

Application Number: F/YR11/0895/O
Major
Parish/Ward: Whittlesey
Date Received: 16 November 2011
Expiry Date: 15 February 2012
Applicant: Mr B Smith, Whitacre Management Ltd
Agent: Mr A Hodgson, Savills Ltd

Proposal: Erection of Mixed Use Business Park to include Employment (B1), Community (D1) and Retail/Professional Uses (A2/A3/A5)
Location: Land North of Gildenburgh Water, Eastrea Road, Whittlesey

Site Area/Density: 8.1 ha

Reason before Committee: This proposal is before the Planning Committee due to the significance of the application.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION

This application was deferred at the Planning Committee held 9 May 2012 to allow further assessment to be undertaken of the commercial viability of the Station Road food store site.

The original report to Committee follows this executive summary along with the update presented to Committee on the 9 May 2012.

An updated assessment including reference to correspondence received since the 9 May 2012 is then provided.

The application is considered to be contrary to adopted local and national planning policy due to the fact the site is within open countryside in an area not allocated for growth and is therefore considered unsustainable. Sufficient need for the scheme has not been demonstrated. The application is recommended for refusal.

F/YR11/0895/O
16 November 2011

Applicant: Mr B Smith
Whitacre Management Ltd

Agent : Mr A Hodgson
Savills (L & P) Ltd

Land North Of Gildenburgh Water, Eastrea Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire

Erection of Mixed Use Business Park to include Employment (B1), Community (D1) and Retail/Professional Uses (A2/A3/A5)

This proposal is before the Planning Committee due to the significance of the application.

This application is a Major. Site Area 4.85ha.

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located to the east of Whittlesey, in open countryside outside the existing Development Area Boundary. Gildenburgh Water is located to the south of the site and to the west of the site is a former nursery, which is currently subject of a planning application for erection of a supermarket (F/YR11/0482/F). The land immediately to the east of the application site is also open land and currently subject to a planning application for a supermarket and country park. The application site consists of flat, open fields with some tree and hedgerow planting to the site boundaries.

2. HISTORY

Of relevance to this proposal is:

F/YR11/0930/F - Erection of a food store with cafe, petrol filling station and car wash with associated parking, landscaping and highway works including formation of roundabouts and change of use of agricultural land to form Country Park with associated landscaping – application pending.

3. CONSULTATIONS

Parish/Town Council:

Minded to approve but request that part of the funding from the section 106 be used to create relief road to back of development to alleviate traffic on A605.

Requested sensible delivery operating hours for HGVs to protect residential amenity. Councillors would like to ensure that type of businesses operating on retail element of business park must have only minimum impact on town centre trade.

Local Highway Authority (CCC):

Initial Highway concerns addressed by applicant but final Highway Authority comments awaited and will be reported at the Committee.

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|---|---|
| <i>Environment Agency</i> | No objection subject to attachment of appropriate conditions. |
| <i>CCC Archaeology</i> | Noted submission of evaluation report, requested standard archaeological investigation condition. |
| <i>Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service:</i> | Require condition for Fire Hydrants |
| <i>Police Architectural Liaison Officer:</i> | Raises concerns regarding pedestrian permeability through the site and potentially poor surveillance of highway from industrial units |
| <i>Natural England</i> | Note need for protected species surveys – can be dealt with by planning condition if application approved. |
| <i>Anglian Water</i> | Planning conditions requested for drainage strategy for foul sewage, wastewater, surface water, trade effluent. |
| <i>Middle Level Commissioners</i> | Object to the scheme on grounds that aspects of the scheme are inappropriate and require revision, not demonstrated a viable scheme for appropriate flood level management, requirement of appropriate calculations. |
| <i>Environmental Health</i> | No objection in principle but if approved conditions required for contamination, noise and odour controls. |
| <i>Local residents/interested parties</i> | <p>168 letters of support received from local residents noting the scheme will bring jobs to the area, boost the economy of Whittlesey, provide more local shopping choice.</p> <p>2 letters of objection received noting that land is not allocated for development, will fill in open space between Whittlesey and Eastrea, no need for further industrial/commercial land, retail use should be resisted, increase traffic on Eastrea Road, noise pollution, light pollution, potential anti-social behaviour, environmental pollution, fuel station safety, detrimental impact on existing shops.</p> |

