

**SOUTH  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
INDEPENDENT  
EXAMINATION  
HEARING STATEMENT  
FOR MATTER SC1 -  
HORNINGSEA  
ON BEHALF OF  
SCOTSDALES GARDEN  
CENTRE (17686)**

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Bidwells on behalf of Scotsdales Garden Centre Ltd in response to Matter SC1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Examination.
- 1.2 Scotsdales are the freehold owner of Scotsdales Garden Centre, High Street, Horningsea. The garden centre site comprises of a number of large buildings and covered spaces, outdoor sales and display areas, storage and car parking. A plan of the site is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.3 Scotsdales' site at High Street, Horningsea has been omitted from the Village Development Framework despite previous representations submitted to earlier stages of the Local Plan. This Statement draws on these previous submissions to respond directly to the questions raised by the Inspector within the Matters and Issues insofar as they relate to the Village Development Framework for Horningsea.

## 2.0 Why the Plan is Unsound without the Inclusion of the Site within the Horningsea Development Framework

- 2.1 Scotsdales Garden Centre object to Policies S/4 and S7 and their interpretation on Local Plan Policies Map Inset 59 for 'Horningsea' since it is considered that insufficient consideration has been given to the need to review the boundaries of the Green Belt and the Village Framework Boundaries having regard to whether sites continue to meet the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.
- 2.2 In particular, it is considered that the inclusion of part of the Scotsdales Garden Centre site at Horningsea within the Green Belt and its exclusion from the Development Framework for Horningsea is no longer justified having regard to the objectives of the Green Belt. Consequently, the Policy is unsound as it is:
- not justified as it is not the most appropriate strategy; and,
  - not consistent with National Policy within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in relation to the Green Belt and building a strong, competitive economy.
- 2.3 The Garden Centre site includes extensive areas of built development on the eastern side of the High Street with the rear part of the Garden Centre site also including a number of buildings and areas of hardstanding along with areas for storage and display and car parking. However, only the front part of the Garden Centre site is currently included within the Village Development Framework, with the rear part of the site currently excluded from the Village Framework which is drawn very tightly to the rear of the main Garden Centre building, excluding the rear part of the Garden Centre site.
- 2.4 In contrast, other properties within the village with substantial curtilages are included within the Village Framework in their entirety. This approach in excluding the rear part of the Garden Centre site is therefore inconsistent in comparison to other sites.

- 2.5 Whilst the rear part of the Garden Centre site is currently included within the Green Belt it is considered that its continued inclusion does not contribute to any of the five purposes of including land in Green Belts as set out in paragraph 80 of the NPPF or any of the factors that define the special character of Cambridge listed in paragraph 2.30 of the Submission Local Plan.
- 2.6 The Garden Centre is a large and busy commercial business operating seven days a week. The rear part of the site currently includes a number of buildings and areas of hardstanding, external display and storage areas along with hard surfaced areas for car parking and servicing.
- 2.7 As such the site is clearly not part of the countryside or 'open' as required by Green Belt policy and the inclusion of the site within the Green Belt therefore fails this fundamental test of Green Belt policy. Indeed, other development on the High Street is excluded from the Green Belt boundary.
- 2.8 In particular, with specific regard to the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt and the factors that define the special character of Cambridge listed in paragraph 2.30 of the Submission Local Plan the continued inclusion of the rear part of the site within the Green Belt:
- Would not assist in preserving the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre given the nature and location of the site and that it is substantially developed;
  - Would not maintain or enhance the quality of its setting since it does not positively contribute to the quality of its setting in the first place;
  - Would not result in the communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the City given the separation of the site from the Cambridge built-up area and that the site is already substantially developed in any event;
  - Would not affect key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside;
  - Does not provide a soft green edge to the City given the nature of development within the site;
  - Does not provide a distinctive urban edge given the character of development within the site;
  - Does not sit within a Green corridor into the City;
  - Does not constitute a designated site or any other feature contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting;
  - Does not affect the physical separation, setting, scale or character of Horningsea given that it is already substantially developed;
  - Does not fall within a landscape which retains a strong rural character and is substantially covered with development.
- 2.9 The continued inclusion of the site in the Green Belt does, however, have a severely detrimental and unreasonable effect on the operation of the business, placing an unnecessary restriction on the site. In particular, its inclusion unreasonably restricts Scotsdales' legitimate requirements to improve facilities at the site as part of the ongoing development of the business and places them at a considerable disadvantage to their competitors.
- 2.10 Continuing to include the rear part of the site within the Green Belt is therefore contrary to Government guidance within the NPPF which seeks to build a strong and competitive economy in

order to create jobs and prosperity (paragraph 18) and requires that the planning system should do everything it can to support economic growth. In particular it emphasises that the planning system should support and not act as an impediment to growth (paragraph 19).

- 2.11 In this context it is also important to stress that NPPF paragraph 83 states that land can be released from the Green Belt for development where very special circumstances are demonstrated through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. The continued inclusion of the site does not play any positive role in fulfilling the Green Belt objectives and therefore serves no useful planning purpose. It is considered that these constitute 'very special circumstances'. It is therefore unreasonable, unnecessary and illogical to continue to include the rear part of the Scotsdales site within the Green Belt boundary.
- 2.12 Consequently, it is considered that the policy and the way that it has been applied to the Villages Policies Map Inset 59 'Horningsea' in continuing to include the rear part of the Scotsdales Garden Centre site within the Green Belt boundary and exclude it from the Horningsea Village Framework boundary is therefore unsound and that changes to the Policies Map should be made to reflect this.

## 3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 Scotsdales Garden Centre objects to Policies S/4 and S7 and Local Plan Policies Map Inset 59 for Horningsea as the continued inclusion of the rear part of the Garden Centre site at Horningsea within the Green Belt and its exclusion from the Village Framework for Horningsea is not justified having regard to the purposes of the Green Belt. Consequently, the Policies are unsound.

### Required Changes to Plan

- 3.2 Scotsdales therefore consider that changes should be made to the Local Plan Policies Map Inset 59 for Horningsea to exclude the rear part of the Garden Centre site from the Green Belt and include it within the Horningsea Village Development Framework as illustrated on the attached plan.
- 3.3 This revised approach will ensure that the Policies as interpreted within the associated Policies Map fully accord with Government guidance in the NPPF paragraphs 18, 19, 80 and 83. As such, this will ensure that the Plan is Sound.

(1,356 words)

# APPENDIX 1

## HORNINGSEA SITE PLAN

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# Garden Centre, High Street, Horningsea



