

Proof of evidence Landscape and Design issues

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In respect of Appeal by: Mr Drew Price and James Ball

Concerning: Land To the South Of Chear Fen Boat Club Twentypence Road
Cottenham Cambridgeshire

On Behalf of: Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service

Planning Reference: 22/01703/FUL

Appeal reference: APP/W0530/W/22/3308444

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Qualifications and experience

My name is Helen Sayers. I am a Chartered member of the Landscape Institute and a Principal Landscape Architect with the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service (GCSP). I have a degree in Landscape Architecture from Heriot Watt University. I joined GCSP as a Principal Landscape Architect in 2022 and have worked on landscape planning work at a range of scales across the Greater Cambridge area including rural and urban locations and covering residential, commercial and infrastructure projects. I have previously worked as an Associate Landscape Architect with PRP LLP and as a senior Landscape Architect with Plincke and Kinnear Landscape Architects.

1.2 Scope of my evidence

In December 2024 my colleagues in the GCSP Development management team asked me to work with them on the appeal for 'Change of use of land through intensification to the stationing of caravans for residential purposes, nine dayrooms and the formation of hardstanding ancillary to that use' on Land To The South Of Chear Fen Boat Club Twentypence Road Cottenham Cambridgeshire.

After review of the details of the scheme I confirmed that I would provide evidence to defend the second reason for refusal:

2. The proposed development would result in a significant urbanisation of the application site in a rural setting. The urbanisation of this site would fail to appropriately relate to its setting and would significantly harm the character of the site and the wider surrounding area. Accordingly, and given the proposal would be located outside of the development framework of Cottenham, the development contravenes Policies S/7, H/22 & HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and fails to comply with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore allow a form of development that is not sustainable.

1.3 The Appeal documents

I have reviewed the following drawings and documents submitted with the application:

- Location Plan (dwg no. 21_1161B_001)
- Proposed Block Plan (dwg no. 21_1161B_003)
- Existing site plan (dwg no 21_116B_002)

1.4 Duty to the Inquiry

I understand my duty to the Inquiry and have complied, and will continue to comply, with that duty. I declare that the evidence which I have prepared and provided for this appeal is true. It has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of the Landscape Institute, and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

2 Landscape and design planning policy context

2.1 In this section I set out the local and national policies which I consider are relevant to the design and landscape issues.

2.2 National Planning Policy

2.2.1 National Planning Policy on design and landscape setting is set out in chapters 12 and 15 of the NPPF (based on 2021 NPPF). Paragraph 135 of Chapter 12 states that:

135. *Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

(a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

(b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

(c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

(d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

(e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

(f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users [51](#); and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Paragraph 187b of Chapter 15 states that:

187. *Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

2.2.2 Planning policy for traveller sites, Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024

The National Policy for traveller sites includes the following relevant paragraphs under the section titled Policy H: Determining planning applications for traveller sites

26. Local planning authorities should very strictly limit new traveller site development in open countryside that is away from existing settlements or outside areas allocated in the development plan⁹. Local planning authorities

should ensure that sites in rural areas respect the scale of, and do not dominate, the nearest settled community, and avoid placing an undue pressure on the local infrastructure.

(⁹ Unless any relevant exceptions from inappropriate development in the Green Belt apply as set out in paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework)

27. When considering applications, local planning authorities should attach weight to the following matters: a) effective use of previously developed (brownfield), untidy or derelict land; b) sites being well planned or soft landscaped in such a way as to positively enhance the environment and increase its openness; c) promoting opportunities for healthy lifestyles, such as ensuring adequate landscaping and play areas for children; and d) not enclosing a site with so much hard landscaping, high walls or fences, that the impression may be given that the site and its occupants are deliberately isolated from the rest of the community.

