

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan

Member Workshops

Workshop 1 – The Big Picture

21 March 2012

Attendees

Cllr David Bard	Cllr Janet Lockwood	Jean Hunter
Cllr Richard Barrett	Cllr Mervyn Loynes	Jo Mills
Cllr Trisha Bear	Cllr Ray Manning	Alex Colyer
Cllr Francis Burkitt	Cllr Mick Martin	Stephen Hills
Cllr Tom Bygott	Cllr Mike Mason	Keith Miles
Cllr Nigel Cathcart	Cllr Cicely Murfitt	Caroline Hunt
Cllr Pippa Corney	Cllr Charles Nightingale	Jonathan Dixon
Cllr Alison Elcox	Cllr Ted Ridgway Watt	Jenny Nuttycombe
Cllr Jose Hales	Cllr Alex Riley	
Cllr Lynda Harford	Cllr Hazel Smith	
Cllr Liz Heazell	Cllr Bunty Waters	
Cllr James Hockney	Cllr Tim Wotherspoon	
Cllr Sebastian Kindersley	Cllr Nick Wright	

These notes are a record of points raised in open discussion sessions by those attending the workshop, where a wide variety of views and ideas were put forward. The notes capture the range of issues and views identified, sometimes by individual Members, and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Council. They do not represent any specific decisions made.

Discussion 1: What is South Cambridgeshire like now?

Things to retain and protect

- Rural lifestyle / rural living – working and living in an area with rural character.
- Diversity of character – all the villages are distinct and this should be protected.
- Good connectivity to the south, including to London.
- Diversity of culture – the district includes important tourist attractions and offers job opportunities in different cultural / heritage / leisure uses.
- Quality of education – the district includes very good secondary schools.
- Proximity to Cambridge – nowhere in the district is more than 30 minutes from the city, which allows the opportunity to live in a rural area with easy access to jobs, services and facilities in the city.
- Quality of the environment.
- Proximity to Cambridge University and ability to feed off the knowledge and pool of talent that it creates.

- Jobs
- Prosperity

Things to improve

- Infrastructure deficit.
- Imbalance in the housing market – house prices, split between affordable and market housing.
- Dumping ground for un-neighbourly uses that neighbouring councils do not want e.g. household waste recycling centre for south of Cambridge is likely to be in South Cambridgeshire.
- Imbalance between jobs and homes, although there has been a shift from the last development plan due to increased number of jobs in Cambridge.
- Spread the employment benefits of being close to Cambridge further into South Cambridgeshire.
- East / west connections into Cambridge.
- South Cambridgeshire can be a difficult place to live for the more disadvantaged within society (e.g. those without access to cars) due to the infrastructure deficit. The character and attractiveness of the district is not a key issue for them.
- Public transport (although the Guided Busway is good).

Discussion 2: What is the vision for South Cambridgeshire at 2031?

- Range and quality of jobs for all, supported by appropriate infrastructure – need additional hotel space to accommodate visiting business people, big conference centre (although will this be replaced by conference calls?).
- Better match between jobs and homes.
- Jobs should be located where businesses want to be – need to engage with the business community to ensure that the business space is provided in the right locations.
- Make start-up companies stay – need to retain companies in the district when they want to grow.
- Protect unique character of villages – new development can destroy the community spirit and feel of a village, need to ensure this does not happen.
- Enhance the environment and preserve green spaces.

- Improved transport infrastructure to reduce congestion – if nothing is done, congestion will become gridlock.
- Retain and increase local facilities e.g. encourage shops back into villages.
- Ensure all development is of a high quality.
- Increase and promote manufacturing base – many villages have small manufacturing companies which should be promoted.
- Local communities should be engaged in plan making so that they feel involved in the decisions being made relating to their local area.
- More executive homes – large unique houses for chief executives and their families, finding the right home can have an impact on whether a business locates in the district.
- Need to increase the University's link with businesses to keep knowledge and expertise in the district / region.

Discussion 3: What can we learn from the current Local Development Framework?

e.g. What policies work well? What policies should be changed or improved?

- Size limits on employment uses are too restrictive, especially for existing businesses that want to expand.
- Officers are advising on the basis of material considerations rather than the development plan.
- 50% restriction on extending dwellings in the countryside is limiting people's quality of life and sustainable development does not mean small houses. Could allow some larger houses on the edge of villages / near villages e.g. for executives.
- 40% affordable housing policy has been very successful although viability has led to less being achieved recently. Likely that developers will seek to reduce proportion in the process of preparing the new Local Plan, this should be resisted. The policy wording on considering viability should be strengthened.
- The new Local Plan should promote use of green technologies and increase the Code for Sustainable Homes levels required for market housing across the district.
- Ensure that high grade agricultural land is protected, even though there is a demand for the use of the land for renewable energy uses.
- Greater weight should be given to local and parish council views, over and above the policies in the development plan.
- The new Local Plan should provide more guidance for householders submitting planning applications for extensions – clear guidance on what is meant by overbearing, amenity etc.

