

CHEFFINS

RURAL

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BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN OFFERS NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR LANDOWNERS

Biodiversity net gain has now passed into law under the Environment Bill 2021 and is due to come into force in January 2024. This new mandatory initiative is designed to prevent the loss of natural habitats as a result of development, whether that be for housing, industrial or commercial use.

Widespread concern for the loss of biodiversity across the UK means that every developer will be bound not only to replace the natural habitat they displace during construction works but also provide an uplift of at least 10 per cent of the value of biodiversity that was originally there.

Cambridgeshire is aiming for a more ambitious biodiversity net gain uplift of 20 per cent under its 'doubling nature' strategy.

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Across the UK a common metric has been established to measure the value of natural habitats so that developers can establish a baseline figure to show how many 'biodiversity units' their site contains, and how many it will need to replace when factoring in the uplift they need to achieve.

Where possible, developers will seek to design their schemes to accommodate natural spaces within them and fulfil the biodiversity net gain in a relatively simple, on-site package. Where this isn't feasible, developers will need to purchase off-site biodiversity units.

At Cheffins we are actively identifying opportunities for strategically placed farms and estates to develop an alternative income stream in the off-site biodiversity net gain market. For example, less productive arable land that is off-lying or of lower value for alternative uses can lend itself to a habitat creation scheme for generating biodiversity units to sell in the emerging marketplace.

There are numerous factors that landowners will need to consider before establishing a biodiversity net gain scheme on their land. Site location and strategic importance will be key considerations, as will an early assessment of the land in question to determine the type of habitat that can be created and the biodiversity units it has the scope to create.

Early engagement with the relevant sources of expertise will be key. Cheffins can act as a vital link between local authorities, landowners and developers, all of whom will have a part to play in securing the long-term environmental outcomes which biodiversity net gain seeks to achieve.

Landowners considering biodiversity net gain on their land will need to be aware of the long-term nature of these schemes, with contractual obligations likely to be secured over a minimum 30 year period under mechanisms such as a conservation covenant. However, this long-term commitment also brings the benefit of secure long-term returns.

In the right place, biodiversity net gain offers an exciting and fulfilling opportunity for landowners to produce a new income stream as an alternative to Basic Payment Scheme payments. If you are interested in considering this route, please do contact us for further details.

Katie Hilton, Director
01223 271959 | katie.hilton@cheffins.co.uk



"...we are actively identifying opportunities for strategically placed farms and estates to develop an alternative income stream in the off-site biodiversity net gain market."

Sustainable Farming Incentive

Farmers can now apply for Defra's latest Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) offer, a scheme that sees a bigger range of 'actions' that can be adopted in a more flexible way than before. These are designed to encourage farmers to bring the environment into greater focus both in the planning and implementation of their crop rotations and wider farmland habitats.

For example, measures for Integrated Pest Management (IPM) include an annual payment of £989 per farm to produce an IPM plan and review it year-on-year. Defra hope that encouraging farmers to have these regular conversations with their advisers will inspire them to adopt new approaches such as growing companion crops, funded at £55 per hectare, or not using insecticides on a proportion of their arable land, funded at £45 per hectare. These in-field measures could also be complemented by field-edge habitats such as blocks or strips of flowers and grassy areas at the field edge, which pay between £590 and £673 per hectare.

Collectively, the different actions under IPM are intended to create a better environment for natural crop predators which in turn can reduce reliance on pesticides.

The suite of SFI actions also includes measures for soils, cover crops, hedgerows, herbal leys and permanent grassland, amongst others. Applicants will be able to take a 'pick and mix' approach to the scheme, only taking up the measures that suit them. The SFI will be rolled out incrementally, with farmers able to add more actions or land to their agreements each year.

If you would like help to build the right SFI scheme for your land, please do get in touch with the Cheffins Rural team.

Katie Hilton, Director
01223 271959 | katie.hilton@cheffins.co.uk



Lack of water set to affect landowners as it curtails development throughout the region

The growth of the Anglia region is becoming increasingly curtailed by a lack of water. There are currently planning applications for 9,000 new homes and 300,000 m² of research and commercial space which are unable to be determined in the Greater Cambridge area alone due to drinking water constraints. This will have a major impact on a number of landowners, as both Anglian Water and Cambridge Water set out significant infrastructure projects as they work to increase capacity.

It is well documented that the East of England has experienced one of the highest growth rates in population in the United Kingdom since the 2011 census, and this growth is expected to increase with an additional 900,000 people predicted to be living in our region by 2050. It is this growth which is putting considerable strain on an ageing infrastructure and utility network.

"...major new projects are bound to cause significant impacts on a number of landowners throughout the region."

One of the issues is that there is zero capacity to increase groundwater abstraction from the chalk aquifers underground, and abstraction from many of our rivers is already at an unsustainable level. As a result, both Anglian Water and Cambridge Water are working to reinforce and increase capacity with a number of new major infrastructure projects, including:

Strategic Pipeline Alliance (SPA) – this is a multimillion-pound investment providing hundreds of miles of new interconnecting pipes, including bringing a 300km-long and 700mm diameter-wide pipeline from north Lincolnshire to Essex, feeding into key supply points along the route.

