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**Westfield Farm, Great North Road, Buckden,  
Cambridgeshire PE19 5XJ**

Report to:

**Deloitte**

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September 2008

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 The site consists of one four bedroom farmhouse and modern buildings in associated farm use in a four acre site on the edge of the village of Buckden.

## 2. Address

- 2.1 Westfield Farm, Great North Road, Buckden, Cambridgeshire PE19 5XJ

## 3. Property Description & Current Lawful Use

- 3.1 The full site extends to 57 acres, and is sited immediately adjacent to the A1 south of the village of Buckden, Cambridgeshire.
- 3.2 Westfield Farm includes a dilapidated two storey brick detached farmhouse, dating from around the 1860s. The property provides approximately 2,325 sq ft of accommodation, comprising four bedrooms, a bathroom and WC, two reception rooms and kitchen/breakfast room.
- 3.3 There are two single storey brick constructed outbuildings divided into various sized store rooms forming a court yard at the rear of the farmhouse property. The outbuildings are in poor condition and would require replacement roofs to make them water tight.
- 3.4 A further traditional building provides 5,468 sq ft of space in a poor but useable working order, in associated farm use.
- 3.5 There is a hay barn which comprises a simple steel frame Dutch barn providing 2,056 sq ft of sheltered accommodation.
- 3.6 The property includes a total of 9.33 acres of flat farm land. Internal to the site is a converted Mill House in residential use, this building and grounds (760 sq m), falls outside UKLI ownership. The Mill House has access rights over the track running alongside the north boundary from Great North Road.
- 3.7 The lawful use of the site is therefore agricultural with ancillary residential use.

## 4. Planning History

- 4.1 A planning application was permitted for the extension of a house at 1 Great North Road, in December 2001. No further details of this application are available at present.
- 4.2 There are a number of permissions relating to the conversion of the Mill House, granted permission in November 2003, the most recent being permission granted to a further bedroom extension in 2007.

## **5. Planning Opportunity (Policy Review)**

### **Regional/Strategic**

- 5.1 The area of Huntingdonshire falls within the remit of the East of England Plan (May 2008) and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003, a number of policies of which have been saved following approval of the East of England Plan.

### **Local**

- 5.2 The site falls within Huntingdonshire District Council, where the saved policies of the Huntingdonshire District Plan Alteration 2002, form the Local Plan for this area.
- 5.3 Huntingdonshire District Council produced a draft Core Strategy Preferred Options report in November 2007, which was submitted to the Secretary of State in 4 July 2008. These policies will form a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Ultimately the policies contained within this draft document will replace those in the existing Local Plan. These policies have therefore also been considered.

### **Land Use Designation**

- 5.4 The site is within an area of attractive open countryside and outside the settlement boundary as identified in the Local Plan 2002. The Local Plan 2002 identifies the site as being within an area of best landscape. In the submission Core Strategy, the site lies between two areas of 'Strategic Greenspace Enhancement' to the east and west, and green corridors to the north and south. The Core Strategy prioritises these areas for ecological enhancement and provision of green leisure and recreation facilities (Policy CS9).
- 5.5 The site falls to the south west of the Buckden Conservation Area and does not contain any listed buildings.
- 5.6 The site does not lie within an identified 1 in 100 year functional flood plain.
- 5.7 There are no Tree Preservation Orders on the site.
- 5.8 It is understood that an Article 4 Direction has been served on the farm land within the wider site of the Westfield Farm to restrict permitted development rights, and in particular the fencing of the site into parcels of land. This is unusual and suggests the Council are signalling their opposition to any future change of use of the land.

### **Housing Requirement**

- 5.9 The East of England Plan requires Huntingdonshire to deliver land for 11,200 homes in the period 2001-2021. Priority is given to provision of residential development in market towns, rather than in the rural areas. Therefore the Greenfield sites around Buckden are largely considered to be inappropriate for development, particularly in the short term (see appendix 2).

