

Your ref: 115896  
Our ref: Land North of Mill Lane Sawston  
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Date: 29/01/2026

Planning Policy  
Greater Cambridge Planning

Dear Sir / Madam,

**REG 18-DRAFT GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION - LAND NORTH OF MILL LANE, SAWSTON, CB22 3BY (HELAA SITE ID: 115896)**

On behalf of our client, [REDACTED] we have submitted an amended Call for Sites form for land north of Mill Lane, Sawston CB22 3BY (hereafter “the Site”) (HELAA Site ID: 115896).

This Site was submitted as part of the 2023 Call for Sites with a proposed dwelling number of up to 225 units.

The Site was given an overall suitability score of ‘Red’ owing to concerns around encroachment into the countryside, potential harm to protected tree belt which runs through the site and inadequate access into the site with only one point of access proposed.

**Site Location**

The Site is located within the village of Sawston which is identified in the settlement hierarchy as a Rural Centre, reflecting its position as one of the most sustainable villages within the district. Sawston continues to be recognised as a Rural Centre within the draft GCLP where it states that in ‘Rural Centres’ there will be no limit on how many homes can be built on a single site within the village framework. Whilst the site currently lies outside the settlement framework, it would represent a logical extension to the village whilst helping to meet the draft local plan’s significant housing requirements.

The Site benefits from good access public transport. Whittlesford Parkway and Shelford railway stations are approximately 3km and 4km away respectively, both providing direct services to Cambridge city centre and London with onward regional connections. The Stagecoach Citi 7 bus route serves Sawston, with the nearest bus stop within 1km of the site, offering frequent daytime services every 20 minutes between Saffron Walden, Sawston and Cambridge city centre.

National Cycle Route 11 runs directly past the Site along Mill Lane and New Road connecting Sawston to Cambridge City Centre as well as neighbouring villages including Stapleford, Whittlesford, Duxford and Hinxton. Further improvements for pedestrian and cyclist connectivity are due to be delivered under the forthcoming Sawston Greenway project.

As a Rural Centre, Sawston is well placed to support additional growth. A variety of convenience services are located within 1.2 km of the site, including a Central Co-op Foodstore, Sawston Post Office, Boots Pharmacy and other village amenities. The area also offers strong educational provision with Icknield Primary School, Bellbird Primary School, and Sawston Village College within walking distance of the Site.

Employment opportunities are available within the village at South Cambridge Business Park and Unity Campus are located around 2.5 km from the site. The Site is also within walking and cycling distance of open recreational spaces and leisure centre within Sawston that supports healthy lifestyles and recreational activities.

### Green Belt

The majority of the Site is within the Cambridgeshire Green Belt and is predominately undeveloped land.

The *Development Strategy Topic Paper (2025)* states GCSP consider the identified need for 73,300 jobs and 48,195 new homes across the plan period can be delivered without necessitating the allocation or release of Green Belt land within the authority area, though given the fundamental changes to national policy and guidance regarding the Green Belt since the LUC Green Belt Assessment (2021) we now understand that a revised Green Belt Assessment will be completed and published after the Regulation 18 Consultation closes. It is argued the revised Green Belt Assessment should have informed the Draft Local Plan and been published as part of and the Regulation 18 Consultation.

Paragraph 146 (NPPF, 2024) identifies that one of the exceptional circumstances in which Green Belt boundaries can be altered is where an authority cannot meet its identified need for homes, commercial or other development through other means. It is therefore noted that GCSP may require a further Green Belt review and consider the additional release of land from the Green Belt to accommodate a higher growth scenario should the Council not be able to accommodate additional growth on non-Green Belt sites

Bidwells understand that GCSP's consultants (LDA) are currently considering the process of examining Grey Belt issues and possibly Grey Belt sites across Greater Cambridge. Officers have stated at various committees that Grey Belt sites are not required to accommodate housing allocations and the Draft Local Plan 'is not configured for this'. However, the fact LDA are considering an assessment of Grey Belt suggests the Draft Local Plan does need to cover this important issue given the increasing importance of Grey Belt policy in the current NPPF (2024) and the Consultation Draft (2025).

Within the 2021 Green Belt Assessment, the Site was assessed under parcels SA20 and SA21 and was found to have the following contributions to the Cambridge Purposes:

#### SA20:

- Purpose 1: No contribution to preserving Cambridge's character
- Purpose 2: A moderate contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting
- Purpose 3: Relatively limited contribution to preventing merging of communities with one another and with the city.

#### SA21:

- Purpose 1: No contribution to preserving Cambridge's character
- Purpose 2: A limited contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting
- Purpose 3: Moderate contribution to preventing merging of communities with one another and with the city.

The study concluded that the additional impact on the Green Belt from the release of the parcel would be negligible and the harm resulting from its release would be moderate for parcel SA20 low for parcel SA21.

