

W-368/P EXAMINATION STATEMENT

MATTER NO. 1.3D GAMLINGAY ii

PERSONAL REF: 2536

REPRESENTATION NO. 60341

April 2017

**EXAMINATION OF THE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
SUBMISSION LOCAL PLAN**

**STATEMENT BY MARTIN PAGE OF BARFORD + CO
ON BEHALF OF WYBOSTON LAKES LTD**

W-368/P EXAMINATION STATEMENT



1.0 Background

- 1.1 Barford + Co are retained by Wyboston Lakes Ltd to represent its objection to the omission of land off Green End, Gamlingay as a housing allocation. The subject land is being promoted through the Gamlingay Neighbourhood Plan specifically for a self-build housing scheme.
- 1.2 The following Statement addresses the Inspector's question is the plan unsound without the allocation of the land off Green End for housing development, and if so why?
- 1.3 Representations have challenged the Council's strategy of concentrating growth in strategic new settlements and whether these are deliverable and the timescales. Representations have also challenged the Council's settlement hierarchy selection and the category of settlements intended to accommodate higher levels of sustainable growth, highlighting for example that the sustainability assessment is focused on proximity to Cambridge, without due regard to proximity to large settlements that exist nearby outside of the district. In response the Inspector has raised a number of related matters, such as whether the more sustainable villages should make an increased contribution to the housing supply. These are matters the Inspector will no doubt reach a view on. In the event it is concluded the Council's plan is not sound and additional/alternative sites need to be found, Wyboston Lakes Ltd considers its land off Green End, Gamlingay is suitable to deliver a well related sustainable development.

The subject site

- 1.4 Gamlingay is one of the larger villages in South Cambridgeshire, situated approximately 15 miles to the west of Cambridge, close to the South Cambridgeshire border with Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire. To the south-west is the small town of Potton (3km/2 miles) and the larger Market Towns of Sandy (9km/5.5 miles) and Biggleswade (9.5km/6 miles). To the north-west is the Market Town of St.Neots (7.5km/4.5 miles) with Huntingdon to the north (24km/15 miles). The village is bisected by the B1040, a cross-country route between the Market Towns of Biggleswade and St.Ives. With the nearby network of larger settlements the village is in an accessible location and offers a good level of services and facilities with a range of shops including a small Co-operative store and a chemist, primary school, Village College, library, doctor's surgery, public houses, a range of recreation facilities and two industrial estates. It is therefore a sustainable location for further growth and its range of facilities is reflected in the proposed Policy H/1:f, which allocates land at Green End Industrial Estate for mixed use housing and employment development.
- 1.5 The land off Green End extends to 1.52 ha and comprises an area of grass land bounded by established hedges on the south-west side of the village. As the accompanying plan (Appendix A) illustrates the proposed site is well related to the existing built framework and offers an

opportunity for a sustainable expansion of the village with good access links to the village facilities and the employment area via paths. In support of the allocation of the site attention is drawn to the following:

- The 2011 SHLAA document confirms the site is not subject to any strategic considerations which could make it unsuitable for development.
- The site is not subject any tenancies and is capable of being brought forward within immediate timescales.
- Given the existing links to the Village Centre via Green End and the adjoining Fairfields estate, the site is in a sustainable location and within easy and safe walking/cycling distance of the Village College, local Doctors' Surgery and the local shops and other community facilities.
- The site comprises poor quality land unsuitable for anything other than low grade grazing. The allocation of the land for development would enable this to be put to a more effective use.
- The site is enclosed by established boundary planting and there is ample scope for reinforcing existing boundary trees and hedges to maintain a 'soft' green edge to this part of the village that will improve biodiversity and avoid adverse impact on the village landscape setting. This can be further assisted by sensitive design, layout and building heights.
- There is no history of flooding or flood risk.
- The development of the land would have no adverse impact on the conservation area.
- County Highways have confirmed there are no highway or access constraints, or road safety issues.
- There are no insurmountable infrastructure issues specific to the site.

