

## **2. SETTLEMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

2.1 South Cambridgeshire is a rural district entirely surrounding the city of Cambridge. It includes 100 parishes and villages ranging in size from Childerley with only 50 residents to Sawston, a large village with a population of around 8,000. The landscape and villages are equally varied. Rolling chalk hills and beech woods in the south give way to a clay plateau in the west and the flat fertile fenland of the north typified by its black soils and drainage channels. This landscape has led to the development of distinctive settlement patterns and village character ranging from spring-line villages to the south, to villages nestling in river valleys in the west and large Fen edge villages to the north. Much of the District is farmland of high agricultural quality (grades 1 and 2).

2.2 Cambridge is the natural focus for this rural area, although villages towards the periphery of the District look beyond South Cambridgeshire for services to the market towns of St Ives, Huntingdon, St Neots, Royston, Saffron Walden, Haverhill, Newmarket and Ely.

2.3 The area has good road and rail links with London and the South-East. The M11 passes through the District, while the A1 runs just to the west. The main Kings Lynn, Ely and Cambridge to London Liverpool Street railway also runs north-south through the District with stations at Waterbeach, Gt Shelford and Whittlesford. A railway line also connects Cambridge to London Kings Cross with stations at Foxton, Shepreth, Meldreth and Steeple Morden. Road communications to the Midlands and the East Coast ports were significantly upgraded in 1994 with the completion of the A1-M1 link.

2.4 This accessibility together with the economic success of the Cambridge area in building up a high technology employment sector has created a buoyant local economy whose performance in jobs and wealth creation is well above the national average. The District includes the internationally renowned Cambridge Science Park, while there are other research facilities such as Welcome Trust at Hinxton Hall and The Welding Institute at Great Abington.

2.5 Planning policy since the mid 1950's for the Cambridge area has been one of overall restraint with the growth of Cambridge itself constrained by a Green Belt. Complementary policies have promoted the development of many of the villages in South Cambridgeshire and as a result the population of the District has more than doubled from only 62,280 in 1951.

2.6 Whilst there has been significant growth in employment in South Cambridgeshire it is still a large dormitory area. The census revealed that although there were 46,980 jobs in the District in 1991, some 60,630 of South Cambridgeshire's residents were in employment. These simple figures mask complex commuting patterns, the most significant of which was the 19,790 people who commuted the relatively short distance to jobs in Cambridge. This demonstrates the close interdependence between Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire which extends to a whole range of services and facilities.

### **OBJECTIVES**

2.7 The rural area can never be self-contained. Cambridge and the surrounding market towns will continue to provide services and facilities which can only be supported by larger concentrations of people. Therefore the settlement policies of the Local Plan have the following objectives:

- To locate development where it will provide the opportunity for people to satisfy their day-to-day needs for employment, shopping, education and other services locally or in locations which minimise the need to travel and where there are modes of transport available in addition to the motor car.

- To protect the varied character of the villages of South Cambridgeshire by ensuring that the scale and location of development in each village is in keeping with its size and character and that the buildings and open spaces which create their character are maintained and where possible enhanced.
- In keeping with the principles of sustainable development, proposals on greenfield land outside village frameworks will not be permitted unless it can be shown that there are no suitable brown field sites available firstly, within the framework of the built up area of settlements and secondly, in sustainable locations within the countryside.

2.8 These objectives, and the policies which set the framework for the Local Plan, provide the basis for a development strategy which is consistent with the principles of “sustainable development” outlined in the White Paper “Rural England - A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside” which include:

- meeting the economic and social needs of people who live and work in rural areas;
- conserving the character of the countryside for the benefit of present and future generations;
- accommodating necessary change while maintaining and enhancing the quality of the environment for local people and visitors;
- encouraging active communities which take the initiative to solve their problems themselves; and
- improving the viability of existing villages by promoting opportunities for both housing and employment, thereby discouraging increased commuting by car to urban centres.

## EXISTING PLANNING PERMISSIONS

**POLICY SE1: Existing planning permissions will be renewed provided that development would not conflict with other policies and proposals of the development plan.**

2.9 This Review of the Local Plan builds upon the first Local Plan approved in June 1993 and rolls forward the Plan Period from 2001 to 2006. Undeveloped allocations from the first Plan have been carried forward into this Plan where they are consistent with its aims, objectives and policies. The majority of undeveloped allocations for housing and employment are therefore carried forward into the new plan.