Since the 2021 study, the Government introduced the concept of Grey Belt in the December 2024 NPPF with the purpose of allowing development on poorly performing pieces of Green Belt, which otherwise would have been restricted to demonstrating very special circumstances. Further guidance was provided in the Green Belt PPG when assessing potential Grey Belt land.

The Site is considered to have the potential to qualify intrinsically as Grey Belt land. Based upon the Council's own Green Belt evidence base, the Site clearly does not strongly contribute to NPPF Green Belt purposes a), b) and d), nor does it have any footnote 7 policies that would form a strong reason for refusing development. Development would also clearly not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the Plan area.

An independent Green Belt Assessment has been undertaken by Bidwells. This assessment concludes that whilst the site is not previously developed land, development of the Site would not fundamentally undermine the functions of the Green Belt taken together across the Plan as a whole. The Site is considered to meet the definition of Grey Belt land, satisfies the 'Golden Rules' for Grey Belt release, and is therefore suitable for development. This assessment also addresses concerns regarding encroachment into the countryside and potential urbanisation of the rural landscape by clearly outlining the Site's role and relative importance within its setting. Importantly, the Site is well screened to the east by existing tree cover and benefits from a defined western boundary along the A1301, further limiting its landscape impact.

### Other Key Constraints

The Site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1. Any minimal surface water flooding can easily be designed out through the development process.

There are no major heritage concerns with development of this Site. The Site does not lie within a Conservation Area. Consideration will be given in the development process to the nearby listed buildings including Grade II Village College.

There are no key infrastructure or utilities running across the Site.

### Proposed Uses

██████ does not object to housing in principle but objects to the draft emerging local plan's over-reliance on large, infrastructure-dependent sites and failure to allocate smaller, sustainable rural sites like Land North of Mill Lane, Sawston. Separate representations have been made to draft policy S/DS as part of this consultation.

The Site is submitted to deliver up to 230 dwellings. The Site is proposed to comprise both market and affordable housing as well as accompanying uses such as public open space and biodiversity net gain.

The Site relates well to the existing built form, representing a logical extension to Sawston. The Site is physically well-contained, bounded by existing development and key infrastructure, notably the A1301, Mill Lane.

██████ is making significant investment in Cambridge and is projected to experience substantial growth in employee numbers over the coming years. The company currently operates from the former Spicers Site within Sawston Business Park, a site specifically allocated for employment use under draft Policy S/RSC/FSS. Importantly, Sawston Business Park lies in very close proximity to the proposed residential development Site. The co-location of new homes and employment facilities demonstrates a highly sustainable pattern of development, supporting the principle of living near work, reducing commuting pressures, and reinforcing ██████ long-term commitment to investment in the local area. By aligning housing growth with employment expansion, the proposal delivers tangible benefits for both the local economy and the wider community.

The landowner has confirmed that the Site is available for development in the next 0-5 years.

## **Access**

The Site is currently marked as 'red' within the HELAA Assessment in regards to Site Access (HELAA ref: 115896). This was in the basis that a development over 100 units could not be supported by a single access and that two points of access are required.

Since the last Call for Sites submission in 2023, additional highways technical work has been undertaken by EAS to demonstrate sufficient access into the site to support a capacity of up to 230 units.

Access into the Site would be taken off Mill Lane to the south. The access would be designed to accommodate all expected vehicle profiles, including refuse vehicles and fire tender and would be supported with the relevant swept path analysis in any future planning application.

As per the Cambridge Highway Development Management General Principles for Development (2022) document, sites between 100 and 200 units would require a secondary emergency access, while larger sites will require two full access points. In circumstances where two points of access cannot be achieved, the views of the emergency services should be sought.

The secondary emergency access is proposed to be taken from White Field Way. The proposed secondary access would form a continuation of the existing carriageway, and as such there are no expected concerns with regards to visibility or swept path analysis.

With both a primary access off Mill Lane and secondary emergency access route from White Field Way, the Site has the potential to support a capacity of up to 230 units. The HELAA Assessment for site access should be upgraded to at least an amber rating.

## **Summary**

The Site is able to make any necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure arising through the proposals and would provide new, or improvements to existing, green spaces which are available to the public.

Allocating this Site for residential development would support the delivery of homes in a highly sustainable location.

The Call for Sites submission is supported by the following information:

- Full Green Belt Assessment for the site demonstrating its relationship to the Green Belt and its contribution against the relevant assessment criteria
- Highways technical information addressing access, capacity and the potential impact on the local highway network
- NWBio intent statement evidencing future investment in Cambridge and the availability of the site for development and its sustainable relationship with NWBio's Research Centre (employment) on Sawston Business Park
- Location Plan

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

**Sophia Nitschke**

Senior Planner