

FAO Ms Gloria Alexander

**Matter Number Matter SC1
South Cambridgeshire strategy for the rural area**

**Personal Reference – 21430
Copsehill Developments**

Representation number - 60357

**Representor's name - Alan Scott
In association with Richard Murray Planning Associates
Please address all correspondence to alan.ks@me.com
Birch Hollow, Lower Station Road, BN8 4HU**

8 May 2017

Ms Laura Graham, BSc MA MRTPI
Local Plan Examinations
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambridgeshire
CB23 6EA

8 May 2017

Dear Ms Graham

Further to the email from Claire Spencer of 24 April 2017 to me, I submit here our Statement. This is on behalf of Copsehill Developments in association with Richard Murray Planning.

Local Plan Examination - South Cambridgeshire strategy for the rural area (Matter SC1)

I understand that the specific hearing sessions relating to SC1 will take place on Tuesday 6 June in relation to the omission sites in Histon & Impington. Site 227 was in the original SHLAA as suitable for development. We are seeking reinstatement of this site south of Villa Road (1.2D i b) in the Proposed Submission Local Plan. This is a 5 hectare site adjacent to Impington and is known as the Kings Gate site. Please see attached plan.

This statement relates to representation 60357 which was made on 11 November 2015. This was submitted by representor number 21430 (Copsehill Developments).

We would like to speak at the Hearing if invited.

1. The Government is very keen to encourage more custom and self-build homes – at present the UK delivers only 8% of its homes this way. The Government has pledged to *at least double* the proportion of self-built homes by 2020.
2. A survey conducted early in 2014 by IPSOS Mori on behalf of the National Custom & Self Build Association (NaCSBA) found that 14% of the adult population is currently researching how to go about a self-build project. The survey also found that 2% of the population had completed all its research, and now wants to start constructing their self-build home in the next 12 months. Nationwide this represents about one million households. So, across the district of South Cambridgeshire, this suggests that around 3,000 households are currently searching for a suitable plot, and are keen to start building their own homes during the next year.
3. The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 requires all English Local Planning Authorities to maintain a register of people who want to build their own homes, and to have regard to this when carrying out their planning and housing functions. The Planning and Housing Act 2016 offers further support to the Government's aspirations to increase self-build housing in the UK by requiring authorities to grant sufficient suitable development permissions on serviced plots of land to meet the rolling demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in their

areas. The register held by South Cambridgeshire currently identifies a demand for 625 plots, and this is increasing by approx. 10 per month.

4. All English local authorities now have a statutory duty to meet this rolling demand *within three years*.
5. South Cambridgeshire is one of 11 Vanguard authorities that is taking the lead in driving the Government's agenda on custom and self-build. The Government's Housing White Paper, recently pledged to make it easier and quicker for people to build their own homes. The White Paper re-reiterates the Government's commitment to the 'Right to Build' and makes it clear that custom and self-build is now an important part of its strategy to solve the housing crisis, along with support for small and medium sized (SME) builders, innovative, offsite methods of construction and a simpler planning system.
6. There is currently not enough land identified to meet the demand for self/custom-built homes in South Cambridgeshire, despite the new legal requirement to match the demand on the register within three years.
7. To respond to this increasing mis-match between demand and supply the Council is acting to encourage the provision of self-build plots by introducing amendments to pertinent policies in the emerging Local Plan requiring the provision of dwelling plots for sale to self and custom builders and is preparing a Self-Build SPD. However, if the Council is to fulfil its obligations this is not enough. To reflect changes to national planning policy the Proposed Modifications Document (March 2016) proposes that self-build be written into Policy H/8 with the inclusion of the following new bullet point:

"g. On all sites of 20 or more dwellings, and in each phase of strategic sites, developers will supply dwelling plots for sale to self and custom builders. Where plots have been made available and appropriately marketed for at least 12 months and have not been sold, the plot(s) may either remain on the market or be built out by the developer. Exceptionally, no provision will be expected in developments or phases of developments which comprise high density multi-story flats and apartments".

These amendments as drafted do not set any specific percentage requirement and in the absence of landowners and developers willing to undertake any significant scale of development the contribution likely to be achieved via this policy will be minimal. The availability of land as the major dictating factor in enabling the provision of self-build plots is recognised at paragraph 7.44 of the March 2016 Local Plan Proposed Modifications, stating that "there is a growing trend for people to build their own homes which is limited by the availability of land".

8. The Kings Gate site at Villa Road Impington is eminently suitable to assist in meeting this demand. A working group was formed with SCDC housing development, Orbit Homes (Housing Association) and the Self/Custom Build Regional Manager. From this group, detailed plans have been prepared for this site that show a scheme that would deliver 168 dwellings, including potentially, a substantial number of self-build homes. 40% of these would be low cost/affordable homes aimed at people on lower/modest incomes. There is existing housing alongside at South Road and 72 new homes on the Bellways site on the other side of Villa Road. The site is in close range of the Guided Busway into Cambridge.

