



Chapter 6

Continuing a Sustainable Development Strategy



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6.1. Given that the current Local Plans introduced a step change in growth, the question now is how best to deliver a sustainable development strategy that is right for the next 20 years. This is in light of the growth already committed to on the fringe sites, and material changes in circumstances since the current sustainable development strategy was agreed, in particular the loss of the major urban extension at Cambridge East at least for the plan period to 2031.

Issues & Options Consultations (Summer 2012)

6.2. Over Summer 2012, the two Councils carried out Issues and Options consultations that sought comments on whether the current development strategy remains the soundest basis for development in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire for the period to 2031.

- **Cambridge**

6.3. The Cambridge Issues and Options report focussed on the City Council's area by assessing options for continued development within the urban area as well as exploring whether there should be further development on the edge of Cambridge in the Green Belt. This included:

City Council Options 2012 for Development Focus

1. Whether there should be more development than is already committed in the 2006 Local Plan on the edge of Cambridge?
2. Should more land be released from the Green Belt?
3. If so, where should this be? Ten broad locations around Cambridge were included in the consultation document.
4. Whether there were any other approaches that should be considered at this stage?

6.4. There was also strong acknowledgement of the good progress that is being made towards implementing the current strategy, with development progressing on fringe sites on the edge of Cambridge.

- **South Cambridgeshire**

6.5. The South Cambridgeshire Issues and Options consultation included a question on how the sustainable development strategy should be taken forward.

6.6. It explained that the new development strategy for South Cambridgeshire needs to recognise the links with Cambridge, particularly in terms of providing employment to support the successful economy of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, and housing to provide opportunities for the workforce, both existing and new, to live close to where they work. As with the current strategy, the new Local Plan is likely to need to be a combination of sites at different stages in the sequence in order to meet housing targets and in particular some village housing developments to provide a 5-year supply, given the long lead in time for new major developments which will realistically only start to deliver later in the plan period.

6.7. The options for the development strategy consulted on that lie within South Cambridgeshire were to:

South Cambridgeshire Options 2012 for Development Focus

1. Focus on providing more development on the edge of Cambridge, in part to replace Cambridge East, through a further review of the Green Belt.
2. Focus on providing more development through one or more new settlements, of sufficient size to provide sustainable development, including provision of a secondary school, and with good public transport links to Cambridge.
3. Focus on providing development at the more sustainable villages that have the best levels of services and facilities and accessibility by public transport and cycle to Cambridge or, to a lesser extent, a market town.
4. A combination of the above.

6.8. The Councils have taken account of relevant planning issues arising from the summer consultation on the Green Belt 'Broad Locations' in preparing the technical assessments of sites in the Green Belt. The full results of both consultations will be considered as the Councils prepare their draft Local Plans and decisions are made on the appropriate development strategy for the Cambridge area as a whole and site allocations to deliver that strategy.

Sustainable Development Strategy Review

6.9. The current sustainable development strategy was extensively scrutinised and challenged during its evolution through the regional plan and structure plan into the Cambridge Local Plan and South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF). Independent planning inspectors confirmed it as the most sustainable development strategy for the two Districts to 2016 and beyond.

- 6.10. Moving forward into the new Local Plans and having regard to the new Duty to Co-operate, the recently established Cambridgeshire Joint Strategy Unit has worked with the Councils to carry out a further review of the sustainable development strategy for the two Councils' areas. Overall, the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Development Strategy Review document concludes that the development strategy in the Cambridge Local Plan and the South Cambridgeshire LDF remains the most sustainable for the two areas, subject to striking the right balance between meeting the needs and demands for new homes and jobs, with environmental, infrastructure and quality of life factors. The most sustainable locations for development are within and on the edge of Cambridge and then in one or more new settlements close to Cambridge, which are connected to the city by high quality public transport and other non car modes. Development in market towns (outside Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire) scores broadly similar to new settlements although travel distances are much further making non-car modes less attractive. Development in villages is the least sustainable option and only appropriate in the larger better served villages with good quality public transport.
- 6.11. The review concluded that in addition to the key sustainability considerations of proximity to employment, services and facilities and access to good public transport, the central themes that emerge from this broad assessment are:

Central Themes of Sustainable Development Strategy Review

- The need to have regard to the scale of development that is planned at different locations, not least to ensure that development allocations do not undermine the delivery of the existing sustainable development strategy and lead to a return to unsustainable patterns of development;
- Its ability to deliver the necessary infrastructure to create sustainable communities; and
- Overall delivery implications and timescales.

- 6.12. Whilst the new Local Plans need to add to the supply of housing, planning permission already exists for more employment development than is forecasted by 2031. Whatever decisions are made on supplying additional houses, jobs growth will continue. The challenge will be to develop Local Plans that deliver a sustainable development strategy that balances employment growth with good quality and deliverable travel options with short journey times from the key locations for new and existing homes. Consideration also needs to be given to the special character of Cambridge and quality of life for existing and future residents.

Towards a new sustainable development strategy

- 6.13. The Local Plan reviews that the two Councils are undertaking need to consider how best to evolve the current sustainable development strategy for the period to 2031, and what this looks like under current circumstances as well as taking a range of important factors into account.
- 6.14. It is appropriate now to look at each stage in the development sequence in turn to identify the commitments in the current strategy and the options being consulted on that could provide additional development to meet the identified needs of the Cambridge area and consider how well they compare with the objective of providing as many homes as close as possible to the jobs that exist or are planned in and close to Cambridge.