- 5.10 The Core Strategy submission document indicates that to meet the plan allocation 3,925 dwellings will be provided on green field land, but these are directed to south east/east Godmanchester as part of a significant mixed use development, in St Neots as part of an urban extension, to the west of St Ives, to the west and north of Ramsey, and in key service centres of Fenstanton, Sawtry and Yaxley (see Appendix 2).
- 5.11 Buckden lies outside the Cambridge Growth Area identified in the East of England Plan, and therefore will not be target of growth. It is unlikely that additional housing land will be sought in or around Buckden to make significant contribution to the regional housing targets due to the underlying characteristics of the local area. The council is likely to focus on those parts of the region within the Growth Area, and within settlement boundaries to deliver housing targets before looking elsewhere should there remain housing need.
- 5.12 The site falls outside the policy area of Buckden as defined in the saved policies of the 2002 Local Plan Alteration. Buckden is identified as a group village, where housing groups (a development of 8-15 units) or infilling may be achievable. The site of Westfield Farm lies outside of this settlement boundary, to the other side of the A1 trunk road, and therefore does not benefit from this policy. Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy identifies Buckden as a 'key service centre' where development in the built up area of a moderate and minor scale may be appropriate.
- 5.13 It is considered preferable in terms of cost and sustainability to build within the existing curtilage of the village where possible. Given there are alternative sites already identified as having the potential for development within the village boundary, it is likely to be challenging to achieve development outside of this boundary at Westfield Farm. This is because the Council will give clear preference to those sites which are within the defined settlement boundary before contemplating sites such as Westfield Farm which lie outside.
- 5.14 Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy proposes that sites outside the settlement boundary may be suitable for some development, as rural exception sites, but only where these would be for affordable housing in perpetuity.
- 5.15 Huntingdonshire produced a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment in June 2008, in which potential sites are identified for housing development. These sites mostly lie to the north, east and south of the village of Buckden, opposite locations to the development site. There is no proposed release of land for development to the west where the Westfield farm site is located, and only one of the identified sites is considered to have any short term potential for development, and only then on a very small scale (see Appendix 2).
- 5.16 Saved policy HL7 supports the re-use of empty properties and the conversion of underused properties into housing use. This should be considered in the context of other housing policies.
- 5.17 Development on unallocated land outside the built up area will generally be restricted to what is essential to the efficient operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, permitted mineral extraction, outdoor recreation or public utility services.
- 5.18 Significantly, the Local Plan states that the District will usually refuse consent for new dwellings on agricultural holdings unless they represent a replacement for a dwelling

previously available for occupation. Replacement dwellings will only be acceptable where they involve only modest changes in building size. Proposals for the refurbishment and alteration of dwellings in the countryside will generally be refused if they significantly change the form and scale of the original building. This is reinforced by the Council's SPG on 'Farm buildings and Outbuildings', 2003.

- 5.19 This SPG also states that any redevelopment for residential purposes is likely to be unsuitable unless it is within the built area of a settlement, unless the building is required for agricultural or forestry purposes. Proposals for re-use or development will be considered against any impact on the environment or traffic in the area.
- 5.20 Any extension to a farm building is determined against its relationship with the existing scale and structure of the building. The agricultural character of the building should be sought to be retained.
- 5.21 The council may be looking to bring forward gypsy/traveller sites in future. Although this would be subject to planning policy and the normal restrictions as to the setting of the site and land use designation, there could be potential to put the site forward for consideration.
- 5.22 Policy AH5 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan indicates that the council may relax normal restrictive open countryside development policies to permit affordable housing. This would be within, adjoining or well related to settlements of less than 3,000 population, and be subject to suitability of an identified site in terms of environmental impact and the availability of necessary infrastructure. To apply this rural exception policy, a local need for such housing must be proven. Given the location of the site to the western side of the A1 and so detached from Buckden, it is likely that this site would be considered unsuitable in not meeting policy criteria. This was further indicated in our meeting with Huntingdonshire's planning department (see appendix 3).
- 5.23 Rural exceptions policy, as set out in PPS3, enables Local Authorities to identify sites suitable solely for affordable housing. These are often small, Greenfield sites, which would otherwise not be released for housing under conventional planning guidance. Although Huntingdonshire's Development Plan does contain an exceptions policy, it is very unlikely that Westfield Farm would be considered for such development due to its unsustainable location, and with limited access to services.