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------|---|---|
| FDWLP Policy | | EMP4 | - | New business, general industrial, storage or distribution uses unrelated to any existing activity are not normally permitted outside Development Area Boundaries. |
| | | EMP8 | - | Large scale office development will normally be permitted only on the primary industrial/business areas. |
| East of England Plan | | SS1 | - | Ensuring provision of sustainable development. |
| | | ENV7 | - | Seeks to achieve quality in the built environment. |
| National Framework | Planning Policy | Para 6 | - | Notes that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. |
| | | Para 11 | - | Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. |
| | | Para 19 | - | Notes that the Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system supports sustainable economic growth. |
| Draft Fenland Strategy | Core | CS1 | - | Spatial Strategy – notes that the majority of the district’s new housing, employment growth, retail growth and wider service provision should take place in the market towns, including Whittlesey. |
| | | CS4 | - | Employment and retail – new employment land will be provided primarily via the urban extensions to the market towns within the identified broad areas of growth. The Council will seek to retain existing quality land currently in B1, B2 and B8 uses. Criteria for employment proposals includes the need to ensure that such schemes |

fit with the identified broad locations for growth and impact in terms of urban/landscape character and setting of settlements.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| CS5 | - | Urban extensions – must be planned and implemented in a comprehensive way through an agreed master-planning approach, provide a wide range of local employment opportunities, make provision for appropriate levels of retail, leisure, social, cultural, community and health facilities to meet local needs. |
| CS9 | - | New urban extensions to Whittlesey will be supported on land to the north of Eastrea Road, and south and east of Drybread Road. |

5. ASSESSMENT

Nature of Application

This application seeks outline planning permission for a mixed use business park to include employment (B1), Community use (D1), retail/professional uses (A2/A3/A5). Access is the only reserved or detailed matter submitted as part of the application, all other matters are reserved. The applicant has indicated that this application forms part of a master plan development for the locality which includes a new supermarket and a country park (submitted as planning application F/YR11/0930/F). The applicant has indicated that the business park will form the second phase of the master plan following construction of the supermarket. The proposed scheme has been subject to a public consultation event at pre-application stage.

The application is considered to raise the following key issues;

- Site history
- Principle and policy implications
- Layout and design
- Access and Parking
- Community facilities.

Site History

The site is currently in agricultural use and has not been previously developed or subject to any previous planning permission. As noted above the site adjoins an application site for a new supermarket and country park and it is proposed that it will share the same roundabout access from Eastrea Road.

Principle and Policy Implications

The site is located to the east of Whittlesey some 180 metres outside the Development Area Boundary and within open countryside. The site does not fall within a Broad Area of Growth as identified within the draft Core Strategy. It is acknowledged that the applicant has partially formulated a master plan approach to this application and the associated supermarket application but the draft Core

Strategy clearly requires such urban extensions to fit within the identified Broad Areas of Growth - this site does not. In addition, although the land to the west of the application site is identified by the applicant as a potential site for housing, no application or detail has been submitted to address how or when that area of land would be brought forward for residential development. It is considered that in this case the applicant has not submitted a comprehensive, deliverable urban extension scheme.

In addition, it is considered that the site as open agricultural land plays an important role in ensuring that coalescence does not occur between Eastrea and Whittlesey. As noted an area for a new urban extension for Whittlesey is identified to the north of Eastrea Road effectively ensuring that coalescence is prevented.

