

Notes from an open meeting of the Save Abington Village Environment (SAVE) meeting on Monday 20th July 2026

Notes from Cllr. Terry Mundy, Vice Chair, Horseheath Parish Council and Cllr. Jane Bunting, Horseheath Parish Council

1 Introduction

Within the draft 2026 Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan is a proposal to build 4500 houses on the Grange Farm site, immediately north of Abington. The site is included as a means of providing the essential number of new houses required by government policies regulating developments in Cambridgeshire. The context is that the government is committed to support life science developments in South Cambridgeshire; this industry has the potential to contribute very substantially to the UK economy. Growth in our area is therefore prioritised through the implementation of the Cambridgeshire Development Corporation (CDC), a government sponsored agency which will take over housing and planning developments from Local Authorities. The outcome measures for this new body are likely to be simply based on the number of new houses it manages to develop.

The area to the north of the A1307 and east of the A11 is truly historic, including the Roman Road (Worsted Street) which was originally a Bronze Age path.

The SAVE group has been set up to explore the reasons and describe positive aspects as well as deficiencies within the current proposals. The Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan is in final draft form and there is a public consultation on the proposals running from 3rd August 2026 to the 25th September 2026.

Given that this proposal will significantly impact our local area, both from a visibility and infrastructure perspective, Horseheath Parish Council believes it is imperative that all residents should have the ability to fully understand the proposals and to provide their own comments.

2 Positive Aspects

The development could potentially provide housing for the expected increase of 30,000 in life science workers in the next ten years. The site is favoured because of its proximity to the proposed travel hub next to the A11 which would also function as a new Park and Ride Site. The travel hub is proposed to be an interface between Babraham's Genome site and the Life Sciences developments between Addenbrookes and Shelford.

3 Significant Concerns

The main objections are as follows. We have highlighted points about which the planners appear to have made assumptions without robust evidence so that residents can make their own determinations and formulate their own opinions.

a) Road Congestion

Traffic congestion: There will be only **two** access points to the proposed development which will undoubtedly increase substantially the amount of traffic accessing the A1307. It is proposed that one of the access points will be via a bridge over the A11, but to date the location and potential funding have not been confirmed. The other access point will be immediately onto the A1307 just east of the Acorn garage.

The planning review has assumed that the new travel hub on the south side of the A1307 and the west side of the A11 will go ahead and that consequently most commuters to Cambridge from the proposed development would cycle to the hub or potentially walk if pedestrian access was provided. Funding for the hub has not been confirmed and so uncertainty prevails with regard to the development of this infrastructure.

Assumption 1 in the Local Plan - that inhabitants of the 4500 houses will NOT use cars to travel to work, wherever that may be, because of the proximity of the proposed travel hub.

Assumption 2 in the Local Plan - The planning team have additionally assumed that only 25% of the 4500 households will have cars and therefore will not contribute to road congestion.

Assumption 3 in the Local Plan - The planning team have also assumed that there will be a migration of people currently living in Haverhill who commute to Cambridge, to the new development, again reducing overall congestion on the A1307.

Assumption 4 – That funding will be obtained for the proposed travel hub and a bridge across the A11.

b) Water

The proposed development will be situated above the Grange Farm aquifer which accounts for the majority of water abstraction for South Cambridgeshire. There is uncertainty as to the impact that such a large development immediately above it would have on the integrity of the aquifer as well as the pollution that may leach into the aquifer from all the building activities. There is also no climate modelling showing the potential reserves available within the aquifer within the proposals.

The aquifer is the source of the Granta river which has now ceased to flow and represents a series of puddles. The aquifer is at a 30 year low and therefore it cannot meet current demand given the heatwaves that are becoming more regular and more intense. It is difficult to see how the increased demand represented by a further 4500 households could be met (over 700 million litres per year minimum).

Assumption 5 in the Local Plan – 4500 households plus industrial sites would have adequate water available from the aquifer – which is currently barely adequate for existing needs.

NB : When this issue was raised with Cllr Henry Batchelor last week, he said that development would not proceed before an alternative source of water was available. He cited the new reservoir in East Anglia as providing that additional resource. That will not be available until 2034 at the earliest (likely 2040). The SAVE team have said that Stephen Kelly (the Director of Planning) said that he would work on the assumption that all requisite infrastructure would be available as planned and phased development would progress once the site was approved.

Assumption 6 in the Local Plan – Adequate water would become available from the proposed new Fenland reservoir. Although the pipeline plans have been agreed, there is as yet no agreement as to where the water to fill the reservoir will come from.

c) General

The site will be high density with 3 storey buildings. The development will rise to 70 metres and would be the highest development site in Cambridgeshire. It will be visible for miles around, particularly at night, dispelling any sense of rurality. Added to this there will be warehousing and an industrial park adjoining the development. There have been no height restrictions, traffic restrictions, or hours of operation assigned to this development.

South Cambs have rejected the site twice before as being unsuitable, but the SAVE team have been unable to determine the basis upon which that previous judgement was determined.

d) Funding for SAVE

The SAVE team require £31k to fund the campaign against the planned development of which they have currently achieved £11,500. They have a benefactor who will match every donation made from here in.

Conclusions

The Grange Farm development would have far reaching implications for the locality as a whole. It is very likely it will impact the historic landscape; our rurality; the resilience of our water supply and traffic congestion accessing Cambridge and the A11 from the A1307.

Proposed Actions

Horseheath Parish Council believes there should be a public meeting to determine the opinion of our Parish on the Grange Farm proposal. We believe every resident should be adequately informed of the proposal, including likely benefits and deficiencies. Depending on the outcome of this meeting we need to determine whether HPC should donate to support SAVE and the associated legal fund.