## **6. Review of Previous Commentary**

### **RD Planning and Land Report 2008**

- 6.1 The report identifies the site as class B, and suggests the promotion of the site for a hotel with leisure facilities and/ or retirement village. There was also the suggestion of possible B1/B8 (office/ warehousing) uses with residential adjacent to the existing house in Perry Road.
- 6.2 It is agreed that this site has good accessibility off the A1, which may allow for some intensification of the use of the site; however this also needs to be considered against the Council stated landscape aspirations for the area. The proposal to intensify the use sufficiently to enable a hotel development in this location is likely to be inappropriate both in relation to the impact from highways, and the visual impact and scale of development in a rural area.

Furthermore, the site lies outside the settlement boundary, so would struggle to demonstrate its being a sustainable location for any such form of development. Market advice would also be needed to demonstrate the appropriateness of this location for hotel use.

- 6.3 The emerging Huntingdonshire Core Strategy has been supported by a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. This seeks to identify potential sites for delivery of housing, the nature of which should meet an identified local need. A number of possible sites have been identified, all of which lie within the settlement boundary or immediately adjacent to it to the north, east or south east. Should they come forward, they are highly likely to be viewed as preferable locations due to their proximity to the centre of the settlement. It is therefore unlikely that residential (even as a care home) use would be acceptable on this site in the short to medium term.

### **Cluttons Report, May 2008**

- 6.4 The Cluttons report recommends that the site would be suitable for redevelopment, but for one new residential unit. It also considers there may be the potential for change of use of the other existing buildings on site.
- 6.5 The redevelopment of the residential unit is likely to be acceptable, subject to good design and sensitive response to the landscape character of the area. There may also be the potential for some extension to the scale of the property, again subject to good design. Any new property would be most appropriately located on the same built footprint as the existing house, however there may be some scope to move its location, as long as it remains within the existing footprint of the site.
- 6.6 The conversion of the other buildings would need to be investigated with the local planning authority. It is likely that provision of a new house would be supported where it was shown to secure the future agricultural use of the site. The buildings are therefore likely to be most appropriately retained in their existing use with some upgrade to their fabric where this could be shown to conserve/enhance the established agricultural use. The expansion to allow office/warehouse use is unlikely to be appropriate, subject to investigation of the specific type of use proposed and the impact of any such use on the character of the area.

### **Savills Report, March 2006**

- 6.7 The Savills report identifies the site as an agricultural small holding with the potential for use by horse owners for a small equestrian establishment. It is likely that this nature and scale of use would be deemed appropriate and fall within the lawful use of the site. Some upgrade to the existing house and associated buildings would be considered achievable.

## **7. Development Potential**

- 7.1 A large part of the site has been retained by UKLI, therefore there is some possibility for resale of the site, or individual buildings. The plot excludes the converted Mill House and grounds.
- 7.2 We have identified that the site lies outside the defined settlement boundary of Buckden as identified in both the Local Plan and the emerging Core Strategy. The potential for significant

redevelopment or infilling of the site will therefore be very limited. Any extension to the building is likely to be of limited scale and restricted to the immediate vicinity of the existing buildings.

