

LAND EAST OF WATER LANE AND NORTH OF THE A421,
RENHOLD.

LOCAL PLAN CALL FOR SITES SUPPORTING STATEMENT

PROPOSED ALLOCATION OF LAND FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (MIX OF B1, B2,
B8 FLOORSPACE) & ROADSIDE SERVICES INCLUDING ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

AUGUST 2020

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of The Howbury Hall Estate and seeks the allocation of land east of water land and north of the A421 for mixed (B1, B2, B8) commercial development and also roadside services and Electric Vehicle (EV) charging facilities as part of the current Local Plan Review process.
- 1.2 The submission includes an indicative Master Plan prepared by PRC which demonstrates how the site could come forward to provide a high quality business area at the eastern edge of Bedford that would act as a gateway to the town. The Master Plan has been prepared following a careful assessment of the opportunities and constraints which exist at the site.
- 1.3 A highway and access assessment has also been undertaken by TPA consultants and has guided the development of the Master Plan. This is submitted alongside this statement. It proposes an upgrade and part re-alignment of the initial section of Water Lane where it comes from the A421 roundabout to provide safe access to the site for the development proposed.
- 1.4 This statement also reviews the location and the proposals and is set out as follows:
- 2.0 Site Analysis
 - 3.0 Concept & Indicative Master Plan
 - 4.0 Ownership & Deliverability
 - 5.0 Conclusions
- 1.5 The statement, the PRC Master Plan and the Indicative Master Plan should be considered in conjunction with and provide additional information to that set out in the main 'Call for Sites' response form.

2.0 SITE ANALYSIS

The Estate

- 2.1 The estate is located to the north east of the main Bedford urban area. It is comprised partly of farmland, (both pasture and crop) and partly Parkland toward the south of the estate. There are a number of buildings within the estate including the main residential property, Howbury Hall, (Grade II Listed) other residential estate properties, barns, outbuildings and stables some of which are also listed.
- 2.2 The overall landholding comprises approximately 186 hectares (460 acres) having been reduced from around 202 hectares (500 acres) as a result of the improvements to the A421 Bedford Bypass which runs (east / west) through the southern portion of the estate.

The Promotion Site

- 2.3 The site which is the subject of this 'Call for Sites' submission is located to the east of the estate directly adjoining the northern side of the A421 with Water Lane forming the western boundary. Land to the north and east is in agricultural use.
- 2.4 There are residential properties at the southern end of Water Lane which back onto the sites north western corner and two estate cottages (owned by the estate) approximately half way along the sites western boundary.

Road Connections

- 2.5 The site would be accessed from the Water Lane / A421 roundabout junction as set out in the accompanying TPA report. This provides access via the A421 (Oxford to Cambridge Expressway) to the 'Black Cat' roundabout on the A1 to the east within a six minute drive and Junction 13 of the M1 to the south west within a sixteen minute drive from the site.

Public Footpaths, Cycleways & Bridleways

- 2.6 There aren't any footpaths or bridleways which cross the site but there are a number in very close proximity which can be accessed via the adopted highway and so provide ease of access into Bedford and the surrounding residential areas.

