I strongly object to the development of site options GB1 (the land north of Wort’s Causeway) and GB2 (the land south of Wort’s Causeway).

It seems a mundane task to state the obvious, however, considering the developments being proposed for the above stated sites, I feel it is my duty to list all reasons why this proposal should not be undertaken, let alone even considered. Broadly speaking, these reasons fall under 4 headings:

1. History of the sites
2. Green Belt
3. The flawed proposal
4. Un-discussed (or disclosed) considerations

**History of the Sites**

This is not the first time that these sites have been volunteered for proposed development. Although it is notoriously difficult to access meaningful information through the city councils website, I understand that in recent history, these sites have been considered several times, but I refer specifically to the Cambridge Local Plans of 2006, and prior to that, 2002. Having reviewed the surveys from both of those plans, it seems that the site of GB1 (and also GB2) were deemed too valuable to be considered for development, as these sites provided “significant views” of the city-scape of Cambridge from the south, from some of the highest topographical points in the area (Wandlebury hill). To quote specifically from the 2002 study (regarding Zone 4 – land south of fulborn road and north of Wort’s Causeway (GB1)):

“This zone has medium to very high importance to the City setting and Green Belt. It contains some of the highest points (Wandlebury) and therefore most elevated views, and these views accord this zone more importance”.

Conclusion point 5.5 from the afore mentioned study stated that “areas where the City is viewed from higher ground/open aspects or where the urban edge is close to the city centre cannot accommodate change easily”.

To further confirm the status of the elevated views of GB1 and GB2 I reference the SCDC Cambridge Green Belt Study summary of edge characteristics, and I quote “…elevated views with a countryside foreground and soft urban edge from Gog Magog Hills to south east Cambridge”.

For these reasons, the site options of GB1 and GB2 have been rejected as development sites previously. The current proposal utilised the study survey from the 2006 proposals and therefore this begs the question – what has changed in the last 8 years? These sites were rejected back then, and the same data has been used in their consideration in the current proposal, so again, I ask – what has changed in the last 8 years. Could government pressure be swaying previously sound Cambridge City Council conclusions, and if so, I wonder which of these two governing bodies has the true interests of Cambridge and its surrounding area at heart.
The Green Belt

Throughout this process, I see little mention and discussion regarding the fact that development of GB1 and GB2 would destroy the Green Belt. I appreciate that the Green Belt actually has no legal protection whatsoever, however one must then ask what is the point of a Green Belt? The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the Government’s guidelines to local planning authorities, and it provides a strong endorsement for Green Belts as a means of preventing urban sprawl. I would find it hard to believe that a more accurate definition of “urban sprawl” exists than the allocating of Green Belt land for development, followed by re-evaluation of the Green Belt after a few years, followed by further development. The NPPF makes it clear (paragraph 90) that Green Belt land should only be released under very special circumstances. Meeting the demand for more houses does not constitute very special circumstances. This is especially true when one considers how many inner city areas of Cambridge are essentially derelict, and in need of renovation. Surely these areas, with pre-existing facilities, amenities, and transport links are a more logical choice. Are they perhaps a more expensive choice, and therefore not even considered?

Obviously, the ecology of GB1 and GB2 would be devastated by any residential development with irreversible destruction of an exceptionally bio diverse area of high natural beauty. Regarding this matter, I feel that a picture screams a thousand words, and I have therefore included one or two such photographs taken from the north end of GB1.

![Photo of GB1](image1.jpg) ![Photo of GB2](image2.jpg)

The Flawed Proposal

Upon attending the recent Planning Exhibition at Netherhall School, reports from surveys of GB1 and GB2 were available for public viewing. These reports address a long list of criteria which a proposed site should adhere to, and list the suitability of the proposed site as either green, amber or red, to indicate the performance in that particular criteria. Regarding GB1, many criteria were red, but rather than list them all, I will simply quote the 2 conclusions of the summary, conclusions which have been reached the body who are suggesting this development:

“Level 1 Conclusion

Amber: - adverse impact on Green Belt purpose
Level 2 Conclusions

Red: - Less than half of the site is further than 800m from the nearest primary school

Red: - The site contains a County Wildlife Site, which is important for its semi natural grassland and biodiversity. This area is also designated as protected open space for its environmental qualities. Any development should not adversely affect this area. If this area was removed from the development site this would allow for appropriate mitigation.