2.3 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (SCLP)

2.3.1 SCLP Policy S/7 Development Frameworks requires the following:

1. Development and redevelopment of unallocated land and buildings within development frameworks (as shown on the Policies Map) will be permitted provided that: a. Development is of a scale, density and character appropriate to the location, and is consistent with other policies in the Local Plan; and b. Retention of the site in its present state does not form an essential part of the local character, and development would protect and enhance local features of green space, landscape, ecological or historic importance; and c. There is the necessary infrastructure capacity to support the development;

2. Outside development frameworks, only allocations within Neighbourhood Plans that have come into force and development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside or where supported by other policies in this plan will be permitted

The supporting text for Policy S/7 also includes the following text in paragraph 2.50:

The development frameworks define where policies for the built-up areas of settlements give way to policies for the countryside. This is necessary to

ensure that the countryside is protected from gradual encroachment on the edges of villages and to help guard against incremental growth in unsustainable locations. In the countryside development is generally restricted to uses that need to be located there. The plan includes some flexibility for reusing existing buildings, and for development which supports the rural economy.

2.3.2 SCLP Policy HQ/1 Design Principles requires the following:

All new development must be of high quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context. As appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals must:

- a. Preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape;*
- b. Conserve or enhance important natural and historic assets and their setting*
- c. Include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness;*
- d. Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;*
- e. Deliver a strong visual relationship between buildings that comfortably define and enclose streets, squares and public places, creating interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and appropriately scaled landmarks along routes and around spaces;*
- f. Achieve a permeable development with ease of movement and access for all users and abilities, with user friendly and conveniently accessible streets and other routes both within the development and linking with its surroundings and existing and proposed facilities and services, focusing on delivering*

attractive and safe opportunities for walking, cycling, public transport and, where appropriate, horse riding;

g. Provide safe and convenient access for all users and abilities to public buildings and spaces, including those with limited mobility or those with other impairment such as of sight or hearing;

h. Ensure that car parking is integrated into the development in a convenient, accessible manner and does not dominate the development and its surroundings or cause safety issues;

i. Provide safe, secure, convenient and accessible provision for cycle parking and storage, facilities for waste management, recycling and collection in a manner that is appropriately integrated within the overall development;

j. Provide a harmonious integrated mix of uses both within the site and with its surroundings that contributes to the creation of inclusive communities providing the facilities and services to meet the needs of the community;

k. Ensure developments deliver flexibility that allows for future changes in needs and lifestyles, and adaptation to climate change;

l. Mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on development through location, form, orientation, materials and design of buildings and spaces;

m. Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation;

n. Protect the health and amenity of occupiers and surrounding uses from development that is overlooking, overbearing or results in a loss of daylight or development which would create unacceptable impacts such as noise, vibration, odour, emissions and dust;

o. Design-out crime and create an environment that is created for people that is and feels safe, and has a strong community focus

2.3.3 SCLP Policy NH/2 Protecting Landscape Character

Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character

Development will only be permitted where it respects and retains, or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and of the individual National Character Area in which it is located.

2.3.4 SCLP Policy H/22 Proposals for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people Sites on Unallocated Land Outside Development Frameworks includes section g) relating to impact on landscape:

Planning permission for Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites and sites for Travelling Showpeople (as defined in the Government's Planning Policy for Travellers) on unallocated land outside development frameworks, and outside the Cambridge Green Belt, will only be granted where:

g. The site, or the cumulative impact of the site in combination with existing or planned sites, would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of surrounding land uses, the countryside and landscape character, village character, on heritage or biodiversity interests, or from traffic generated;

2.4 Summary

National and Local planning policies require new development to:

- Preserve and enhance the landscape setting and local landscape character
- Not to encroach into the open countryside
- Be compatible with the surrounding landscape context
- Include high quality landscape design

3 Existing Landscape Character: Published Landscape Character Assessments

- 3.1 The site context within national, regional and local landscape character assessments is considered in this section.
- 3.2 Table 1 sets out the relevant landscape character assessments and identifies the type of landscape and character area the site is located in.

