

M-167/P EXAMINATION STATEMENT

MATTER SC1 1.3D GAMLINGAY ii

PERSONAL REF: 1528

REPRESENTATION NO. 60345

April 2017

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

**STATEMENT BY MARTIN PAGE OF BARFORD + CO
ON BEHALF OF MERTON COLLEGE**

M-167/P EXAMINATION STATEMENT



1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 Barford + Co are retained by Merton College, Oxford to represent its objection to the omission of land off Grays Road, Gamlingay as a housing allocation.
- 1.2 The following Statement addresses the Inspector's question is the plan unsound without the allocation of the land off Grays Road 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, Merton College considers its land off Grays Road, 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 housing development.
- 1.5 The land off Grays Road extends to 4.32 ha and comprises an area of arable farm land at the north end 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 via paths that connect to the Waresley Road to the west and Church Street, where the village shops are located, through existing public footpaths to the south. In support of the allocation of the site attention is drawn to the following:

1. The site is capable of being brought forward within immediate timescales.
2. It is evident the village edge in the vicinity of the site is exposed to built development with minimal boundary hedgerows. The allocation of the site offers scope to provide a new 'soft' green edge to the village that would enclose the site. Furthermore this could be extended along the northern boundary of the existing development off Murfitt Way to improve views when entering the village from the north. The land in question is all in the ownership of Merton College.
3. The new planting referred to provides the opportunity to improve biodiversity.
4. The suggested planting could be integrated with planned footpath improvements linking the village to Gamlingay Wood.
5. The proposal would not involve the loss of high quality agricultural land. Although the 2011 SHLAA identified land quality, this was in respect of the much larger area and specifically land to the east.
6. The development of the land would have no adverse impact on any Heritage assets.
7. In the 2011 SHLAA document Cambridgeshire County Highways commented the Gray's Road junction would be acceptable to the Highway Authority and the proposed site is acceptable in principle.
8. There are no insurmountable infrastructure issues.
9. Development would be accessible to the village facilities via existing footpath connections along Grays Road and through Avenells Way to Church Street, where local shops are located within a matter of minutes walking distance.
10. There are no viability issues. The land is currently in agricultural use and a residential development will provide sufficient return to enable a viable development scheme and meet the development/infrastructure costs.

2.0 The Matter: is the plan unsound without the allocation of the following sites for housing development, and if so why?

Response

- 2.1 The site's potential suitability for development is reflected in the fact this was identified as Site Option 32 in the Council's Issues and Options consultation document for a potential development of 45 dwellings. The document identified the 'pros' of the development could be its scope to improve the existing village edge and the 'cons' would be the loss of green

space. Disappointingly for Merton College this potential site was not taken forward in the next stage of the plan.

2.2 In response to the Issues and Options Consultation the following key comments were received in respect of the site:

- Loss of agricultural land. *Response: due to the limited amount of previously developed land in the district accommodating growth the required growth will inevitable involve green field development.*
- Relationship to the Gamlingay Wood SSSI. *Response: the proposed site will be comparable to existing built development in proximity terms.*
- Impact on paths. *Response: these can be accommodated in a development.*
- Traffic volumes through the village. *Response: development of the scale proposed would have minimal consequences.*
- Rural landscape Impact. *Response: The 2011 SHLAA document acknowledged the site would leave the landscape setting viewed from the east essentially unchanged despite intrusion into the countryside and there is the scope for a new soft green edge to the village, which would be characteristic of the historic village and which would have a beneficial impact on the landscape setting.*
- Access. *Response: As noted above County Highways commented the Gray's Road junction would be acceptable to the Highway Authority and the proposed site is acceptable in principle.*
- Gamlingay Parish Council commented 'Strongly object to the inclusion of the site. Only after the delivery of the two large developments within the existing framework are delivered and the impact of these has been fully assessed should consideration of this site be made in consultation with local people'. *Response: the parish raised no fundamental points in respect of the suitability of the site and the large development off Station Road has successfully now been assimilated into the village.*

2.3 The Council's assessment set out in the response to sites states the site was not included in the Proposed Submission Local Plan because it forms an important part of the landscape setting of Gamlingay and there were better sites options to meet the development strategy. However, the landscape setting point does not reflect the 2011 SHLAA document comment the site would leave the landscape setting viewed from the east essentially unchanged despite intrusion into the countryside and there is the scope for a new soft green edge to the village, which would be characteristic of the historic village and which would have a beneficial impact on the landscape setting.

2.4 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 Merton College has put forward the land off Grays Road. 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 were that 31.6% of those asked commented that Gray's Road would be their preferred location.

- 2.5 The Issues and Options Consultation also sought views on a potential site off Mill Road (Site Option 34), which was similarly not carried forward in the plan and the Council's reason set out in the response to sites not included in the plan was that it 'forms an important part of the setting of Gamlingay, its Conservation Area and Listed Buildings, and there were better sites options to meet the development strategy. However, planning permission for the development of that site was granted by the Council in February 2017 with the officer concluding *'Overall, it is considered that the significant contribution the proposal would make to the deficit in the Council's five year land supply and the economic and social benefits that would result from the development outweigh the potential landscape impact on the setting of the grade II listed building and Conservation Area None of these disbenefits are considered to result in significant and demonstrable harm and therefore it is considered that the proposal achieves the definition of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF'*. This contradictory conclusion undermines the Local Plan assessment of potential sites that could suitably come forward in Gamlingay and achieve sustainable growth.
- 2.6 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 C. Consequently the release of alternative sites within the village for housing would secure a more sustainable growth strategy for Gamlingay.

