

RURAL

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EAST ANGLIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE REVOLUTION

But how do landowners ensure they get a fair deal? East Anglia is currently experiencing a high volume of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) and Transport for Work Act Orders (TWAOs).

There is a large volume of compulsory purchase and infrastructure activity within East Anglia, with the aim to enhance regional connectivity and development. These initiatives involve acquiring land for public projects, such as road expansions, railway enhancements, utility installations and new guided busways and greenways.

A number of Acquiring Authorities and Statutory Undertakers are using their statutory powers to deliver infrastructure schemes across the region. These schemes are deemed crucial for improving transportation networks, supporting economic growth and addressing regional infrastructure needs in East Anglia. (Continued overleaf...)

Continued from front page...

They often involve extensive planning, consultation with stakeholders and adherence to legal processes to ensure fair compensation and minimal disruption to affected communities.

Naturally, these infrastructure schemes have a significant impact on both landowners and occupiers, affecting their property rights, access, and ultimately the value of their interest.

Furthermore, in 2020 the Government set out its vision to streamline the infrastructure consenting process within the National Infrastructure Strategy, which was reinforced in the British Energy Security Strategy (April 2022) to make the process better, faster, and greener.

The Government has acknowledged that there are a number of critical infrastructure projects and therefore the planning regime needs to be effective and resilient, ensuring the system remains fair and transparent.

It is our recommendation that all interested parties engage with the statutory undertaker at an early stage, through

to completion of the scheme. This joined-up approach is beneficial to both the Project and landowners/occupiers alike. The Project is able to gather and obtain factual information to deliver the scheme and the landowners and occupiers are able to enter into discussions surrounding the practical implications relating to access, drainage, utilities and services, to name but a few. In addition, discussions can be had regarding the detailed design of the scheme and accommodation works.

East West Rail (EWR) – This is a National Infrastructure Project connecting Oxford to Cambridge, via railway, linking a number of key cities and towns in the region. This ambitious initiative involves the restoration and expansion of railway lines, creating new connections and enhancing existing infrastructure. Once completed, the East-West Rail project is expected to facilitate easier travel, stimulate economic growth, and reduce congestion on road networks. Recent developments include confirmation of the proposed route alignment and consultations with stakeholders to ensure the project meets the needs of local communities and adheres to environmental considerations.

The Project is currently undertaking a variety of non-intrusive surveys across the proposed route, to gather crucial information, prior to submitting the Development Consent Order (DCO). In addition, EWR are actively seeking agreements with landowners and occupiers to begin intrusive survey works across the scheme and these discussions are on-going.

UK Power Networks, Greater Cambridgeshire – There are a number of Projects across Cambridgeshire, in preparation for future growth within the city, due to future electricity demands, rise in electrical vehicles, heating and expansion of Cambridge.

Fulbourn to Sawston Cable Route is a fundamental Project to maintain future resilience of power supplies in Cambridge which will also enable capacity for new connections to the network. The works include three new 33kV circuits with new underground cabling. The majority of the cable has now been pulled through the ducting and the Project is expected to be completed by September 2024. Following the works, there will be a number of crop loss claims and formal easements to be documented as a result of the scheme.

Engaging a professional advisor is essential for navigating the complex legal and negotiation processes involved and can advocate for fair compensation, ensure compliance with regulations, and represent the interests of landowners and occupiers throughout the process. With expertise in property valuation and negotiation, we endeavour to secure the best possible outcomes for clients, safeguarding their rights and maximising compensation for any losses incurred as a result of a scheme.

Cheffins has experience in dealing with all forms of compensation matters, representing landowners and occupiers. Where residential dwellings are impacted as part of a scheme, we are well versed in assisting clients with Blight and Discretionary Purchase applications.

Please do not hesitate to contact the team if you are affected by any of the matters raised in this article.

Jonathan Purkiss, Associate,
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“...a professional advisor is essential for navigating the complex legal and negotiation processes involved and can advocate for fair compensation, ensure compliance with regulations, and represent the interests of landowners and occupiers throughout the process.”

Sustainable Farming Incentive

An opportunity to boost farm income

Defra are now seeing a brisker uptake to their Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme with farmers and landowners keen to recoup lost income this year, particularly as the Basic Payment Scheme continues to tail off.

Back in January, Defra Secretary Steve Barclay presented an update to the Agricultural Transition Plan at the 2024 Oxford Farming Conference which focused on increased payment levels for the SFI and Countryside Stewardship (CS) as well as announcing a suite of new 'actions' which will come into full force from July.