2.10 Applications for the renewal of planning permissions granted under the provisions of previously adopted plans will be considered afresh against the policies of the current Development Plan which includes the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. Where there has been a change in policy and the proposed development would materially conflict with the policies of the Structure and Local Plan, planning permission will not be renewed.

## STRUCTURE PLAN FRAMEWORK

2.11 At the end of June 1991, the starting date of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995, the population of South Cambridgeshire was 122,500 persons, having grown from 100,720 since 1976, the starting date of the first Cambridgeshire Structure Plan. The Structure Plan 1995 forecasts that the population of the District will grow to approximately 141,500 persons by the middle of the year 2006. The Structure Plan 1995 proposes that this will require the development of an additional 11,300 dwellings in the fifteen year period 1991 to 2006. Between the end of June 1991 and the end of June 2001, existing housing commitments (in

the form of dwellings built, under construction and with planning permission) totalled 8,961 dwellings, leaving a further 2,339 to be provided by future planning permissions and the policies of this Plan. In reviewing its Local Plan, the District Council will need to satisfy itself that allocated sites are likely to be made available for development. If, at the end of the Plan Period, allocations have not been developed or granted planning permission, the District Council in reviewing the Local Plan will give consideration to deleting such allocations.

## **RURAL GROWTH SETTLEMENTS**

### **Cambridgeshire Structure Plan**

2.12 Policy SP3/2 of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 provides a framework for the selection of Rural Growth Settlements as follows:

*“Rural Growth settlements will be identified in local plans. Within these settlements:*

- (i) housing estates will normally be permitted, in accordance with structure and local plan policies;*
- (ii) housing groups will normally be permitted where suitable sites exist;*
- (iii) industrial or commercial development will normally be permitted, subject to policy SP5/9.*

*The selection of Rural Growth Settlements and the determination of an appropriate scale and rate of growth will take according to the following criteria:*

- (a) selected settlements should have a good range of facilities, normally including food and non-food shops, a primary school, good access to secondary education, a library, public hall and good public transport, and be generally well related to the existing road network*
- (b) growth can be accommodated without detriment to village character or areas of environmental sensitivity;*
- (c) growth can be accommodated in conformity with the other policies of the Structure Plan.”*

## List of Rural Growth Settlements

**POLICY SE2: The following villages have been selected as Rural Growth Settlements (RGS): Bar Hill, Cambourne, Cottenham, Fulbourn, Great Shelford & Stapleford, Histon & Impington, Linton, Melbourn, Sawston, Swavesey, Waterbeach, and Willingham.**

**Residential development and redevelopment will be permitted on unallocated land within village frameworks of RGS provided that (a) the retention of the site in its present form is not essential to the character of the village; (b) the development would be sensitive to the character of the village, local features of landscape or ecological importance, and the amenities of neighbours; (c) the village has the necessary infrastructure capacity; and (d) residential development would not conflict with another policy of the Plan, particularly policy EM8.**

**Development should provide an appropriate mix of dwellings in terms of size, type and affordability and should achieve a minimum density of 30 dph unless there are strong design grounds for not doing so.**

2.13 The villages selected as Rural Growth Settlements are generally the larger settlements in South Cambridgeshire. They usually have the largest populations, the best public transport connections, the highest numbers of shops and facilities such as village colleges, surgeries and libraries, and relatively high proportions of jobs in relation to residents of working age.

2.14 Since the RGS generally comprise the most sustainable villages in South Cambridgeshire there is no strategic numerical constraint on the development or redevelopment of land for housing within the village frameworks provided that the criteria in policy SE2 are met.

## LIMITED RURAL GROWTH SETTLEMENTS

### Cambridgeshire Structure Plan

2.15 The selection of Limited Rural Growth Settlements and the nature of development within them is guided by policy SP3/3 of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 which proposes:

*"Limited Rural Growth Settlements will be selected by the District Councils through their Local Plans. Within these settlements:*

- (a) *Small housing estates will normally be permitted where appropriate, or larger estates where suitable sites are identified in local plans.*
- (b) *Housing groups and infilling will normally be permitted where suitable sites exist.*
- (c) *Small-scale industrial or commercial development will be permitted, subject to policy SP5/9.*

*The selection of Limited Rural Growth Settlements and the appropriate scale and rate of growth will be determined by the District Councils in their local plans, according to the following criteria:*

