

Request 10666 - OxCam Arc Environmental Principles

South Cambs District Council is part of the Arc Leader's Group that has signed up to the "Shared regional principles for protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc" hereinafter referred to as the principles."

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Can you please provide the following information:

1. What date your Authority adopted these Principles?
2. If you have not yet adopted them at what date or at which council meeting or with what other mechanism you plan to adopt them?
3. Following on from 1 or 2 above at which date you plan to test your Local Plan against the Principles and if you have already done so with what result?
4. Also following on from 1 or 2 above at which date going forward you plan to assess every planning application or other methods of approving development against the Principles?
5. Please describe any developments that you have refused because, possibly among other reasons, they do not meet the principles.
6. Please describe what new projects you have initiated to implement the principles. Please include their budget and timescales and how their effectiveness will be assessed.
7. Please describe your reporting mechanism for informing the public how well you have implemented and adhered to the principles?

Response

Thank you for your request for information above, which we have dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I hope the information below will answer your query.

1. What date your Authority adopted these Principles?

South Cambridgeshire District Council [Cabinet endorsed the Arc Environmental Principles on 19th April 2021.](#)

2. If you have not yet adopted them at what date or at which council meeting or with what other mechanism you plan to adopt them?

N/A

3. Following on from 1 or 2 above at which date you plan to test your Local Plan against the Principles and if you have already done so with what result?

The Arc Environmental Principles have informed the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, including the recent [First Proposals consultation](#). The consultation responds explicitly to the Principles in the following ways:

- [Policy BG/BG: Biodiversity and geodiversity](#) policy direction states that the policy will require development to achieve a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain, and that the policy will also seek wider environmental net gains
- [Policy CC/WE: Water efficiency in new developments](#) policy direction requires water efficiency standards for residential and non-residential development that are above national minimum standards. The Arc Principles are referred to in the Why is this policy needed section.
- [Policy BG/TC: Improving Tree Canopy Cover and the Tree Population](#) policy direction requires development proposals to preserve, protect and increase the amount and distribution of tree canopy cover, and encourages the provision of new woodland of locally appropriate species in appropriate locations. The Arc Principles are referred to in the Why is this policy needed section.

It's important to note that the Principles reflect the existing corporate priorities that the Council was already working on, including zero carbon and doubling nature strategies and action plans (see below in answer to question 6). Responding to these twin goals of zero carbon and doubling nature, the First Proposals:

- Places zero carbon and increasing space for nature at the centre of its [vision and objectives](#)
- Sets a [development strategy](#) that aims to direct development to where it has the least climate impact, where active travel and public transport is the natural choice, where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development, and where jobs, services and facilities can be located near to where people live, whilst ensuring all necessary utilities can be provided in a sustainable way. The strategy was informed by testing of options in terms of [climate, water and green infrastructure impacts](#) alongside other evidence.
- Sets ambitious [net zero carbon buildings standards](#) that go beyond national standards

- Includes policies on reducing waste and [supporting the circular economy](#)
 - Sets ambitious [green infrastructure policy](#) including identifying 14 strategic green infrastructure initiatives to enhance and expand the existing Greater Cambridge green infrastructure network
- 4. Also following on from 1 or 2 above at which date going forward you plan to assess every planning application or other methods of approving development against the Principles?**

Legislation, national policy and the local development plan provide a clear framework for assessing planning applications. As high level principles endorsed by the Council, in themselves the Arc Environment Principles have little planning weight, and as such we do not consider that it would be appropriate or practicable to try to assess applications against the Principles in addition to the existing policy framework. Rather, as set out above, we are embedding the Principles within our emerging Local Plan. Once that is adopted, future applications will be judged against policies that are consistent with the Principles.

- 5. Please describe any developments that you have refused because, possibly among other reasons, they do not meet the Principles.**

See above answer to question 4.

- 6. Please describe what new projects you have initiated to implement the Principles. Please include their budget and timescales and how their effectiveness will be assessed.**

As noted above, the Council have not initiated new projects to implement the principles; rather, the principles reflect the existing priorities that the Council was already working on, including the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan referred to above.

Our [Zero Carbon Strategy \[PDF, 5.5MB\]](#) was adopted on 21 May 2020. It outlines how we are supporting the district to halve carbon emissions by 2030 and reduce them to zero by 2050, including delivering a reduction in our own carbon footprint of at least 45% by 2025, (on a 2019 baseline), and at least 75% by 2030.

Our Business Plan 2019 to 2024, agreed by Full Council in February 2019, includes a broad and far-reaching programme consisting of 14 high level actions on zero carbon.

In July 2019 the Council recognised that we face an ecological emergency and agreed to support the aim of doubling nature in South Cambridgeshire.

Our [**Doubling Nature Strategy \[PDF, 3MB\]**](#) sets out our approach to supporting this aim.

The [**Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document \[PDF\]**](#) adopted in February 2022 provides practical advice and guidance on how to develop proposals which avoid harm, and provide a long-term measurable net gain for biodiversity.

Full details of our [**Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature action plan**](#), including 6 monthly progress updates, can be found in reports to our [**Climate and Environment Advisory Committee**](#).

7. Please describe your reporting mechanism for informing the public how well you have implemented and adhered to the Principles?

See above answer to question 6.

We aim to provide a quality service to you and hope that you are satisfied with this response, however if you have any questions please contact us.