The need for a new business park is also a material consideration. The Council's Economic Development Team have indicated that demand for additional employment land within Whittlesey is low, but in any event if demand were to increase a significant area of vacant allocated industrial/commercial land already exists at the Station Road/Benwick Road industrial site. The applicant has indicated that they have received interest from a family/pub restaurant operator, A3 operators, an A5 operator and a furniture construction company/showroom, although some of the interest is conditional on a supermarket being built and open first. In the opinion of officers this does not indicate strong demand for the proposed development.

The proposal is, therefore, considered contrary to Local Plan Policy EMP4 and to the emerging Core Strategy Policies CS4, CS5 and CS9.

Layout and Design

As noted the application is in outline form only with just access details supplied. The site measures 4.85 hectares in area and the proposed uses are identified as follows: B1 (commercial) 4,500 sqm, B1c (light industrial) 13,250 sqm, D1 (community use) 4000 sqm, A2 (office), A3 (restaurant), A5 (takeaway) – 2,500 sqm.

An indicative layout has been submitted which shows the proposed community uses and Class A uses located around the site entrance with the larger B1c industrial uses located further to the south and east. Construction heights are proposed as a mix of single storey and two storey buildings. A feeder road leading from the site access will serve the development with pedestrian access and cycleways also provided. Pedestrian access to the adjoining country park is also provided. In principle the proposed layout would be considered acceptable, but clearly may not represent the final design.

Access and Parking

Access to the site from the Eastrea Road will be via a new roundabout providing access into the application site and the existing access lane to Gildenburgh Water. A smaller roundabout within the site provides access to the proposed Sainsbury store and then the business park via a new feeder road. Exact parking levels are not specified at this stage. As noted the final comments from the Highway Authority will be presented at the Planning Committee.

Conclusion

As noted above officers do have concerns with regard to the proven need for this development. It is considered that there already exists a significant level of available commercial/industrial land within Whittlesey and this additional site is unnecessary. In addition, although the applicant has adopted an urban extension approach to this scheme, linking it to a scheme for a new foodstore and country park, this is not considered an appropriate location for an extension to Whittlesey and would, therefore, be contrary to the Fenland draft Core Strategy. It is considered that the site currently forms an important area of open land which effectively prevents coalescence between Eastrea and Whittlesey, the development would, therefore, be inappropriate in this location.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

- 1. The proposed development does not accord with the Fenland Draft Core Strategy Policies CS4, CS5 and CS9 in that the site is located within open countryside and is not located within the identified broad areas of growth for Whittlesey. The site is considered unsustainable - contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (achieving sustainable development and section 1).**
- 2. The proposed development is contrary to Policy EMP4 of the adopted Local Plan in that it is located within open countryside and sufficient need for the scheme has not been demonstrated.**

UPDATE TO PLANNING COMMITTEE – 9 MAY 2012.

CCC Highways

CCC Highways have now confirmed that proposed access arrangements are acceptable subject to suitable conditions and section 106 requirements.

Additional Correspondence Received

23 additional letters received in support of proposed scheme since issuing of Committee report. Letters suggest scheme will boost economy and provide jobs for local people.

Andrew Hodgson, the agent acting on behalf of Whitacre Management, has written via email to suggest that the Council are wrong to rely on the FDC Local Plan or draft Core Strategy as they carry no weight.

Officer Response

This assertion is incorrect, the Local Plan continues to have full weight unless it conflicts with the NPPF. Some weight can also be given to the draft Core Strategy.

Andrew Hodgson, the agent acting on behalf of Whitacre Management, has suggested that the Station Road site is poorly located and states that there is interest in the proposed business units, suggesting that some are pre-let.

Officer Response

Comments noted but based on current evidence held by the Council's Economic Development Team there is not strong demand for new units at present.

UPDATE TO PLANNING COMMITTEE – 29 AUGUST 2012

ADDITIONAL CONSULTATIONS

Since the previous Planning Committee, held on the 9 May 2012, four additional letters have been received from third parties making specific reference to this application. Comments made include reference to the need for a supermarket, preference for a Sainsbury store, the business park will bring new jobs to the area and boost the local economy.