- 7.3 The area does have an identified need to deliver housing as it lies outside a growth area, and the Council's recent Strategic Land Availability Assessment has begun to identify potential sites (see Appendix 2). There are sites under consideration as being suitable for housing development around Buckden, and these are very likely to be preferable to the Westfield Farm site, due to their closer proximity to the village centre and facilities therein. As a result, there is likely to be little potential for wholesale redevelopment for housing or commercial use at this time.
- 7.4 There may be the opportunity to promote the site through representations to the emerging Core Strategy. This document will set an overall quantum for levels of housing and employment growth in the area, and an overall strategy for the preferred locations for this growth. More specific documents relating to sites for development will be prepared, in the form of a 'Planning Proposals DPD', due to be subject to consultation in mid 2009. This will be a further opportunity to put forward this site for alternative, intensified use if considered appropriate.
- 7.5 The Council are allowing some residential infilling where there are services existing to support additional dwellings, but only on sites within the defined settlement boundaries (see Appendix 3).
- 7.6 There are a number of potential sites already being considered for delivery of housing. As such, our advice remains however that any such representations will be viewed in the context of the site's location, outside the identified settlement boundary, and therefore in a location which will continue to be viewed as unsuitable and unsustainable for any type of development.
- 7.7 Looking ahead, there is the possibility the site could be pursued for alternative use or a higher intensity of the residential use through the emerging Local Development Framework, however as identified, there are a number of potential sites already being considered and this site would need to be proven as preferable to development at these alternatives.
- 7.8 The area has a rural village character, is in an area of landscape quality, and lies within the Green Belt, therefore any redevelopment proposals would need to be considered in this context.
- 7.9 The most likely preferred option for the site is to upgrade the associated buildings to allow their continued use for agricultural purposes where this could be shown to be retained and enhance the existing use. The extent and nature of works to the buildings would be subject of discussion with the planning authority.

### **Farm House**

- 7.10 Given the site restrictions, we consider there is likely to be the potential for the demolition and rebuild of the existing farmhouse, to create a new, modern property for resale. The design of this would need to be of high quality and sensitive to its location, and would be most

appropriately located on the built footprint of the existing property, but with some potential for realignment of the property within the existing built footprint of the site.

- 7.11 The Council indicated that they may be likely to accept the redevelopment of the existing residential dwelling, with possible relocation to be further from the A1 (see Appendix 3). This would be subject to consideration of an alternative siting regarding with the existing Mill House. The Council would not be likely to accept a development increasing the visual impact of development in the Green Belt. It is very unlikely that the Council would support a proposal increasing the floorspace of the existing development.

### **Farm Buildings**

- 7.12 It is likely to be possible to upgrade and convert some of the surrounding buildings for alternative use (most appropriately agricultural related, for example equestrian or horticulture use, see Appendix 3) subject to any impact on the surrounding area and where it can be proved that this will enhance the agricultural offer of the area.

