

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This first review of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan has been prepared by South Cambridgeshire District Council to set out detailed policies and proposals for the control of development in the District up to the year 2006. It builds upon the first Local Plan prepared by the District Council which provides guidance up to the year 2001 and some of its content is not therefore new. Where policies and proposals have changed this is often to reflect new national and regional planning guidance and the newly-emerging policies for the Cambridge Sub-Region. Most of these changes address the greater emphasis being placed on developing more sustainable patterns of development, including protection of the built and natural environment, while also maintaining the buoyant nature of the Cambridge economy.

STATUS OF THE PLAN

1.2 The Local Plan is a statutory local plan prepared under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991) and the Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) Regulations 1991. The Plan is known as the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

1.3 This local plan supersedes all previous local plans, the most recent being the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 1993, and the Cambridge Green Belt Local Plan 1992 as far as it affects this district. Local Plan 2004 was prepared in accordance with the Structure Plan 1995, and like that plan it covers the period up to 2006. However, the strategy takes account of more recent government guidance, in particular PPG3: Housing and the sequential approach to development, and PPG13: Transport and its emphasis on sustainable travel. Shortly before this plan was adopted, the Structure Plan 1995 was superseded by the Structure Plan 2003, which covers the period up to 2016. The development plan therefore currently comprises the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003, the Cambridgeshire Aggregates (Minerals) Local Plan 1991, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Local Plan 2003, and the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

1.4 With the exception of minor development such as small household extensions and some statutory services, all development in the United Kingdom requires planning permission. Obtaining planning permission takes the form of making a planning application to the local planning authority - normally the District Council - which will have regard to all relevant planning considerations before reaching a decision either to permit or refuse the development.

1.5 Parliament has attached prime importance to the Development Plan as a means to guiding local planning authorities decisions on development proposals. Section 54A of the 1990 Act requires "*Where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise*". The starting point is therefore the conformity of any development proposal with the Development Plan - both the Structure Plan and the Local Plan.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE PLAN

1.6 The primary functions of the Local Plan are derived from Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 "Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance" published by the Department of the Environment in 1992. These are:

- to set out South Cambridgeshire's policies for the control of development; and

- to make proposals for the development and use of land and to allocate land for specific proposals.

REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR EAST ANGLIA

1.7 Structure Plans, which are prepared by County Councils and provide a countywide strategic framework for Local Plans, are prepared within a regional strategic framework set by the Department of the Environment.

1.8 Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk are covered by Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia (RPG6), published in November 2000. This replaces earlier guidance issued in 1991.

1.9 RPG6 comments that past planning policies have sought to restrain development with the objective of protecting the historic character of Cambridge by dispersing both housing and employment development. It observes that while firms based on research and technology have been resistant to locating far from Cambridge, housing development close to the City has been constrained. Certain result effects are identified:

- Housing development in locations further from Cambridge, unsupported by local employment;
- Concerns that the characters of some villages and towns have been compromised or that development has reached limits which threatens that character;
- The extension of Cambridge's commuting hinterland with commuters overwhelmingly travelling by car;
- High land and house prices and difficulties for many people in affording housing that meet their needs; and
- Skills shortages and recruitment difficulties for employers.

1.10 The new RPG recognises the importance of the Cambridge Sub-Region to the national and regional economy and the urgency of addressing the misfit between the previous planning policies and the objective of sustainable development. The guidance seeks to develop a planning framework which will allow the Sub-Region's development needs to be met in a sustainable way while protecting and enhancing the important environmental qualities of the city and surrounding area and achieving new development of the highest quality. Policy 21 of the RPG sets the objective of developing a vision and planning framework for the Sub-Region which will:

- Allow the sub-region to develop further as a world leader in research and technology based industries and the fields of higher education and research;
- Foster the dynamism, prosperity and further expansion of the research and technology based economy;
- Protect and enhance the historic character and setting of Cambridge and the important environmental qualities of the surrounding area;
- Provide a more sustainable balance between rates of growth in jobs and housing allowing the sub-region to accommodate a higher proportion of the region's housing development;
- Promote a more sustainable and spatially concentrated pattern of locations for development and more sustainable travel patterns;
- Facilitate the provision of an attractive, accessible, ecologically rich countryside;
- Secure development of the highest quality;
- Provide a high quality of life and seek to avoid social exclusion, including by addressing the issue of housing affordability in the area;
- Be based on a co-ordinated approach to development, which maximises and integrates the different sources of investment; and
- Allow scope for, rather than constrain, continuing development.