The pipeline is already under construction with the northern sections laid and the southern sections currently underway.

Fens Reservoir – this is a new 55million cubic metre freshwater reservoir set to be located between Chatteris and Wimblington covering circa 1,200 acres of prime agricultural land and taking water from the Great Ouse catchment. A second reservoir is also planned for southeast of Sleaford in Lincolnshire. The aim of the reservoirs is to provide an increase in supply capacity and resilience to drought, to enable further growth in the region. Survey work is underway across both sites with further consultations planned for 2024.

Grafham to Cambridge West – East Pipeline – a bulk water pipeline connecting Cambridge Water's network to Anglian Water's reservoir at Grafham Water. Aimed at improving resilience, this project was rejected by Defra in June this year, and a renewed application is expected in the coming months.

The major new projects are bound to cause significant impacts on a number of landowners throughout the region, both through demands for access to lay new pipelines, as well as compulsory acquisition of land for the construction of reservoirs. Anyone affected by this should seek professional representation from an early stage in the process. This will ensure that landowners can be fairly compensated for the loss of any land or access rights, as well as offering support and representation throughout the design and development of these projects.

Cheffins specialises in representing landowners and occupiers throughout such transactions, and we would urge anyone affected by any of the projects mentioned to get in touch with our team for professional advice.

Edward Tabner, Director, Cheffins Rural Professionals (Ely)
01353 654922 | edward.tabner@cheffins.co.uk

A tale of two halves for UK farmland market

Below: Chrishall Grange – over 1,000 acres of arable and pastureland provided an excellent long-term investment opportunity



“...farmland still remains one of the most attractive options for those looking to park their money in a stable investment.”

Cheffins has bought and sold over 3,000 acres of farmland throughout Cambridgeshire, Essex and Hertfordshire in the past 18 months, with the majority of farms selling for at least 10 per cent over the guide price, as the demand for quality land parcels continues unabated. However, as external factors such as rising interest rates and predicted lower profits from farming start to bite, the next 12 months are set to be an indicator of whether farmland values can continue to advance at the pace seen over the past couple of years.

Over the coming months the number of larger farmland parcels of more than 500 acres being openly marketed are expected to remain few and far between, and with strong demand from non-farming investors continuing to outstrip supply, we predict that the value of this type of opportunity will remain high, with prices of £10,000/acre plus throughout the region. This section of the market is likely to see little change in terms of demand, partly as the larger agri-businesses continue to grow and inward investment from funds, private equity firms or corporates looking to reach net zero, drive prices upwards.

An example of larger farmland parcels would be the recent sale of Chrishall Grange Farm on the Hertfordshire/Essex border. This farm saw over 1,000 acres of arable and pastureland, woodland and extensive farm buildings on offer, subject to a long-term Farm Business Tenancy, providing an excellent long-term investment opportunity. It saw significant levels of interest from both private and institutional buyers and achieved premium values, as buyers were driven by its secure rental income and substantial opportunity for return on investment.

At the other end of the spectrum, the availability of parcels of 200 acres or less has been steadily increasing as smaller farming units become less viable due to continually increasing fixed costs and lower corn prices. This has seen some landowners look to sell off-lying and less productive land to consolidate debt in light of increased interest rates and release capital for other investment and diversification projects.

The demand for smaller acreages has largely been reliant on interest from local buyers with values starting to come under pressure in some areas. In addition, the cooling housing market and delays in Local Authorities granting planning permission has led to delays in the sale of many development sites, which in turn may start to reduce the number of rollover buyers entering into the farmland market over the following 12-18 months.

With a General Election looming in the next 12 months, and a widely predicted change in government, there is an increased likelihood of Agricultural Property Relief and other capital taxes being reformed. This could well have an impact on demand for farmland from non-farming investors, who are currently one of the major drivers in the market. It could be that the drive for net zero and environmental buyers will help fill the gap left by investment buyers, but the full impact of any potential tax changes will remain to be seen.

The fact remains that uncertainty over the changes to agricultural subsidies may affect the profitability of farming, but with global food supplies down and fluctuations in other investment assets, farmland still remains one of the most attractive options for those looking to park their money in a stable investment.

Those landowners looking to sell in the near future are advised to do so sooner rather than later in order to benefit from the current strength of the market and to benefit from the current imbalance between demand and supply.

If you are considering selling or renting your land, please do get in touch with a member of our experienced rural agency team.

Simon Gooderham, Joint Managing Partner
Cheffins Rural Professionals
01223 271952 | simon.gooderham@cheffins.co.uk

Renewable energy opportunities

In demand: land for solar farms and battery storage sites

Demand for sites for field scale solar farms and battery storage sites is still high despite the recent announcement by the Government that the ban on phasing out new petrol and diesel cars has been delayed. This postponement, which brings the UK in line with the EU's plans to ban the sale of new fossil fuel cars by 2035, does not diminish the UK's overarching commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. This new approach, which has seen the Prime Minister easing up on some green policies, will be more proportionate and will protect hard-pressed British families from unacceptable costs.

