

RPS

Response Note to Examination Document ED026

In respect of

East Cambridgeshire Proposed
Submission Local Plan

On behalf of

Abbey Properties Cambridgeshire
Limited & Peter and Michael Seymour
and Nicholas and Judith Holdsworth

RPS Ref: JCG22793

14 September 2018

Secure & Stable
ADDING VALUE

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We are instructed by our clients, Abbey Properties Cambridgeshire Limited & Peter and Michael Seymour and Nicholas and Judith Holdsworth, to submit a response note to Examination Document ED026.
- 1.2 Examination Document ED026 is a briefing note referenced 'Role and Responsibilities in Planning for Education Provision' and was produced by the Council as additional work arising during the Stage 1 Hearing Sessions.
- 1.3 Our response to this additional Examination Document is set out below.

2 RESPONSE TO EXAMINATION DOCUMENT ED026

- 2.1 On 17 August 2018 the Inspector invited East Cambridgeshire District Council via letter reference ED037 to provide additional work that the Council had agreed to undertake during the Stage 1 sessions.
- 2.2 In Briefing Note 'Role and Responsibilities in Planning for Education Provision' the Council seek to clarify the role of the Cambridgeshire County Council and the Education Skills & Funding Agency (ESFA) in delivering education in East Cambridgeshire.
- 2.3 The Council establishes that it is the County Council's responsibility to meet the future demands in terms of education and undertake forward planning for education infrastructure.
- 2.4 We consider that the Councils have failed to undertake effective forward planning in relation to education infrastructure in Witchford and the District Council's Note does not address this issue if that was its purpose.
- 2.5 The emerging draft Local Plan removed allocation WFD.M1 which proposed to provide a new Primary School. We consider that the Council has not made provision either directly or through its partners to redress this shortfall and has not therefore adequately planned for the future growth of Witchford.
- 2.6 We note that allocations WFD.H1, WFD.H3 and WFD.H4 benefit from planning permission and collectively will provide an additional 187 dwellings. Allocation WFD.H2 is also due to be determined on 13 September 2018 and would provide a further 116-120 dwellings to the village.
- 2.7 We consider that in order for the Council to demonstrate effective forward planning in respect of these and other future housing developments it should revisit an allocation at Land South of Main Street, Witchford immediately to the west of Rackham Church of England Primary School. This includes provision to gift land to the adjacent primary school including some enabling residential development. This could partly help to counter the effects of the removal of WFD.M1 and its proposal for the new primary school.
- 2.8 This proposed allocation provides an excellent opportunity for Witchford to expand its existing school facilities without the need to provide a new Primary School. Paragraph 72 of the NPPF (2012) attaches great importance to ensuring a sufficient choice of school places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.
- 2.9 We consider therefore that the Draft Local Plan falls short in planning for the effects of new residential allocations in Witchford and Note ED026 does not effectively address this.
- 2.10 Additionally we consider that providing a new Academy is not necessary for Witchford and a much more logical short-term solution would be to expand their current educational facilities in the settlement.

3 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 On behalf of our clients, we have a number of concerns in relation to the soundness of the draft submission version of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. This note is in response to Examination Document ED026 which clarifies the responsibility for East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to forward plan effectively in terms of education infrastructure.
- 3.2 Our note responds to the need for additional school places in Witchford, particularly with a number of residential developments recently being granted planning permission.
- 3.3 Our client's proposals, and their pursuit of a new allocation in the draft Local Plan, seeks to address this issue by offering to gift the land to Rackham Church of England Primary School. The gifting of land to the existing primary school would provide an effective opportunity for Witchford to expand its facilities and to address what we see as one of the current shortcomings of the Local Plan as currently drafted. This could however only be viably delivered alongside enabling residential development on the wider site.