National Character Areas by Natural England	National Character Area 46 The Fens Key characteristics • Expansive, flat, open, low-lying wetland landscape influenced by the Wash estuary, and offering extensive vistas to level horizons and huge skies throughout, provides a sense of rural remoteness and tranquillity. • Overall, woodland cover is sparse, notably a few small woodland blocks, occasional avenues alongside roads, isolated field trees and shelterbelts of poplar, willow and occasionally leylandii hedges around farmsteads, and numerous orchards around Wisbech. Various alders, notably grey alder, are also used in shelterbelts and roadside avenues. • The predominant land use is arable – wheat, root crops, bulbs, vegetables and market gardening made possible by actively draining reclaimed land areas. Associated horticultural glasshouses are a significant feature. Beef cattle graze narrow enclosures along the banks of rivers and dykes and on parts of the salt marsh and sea banks. • Open fields, bounded by a network of drains and the distinctive hierarchy of rivers (some embanked), have a strong influence on the geometric/rectilinear landscape pattern. The structures create local enclosure and a slightly raised landform, which is mirrored in the road network that largely follows the edges of the system of large fields. The drains and ditches are also an important ecological network important for invertebrates, fish including spined loach, and macrophytes. • Settlements and isolated farmsteads are mostly located on the modestly elevated 'geological islands' and the low, sinuous roddon banks (infilled ancient watercourses within fens). Elsewhere, villages tend to
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	be dispersed ribbon settlements along the main arterial routes through the settled fens, and scattered farms remain as relics of earlier agricultural settlements. Domestic architecture mostly dates from after 1750 and comprises a mix of late Georgian-style brick houses and 20th-century bungalows.
Regional Landscape Character study by Landscape East 2011	Planned Peat Fen: a flat, low lying and sparsely populated landscape in the north of Greater Cambridge. It is characterised by dark peaty soils, a grid like pattern of large arable fields bounded by drainage ditches and wide views to distant, often dramatic skies. Physical environment: Landform: An expansive, low-lying (often below sea level), landscape with a distinctively flat landform. Natural / water features: The Hundred Foot Washes are a key water feature when flooded in winter, as are the altered courses of major rivers (e.g. Old Bedford River and the Nene). There are also occasional gravel extraction lakes (e.g. at Needingworth). Vegetation and land use: Ecological character: A uniform and low-lying landscape, characterised by drained fenland, but supporting a mosaic of wetland habitats including fens, reedbed, wet woodland and patches of grazing marsh. Primary land use: An intensively farmed arable landscape. Tree cover: Almost no tree cover - restricted to infrequent patches of secondary woodland/scrub and discrete conifer belts around farmsteads. Cultural pattern: Historic features: The area is dissected by long straight roads with 90 degree bends, often located on dykes above the arable fen fields, or following ditches. Occasional pump houses are a feature. Enclosure pattern: Planned geometric landscape with large fields defined by straight ditches. There is little apparent structural difference between the early and recent episodes of field creation. Settlement pattern: Settlement is sparse and limited mainly to isolated brick-built farmsteads on former fen islands. Most are post-medieval in origin reflecting the late reclamation of the area for agriculture. Thorney is the only historic nucleated settlement.

	Historic development: A landscape created by drainage from the medieval period onwards to create farmland. Most comprises recent (18/19th century) fen enclosures, but significant areas of early (16th-18th century) enclosure also exist in the south and around Thorney.
Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines 1991	8 - Fenlands: a complex landscape of contrasts and variety. It is a large, open landscape with a haphazard pattern of settlement and tree cover superimposed on the regimented and highly organised drainage patterns.
Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment 2021 (Part of the emerging Local Plan evidence base)	1.The Fens -Key Characteristics • Expansive, flat, open, low-lying fen landscape with extensive vistas and large skies • Sense of rural remoteness and tranquillity • Hierarchy of rivers, streams, lodes, drains and ditches that dissect the landscape • Dominance of arable farming within an open field network bound by straight ditches and dykes that define regimental field patterns • Distinctive, dark peaty soils • Haphazard pattern of scattered farms and agricultural buildings • Sparse woodland cover comprising scattered, small deciduous woodland blocks, isolated field trees and shelterbelts • Concentration of floodplain grazing marsh and lowland fens priority habitats alongside the rivers and main drains • Vertical features including the high voltage pylon lines to the northeast and east of the city, telegraph poles and masts are very prominent in the flat landscape The Fens LCT is an intensively farmed LCT. However, it remains rich in geodiversity and archaeology. The landscape has a strong, distinctive geometric/rectilinear landscape