2.0 The Matter: is the plan unsound without the allocation of the land off Green End for housing development, and if so why?

Response

2.1 The Council's assessment set out in the response to sites not included in the Proposed Submission Local Plan states the site was not included because it *'has been assessed through the SHLAA and SA processes and was rejected. The SHLAA does not need amending. The plan is sound as proposed to be submitted'*. Reviewing the SHLAA this concluded the site *'is not potentially capable of providing residential, development taking account of site factors and constraints'*. However, we have to stress the SHLAA contained a number of incorrect assessments and assumptions:

- It was stated the proposal would be harmful to the setting of the listed cottage at 1 Dennis Green, however, there is the opportunity to safeguard/enhance the setting by

introducing a green space between the existing cottage and any new development.

- There was reference to the site's potential for archaeology. However, the site has been the subject of landfill by a local building firm in the past and any archaeology will have been lost many years ago.
- Although the site has been the subject of landfill in the past, this comprised mainly inert spoil from various building sites in the area, deposited by a local building firm. It was not a public landfill site. This has been investigated in connection with development proposals on adjoining land off West Road, where the Council's Environmental Protection officer was satisfied this did not pose a risk to development on adjacent land.
- It was stated the development of the site would have an adverse impact on the landscape setting of the village by reducing the transitional area of small fields, hedgerows and trees and by the creation of a promontory of built development into the countryside. However, this could be said of most greenfield developments on the edge of settlements (some of which have been allocated by the Council) and this point is not limited to this site. Additionally, the development form could incorporate the 'transition' that is referred to.
- There was reference to the sewerage network approaching capacity, but this can be easily mitigated by developer contributions to upgrade the network.
- It is concluded the site is 'category 4 least viable site'. Contrary to the statement in the SHLAA there are no viability issues. In the absence of any significant on or off-site abnormal development costs, the current poor grazing use and the extremely low current use (and book) value, a residential development will provide sufficient return to enable a viable development scheme and meet the development/infrastructure costs.

2.2 The Gamlingay Parish Council has decided to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan that is in the process of being prepared and in response to an invitation for potential development sites Wyboston Lakes has put forward the land off Green End. At the Village Show in September last year volunteers questioned 65 show-goers about their views on the future of the Parish and a range of key issues, such as village facilities, housing mix and location, transport, employment and the environment. This included asking people to rank six proposed housing development sites that had been put forward in order of preference. The results of the survey – see Appendix B, was that 9.4% of those asked commented that the Green End site (known locally as Little Heath/Dennis Green) would be their preferred location, which indicates there is a level of local support for the site's development.

2.3 As previously noted the site is being specifically promoted through the Neighbourhood Plan as a self-build development site and at the Village Show in September last year volunteers questioned show-goers about their views on the need/demand for self-build plots in the village, with a significant number expressing agreement or strong agreement – refer to Appendix B. This reflects the Council's self-build Register, which has more than 500 people on its list.