Red: - Lacks dedicated cycling provision on Worts Causeway and during rush hour could result in added risks to cycling. This could however be mitigated.”

Despite all the “red” conclusions, it seems that the overall conclusion was that this site has development potential. I would be intrigued to know how an area of natural importance and of great biodiversity (as indicated above) can be “removed from the development site”. Clearly a conclusion developed by an office worker.

Two further flaws noted in the summary reports of these sites are that of a significant water drainage problem at the north end of GB1, and the fact that the owner of the land has not yet agreed to sell the land to the developers (unlike other sites). Certainly this would seem to be a rather important step in developing land – its acquisition.

Un-discussed considerations

To understand the true adverse implications of developing sites GB1 and GB2, one must understand their current use. These sites flank Worts Causeway, a quiet rural road transecting a section of a dedicated Green Belt which has previously been studied and concluded to be an area of significant beauty and therefore importance to the Cambridge. Every weekday morning, at peak times, this road is used by both Park & Ride and town buses, as well as a number of school buses, as an alternative route to avoid Babraham road, which during peak times always features stand still traffic passing directly in front of Addenbrooke’s Hospital. Developing the sites around Worts Causeway and Babraham road would therefore have dire consequences. Access to the residential sites would either be from Worts Causeway, Babraham road, or both. This would eliminate Worts Causeway as a traffic free access road for buses (an important transport consideration for the City of Cambridge, apparently). This would also intensify traffic on Babraham road. Other than the nuisance and frustration that traffic creates, what of the financial, emergency and clinical implications, as fire, police and importantly ambulance services all use this road and would be severely affected by increased traffic flow.

Another un-discussed implication of building hundreds of homes on sites GB1 and GB2 is the availability (or lack of availability) of amenities such as schools and local healthcare provision, namely, GP surgeries. Even if all the children in the proposed sites were able to attend the most local school (Netherhall School), access would be by a long, poorly lit path along the north border of GB1. This does not seem to be the safest way for our communities children to reach the safety of their educating body, although I’m sure that hundreds of street lamps, and their subsequent light pollution would be considered.
To summarise, the stated need for development of GB1 and GB2 has been to meet rising demand for affordable housing (apparently for citizens of Cambridge as opposed to commuters to London). I would suggest that the more realistic outcomes of developing these areas would be:

1. Destruction of the Green Belt and urban sprawl
2. Loss of a County Wildlife Site and a significant detrimental impact on the areas biodiversity
3. Ignoring of the conclusions from the 2002-2006 survey summaries which stated that these areas are important and would not accommodate change easily
4. Increased traffic on one of the busiest roads in Cambridge with a knock-on effect on the emergency services, such as ambulances which run from Addenbrookes Hospital, one of the biggest hospitals in the region, and would on the best clinical and research centres in the country
5. Loss of a dedicated bus route, a transport modality which the Government and Councils suggest we all use instead of our own vehicles
6. Danger (as concluded by the City Council) to any cyclists that would use the roads involved (apparently cyclists are quite prevalent in this City, so they may take issue with this development)
7. Residential areas without access to or nearby amenities, such as GP surgeries and schools for children

To whomever is charged with the task of reading public opinion regarding this proposal, I apologise if my thoughts seem sarcastic or biting, but I, as a contributing member of the society we live in, cannot see how this proposal could have been formulated, let alone considered and presented to the public. The fact that it has been rejected several times previously speaks volumes. Furthermore little mention has been given to the new villages which have been approved in the surrounding countryside (which could happily accommodate the extra homes which sites GB1 and GB2 could afford). This again seems like a battle of councils (as I believe these developments fall under the remit of the South Cambridgeshire Council) where nobody wants Government targeting meeting development to happen in their own “back garden”. I pray that educated individuals of logical and sound mind read these thoughts that I have committed to paper, and that hopefully, brave voices at the heart of the system speak out against what they know to be unnecessary and wrong – the destruction of Cambridge’s Green Belt.

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