### **Other Uses**

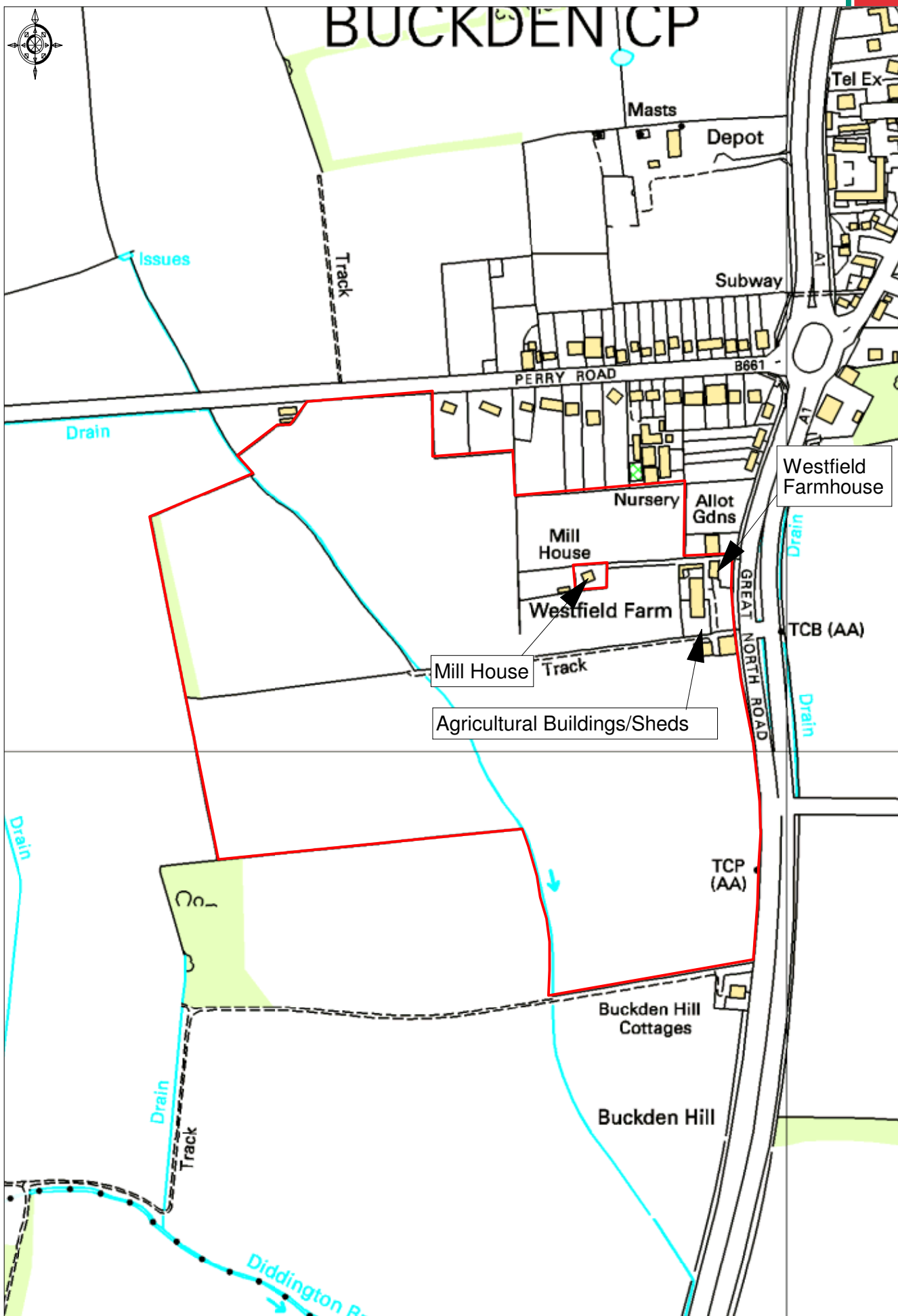
- 7.13 The site could potentially be put forward as a gypsy / traveller site, this was further suggested at the meeting with Huntingdonshire District Council (see Appendix 3).
- 7.14 Given the location of the site it is unlikely that a proposal for a sport/recreation facility would be considered to be sustainable or supported.

### **Summary**

- 7.15 Given the green field nature of the site within an area of best landscape, and the opinion of the Council, it is very unlikely that the site would be considered for housing development. The site lies outside the Cambridge growth area and outside the boundary of Buckden, as such the site will not be prioritised for the delivery of housing. To meet housing delivery targets a number of green field sites have been identified, which do not include land around Buckden or the Westfield Farm site.
- 7.16 It is likely that the redevelopment of the existing 2-storey residential dwelling would be supported, with potential to relocate further from the road.
- 7.17 A proposal for a recreation/leisure use is unlikely to be supported due to the unsustainable location. There may be potential to put the land forward for a gypsy/traveller site.