The expanded SFI scheme will comprise of 102 different actions for farmers to choose from and details are available now to enable potential applicants to get to grips with it ahead of the full launch. Payments will include more incentives for soil health and precision farming as well as a much wider range of actions for farm wildlife, boundary features and watercourses.

Additionally, an SFI management payment will be paid to all entrants to cover the administrative costs of joining the

scheme, at an increased rate for 2024 of £40 per hectare up to the first 50 hectares of land entered.

For now, the announcement of increased SFI actions and payment rates coupled with the challenging season for growers means there has been a real shift in focus towards this new environmental scheme with most farming clients we speak to taking the view that, since funds are being pulled away from BPS and into SFI, they may as well start taking some of that income back.

With the flexibility it offers, SFI is easy to access with monthly start dates and opportunities to add more SFI actions as and when required.

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

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England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO)

Landowners can apply to the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) for support to create new woodland, on areas as small as 1 hectare (2.4 acres).

EWCO is one of a suite of Forestry Commission incentives to encourage more tree planting across England and can be an attractive proposition for landowners seeking to make a project such as this stack up financially.

Different types of support can be rolled into the same funding application. For example, there are capital payments for standard-cost items including tree planting (£1.72 per tree), individual tree shelters (£2.43 per shelter) and deer fencing (£10.27 per metre) as well as many more.

"...applying for a grant through EWCO will give landowners access to valuable advice from the Forestry Commission's team of Woodland Officers."

Additional contributions are also available of up to £2,800 per hectare where the woodland creation is deemed to have added benefits.

These could include, for example, planting your trees adjacent to existing woodland to enlarge the overall area, or beside a watercourse to alleviate flooding or pollution. These additional contributions can be stacked and can therefore make a significant uplift to the value of grant payments you can claim for a woodland scheme, although they are location specific and do vary.

Following completion of a planting scheme, the Forestry Commission can provide an annual maintenance payment of £400 per hectare for 15 years to help with the replacement of any trees that die, keeping planted areas weed-free and maintaining tree protection.

As well as providing financial support, applying for a grant through EWCO will give landowners access to valuable advice from the Forestry Commission's team of Woodland Officers, although prospective applicants should allow sufficient time to complete the detailed application process.

If you would like to learn more about EWCO, please do get in touch with our Rural team.

Katie Hilton, Director,
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Eastern region farmland market review

There has been a buoyant start to the 2024 farmland market in the Eastern region with an increase in the amount of farmland being publicly marketed across the region. This upturn in supply is being driven largely by retirement, business restructuring and debt repayment resulting from increased borrowing rates and the continuing challenges and market volatility being faced by farmers, particularly in the arable sector.

Despite the increase in supply, values have remained firm with the majority of blocks of Grade 2 arable land achieving in excess of £10,000/acre. Premium prices are still being achieved in some of the regional hotspots and more accessible locations with bare land achieving £12,000+/acre for both arable and pasture. The increased supply and availability of holdings allows buyers to be more subjective and, whilst the best quality farms continue to attract strong interest, we predict that the demand for secondary holdings in less accessible locations will start to become more price sensitive.

We have seen a marked increase in the number of private and institutional buyers, particularly for blocks of land in excess of 500 acres, with good environmental and amenity opportunities and high habitat value continuing to add value. The percentage of farmer buyers has fallen to its lowest level for a number of years, with lower profits and higher borrowing costs impacting on the availability of finance for land purchases in many cases.

The seemingly endless spell of wet weather has highlighted drainage issues on many farms with the expression 'it's never laid wet there before' becoming a common refrain. This season has highlighted the importance of ensuring that maintenance to land drains, ditching works and mole drainage are up to date with buyers increasingly focusing on good drainage practice. Good record keeping and the availability of land drainage maps will be key information for buyers.

With water scarcity (despite all the rain!) a growing issue in the Eastern region, the availability and value of abstraction licences has also been brought into greater focus. Landowners should be mindful of the 'use it or lose it' policy adopted by the Environment Agency as any unused water could reduce the value of the licence on renewal, with a subsequent impact on the value of the associated land.

The continued high cost of labour and materials is also resulting in a greater differential in values between modern well-maintained farm buildings and those yards and buildings which have not been adequately maintained and require investment and/or replacement.

As ever, land and buildings with scope for alternative uses – whether in the short or longer term – continues to generate strong interest and associated premium values, and the recently updated (March 2024) General Permitted Development rights provides greater flexibility for conversion and re-use of farm buildings, which should help to unlock additional value. (Check out the article by Edward Clarke on Permitted Development Rights on page 16).