- i) Selected settlements will have a range of facilities including shopping, a primary school, a post office, and public transport.*
- ii) Growth will be accommodated without detriment to village character or areas of environmental sensitivity.*
- iii) Growth can be accommodated without conflicting with other policies of this Plan particularly those relating to the natural environment, agriculture and the Green Belt.*
- iv) Growth will be consistent with the improvement of community life."*

#### **List of Limited Rural Growth Settlements**

**POLICY SE3: The following villages are selected as Limited Rural Growth Settlements (LRGS):**

**Bassingbourn, Gamlingay, Girton, Milton, Over, Papworth Everard.**

**Residential development and redevelopment up to a maximum scheme size of 30 dwellings will be permitted on unallocated land within the village frameworks of LRGS provided that:**

- (a) the retention of the site in its present form is not essential to the character of the village;**
- (b) the development would be sensitive to the character of the village, local features of landscape or ecological importance, and the amenities of neighbours;**
- (c) the village has the necessary infrastructure capacity; and**
- (d) residential development would not conflict with another policy of the Plan, particularly policy EM8.**

**Development should provide an appropriate mix of dwellings in terms of size, type and affordability and should achieve a minimum density of 30 dph unless there are strong design grounds for not doing so.**

2.16 The LRGS generally represent the second band of most sustainable villages by South Cambridgeshire standards. These settlements have some similarities to the RGS but are usually smaller, with a less favourable (but still relatively good) range of public transport connections, shops and other facilities such as village colleges, surgeries and libraries, and often with a lower proportion of jobs in relation to residents of working age.

2.17 Since the sustainability standards of the LRGS are relatively modest, policy SE3 reflects the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 by imposing a strategic maximum of 30 dwellings (net) on any scheme of residential development or redevelopment of unallocated

land within the village frameworks. It will also be necessary for schemes to meet the other requirements set out in the policy.

## **GROUP AND INFILL VILLAGES**

### **Cambridgeshire Structure Plan**

2.18 Policy SP3/4 of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 proposes:

*"In all other settlements (not covered by preceding policies) housing estates will not be permitted, and further development will be limited taking account of:*

- (i) The physical and environmental capacity for growth within such settlements;*
- (ii) The availability and capacity of community facilities, public transport and other infrastructure;*
- (iii) The need to support the quality and vitality of community life.*

*The District Councils may identify in their local plans:*

- (a) Villages suitable for infilling and groups of housing;*
- (b) Villages where housing development will normally be restricted to infilling only;*
- (c) Guidelines for industrial and commercial development, which will normally be permitted in these villages on a small scale."*

## List of Group villages

**POLICY SE4: The following villages are selected as Group Villages:**

**Balsham, Barrington, Barton, Bourn, Castle Camps, Comberton, Coton, Dry Drayton, Duxford, Elsworth, Eltisley, Fen Ditton, Fen Drayton, Fowlmere, Foxton, Gt Abington, Gt Wilbraham, Guilden Morden, Hardwick, Harston, Haslingfield, Hauxton, Highfields Caldecote, Lt Abington, Longstanton, Meldreth, Oakington, Orwell, Steeple Morden, Teversham, Whittlesford and Whittlesford Bridge.**

**Residential development and redevelopment up to a maximum scheme size of 8 dwellings will be permitted within the village frameworks of Group Villages provided that:**

- (a) the retention of the site in its present form is not essential to the character of the village;**
- (b) the development would be sensitive to the character of the village, local features of landscape or ecological importance, and the amenities of neighbours;**
- (c) the village has the necessary infrastructure capacity; and**
- (d) residential development would not conflict with another policy of the Plan, particularly policy EM8.**

**Development may exceptionally consist of up to 15 dwellings, if this would make the best use of a brownfield site.**

**All developments should provide an appropriate mix of dwelling size, type and affordability.**

2.19 Group villages are generally smaller than the Rural Growth and Limited Rural Growth Settlements, and are less sustainable locations for new development, having more modest services and facilities. However, some of the basic day-to-day requirements can generally be satisfied without the need to travel outside the village. Development is therefore normally limited to schemes of no more than 8 dwellings. However, in the interests of making the best use of previously developed land in built up areas, Policy SE4 allows for developments of up to 15 dwellings as an exception to the normal maximum size of development where this would make the best use of a brownfield site. This is consistent with the 1995 Structure Plan which allows for Group development to exceptionally be up to 15 dwellings where this is contained within the framework of a village and 'makes the best use of a particular site' (paragraph 3.5).

## List of Infill villages

**POLICY SE5: The following villages are selected as Infill-Only Villages:**

**Abington Pigotts, Arrington, Babraham, Bartlow, Boxworth, Carlton, Caxton, Conington, Croxton, Croydon, Grantchester, Graveley, Gt Chishill, Gt Eversden, Harlton, East Hatley, Hatley St. George, Heathfield, Heydon, Hildersham, Hinxton, Horningsea, Horseheath, Ickleton, Kingston, Knapwell, Kneesworth, Landbeach, Litlington, Lt Eversden, Lt Gransden, Lt Shelford, Lt Wilbraham, Lolworth, Longstowe, Madingley, Newton, Pampisford, Papworth St. Agnes, Rampton, Shepreth, Shingay-Cum-Wendy, Shudy Camps, Six Mile Bottom, Streetly End, Stow-Cum-Quy, Tadlow, Thriplow, Toft, Weston Colville, Weston Green, West Wickham, West Wrating, Whaddon, Wimpole.**

**Residential developments within the village frameworks of these villages will be restricted to not more than two dwellings comprising:**

- 1. a gap in an otherwise built-up frontage to an existing road, provided that it is not sufficiently large to accommodate more than two dwellings on similar curtilages to those adjoining; or**
- 2. the redevelopment or sub-division of an existing residential curtilage; or**
- 3. the sub-division of an existing dwelling; or**
- 4. subject to the provisions of Policy EM8, the conversion or redevelopment of a non-residential building where this would not result in a loss of local employment;**

**Provided the site in its present form does not form an essential part of village character, and development is sympathetic to the historic interests, character, and amenities of the locality.**

**In very exceptional cases a slightly larger development may be permitted if this would lead to the sustainable recycling of a brownfield site bringing positive overall benefit to the village.**

2.20 Villages selected as Infill-Only Villages are generally among the smallest settlements in South Cambridgeshire. These villages tend to have a poor range of services and facilities and it is often necessary for local residents to travel outside the village for most of their daily needs. These villages generally lack any food shops, have no primary school and may not even have a permanent post office or a village hall or meeting place. Development on any scale is therefore likely to generate a disproportionate number of additional journeys and would therefore be contrary to Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 settlement policies.

2.21 Remaining services and facilities in these villages are often under pressure. While the District Council will take what action it can to support them, additional residential development is unlikely to have any effect on the trends that have given rise to these pressures.

## **HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

2.22 The Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 proposes at policy SP12/1 that housing development in the countryside will be strictly limited to uses that need to be located in the countryside, as follows:

*"Development in the countryside will be restricted to that which is essential to the efficient operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, permitted mineral extraction, outdoor recreation or public utility services."*

2.23 Detailed policy guidance on these uses is provided in subsequent chapters of the Local Plan.

## **AREA OF RESTRAINT**

2.24 Policy SP18/13(i) of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 seeks to resist the pressures for development between Cambridge and the Hertfordshire border which are both strong and increasing. The District Council will limit housing development in the Area of Restraint to the recycling of land and housing allocations within the existing built-up area of villages. This area is defined as being south of the A603 and south of the Cambridge/Newmarket railway line to the east of the city.

**POLICY SE6: The Area of Restraint south of Cambridge is defined on the District Proposals Map. Housing allocations outside the built-up area of villages in the Area of Restraint will not be made.**

## **NEW SETTLEMENT OF CAMBOURNE**

2.25 The Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995 proposes a new settlement of 3,000 dwellings plus expansion on the A428 west of Cambridge to serve the housing and employment needs of the Cambridge area.

**POLICY SE7: Cambourne, a new village of 3,300 houses and a business park has been granted planning permission on the A428 west of Cambridge. Development will be carried out in accordance with a Master Plan and Design Guide which have been approved by the District Council.**

2.26 Although planning consent has been granted for 3,300 dwellings, it is anticipated that 2,000 units and a 20 hectare business park will come forward in the Plan Period to 2006. Policy guidance for the types of houses, social housing, provision of services and facilities, recreation and other infrastructure is provided in subsequent chapters of the Local Plan.