	pattern that is a result of a long history of land management that also provides an important ecological network. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be good. 1C Bare Fen to Fidwell fen Key Characteristics • Open, low-lying, flat floodplain landscape with expansive, panoramic views to distant horizons • Regular, rectilinear enclosure pattern defined by drains, dykes and lodes that are evidence of historic occupation of The Fens • A landscape with sparse woodland cover, in which fragmented hedgerows, isolated trees and shelterbelts are visually prominent • Settlement is limited to isolated farms, with occasional small, linear settlements along the roads Specific Landscape Sensitivities In addition to the generic landscape sensitivities for this landscape character type, the following sensitivities are specific to this character area: • Particularly distinctive, historic network of ditches, drains, tracks and droves that define the regimented, open field pattern • Limited vegetation providing expansive, panoramic views • Dispersed pattern of small farms and cottages in the large-scale, rural landscape
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4.0 Existing landscape character: appeal site and immediate context

4.1 Site components

4.1.1 The site includes four areas:

- Access drive from Twenty Pence Road
- Riverside meadow
- Raised embankments along the north edge of the site, which are the flood defences for the river
- Flat grass and scrub area forming the main part of the site, south of the river embankments.

4.1.2 Landscape elements on the site (prior to construction of the development) include:

- Riverside meadows
- Large established trees along the base of the northern embankments
- Drainage channel (Fourth Sock Drain) on the north of the site along the base of the embankments.
- Established hedgerows and woodland alongside the access drive, next to Twenty Pence Road and western boundaries of the site.
- Established hedgerows along the southern and eastern boundaries (now removed).

4.1.3 Built elements on the site (prior to construction of the development) comprised an access track and two areas of hardstanding in the centre of the site which made up approximately 3% of the total site area.

4.1.4 The existing trees along the north edge of the site are part of the river corridor landscape and include Poplars and Willows with understorey vegetation below. The hedgerows to the south, and eastern edges of the site were mainly Hawthorn and typical of the hedgerows along field boundaries in the areas south of the site. Trees along the access drive are a mix of hedgerow trees such as Hawthorn mixed with Willow and Poplar and form a dense screen along the edge of Twenty Pence Road.



Figure 1 Inside the site - View south on access drive



Figure 2 Inside the site -View west towards trees on western boundary of site



Figure 3 Inside the site- View east towards eastern edge of site

4.2 Location and access

- 4.2.1 The site is a rectangular piece of land approximately 3.5km north of Cottenham, on the southern edge of the River Great Ouse, east of Twenty Pence Road (B1049) and next to the Twenty Pence Bridge. Cottenham Lode, a historic drainage channel, is located approximately 270m west of the site. Engine Drain and Long Drove are located around 165m south of the site and run east and north towards Chear Fen Farm and the Chear Fen pumping engine. Twenty Pence Marina, Twenty Pence Cottage and a group of houses around the old Twenty Pence Inn are located north of the site, on the north edge of the river, in East Cambridgeshire. The A10 is located 1600m to the east of the site. The area immediately south of the site is part of Mitchell Hill Farm, an active gravel extraction site.
- 4.2.2 The site is accessed by vehicles via a gated driveway which runs northeast off Twenty Pence Road, to the south of the bridge. There is a public right of way across the northern part of the site on the river embankments.
- 4.2.3 Twenty Pence Road is a key route linking Cottenham with Ely and villages to the north. The road was originally built in the mid-19th century and there was a floating bridge crossing to the west of the existing bridge next to Twenty Pence Cottage. In the early 1900s the current bridge was built and the road south of the bridge had two separate access lanes. It appears that the existing driveway into the appeal site is part of the original eastern bridge approach lane.