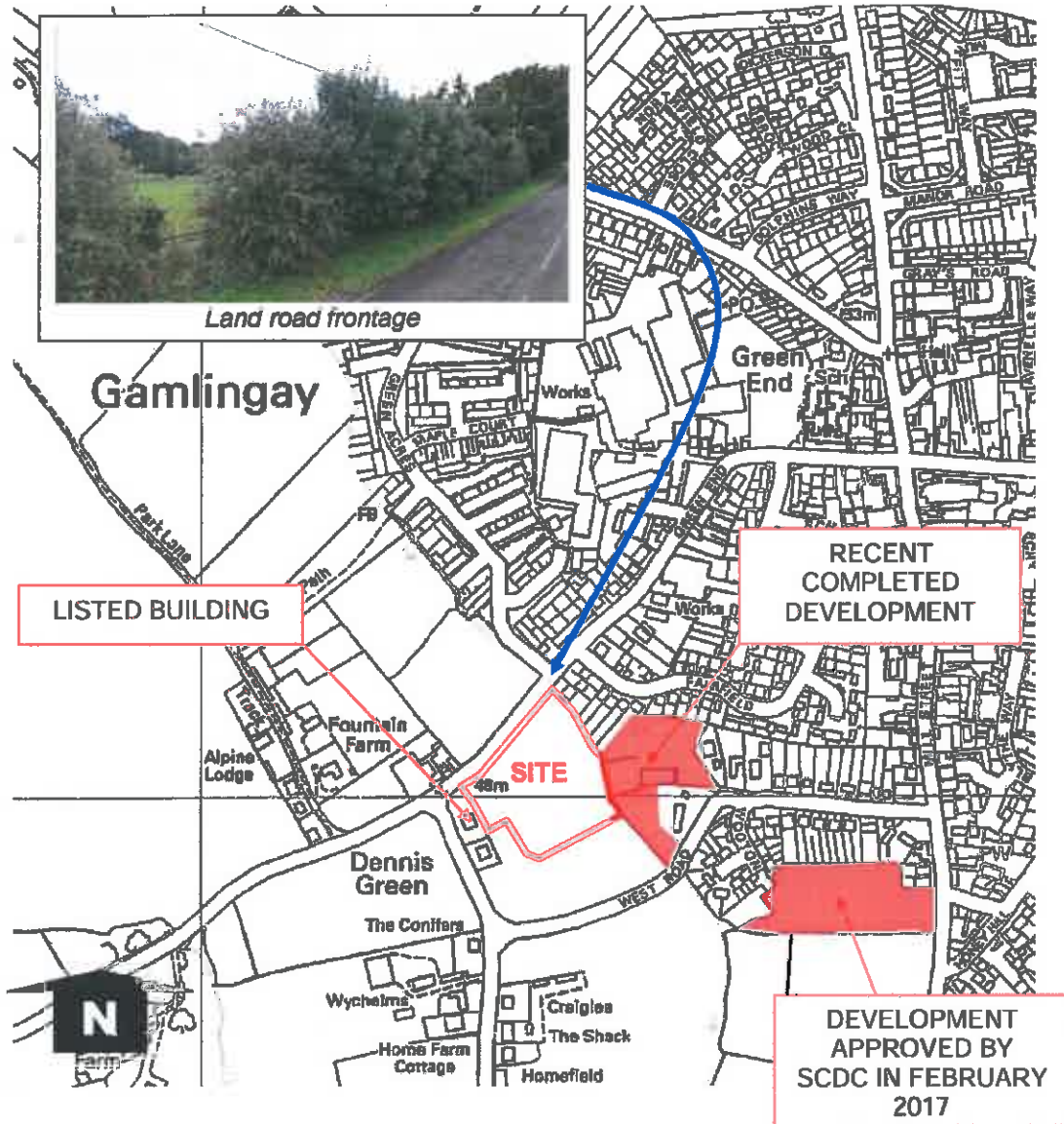
- 2.4 The only reference to self-build in the Submission Local Plan is in paragraph 7.44 relating to replacement homes in the countryside. Due to the high property prices in south Cambridgeshire the replacement of existing homes will generally only be viable where the replacement can achieve a significant increase in living accommodation. Frustratingly, the Council's development management officers have historically (and continue to) taken a robust position to restrict any significant increase in floor space where opportunities do come forward in the countryside. Additionally, due to the high property values acquiring an existing property for demolition and replacement represents a significant outlay and involves a level of financial risk that will discourage most self-builders. Consequently, in practice the acknowledgement in paragraph 7.44 will not have any material impact on the delivery of self or custom build opportunities.
- 2.5 The proposed strategy in Proposed Modification PM/SC/7/G is to secure a number of self-build dwellings on larger allocated development schemes. However, the policy does not identify specific targets. Furthermore this strategy will have limitations having regard to the following:
- It will be restricted to the larger developments that will be focused in larger selected settlements;
 - House builders are averse to this strategy because it will reduce the profitability of the development as they will not be able to realise the profit from the house build construction. There will also be concerns in respect of the design and compatibility with the general estate layout and the uncertainty this will create, which might impact on general house sales. To reflect this house builders are likely to reduce their residual land value bids, making it more difficult to secure sites;
 - For the self-builder a key factor is their aspirational objective for an individual home and they may not want to be part of a larger development scheme;
 - The developer will expect the self-builder to pay the full residential land value and in the process – depending on the price paid, incur a stamp duty liability. Also, as part of a larger development there will be higher infrastructure and servicing costs for the plots that the self-builder will have to meet, which will undermine the affordability.
- 2.6 Within the smaller villages there will be the ongoing scope for self-build opportunities on small windfall infill detached house developments. However, with the increasingly limited opportunities for infill development in many villages and the competitive demand, the smaller infill developments pose serious affordability problems for many. Additionally there is currently already benefit in a landowner selling plots to self-build purchasers on small developments of 1 or 2 units as they will generally be prepared to make higher bids than small builders due to the fact the self-build will be exempt from paying CIL and will not have to realise a profit. Additionally, the self-builder will have an aspirational aim to realise their dreams and will be prepared to outbid the local builder. Consequently there is no reason to suppose the limited windfall opportunities that are available in small villages will increase the delivery of self-build plots in the future.

