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RE: Greater Cambridge Call for Sites – March 2025 Land at Hillside Orwell – HELAA Reference 40496

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This supporting statement has been prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of Endurance Estates to support the promotion of Land to the rear of Fishers Lane, Hillside, Orwell (herein after referred to as “the site”) to the Greater Cambridge Call for Sites update process which is running until the 7th of March 2025.
- 1.2 The site extends to approximately 1.35ha and is promoted for a residential development of approximately 26 dwellings.
- 1.3 The site has been promoted at previous stages of the plan preparation and assessed under HELAA reference 40496.
- 1.4 In line with the guidance published by Greater Cambridge Planning, this note is submitted in order to provide updated information on the changing context which has improved the Suitability of the site.
- 1.5 To support future representations and potential planning applications, technical investigations are ongoing, however these are not available at the time of this consultation

Greater Cambridge Housing Need

- 1.6 As a result of the changes to the NPPF in December 2024 and associated updates to the Standard Method for calculating Local Housing Need, it is common ground that Greater Cambridge cannot, as of February 2025, demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. Whilst it is accepted that the Call for Sites submission does not directly relate to the 5-year housing land supply issues, it should nevertheless feed into the emerging Local Plan in terms of strategy and represents a material change in the circumstances for housing development in Greater Cambridge.
- 1.7 The new Local Housing Need calculated in accordance with the updated Standard Method represents a combined increase of 634 dwellings per annum for Greater Cambridge when compared to the housing requirements as outlined in the Adopted 2018 Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Plans. Details are set out in the table below.

	Adopted Local Plan Housing Requirements (and difference versus 2024 Standard Method)	Previous Standard Method LHN (and difference versus 2024 Standard Method)	December 2024 Standard Method LHN	Proposed Housing Requirement in Emerging Plan (and difference versus 2024 Standard Method)
Combined Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire	1,675 dpa (-634)	1,726 dpa (-583)	2,309 dpa	2,111 dpa (-198)

- 1.8 Whilst it is true the majority of the 5-year housing land supply shortfall is as a result of the increased Standard Method Housing Need figure, the shortfall has undoubtedly been exacerbated by difficulties in delivering the large-scale strategic sites which Greater Cambridge are reliant upon to deliver the majority of the housing need across both districts. Since the adoption of the 2018 Plans, both Councils are increasingly reliant upon significant housing delivery at Northstowe, Bourn Airfield and Waterbeach, alongside strategic sites on the Cambridge Fringe. Many of these sites have regrettably suffered from widely publicised difficulties in the delivery of the supporting infrastructure necessary to mitigate their impacts. As a result, many large sites now running significantly behind their expected delivery rates as outlined in the Housing Trajectory.
- 1.9 Accordingly, it is necessary for Greater Cambridge to re-assess the strategy for delivering the quantum of housing required by the new Standard Method. Logically, to minimise the amount of time in which Greater Cambridge cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, it would be prudent to focus on smaller and medium-scale sites that are located in sustainable locations and can come forward quickly. Crucially, smaller and medium sized sites can often come forward without the need to provide significant additional infrastructure prior to delivery commencing.
- 1.10 The fastest, and most cost-effective method of boosting supply in the short and medium term, would be to focus on locations which benefit from existing and committed infrastructure, or do not require additional infrastructure to be provided. This includes sites such as Land at Hillside Orwell, which not require significant additional infrastructure and could come forward quickly.
- 1.11 It is the view of Endurance Estates that a balanced portfolio of small, medium and large-scale sites should be allocated to both deliver the quantum of housing required in the next plan period, whilst also ensuring choice and competition for housing land and robustness in the housing trajectory, enabling a rolling 5-year housing land supply to be maintained throughout the Plan period.
- 1.12 Capitalising on this existing and committed infrastructure investments is clearly the most effective method of boosting housing supply in the short-term, however this must be balanced with a need to support smaller villages which risk stagnation and decline without controlled growth.

2. SITE ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 The site has been previously submitted and assessed in the 2021 HELAA document under Site Reference **40496**. The assessment concluded the following:

Criteria	Outcome of HELAA
Suitable	Red
Available	Green
Achievable	Green

- 2.1 Since this assessment was made, there have been material changes in the circumstances which improve the suitability, availability and achievability of the site for residential development. These representations aim to outline these material changes in circumstance and demonstrate that the site represents a sustainable location for residential development.