4.3 Local Landscape Character

- 4.3.1 The site is in the Fens landscape character area and is an area of rough ground and trees in the northeast corner of a large, flat and open field, immediately south of the River Great Ouse corridor and east of the Twenty Pence Bridge. The site is at a level of 2.5 AOD. The river corridor immediately north of the site is about 70m wide with protective, manmade embankments along both sides of the river. On the south side of the river, within the appeal site, the embankments are set back approximately 30-40m from the river edge and there is an area of meadow between the river edge and the embankments. On the north side of the river the banks are around 22-25 m from the river edge and wrap around the back of the marina opposite the appeal site. The enclosure created by the embankments and the large established trees along north and south sides of the river contain views along the river near the bridge and create a tranquil protected character along the river corridor, separating it from the open farmland beyond. Trees on the north edge of appeal site are part of the river corridor and contribute to the enclosure of the river corridor and to its character.



Figure 4 View east along the river corridor from Twenty Pence Bridge



Figure 5 View south towards the site from the north bank of the river

- 4.3.2 The landscape south and east of the site is an open and flat landscape with a framework of large, arable fields typical of the Fens. The drainage channels and lanes south of the site such as Long Drove and Engine Drain are straight and long, running east and northeast towards the river corridor. There is little vegetation along the field edges and ditches in the areas south of the site and so there are long open views across the landscape towards the River Great Ouse corridor. Trees along the river corridor are visible and an important marker in the landscape.
- 4.3.3 The landscape south of the site includes the active quarry at Mitchell Hill Farm which extends up to the site boundary and disrupts the landscape through the addition of long earth bunds and excavation operations. Chear Fen Farm, to the southeast of the site, is used by a gun club and is enclosed by extensive, tall embankments which are visible from the surrounding area and disrupt the low flat landscape and long views to the north and east.
- 4.3.4 North of the River Great Ouse the landscape is an agricultural, fenland landscape, flat and open with a regular field pattern and very few buildings. The field boundaries and drainage ditches run parallel and perpendicular to the river.



Figure 6 View north towards the site from Long Drove, next to Twenty Pence Road

4.4 Public rights of way

- 4.4.1 Public footpath 56/3 is located on the southern bank of the river, inside the appeal site, and links the A10 with Twenty Pence Road where it connects to path 56/1 which continues west along the river, connecting to paths to Cottenham and villages to the west.
- 4.4.2 Public footpath 261/13, on the north side of the river, is part of two long distance footpaths, recognised by Cambridgeshire County Council and promoted by the Long-Distance Walkers Association:
- Ouse Valley Way is a 229Km route following one of England's longest rivers between Kings Lynn and the river source in Syresham, Northamptonshire. The route passes from rolling countryside in Buckinghamshire to the fenlands and includes riverside and canal side walking.
 - Rothschild Way is a long-distance path between Wicken Fen and Woodwalton Fen and commemorates the nature conservation work of Nathaniel Rothschild. The path is promoted by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire as part of the Great Fen project. The Rothschild Way Challenge is an annual fund-raising walk held in June to raise money for the Great Fen project.
- 4.4.3 Public footpath 56/11 is located southeast of the site and follows Long Drove east and then links to Chittering further to the south.

4.5 River transport and recreation

- 4.5.1 The River Great Ouse is used by canal boats for recreational and holiday boat trips. The Twenty Pence Marina opposite the appeal site provides moorings and facilities for boats and their passengers.

4.6 Summary

- 4.6.1 The site is in a rural fenland location on the northern edge of arable farmland and next to the River Great Ouse corridor. The northern parts of the site contribute to and are part of the rural, tranquil character and setting of the river corridor and the marina. The southern, main part of the site is strongly connected to the fields and farmland immediately to the south which is a more disturbed and disrupted landscape due to the gravel extraction activities and the earthworks around the gun club at Chear Fen Farm.

5.0 Landscape Value

The site is not a designated or protected landscape and so the assessment of landscape value below is based on the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 and assesses the site and its immediate surroundings.