Cheffins have handled the sale and purchase of over 3000 acres across the Eastern region in the past 12 months, across a wide range of farm types including unequipped arable and pasture land, residential and mixed use farms.

For advice on buying or selling contact us for a confidential, no-obligation discussion.

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"Premium prices are still being achieved in some of the regional hotspots and more accessible locations..."



Development land opportunity at Bottisham, Cambridge

Is now the right time to sell residential development land?

The residential development land market experienced very strong demand following the pandemic and this resulted in some robust prices being paid for residential development land around Cambridge and throughout the region.

The market started to cool in mid-2022 and the impact of the Truss mini-budget sent the market into reverse with housebuilders and developers pulling out of agreed purchases or significantly re-negotiating the agreed prices.

"...with the market improving and Capital Gains Tax at historically low levels, now would appear to be a very opportune time to sell residential development land."

Throughout 2023, housebuilders and developers experienced a sharp fall in reservations on their sites following acute increases in inflation and interest rates. As a result, they significantly cut back on the number of houses which they were building and this inevitably fed through into a reduction in demand for new sites.

However, this year we have started to see more interest in residential development land with a number of the housebuilders returning to the market.

They are looking to purchase sites with planning permission which will be ready to start developing in late 2024/early 2025 to catch the predicted upturn in the residential property market following the General Election and the long awaited reduction in interest rates.

Regardless of which party wins the election, housebuilding is going to be a priority and we are confident that demand for residential development land will increase in 2024. However, whilst housing will be a priority, the incoming Government will be very keen to raise tax revenue and the windfall receipts which Landowners receive from selling their land with the benefit of planning permission are likely to come under the microscope to see if they can provide additional tax revenues.

So with the market improving and Capital Gains Tax at historically low levels, now would appear to be a very opportune time to sell residential development land.

If you have any land which either has planning permission for development or is allocated for development, please contact Jonathan Stiff.

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Politics and planning

I have worked in the planning and property industry for coming up to twenty-five years. As a Chartered Planning & Development Surveyor I have witnessed many changes with several administrations trying to put their stamp on a planning system which is under increased pressure to deliver much needed homes, jobs, amenities, services and other public benefits. The emphasis has been about planning decisions being made in the public and not the private interest.

Broadly speaking, during my time, we have gone full circle. We moved from Local Plans to Local Development Frameworks and back again to Local Plans. At no point has the system been perfect but over recent times the planning process has become more political, complicated, uncertain, risky, time-consuming, expensive and bureaucratic. In my opinion legislative changes, requirements and pressures have not always provided or delivered better quality developments. There is also increased tension between the private and public sector with both under different pressures.

Over recent months planning fees have increased and will continue to do so. Worryingly these fees will not be ring-fenced to enhance the planning service. We have also lost the planning 'free go' where a further fee was not payable to the local authority for a second similar application. The industry continues to face pressures and uncertainties around water neutrality, nutrient neutrality and biodiversity net gain.

"Planning, once again, is a political 'hot potato', a vote winner or loser."

At the time of writing we are entering a further period of uncertainty with the General Election having been called for 4th July. The Conservatives are trying to appease their voter base and protect their position while the opposition are trying to win votes. Planning, once again, is a political 'hot potato', a vote winner or loser.

Most recently the UK Government sought input on proposals to accelerate the existing planning system. The consultation opened on 6th March 2024 and closed on 1st May 2024. This consultation focused on several key measures aimed at streamlining and enhancing the planning process.

The proposed Accelerated Planning Service aims to expedite major commercial planning applications, the key features of this include:

- **Reduced Decision Time:** Under this new service, major commercial applications would be processed within ten weeks, as opposed to the current 13-week timeline.
- **Fee Refunds and uplift in fees for accelerated planning:** if deadlines are not met, applicants would be eligible for fee refunds.

The consultation also addresses extension of time agreements, with the following adjustments being considered:

- **Performance Measure:** a new performance measure would assess the speed of decision-making against statutory time limits.
- **Householder Applications:** extension of time agreements would no longer apply to householder applications.

- **Repeat Agreements:** for other types of applications, the use of repeat agreements would be discontinued.

The current simplified householder and minor commercial appeal service would be expanded to include more written representation appeals. This move aims to enhance accessibility and efficiency in the appeals process.

The consultation provided details on the broader scope of varying a planning permission through Section 73B applications. Additionally, it outlined the treatment of overlapping planning permissions.