With one eye on the deadline of 2035, developers are currently looking for sites of 150 – 200 acres for solar farms of up to 50 megawatts, located close to a sub-station or a high voltage overhead power line; such sites are commanding rents of up to £1,000 per acre with annual increases in line with inflation. Developers usually look for an option of 3 – 5 years to enable them ample time to apply for a grid connection and submit a planning application. If a grid connection can be secured at a reasonable price and planning permission is granted, then the developer will exercise their option and take a lease of the site.

Since the construction of the project and connection to the grid can take many months to complete, we advise that the

rent commences upon construction, otherwise the Landowner may not receive any rent until the project is fully energized.

The significant increase in the generation of renewable electricity has put enormous pressure on the electricity grid because the output from solar and wind power fluctuates according to the weather. National Grid is not permitted to invest in generating capacity and this includes battery storage facilities, hence the huge increase in demand for sites.

Typically, developers are looking for sites of 5-10 acres located either adjacent or very close to electricity sub-stations for a battery storage site of up to 100 megawatts; rents of up to £2,000 per megawatt are being offered with an annual increase in line with inflation.

If you have land which is close to a sub-station and you think it may be suitable for a solar farm or a battery storage site, please contact us.

Jonathan Stiff, Director, Head of Rural Division
jonathan.stiff@cheffins.co.uk | 01353 654915



Property auction roundup

It's often said that the auction market provides a good snapshot for the wider property market, and the last few months seem to fit that description perfectly!

The auction land market remains buoyant and it is those 1 – 10 acre parcels that attract the most frantic bidding. Buyers for these pockets of land generally have a specific purpose in mind and are therefore fuelled by a determination to acquire their chosen lot with less consideration for traditional ballpark values. A grassland parcel of one acre in Kedington sold in

June for £25,000, while a 2.49 acre parcel in Kirtling soared to £100,000 (£40,160/ac), with multiple bidders in the room sparking a fierce bidding war.

The larger blocks can be a little more price sensitive and value will often depend on whether there are any motivated neighbours keen to acquire, but buyers do remain waiting in the wings for such opportunities. In September a pair of lots totaling 25.4 acres of Grade 2 agricultural land successfully sold to the same buyer.

Aside from the land lots, the residential refurbishment and speculative lots remain the most desirable. June saw the sale of a semi-detached chalet property in Hitchin which needed full refurbishment; guided at £275,000 and with a mix of owner-occupiers, investors and developers quickly drove the price upward to reach £355,000.

The trends continued into our September auction with a couple of very notable sales.

"...for the right kind of property there are a huge number of motivated buyers waiting to pounce."

Redlands in Longstanton, an abandoned Victorian mansion which had been ravaged by fire and uninhabited for over 70 years, generated a vast amount of interest from potential buyers, with each interested party seemingly having their own take on what they hoped they might be able to do with the site, and therefore a difference of opinion as to value. Auction day saw a packed saleroom, with multiple parties participating in the bidding at various stages.

The rapid bidding eventually concluded at £455,000, and its adjacent 2 acre parcel fetched a further £170,000 for a delighted vendor. But this wasn't an isolated example, as a bungalow in the Wandlebury Park rocketed to £1,010,000 from its original guide price of £650,000 (with the in-room buyer receiving a round of applause from the auction room). Similarly, other project properties, including two Churches in Barford and Tempsford, a derelict house in Soham and a pre-fab bungalow near Sudbury were also hotly contested, with sale prices far exceeding guides.

Despite the high levels of activity in the refurbishment market, there is some tentativeness in the commercial property market – buyers are still happy to acquire, but yields have softened and buyers are more cautious when selecting their purchases.

It has been a very busy summer and early autumn for the auction team, and this seems to replicate what is being seen in the wider agency parts of the business; there are some parts of the market that are a little cautious, but for the right kind of property there are a huge number of motivated buyers waiting to pounce, and they are happy to pay a premium to acquire them!

The next property auctions will take place on 13th December and 6th March (closing date 2nd February).

Ian Kitson, Director – Property Auctions & Valuations
01223 271942 | ian.kitson@cheffins.co.uk



Redlands in Longstanton sold for £455,000 at the September Property Auction



A bungalow in Wandlebury Park sold for £1,010,000

Diversifying Farm Buildings

Guest article from Simon Kelly of Buckles Solicitors



Government statistics suggest that 68% of farm businesses in England had some diversified activity in 2021/2022. The most common form of diversification involved using buildings and related land for non-agricultural uses and/or for processing and retailing of farm produce.

In England, materially changing the use of a building or land from agricultural to a non-agricultural use needs planning permission. There are two routes to securing the necessary permission: an 'automatic' permission under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the GPDO) or an express planning permission granted by the relevant Local Planning Authority (the LPA) in response to a formal planning application. Each of these routes have their own benefits and disadvantages.