Factor	Definition	Landscape qualities	Value
Natural heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	The River Great Ouse corridor is a County Wildlife site. Engine Drain and Twenty Pence Pit to the south of the site are also County Wildlife sites. The site includes existing, established trees on its northern edge which are part of the river corridor and valuable habitats. The existing deciduous woodland, the River and riverside meadows are Natural England priority habitats.	High
Cultural heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	The site and its surroundings are part of a man made, drained fenland landscape which includes historic features such as Cottenham Lode, Long Drove and Engine Drain, historic field patterns and relics	Medium

		of the old transport routes such as Twenty Pence Cottage.	
Landscape condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure.	The landscape on site has not been actively or positively managed and appears to be poor condition. No supporting surveys to assess the condition of the landscape have been submitted.	Low- medium
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts.	The Rothschild Way on the north of the river opposite the appeal site is linked to Nathaniel Rothschild who pioneered nature conservation in the fens. The existing drainage ditches and pumping stations south and east of the site date from the mid 19 th century when drainage of the fens was mechanised bought under control of the drainage boards.	Medium
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity.	The site and its surroundings are typical of the fenland landscape and have a strong sense of identity and distinctiveness due to the open,	Medium

		flat landscape and the distinct river corridor.	
Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important.	The Long-distance paths, local footpaths on and near the site and the river corridor provide opportunities for long distance and local walks, boat journeys and other recreation on and near the river and for walks between villages.	High
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense.	The riverside landscape is scenic and visually appealing. The arable farmland south of the site is less scenic due to the disturbance of the gravel extraction activities.	Medium
Perceptual (Wildness & tranquillity)	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies	The river corridor landscape has a tranquil quality and is remote from settlements, roads and activity. The farmed, agricultural landscape and gravel extraction sites south of the site are less tranquil due to the gravel extraction sites.	Medium
Functional	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and	The site includes flood defence embankments,	High

	valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape	and the Fourth Sock Drain which perform important functions for the surrounding area. The Twenty Pence Bridge is a key river crossing and link between Cottenham and areas to the north. The marina and long distance paths are important facilities for tourism and leisure.	
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Overall, the value of the immediate landscape in which the site is located is medium. It is not considered to be a valued landscape for the purposes of the NPPF Paragraph 187a however, it does contain landscape features that are valued. In particular:

- The northern part of the site is in the river corridor and part of the County Wildlife Site
- The existing tree belt along the northern section of the site is important as a backdrop to the river corridor and for screening
- The site is in the flood plain and contains an important drainage channel
- The site is close to and visible from the Twenty Pence Bridge and from the long distance and local footpaths along the river. The site is visible from the river which is used for recreational boat trips.
- The site and its surroundings contain landscape elements which are significant to the local history of Cottenham and the Fens

6.0 Landscape effects of the proposals

6.1 The development

The proposed development comprises a paved access road running east across the site from the access drive and nine residential plots laid out to the north and south of the road. Each plot has a hardstanding area and a private garden area. The hardstanding areas provide plots for traveller homes, but no information was provided at the application stage of the heights of the proposed homes or caravans or the proposed ground levels. The perimeter of the site was proposed to be enclosed by fences and vegetation and hedges were shown as boundary treatments between the plots but these have not been fully implemented.

6.2 Landscape harm

The proposed development adds buildings, lighting, hardstanding and fencing into the site alongside the River Great Ouse which negatively impacts views from the public rights of way on both sides of the river, views from the river and from the marina. The development does not address, manage or renew existing trees and hedgerows around the site edges and so the trees and hedgerows are at risk of damage and depletion which increases the negative impacts on the river corridor environment as well as allowing the exposing of the development to views from the river and the footpaths. The development is also visible from the Twenty Pence bridge, from Twenty Pence Road and from Long Drove in the south and has a negative impact on views towards and across the river corridor.

Hedgerows, trees and grassland have been removed from the site, and this has damaged the existing landscape, reduced the screening provided by planting, and cannot be undone and so has a harmful effect on the landscape of the site and its immediate surroundings.

The landscape effects of the proposals are:

- Harm to the character and tranquillity of the river corridor and marina
- Harm to existing landscape features such as trees and hedgerows
- Harm to the character of the long-distance paths and the local footpaths
- Harm to the rural character of the farmland and views towards the river corridor from the south, including the approach to the Twenty Pence Bridge

6.3 Landscape sensitivity- the site and its immediate surroundings

The sensitivity of the site is a combination of the susceptibility of the site to the development and the value placed on the site and the surrounding landscape.