- Large developments (size to be defined) should be required to undertake pre-application consultation with local residents.
- Allow third party (e.g. parish councils) right of appeal on district council decisions.
- Comments from statutory consultees are given more weight than comments from local residents / parish councils e.g. comments on sewage, highways.
- Do not increase the length of the Local Plan to replace what will be lost from national planning policy guidance with the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Wording of policies is crucial when considering appeals.
- Public art policy should be amended so that any money received is passed on to the community for them to choose the art and artist.
- Local development orders should be developed for business parks to speed up employment development.
- More consideration should be given to residential amenity.
- Conservation policies seem to work well most of the time, need to ensure they work well more of the time, that they are retained and that they continue to be applied especially as development pressures increase.
- Need policies for Gypsies & Travellers.

Discussion 4a: Key Issues relating to Sustainable Development, Design & Climate Change

- What does sustainable development mean? (i) mixed and balanced communities with homes, shops, pubs etc; (ii) green / renewable technologies and reducing carbon dioxide emissions; (iii) using local resources; (iv) ensuring a long term future; (v) having access to jobs, schools and other services by public transport, bike or on foot; and (vi) good quality buildings that do not fall down.
- Sustainable development is a balance between conservation and green adaptation.
- All new houses should include grey water or rainwater harvesting systems – new Local Plan should raise standards of development, this could be done by specifying Code for Sustainable Homes levels required.
- Raise standards of market houses to be comparable to affordable houses – RSLs recognise the benefits of sustainable buildings and reduced running costs, this should be an option for all households.
- Consider the long term economic benefits of reduced costs, not just the initial outlay. Aim to ensure that amount of money saved on lower running costs is greater than the amount added to the mortgage payments for choosing a sustainable building rather than a standard building.

- Incentivise sustainable living and sustainable buildings – lower council tax payments for more sustainable buildings, provide water butts to all South Cambridgeshire households (like provided blue bins).

Discussion 4b: Key Issues relating to Economy & Growth

- Retain 'exceptional circumstances' for expansion of sites into the Green Belt?
- Assumption of approval for employment generation – local development orders?
- Radial approach to zoning – presumption in favour of employment development along the radial transport corridors, because this attracts Government money to improve the route. Need to ensure that transport policies are aligned to allow this to happen.
- Zoning new areas for science parks and manufacturing.
- Balance of employment between high tech and manufacturing.
- Redevelopment of Cambridge Science Park and improvements to the A14.
- 21st century enabled buildings incorporating green technologies, ability to be reused easily for different purposes.
- Requirement to include employment on site within mixed use developments, equivalent of one job for every house. Could also be applied to affordable housing exception sites.
- Section 106 agreements could include funding of apprenticeships.

Discussion 4c: Key Issues relating to Housing & Affordability

- Collation of housing lists to ensure that we have a robust evidence base of housing need for section 106 negotiations and plan making.
- Issues of affordability now cover a much larger income range.
- Need to ensure balanced communities.
- Viability of developments has become an important consideration due to the current housing market, therefore need for independent viability testing – developing capacity in house.
- Need to be alert to new opportunities.
- Need to ensure jobs / housing / transport balance.

Discussion 5a: Options for the Development Strategy and Scale of Growth

- Has the existing development strategy delivered sustainable growth? Are sites on the edge of Cambridge sustainable – good public transport access?

- Current forecasts do not take account of the enterprise zone at Alconbury Airfield, will the new forecasts? Yes.
- Do the military houses at Waterbeach Barracks count in existing housing supply? Or will they count as new housing supply once the barracks have been decommissioned?
- Spread the load across all villages: 10,000 homes divided by approximately 100 villages is approximately 100 new homes per village. This would help to keep services and facilities e.g. public transport, pub, and school.
- Spread the load across all villages: same percentage increase for all villages, but based on number of existing homes e.g. village with 100 homes, could accommodate 10 new homes.
- Some villages do not want change, other villages want to expand.
- New development could be focussed on one big site, the villages that want to expand, and sites from the SHLAA in the more sustainable villages.
- How do we build houses for local people – new settlements tend to be located near major transport routes (e.g. railways, motorways) which allows new residents easy access to commute out of the district, how do we ensure the new houses are occupied by people working in the district / local area?
- Development frameworks have resulted in all the gaps within the village being filled by new houses - intensified the built development and resulted in the loss of open spaces / gaps.
- Development frameworks should be removed or enlarged so that villages can grow – each village should be able to vote on whether they want this. How do you determine the amount of growth appropriate for a village?
- Need more buses! How do you get to Cambridge without a car from some of the smaller villages?
- Incentivise village expansion by providing financial gain to local communities that want to grow, that could be used to build the community e.g. by subsidising village shop, developing community facilities, local sports teams etc.
- Develop new town in a sustainable location e.g. Bourn Airfield, Waterbeach, Chesterton Sidings, Six Mile Bottom (good rail links).
- Too many villages feel full so need to allow some breathing space.
- Developing an empty homes strategy is key. Also promote the reuse of obsolete buildings – redevelop at a higher density.
- Ensure we have a robust evidence base and forecasts.
- Priority should be given to developments that support the local economy.
- Scope for some growth in villages as well as on the edge of Cambridge.
- Preserve separation and distinction between villages.

Discussion 5b: Options for the Green Belt

- What is the point of the Green Belt if you keep reviewing and changing it? STOP! Don't keep nibbling at the Green Belt. Build out the new developments that have been allocated already and then review the Green Belt again.
- Green Belt should be used to prevent fusion of necklace villages and Cambridge.
- Should more rural leisure facilities / uses be allowed in the Green Belt? e.g. walking, riding.