisable and distinctive to the city. *"Supportive landscape"* is identified as land which supports the character of the historic core and areas distinctive to the city. *"Connective landscapes"* are shown as areas integral to the city, but lack distinction, and some areas of visually detracting landscape/townscape. Scotland Farm is shown as lying on the outer edge of *"Other Rural Areas of the Green Belt"*. These are defined as *"views of the city are scarce or absent. The function of this landscape is in providing a backdrop to views of the city, and in providing a setting for approaches to connective, supportive and distinctive areas of townscape and landscape."*
- 2.22 The report went on to identify the Special Qualities of the Cambridge Green Belt in 2002. These were summarised as;
- *A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole*
 - *Short and/or characteristic approaches to Cambridge from the edge of the city*
 - *A city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle*
 - *Key views of Cambridge from the landscape*
 - *Significant areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape*
 - *Topography providing a framework to Cambridge*
 - *A soft green edge to the city*

- *Green fingers into the city*
- *Designated sites and areas enriching the setting of Cambridge*
- *Long distance footpaths and bridleways providing links between Cambridge and the open countryside*
- *Elements and features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting*
- *The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of necklace villages*
- *A city set in a landscape which retains a strong rural character.*

2.23 These are also shown on the plan reproduced at Figure 5.

2.24 This shows how the features identified as special qualities mostly lie relatively close to the city or the landscape surrounding it. Scotland Farm lies on the western edge of the area, simply described as “*rural land*” with no qualities identified near to it. This suggests that the site makes little contribution to the Green Belt based on this evidence.

Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study November 2015

2.25 This study was commissioned jointly by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, following the suspension of the Examinations of their respective Local Plans in May 2015. The aims of the study were to provide a robust, transparent, and clear understanding of how the land in the Cambridge Green Belt performs against the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt, for the Inner Green Belt Boundary. Scotland Farm does not lie within the area defined as “*Inner Green Belt*”. However, the study contains information of relevance to the wider Cambridge Green Belt, and so the study is briefly discussed below.

2.26 The “*Special Qualities of the Green Belt which are described as finite and irreplaceable and should be safeguarded*” as set out in the 2002 study are adopted in the 2015 study.

2.27 The 2015 study notes the changes to the city since the 2002 study including Green Belt releases for residential development, and major developments at Addenbrookes and for the University. It notes that Cambridge remains a relatively compact city, with all suburbs well connected to the city centre, which is focussed on the medieval core.

2.28 The 2015 study includes a visual assessment, which is an update to the one completed in the 2002 report. The plan is reproduced at Figure 6.

2.29 Scotland Farm remains well outside the area from which Cambridge can be seen and from where any important characteristics or features are identified.

2.30 The findings of the Green Belt studies, in particular the Special Qualities have been taken forward by South Cambridgeshire in Plan Policy S/4.

3.0 THE SITE

- 3.1 The site consists of a number of large scale, intensive arable fields which are of regular, geometric form. Land to the east of Scotland Road lies within the Green Belt and Land to the west of Scotland Road is outside the Green Belt. There is little difference in landscape character between the two parts. Fields are bound by a combination of small-scale hedgerows or timber post and rail fences with ditches also a feature, especially along Scotland Road. The landform rises to the south west with small scale valleys associated with watercourses flowing towards the north east, within the western part of the site. The eastern part of the site comprises the western slopes of a minor valley containing the Callow Brook that extends north to Dry Drayton. The valley rises to the east with some tree belts running along the higher ground. Two field ponds are also present with one located to the south adjacent to Scotland Farm and a second towards the north of the site associated with a small woodland at Fishpond Plantation. Tree cover is low with only small pockets of woodland at Fishpond Plantation and Blackthorn Spinney located at the centre of the site. Other than this, trees are limited to lines of trees associated with hedgerows and the water courses with narrow linear woodlands at Top Plantation on the south western boundary and Newroad Plantation on the north eastern boundary. Further tree cover is associated with settlement and farms with trees around Scotland Farm to the south and around the edge of Dry Drayton to the north east.
- 3.2 The site is open and of large scale with wide views possible over agricultural land and to more distant settlement and highway infrastructure, with low skylines. Settlement is not prominent although agricultural buildings are visible set amongst mature trees. The adjacent villages of Dry Drayton and Bar Hill are effectively screened within views by mature trees on the perimeter of the settlements. Pylons and overhead cables are a visible feature crossing the landscape within the northern part of the site.
- 3.3 The A428 passes the site to the south, along the southern boundary with the A14 passing beyond the settlement of Bar Hill further to the north east. Scotland Road passes between the eastern and western parcels of the site leading from the A428 in the south to Dry Drayton and a network of minor roads to the north east. There are few roads to the west of the site with only lanes accessing Childerley Hall and other farm buildings. Public footpaths are prevalent however with a number of routes passing through the local area. These include a bridleway and footpaths which cross the northern part of the site and the Pathfinder Long Distance Walk which leads east to west linking Childerley Hall in the west to Dry Drayton in the east. A permissive path also leads away from the site from New Farm to the south east linking with a footpath (ref 66/17) which follows Callow Brook.
- 3.4 The proposed Scotland Farm Travel Hub lies to the south of the western part of the part, within the Green Belt.
- 3.5 The effect of topography and the intervening vegetation associated with Maddingly and Maddingly Park to the east means there is effective visual separation between the site and Cambridge which lies to the east. The landscape is one of very large-scale arable land, with few distinctive features, just some minor local variations in topography and a low proportion of woodland cover.

