

Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Local
Plan Examination

Statement for Matter M11.3 Grange Farm, West Cambridge

On behalf of St John's College Cambridge (ID 698)

Representation Number: 27966

Statement for Matter M11.3

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Appendix 2 – Vision Document

Appendix 3 – Updated Access Strategy (June 2017)

Appendix 4 – Representations to the Greater City Deal

Appendix 5 – Report on Western Orbital Route Consultation 2016 including Indicative Plan



1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1. St John's College, Cambridge, have instructed Savills (UK) Limited to advise and represent them on the promotion of land at Grange Farm ('the Site') west of Cambridge.
- 1.2. Savills' representations in the context of the Site have focussed on the following issues and themes:
 - general planning strategy and development sequence adopted by the Council in this Local Plan Review.
 - housing numbers proposed by the Council.
 - site specific issues relating to promotion of the Site for residential development.
- 1.3. Submitted representations, including the Hearing Statements, are listed in [Appendix 1](#) and the College were one of three parties represented by G L Hearn at the Examination's housing sessions.
- 1.4. This Statement does not repeat matters already discussed at Hearing Sessions nor the subject of previous representations. However, it is necessary to draw out the main points with reference to the issues raised by the Inspectors' question as they relate to the Site.
- 1.5. It is the College's case that given Cambridge's success and its integral role within the national economy, there is a clear need to meet the demands of its economic function by providing greater numbers of housing and importantly, housing that is affordable. The special role that Cambridge performs within the economy in terms of academic and R&D biotechnology excellence means that it has a critical part to play in providing the necessary infrastructure and growth to cater for demand. The Site provides a unique opportunity to respond to this need.

2. Tests of Soundness

- 2.1. The Inspectors' question asks whether the Plan is sound without the allocation of 500 dwellings on the Site.
- 2.2. This Plan is not sound as it fails to provide sufficient housing numbers within the plan period, for reasons explained by G L Hearn and in Savills Statement for Matter PM1A 'Objectively Assessed Housing Need' (ID 3084, Representation Number 66029).
- 2.3. Their analysis suggests an OAN for 15,200 dwellings in Cambridge and 27,000 in South Cambridgeshire.
- 2.4. Since the OAN has not been met, the Plan cannot have been positively prepared and thus fails the test of soundness. Consequently, the Council must look to identify further housing sites within its Plan to meet such figures. The Site should be one.
- 2.5. The College generally supports the strategy of directing growth towards firstly, the urban area of Cambridge, then its urban edge and then new settlement locations. The Inspectors have expressed concerns about the impact of such a development strategy in terms of its distribution - their letter to the Councils on 20th May 2015¹ pointed out that 48% of allocations in the two areas are within new settlements. This sits uncomfortably with a development strategy intended to locate new development in the most sustainable locations, which the Councils accept to be in and around the edge of the City.
- 2.6. The Site provides a significant opportunity to help meet the OAN in a sustainable location on the edge of Cambridge, in accordance with the Council's development strategy.

¹ RD/GEN/170

3. The Site

- 3.1. The Site lies on the western edge of Cambridge and is part of a wider landholding. The large field immediately to the west of the Site, forming the southern edge of the University's West Cambridge site, also falls within St John's College ownership. West of the Site is the proposed allocation at Wilberforce Road for student accommodation (Allocation Reference U3).
- 3.2. The Site is in a highly sustainable location. It is adjacent to the University's West Cambridge site which is subject to major redevelopment proposals to increase employment densities and thus become an even greater focus for jobs in this location. The Site also lies adjacent to the University Sports complex at Wilberforce Road (which offers access to the wider community including academic staff and students and provides for recreation opportunities adjacent to the Site). The City Centre is less than 2km away and is linked by a well used pedestrian/cycle network including the Coton footpath which runs on the northern edge of the Site.
- 3.3. The Site is in a location closest to the city centre when compared to the other large omission sites put forward in this Plan and consequently is uniquely positioned to deliver new residential development in accordance with the Plan's strategy. On behalf of the College, Savills submitted a Vision Document in the context of the Main Modifications consultation period in January 2016. A copy of this is enclosed at **Appendix 2**.
- 3.4. The main vehicular access to the Site will be from Clerk Maxwell Road, with an appropriate crossing of the West Cambridge to Coton cyclepath. The crossing point would accord with details contained within the Sustrans Design Manual (Chapter 7 – Para 7.22) for mid link crossings on lightly trafficked low speed roads, maintaining cycle and pedestrian priority. The access would cross the drainage ditch at the end of the Clerk Maxwell Road adjacent to the cyclepath, however, this is straightforward.
- 3.5. A second point of access in the form of a Secondary "Emergency and Sustainable Transport" Access can be explored for part of the development via Adams Road. This could be shared with the existing University sports ground access, upgraded to adoptable standard to provide public transport, emergency vehicle and walking / cycling access.
- 3.6. The nearest current bus service is the Citi/Uni 4 service, which stops on Charles Babbage Road and is within 400m of the northern part of the Site. Various options have been identified to ensure that the entire Site is within 400m of a bus stop. The preferred option (iv) is to split the current 10 minutes frequency of the Citi/Uni 4 service to divert from Madingley Road via Clerk Maxwell Road (in order to loop within the Site and exit via Clerk Maxwell Road). This arrangement would ensure a 20 minute service at the Site and at the Cavendish Laboratory complex, while maintaining a 10 minute service frequency on Madingley Road.
- 3.7. Further discussions will be required with CCC and the Citi/Uni 4 operator (Stagecoach) to identify the preferred option for bus delivery, however due to the range of options available, bus accessibility is considered to be viable.