Within Cambridge

- 6.15. The urban area of Cambridge is the most sustainable location for development across the two areas. At the end of March 2011 there was an existing supply of 3,351 homes in Cambridge City Council's area either with planning permission or outstanding allocations. This is excluding the major developments on the edge of Cambridge in the current Local Plan 2006, that are considered under the edge of Cambridge stage below. Orchard Park also forms part of the urban area of Cambridge, although it lies within South Cambridgeshire. It is largely built, but a further 384 dwellings are expected to be built by 2031. There is therefore a total existing supply of 3,735 homes within the urban area of Cambridge.
- 6.16. Cambridge City Council has undertaken an extensive search for additional housing sites within the built-up area. This involved a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) whereby the Council issued a general 'call for sites' to identify all possible sites that could accommodate housing development in the city as well as undertaking an extensive search for sites. Sites that were put forward were subject to a rigorous assessment leading to a shortlist of sites which could deliver an additional 2,060 homes. These sites were subject to public consultation in September 2011 in order to seek public involvement at an early stage. Whilst the Issues and Options report did not include any site options for consultation in the summer, it was always the intention to consult on site options for allocations as part of a second Issues and Options consultation. The Issues and Options report did identify the capacity coming through the SHLAA, giving an additional supply of suitable sites for residential development within the urban area of 2,060 homes. This gives a total potential supply within Cambridge City Council's area of 5,411 homes and a total in both Council's areas of approximately 5,795 homes.

On the edge of Cambridge

- 6.17. Land on the edge of Cambridge is the second stage in the development sequence, and the most sustainable in South Cambridgeshire. The key to the delivery of the current sustainable development strategy has been the review of the Cambridge Green Belt undertaken in the current Local Plan and LDF, which released land for 22,000 homes at this stage of the sequence. New homes on the edge of Cambridge would be closer to the main sources of jobs and services than development in the rural area or market towns, and provides good public transport and cycle access to the services, facilities and jobs in Cambridge. As identified earlier, the change in position at Cambridge East so that 10,000 to 12,000 planned homes will now not come forward in the plan period at least, means that the current development strategy will not be fully implemented in the period to 2031. However, 11,380 new homes will be delivered on the combined land released from the Green Belt in the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 (7,061 homes) and South Cambridgeshire LDF adopted between 2007 and 2010 (4,319 homes), and good progress in relation to the development of the fringe sites has been made in recent years.
- 6.18. Both Councils included questions in the summer 2012 consultation on the merits of ten broad locations in the Green Belt on the edge of Cambridge to inform this second round of consultation on any further releases of land from the Green Belt. A summary of the views received are contained in the Site Assessments for Edge of Cambridge Sites. This second consultation includes site options for 680 homes on land currently in the Green Belt, 550 homes in Cambridge City Council's area and 130 homes in South Cambridgeshire. This gives a total potential supply on the edge of Cambridge of 12,060 homes.

New settlements

- 6.19. The new town of Northstowe is a key part of the current strategy. The town will comprise 9,500 dwellings in total, of which 7,500 are anticipated to come forward by 2031. Northstowe is located on the Guided Busway and will have good public transport links to Cambridge but at present the guided buses often get caught along with all other traffic on congested roads once they reach Cambridge. South Cambridgeshire District Council consulted on whether the reserve site at Northstowe should be allocated in the Local Plan but recognised that this would not increase the number of homes that could be built by 2031, but could provide flexibility in the way the town is built.
- 6.20. During the Summer's Issues & Options consultation, South Cambridgeshire District Council consulted on options for a new town based on Waterbeach Barracks delivering up to 10,500 new homes, and a new village at Bourn Airfield which could deliver up to 3,500 new homes. New settlement options could deliver significant numbers of new homes but they have major infrastructure

requirements, particularly in terms of transport measures, and are not as sustainable as locations in and on the edge of Cambridge. High quality, sustainable transport solutions would be essential to minimise commuting by private car. New settlements also require long lead in times before they can deliver homes on the ground and therefore could only provide homes for the second half of the plan period, although they would continue to provide housing beyond the plan period. It is therefore considered that a new town at Waterbeach could deliver 4,500 dwellings in the plan period, whilst all of Bourn Airfield could potentially be delivered. This stage in the sequence could therefore deliver up to a maximum of 15,500 new homes in the plan period if both Waterbeach and Bourn Airfield were allocated alongside Northstowe.

Larger, better served villages

- 6.21. This is the least sustainable stage in the sequence for new development, with only the many small villages in South Cambridgeshire being less sustainable. There are outstanding commitments for a total of 3,490 homes in the rural area as a whole as at end March 2011. South Cambridgeshire District Council consulted in the summer on site options that could deliver a total of 5,850 new homes on village sites. As part of the Council's Part 2 Issues and Options consultation, it is consulting on additional site options at larger villages that could deliver an additional 1,245 new homes. This gives options for a total of 7,095 additional new homes at this lowest stage in the development sequence and a total supply of 10,585 homes in the rural area.

Implications for a sustainable development strategy

- 6.22. In its National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Government carries forward the advice from earlier Planning Policy Statements that, when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. They should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. As part of preparing new Local Plans and given the change in circumstances since the current development strategy was agreed, it is therefore considered appropriate to carry out a new review of the Cambridge Green Belt in order to establish whether there are new site options for development that should be consulted on.