4.0 THE ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE SITE IN RELATION TO GREEN BELT

National Green Belt Purposes

- 4.1 The eastern part of the site lies within the Cambridge Green Belt.
- 4.2 Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account. The NPPF states that strategic policymaking authorities should consider, channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.
- 4.3 Within Cambridge there is very little previously developed land, and there is an acknowledgement that green field land will be required for development. Having regard to paragraph 142 of the NPPF, when releasing land from the Green Belt, first consideration should be given to land well-served by public transport. Although the land east of Scotland Road is not currently well-served, it will be within the early part of the Plan period as a result of the proposed Scotland Farm Travel Hub at the southern end of the site and the C2C public transport corridor. On this basis, it is appropriate to assess Scotland Farm against the purposes of the Green Belt prior to other less well-served locations.
- 4.4 An extensive area of land east of Callow Brook, is available for Compensatory Improvements as notes in paragraph 143 of the NPPF, including habitat creation, landscape enhancement and increased public access, established as part of the comprehensive Green infrastructure design as part of the wider site.
- 4.5 Paragraph 138 sets out the 5 purposes of the Green Belt;
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*
- 4.6 Scotland Farm is a proposal for a new sustainable settlement, not connected to a large built-up area, and approximately 6km from the edge of Cambridge City itself. Development of Scotland Farm would not lead to the “unrestricted sprawl” of a large built-up area, as subsection a) of paragraph 138.
- 4.7 Scotland Farm is currently mostly under arable cultivation, so the establishment of a new settlement would inevitably encroach on the countryside (as subsection c) of paragraph 138), as would be the case with the release of any farmland from the Green Belt.

- 4.8 As it is acknowledged that there is insufficient derelict and other urban land to provide the required quantum of development for Greater Cambridge, subsection e) of paragraph 138 is not evaluated any further in this appraisal.
- 4.9 Subsections b) and d) of Paragraph 138 are developed in more detail in planning policy for Greater Cambridge, through the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, so these purposes are evaluated by reference to that in the following section.

Cambridge Green Belt Purposes

- 4.10 The Cambridge Green Belt Purposes are set out in the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 and the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018.
- 4.11 The Local Green Belt Purposes are;
- *preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre*
 - *maintain and enhance the quality of its setting*
 - *prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city*
- 4.12 The following section of the report analysis the role the Scotland Farm site plays in the local Green Belt purposes. In terms of the unique character and setting of the city, the factors which define the special character of Cambridge, and its setting are relevant, and these are explored below;

Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside.

- 4.13 The work done as part of the 2002 and 2015 Green Belt Studies identified the areas where views to Cambridge were possible from, and in particular where Key Views were possible from. Scotland Farm lies well outside these areas. The site analysis carried out within the LVA for Scotland Farm, confirms this. Scotland Farm does not contribute this element of Special Character.

A green edge to the city.

- 4.14 Scotland Farm is located approximately 6km west of Cambridge and provides no role in providing a green edge to the city. It lies within farmland separate to the west, beyond the M11.

A distinctive urban edge.

- 4.15 Scotland Farm similarly plays no role in providing a distinctive urban edge.

Green corridors penetrating into the city.

- 4.16 Green Corridors (or Green Fingers in the 2002 study) are identified in the Green Belt studies and none of these extend out to Scotland Farm, which plays no role in this element of special character.

Designated sites and other features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting.