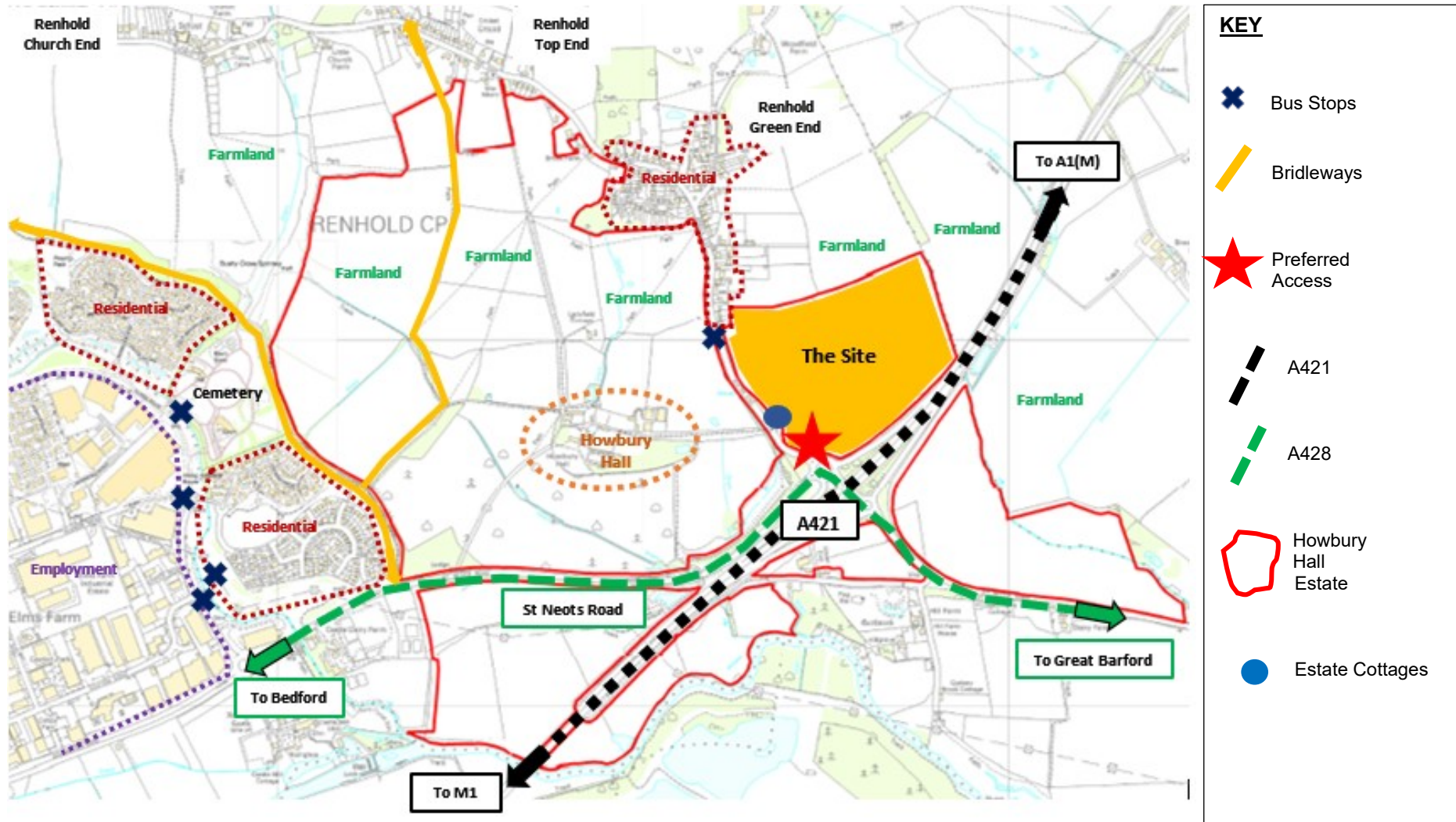
Public Transport

- 2.7 There is an existing bus stop on Water Lane which is serviced by Grant Palmer (Route 27) providing a local service connecting the area with the nearby villages and into Bedford / Bedford Station.

Opportunities & Constraints

- 2.8 The site is broadly square in shape making it an efficient are for commercial development with building generally of square or rectilinear design to maximise usability. It is very well located adjoining the A421 such that traffic associated with the site would not need to travel past any residential properties when accessing or leaving.
- 2.9 The site is also well located to act as a gateway into Bedford and to provide roadside service facilities including EV charging directly on the A421 at the centre of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.
- 2.10 There are two estate properties adjoining the western boundary and also just to the north west of the site at the southern end of Green End. Development at the site would need to be respectful of these properties with appropriate buffer planting included and also the scale and massing of built form close to the sites western edge being minimised to around eight metres i.e. comparable to a two storey house with pitched roof.