## VILLAGE CHARACTER

### Village frameworks

**POLICY SE8: There will be a general presumption in favour of residential development within village frameworks (as defined on the Inset Maps) where this is also in accordance with policies SE2, SE3, SE4 and SE5. Residential development outside these frameworks will not be permitted.**

2.27 The village frameworks define where policies for the built-up areas of settlements give way to policies for the countryside. This is necessary to ensure that the countryside is protected from gradual encroachment on the edges of villages and to help guard against incremental growth in unsustainable locations. However, the efficient re-use of previously developed land within village frameworks will generally be supported, subject to the satisfaction of relevant policies, in the interests of sustainability. Frameworks have been defined to take into account the present extent of the built-up area, development committed by planning permissions and other proposals included in the local plan. Buildings associated with countryside uses (eg farm buildings, houses subject to agricultural occupancy conditions or affordable housing schemes permitted under the rural exceptions policy) are not normally included within the framework.

2.28 Frameworks have not been defined around small clusters of houses or areas of scattered development where such buildings are isolated in open countryside or detached from the main concentration of buildings within a nearby village. Although it is recognised that such dwellings may be considered locally as 'part' of the nearest village in community terms it is important in planning policy terms to limit the amount of new development that can take place in rural areas with few services and little or no public transport.

2.29 Property boundaries shown on the OS map have been taken into account in defining village frameworks. However, since there are many large gardens on the edges of villages the framework boundaries sometimes cut across such gardens, especially (but not solely) if parts of those gardens relate more to the surrounding countryside than they do to the built-up parts of the village. The 'cutting' of some gardens is regarded as a positive development control tool to limit the potential for further residential development in smaller villages with few facilities and little or no public transport. However, in such circumstances policy SE8 will not be operated to establish a presumption against the grant of planning permission for ancillary domestic buildings in those parts of residential curtilages excluded from the framework. Where permission is required for such developments applications will be considered on their individual merits.

### Village Edges

**POLICY SE9: Development on the edges of villages should be sympathetically designed and landscaped to minimise the impact of development on the countryside.**

2.30 Individual villages in South Cambridgeshire have different relationships with the surrounding landscape. New development on the edges of villages will therefore require careful attention to design and landscaping to ensure that harmony is achieved with the prevailing landscape character of the local area.

## Protected Village Amenity Areas

**POLICY SE10: Protected Village Amenity Areas (PVAA) are defined within village framework boundaries in order to identify undeveloped land, the retention of which is of importance to the character, amenity and/or functioning of the village as a whole. Development of such areas will not be permitted if it would be harmful to the distinctive qualities and functioning lying behind their inclusion in the PVAA.**

2.31 The purpose of this policy is to identify all those areas of generally undeveloped land within the villages of South Cambridgeshire which make an important contribution to the character, amenity and/or functioning of a particular village and therefore need to be protected from development that would have an adverse effect on those attributes.

2.32 Such areas may be in public or private ownership. They include a wide range of sites from land with a very open character to areas with a semi-enclosed appearance. Many are coming under increasing pressure for development. It is national policy to make full and effective use of land in built-up areas and it is therefore important not to prevent the reasonable recycling of brownfield sites. However, for the benefit of landowners, local communities and potential developers, policy SE10 aims to identify those undeveloped areas within villages where development will not normally be permitted.

2.33 Smaller unidentified gaps or spaces between individual buildings may be of importance from the standpoint of conservation or very local amenity and may be protected from development under other policies of the plan, where appropriate. However policy SE10 will not be applied in such cases.

## Important Countryside Frontages

**POLICY SE11: Important Countryside Frontages (ICFs) are defined within village framework boundaries in order to identify frontages to land with a strong countryside character which either (a) penetrates or sweeps into the built-up area of a settlement so as to provide a significant connection between the village street scene and the surrounding rural area or (b) provides an important rural break between two nearby but detached parts of a village framework. Proposals for development along or behind such ICFs (as defined on the Inset Maps) will be strongly resisted if they would compromise either of these purposes.**

2.34 There are many instances in which land with a strong countryside character penetrates or sweeps into the rural settlements of South Cambridgeshire or separates two detached parts of the built-up area of a village. Such frontages can enhance the setting, character and appearance of the village street scene by retaining a sense of connection between the village and its rural origins and surroundings. The frontages identified as important for the purposes of this policy are defined on the Inset Maps. In the great majority of cases such frontages directly abut the village framework boundary but, in some instances, they extend beyond the boundary to connect two nearby individual frameworks within the same village where the

open nature of the intervening land is particularly important to the character of the village as a whole.