A further letter dated 14 August, 2012 received from Indigo Planning Ltd who act for the associated Sainsbury's application (ref F/YR11/0930/F), notes that the Sainsbury's proposal will assist with delivery of the Business Park scheme by providing the necessary highway infrastructure and increasing confidence of potential occupiers of the business park making pre-letting of units more likely.

PLANNING POLICY

Since the 9 May 2012 Committee meeting a revised version of the Core Strategy (Further Consultation Draft) has been published. Policies in respect of this particular application remain broadly unchanged, however, there are minor amendments to Policies CS4, CS5 and CS9.

The revised Policy CS4 requires that new employment land will be provided through sites with permission, appropriate intensification, extensions to existing employment areas and through the master planning approach within urban extensions to the four market towns. The Council will seek to retain existing quality land currently in B1, B2 and B8 uses. Criteria for employment proposals includes the need to ensure that schemes fit with the specific and broad locations for growth or in other suitable locations on the edge of market towns where it can be demonstrated that such growth would be compatible with adjacent urban land uses.

The revised Policy CS5 relating to urban extensions requires that urban extensions must be planned and implemented in a coordinated way through an agreed 'overarching' comprehensive delivery scheme that is linked to delivery of key infrastructure. Criteria for such schemes includes the requirement to make efficient use of land, contribute to providing a wide range of employment opportunities and demonstrate availability and deliverability of the proposed scheme.

Policy CS9 relates specifically to development within Whittlesey and notes that a new urban extension will be supported to the north and south of Eastrea Road – this area is identified on the Policies Map. It does not include the land subject to this planning application.