I consider that the site has a medium susceptibility to the proposed development due to:

- The main part of the site is in the corner of the field partially hidden from surrounding areas by vegetation and landform.
- The main part of the site is lower than the river corridor and lower than Twenty Pence Road and the Twenty Pence bridge which means that the site is concealed from some views
- The gravel extraction site south of the appeal site and the existing earthworks at Chear Fen Farm disrupt and disturb the pattern of landscape and views towards the site from the south
- Parts of the site are within the River Great Ouse Corridor and the main residential area of the site is visible from the river corridor which is a recreational and natural resource and a distinct feature visible in the wider landscape.
- The addition of the residential plots on the site is not in keeping with the sparse pattern of homes, farms and other buildings in the area.

Considering the medium susceptibility of the landscape and the medium value I consider that the sensitivity of the site to the proposed development is medium. I consider that the overall effect on the site and its immediate surroundings is medium adverse.

Replacement of trees which have been removed, new tree and hedgerow planting along the riverside and other site boundaries, internal planting on plot boundaries would reduce the negative impacts of the development and so there is potential for effects to be reduced but no assessment by the Appellants has been forthcoming.

6.4 Summary

The adverse effects of the development on the landscape are the result of:

- Loss of trees and hedgerows
- Introduction of buildings and hardstanding, into a rural, riverside location where there are no similar developments
- Harm to the character of the long-distance paths on the north of the river and to the marina

7.0 Effects on visual amenity

7.1 This section addresses the visual receptors that will experience changes in the landscape as a result of the development. Based on GVLIA3 the most sensitive receptors are:

- Residents at home.
- People engaged in outdoor activities whose attention is focused on the landscape and views; and
- Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views are an important part to the experience.

The least sensitive receptors are:

- People engaged in outdoor sports or activities which do not depend on an appreciation of views;
- People at their place of work

7.2 Visual receptors affected by the development:

- Users of the Ouse River Way and Rothschild Way (high sensitivity)
- Users of the local footpath on site (high sensitivity)
- Users of the marina and river (high sensitivity)
- Road users on the Twenty Pence Road (low sensitivity)
- Users of Long Drove south of the site (low sensitivity)

The table below provides an assessment of the harm to visual receptors, and this is based on my site visit on 27th February 2025. I was able to access Long Drove, Twenty Pence Road and Twenty Pence Bridge, the appeal site and the long-distance path on the north of the river between Twenty Pence Road and the western edge of the marina.

Users of the Ouse River Way and Rothschild Way	The footpath follows the river embankments around the north edge of the marina and then west towards the Twenty Pence Bridge. The appeal site is visible from the path and becomes more visible in the western section of path by the Twenty Pence Bridge where the path is elevated. Existing planting and embankments provide some screening, but the
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	appeal site and new homes are visible and have a moderate adverse effect on users of the long-distance paths. New planting and long-term management of planting on the northern boundary of the appeal site could mitigate the impacts and provide screening in the long term.
Users of the local footpath on site	The appeal site is likely to be highly visible from the PROW because it is elevated above the site and there are gaps in existing trees and vegetation. This has a moderate adverse effect on the people using the footpath. New planting and long-term management of planting on the northern boundary of the appeal site could mitigate the impacts and provide screening in the long term. New hedge planting between plots inside the appeal site could also mitigate impacts by screening views of the residential plots from the public right of way.
Users of the marina and river	The appeal site is visible from the marina and from the river because there are gaps in existing vegetation. This has a moderate adverse effect on the people using the river and marina. New planting and long-term management planting on of the northern boundary of the appeal site could mitigate the impacts and provide screening in the long term.
Road users on the Twenty Pence Road	The appeal site is visible from the bridge because the bridge is elevated and there are gaps in existing vegetation on the site boundaries. This has a moderate adverse effect on the road users and pedestrians. New planting and long-term management of planting on the northern and western boundaries of the appeal site could mitigate the impacts and provide screening in the long term.