Diversification under the GPDO

Classes Q and R of the GPDO grant 'automatic' planning permissions to convert agricultural buildings such as a barn and land within its curtilage to respectively, a residential use (Class Q) or a 'flexible' commercial use (i.e. storage or distribution, hotel or a range of commercial uses including a shop, office, restaurant or light industry) (Class R).

The word 'automatic' should be treated with a small pinch of salt, as both PD Rights are subject to a number of criteria and restrictions, of which the main ones are summarised below. However, where an application for prior approval is required (see below), it is intended to be a 'light touch' process. As long as the proposal falls within the scope of the relevant PD Right an approval should normally follow swiftly.

"In England, materially changing the use of a building or land from agricultural to a non-agricultural use needs planning permission."

Class Q – Agricultural to residential use

- Building must have been in solely agricultural use on 20 March 2013 (or if then empty, when last in use before that date), or for at least 10 years before date of proposed change of use.
- Total change of use floorspace not to exceed three houses of 100sqm-465sqm or five houses of up to 100sqm each.
- The proposed development must not extend the building beyond its existing external dimensions.
- Does not apply to sites occupied under an agricultural tenancy / where agricultural tenancy terminated within 1 year before proposed date of development unless consent of both landlord and tenant obtained.
- Excludes Listed Buildings, sites of scheduled monuments, sites within an AONB, Conservation Area, the Broads, a National Park or a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- Includes a right to install/replace windows, doors, roofs, exterior walls and carry out related partial demolition and the installation of services as are "reasonably necessary" for the building to function as a dwellinghouse.
- Where proposal does not include building works, developer must ask LPA to confirm whether prior approval required for matters listed below.
- Where proposal includes building works, developer must apply for prior approval of (amongst others) transport & highways, noise, potential contamination and flood risks, whether siting makes proposal impractical or undesirable, the design and appearance of the building.

Class R – Agricultural to flexible commercial use

- Building must have been solely in agricultural use on 3 July 2012 (or if then empty, when last in use before that date), or for at least 10 years before date of proposed change of use.
- Total change of use floorspace must not exceed 500sqm.
- Excludes Listed buildings.
- If floorspace of building exceeds 150sqm, LPA must give 'prior approval' of transport & highways, noise and potential contamination and flood risks.
- Does not include right to carry out related works which may require separate planning permission.
- Includes right to subsequently change use between Classes B8, C1 and E (subject to obtaining prior approval (etc) where appropriate).

Both Classes Q and R allow the proposal to include land within the 'curtilage' of the building. However, 'curtilage' is narrowly defined as the lesser of (a) the land immediately beside or around the agricultural building or (b) such land with an area not exceeding the footprint of the relevant building.

Where prior approval is required (or a determination that no prior approval is required), the developer must not start the development before the Council has issued its decision. A failure by the Council to respond within 56 days of an application for prior approval will result in a deemed approval. A refusal of prior approval can be appealed to the Secretary of State in the usual way.

The Courts have consistently found that to benefit from a PD right, the development must fall squarely within the description of development (Keenan v Woking Borough Council & Anor [2018] PTSR 697).

Government guidance advises in respect of Class Q: "[i]t is not the intention of the [PD] right to include the construction of new structural elements of the building". Following that logic, in the leading case of *Hibbitt and Another v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government*, a proposed 'conversion' under Class Q of an open-sided, steel framed shed to a dwellinghouse, which required adding external walls and a range of other works, was held to constitute a substantial rebuild falling outside the scope of Class Q. In its judgement, the Court held that there was a clear distinction between works of conversion (within the scope of the PD right) and works "of such magnitude that in practical reality what is being undertaken is a 'rebuild'" (outside the scope). Whether proposed works constitute conversion or a rebuild is a matter of the reasonable planning judgement of the decision maker.

A similar logic is likely to apply to Class R conversion. In December 2022, a planning inspector dismissed an appeal against South Cambridgeshire's refusal of prior approval to change the use of a glass house to a motel on the basis that the applicant had provided insufficient information to show that the change of use could be carried out without a complete rebuild of the building. The implication is that had evidence been submitted demonstrating that the conversion required a complete or substantial rebuild of the glass house, it would by definition have fallen outside the scope of Class R.

The fact that a Class Q or Class R conversion might result in a development in an area not otherwise supported by policy is not normally a reason for refusing prior approval (*East Hertfordshire District Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government*). NB, this does not prevent an LPA refusing prior approval under Class Q because if the location of the building makes its residential use impractical for (say) amenity or safety reasons.

Class Q and R must have a building as their focus. For example, an application to change the use of land from agriculture to the storage of cars, but without any related change of use of a building, will fall outside the scope of Class R.

If the building which is proposed to be converted exceeds the floorspace criteria but otherwise meets the Class Q or Class R criteria, in principle an application can be made to convert just part of it. Class Q (and by extension Class R) allow for a building partially in residential or commercial use, and partially in agricultural use (*Michael Mansell v Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council*).