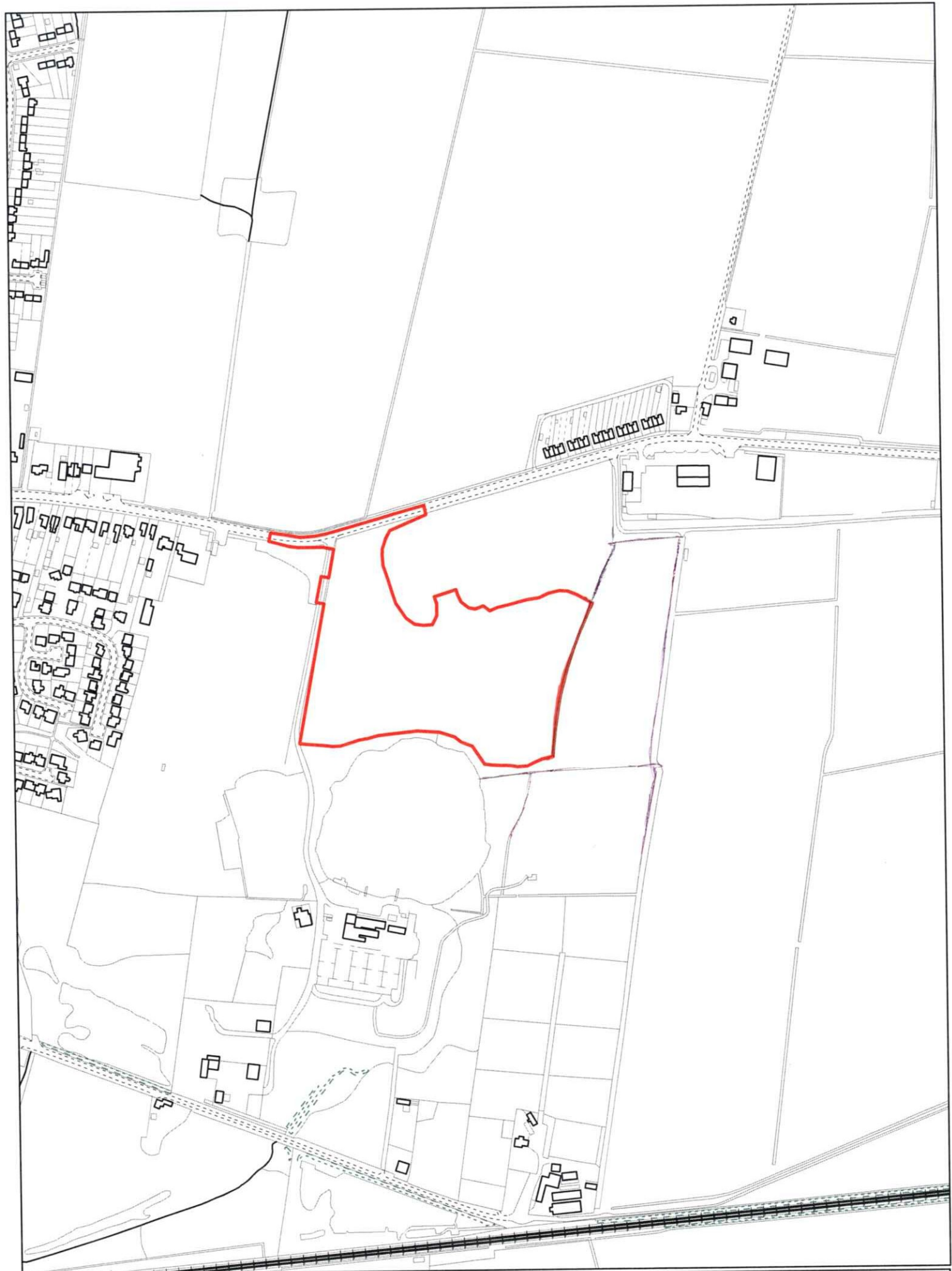
CONCLUSION

Having considered the additional responses submitted in respect of this application and taking into account the amendments made to the Core Strategy it remains the case that officers have serious concerns regarding the need for this additional employment site taking into account the existing level of available commercial land in Whittlesey. Officers are not convinced that the applicant has provided adequate evidence to justify the proposed development. As previously noted, although the applicant has adopted an urban extension approach to this scheme which shows an attempt at compliance with policy CS5, linking it to a scheme for a new food store and country park, this is not considered an appropriate location for an extension to Whittlesey given the existing Local Plan and the emerging Core Strategy which indicates growth to the west and north west of this site. The Site would contribute to the coalescence of Eastrea and Whittlesey; taking away the open characteristics of the exiting farmland. The development is considered inappropriate and the officer recommendation remains to refuse the application.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

- 1. The proposed development does not accord with the Fenland Draft Core Strategy Policies CS4, CS5 and CS9 in that the site is located within open countryside and is not located within the identified broad areas of growth for Whittlesey. The site is considered unsustainable - contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (achieving sustainable development and section 1).**
- 2. The proposed development is contrary to Policy EMP4 of the adopted Local Plan in that it is located within open countryside and sufficient need for the scheme has not been demonstrated.**