Suitable

- 2.2 The 2011 HELAA gave the site a 'Red' rating for suitability. The biggest contributing factor to this rating was impact upon the Historic Environment.
- 2.3 The unfavourable rating for Heritage impact is primarily a result of the easternmost extent of the registered Historic Park and Garden associated with Wimpole Hall, which meets Cambridge Road opposite the site. However, the HELAA does state that despite this proximity "some small level of development might be possible, but it would need to respect the residential context and the views into and out of the Wimpole Hall Site". Any proposals would have to take account of their historic context, and this can be factored into the final detailed design for any scheme which comes forward on the site. Impact upon the Historic Park and Gardens should therefore be assessed once a more detailed scheme can be prepared. Regardless, it is clear that proximity alone does not necessarily preclude development of the site, and so the 'Red' rating is considered to be unjustified.
- 2.4 In terms of location, Orwell is classified as a Group Village by Policy S/10 of the South Cambridgeshire Adopted Local Plan 2018. As a result, the development up to an indicative maximum of 8 dwellings is permitted with up to 15 on an exceptional basis.
- 2.5 Orwell has a population of 1,146 as of the 2021 Census, an approximate 6% increase on the 1,080 residents at the 2001 Census. This is in stark contrast with South Cambridgeshire which grew by just under 25% in the same time period. This represents a stagnation and does not reflect the need to meet local affordable and market housing needs as well as protect the vitality of the village and to secure the ongoing provision of shops and services. Without additional growth in villages such as Orwell, their range of shops and essential services is likely to continue to deteriorate.
- 2.6 Indeed, the Petersfield C of E Primary School in Orwell reports having 121 pupils on roll versus a capacity of 210 – indicating the school is at less than 60% capacity.
- 2.7 Other services in the village include the Chequers Public House, a Post Office, Convenience Store and Orwell Clunch Pit (a recreation trail).
- 2.8 Since the development at Hurdleditch Road was approved in 2016 (**S/3190/15/OL**), no further major schemes have been approved in the village. Further residential growth in Orwell and indeed surrounding villages is therefore overdue and considered to be essential to securing the long-term viability of the school and other key services in the area.
- 2.9 Beyond the range of shops and services in the village, the HELAA also noted other areas of concern, brief responses to which are below:
- In terms of landscape impact, the HELAA notes that the site "currently has enough screening on site

to limit views but could benefit from further screening north to limit views of the countryside looking into the site". This approach is agreed, and any detailed proposals would incorporate extensive landscape planting along the Site boundaries to preserve the character of the countryside and restrict views into the development. There is also an opportunity to include a landscape buffer/ open space at the northern end of the Site to further mitigate any potential harm.

- In terms of Biodiversity, the site is not thought to contain any priority habitats, however the proposals for the site would be accompanied by significant landscape planting to enhance the existing features of the site and provide a Biodiversity Net Gain in line with current and emerging policies.
- Any application would be accompanied by a Heritage and Archaeological Assessment and follow up trenching can be secured by condition if necessary.
- The HELAA notes that "the proposed site access is acceptable in principle subject to detailed design" and that "potential access constraints... could be overcome through development". Further technical work and access design details will accompany any future application.
- In terms of transport and roads, "any potential impact of the functioning of trunk roads and/or local roads could be reasonably mitigated". Further traffic and transport assessments will accompany any future application.
- In terms of noise/vibration/light pollution, the HELAA notes "the site is capable of being developed to provide a healthy internal and external environment". Further technical work in the form of a noise impact assessment will be undertaken to support any application.
- The HELAA also notes that conditions will be required relating to ground contamination as a result of the agricultural use.

- 2.10 Accordingly, none of the potential issues raised are significant enough to preclude development of the site and can be adequately addressed through further, detailed information at application stage or through design and mitigation. We would emphasise that, growth in Orwell is essential for the continued vitality of the village itself and to safeguard the existing shops and services therein.

Available

- 2.11 As confirmed in previous representations, the site is in agricultural use, and Endurance Estates (a site promoter) control the site for the purposes of the proposed development. There are no known legal or ownership impediments to the development of the site.
- 2.12 There are no planning permissions relevant to the site which would preclude the development, or which would cast doubt upon the intentions of the landowner or promoter.
- 2.13 The site is available to commence development immediately upon the grant of detailed permission, i.e., within years 0-5 of the plan period.
- 2.14 Endurance Estates may pursue a speculative application ahead of, or in tandem with the later stages of, the Local Plan process. As such, the site could begin delivery of dwellings within the first years of the plan period, helping to ensure the Councils are able to maintain a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- 2.15 The site is therefore **Available** for development.

Achievable

- 2.16 The details previously submitted still stand. The site is in agricultural use and accordingly has a low existing use value. At present, there are no known viability constraints which would preclude development in line with both adopted and emerging planning policies.
- 2.17 The site is therefore **Achievable**.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.2 Land off Hillside, Orwell, is promoted for residential of approximately 26 dwellings with associated infrastructure, including landscaping and open space.
- 3.3 The site remains **Available** and **Achievable** as outlined in previous representations and confirmed in the HELAA 2021 document. In addition, the responses to the HELAA items outlined in this letter, in addition to an evolving context demonstrates that the site can be considered **Suitable**.
- 3.4 It is anticipated that the site will be available for development in the first five years of the new local plan period, delivering against the pressing need for new market and affordable housing in Greater Cambridge and helping to maintain a 5-year housing land supply. There are no known constraints which could conceivably preclude the development of the site.
- 3.5 Endurance Estates therefore hope that the site will be given further consideration as part of the updated HELAA. The Site could help meet unmet Local Housing Needs over the Plan period and we hope it will be considered for a housing allocation in the new Local plan.

Yours sincerely



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