One of the main ways the UK can foster economic growth, create jobs and facilitate sustainable development is by

reducing bureaucracy and expediting planning decisions.

This can only be achieved if we remove or at least reduce, the politics from planning.

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Biodiversity Net Gain – Legal Insights

What exactly is Biodiversity Net Gain (“BNG”)?

Guest article from Jeremy Stanton of Birketts LLP

The introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on 12 February 2024 saw the biggest change to planning regulations in decades. Following on from our headline article on Biodiversity Net Gain in our Winter 2023 edition of Rural Scene, we asked Jeremy Stanton, Partner in the Agriculture & Estates Team at Birketts LLP, to provide us with a legal perspective on this hot topic so our clients can have a better understanding of the finer details of what is required to redress the consequential loss of habitat caused by development.

Over the past few years or so readers will no doubt have seen in the farming, development and housebuilders press an increasing number of articles about BNG. Not to be confused with a Roald Dahl creation but at times equally mysterious, BNG is one of the government’s responses to addressing the impact of global warming on the natural environment. This includes addressing the impact of development and consequential loss of habitat caused by development. It has become increasingly important to support and promote nature recovery wherever possible. These are the early stages of the new BNG measures.

It is intended that these new BNG requirements will help prevent further habitat loss and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The BNG measures aim to increase the biodiversity of a site following development, either through creating or improving habitats on site, sometimes off-site, or by purchasing statutory credits. 2024 has seen the introduction of mandatory requirements for developments to deliver a minimum 10% increase of BNG over a baseline level assessed prior to development. The delivery of BNG will therefore become an important consideration for developers assessing development opportunities, and when designing developments, particularly if the base line biodiversity of a site starts from a high baseline.

Biodiversity is measured in ‘biodiversity units’ which are calculated by applying the Biodiversity Metric. There are three types of biodiversity unit used in the Metric, including area units, hedgerow units and watercourse units. Different values apply to different habitats. The Biodiversity Metric then considers four main factors in relation to each unit, including habitat size, condition, its location and distinctiveness prior

“BNG delivery and its application is evolving as local authorities and developers feel their way.”

to development, and then compares that against the proposed value following development, after the developer has put forward its proposed solutions to enhance biodiversity. This will assist developers in determining whether they can meet the BNG requirements on site, or whether they need to look at BNG delivery off site or buy BNG credits. The 10% BNG uplift applies to each type of unit and cannot be transferred between them. Therefore, if the development has a negative effect on more than one type of unit, then these units are both subject to a separate requirement to increase BNG by 10%.

Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) states that all planning permissions granted in England (subject to exemptions set out below) will be required to provide a minimum 10% BNG compared to pre-development levels. This became mandatory for major developments on 12 February 2024 and for small-scale developments from 2 April 2024.

There are several types of development which are exempt from complying with the regulations, these include, permitted development, planning applications made prior

to 12 February 2024, urgent developments by the Crown, development specified by the Secretary of State and self-build and custom build applications.

BNG can be delivered in the following ways:

- 1. On-site gains:** the most preferable option for developers is to deliver BNG on the development site, this is also beneficial as the biodiversity units for the Metric will carry a higher value;
- 2. Off-site gains:** if an on-site gain is not possible, developers can use land which is not part of the development site to increase BNG or purchase biodiversity units on private land. Developers should aim for the BNG to be provided as close to the development as possible, the further away the BNG solution land the less BNG value is attributed.
- 3. The purchase of statutory biodiversity credits:** this is probably the least attractive solution for a developer and the price of the credits is reflective of this.

Developers will need to ensure that developments replace any biodiversity units lost, as well achieving an additional 10% BNG above the baseline assessment. Any biodiversity net gain will need to be maintained and secured for a period of 30 years, usually secured through a planning condition, S106 agreement or conservation covenant. Alongside these agreements will be a Habitat Management Agreement. This is a plan for the creation and ongoing management of the intended habitat delivering the BNG over that 30 year period.

BNG delivery and its application is evolving as local authorities and developers feel their way. The 30 year commitment for planning purposes could for example give rise to potential problems, where land is committed to renewable projects under say a 30 year lease with planning permission for that term. The BNG solution land is secured for the 30 year period under a planning agreement, yet there may be a break clause in the lease exercisable after 15 years. It is not clear in those circumstance what the position would be in relation to the BNG land after the 15 years, in terms of planning or under the BNG commitment. It is also not clear what will happen to these areas after 30 years, given it seems unlikely that these established habitats would be removed or reduced. As the BNG delivery, monitoring and market evolves these areas will no doubt become clearer but for the moment tread cautiously.

BNG is rapidly evolving as the players work their way through the legislation and regulations. It will become mainstream and clearer in its application in a few years, however these are long term commitments and require careful thought and professional input, from your surveyor and lawyer.



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Get your house in order!

Tenant demand for rental properties continues to outstrip supply and in that sometimes frenetic rush to get properties ready for occupancy, it's easy to overlook or rush matters which can have serious repercussions. In this article, we've put together some housekeeping pointers to help keep you, as landlords, on the right side of the law.

Pre-Tenancy Documentation

Prior to the start of a residential tenancy all tenants must be provided with, and confirm receipt of, specific documentation to comply with the Deregulation Act 2015. These documents include copies of:

- A valid EPC
- Gas Safety Certificate
- How to Rent Guide
- Deposit Protection Information Booklet
- Deposit Protection Certificate.

The above provisions may seem onerous but it's worth remembering that if the above documentation isn't provided to the Tenant, this will jeopardise the serving of a Section 21 Notice for Possession (in the unlikely event that this course of action has to be taken).

Deposits

All deposits collected from tenants for tenancy agreements must be registered with a Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme within 30 days and details of the scheme must be provided

to the Tenant. Failure to do so could jeopardise a Section 21 Notice for Possession and result in a fine for the Landlord of up to three times the deposit amount.

Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)

The law requires all let residential and commercial property to have an EPC. All let residential property must have an EPC rating E or better (except where certain exemptions apply). Failure to have a valid EPC could result in a Section 21 Notice for Possession being deemed invalid, it may also result in enforcement action being taken by the local authority and a financial penalty of up to £5,000. Failure to have a valid EPC could also lead to delays in obtaining finance or refinancing as lenders will now insist on a valid EPC being in place.

Gas Safety Certificates

The Law requires that all let residential properties which are fitted with gas appliances must have an annual Gas Safety Check on each appliance and flue. The Tenant should be provided with a copy of the Gas Safety Certificate within 28 days, confirming that any issues have been repaired.

Electrical Installation Condition Report

The Law requires that all let residential properties have a Satisfactory Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) or Unsatisfactory EICR along with a corresponding minor works certificate (MEIWC) that meets the 2018 Wiring Regulations.

Carbon Monoxide and Smoke Alarms

The Landlord must provide a smoke alarm for each floor of the property and a carbon monoxide alarm in any room with a solid fuel burning appliance in line with the Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022. The alarms should be tested and replaced as required. It's also incumbent on the Landlord to make sure that any furniture and furnishings supplied with the house are fire safe in line with Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 2022.

Damp and Mould

Landlords have a responsibility to ensure that houses they are letting are fit for habitation in line with the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018; the Landlord should demonstrate that all the measures are in place to ensure that damp and mould have been minimised. Properties should be regularly inspected and any deficiencies remedied as soon as is practicable.

Material Information

It is now a legal requirement to provide details of all information which may influence a prospective Tenant's decision on whether to rent a property or not. These regulations form part of the Consumer Protection Regulations and fall into three parts:

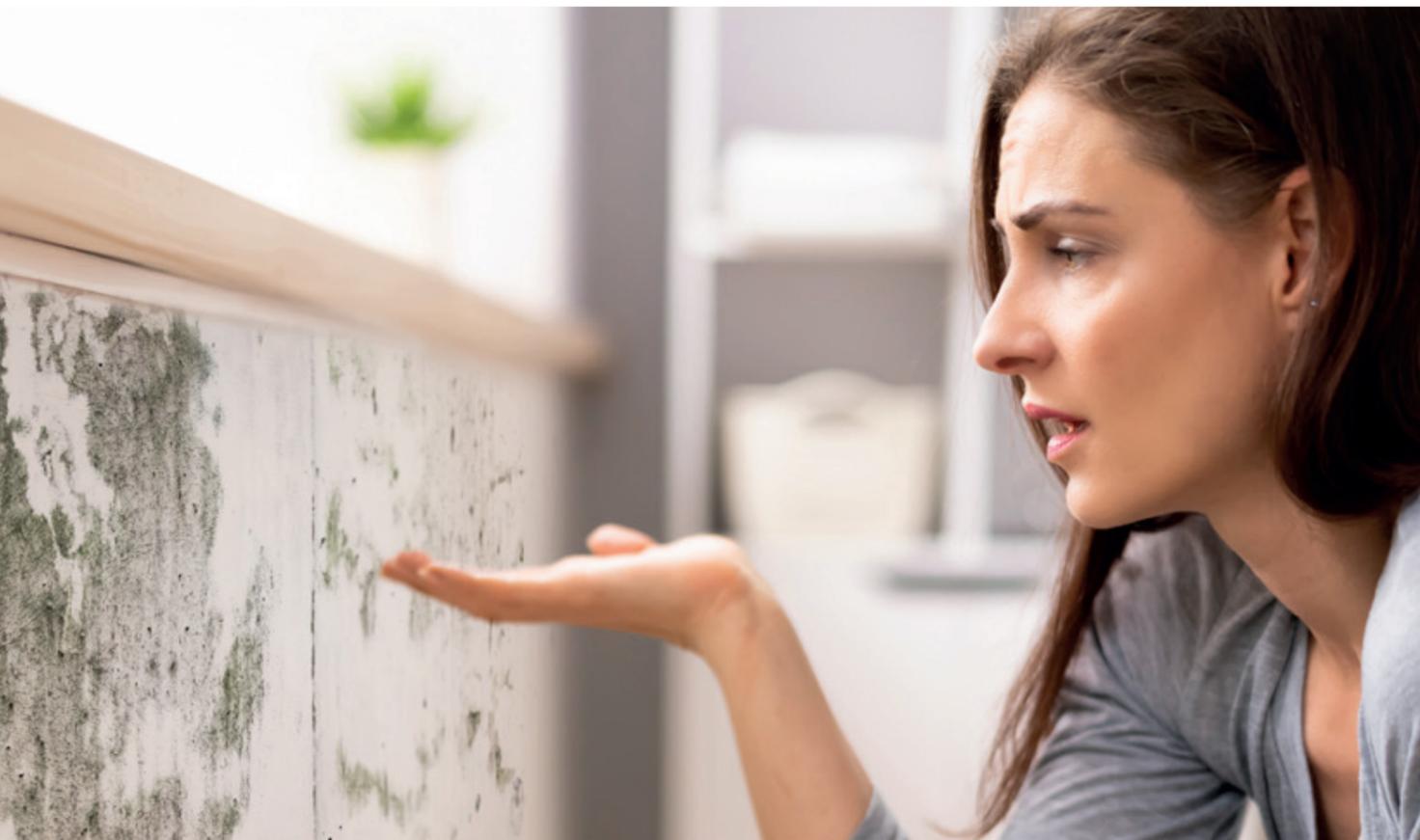
Part A covers the basics such as Council Tax, Rent, Deposits, EPCs etc.

Part B covers i) the physical characteristics of the property; such as construction, room numbers, type and size. ii) utilities; source of heating, electric, gas and water supplies, sewerage, broadband availability, mobile signal, iii) parking; whether it has a driveway, garage, allocated parking space, communal parking etc.

Part C covers i) Building safety; presence of unsafe cladding, asbestos, subsidence and so on, ii) Rights and Restrictions; private and public rights of way, easements and wayleaves, restrictive covenants, listed building status etc. iii) flood and erosion risk; details of any known flooding or flood risk must be provided. iv) planning permission and development proposals; details of any existing or proposed planning permissions or planned local developments. v) Property Accessibility and Adaptations; details of set free access from the street, ramps, lifts, wet rooms etc.

The legislation for landlords may feel like a minefield but our team of letting agents have extensive experience of dealing with properties of all shapes and sizes. Many of our agents are ARLA Propertymark registered and governed by strict regulations giving you peace of mind. If you're thinking of letting out a property or you would like some advice on the regulations governing the lettings industry, please get in touch.

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"Many of our agents are ARLA Propertymark registered... giving you peace of mind."

Used machinery auction market withstands the turbulence

2024 has continued as 2023 ended with an unprecedented number of auctions taking place in addition to our regular monthly Cambridge Machinery Sales. The continuing popularity of timed online auctions has proved to be an efficient method of sale which has also meant that we are able to conduct auctions more frequently throughout the UK. Already in 2024 the auction team has ventured as far west as Somerset and as far north as Lancashire taking in Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Herefordshire as well as the more familiar hunting grounds of East Anglia.

An increasing number of contractors have declared time on their business for a variety of reasons including the rising cost of new machinery, cashflow, low commodity prices, high interest rates, shortage of skilled labour and a lack of succession planning. This, coupled with the depressing and seemingly never ending rain as well as the new environmental schemes taking land out of production, has caused some contractors to call it a day bringing some excellent quality machinery to the market. Farmers who have entered contract farming arrangements or who have sold their land have looked to traditional as well as timed online auctions as an effective method of sale.