Formal Planning Applications

A downside of Classes Q and R is that the development is limited to the fabric and envelope of the existing building in its existing location and the narrow geographic scope of its curtilage. The resulting conversion may not be either attractive or practical. In these cases, an express planning permission tailored to the needs of the developer and the site is preferable.

As a result of section 38(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, planning applications must be determined in accordance with the policies in the relevant local plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Unfortunately, national and local plan policies tend to discourage residential or commercial development in rural locations outside of settlement boundaries, where most agricultural operations are located.

However, where there is a "real prospect" that a site could be developed under Class Q or Class R (known as a 'fallback'), that is often a powerful material consideration in favour of granting an express planning permission for a better designed scheme, notwithstanding that the better designed scheme still conflicts with local plan policy.

Mansell v Tonbridge and Malling BC is a case in point. It concerned an application to demolish a barn and a bungalow on an agricultural unit, and in their place construct four detached dwellings with garages and gardens. The proposal conflicted with local plan countryside policies. However, in granting permission for the proposal, the Council gave considerable weight to applicant's fallback, which involved converting much of the existing barn under Class Q. The case officer advised that the limitations of Class Q meant that the fallback would result in a "a contrived and piecemeal" development of the site which would be visually detrimental. By contrast, the proposed, full permission scheme presented a "more comprehensive and coherent redevelopment of the site", was more attractive, and therefore preferable. Rather than see the site developed in accordance with the unattractive and contrived fallback, the Council granted permission for the better designed application.

Final Thoughts

In summary, Classes Q and R provide some scope for changing the use of agricultural buildings as part of a diversification scheme. Proposals must fall 'four square' within the scope of the PD right, and the procedural requirements must be strictly adhered to.

If the agricultural landowner's diversification scheme exceeds the scope of Classes Q and R, an express planning permission will be required. Local Plan policies tend to discourage rural development outside of existing settlement boundaries. However, a realistic prospect that a similar (albeit potentially less attractive) development could be carried out under Classes Q and/or R can be a powerful material consideration in favour of granting permission for a better designed scheme, notwithstanding that it conflicts with Local Plan policy.

Cheffins and Buckles Solicitors have successfully worked together to promote a number of agricultural diversification schemes including at appeal. If you are considering diversifying an agricultural operation, we would be delighted to help you develop an appropriate strategy to secure the necessary consents.

Simon Kelly, Associate, Buckles Solicitors
simon.kelly@buckles-law.co.uk | 01223 854561

Converting Listed Farmsteads

The demand for unique countryside property prevails with many people keen to experience a rural lifestyle, away from the city. Barn conversions are an ever popular way of achieving this dream, giving many a chance to live in a bespoke building full of traditional character but meeting modern living standards. For agricultural land owners, this also presents an opportunity to add value to their property through conversion. However, the process of converting and changing the use of a farm building is not straightforward at the best of times, so what are the additional constraints when you are dealing with listed buildings and farmsteads?

As discussed in our guest author Simon Kelly's article, there are a few routes to conversion through Permitted Development, allowing agricultural buildings to be converted into residential (Class Q) or flexible commercial use (Class R). However, listed buildings are excluded from this and the only route to conversion will be securing planning permission and listed building consent.

Listed Buildings are afforded statutory protection under the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The regulations are intended to prevent the unrestricted demolition, extension or alteration of a listed building without the express consent of the local planning authority or the Secretary of State.

Whilst the route to converting listed farmsteads into residential or commercial use might not be as light touch, the conversion of these buildings is still a worthwhile option.

With the changes to the farming industry requiring farmers to construct new buildings to reduce labour costs, accommodate new machinery and meet animal welfare regulations, many traditional farm buildings have become redundant. Often, when agricultural use is no longer viable, conversion is the only sustainable option for ensuring the long term preservation of these buildings.

So what do you need to think about when converting a listed farm building? We recommend appointing a professional team from the outset to ensure that the conversion is viable and any future scheme is well designed. This should include a structural engineer to understand the structural condition and potential for conversion, an architect who is experienced in working with historic buildings and conversions, and a heritage planner to help shape the scheme and compile and present the application to the council.

When considering the design, there are a few factors to consider:

- Reuse existing openings in the building fabric;
- Retain the sense of openness of the interior;
- Ensure timber framing is visible and incorporated where possible;
- Any surviving fittings should be retained; and
- Thermal upgrades should be sensitively introduced.

"...when agricultural use is no longer viable, conversion is the only sustainable option for ensuring the long term preservation of these buildings."

A carefully considered design is an important aspect of converting a farm building, this helps to show that thought has been given to its agricultural character and historic function as a barn or farm building. As part of the development of the design, early engagement with the local planning authority is also key. Pre-application meetings can help move towards a successful scheme that meets planning and listed building requirements as well as the standards of modern living without going too far down the process of submitting an application.

Cheffins Heritage and Planning team is currently working on a range of barn conversions, including listed farmsteads. Whilst the process to gaining permission for conversion may be challenging, we are keen to help clients secure consent and give these buildings a long-term viable use, ensuring their preservation.

