Greater Cambridge Share Planning Service

By Online Planning Register

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Response to 26/03876/OUT: Residential development of up to 240 dwellings on Land Between Hinton Way And Mingle Lane, Great Shelford and Stapleford.

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

Cambridge Past, Present & Future (CPPF) strongly objects to outline planning application. This scheme represents more than a doubling of the previously refused 110-dwelling application on the site (currently under appeal, Ref: 6014493 / planning reference 26/00610/OUT).

CPPF maintains its established objection and requests that South Cambridgeshire District Council refuse planning permission on five key grounds:

1. **Green Belt Harm:** While the site is identified as provisional Grey Belt, development would fundamentally undermine the other core purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt.
2. **5-Year Housing Land Supply:** The Council can demonstrate an up-to-date, robust, and defensible 5-year housing land supply position and there is therefore no need to allow this development.
3. **Harm to Heritage Assets & Conservation Area:** The proposal directly compromises the special visual, rural, and historic character of the Stapleford Conservation Area, the Grade II* listed Church of St Andrew, and the Grade II listed White House.
4. **Spatial Strategy & Local Plan Conflict:** The site lies outside the development frameworks of Great Shelford and Stapleford and conflicts with the made Stapleford & Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan (2025).
5. **Loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land:** The scheme causes the permanent loss of over 12 hectares of Grade 3a agricultural land.

Detailed Grounds of Objection

A. Green Belt Harm: Undermining Other Core Green Belt Purposes

While the Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment Review (LUC, July 2026) identifies the site as provisional Grey Belt with a moderate contribution to purpose (d), classification as Grey Belt does not confer automatic acceptability. NPPF Policy GB7(1)(g)(i) explicitly requires that development must not "fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan".

The scale of development proposed severely conflicts with the remaining Green Belt purposes:

- **Checking Unrestricted Urban Sprawl:** Allowing 240 homes on this site encourages incremental urban expansion into open countryside. The speculative pressure is already demonstrated by adjacent applications in the immediate area (such as application 26/02928/SCRE for up to 400 dwellings).
- **Preventing Coalescence:** The site forms part of the crucial green gap separating Stapleford and Great Shelford along the eastern flank between Haverhill Road and Hinton Way. Urbanising this gap erodes the distinct separation of the two villages.
- **Safeguarding Countryside from Encroachment:** The scheme converts 12.06 hectares of productive, open agricultural countryside on the south-eastern village edge into a suburban housing estate.
- **Preserving Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns:** Cambridge's special character relies on being a compact historic city surrounded by a distinct "necklace" of rural villages. Substantially expanding and urbanising these Rural Centres degrades their village character, indirectly harming the historic setting of Greater Cambridge.

B. Housing Land Supply: The Need for an Up-to-Date and Robust Position

The applicant seeks to exploit uncertainties surrounding housing land supply calculations to justify speculative greenfield release.

- The Further Addendum to the Greater Cambridgeshire Housing Trajectory and Housing Land Supply Report (November 2026) demonstrates 7.83 years for South Cambridgeshire and here is therefore no need to allow this development.
- Even if land supply calculations are heavily contested by developers, housing supply is only one element of the planning balance. Deficits in supply do not override clear, permanent, and unmitigated harms to the Cambridge Green Belt, local heritage assets, and village settlement hierarchy. The emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan explicitly evaluated and rejected part of this site for allocation, confirming that exceptional circumstances do not exist to release this land.

C. Conflict with Spatial Strategy and Neighbourhood Plan

- Local Plan Policy S/7: The site is located outside the defined development frameworks of Great Shelford and Stapleford. Policy S/7 strictly controls development in the countryside to protect rural character.
- Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan (2025): The made Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect and enhance the landscape character. Policy S&GS 12 requires development to respect the identity of Stapleford and Great Shelford as two distinct villages. This proposal infills the countryside between the two villages, merging the two villages into one, contrary to this policy.

D. Specific Harm to the Stapleford Conservation Area and Setting of Listed Buildings

The proposal directly impacts the Stapleford Conservation Area and nearby statutory heritage assets, including the Grade II* listed Church of St Andrew and the Grade II listed White House on Mingle Lane.

- **Special Character of the Conservation Area:** As detailed in the *Stapleford Conservation Area Appraisal (2021)*, the Conservation Area is defined by its "quiet and sylvan" quality, reflecting a 19th- and 20th-century residential area interwoven with glimpses and open views of the surrounding

countryside. A key defining feature of its significance is the long views outward from the churchyard of St Andrew and through the spatial gaps between houses across the rising chalk downs to the north.

- **Nature of Harm:** The introduction of 240 dwellings, alongside a main vehicular access road off Mingle Lane, structural lighting, street furniture, and domestic paraphernalia, directly abuts the Conservation Area boundary on rising ground. This built form permanently severs the visual and spatial connection between the historic village core, the churchyard, and the open agricultural backdrop. The resulting suburbanisation causes unmitigated harm to the setting and significance of both the Conservation Area and the Grade II* listed Church of St Andrew, contrary to South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy NH/14 and NPPF Policy HE4.

E. Loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

The site comprises ~12 hectares of Grade 3a agricultural land, classified as Best and Most Versatile (BMV). Local Plan Policy NH/3 protects high-grade agricultural land from irreversible development. The cumulative loss of productive agricultural land around Cambridge undermines local environmental resilience and food security.

Conclusion

This proposal is an unsustainable, speculative overdevelopment of open countryside within the Cambridge Green Belt. While the applicant points to Grey Belt classification, the development fundamentally undermines the wider purposes of the Green Belt and causes irreversible harm to the special historic setting of the Stapleford Conservation Area.

Cambridge Past, Present & Future respectfully requests that Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Services refuse planning permission.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer