

## Chapter 6

# Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment



Wimple Hall, South Cambridgeshire



## Chapter 6 Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment

- 6.1 South Cambridgeshire has over one hundred villages with many featuring beautiful buildings set within a wide range of landscapes. Land use and the underlying geology have combined to produce a very diverse landscape including the distinctive Chalklands, rolling Clay Hills and the wide expanses of the Fens to the north. South Cambridgeshire has extensive areas of high quality agricultural land with medium to large-scale arable farmland dominating. Within the fields and hedgerows, hills and valleys, woodlands and fen a variety of habitats exist for plant and animal species. The Council wants to make sure these landscapes with their biodiversity are protected for the future.
- 6.2 Many of South Cambridgeshire's villages have a quiet, rural character which belies their proximity to Cambridge or towns outside the district. The Council regards the Cambridge Green Belt as vital to retaining the rural character of land and villages around Cambridge. Within villages are green spaces of particular importance to local communities or views into open countryside which all help to create what is special about the villages in South Cambridgeshire. These special features need to be protected. The [Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) highlights opportunities for improving landscapes, enhancing biodiversity, enjoying heritage and getting out into the countryside.
- 6.3 People have lived and worked in the area since Palaeolithic times and the evidence of their lives is all around us. It can be found in the historic villages and landscapes and as archaeological remains beneath our feet. Roman roads, remains of medieval field systems, Gothic churches, Georgian parkland, nineteenth century model farms and twentieth century schools are just some examples. A number of historic buildings are at risk from neglect or lack of use while modern agriculture can be harmful to archaeology. Other challenges are retaining the special character of historic buildings and places while accommodating modern changes and new and growing settlements.
- 6.4 South Cambridgeshire has many heritage assets, ranging from the nationally designated historic parks and gardens, scheduled monuments and listed buildings to historic landscapes, archaeology and historic buildings of local interest. Some parts of our heritage have particular meaning and value to local communities. Conservation areas are based on groups of historic buildings but also seek to conserve and enhance other aspects of a village which make it special.

**Key Facts:**

- Five distinctive landscape characters in the district are identified by Natural England – from the Fens in the north to the Chalklands and Claylands to the south.

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- The waterways flowing through the district are important wildlife corridors but other uses for recreation may put pressure on these environments. The River Cam is identified as a County Wildlife Site.
- South Cambridgeshire has a diverse range of wildlife sites many of which are officially recognised for protection. Development pressures can threaten the future of some habitats.
- Only one internationally important wildlife site exists within the district; the Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation which is home to a breeding colony of the rare Barbastelle bat.
- The ancient woodlands and veteran trees in the district are invaluable for their biodiversity importance.
- The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy provides an overarching landscape strategy for Cambridgeshire which highlights the parts of South Cambridgeshire where there is a shortage of natural green space that is open to the public. It targets projects in Northstowe, Cambourne and the West Cambridgeshire woodlands.
- The area of the Green Belt in South Cambridgeshire comprises 23,000 hectares covering 25% of the district.
- The district has a very rich heritage with 2,672 listed buildings, 86 conservation areas and 103 scheduled monuments.
- Within the wider historic landscape are individual features such as Roman roads and ancient Dykes.
- Historic landscapes are particularly important in South Cambridgeshire where they add interest and variety to an intensively farmed countryside.
- Important visitor attractions with historic links include Wimpole Hall, Denny Abbey and the Imperial War Museum, Duxford. Impington Village College is a pioneering modernist building.

### **Conservation Area and Green Separation at Longstanton**

#### **Policy NH/1: Conservation Area and Green Separation at Longstanton**

Areas of countryside within the conservation area at Longstanton will form part of the green separation between Longstanton and Northstowe. Public access to this area of countryside will be controlled to protect the conservation area. The area will contain only open land uses, such as playing fields, allotments and cemeteries, which will contribute towards effective separation between these communities. The open aspect of the fields affording views of All Saints Church will be maintained. Elsewhere the landscape character of a series of hedged paddocks, small copses and tree belts will be maintained and enhanced.

- 6.5 The green separation between Longstanton village and the new town of Northstowe is designed to ensure the maintenance of the village character of Longstanton. Most of the area of green separation is covered by the Northstowe Area Action Plan, but part of the area lies outside its boundary and is covered by this policy. The land within the conservation area has a valuable character which should be preserved or enhanced. The predominant historic character of the open land comprises a series of paddocks with hedgerows and small copses, bounded by the tree-lined bridleway of Long Lane. Historically this is an important area and includes fields which still demonstrate remnants of the early ridge and furrow field system. Long Lane is a long established right of way and its Sylvan character is a key part of the setting of Longstanton.

### **Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character**

#### **Policy NH/2: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character**

Development will only be permitted where it respects and retains, or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and of the individual National Character Area in which it is located.

- 6.6 The importance of the landscape is reflected in national planning guidance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stating that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.
- 6.7 The South Cambridgeshire landscape has several distinctive and readily identified characters. These have been identified by Natural England as five distinct National Character Areas:
- The Fens
  - South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands
  - East Anglian Chalk
  - Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
  - Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge.
- 6.8 Within these national areas are a number of smaller and more detailed landscapes which add to and enhance the local landscape character of the district.
- 6.9 The district's landscape is dominated by arable farmland with dispersed woodlands and often low, trimmed hedgerows. As a result it is a predominantly open landscape, allowing long views. A mosaic of hedgerow, fields, parkland and small woodlands create variety and combine to create an often treed skyline. A greater degree of enclosure and a more detailed landscape is often associated with settlements and the many small river valleys. Early enclosures of 'ancient countryside' give a distinctive character to some villages which are surrounded by small fields with hedgerows.

- 6.10 There are pressures on these landscapes as a result of changes in agricultural practice and the impact of new development for housing and employment. These distinctive landscapes help create a quality natural environment within the district which needs to be enhanced and protected for the future. There will be opportunities to enhance the landscape particularly in the growth areas around Cambridge and elsewhere in the district as these new settlements and urban fringe sites are developed in the coming years. The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy identifies further opportunities for landscape enhancement within the district.
- 6.11 To assist in retaining the distinctive nature of the South Cambridgeshire landscape the Council provides more detailed guidance about landscape character areas in the [District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#) and the [Landscape in New Developments SPD](#) to ensure that development respects both the distinctiveness of these National Character Areas and the more detailed local landscapes. Within the lifetime of the Local Plan these SPDs will be reviewed to include the more detailed [East of England Landscape Typology](#) published by Landscape East further refining the landscape character areas within the district.

### Protecting Agricultural Land

#### Policy NH/3: Protecting Agricultural Land

1. Planning permission will not be granted for development which would lead to the irreversible loss of Grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land unless:
  - a. Land is allocated for development in the Local Plan;
  - b. Sustainability considerations and the need for the development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of the land.
2. Uses not involving substantial built development but which take agricultural land will be regarded as permanent unless restricted specifically by condition.
3. When considering proposals for the change of use or diversification of farmland, particular consideration shall be given to the potential for impact upon Priority Species and Habitats<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Priority Species and Habitats are those that are identified within a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and / or the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006, Section 41.

- 6.12 The NPPF requires plans to take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

- 6.13 South Cambridgeshire has a significant resource of good quality agricultural land. Much of the best agricultural land lies around Cambridge and the larger settlements, which may be the most sustainable locations for future development. The need to identify and maintain a large supply of land for development means there is pressure for development of agricultural land. In addition, the impact of development on soils and the protection of soil quality must be considered.
- 6.14 Farmland is also important for biodiversity whether it is arable or pastoral. South Cambridgeshire being still a largely rural district has a large proportion of open farmland which has a variety of habitats on both high and low grade agricultural land. This provides an extensive biodiversity resource for the district. Due to the pressures of increasing land use and the past needs of intensive cultivation, the farmland of the district in places is under severe stress and this resource needs to be protected.

## **Biodiversity**

### **Policy NH/4: Biodiversity**

1. Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity will be permitted.
2. New development must aim to maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity. Opportunities should be taken to achieve positive gain through the form and design of development. Measures may include creating, enhancing and managing wildlife habitats and networks, and natural landscape. The built environment should be viewed as an opportunity to fully integrate biodiversity within new development through innovation. Priority for habitat creation should be given to sites which assist in the achievement of targets in the Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and aid delivery of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.
3. If significant harm to the population or conservation status of a Protected Species, Priority Species<sup>1</sup> or Priority Habitat resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission will be refused.

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4. Where there are grounds to believe that a proposal may affect a Protected Species, Priority Species or Priority Habitat, applicants will be expected to provide an adequate level of survey information and site assessment to establish the extent of a potential impact. This survey information and site assessment shall be provided prior to the determination of an application.
5. Previously developed land (brownfield sites) will not be considered to be devoid of biodiversity. The reuse of such sites must be undertaken carefully with regard to existing features of biodiversity interest. Development proposals on such sites will be expected to include measures that maintain and enhance important features and appropriately incorporate them within any development of the site.
6. Planning permission will be refused for development resulting in the loss, deterioration or fragmentation of irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.
7. Climate change poses a serious threat to biodiversity and initiatives to reduce its impact need to be considered.

<sup>1</sup> *Priority Species and Habitats are those that are identified within a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and / or the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006, Section 41.*

- 6.15 National legislation and planning guidance place a duty on local authorities to consider biodiversity through their Local Plans. The Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and will work with partners to ensure a proactive approach to protection, enhancement and management of biodiversity identified in national and local strategies and plans such as Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- 6.16 Whilst the need for development will be carefully considered against its impact on biodiversity, opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and the creation of new habitats can arise through sensitively located and carefully designed developments. For example, where habitats would be fragmented by new developments, it may be possible to create green corridors to reconnect habitats and assist species' movement and dispersal into the wider landscape.
- 6.17 BAPs provide guidance on targets and actions for habitats and species conservation. Further guidance on sites, species and habitats are set out in the Council's [Biodiversity SPD](#). This also contains guidance for developers of how biodiversity should be considered in the development process.

- 6.18 It is recognised that climate change poses a serious threat to biodiversity. As a means to make biodiversity more resilient to climate change applicants will be encouraged to reduce habitat fragmentation and to strengthen ecological networks to aid migration, natural dispersal and the exchange of genetic material within species.

**Policy NH/5: Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance**

1. Proposed development likely to have an adverse effect on land within or adjoining a Site of Biodiversity or Geological Importance, as shown on the Policies Map (either individually or in combination with other developments), will not normally be permitted. Exceptions will only be made where the benefits of the development demonstrably and significantly outweigh any adverse impact.
  2. In determining any planning application affecting Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance the Council will ensure that the intrinsic natural features of particular interest are safeguarded or enhanced having regard to:
    - a. The national or local status and designation of the site;
    - b. The nature and quality of the site's features, including its rarity value;
    - c. The extent of any adverse impacts on the notified features;
    - d. The likely effectiveness of any proposed mitigation with respect to the protection of the features of interest;
    - e. The need for compensatory measures in order to re-create remaining features or habitats on or off the site.
  3. Where appropriate the Council will ensure the effective management of designated sites through the imposition of planning conditions or Section 106 agreements as appropriate.
- 6.19 The NPPF states that to minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity local planning authorities must identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them, along with areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation.
- 6.20 South Cambridgeshire has a range of important sites and habitats for biodiversity, recognised through designations, from international to local importance. Some of these are also of geological importance. Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance are identified on the Policies Map and these represent a tiered network for the conservation of biodiversity and geodiversity within South Cambridgeshire. These sites include the statutorily protected international (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and national (Sites of

Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and the non-statutorily protected Local Nature Reserves and County Wildlife Sites.

- 6.21 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, require all European Sites to be given full protection. Ramsar and potential SPAs or SACs are afforded similar protection as if they were legally designated. Natural England will be consulted on any planning application in or adjacent to a European Site, or any such candidate site. It is therefore a requirement that all proposals that might adversely affect the special interest of a European Site be given special scrutiny.
- 6.22 At present the only site of international importance within South Cambridgeshire is the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC. The site provides a habitat for a breeding colony of the barbastelle bat, one of the rarest bats in Western Europe. The bats have been recorded at a small number of other sites up to eleven kilometres from the Woods. The SAC is shown on the Policies Map. The area of particular interest for the bats' flight and feeding areas is shown within the Biodiversity SPD.
- 6.23 There are a number of other sites within the surrounding districts, which are considered as part of any Habitat Regulation Assessment carried out by the Council, because of their proximity to South Cambridgeshire and/or the nature of their conservation interest:
- Ouse Washes SAC and SPA
  - Fenland SAC
  - Portholme SAC
  - Devil's Dyke SAC
  - Breckland SAC and SPA
  - Ouse Washes
  - Fenland (Woodwalton Fen, Chippenham Fen, Wicken Fen)
- 6.24 The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy has identified a strategic green infrastructure network across Cambridgeshire. Within the district it is important to retain and enhance the existing networks of natural habitats and the NPPF recognises the value of such networks. These networks may link sites of biodiversity importance and provide routes or stepping stones for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species in the wider environment. In South Cambridgeshire such networks may include public rights of way, important roadside verges which need to be protected from road improvements or new access points, watercourses, ponds, moats, marshes and ditches that can be adversely affected by changes in local hydrology, woodlands, copses, pollarded willow and hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands and disused gravel, chalk or clunch pits. The management of such features is crucial to maintaining the existing biodiversity interest and to assisting further colonisation of habitats by various species. Further detail on these networks will be provided in the Biodiversity SPD.
- 6.25 Rivers, streams and drainage networks are particularly important features in South Cambridgeshire and make an important contribution to the biodiversity and landscape of the district. However these waterways are also a major recreation and tourism resource and careful management is required to

preserve the special qualities that attract users. In view of the specialist characteristics of river valley habitats and their importance to the biodiversity of the district as a whole, detailed guidance on the way in which development proposals should respect these habitats, natural features and characteristic species shall be included in the Council's Biodiversity SPD.

- 6.26 Public rights of way can often be green corridors in their own right, especially when in open arable countryside. Some rights of way can be up to 18 metres (60 feet) wide strips through the countryside, and should consequently be protected for the biodiversity opportunities that they provide. These corridors often co-exist with SSSIs, Local Nature Reserves, County Wildlife Sites, and Scheduled Ancient Monuments, and need to be very carefully managed to balance the complex rights and various statutory protections.

### **Green Infrastructure**

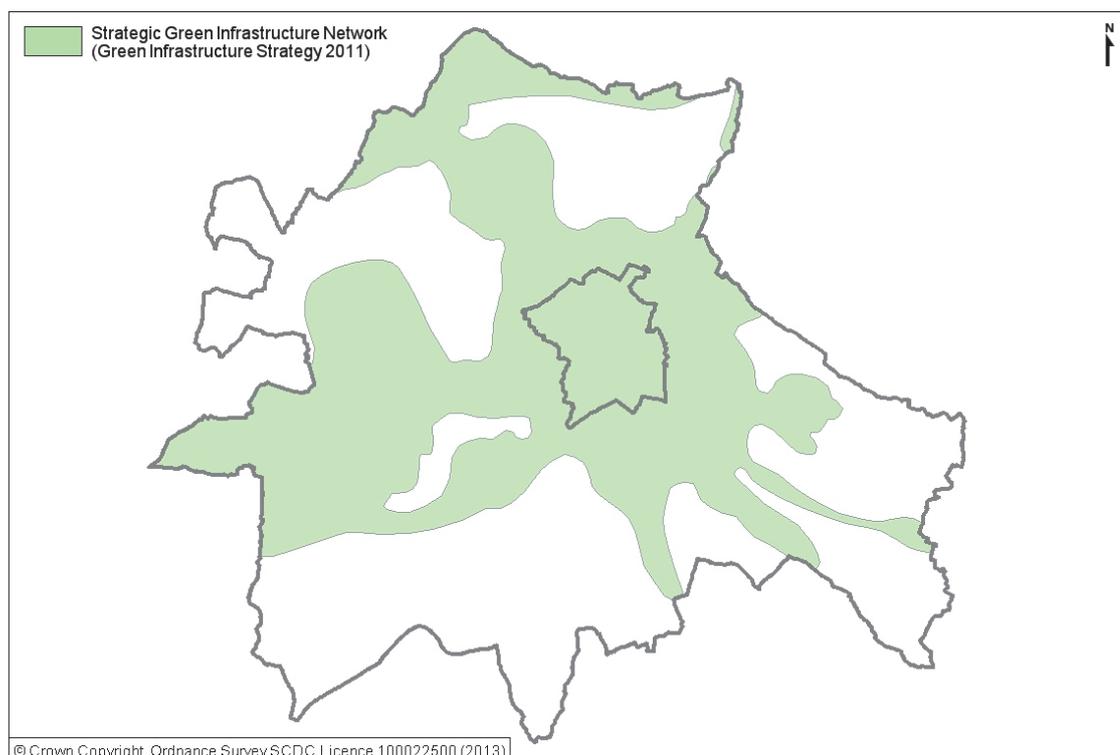
#### **Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure**

1. The Council will aim to conserve and enhance green infrastructure within the district. Proposals that cause loss or harm to this network will not be permitted unless the need for and benefits of the development demonstrably and substantially outweigh any adverse impacts on the district's green infrastructure network.
2. The Council will encourage proposals which:
  - a. Reinforce, link, buffer and create new green infrastructure; and
  - b. Promote, manage and interpret green infrastructure and enhance public enjoyment of it.
3. The Council will support proposals which deliver the strategic green infrastructure network and priorities set out in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, and which deliver local green infrastructure.
4. All new developments will be required to contribute towards the enhancement of the green infrastructure network within the district. These contributions will include the establishment, enhancement and the on-going management costs.

- 6.27 Green infrastructure is a strategic, multi-functional network of public green spaces and routes, landscapes, biodiversity and heritage. It includes a wide range of elements such as country parks, wildlife habitats, rights of way, commons and greens, nature reserves, waterways and bodies of water, and historic landscapes and monuments. The network comprises rural and urban green infrastructure of different sizes and character, and the connections and links between them. It is part of (and contributes to) the wider environment. It

includes both land that can be open to the public and areas that are not accessible.

- 6.28 In 2011 a partnership of local organisations, including the Council, produced the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy which provides an overarching green infrastructure strategy and network for Cambridgeshire. In the NPPF it states that in order to minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should plan for biodiversity at a landscape scale across local authority boundaries and this Strategy takes such an approach. The Strategy highlights shortfalls in green infrastructure which need to be addressed. The level of growth planned for South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge will put pressure on existing green infrastructure and will require investment to develop this network. Major developments create new demands and opportunities for green infrastructure. Delivery of green infrastructure can achieve many goals including linking different areas of green space, enhancing landscape character and creating more robust wildlife habitats, climate change adaptation, as well as delivering public access to countryside open space and supporting healthy lifestyles.
- 6.29 The Greater Cambridgeshire Local Nature Partnership has been set up to promote and deliver natural environment objectives and related benefits. A key role for the partnership is to be overseeing delivery of the Strategy.
- 6.30 The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy network is shown on Figure 9. The Strategy identifies a range of opportunities for enhancement in and around the district and has Cambridge and the surrounding area as one of its strategic areas. Each strategic area contains target areas and projects. Full details are included in the [Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy](#).

**Figure 9: Green Infrastructure Strategy Network**

- 6.31 The target areas in and around South Cambridgeshire are Northstowe; Wicken Fen and Anglesey Abbey; Cambridge; Cambourne; Wimpole; West Cambridgeshire Woodlands and Fen Drayton. The projects include Fen Drayton Lakes; RSPB habitat and visitor infrastructure management; Fens Waterways Link; Chalk Rivers project; Fowlmere Nature Reserve extension and development of facilities; linear monuments; woodland linkage project; enhanced rights of way links in Northstowe; Wicken Fen Vision; Wimpole cycle link; Cambridge fringe sites and Cambridge necklace projects. These take in projects in the Quarter to Six Quadrant part of the district which includes the parishes of Barton, Coton, Grantchester and Madingley. Other areas and projects outside the district will also be important to the residents of South Cambridgeshire. Green infrastructure projects will continue to come forward.

## Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees

### Policy NH/7: Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees

1. Planning permission will be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland (as shown on the Policies Map) or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.
  2. Development proposals affecting ancient woodland or veteran trees will be expected to mitigate any adverse impacts, and to contribute to the woodland's or veteran tree's management and further enhancement via planning conditions or planning obligations.
- 6.32 The NPPF encourages local authorities to protect ancient woodlands and veteran or aged trees. Ancient woodland is defined as an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD and such areas exist within South Cambridgeshire. Veteran trees are particularly valuable for biodiversity due to the large amount of deadwood that they may contain. These trees are defined by Natural England to be 'A tree which because of its great age, size or condition is of exceptional value culturally, in the landscape or for wildlife'.
- 6.33 Ancient woodlands and veteran trees represent an important constituent of green corridors across the district since they have a high inherent biodiversity value. A list of known veteran trees will be compiled by the Council working with the Environmental Records Centre. The list will not exclude the inclusion of new trees identified during the Local Plan's lifetime. The list will be included in the Biodiversity SPD.

## The Green Belt

### Policy NH/8: Mitigating the Impact of Development In and Adjoining the Green Belt

1. Any development considered appropriate within the Green Belt, or proposals outside but in the vicinity of the Green Belt, must be located and designed so that it does not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.

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2. Where development is permitted, landscaping conditions, together with a requirement that any planting is adequately maintained, will be attached to any planning permission in order to ensure that the impact on the Green Belt is mitigated.
3. Development on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality in order to protect the purposes of the Green Belt.

6.34 The area of Green Belt in South Cambridgeshire comprises 23,000 hectares covering over 25% of the district. This means much of the district is affected by Green Belt policies particularly those villages surrounding Cambridge.

6.35 Green Belt is a key designation in the district, designed to protect the setting and special character of Cambridge. Even where exceptional circumstances warrant changes to the Green Belt or a development proposal is considered an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, it will need to be designed and landscaped to ensure it does not have an adverse impact on wider rural character and openness.

### **Redevelopment in the Green Belt**

#### **Policy NH/9: Redevelopment of Previously Developed Sites and Infilling in the Green Belt**

1. The Council will seek to ensure that redevelopment will be limited to that which would not result in:
  - a. A greater footprint unless there are significant environmental improvements;
  - b. The existing height of the built development being exceeded;
  - c. There being a greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt.
2. Infilling is defined as the filling of small gaps between built developments. Such infilling should have no greater impact upon the open nature of the Green Belt and should not lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site. The cumulative impact of infilling proposals will be taken into account.

6.36 The NPPF now enables limited infilling or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites in the Green Belt. Planning applications will be assessed to ensure that such infilling or redevelopment does not cause harm to the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.

## Green Belt and Recreation Uses

### Policy NH/10: Recreation in the Green Belt

1. Proposals in the Green Belt for increased or enhanced opportunities for access to the open countryside and which provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation, appropriate to the Green Belt, will be encouraged where it will not harm the objectives of the Green Belt.
2. The Council will not permit additional sports pitches and recreation development where it considers that the cumulative impact of these would be detrimental to the objectives of the Green Belt.

6.37 The Cambridge Green Belt plays an important role in providing opportunities for access to the countryside for local people. This is recognised in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.

6.38 The NPPF guidance on Green Belt allows for the provision of 'appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation that does not conflict with Green Belt purposes'. With the growth proposed in the extensions around the City in the Cambridge Green Belt it is likely that land will become more intensively used, which could result in uses such as playing fields being relocated to, or specifically developed on Green Belt land. It is important this is done in a way which protects the overall rural character of the Green Belt rather than creating a character more associated with the urban environment.

### Protecting Village Character

6.39 The character of villages is made up of a blend of buildings and open spaces. Given the pressure for development in the district, the remaining open land in and on the edge of villages is threatened. Some undeveloped land can be built on without harm to the character of the village and can contribute to the full and effective use of land in accordance with national policy, but others are important to maintain the village character and should not be developed. Some of these open spaces are particularly valued and cherished by the local community.

**Policy NH/11: Protected Village Amenity Areas**

Protected Village Amenity Areas are identified on the Policies Map where development will not be permitted within or adjacent to these areas if it would have an adverse impact on the character, amenity, tranquillity or function of the village.

- 6.40 Protected Village Amenity Areas (PVAAs) have been designated on sites within village frameworks in order to safeguard those areas of undeveloped land within villages which are important to retain. Some of the PVAAs may have important functions for the village such as allotments, recreation grounds and playing fields whilst others have an important amenity role in providing a setting for buildings or offer tranquil areas where there is minimum activity. Not all PVAAs have public access as some undeveloped areas which are important may be private gardens. They also vary from those which are very open to visual penetration to those which may be enclosed or semi-enclosed.

**Policy NH/12: Local Green Space**

Local Green Space identified on the Policies Map will be protected from development that would adversely impact on the character and particular local significance placed on such green areas which make them valued by their local community. Only in exceptional circumstances and in discussion with the local community would development be permitted.

- 6.41 The NPPF has created a designation called Local Green Space (LGS), which is for green areas of particular importance to local communities which once designated can prevent new development other than in very special circumstances. Local communities and parish councils in the district have helped the Council to identify the sites that are demonstrably special to their local community. A LGS must hold a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife. The green area must be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves. It must be local in character and not be an extensive tract of land. These sites can protect land outside of a development framework.

**Policy NH/13: Important Countryside Frontage**

1. Important Countryside Frontages are defined where land with a strong countryside character either:
  - a. Penetrates or sweeps into the built-up area providing a significant connection between the street scene and the surrounding rural area; or
  - b. Provides an important rural break between two nearby but detached parts of a development framework.
2. Planning permission for development will be refused if it would compromise these purposes.

6.42 In many places land with a strong countryside character penetrates or sweeps into South Cambridgeshire's villages or separates two parts of the built-up area. Such land enhances the setting, character and appearance of the village by retaining the sense of connection between the village and its rural origins and surroundings. The frontage where this interface particularly occurs is identified to indicate that the frontage and the open countryside beyond should be kept open and free from development. In most cases it is land which adjoins the village built-up area but in some cases it separates two parts of the village and the open intervening land therefore assumes an importance for the character of the village as a whole.

**Heritage Assets****Policy NH/14: Heritage Assets**

1. Development proposals will be supported when:
  - a. They sustain and enhance the special character and distinctiveness of the district's historic environment including its villages and countryside and its building traditions and details;
  - b. They create new high quality environments with a strong sense of place by responding to local heritage character including in innovatory ways.
2. Development proposals will be supported when they sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, particularly:
  - c. Designated heritage assets, i.e. listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens;

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- d. Undesignated heritage assets which are identified in conservation area appraisals, through the development process and through further supplementary planning documents;
- e. The wider historic landscape of South Cambridgeshire including landscape and settlement patterns;
- f. Designed and other landscapes including historic parks and gardens, churchyards, village greens and public parks;
- g. Historic places;
- h. Archaeological remains of all periods from the earliest human habitation to modern times.

- 6.43 A core planning principle of the NPPF is to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.
- 6.44 Heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes which are significant because of their historic interest. They are irreplaceable but can be vulnerable to neglect or unsympathetic change.
- 6.45 The district's character is largely shaped by its heritage, including that of its much loved historic villages and countryside. Villages stand out in the landscape, with a variety of forms which respond to their locations such as at the edge of Fens or on hilltops or valley sides. Agricultural and foodprocessing buildings are characteristic, and the varied geology is reflected in traditional materials such as brick, tile, clunch and clay batt.
- 6.46 Challenges facing the historic environment include preserving the district's special rural character and scale of building, the degree of change generated by prosperity, the impact of intensive agriculture on historic landscapes and archaeology, the need to find new uses for traditional farm, food-processing and industrial buildings, and securing the future of unoccupied buildings such as historic garden pavilions. Understanding, conserving and enhancing the historic environment will be an essential part of master planning the growth planned within the district helping to create a sense of place.
- 6.47 The distinctive character and quality of life given by the historic environment of the area has been key to its economic success. Many important Hi-Tech and Bio-Tech organisations and businesses are based in large historic houses and their parkland settings. Strategic management plans are an important tool for achieving successful growth. Historic farm and industrial buildings can provide a range of size and type of premises for smaller businesses. Retaining historic pubs in use is important for village life as well as conservation.
- 6.48 Heritage is an essential component of plans from a village or neighbourhood level to that of the district. A full understanding of the historic environment is needed to inform plans, identify opportunities for conservation and

enhancement, and to be able to reinforce local identity and create a sense of place.

- 6.49 The conservation of heritage assets does not prevent all change but requires it to be managed in a way which does not compromise heritage significance and exploits opportunities for enhancement. The NPPF says how different degrees of significance and harm should be weighed against each other and how heritage and other public benefits should be taken into account. Harm should be minimised and needs to be justified.
- 6.50 Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest which are of equal significance to scheduled monuments will be considered in the same way as designated heritage assets.
- 6.51 Finding viable uses which sustain rather than compromise the significance of historic buildings is fundamental to conservation (though not possible for all buildings). The need to secure the future of buildings may require a flexible approach to other policies or enabling development, Section 106 agreements and other planning contributions. Buildings at risk will be monitored and action taken to secure their repair and encourage sustaining uses.
- 6.52 Decisions on development proposals must be based on a good understanding of how the proposals will affect heritage. Applicants must describe the significance of any heritage assets, including any contribution from their setting. The level of detail must reflect the importance of the asset and clearly identify the potential impact of the proposal.
- 6.53 Where development is proposed for a site which includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, developers must submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
- 6.54 Prospective developers should contact the County Council's Historic Environment Team for information to establish whether there is known or potential archaeological interest and the need for investigation and evaluation at an early stage.
- 6.55 Different levels of information are available on different types of heritage asset and parts of the district. For some development proposals, more research will be required. It will always be important to investigate sites and their context on the ground.
- 6.56 The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record, held by the County Council, gives information on archaeological sites and monuments. Other information on heritage assets and local heritage character is available on national websites, from the County Council's Historic Environment Team, and in District Council Conservation Area Appraisals and SPDs. The Council's web site and officers will give advice on sources of information.

- 6.57 Information about historic assets, including recordings and assessments, which are required and collected as part of development management advance our understanding and are of public interest. They will be made accessible, normally through the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record.
- 6.58 The Council encourages people to be involved with and enjoy local heritage and, where appropriate, developers will be required to support public understanding and engagement, and interpretation.

### **Heritage Assets and Adapting to Climate Change**

#### **Policy NH/15: Heritage Assets and Adapting to Climate Change**

1. The retention and re-use of historic buildings and other heritage assets will be encouraged and supported as a sustainable resource.
  2. Proposals for energy efficient and renewable energy measures for historic buildings which adequately safeguard their heritage significance will be permitted.
- 6.59 Historic buildings and settlements often have sustainable forms of construction and design, and they can inform and inspire the best modern, sustainable development. Their survival reflects their success and adaptability. Conserving and re-using historic buildings retains their materials and 'embodied energy' which is the energy used in materials and construction.
- 6.60 The energy efficiency of buildings is covered in Chapter 4: Climate Change. However, the implications of energy efficient and renewable energy measures for historic buildings need special consideration. Historic buildings are normally constructed and perform in a different way to modern buildings and the measures should be compatible with an individual building's characteristics as well as its heritage significance.
- 6.61 There are opportunities in most historic buildings to improve energy conservation without causing harm, through measures such as secondary glazing, improved loft insulation using natural materials, low energy lighting, and fuel efficient boilers. In some situations, renewable energy technologies can also be installed without causing harm.
- 6.62 When proposals will have a potentially negative impact on heritage assets, then alternative solutions which cause no or less harm should be identified. Where conflict between climate change objectives and the conservation of heritage assets is unavoidable, then the public benefit of mitigating the effects of climate change will be weighed against the harm to the significance of the heritage assets.

- 6.63 English Heritage provides guidance on how heritage assets can be acceptably adapted to reduce their carbon footprint. The Council's [Listed Buildings SPD](#) provides guidance on general sustainability, improving energy efficiency and renewable energy related to listed buildings. The Council will produce supplementary guidance which will set out ways in which the environmental performance of heritage assets can be improved without compromising their significance, taking account of new approaches and innovations.