As dealers yards swell with an increasing amount of new and used machinery, entries for our monthly Cambridge Machinery Sales have been at their highest levels for several years. It's clear that there is more pressure on the trade with a growing supply of used machinery, nevertheless the global market place in which Cheffins operate has to some extent supported the trade as EU and overseas buyers return to the UK market to source good quality used kit.

Cheffins has quickly adapted to the increasing paperwork required to export machinery into the EU and we have invested heavily in new facilities including a washdown area for agricultural machinery to be cleaned and certified by DEFRA for export into the EU. A new 'drive through' auction hall has been erected with a new layout to allow tractors, plant and machinery to be displayed on new and additional hardstanding throughout our 40 acre sale ground.

"The trade for vintage and classic tractors remains unabated in 2024... in particular, later and emerging classic tractors such as a 2001 John Deere 8410 which achieved a fantastic £92,500."

The Cambridge Machinery Sales attract export buyers from throughout the EU, which means sellers benefit from a truly global market which most of our competitors are unable to offer. As we have adapted to deal with phyto-sanitary requirements and increased paperwork our export buyers are confident in buying and, in some cases, selling equipment through this established market place.

With farmers and end-users reluctant to buy new kit there have been a number of high profile casualties within the industry. Despite all of this, the used machinery trade has withstood these pressures and we have seen good quality second hand machinery achieve premium prices at onsite farm machinery dispersal sales. Farmers are actively seeking a good quality alternative to buying new and, in some cases, over-priced machinery. This high pricing of new kit has strengthened the residual prices of used equipment at auction and in some cases 3-4 year old kit can make as much as the price it was purchased for. Auctions are dominated more by farmer buyers than the trade which is a situation we have not seen for many years, although nearly new machinery can suffer higher depreciation with dealers giving higher discounts on retail prices with added incentives such as 'no interest' deals on finance arrangements.

The on-farm sales conducted in 2024 have been successful with auction prices staying strong as farmers look to re-equip with good quality alternatives to buying new. There is the added benefit of buying machinery ex-farm as buyers can see the environment and the type of farm within which the machinery has been operating. Cheffins has built a strong reputation and we have a specialist team headed by Oliver Godfrey that travel to all four corners of the UK to source and sell used agricultural machinery.

The trade for vintage and classic tractors remains unabated in 2024 and time and again we are surprised at some of the prices achieved for classic tractors and, in particular, later and emerging classic tractors such as a 2001 John Deere 8410 which achieved a fantastic £92,500. In May we held a sale in Evesham for Johnson Bros where no less than six Doe Triple-D

tractors were on offer with a price of £70,000 for a 1964 New Performance Doe Triple-D and £60,000 for an 1963 original Blue Orange Doe Triple-D; meanwhile other 4wd classics such as MB Trac, Muir Hill and County have continued to realise prices which are in excess of expectations. New buyers are appearing with a hunger to start and compliment collections rather than leave cash in the bank. There are plenty of buyers looking at tractor collecting as an investment vehicle but the overriding reason is an enthusiasm and passion for tractors.

Keep an eye on our website and social media pages for details of our sales up and down the country.

William King, Chairman
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1964 New Performance Doe Triple-D £70,000



2023 John Deere 6R250 tractor £170,000



1928 Foden C type steam tractor £190,000



2020 Dewulf RCA3060 self-propelled potato harvester £211,000



1936 Ferguson Brown £38,000



2001 John Deere 8410 tractor £92,500

Property Auction update

The first quarter of 2024 has been a busy one for the property auction team. The March auction saw some fantastic results, but also gave a snapshot of the wider property market.

As is often the case when there is some unpredictability in the wider world/markets, there was a noticeable flight to prime, where buyers seek assets that they consider to be safe, but are happy to pay a premium for this assurance. In the property world this tends to mean that buyers look for prime locations and properties that they see as robust and easily re-sellable if they need to. This was exactly the case in the March auction, with three central Cambridge lots all seeing huge interest and all selling far in excess of their guide prices. A small derelict shop on Gwydir Street sold for £184,000 against a guide of £125,000. Similarly a residential house needing full renovation sold for £570,000 against a guide of £375,000.

These were exceptional results, with premium prices paid and an illustration that there is still huge demand for the 'right' thing.

