



ANDREW FLEET
CHARTERED ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGISTS

02 September 2025

Our Ref: 25:110
Your Ref:

Strategic Planning Team
East Cambridgeshire District Council
The Grange
Nutholt Lane
Ely
CB7 4EE

Dear Strategic Planning Team,

CONSULTATION RESPONSE; WITCHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

We write on behalf of our client, the owner of the *'four meadows located south of High St. and east of The Slade'* referred to in Appendix 1 of the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan Submission Draft Plan (Plan). We have only recently been appointed by the owner and acknowledge the late stage at which we have engaged with the process. We write in response to the public consultation on the Plan.

The draft Plan (Section 7 and Appendix 1) acknowledges the biodiversity and historical value of this land. We acknowledge that these qualities should be protected and enhanced. However, with sensitive design and mitigation, the site could deliver additional benefits for the Parish in accordance with national planning policy (NPPF) and the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy WHM2 – Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites

Policy WHM2 provides an important opportunity to address housing affordability in Witcham. The Residents' Survey identified strong demand for affordable homes, particularly for younger families with local connections. Our client's land could accommodate a modest affordable housing scheme. Where viability requires, a limited proportion of market housing could be included, consistent with national guidance. This would directly respond to local housing needs without compromising the village character.

Policy WHM4 – Biodiversity Enhancements

We acknowledge the habitat richness identified in Appendix 1. Any proposal would seek to conserve and enhance these ecological assets. Furthermore, the land has the potential to operate as a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credit site, supporting the Environment Act 2021 requirement for at least 10 per cent net gain. Such an approach would not only protect but actively enhance biodiversity in Witcham, in line with Policy WHM4.

Andrew Fleet Ltd CHARTERED ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGISTS

Tel +44 (0)1353 720651

Email info@andrewfleet.co.uk

Visit www.andrewfleet.co.uk

Registered address 6 Regent Place, Soham, Cambridgeshire CB7 5RL

Registered in England and Wales No. 05332382





Policy WHM5 – Locally Important Views

We acknowledge the importance of views and welcome the inclusion of a policy to protect those most important to Witcham. In order to avoid any ambiguity in the future, may we request that the location of important view 12 is consistent across both Map 6 and the Village Centre Inset Map.

Policy WHM10 – Renewable Energy

We support Policy WHM10, which provides a framework for renewable energy development where impacts are managed. The land may be suitable for small-scale renewable generation that contributes to local carbon reduction targets, while being carefully designed to safeguard visual and environmental assets.

Community Benefits

In addition to housing, biodiversity and renewable energy, the land could support community-focussed initiatives such as educational projects or land-based enterprises. These uses would help sustain Witcham's services and align with the wider vision of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Conclusion

We consider that a balanced approach is achievable, combining sensitive development with ecological enhancement. This would provide the Parish with the opportunity to benefit from affordable housing, renewable energy, biodiversity improvements and community projects, while respecting the valued natural environment. These comments are made in the context of the current planning landscape.

We therefore encourage the Neighbourhood Plan to acknowledge the potential for sites such as this to deliver positive outcomes for Witcham, and we would welcome further dialogue with both the Parish and District Councils.

Yours faithfully,

ADRIAN FLEET MCIAT

For and on behalf of Andrew Fleet MCIAT

Encs. Representation table



APPENDIX – REPRESENTATION TABLE

| Policy / Section | Comment | Suggested Change |
|--|--|--|
| Section 7 – Natural Environment & Appendix 1 (Habitat Richness) | We acknowledge the recognition of the meadows as an area of biodiversity significance. We support the principle that these assets should be protected and enhanced. However, we believe the site also has potential to contribute to biodiversity objectives through managed use as a Biodiversity Net Gain credit site, consistent with the Environment Act 2021. | Add text to acknowledge that sites of biodiversity richness may be suitable for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) projects, provided they deliver measurable enhancement and long-term management of habitats. |
| Policy WHM2 – Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites | We strongly support the inclusion of Policy WHM2. Our client's land could accommodate a modest affordable housing scheme to meet the needs identified in the Residents' Survey. To ensure viability, a small proportion of market housing may be required, in line with national policy. | Clarify that viability considerations may justify the inclusion of a small proportion of market housing on exception sites, consistent with national guidance. |
| Policy WHM4 – Biodiversity Enhancements | The policy sets a clear framework for biodiversity gain, which we support. Our client's land could deliver significant enhancements as part of a BNG project or in combination with other uses (e.g. housing or renewable energy). | Widen supporting text to reference the potential for land to function as strategic BNG sites, which could support delivery of biodiversity improvements beyond the site boundary. |
| Policy WHM5 – Locally Important Views | We acknowledge the importance of views and welcome the inclusion of a policy to protect those most important to Witcham. In order to avoid any ambiguity in the future, may we request that the location of important view 12 is consistent across both Map 6 and the Village Centre Inset Map. | Ensure the view symbol for view 12 is in the same location on both maps. |
| Policy WHM10 – Renewable Energy | We support the principle of renewable energy generation where impacts are managed. Our client's land may be appropriate for small-scale renewable energy, complementing biodiversity and community uses. | Amend supporting text to recognise the role of small-scale renewable energy schemes in contributing to local carbon reduction targets where designed sensitively and alongside biodiversity enhancement. |
| Vision & Objectives | The draft Vision focuses on protecting natural and historic characteristics while maintaining services. We support this but believe the Vision could be strengthened by explicitly recognising the role that managed development outside the development envelope can play in delivering housing, biodiversity net gain and renewable energy. | Include reference in the Vision or Objectives to the potential for sites outside the development envelope to contribute positively to housing, biodiversity and renewable energy, where proposals are sensitive and supported by appropriate mitigation. |