- 2.7 On windfall or allocated development opportunities of more than 2 houses the delivery of self-build is more complicated for the following reasons:
- The affordable housing policy and housing mix policy implications;
 - To enable the land to be sold as individual self-build plots will require infrastructure such as roads and services to be provided. If the land owner has to provide this then the land owner effectively becomes a trader in land which may alter his tax position. The land owner will also have to fund the provision of the infrastructure and accept the sales receipts in stages giving rise to potential financial and taxation problems;
 - The land owner is at risk of the plots potentially being blighted by a sold plot not being completed or remaining dormant and the land owner will not be in control of the style/quality of the dwelling to be erected.
- 2.8 For the above reasons it is our experience that the sale of windfall sites larger than two properties to individual self-builders is generally not attractive to land owners and the preference is to achieve an outright sale to a small house builder.
- 2.9 In light of the above factors we are of the opinion the Council's proposed policy strategy will not realise the Government's stated aim to improve significantly the new self-build opportunities and this will not enable the Council to meet the duty in the Housing and Planning Act. Achieving the successful delivery will therefore be dependent on a more proactive approach and this should include accepting self-build developments in appropriate locations on the edge of settlements, such as the land at Green End. In support of the promotion of the site an indicative layout plan has been prepared, which reflects the self-build nature and ensures good separation from the listed cottage at 1 Dennis Green and a transition at the village edge and this is attached as Appendix C.
- 2.10 The proposed submission plan proposes the redevelopment of the Green End Industrial Estate for a mixed use residential and employment site. However, this will involve the loss of business premises in the village and be detrimental to the aim to achieve balanced sustainable growth. The demand for these business units is reflected in a statement by the commercial agent attached as Appendix D. Consequently the release of alternative sites within the village for housing would secure a more sustainable growth strategy for Gamlingay.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 To meet the district housing need better served villages such as Gamlingay can accommodate more significant growth and the Council's failure to allocate the land off Green End, which could deliver a specific self-build development and meet an identified need, leaves the plan unsound.