## **APPENDIX 1**



## APPENDIX 2

## 2. Review of Housing Land Requirements - Westfield Farm, Buckden, Huntingdonshire

### Housing Numbers

- 2.1 Housing provision figures for Huntingdonshire are set out in the East of England Plan and require a minimum of 11,200 dwellings for the period 2001 to 2021. Taking into account the completions that have already taken place between 2001 and 2006, this equates to a residual requirement of 8,310 dwellings at an average completion rate of 550 per annum.
- 2.2 National Planning Policy, as set out in Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS 3), requires that LPAs ensure there is at least a 15 year supply of land for housing, in accordance with regional requirements, from when the Core Strategy is adopted. A submission version of the Core Strategy document for Huntingdonshire was submitted to the Secretary of State on July 4th 2008 and therefore the earliest it will be adopted is in 2009. The East of England Plan end date of 2021 would not allow for this 15 year supply therefore. To this end the Core Strategy proposes an end date of 2026 for the housing trajectory to allow for a 15 year supply in accordance with PPS 3 requirements. This equates to an overall district housing figure for the period 2001-26 of at least 14,000 new homes at an annual average of 560 per annum.
- 2.3 In order to inform the evidence base for the Core Strategy submission document, the Council have completed the following evidence base documents:
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2008)
  - Housing Needs Survey (2003 and updated in 2006)
  - Cambridge Housing sub-region Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008)
- 2.4 These documents have been used to inform the Council's Housing Trajectory set out in the Core Strategy submission document together with the Council's latest Annual Monitoring Report (AMR 2007). The Housing Trajectory is as follows:
- Between 2001 and 2026 2,890 dwellings have been completed
  - From 2006 to 2026:
    - 4,265 dwellings will come forward from existing allocations in the Local Plan
    - 1,345 dwellings will come forward from non-allocated sites that have planning permission or agreement in principle
    - 5,500 dwellings will be provided in allocated locations across the District including Greenfield sites (these are discussed in further detail below) as part of the emerging LDF
  - This equates to a total of 14,000 dwellings.
- 2.5 As noted in the Council's most recent Annual Monitoring Report (AMR 2007), the trajectory is based on estimations and actual delivery will be affected by wider market and economic conditions, together with the formal adoption of the LDF which proposes additional allocations of 5,500 dwellings.

- 2.6 In terms of the PPS3 requirement to identify a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, the Council's AMR identifies a deliverable supply of 4,909 dwellings compared to a requirement for 2,795 for the five year period between 2007 and 2012. For the following five years (2012 to 2016) the AMR suggests an under-supply in dwellings of -1538. However, it is noted that this will change once the Core Strategy has been adopted and additional sites are allocated.

## Housing Locations

- 2.7 As set out above, the Council's housing trajectory includes 5,500 dwellings to be allocated as part of the emerging LDF. According to the Core Strategy submission document, at least 1,575 of these will be on previously developed land whilst 3,925 will be on greenfield land.
- 2.8 The overall strategy is to concentrate the majority of growth in the Huntingdon and St Neots Spatial Planning Areas. Areas identified for greenfield release have been done so on the basis of the identified locations being sustainable in terms of planned infrastructure improvements. Of the 3,925 dwellings to be provided on greenfield land, the following areas have been identified:
- In Godmanchester as part of a significant mixed use development on greenfield land to the south east/east after the A14 road improvements have been implemented and on greenfield land to the south west (c800 homes in total)
  - In St Neots as part of the first phase of a significant mixed use urban extension on greenfield land to the east of the town (c2,500 homes in total)
  - In St Ives in a significant greenfield development to the west of the town (c400homes)
  - In Ramsey to the west and north of the town (c50 homes in total)
  - In key service centres of Fenstanton, Sawtry and Yaxley on Greenfield land (c175 homes in total).
- 2.9 None of these locations for greenfield development include Buckden or the general area in which Westfield Farm is located. Indeed the SHLAA did consider a number of sites on the edge of Buckden for their housing potential but these were all located east of the A1. The ability of a number of the sites proposed for housing growth to actually deliver will be largely dependent on significant and timely infrastructure improvements. It is unlikely, for example, that some of the large scale greenfield sites will come forward before 2015.
- 2.10 Windfall sites have not been included in the housing trajectory (as required by PPS3) but, should any come forward they will be dealt with in accordance with the settlement hierarchy set out in the Core Strategy. This identifies that areas which are part of the countryside, which includes Westfield Farm, residential development will be strictly limited to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside. It is possible, therefore, that some moderate/minor release of greenfield land would take place in Buckden, but Westfield Farm is unlikely to be considered suitable for such release in that it falls outside the settlement boundary of Buckden (see Appendix 3).



