Consultancy Unit

Consultation Response Form

☐ **THIS CONSULTATION IS NOW COMPLETE**

Reference Number:	**S/2273/14**
Proposal:	**Residential development up to 110 dwellings**
Site Address:	**Teversham Road Fulbourn**
Case Officer:	**Andrew Filmore**
Comments due:	**27th Oct 2014**

☐ **Urban Design**

☐ **Landscape**

☐ **Historic Buildings**

☑ **Ecology**

☐ **Environmental Sustainability**

☐ **Trees**

Urban Design

The proposals are generally acceptable, and the designs have the potential to deliver a quality development. The principle of residential development in this location, relationship with existing housing and indicative layout are all acceptable.

Impact on existing housing is limited, helped by retention of existing landscaping and incorporation of landscaped buffers / boundary planting around perimeter of new development. Generous green open space incorporating recreational routes should provide a strong identity / setting for the development, and if well designed, detailed and maintained, could significantly enhance the overall design.

Proposed density is acceptable, with a mix of proposed unit types and tenure. Indicative scale of dwellings appears appropriate, and plot sizes / gardens generally good. Supportive of the concepts regarding a variety of materials, inclusion of front gardens where appropriate, and the development of character areas. Possible concern as to the provision of private amenity space for the units addressing Meadow Park in the "C" shaped blocks. These will need careful consideration to ensure they provide suitable focal buildings in these locations that can still provide high quality living accommodation. Design and arrangement of parking and external space will be even more crucial in these particular locations. Concerns that one block is effectively on an island within a square roundabout with roads on all four sides.

Development shows good levels of permeability to non-vehicular traffic (less permeable for vehicles), with well-connected pedestrian / cycle routes and with strong frontages to primary routes.

Glad to see key frontages have been identified, as well as locations for key buildings. It is hoped the detailing of these plots is well considered during detailed design stage to ensure this intention is not lost. Strong frontages should be encouraged along the primary route through the development, and to the open spaces as indicated. I am a little concerned about the perimeter walkways, which at certain points run between the backs of the existing housing, and the side elevations (and presumably high boarded boundary fencing) of the new housing. These routes would benefit from better natural surveillance, could they be rerouted into the centre of the development? If the housing was pushed back to the boundary the central landscape spine could be widened and strengthened, which would be advantageous, as this is where most people would walk anyway. Obviously pedestrian / cycle routes connections to the existing networks around the site should be retained.

Parking – indication of mixed on and off plot. Inclusion of large parking courts should be discouraged,

detailing and landscaping etc of any areas of parking will required to ensure these do not detract from the development. On plot parking should also be carefully considered so that parked cars do not dominate the streetscene.

No specific mention of onsite renewable energy. Inclusion of this would be strongly encouraged at detailed design stage.

It is important that the principles and intensions of the design and access statement are followed through and developed further in the detailed design stage and do not get diluted as the scheme develops, as previously stated, this has the potential to be a high quality development.

This application would have been good to see at the Design Enabling Panel.

RC 28.10.14

Landscape

Barton Wilmore
Landscape and Visual Appraisal
Flood Risk Assessment
Design and Access Statement

Landscape and Visual Character
The proposed development will have a significant landscape and visual impacts on the local landscape and visual receptors in the area..

The site lies within the 'East Anglian Chalk' national character area, but as the Design and Access statement (D&AS) notes the site is more heavily influenced by the village form of Fulbourn and the Little Wilbraham Fen and Eastern Fen Edge landscape Character Areas identified in the Cambridge Green Belt Study of 2002.

The site is fairly enclosed but is permeable with views possible into the site from east and west (Cox's Drove and Teversham Road) and glimpsed views from the south between the houses on Cow Lane.

It is rural in character. Both east and west frontages feature mature trees and hedgerows, with filtered and clear views to the two meadows which make up the site, the meadows divided by a mature hedgerow and stream running south to north. The southern boundary has more of a village edge character, retains a green frontage, and features two areas of open space which connect through to the site – The Pump House Garden to the west and Poorwell Water to the east. Poorwell Water is outside the proposed development, but offers views through to it. Poorwell Water contains several small chalk springs which feed into the stream to the north – a tributary of the Little Wilbraham chalk river system.
The northern boundary is entirely enclosed by a well vegetated railway embankment.

In the Site Appraisal (3.4 page 20) the applicants state that there has been an urbanising influence on the site, as illustrated in site appraisal photographs A B C and E due to adjoining residential and employment units and the railway embankment. However these photographs actually show a village edge with a very rural character where building make up only a relatively small part of the view, and all being set within or against mature trees, and set well below the vegetated skyline

The applicants have also produced a set of Site Context photographs, which are said to show urbanising influences on the site. (summary page 25) Again the photographs from the immediate area Photographs 1 2 3 and 4) show the site set in the context of a green, rural village edge. Photographs 6 7 and 8 show more distant views, again almost entirely rural in character, but at such distances that the proposed development would have only a very limited impact on Landscape of Views. A greater visual impact photograph 5 where rooflines may be visible, but set beyond the rather stark village edge of the Caraway Road properties.

The site itself also has a highly rural character. It contains two small chalk streams fed by adjacent springs

Water quality is good and the generally high water table beneath adds further interest in terms of landscape character. The fen areas and the 'Semi-improved' meadow containing a number of locally scares plant species would make the site worthy of becoming a County Wildlife Site.

The proposed development however would have an urbanising effect on the site and the local landscape. Views into the site would be possible particularly from the proposed entrance on Teversham Road, from Cox's Drove and from between buildings and through open space from Cow Lane where the gable ends of the proposed 2.5 story buildings would be visible.

Summary
Currently the site has a rural character a green village edge with views through to a mature area of meadow, hedges and areas of woodland.

Landscape character would be completely altered as the whole site would have to be either raised as a building platform, or lowered to provide drainage routes or attenuation areas. Table 6.1 states that grasslands will be retained, but these will be largely confined to drainage features, and it is likely that the quality of landscape and ecology would be reduced as it will take many years to replace the lost semi-improved grassland. The landscape effects on the water table and the many small springs have also not been considered. Locally the landscape character would not be enhanced as stated (6.28 page 41) by replacing established village edge meadows with built areas and drainage features.

Visual effects would be most evident from close viewpoints. Currently the green village edge and mature, tranquil meadow form the views experienced by receptors (local residents and visitors to the site) This would be completely altered by the proposed 110 dwellings. Again I do not agree that development would improve views from Teversham Road, Cox's Drove and Cow Lane. The visual effects on visitors to the site (the area is a popular village recreation area – dog walking etc) have not been assessed.

Complience with policy
The LVIA states that the design is compliant with development control (DC) policies as it will conserve and enhance the local landscape character, would not affect the purposes og the green belt and would respect the adjacent conservation area and local landscape character.

As noted above the local landscape character would be completely altered.

The proposals do not accord with policy S/9 – Fulbourn as a Minor Rural Centre where a development will be limited to a maximum of 30 dwellings,

Policy NH/12 Protecting Village Character – The site has been allocated as Local Green Space due to its Tranquility, Richness of wildlife and its special value to the local community.

Policy S/7 Development Framework – development outside the Development Framework would only be allowed where it protects and enhances local features or green space of landscape, ecological or historical interest (the site covers all three), all of which would be damaged by the proposal.

Layout
The layout has a number of problems.

The access is poor – a single in and out onto Teversham Road.

The link between the two major built areas of the site across 'Meadow Park' is shown as of only a 'lane/private drive' in the street hierarchy – A shared surface 4.5-5m wide. This type of road also forms the access route to the majority of the housing. Normal adoptable standards for highways limit access by this type of street to 12 dwellings. The likely requirements to upgrade the access across the site could have a significant negative impact on the character of the development, making it far more urban.

The potentially most visually intrusive buildings on the site have been placed within direct views from Poorwell.

The density of dwellings in the built areas is far higher than that existing on the village edge, and will contrast negatively with it. (see pages 46, 47 D&AS)

Open Space
The D&AS states that over 50% of the site will remain as open space, mostly publicly accessible.

However the Surface Water Management and Surface Water Flood Management Plan (Cannon Drawing B411 004) shows that nearly all open space within the development is either 'Bioretention Area' or 'Maintained Surface Water Flood Storage and Run – Off Area'

Cross sections on drawing B411 004 also show (presumably) the building platform edge as a 1:1 slope. This, together with the significant drainage infrastructure required in these type of drainage/storage features (guard rails, erosion control, head walls etc) is likely to produce a far more engineered character to the open space than the examples shown in the D&AS. General slopes in the Bioretention areas are to be 1:2 to 1:4. This will appear steep and engineered.