Emma Healey, Senior Heritage Planner
emma.healey@cheffins.co.uk | 01223 609747

New appointments for Rural and Planning

Cheffins Rural department has bolstered its team with the appointments of **Jonathan Purkiss** and **Jack French**.

Jonathan joined Cheffins earlier this year from the Valuation Office Agency, where for the past seven years he held the position of Senior Surveyor. This role involved valuations for National Taxation purposes and compulsory purchase work representing the acquiring authorities. At Cheffins, Jonathan's focus will be valuations, agency and professional work within the rural team.

Jack French is a recent appointment. He joined Cheffins in September from The Royal Agricultural University having completed his degree in Rural Land Management.

Cheffins Planning department continues its expansion with the recent appointment of Emma Healey as Senior Heritage Planner. Emma previously worked for Barton Willmore, now Stantec, where she was involved in a variety of heritage projects nationwide. Emma will provide Cheffins' clients with specialist heritage advice including listed buildings, development in conservation areas and in the setting of heritage assets.



Local Plan Update October 2023

A 'Local Plan' sets out a strategic framework for future sustainable development in a local authority's administrative area. It performs two specific roles:

- It identifies key areas of land for development to deliver the homes, jobs and services needed in the area, and
- Includes policies against which all planning applications are considered.

A Local Plan is a document by which all development in the local authority's administrative area is judged, it provides the basis for what can happen, where it can happen and when it can happen.

Town and Country Planning Regulations state that local planning authorities must review their Local Plan every five years starting from the date of adoption.

"A Local Plan... provides the basis for what can happen, where it can happen and when it can happen."

Braintree District Council

Adopted Local Plan: The Braintree District Local Plan 2013 – 2033 (July 2022)

New Local Plan: Braintree District Council has an up-to-date Local Plan at this time, but it will need to be reviewed by 2026 at the latest, when the Section 1 Plan becomes five years old.

5YHLS: Braintree District Council is stating it can demonstrate a **4.86** years supply of housing land (as of April 2022).

Breckland Council

Adopted Local Plan: Breckland Local Plan (November 2019)

New Local Plan: In September 2022, Breckland Council agreed to undertake a review of the Adopted Local Plan 2019.

The latest Local Development Scheme (LDS), prepared in September 2022, anticipates Preferred Options Consultation in late 2023/early 2024 and Consultation on the Draft Local Plan in late summer 2024.

The Local Plan Adoption (Regulation 26) is scheduled to take place Autumn 2026.

5YHLS (Housing Land Supply): Breckland Council is stating it can demonstrate a **6.66** years supply of housing land (as of July 2023). The position will be reviewed in March 2024.

Central Bedfordshire Council

Adopted Local Plan: Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015 – 2035 (July 2021)

New Local Plan: Policy SP1a of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (July 2021) states that; "The Council will commence a Partial Review of the Plan within six months of adoption of the Local Plan 2035."

Central Bedfordshire Council prepared and published a Local Development Scheme (LDS) in April 2022 following the adoption of their Local Plan (July 2021). The LDS (April 2022) sets out the Local Plan timetable with the Draft Local Plan consultation (Regulation 18) scheduled to take place in summer 2024.

The Local Plan Adoption (Regulation 26) is scheduled to take place in December 2026. However, with the reforms to national planning policy and guidance, as well as the

uncertainty surrounding the East West Rail project, there are likely to be delays to the Local Plan timetable.

5YHLS: Central Bedfordshire Council is stating it can demonstrate a **5.24** years supply of housing land (as of July 2023).

East Cambridgeshire District Council

Adopted Local Plan: East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (April 2015)

New Local Plan: East Cambridgeshire District Council is undertaking a focused Single Issue Review (SIR) of its adopted Local Plan (April 2015). The SIR is intended to partially replace a very small part of the Local Plan adopted in April 2015. The vast majority of the Local Plan (April 2015) is proposed to remain unaltered and remain part of the development plan for East Cambridgeshire.

The Proposed Modifications consultation ran from 21 July to 31 August 2023. All representations received are now being considered by the appointed Inspector examining the SIR of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

5YHLS: East Cambridgeshire is stating it can demonstrate a **7.18** years supply of housing land (as of January 2023).

East Hertfordshire District Council

Adopted Local Plan: East Herts District Plan (October 2018)

New Local Plan: The current Local Development Scheme (LDS) is considered out of date. East Hertfordshire District Council is currently considering whether an update of the District Plan is required and will look to update its LDS in due course.

5YHLS: East Hertfordshire District Council is stating it can demonstrate a **5.8** years supply of housing land (as of November 2022).

Fenland District Council

Adopted Local Plan: Fenland Local Plan (May 2014)

New Local Plan: The pre-submission publication (Regulation 19) version is due to be published for public consultation over the coming months (delayed from January 2023).

This version of the plan will then be submitted to central government who will appoint an independent Planning Inspector to carry out a public examination into the document.