- 2.11 The Council's SSA DPD will set out the precise numbers of housing to be delivered in each of the areas and sites to be allocated.

### **Implications**

- In accordance with PPS3, the Council has identified a deliverable five year supply of housing. To this end there are no identified housing shortages within the period 2007 to 2012.
- The ability of the Council to meet a 15 year supply of housing will be dependent in part on the approval of additional allocations, including a number of greenfield sites, as part of the LDF process.
- Greenfield areas that have been identified for housing growth have been done so on the evidence base of a SHLAA. None of the areas identified are in proximity of Westfield Farm site.
- Although there may be some further release of greenfield land to meet exceptional need, the Westfield Farm site is unlikely to be considered suitable for such release because it falls outside the settlement boundary of Buckden.

## **APPENDIX 3**



**WESTFIELD FARM, GREAT NORTH ROAD, BUCKDEN,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE PE19 5XJ**

**NOTE OF MEETING WITH HEAD OF PLANNING  
HELD ON FRIDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2008 AT HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES**

<b>Attendees:</b>	Steve Ingrams (SI)	Huntingdonshire District Council
	Iestyn John (IJ)	DTZ (Planning)
	Clare Lucey (CL)	DTZ (Planning)

**Distribution:**

**ACTION**

**1.0 Site Specific Issues**

- 1.1 SI noted from the outset that the land was currently 'nice agricultural land' and this was likely to remain. There is limited other potential as development would not accord with existing/emerging planning policy.
- 1.2 The Council were aware of the marketing for the site and have received a number of queries from potential investors. The Council issued a press release on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2005 advising prospective purchasers of plots of land to exercise caution. The release states that a meeting of the district council development control panel had been advised that no application for planning permission had been made, and that permission for residential development was unlikely to be granted because homes would be contrary to current, emerging, and foreseeable planning policies.
- 1.3 SI confirmed that the Council have had no direct correspondence with UKLI. There have been no representations made on the land in the course of developing planning policy. SI was not aware of there being any discussion with UKLI over development potential at the site.
- 1.4 Buckden is defined as a key service centre in the Huntingdonshire centre hierarchy, ranked second of three settlement categories). As such, it was indicated that within the development policies of local planning policy, schemes of moderate to minor scale may be supported.
- 1.5 Buckden falls outside the South East Plan Cambridge Growth Area. SI also confirmed that the Westfield Farm site is outside the Buckden settlement boundary, as well as being outside the Cambridge Growth Area (unlike many other sites). As such, it was his opinion that the plot is very much within the local countryside and Green Belt.
- 1.6 The Council are allowing some residential infilling where there are services existing to support additional dwellings, but only on sites within the defined settlement boundaries. SI's view was that due to its location on the western side of the A1, this site would be very likely to be considered unsuitable due to infrastructure and safety issues of the A1 Great North Road, and potential traffic problems.
- 1.7 SI added that access from the A1 Great North Road is currently suitable for limited traffic only. The A1 is a dangerous route, and the Council have no plans to improve

the existing to be suitable for increasing exit/joining traffic.

- 1.8 Although the Council are beginning to work from a 'Built Framework Strategy' rather than defining settlement boundaries, there was little chance that the site would ever be considered to be within Buckdens built up area. It would remain that the site is outside and development area, and within the countryside.
- 1.9 Steve Ingrams was unaware of the site being within an area of mineral search.