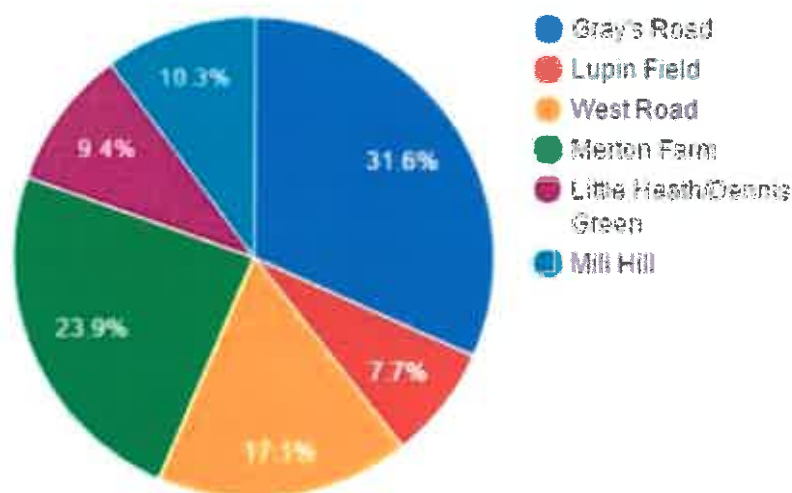
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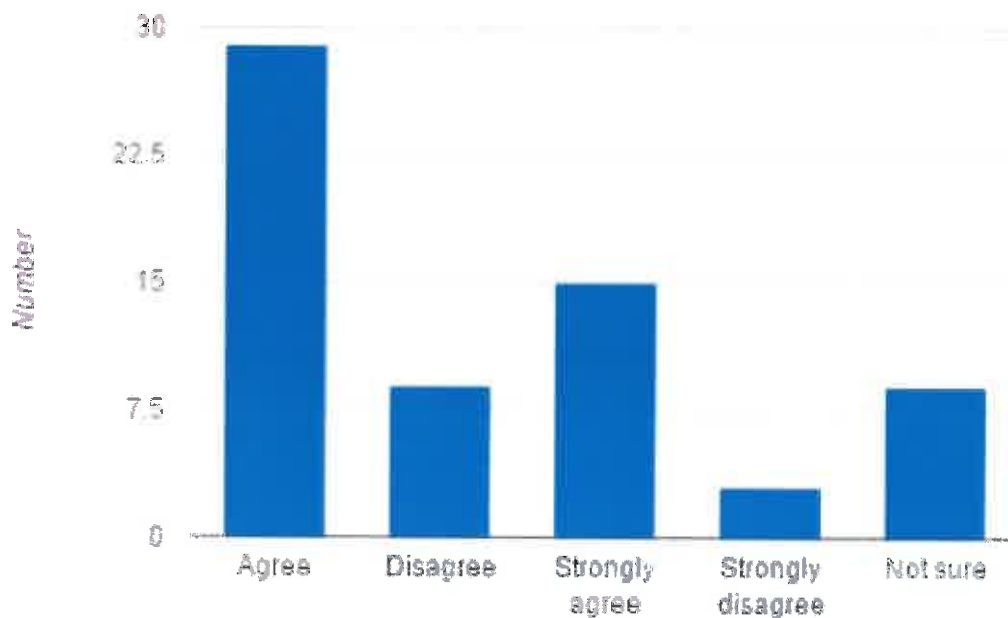
Housing sites