Open space allocation is stated as 3.45Ha – over the provision required (D&AS page 42). However very little of the open space shown is actually accessible. The Bioterention and surface water retention areas are to be lowered by up to 600mm from the present ground levels, with the building platform raised approximately 300mm above existing levels. Most of the open space is expected to be damp (maximum groundwater levels are at 0.67m) and are to be planted with moisture loving plants. Public access is restricted to boardwalks through these areas.

It is not acceptable that use of public open space should be restricted to walking on boardwalks. Approximately 900-1000m of boardwalk are shown, and I feel that it would be unlikely that the majority of these would actually be used.

There will be some public space available in the refurbished Pump House Gardens, but again significant areas of this sre likely to be damp, or are permanent water.

As noted above the existing landscape and meadow is of a good quality for the area, and nearly all would be removed in the need to lower or raise ground levels. This meadow land w3ill be difficult to replicate, especially as the site is to be engineered and likely to be welter, generally than at present.

Recommendations
On Landscape Grounds I would recommend refusal for the following reasons;

- The development will irreversibly changing the Landscape and Visual character of a valued and well used Village Green Space.
- The requirements to alter levels and drainage patterns over the whole site will result in the destruction of locally scare Semi-improved Grassland.
- The development does not comply with SCDC DC policy as it is far in excess of the limits set for development in a Minor Rural Centre, (S/9) It does not protect Village character (NH12), and the development is outside the Development Framework (S/7).
- Access is poor and it is likely that requirements for road and drainage engineering will result in a development far more urban in character than that shown. The development will introduce a built area with a high dwelling density into an area of low density with a green and permeable character.
- Very little of the public open space is accessable. Activity will be restricted to walking through the areas on a boardwalk.

David Hamilton 5-11-14.

Historic Buildings

Ecology

An objection is raised to this development on unmitigated adequately mitigated biodiversity impact. The development does not accord with the objectives of policy NE/6 Biodiversity, part 1 states, "New development should aim to maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity…."

The application is supported by a broad range of surveys which is welcomed. The master plan *appears* to retain a reasonable amount of semi-natural habitat but the layout needs to be considered in accordance with the "surface water management and flood surface water flood management plan". That plan appears to show that all areas of retained open space will be of lowered ground in order to accommodate swales (referred to as "rills/bioremediation areas" and as "maintained surface water flood storage and route for site run-on"). **This approach is not acceptable as it will result in the complete loss of the site's existing natural features.**

The objection could be removed if the applicant could demonstrate how areas of existing habitat will be retained. Normally the integration of swales and semi-natural open drainage features is welcomed as it can bring ecological gain to a site. I do not believe this to be the case at present.

The site currently comprises semi-improved neutral grassland with hedgerows boundary features, in addition to a small area of woodland, a pond and two spring fed-watercourses (small chalk streams of high water clarity which feed Wilbraham Fen SSSI). Of particular botanical note within the grassland was the occurrence of adder's tongue fern, yellow rattle, square-stemmed St Jon's wort, hairy violet, common spotted orchid and early marsh orchid. **The occurrence of these species make this grassland habitat worthy of consideration as County Wildlife Site status, as such a greater degree of consideration must be given as to how the rare flora of this site can be conserved and further enhanced**. The complete retention of the most ecologically sensitive areas should be the first approach to conserving the site's significant biodiversity interests.

The Phase 1 habitat survey report draws attention to the value of the watercourse as chalk stream habitats worthy of conservation under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. No particular habitat restoration of this important habitat has been proposed. Furthermore the watercourses feed the Wilbraham Fen SSSI which must be protected from any deterioration in water quality, one welcomes the intended use of swales and bioremediation areas. However, **Natural England must be consulted on this application in view of its potential to impact upon a SSSI**.

The habitat report (as do the other ecology reports) contains a number of recommendations for species/habitat protection, management and enhancement. However**, it is not clear that the applicant has addressed these recommendations within the overall master planning process**. A design approach that truly integrates the sites special features should be delivered. A detailed management plan should then be produced so that it is clear what habitats are to be subject to management and/or enhancement.