The Local Plan Adoption (Regulation 26) is likely to take place mid-2024.

5YHLS: Fenland District Council is stating that it can demonstrate a **6.69** years supply of housing land (as of September 2021).

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (formerly Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council)

Cambridge City Council Area	South Cambridgeshire District Council Area
Cambridge Local Plan (October 2018)	South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (September 2018)

New Local Plan: The Draft Plan Consultation (Regulation 18) is due to take place in the coming months / Autumn 2023; although, likely to be delayed. Due to the delay to the submission of the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant relocation Development Consent Order (DCO), the Local Plan timetable will be updated, which is expected in the coming months.

The Local Plan Adoption (Regulation 26) will not take place before 2026.

5YHLS: Greater Cambridge Shared Planning is stating it has a **6.1** years supply of housing land (as of April 2023).

Huntingdonshire District Council

Adopted Local Plan: Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (May 2019)

New Local Plan: On 24 January 2023, Huntingdonshire District Council's Cabinet agreed to the preparation of a full update to the adopted Local Plan which will set out a plan for how the district will grow over future decades.

A number of consultations have been completed which will feed into the preparation of the Local Plan (Regulation 18). Preferred Options (full draft) Local Plan (Regulation 18) is scheduled to take place Summer/Autumn 2025.

The Local Plan Adoption (Regulation 26) is scheduled to take place winter 2028.

5YHLS: Huntingdonshire District Council is stating it can demonstrate a **5.75** years supply of housing land (as of October 2022).

King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Adopted Local Plan: Core Strategy (July 2011) and Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (September 2016)

New Local Plan: The Local Plan Review was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent Examination on 29 March 2022, in accordance with Regulation 22. Hearings commenced in December 2022, but were adjourned to allow King's Lynn and West Norfolk time to undertake further work to justify their spatial strategy.

King's Lynn and West Norfolk are currently consulting on the following documents:

- F47 – Topic Paper Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy (including Neighbourhood Housing requirements)
- F48 – Update on Technical Note on Transport Evidence
- F49 – Retail Impact Threshold for Hardwick Road Area
- F50 – Updated Housing Land Supply
- F51 – West Winch Topic Paper

The consultation was set to expire at midnight on Friday 20 October 2023.

This consultation will inform the Inspectors in understanding the issues affecting the Local Plan and setting agendas for the future sessions of the Examination Hearing, which is anticipated to commence in early 2024.

The Local Plan Adoption (Regulation 26) is likely to take place mid-2024.

5YHLS: King's Lynn and West Norfolk are stating they can demonstrate a **6.24** years supply of housing land (as of April 2022).

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North Hertfordshire Council

Adopted Local Plan: North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (November 2022)

New Local Plan: North Hertfordshire Council does not have any immediate plans to review its Local Plan; however, there is an early review mechanism scheduled for the end of 2023.

5YHLS: North Hertfordshire Council is stating it can demonstrate a **1.47** years supply of housing land (Appeal reference: APP/X1925/W/21/3289940, October 2022).

Uttlesford District Council

Adopted Local Plan: Uttlesford Local Plan (January 2005)

New Local Plan: Councillors decided to withdraw the draft Uttlesford Local Plan (2019) and start a new plan at an Extraordinary Council Meeting (ECM) on Thursday 30 April 2020.

In September 2022, preparation was paused to enable completion of further evidence. The Draft Plan Consultation (Regulation 18) was due to commence on 30 October 2023. Uttlesford District Council will be arranging a series of drop-in sessions so the public can discuss the plans with officers.

The Local Plan Adoption (Regulation 26) is likely to take place mid-2026.

5YHLS: Uttlesford District Council is stating that it can demonstrate a **3.52** years supply of housing land (as of April 2021).

West Suffolk Council (formerly Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council)

Adopted Local Plan:

Former Forest Heath District Council Area	Former St Edmundsbury Borough Council Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Strategy (May 2010) • Core Strategy Single Issue Review (SIR) (September 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Strategy (December 2010)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Allocations Local Plan (September 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision 2031 (September 2014) • Bury St Edmunds • Haverhill • Rural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Development Management Policies Document (February 2015) 	

New Local Plan: The Local Plan Review Preferred Options (Regulation 18) consultation closed in July 2022, and the Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) consultation is scheduled to commence January 2024. Submission to the Secretary of State for independent Examination (Regulation 22) is anticipated spring 2024.

The Local Plan Adoption (Regulation 26) is likely to take place spring 2025.

5YHLS: West Suffolk Council is stating that it can demonstrate a **5.4** year supply of housing land including a five per cent buffer (as of January 2023).

Edward Clarke, Associate, Planning & Development
01223 628929 edward.clarke@cheffins.co.uk



“...new technology has allowed us to host sales in some of the most remote corners of the UK and live stream the sale to the rest of the world.”