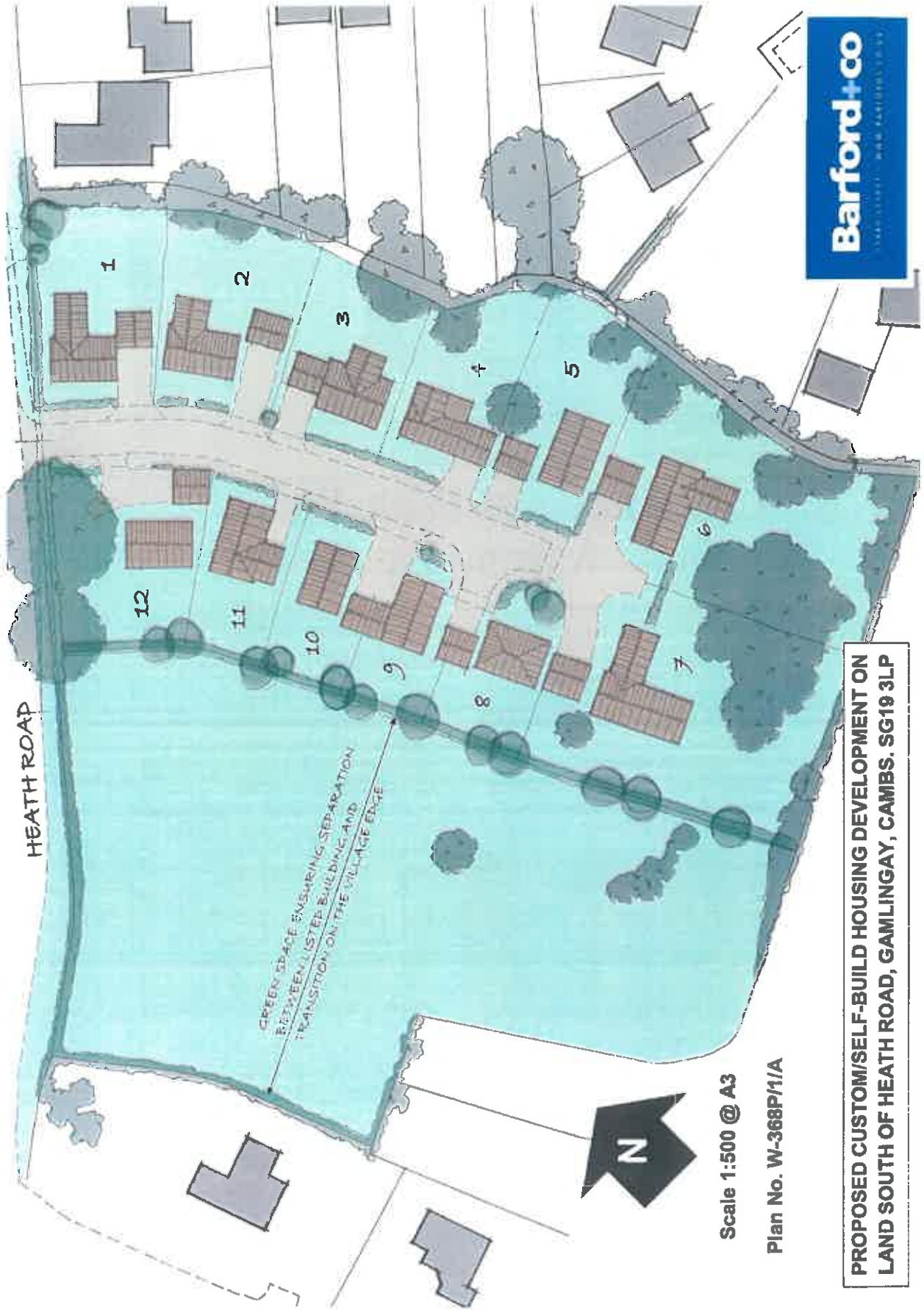
In the past year 6 proposed housing development sites have been put before the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. We asked people at the Village Show to rank them in order of preference. Gray's Road (near Gamlingay Wood) and Merton Farm are the two most popular sites. The Neighbourhood Plan might not actually designate sites for development because this requires the use of an appropriate appraisal process which may be beyond our ability to deliver. But knowing people's preference provides useful information for the Plan anyway.

Future housing development in order of preference



Self build







Green End Industrial Estate in Gamlingay

Crate news as Packable unveils warehouse deal

Barker Storey Matthews' Cambridge office has let a commercial unit at the Green End Industrial Estate in Gamlingay to custom crating and shipping company Packable Limited.

The industrial unit, comprising 7,361 sq ft, provides open plan heated warehouse accommodation with two roller



Ben Green of Barker Storey Matthews

shutter doors. The property benefits from an external canopied area.

The Green End Industrial Estate provides a popular and well-established business location offering easy access to the A1 and M11. The property was let on a five year lease.

Packable is a specialist packer & bespoke crate manufacturer for national and worldwide forwarding and shipping.

Ben Green, director at Barker Storey Matthews said: "This unit formed part of a program of refurbishment and upgrade works by the landlord on a number of units at Green End Industrial Estate.

"Demand for the units has been very strong and, with a general shortage of warehouse space in the area, we are not surprised to have all the units either let or under offer."