Users of Long Drove south of the site	The new homes are visible from the south and this has a moderate adverse effect on pedestrians using Long Drove. New planting, earthworks and landscape management works on the south boundary of the appeal site could mitigate the impacts and provide screening in the long term
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8.0 Compliance with Landscape Related Planning Policies

8.1 The table below describes the conflicts between the development and National Planning Policy, the National Policy on Traveller sites and relevant local plan policies.

NPPF Paragraph 135	The development is in conflict with paragraph 135 because it does not add to the quality of the area in short or long term and does not include effective landscaping such as boundary hedges and trees. The development is not sympathetic to the local character, history or the landscape setting because it introduces materials and a pattern of buildings which are out of keeping with the surrounding area. Important elements of the landscape setting such as hedgerows and trees have been removed as a result of the development and the setting of the site as part of the river corridor has not been addressed in the design and layout.
NPPF Paragraph 137b	The development is in conflict with paragraph 137b because, trees and hedgerows have been removed, buildings, fences and lighting have been added into a site and area where there are no similar developments and few other buildings. Views towards and into the site from neighbouring footpaths and areas have not been screened or addressed. As a result of the factors listed above the development does not enhance the natural and local environment and does not recognise the character and beauty of the countryside.

National Planning policy for traveller sites Policy H 26.	The site is away from other settlements, outside the Cottenham development framework and is in the open countryside and so conflicts with Policy H-26
National Planning policy for traveller sites Policy H 27	The site has not been well planned to enhance the environment and does not include any significant soft landscape which might add shade, screening and shelter inside the site. There are no play areas or other features to encourage healthy lifestyles. Parts of the site, near Twenty Pence Road are enclosed by fencing. These points conflict with Policy H-27.
SCLP Policy S/7 Development frameworks	The site is outside the development framework of Cottenham and is not related to agriculture, forestry, horticulture or outdoor recreation and so conflicts with policy S/7
SCLP Policy HQ/1 Design principles	The development does not preserve or enhance the character of the local, rural area or respond to its context in the wider landscape because it adds buildings into a rural site on the river corridor, where there are no similar, built developments. Natural assets on the site have not been preserved because woodland, trees and hedgerows have been removed. The design of the development is not responsive to the surrounding context because it introduces materials and a pattern of buildings and landscape which is unrelated to nearby, existing building groups. High quality landscape has not been integrated into the development and the definitions between public and private spaces within the site are weak. The points listed above conflict with Policy HQ/1
SCLP Policy NH/2 Protecting Landscape Character	The design of the development does not respond to the local landscape character. No landscape features have been included to enhance the river corridor in the north of the site or the interfaces and views to and from the fields to the south. No supporting information on landscape character or landscape design has been submitted to

	support the development. The points listed above conflict with Policy NH/2
SCLP Policy H/22 g) Proposals for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people Sites on Unallocated Land Outside Development Frameworks	The development has a negative impact on the amenity of the public footpaths, the marina and boat routes in the river corridor. The development has an adverse impact on the landscape character and countryside in the area immediately around the site and so conflicts with Policy H/22.

No supporting information or design information has been submitted to address the landscape context. For example, a landscape and visual appraisal should have been prepared to assess the surrounding landscape character and the impact of the proposed development on the landscape character and views from public areas and routes, including the long-distance footpaths north of the river, views from the marina and from the river itself. The landscape appraisal should have set out design principles for the site plan and proposed landscape design measures to mitigate impacts on the existing landscape. Other technical and landscape design information which would be expected for a site in this location include:

- tree survey to BS5837
- information on existing and proposed ground levels, including site sections
- information on the public footpaths
- supporting design statements on site layout, access and landscape design
- landscape strategy and landscape design drawings

However, none of the above information has been provided and, indeed, as the development took place prior to planning consent being granted, this fails to be a landscape led or landscape sensitive development.

9. Conclusion and summary

The development is not consistent with Local Plan policies S/7, H/22, NH/2 and HQ/1 or with national policies and is not in keeping with the landscape context and character. No supporting information has been provided to explain the design and

proposed mitigation. This is unsurprising given that the development has been undertaken without planning permission and without considering the landscape context.

This proof of evidence has been provided without sight of a landscape and visual impact assessment for this development. The Council reserves its position should such an assessment be forthcoming.