- 4.17 The designated sites and other features that contribute positively the character of the landscape setting, are identified in the 2002 and 2015 studies. To the west of Cambridge these include the

American Cemetery, windmills and the church at Coton. Scotland Farm is separated from these features by the A14 and is not a designated site or other feature identified as contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting.

The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages:

- 4.18 The 2002 and 2015 studies repeatedly reference the “*inner necklace villages*”, which include Coton, Barton, Great Shefford Fulbourn and Girton, and these are identified on plans in the reports. The settlements closest to the Scotland Farm site are Dry Drayton and Barr Hill to the north and Hardwick to the south. These settlements lie on the boundary of the Green Belt but are not within it. The Scotland Farm scheme would not make any difference to the relationships between “*inner necklace villages*” or their relationship with Cambridge. The new settlement would lie between Hardwick and Dry Drayton but would be physically and visually separate to both, with Hardwick being separated by the A428 and a permanent landscape buffer with woodland established between the new settlement and Dry Draton. The new settlement would continue the pattern of settlements along the A428, with the expanded Cambourne and the development at Bourn Airfield.

A landscape that retains a strong rural character.

- 4.19 This element of Special Character relates to providing the setting to Cambridge. The Green Belt Studies of 2002 and 2015 identify the landscape that is distinctive and supportive largely around the edge of the city but extending west as far as the American Cemetery. The part of Scotland Farm, that lies within the Green Belt, is part of a broad area of “*Rural Land*” identified on the outer edges of the Green Belt. Where there is no visual connection with the city, this must comprise land that makes the least contribution in terms of a wider rural setting.

Summary

- 4.20 When analysing the factors which provide the unique character and setting of the city, the land at Scotland Farm, provides no role, or in some cases a very low level of contribution to these factors. This very low contribution to the character and setting feeds through into the site providing a very low contribution to the Cambridge Green Belt Purposes overall. If land is to be removed from the Green Belt to provide the required level of development, then a site that makes a minimal contribution to Green Belt Purposes should be preferable to one that contributes to a greater extent.

Amendments to the Green Belt Boundary and Compensatory Improvements.

- 4.21 The analysis of the existing Green Belt studies, and the review of the site itself contained in the LVA, identifies that the eastern part of the site, which lies within the Green Belt, contributes little to the overall Green Belt purposes. At present the western boundary of the Green Belt extends along Scotland Road. A minor adjustment to the east, to follow the Callow Brook, would form a recognisable and permanent alternative boundary. This is shown on Figure 7. Land to the east of the Brook could be permanently dedicated as land for Compensatory Improvements. The land could include new habitat creation and landscape measures, along with new public access. Part of the land could remain in productive agricultural use, but within an enhanced ecological framework, and managed to optimise the biodiversity potential. New Green Belt could be created to the west of Scotland Road, to provide permanent separation between the new community and Dry Drayton, but also between Dry Drayton and Barr Hill. The new Green Belt boundary could follow the watercourse and valley base to the west of Dry Drayton, with the new boundary south of Dry

Drayton, being marked by planting belts. This boundary change would form a logical boundary with Local Green Belt principles.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This report summarises the findings of a review into the existing Green Belt studies for Cambridge, and analyses how the Scotland Farm site contributes to the recognised purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt.
- 5.2 The analysis has shown that the site contributes between nothing and a minimal contribution to the factors which define the special character of Cambridge and its setting. In turn these factors feed through to establishing that the site provides a very low contribution to the overall Cambridge Green Belt Purposes.
- 5.3 A minor amendment to the Green Belt Boundary, at Scotland Farm, moving it east to run along the Callow Brook, rather than along Scotland Road, would take the potential new settlement area outside of the Green Belt. Land could be included in the Green Belt to the west of Scotland Road to provide separation between the new community and Dry Drayton, and between Dry Drayton and Barr Hill. The new boundary would be recognisable and permanent. A new area of Compensatory Improvements, including ecological and landscape enhancements and provision of new public access and rights of way, could be established east of Callow Brook. This would be designed to tie into the new settlement and would further strengthen the long-term boundary to the Green Belt.
- 5.4 Green Belt release on the outer edge of the Green Belt, instead of Green Belt release close to the city, would protect the setting and scale of Cambridge, compatible with Holford and Miles Wrights vision that the city should *“retain the general advantages of a medium sized town and the special advantages of Cambridge, and future development should be compact rather than sprawling.”* (Para 426 Holford and Miles Wright Report 1950).”



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