9. There is an issue of pluvial flooding in the area which residents would like to see resolved. The detailed plans prepared for this site includes the construction of a 325m pond to alleviate this, and the proposal has the backing of Cambridgeshire County Council Environmental Department, the A14 team and Orbit Homes. Much of the pond survey work is already complete. For the scheme to take place it would need the financial support associated with the development of the Kings Gate site.
10. It is accepted that some effect to the Green Belt would arise at this site by reason of inappropriateness and as a result of a loss of openness and encroachment into the countryside given the site's current undeveloped status. It is not however considered, given the location of the site to the south west of the village, that there would be any harm to the Green Belt purposes of preventing towns from merging (Histon & Impington with Girton in this case), preserving the setting and special character of historic towns, assisting in urban regeneration given the absence of previously developed alternatives or checking unrestricted sprawl. The scale and location of the site allied to its containment by existing development is such that its development would not result a 'sprawl' of the type that Green Belt policy is intended to prevent. This is shown on the site plan.
11. The Kings Gate site can be ready for development next year. Unlike some developers who tend to delay after planning approval, this site has a developer and landowner ready to progress this site now.

In summary, development of the site, because of its location and size and the flexibility of the landowner and developer, could provide the following benefits:

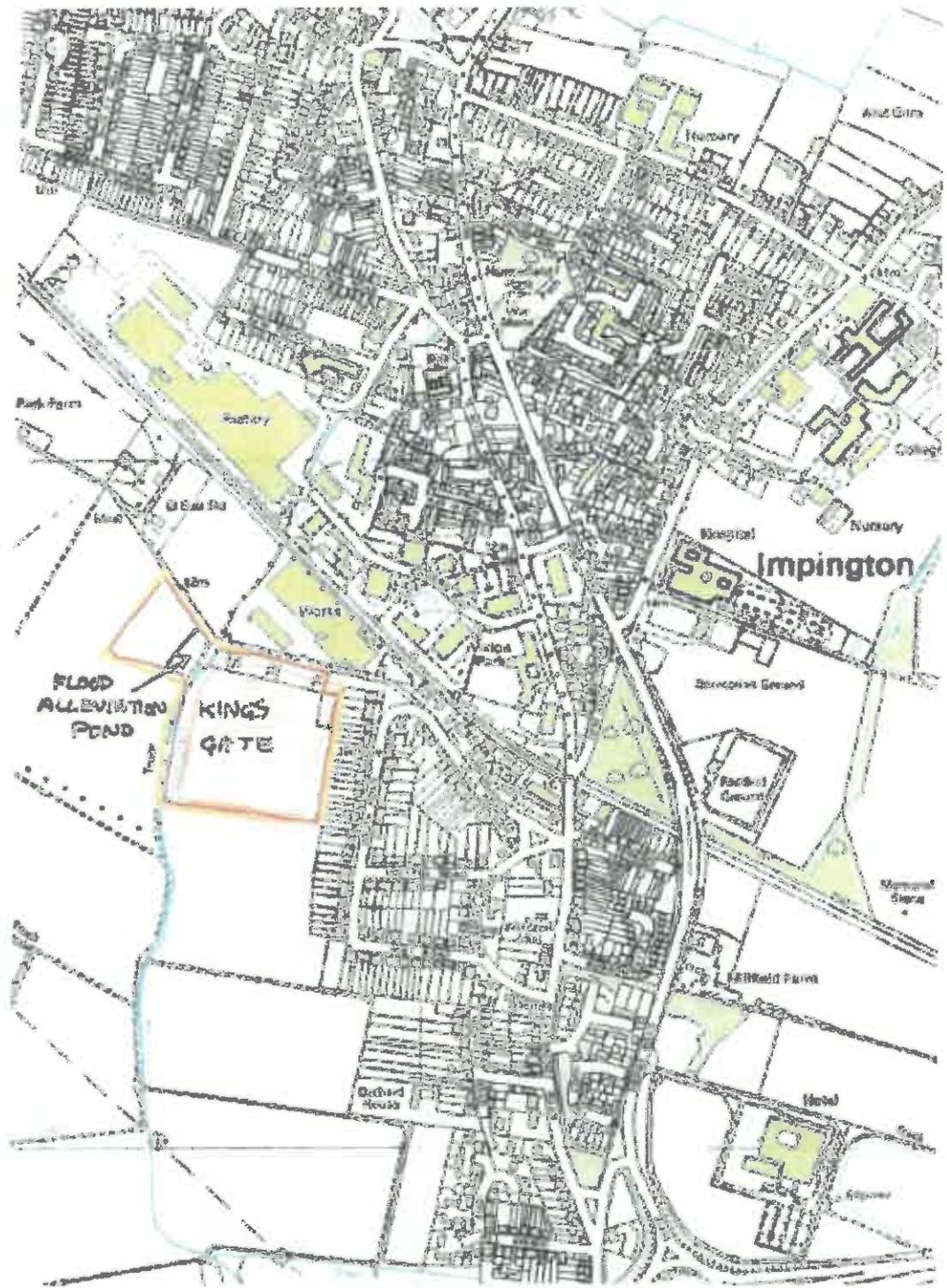
- the provision of a substantial quantum of self-build units to meet local Government targets, which many other sites, including those currently proposed for allocation in the emerging plan, are unable to rival,
- the opportunity to secure a solution to the longstanding flooding issues affecting the village by enabling the delivery of the works identified for this part of the village by the Cambridgeshire Surface Water Management Plan,
- the provision of much needed affordable homes, including starter homes,
- the delivery in 2018 of new housing in an authority with a current 5-year shortfall.

These benefits are fully aligned with both the Government's ambitions and the Council's own objectives which would not be forthcoming in the absence of a willing landowner. These considerations, when taken together, represent very special circumstances sufficient to justify the development of this site.

Yours sincerely

Alan Scott

Cc Ms Gloria Alexander



Land off Villa Road, Histon
Site Location Plan