Opportunities & Constraints Analysis Plan



3.0 CONCEPT & INDICATIVE MASTER PLAN

The Overall Concept

- 3.1 As local landowners, the vision for the development of the site is to create opportunity for local businesses to start up and remain in the town while they develop and thrive into successful commercial enterprises.
- 3.2 The intention is therefore to create a scheme with a range of different sized units that will accommodate their growth through various stages of development. The smaller units could be let on shorter more flexible lease terms with breaks to allow businesses to trade up to larger medium sized premises as they expand. The larger units would accommodate established businesses that would bear the lion's share of the costs of maintaining and managing a well-designed and landscaped business park in a gateway location to Bedford town.
- 3.3 This concept is also clearly defined in the indicative Master Plan with smaller scale starter units of more residential scale located to the west of the site adjacent to Water Lane with the larger units to the east.
- 3.4 Bedford continues to be attractive to multinational employers with a good labour supply and numerous successful new developments where international companies have shown confidence in the town by basing their operations here.
- 3.5 Savills advise that In 2019, 3.26m sq ft was let in the geographical area around Bedford between Luton, Milton Keynes, Northampton and Biggleswade.

- 3.6 There has been high transactional activity across Bedfordshire over the past 12 months with lettings to Amazon, Rajapack, L3 Technologies, Kramp and AF Blakemore. Elsewhere, within the surrounding market, there have been lettings to Amazon, Ball Corporation and Lightning Source.
- 3.7 This provides a strong case for demand in Bedfordshire and the potential for local businesses to locate and associate with international companies.
- 3.8 There is also increase in demand in Bedfordshire from new medium sized occupiers seeking to relocate from London to more affordable areas. Manufacturers such as Toughglaze (glass manufacturer) and Kolak (food production) are such examples with active requirements in the market.
- 3.9 Pricing, staff availability and location are important drivers as Bedford is perhaps the first location occupiers find stock, affordable rents and staff availability when looking north from London. This message is helped by a very supportive and encouraging local authority Economic Development function.

The Indicative Master Plan

- 3.10 As outlined above, the concept for this site is to provide a mix of unit sizes ranging from smaller start up through to medium and larger scale units. The key aspects are:
- The access would be taken from an enlarged A421/ Water End roundabout and modifications to Water End access.
 - Smaller units would be located along western boundary to create a perforate edge to the site.

- Screening would be provided to the northern boundary - 15m to 25m deep.
- A proposed roadside service and EV charging station would be located at the site entrance.
- SuDS would be incorporated to accommodate the sites surface water and to create diverse ecological habitat. This would also provide opportunities for general amenity.
- A landscape buffer to the A421 would assist in filtering views toward the new built development and provide a sense of enclosure to the site.
- Green corridors would run through the site providing links across it and between landscaped boundaries.



Extract from the Indicative Master Plan

Climate Change – Policy 51S

- 3.11 The Call for Sites form notes that the Council has declared a climate change emergency and seeks to ensure that development which comes forward recognises this matter consistent with the aims of current Local Plan Policy 51S. This states that the Council will require new development to address climate change, adapting to anticipated future changes and mitigating against further change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- 3.12 In the case of development at this site there is significant scope to introduce sustainable features which will assist in mitigating against climate change. This includes the use of green roof, PV and smart buildings to take advantage of passive solar gain and passive solar cooling.
- 3.13 There is also significant scope to enhance tree planting throughout and particularly to the northern and southern boundaries. Drainage would be wholly sustainable, with above ground transference to the main eastern drainage basins which would also include planting and associated biodiversity enhancement.
- 3.14 Provision of a new EV charging station is in its own right a sustainable element designed to encourage the use of electric vehicles and so minimise carbon emissions.

4.0 OWNERSHIP & DELIVERABILITY

- 4.1 The promotion site is wholly owned by the Howbury Hall Estate. The Estate confirm that the land would be made available for development within six months of any allocation in the Local Plan.
- 4.2 There are therefore no land ownership or other technical constraints to the early delivery of development at the site.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This submission seeks the allocation of land at Howbury Hall Estate to provide a mixed B1, B2, B8 gateway business location on the east side of Bedford with associated roadside service and EV charging facilities.
- 5.2 The development of the site as proposed would not adversely impact the setting of the hall or its associated parkland nor would it adversely impact residents to the north on Water Lane.
- 5.3 The site lies close to the A421 expressway and so well related to assist and contribute to delivering growth within the Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor. Further submissions will be made in this regard as part of the Estate's response to the Issues and Options consultation.
- 5.4 We seek the Council's favourable consideration of this submission.