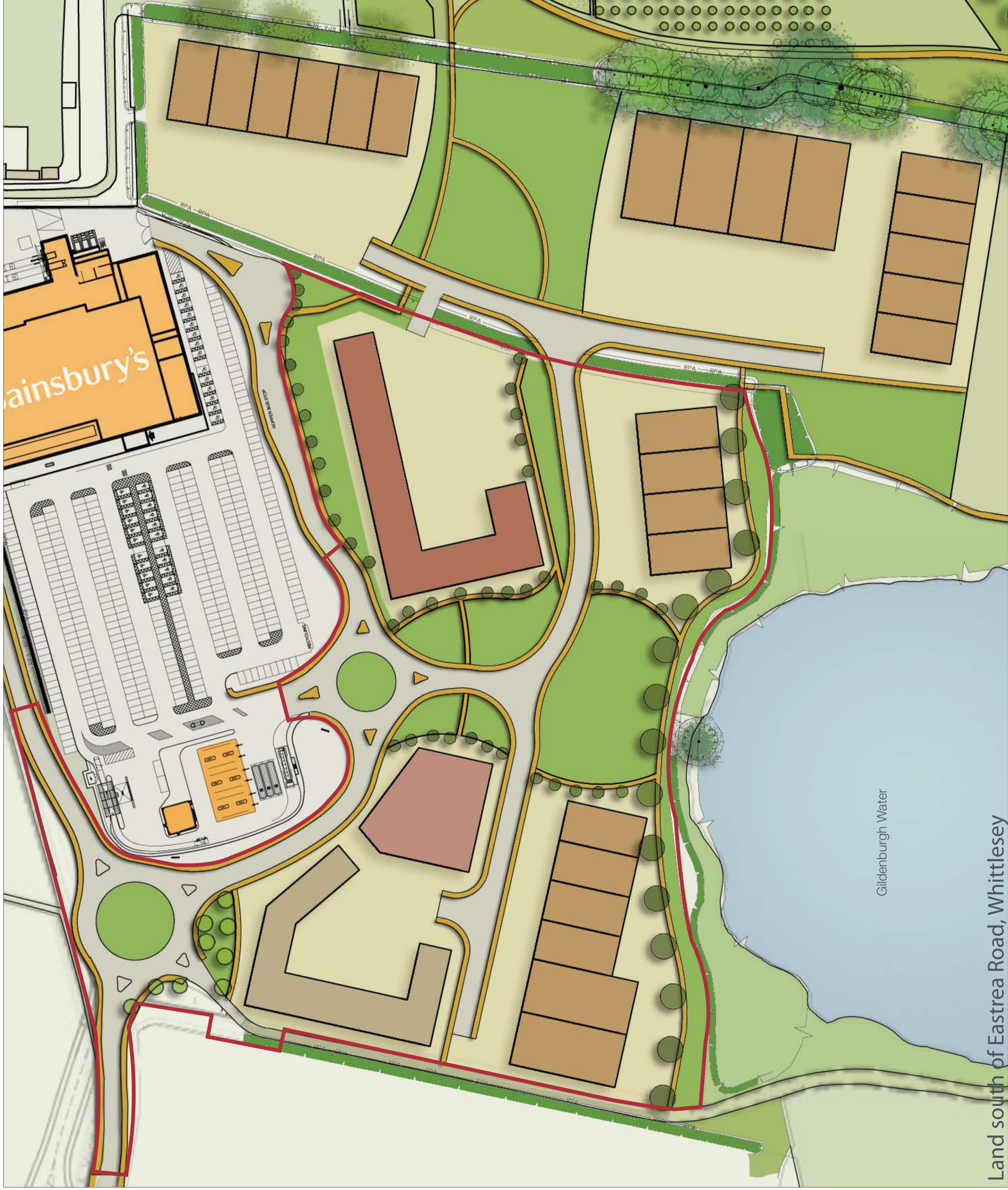
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KEY



- Site application boundary - Business park
- Proposed B1 use (Commercial spaces)
- Proposed A class use (A2, A3 & A5) (Financial/Professional Services, Cafe/Restaurant, Hot Food Takeaway)
- Proposed D1 use (Community use)
- Proposed B1c use (Light industry compatible with residential)
- Proposed junction layout based on access arrangement for the Larkfleet development to the north of Eastrea Road

INDICATIVE SCHEDULE OF ACCOMMODATION FOR PROPOSED BUSINESS PARK

| Use class | Area (sq m) | Storeys (nos) |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| B1 | 4,500 | 2 |
| B1c | 13,250 | Single |
| D1 | 4,000 | 2 |
| A (incl. A1, A2, A3 & A5) | 2,500 | 2 |
| Total | 24,250 | |

Land south of Eastrea Road, Whittlesey
on behalf of Whitacre Management Ltd

drawing no. UD03
rev D
scale 1:1000 @ A2
drawn by UK
checked by AJH

Block plan
Business park proposals
job no. CAUD233831
date 24/02/2012

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