

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/23/3315611

Appellant: Brookgate Land Ltd on behalf of the Chesterton Partnership

LPA Position Statement – 23 May 2023

Water Resources

Background

This Position Statement has been prepared as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) was not included in discussions and negotiations on the Water Resources Statement of Common Ground (SoCG). Instead, these discussions have taken place between the Appellant and the Environment Agency (EA). This Statement is submitted in advance of any opportunity to review the final SoCG and the LPA therefore reserves the right to make further submissions/clarification upon receipt of the SoCG on Water Resources.

Cambridge Water's (CW) existing Water Resources Management Plan was published in 2019 (WRMP19).

On 27 February 2023 the EA objected to the appeal proposals *“as it may, through the additional demand for potable water use, increase abstraction and risk deterioration to water bodies in the Greater Cambridge area”*. In its letter the EA advised that the objection would be maintained *“until evidence is provided to demonstrate that an adequate and sustainable water supply can be provided, or that site-specific and/or off-site measures show that the risks posed by the development can be mitigated or removed, in the context of the evidence”*.

Following the publication of WRMP19 and prior to CW publishing for consultation the draft 2024 Water Resources Management Plan (dWRMP24) on 24 February 2023, the EA issued details of licence caps to CW which the EA considers to be a material change in the availability of water supply.

Since February, the EA has objected to a number of planning applications for the same reason as set out above. The EA has also responded to consultation on screening opinion requests advising that the potential impact on water supplies and Water Framework Directive waterbodies is a likely significant environmental effect and that this would need to be assessed via an Environmental Impact Assessment.

The LPA's Position

The current planning appeal is supported by a number of documents related to water resources including:

- ES Vol 1 (Chapters 10 Flood Risk and Drainage and Chapter 7 Climate Change)
- ES Vol 2 Appendix 10.1 - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Flood Risk Addendum dated October 2022
- Water Resources Addendum Rev 1 dated September 2022
- Sustainability Strategy dated June 2022
- Addendum to Sustainability Strategy dated August 2022

A further quantitative assessment was undertaken by the Appellant to identify opportunities to further enhance the previously proposed water efficiency strategy (Cambridge North Quantitative Assessment, PJA, April 2023). This identifies further water efficiency and reuse measures as follows:

- Residential development will achieve a typical consumption rate of 89 l/h/d; and
- Commercial development will achieve a BREEAM certification level of 'Excellent'.

It is noted that the BREEAM 'Excellent' standard only requires 2 credits in the category of water efficiency however the detailed quantitative assessment has demonstrated that the full 5 BREEAM credits in this category is achieved.

It is the LPA's position that the proposal exceeds the requirements of Local Plan policy CC/4; Water Efficiency and meets the requirements of Local Plan policy CC7: Water Quality.

Due to the current objection to the proposed development and to others in the Greater Cambridge area, on 19 April 2023, a meeting was held with representatives from the EA, CW and LPA to discuss and agree a way forward. At that meeting, it was agreed with the EA that CW are to develop a number of development/growth scenarios which will then be modelled to enable assessment of the risk of deterioration. The completion of modelling (and agreed assumptions underpinning it) would then enable an applicant for planning permission and the decision maker (in this case the Secretary of State) to consider the cumulative effects of the development and any scope for mitigation in the assessment of the overall planning balance.

At this time, the LPA is awaiting confirmation from CW as to when the modelling work will be undertaken and is expecting to provide advice on the development scenarios to be modelled. It is not therefore clear when the model will be made available to the LPA to inform the assessment of planning applications.