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- 3.8. It is clear that the Site can provide good bus based public transport accessibility with new bus stops within the Site and upgraded pedestrian links to existing bus stops)). Further discussion would be required with Stagecoach and the County Council's Passenger Transport Team to agree the detail of any changes to services.
- 3.9. An Access Strategy prepared by WSP was submitted in support of our response to the Draft Local Plan (June 2013). Given the length of time which has passed since this response was made, this report has been updated and is attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 3.10. It is notable that the Site lies in a strategically important location with regard to a number of projects within the Great Cambridge City Deal proposals, described by the City Deal themselves as "a unique opportunity to secure the future of Greater Cambridge as a leading UK and global hub for research and technology, supporting economic growth and improve quality of life for residents of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire".
- 3.11. In such a context, the Site presents a unique opportunity to contribute to two major elements of the programme, which are of direct relevance to Grange Farm and which have been the subject of recent consultation. One of these is "Cambourne to Cambridge – better bus journeys" which is considered to be a high priority scheme for the City Deal programme. Of particular reference to the Site is Area 1 between Madingley Mulch and Cambridge. Representations on behalf of the College are enclosed at **Appendix 4**. We support a new on line bus route along Madingley Road, then turning southwards through the West Cambridge site, entering St John's College land and turning eastwards to connect into Grange Road. The proposals remain subject to further consultation but need to be kept in mind when considering West Cambridge strategically.
- 3.12. The other elements of the City Deal programme that impact upon West Cambridge and thus the Site, are the Western Orbital route proposals. These proposals seek to intercept car trips from the south/west of Cambridge into key City destinations. They include consideration of potential linkages with orbital capacity including public transport priority between Cambridge North-West (Madingley Road) and the Biomedical Campus (Hauxton Road/Trumpington Park and Ride). Such proposals are intended to be compatible with the schemes emerging from the A428 Cambourne to Cambridge transport proposals. The College has submitted representations to the Western Orbital consultation exercise which are enclosed at **Appendix 5**. The College supports a dedicated bus route on the eastern side of the M11 connection, North-West Cambridge to Darwin Green.
- 3.13. Both these consultation schemes affect West Cambridge. The College's proposals are uniquely placed to accommodate both schemes given the College's land ownership in the area, and the ability to serve the proposed new residential development at Grange Farm.

4. Green Belt and Landscape Issues

- 4.1. Long standing national policy has required exceptional circumstances to be demonstrated to justify the release of Green Belt land. As part of the last Local Plan exercise, the Councils removed land from the Green Belt to allow major urban expansion to address development pressures that were prevalent then.
- 4.2. The development pressures that were evident then, remain now. The principles of sustainability and the need to create development settlement patterns which seek to reduce the distance between home and workplace, also remain equally relevant today. Coupled with the damaging effect of the increase in house prices and the inability to secure sufficient affordable housing, the Councils must look to the Green Belt to make provision for new housing numbers.
- 4.3. Cambridge remains key to the national economy, as acknowledged by the Councils in their Foreword to the Draft Local Plan². The City possesses a dynamic, buoyant economy and a proven track record of high value accelerated growth. It is imperative that growth supports Cambridge's position on the world's commercial stage as a result of its strength and skills in science, technology and entrepreneurship. New housing must service this important economic function and that means the provision of both market and affordable homes at prices that people can afford.
- 4.4. Importantly, sites for new housing growth must be located in sustainable locations and consequently a balance of planning considerations must be made, having regard to a host of influencing factors, not least transport and sustainability issues which remain key to accommodating growth in the Cambridge area.
- 4.5. The Site is uniquely placed to address all of these matters given its location close to the City Centre and the excellent footpath and cycle connections it can demonstrate to link into the wider network. As expressed above and within the documents already submitted to the Examination, the Site is adjacent to key employment centres. It is strategically placed to exploit major transport proposals contained within Tranche 1 of the City Deal - the City Deal is itself an initiative resulting from recognition of Cambridge's exceptional role within the national economy.
- 4.6. In the consideration of site issues, the Site is clearly greenfield but it is evident that greenfield sites are required to accommodate new growth. The only real constraint is the Green Belt designation which is subject to exceptional circumstances which apply here in the context of the City's exceptional role in the national economy and the unique position of the Site in terms of accommodating new growth in the most sustainable location.
- 4.7. Regarding Green Belt and landscape issues, the College's representations at the Issues and Options stage included a landscape focussed assessment of the Site. The Landscape Partnership (TLP) undertook further analysis of the Site as part of their "Landscape and Visual Assessment and Review of Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study" (January 2016), submitted in response to the Councils' Main Modifications³ which included a Green Belt Review by LDA Design in 2015.

² RD/SUB/C/010

³ RD/MC/140

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- 4.8. TLP's document contained a detailed site description (we confirm that it is the eastern most field which is the focus for residential development proposals). It noted the presence of the cycleway on the northern side of the Site. Immediately to the north of the cycleway are the large and imposing 4 and 5 storey buildings providing educational research, sports and recreational facilities. These form a large scale and abrupt built edge to the City which are not complemented by a robust landscape buffer, particularly adjacent to the Site. These buildings present prominent visual elements within the landscape and stand out as the key landmarks when approaching from the south and west (especially viewed from a section of the M11), rather than any landmark buildings within the historic city which are seen fleetingly and appear diminutive in comparison.
- 4.9. The eastern boundary of the Site is marked by the University Sports Ground which includes an athletics track and an all weather hockey pitch, together with ancillary pavilion and parking. There are proposals for two further hockey pitches and floodlighting at the Sports Ground which will mean further intensification of uses there if approved (application reference 17/0472FUL which is awaiting determination).
- 4.10. The 17 hectare Site is in agricultural use. There are public views from the rights of way that run around parts of the perimeter. The most extensive views are from the cycleway/footpath 39/31a on the northern edge. There are some views to a few landmark buildings travelling east, but set within the mature vegetated edge of the western edge of Cambridge, the most notable being the University Library which is the tallest and closest landmark building to the Site. Views to the Library could be retained within a suitable development layout.
- 4.11. Public footpath 55/9 runs west of the Grange Farm site. Boundary hedges screen most views to the east, with very limited glimpses of landmark buildings. The main visual attraction points are the prominent buildings at the West Cambridge site.
- 4.12. TLP refer in detail to the work undertaken on the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study⁴ (CIGBS) and the 16 qualities that have been identified by LDA as relevant to the Cambridge context. TLP conclude that the use of so many criteria makes the analysis overly complex and raises issues of relevance and weighting.
- 4.13. The site falls within Sector 3 of the CIGBS, where LDA's assessment suggests that the key qualities that would be affected by development would be Quality 1 (A large historical core relative to the size of the City as a whole), Quality 7 (key views of Cambridge from the surrounding landscape), and Quality 16 (a City set in landscape which retains a strongly rural character).
- 4.14. TLP accept that development on the site would have an impact but state that the original historic core is well contained beyond the 20th Century development which has occurred between the Backs and Wilberforce Road – the experience of enjoying the historic core and the Backs derives more from being within that area, than enjoying distant views towards it.

⁴ RD/MC/030

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- 4.15. Regarding Quality 7, the visibility of the historic landmark buildings from and across the Site is relatively restricted. There are longer distance views from Red Meadow Hill across CIGBS's Sector 3, but a development limited to the eastern section of the Site (as set out in the Vision Document), would not affect the cone of view to the historic landmark buildings seen from Red Meadow Hill.
- 4.16. Regarding Quality 16, the retention of agricultural land to the west of the Site including any necessary structural landscaping will retain a rural foreground to this approach to the City.
- 4.17. The circumstances affecting Cambridge are exceptional, owing to its particular qualities and difficulties. The Site offers the opportunity to contribute to meeting identified housing needs in accordance with the Plan's strategy and it is uniquely well placed to integrate with sustainable strategic transport proposals. The Site is intended to deliver some 500 dwellings including affordable dwellings at a policy compliant 40%. Whilst we are aware that land to the south is being promoted by a consortium, the Site can be delivered as a discrete development. If the Inspectors see merit in allocating the Barton Road site in addition to the Site, then both could come forward to deliver a comprehensive West Cambridge solution.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. The plan is unsound because the Council has made insufficient housing allocations to meet its OAN. The identification of the Grange Farm site provides the opportunity to increase housing provision within the City – this site along with other omission sites should meet the OAN figure as put forward by GL Hearn on behalf of the College.
- 5.2. The College fully acknowledges that the Site falls within the Green Belt. However, its designation must be seen as a policy tool and in circumstances where housing numbers fail to be identified, then sustainable locations on the edge of the City must come forward in the development sequence. Cambridge remains a vital contributor to the national economy, and consequently has a unique role in accommodating growth to stimulate investment and provide both market and affordable housing.
- 5.3. The Grange Farm site provides the opportunity to secure some 500 dwellings including affordable housing together with all necessary open space, landscape, infrastructure etc.
- 5.4. Accordingly, it is requested that the Draft Local Plan be amended to include the 17.9 hectare site for residential development for approximately 500 dwellings within **Appendix B** of the plan listing the Proposals Schedule. This would constitute a new local plan allocation and would necessarily require the site being allocated on the Proposals Map forming part of the plan.