#### Existing Dwellings

- 1.10 Although an argument could be made for the relocation of the existing dwelling further from the roadway, Council policy for replacement dwellings in the green belt is for one-for-one replacement on the existing footprint. It was indicated that the Council would strongly impose this policy, and be unsupportive of proposals which used more of the Green Belt.
- 1.11 IJ suggested that there may be a case for a relocation of the dwelling based on providing an improved residential environment (i.e. away from the A1 and therefore less noisy). This could be implemented by further landscaping and planting to reduce any Green Belt impact. SI accepted that this may be justified but would be down to detailed analysis and design.
- 1.13 Movement further into the site would lead to a visual cluster of dwellings around the existing former Mill, contrary to the visual appearance of the green belt. SI suggested that the Mill had been a former windmill converted to a residential dwelling and as such the scope for residential development on site had been reached [\* Post meeting note- further to the issue of Mill House being raised, research has identified a number of permissions, the earliest being 2007, relating to the conversion and further extension of the former Mill to a residential dwelling. It is therefore unlikely that further extension or alteration would be permitted in maintaining the visual amenity of development in the Green Belt. The Mill House and surrounding land falls outside UKLI ownership].

#### Affordable Housing

- 1.14 Although there is some local need for affordable housing, SI felt that it was significantly unlikely that the Westfield Farm site would be considered suitable for an affordable housing site, being in an unsustainable location, the wrong side of the A1, with safety issues and limited access to services. The development plan did contain an exceptions policy but this requires sites to be tested against localised criteria.

#### Other Uses

- 1.15 Huntingdonshire has not identified need for a new school or other community facilities which could be located on site. Given the detached nature of the site, it is likely that sequentially there would be more preferable options within the District.
- 1.16 The Council will be shortly looking for gypsy sites and the site could potentially be put forward to be considered in this search.

#### Article 4 Direction

- 1.17 The site is the subject of an Article 4 Direction made September 2005. The corresponding Development Control report highlights the issues surrounding the

site:

- The land lies within open countryside designated as being within the Area of Best Landscape.
- On the basis of sale documentation, the subdivision of land would be imminent.
- Subdivision and resultant developments and potential fencing would cause severe, demonstrable and potentially irreversible harm to the character, appearance and openness of the sensitive rural landscape.

1.18 The direction identifies no formal planning history on the site, and highlights its underlying agricultural use.

## **2.0 Housing Need and Potential for Green Belt Release**

2.1 SI confirmed the Council will be looking to release some Greenfield land but only in 'strategic, sustainable locations'. SI noted that there were other, larger-scale development sites which would be seen as preferable for development and were actively coming forward, including brownfield and former military sites. These were the focus of the Council's search.

2.2 The Council strategy to meet housing need follows the government direction of brownfield land first, e.g. former RAF Bramford. Although Huntingdonshire would not be likely to meet the national 60% target for development on brownfield sites, any release of land would be of a strategic scale. There is to be a sustainable urban extension at St. Neot's.

2.2 Steve Ingrams advised that council support for green belt release would likely to be for select and substantial strategic sites of 5000+ homes which would be self-sustainable (e.g. the St. Neot's urban extension). The Council would not therefore be pursuing the release of small Green Belt sites for development.

2.3 The Council are working to a 9-year housing land supply, and there have not been problems with land supply in meeting regional targets as yet.

2.4 It was advised that Huntingdon, St Neot's, and St Ives fall within the Cambridge Growth Area, and as such are the targets for housing growth. There is no housing needs case likely to be brought forward in the South East Plan period.

2.5 There have been no successful proposals for housing development in the green belt made in the surrounding area.

2.6 The Huntingdonshire Core Strategy submission document does not include the site as a potential development site. Policy on rural exception sites and housing will allow for development only where there is specific local need and appropriate access to services. It was considered that this site would be insufficiently connected to transport links and local services to be considered.