1.11 The objectives of the RPG will be progressed mainly through a review of the Structure Plan, followed by reviews of the local plans covering the Sub-Region. These processes will

involve comprehensive review of the Green Belt and the identification of a site for a new settlement. In the meantime, this plan takes account of the principles of the RPG as far as possible at present, particularly policies 22 and 23 as follows:

“Policy 22: Location of housing and related development

Development Plans should identify locations for housing and related development for services, schools, community facilities etc in the following order of preference:

- i. within the built up area of Cambridge, subject to capacity and environmental considerations;*
- ii. on the periphery of the built up area of Cambridge, subject to a review of the Green Belt;*
- iii. in a new settlement close to Cambridge;*
- iv. within the built up area of market towns, larger villages and previously established new settlements where good public transport access to Cambridge exists or can be provided, provided that growth in car commuting can be minimised;*
- v. by extensions to market towns, larger villages and previously established new settlements where good public transport access to Cambridge exists or can be provided, provided that growth in car commuting can be minimised.”*

“Policy 23: Employment generating development

Development plans should provide a range of suitable sites for employment generating development which take account of the needs of existing and future businesses. In particular, they should ensure the availability of a range of premises to allow the continued expansion of the group of research and technology based clusters with their different accommodation needs. Employment generating development should be located in locations where good public transport, cycling and walking access exists or can be provided:

- Within or by extensions of the built up area of Cambridge;*
- In the new settlement close to Cambridge;*
- Within or by extensions to the market towns.*

Policy 7 provides guidance on the extension of the clusters of research and technology based industries beyond Cambridge and its immediate vicinity.”

THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN 1995

1.12 Cambridgeshire has been under intense pressure for development for much of the post war period. Successive structure plans since the early 1980's have aimed for a slower rate of growth than was experienced in earlier decades. Structure Plans have long proposed that the rate and nature of growth is to be carefully controlled in the south and west - primarily Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire - where development pressures are greatest. To complement this, opportunities for economic development are to be maximised in the north and east of the county to overcome social and economic disadvantages.

1.13 The Structure Plan 1995 built upon this strategy by:

- increasing the emphasis on safeguarding the environment and defining environmentally sustainable development;
- providing a more coherent framework for the selective dispersal of jobs away from Cambridge, and towards the north and east of the County;
- better integration of policies for development and transportation, particularly the encouragement of public transport;
- providing housing which local people can afford; and

- conserving water resources and water in the environment.

1.14 The review leading to the adoption of this local plan took place concurrently with a review of the Structure Plan 1995. The latter will take forward the new vision and planning framework for the Cambridge Sub-Region provided in November 2000 by revised regional planning guidance (RPG6). The Structure Plan review was placed on deposit in March/April 2002, and the new Structure Plan adopted in Autumn 2003.

1.15 Sustainable development is now the cornerstone of the Government's rural and planning policies. This means managing the countryside in ways that meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. This means accommodating necessary change while maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the quality of the environment for local people and visitors. The appeal of the countryside is central to its economic prosperity, and healthy economic activity in rural areas may facilitate investment to protect and improve the countryside. New development should respect, and where possible enhance, the environment in its location, scale and design. The challenge for sustainability in South Cambridgeshire, which is the heart of the largest cluster of high technology research and development in Europe, will be different from much of the rest of rural England. It is to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck in particular between economic and environmental objectives. Sustainability in South Cambridgeshire will entail the following objectives:

- Meet the economic and social needs of people living and working in South Cambridgeshire by making available land for employment which allows for the planned development of the 'Cambridge Phenomenon' of high technology research and development, and by making provision for rural businesses including facilitating rural diversification.
- Maintain and where possible enhance the distinctive character of the countryside of South Cambridgeshire comprising:
 - the 'Fen Edge' landscape and large villages to the north;
 - the villages situated along the gentle river valleys within the undulating and well-wooded clay plateau to the west;
 - the villages of the rolling 'Chalklands' to the south with large arable fields and small but distinctive beech copses;
 - the small villages and hamlets along the shallow valleys in the undulating and wooded clay hills in the south east; and
 - conserve the District's natural resources, including the diversity of its wildlife, the quality and distinctiveness of South Cambridgeshire's villages, its historic and archaeological interest, and the best and most versatile agricultural land.
- Within the strategy of the Structure Plan 1995, to improve the viability of the villages of South Cambridgeshire and provide the opportunity for reduced car commuting to Cambridge and the market towns by stimulating the provision of rural services and promoting living communities which have a mix of age, income and occupation and which offer local employment, affordable and market housing, community facilities and other local opportunities.
- Recognise and accommodate the interdependence of South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge and the surrounding market towns.
- Seek to facilitate the substitution of alternative forms of transport to the motor car and to reduce the extent to which it is used, whilst recognising that it remains and will continue to remain the most important means of transport in this rural District for the foreseeable future.

STRATEGY AND AIMS OF THE LOCAL PLAN

1.16 Within the framework of the Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia and the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan, the strategy for the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan is:

- To guide the provision of homes, jobs and shops together with facilities for recreation, education, leisure and transportation to meet the needs of the people of South Cambridgeshire up to the year 2006;

- To plan for the location of development which provides the opportunity for more people to satisfy their day-to-day needs locally or in locations from which modes of transport in addition to the private motor car can realistically be provided.
- To maintain and enhance the character and diversity of the built and natural environment, ensure that development meets the Structure Plan 1995 objectives for sustainability and that the capacity of the environment to absorb development is not exceeded.
- To secure the provision of services and facilities in line with new development.

1.17 This sustainable development strategy will be pursued by implementing a range of policies and proposals designed to achieve the following aims:

Settlement:	To protect the villages of South Cambridgeshire by ensuring that the scale and location of new development is in keeping with the size and character of each village and that development is located where it will minimise the need to travel consistent with the objectives of the Road Traffic Reduction Act.
Housing:	To facilitate the provision of a range of sufficient housing in sustainable locations with the emphasis on the re-use of existing sites and to ensure a continuous supply throughout the plan period to meet the needs of the existing and planned population of South Cambridgeshire.
Green Belt:	To maintain and protect a Green Belt around the city of Cambridge which contains its urban growth, preserves its unique character, maintains its present setting and prevents communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another.
Environment:	To maintain and enhance the character of the villages and countryside of South Cambridgeshire and to protect and where possible enhance the natural environment for existing and future generations.
Employment:	To facilitate the provision of employment which builds upon the high technology research and development specialism of the Cambridge area and to encourage the development of jobs for the less skilled workforce.
Shopping:	To encourage shopping development in locations which are convenient and accessible and to ensure that within South Cambridgeshire the villages are the main destination for convenience shopping. To ensure that Cambridge, which is at the focus of the sub-regional transportation network, remains the main destination for comparison shopping.
Recreation and Tourism:	To protect existing recreation facilities from development pressures and to ensure that new facilities are provided to meet the need of the growing population of the Cambridge Area. To limit tourist facilities to those activities based on the existing physical and cultural heritage of South Cambridgeshire.
Community Services and Infrastructure:	In addition to conserving resources used by infrastructure providers to require the provision of services and facilities in line with new development and to facilitate/encourage the provision of a wide range of services to serve a dispersed rural population.

Transport: To achieve the safe and efficient movement of goods and people through the District whilst minimising any adverse environmental impact.

1.18 Each Chapter of the Local Plan sets out measurable objectives which indicate how these aims will be secured. These will provide the framework for the policies and proposals which will ensure their implementation. Explanation and clarification of these policies is included as lower case text.