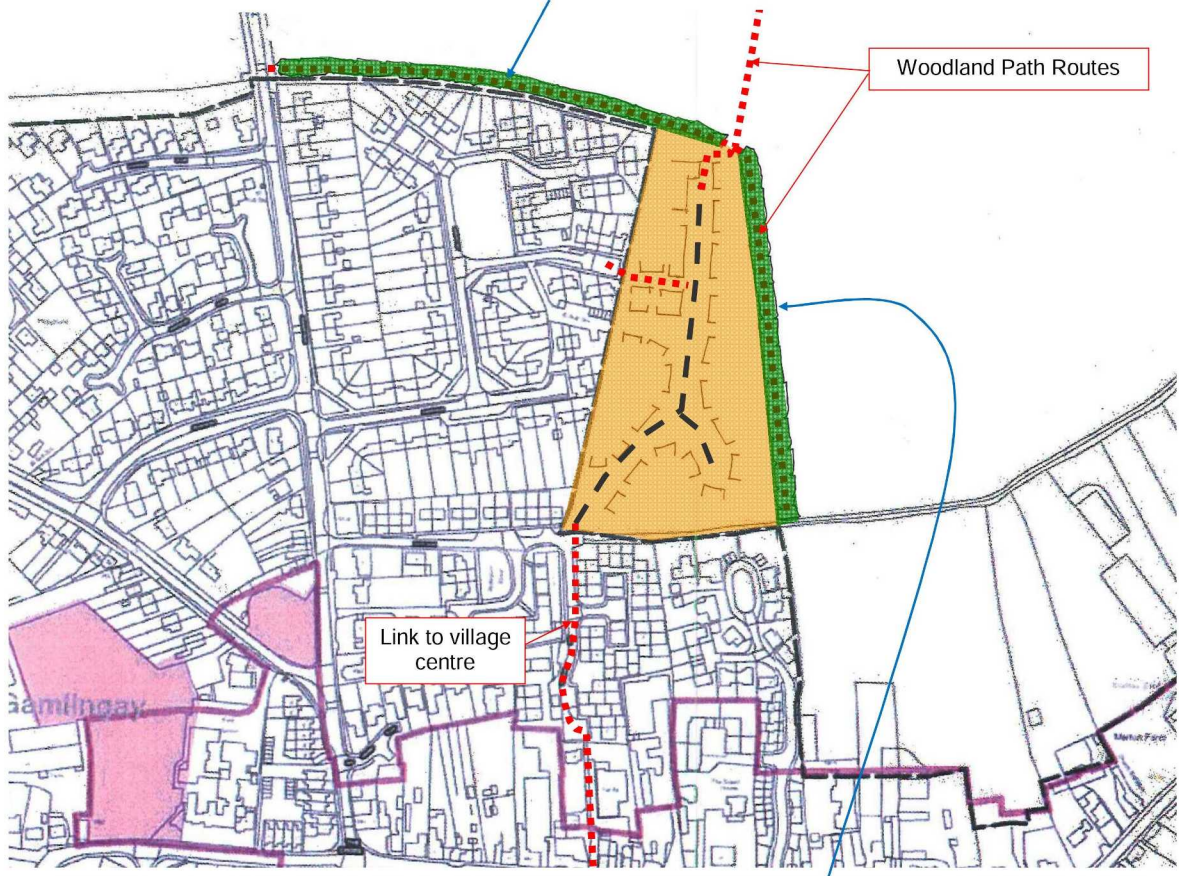
3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 To meet the district housing need better served villages such as Gamlingay can accommodate more significant growth and the Council's reasons for rejecting the land off Grays Road, which has local support, leaves the plan unsound.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT LAND OFF GRAYS ROAD, GAMLINGAY



Existing open views approaching the village from the north

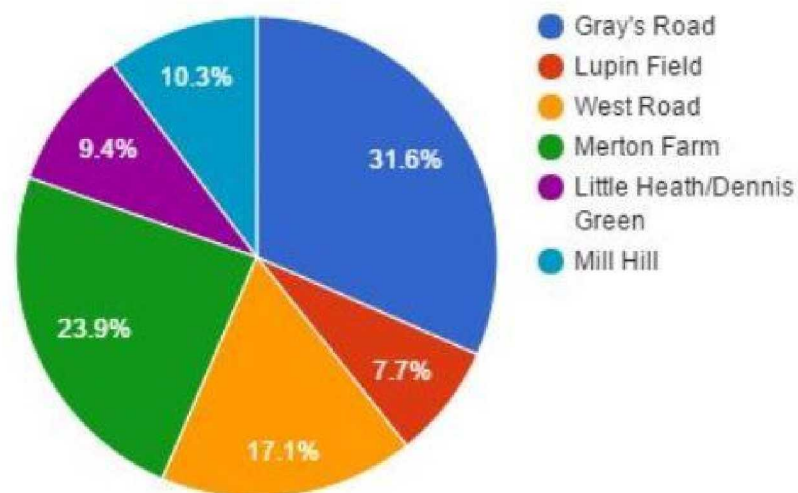


Existing open views of the village edge from the east.

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





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."