That sentiment is also true for land in the auctions; in particular the smaller parcels continue to command high prices where the land in question offers a rare chance to acquire paddock or amenity land or where a nearby neighbour might be keen to protect a boundary. In December last year a 10 acre parcel of grassland in Lidgate soared to £186,000 (£18,271/acre) far exceeding the guide of £80,000, and a 7.5 acre parcel of amenity land in Godmanchester reached £182,000 (£24,202/acre). In March this year, buyers continued this trend when a 0.23 acre parcel of land in Sutton, Peterborough sold for £206,000 (£895,652/acre) far above the guide of £80,000, and even though the land had a historic

lapsed consent for one dwelling, the price paid reflected the demand for a rare parcel in this location.

The entries are starting to come in for our next auctions and, with slightly lower mortgage rates, further signs of activity in the residential market and the ever-present demand for land, we're hoping for another busy quarter.

The next property auction will take place on Wednesday 25th September.

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"...there is still huge demand for the 'right' thing."



Gwydir Street sold for £184,000 against a guide of £125,000



New planning laws provide enhanced flexibility for farmers across England

The Government announced significant new planning laws at the end of April (2024) which seek to cut the 'red tape' and give farmers greater freedom to diversify, support and grow their businesses.

The changes include converting agricultural buildings to a greater number of dwellinghouses and a wider range of commercial uses, such as larger farm shops, buildings for agricultural training and sporting facilities and are the result of a consultation undertaken by the Department for Levelling

Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) between July and September last year (2023).

The main changes relate to Class Q – buildings on agricultural units and former agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses and Class R – agricultural buildings to a flexible commercial use of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) and came into effect on 21st May 2024. The key changes are summarised right:

Class Q – buildings on agricultural units and former agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses

- Increase in the number of homes that can be delivered through the change of use/conversion of agricultural buildings from 5 to 10.
- Increase in total floor area allowed from 865 square metres to 1,000 square metres (i.e. 10 homes at 100 square metres).
- Allowance for an extension to the rear of the agricultural building by up to 4m in depth and height. It should be noted the extension must be single storey and on hard standing which existed on or before 24 July 2023 or if it was installed after this date it must have been there for 10 years.
- If the agricultural building was erected under a full planning permission before 24 July 2023 you should now be able to convert it under Class Q (subject to the wider criteria).
- The agricultural building being converted must now have a suitable existing access to a public highway. If this is not the case you could look to apply under the old rules until 20 May 2025.
- Buildings don't necessarily need to be 'agricultural' to change use – just located on an 'agricultural unit'. This opens up the possibility that, for example, equestrian or commercial storage or mixed use buildings within agricultural units could now be converted. Buildings on sites solely in equestrian or commercial use would still be excluded.
- You can extend the external envelope to carry out reasonably necessary operations – meaning cladding etc could be installed.

Please note, there is a transitional period allowing the previous regulations to be utilised up until 20 May 2025 (i.e. from 21 May 2024 to 20 May 2025 you can choose to progress Class Q under the previous or current (new) regulations).

Class R – agricultural buildings to a flexible commercial use

- Increase in the range of permitted uses to include general industrial uses and outdoor sport and recreation uses, in addition to the existing storage and distribution uses, hotels and general commercial, business and service uses.

- Double the amount of floorspace that can change from agricultural to 'flexible commercial use' from 500 square metres to 1,000 square metres.
- For larger farms (more than 5 hectares) increase the size of new buildings or extensions that can be built from 1,000 square metres to 1,500 square metres.
- For smaller farms (less than 5 hectares) increase the size of new buildings or extensions that can be built from 1,000 square metres to 1,250 square metres.

Please note, Class R is unique in as much as instead of changing the use of the building to a specific use class, any completed change of use/conversion will be treated as 'Sui Generis', which means in a class of its own kind.

"Farmers are the lifeblood of communities, and these changes give them the freedom to grow their businesses, and plan for their futures."

Lee Rowley, Minister for Housing, Planning & Building Safety.

As with all permitted development rights (PDRs), conditions, requirements and limitations apply, some generally applicable and some applicable to the Class of rights in question. These should always be checked before relying upon the PDRs.

The DLUHC will continue to monitor permitted development rights to ensure that the intended outcomes are achieved.

Cheffins Planning team has considerable experience in successfully helping farmers, landowners, developers, charities, individuals and rural businesses in all aspects of rural development.

If you have agricultural land or buildings and would like to explore the development potential please do not hesitate to contact the Land, Planning, Development & New Homes Team on 01223 271999 or new.homes@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.



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