THE LOCAL PLAN

Preparation Process

1.19 The Local Plan was published as a Consultation Draft on 4th August 1997. It was subject to public comment from that date until the 10th October 1997. The Planning Committee considered all the representations at two meetings on the 10th June and 8th July 1998. The decision of the Planning Committees were ratified on 30th July 1998, when the Council adopted the Local Plan, as amended, as its informal policy. It also resolved that it be placed on deposit as a plan which the Council wishes to adopt as a Statutory Local Plan. Formal objections to this copy of the Local Plan were invited to be heard at a Local Plan Inquiry held between June 2000 and September 2001. Another period of public consultation took place and objections made at that stage were considered by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Inspector reported to the District Council in January 2002, with a recommendation as to which objections to accept or reject. The final decision on which changes to make to the Deposit Plan rests with the District Council which published a list of Modifications to the Plan in October 2002 for public comment. Following consideration of the comments made, Further Proposed Modifications were published in September 2003, before finally adopting the Local Plan.

1.20 PPG12 – Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance 1992 underlines the need for environmental concerns to be integrated into the development plan preparation. The Deposit Local Plan was subjected to an Environmental Appraisal which is available as a separate report prior to being placed on Deposit in February 1999. The Appraisal has highlighted some areas of policy where development would have an adverse impact on environmental objectives, but they have been balanced against the social and economic objectives contained in Government Advice and the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995. The main conclusions of the Appraisal are:

- the Local Plan review has taken account of the full range of environmental issues;
- there are no significant policy areas where the plan is deficient;
- settlement development policy provides the opportunity for houses, jobs and services to be closely related and access to better public transport;
- the Green Belt is sustaining the historic character of Cambridge and its setting;
- providing employment in the larger villages or in public transport corridors provides the opportunity to reduce/keep to a minimum the length of journeys to work for the 127,000 people that live in South Cambridgeshire;
- accommodating movement in a predominantly rural area is important and likely to remain heavily dependent on the private motor car, but policies are being developed to provide for alternatives and minimise the impact of the car in urban areas e.g. concentrate development in larger villages with good public transport, cycleway provision, and park and ride.
- development being required to fund the provision of local services and facilities will support community life and keep to a minimum the need to travel;
- policies for the conservation of the built and natural environment score well against criteria for the rate of carbon dioxide fixing, wildlife habitat protection, landscape quality and open land, urban liveability, cultural heritage and building quality.

Format

1.21 The Local Plan is divided into two parts. Part I sets out the general policies which will apply across the District, and includes the District Proposals Map at a scale of 1:50,000. Part II consists of the detailed policies and proposals for each village and the Inset Proposals Maps at a scale of 1:5000 which correspond with the written statements. This needs to be read in conjunction with Part I, which also applies.

1.22 Parts I and II comprise policies in bold capital letters supported by a written justification.

Local Plan Area

1.23 The Local Plan covers the whole administrative area of South Cambridgeshire District entirely surrounding, but excluding, the city of Cambridge.

Plan Period

1.24 The period for which the Local Plan provides guidance is 1991-2006, the same as the period of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995.

1.25 A review of the Local Plan for the period up to 2016, the period covered by the Structure Plan 2003, will begin imminently.

DEPARTURES FROM THE PLAN

1.26 This Local Plan forms part of the Development Plan for South Cambridgeshire. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 places a requirement on local planning authorities to make planning decisions in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.27 During the lifetime of this Local Plan, there may arise rare development proposals for which South Cambridgeshire District Council would wish to grant planning permission which do not accord with the provisions of the Local Plan. The planning legislation makes provision for such proposals where the District Council can demonstrate that there are good planning reasons which mean that planning permission should be granted. In order to protect the public interest, these proposals must be notified to the Secretary of State for the Environment as a Departure from the Development Plan. In addition to the opportunity for the Secretary of State to intervene, the District Council must also advertise locally its intention to depart from the development plan in reaching its decision. This will give members of the public an opportunity to make representations to the District Council which it must take into account before making any final decision on the application.