<u>Great crested newts</u>

The Habitat Reports states that a historic record of great crested newt exists within the village albeit 1.2km from the site. However, the initial assessment of the 2 ponds adjacent to the site identified them as being of "average" suitability for great crested newt, and recommended that the two ponds were surveyed for the presence of great crested newt. This has not been done and on this point **I would raise a holding objection due to in adequate species surveys being undertaken**. If newts are present in the ponds then removal of a large extent of adjacent grassland would pose a significant adverse effect upon the species' use of terrestrial habitat. Provision of specific (undisturbed habitat within he site may be a requirement if great crested newts are present, if the current layout is approved there is no certainty that this can be achieved.

<u>Reptiles</u>

The Reptile Survey confirmed that both common lizard and grass snake are present on site. Both populations are considered as "small" but still need to have specific measures in place to ensure their

conservation. **At present there is no clarification that a specific reptile reserve is being provided.** The conservation of the reptiles must be addressed before any ground work or archaeological investigations can take place as there is a real risk of committing reckless harm to these protected species which are widely distributed across the site. **A strategy of detailed reptile mitigation needs to be presented before the application can be determined.**

Breeding birds

A summer Breeding Bird Survey identified a total of 34 species using the site and establishing territories. The most noteworthy species due to their conservation status, were listed as whitethroat, starling, song thrush, dunnock and corn bunting. **Vegetation clearance, including grass mowing or vehicles tracking over the meadow habitats, presents a threat to the identified nesting birds.** This should be addressed through the timing of works or vegetation clearance outside of the bird breeding season (but integrated with the conservation of reptiles).

The report considers that the retention of suitable nesting habitats along the boundary features could sustain many of the birds of interest for the site. However, **now that it is believed that the drainage measures will result in much impact upon these boundary features I am not convinced that retention of the breeding habitats will be secured**. Furthermore the report has recommended that an area of semi-improved natural grassland be retained for the ground nesting corn bunting. No clarification is provided with regard to this point.

The report continues to advise on a range of specialist bird boxes that could be provided, again no commitment appears to have be given regarding that recommendation.

Bats

Appropriate Bat Surveys have been undertaken on the site. The bat surveys identified 6 species of bat (serotine - rare, noctule-rare, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, another pipistrelle species and a Myotis species - rare). No bat roosts were identified with the tree at the site and therefore it is concluded that bat roosts will not present any constraint to the proposed development.

A strong commuting route was identified for Common pipistrelle at the site and was along the main stream and hedge that bisects the site. It was believed that the bats were flying from a roost in Fulbourn but use this site to access feeding areas and habitat (such as Wilbraham Fen SSSI) beyond the site.

Should any development be allowed then it is very important that a dark route is retained along the watercourse so that the bat flight path is not disrupted. The access road over the central watercourse should not be lit, can this be confirm or the principle agreed to?

The bat report also recommends that at least 15 bat boxes be erected upon trees and 5 on dwellings

Badger, otter and water vole surveys

No badger, otter nor water voles signs were found on the site. The stream is presently of suboptimal habitat for water vole being quite shaded. With very limited fish present in the watercourse there is limited food to attract otter. The low lying nature of the ground is believed to have presented unsuitable conditions for badgers, however they could excavated a sett into the sides of the watercourses.

It is advised that prior to any development commencing a repeat survey should be undertaken for badger as they are a species that have the ability to colonise new sites where previously absence may have been recorded.

The is an opportunity for habitat restoration is so far as the channel form of ditch 2 is concerned. The badger, water vole and otter survey reports that (part of) the banks of ditch 2 are formed of concrete slabs. This channel should be returned to a more natural form if it is practicable. I would also welcome selective thinning of the hedge that currently shades the watercourses (as recommended in the report).

It also appears that pedestrian access is to be provided alongside the two adjacent pond features (within boardwalks proposed at present). These features will therefore be subject to a much greater degree of human disturbance than they have at present. As no great crested newt surveys have been undertaken,, nor specific consideration of this point provided in the reports, **I also have concern that these two important ponds will be subject to unmitigated disturbance**. The ponds will require management in order to keep them as attractive features that are rich in biodiversity this will require their inclusion within a

management plan and for suitable **funding to be allocated through the S106 process**. Are these ponds in the control of the applicant? What confirmation can be provided that these access routes can be achieved, and then any subsequent biodiversity mitigation.

RM 23Oct14

Environmental Sustainability

Trees