Second-hand machinery sales continue to pay dividends for farmers

Our financial year-end results showed that Cheffins has sold over £62-million worth of second-hand machinery over the past 12 months, across 63 auctions. These figures take into account the Cambridge Monthly Machinery Sale, on-site auctions and the regular vintage collective sales, with over 49,000 lots of machinery and associated items offered. Sales were up £10 million on the previous financial year, which grossed £52 million by comparison.

The Cambridge auctions hosted at Sutton have grown in terms of prices achieved and the numbers of lots offered and have benefited exponentially from the return of the overseas market post-Brexit. In fact, the past 12 months has seen over 24,000 lots go under the hammer at the Cheffins Monthly Machinery Sale, with well over 3,000 tractors offered. We have seen stock levels grow by over 10 per cent in comparison with last year, thanks to increasing numbers of farmers and dealers looking to trade in second-hand machinery and have a clear out of barns and yards across the country.

In the meantime, on-site auctions have seen a marked uplift in regularity, as farmers and dealers see them as the ultimate solution to dispose of multiple items in one fell swoop. We hosted some 32 on site sales over the last year, on behalf of farmers and the trade, covering the length and breadth of the UK. This sale format has paid dividends for farmers in particular, who due to succession issues, retirement and changes to subsidy payments, are now looking to future-proof their businesses.

Over 80 per cent of on-site sales over the past 12 months have taken place on behalf of farmers, with the majority being as a result of a change in farming policy, with local contractors and neighbouring farmers entering into contract farming arrangements and clients looking for diversification projects which will alleviate the pressure on profits earned by traditional farming methods. Undoubtedly our on-site sales have proved a quick and efficient method to dispose of farm machinery and equipment. On-site auctions have also proved particularly popular with buyers who take confidence in seeing where machinery has come from and how it has been maintained on-farm.

We have also introduced new technology at Cheffins this year, which has enabled us to host sales in some of the most remote corners of the UK, and live stream the sale to the rest of the world, allowing buyers from all locations to bid in real time. This has also been helped by Cheffins' facility to complete export paperwork and phytosanitary requirements following Brexit.

The results of the last year have continued to demonstrate the strong demand for good quality second-hand machinery, as farmers and the trade continue to be affected by inflation, rising costs and delayed delivery times for new items. Cheffins is continuing to be at the forefront of the second-hand market, helping clients end-to-end, both in purchasing machinery as well as disposing of unwanted or surplus kit. Cheffins is leading the second-hand machinery industry, accounting for more sales throughout the UK than any of its competitors and has become a critically important source for the farming industry. In spite of market fluctuations and the uncertainty around funding for UK farmers, Cheffins has continued to remain deeply connected to clients and help provide the machinery needed for their operations.

The calendar for the next year is already packed with a number of significant on-site sales up and down the country. Keep an eye on our website for updates.

Oliver Godfrey, Director, Cheffins Machinery Sales
01353 77767 | oliver.godfrey@cheffins.co.uk

MEET THE TEAM



Simon Gooderham MRICS FAAV
Director,
Joint Managing Partner
01223 271952
simon.gooderham@cheffins.co.uk



Jonathan Stiff MRICS FAAV
Director,
Head of Rural Division
01353 654915
jonathan.stiff@cheffins.co.uk



Adam Tuck
BSc (Hons) MRICS CPDS
Director, Head of Planning
01223 271958
adam.tuck@cheffins.co.uk



Edward Tabner
MRICS FAAV
Director
01353 654922
edward.tabner@cheffins.co.uk



Ian Kitson MRICS
Director, Property Auctions
& Valuations
01223 271942
ian.kitson@cheffins.co.uk



Katie Hilton BSc (Hons) MBIAC
Director
01223 271959
katie.hilton@cheffins.co.uk



Sam Harding
Head of New Homes
01223 628928
sam.harding@cheffins.co.uk



Christina Green
Associate,
New Homes Sales
01223 628928
christina.green@cheffins.co.uk



Jonathan Purkiss MRICS FAAV
Associate
01223 271991
jonathan.purkiss@cheffins.co.uk



Maxwell Fahie MRICS
Associate,
Development Surveyor
01223 271975
maxwell.fahie@cheffins.co.uk



Claire Freeman MRICS
Residential Valuer
01223 213777
claire.freeman@cheffins.co.uk



Peter Walker BA (Hons) AIB
Farm Management
Consultant
01223 213777
peter.walker@cheffins.co.uk



Ralph Knight MRICS FAAV
Associate
01353 654930
ralph.knight@cheffins.co.uk



Andrew Amey
Graduate Rural Surveyor
01353 654900
andrew.amey@cheffins.co.uk



Jack French
Graduate Rural Surveyor
01223 213777
jack.french@cheffins.co.uk

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Cheffins offers an all-inclusive service for clients from initial identification of an opportunity, through the planning and development lifecycle, culminating in the sale of the opportunity or the completed new homes development.



new-homes@cheffins.co.uk
01223 628928

cheffins.co.uk

Clifton House, 1-2 Clifton Road, Cambridge, CB1 7EA

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Clifton House, 1-2 Clifton Road, Cambridge, CB1 7EA ☎ 01223 213777
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