

Independent Examinations Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan - Matter 8C Housing Supply and Delivery

Endurance Estates (19174) Pembroke College & Balaam Family
(21173/21174) Gt Shelford Ten Acres Ltd (8948) and Bidwells (17324)



January 2015

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1 Matter 8C

Should the more sustainable villages make an increased contribution to housing supply?

- 1.1 We consider that sustainable villages should make an increased contribution towards housing supply within South Cambridgeshire and therefore as part of the wider development strategy for Greater Cambridge.
- 1.2 It is considered that insufficient regard has been given to the potential for further development in sustainable villages, particularly those close to Cambridge, and the valuable contribution development in such locations could make to ensuring delivery of sufficient housing in a sustainable and responsive manner.
- 1.3 SCDC's approach to new development in the District currently provides only 16% of the new housing for SCDC at the villages, amounting to 860 dwellings, 540 (63%) of which will be at Sawston. It is also evident that, whilst the proportion of development proposed for the Cambridge Urban Area / Edge of Cambridge sites remains similar to the previous strategy, the proposed role of the villages has diminished significantly with less than a quarter of the District's housing needs and little more than 10% of the two Authorities' overall housing requirement being met in such locations compared to 48% and 30% respectively within the Structure Plan based strategy.
- 1.4 Our Statements in relation to Matter 2 and Matters 8A and 8B highlight the increased reliance within the development strategy on the delivery of housing on strategic sites and new settlements in particular. South Cambridgeshire's housing trajectory is heavily reliant on the delivery of housing in the new settlements at Northstowe, Bourne Airfield New Village and Waterbeach along with Cambourne West.
- 1.5 The significant reliance on new settlements places the delivery of the Council's housing targets in a precarious position as any difficulties or delays to the delivery of one or more such developments will inevitably expose the Council to a significant shortfall in housing supply as has happened with Northstowe already. This risk is further exacerbated by the over-optimistic assumptions regarding delivery on these sites highlighted in our Statement in relation to Matters 8A and 8B. As a result it is considered that there will be insufficient flexibility within the strategy to enable the Plan to adapt to changes in market conditions and ensure a rolling 5-year supply of housing land can be maintained.
- 1.6 We consider that the plans provide insufficient flexibility in terms of housing supply in order to respond to changing circumstances with regard to delays in the delivery of strategic sites and the new settlements in particular. The over-reliance on strategic sites and New Settlements within the two plans and the optimistic assumptions regarding delivery at the new settlements will mean that there is little scope to bring forward alternative sites more quickly to address any delays on such sites coming forward. This will compromise the ability of the Plans to meet objectively assessed housing needs in full and significantly boost the supply of housing as required by paragraph 47 of the NPPF.
- 1.7 Whilst sustainable development is a key principle of the NPPF, it is considered that some development at the larger and better located villages can be sustainable. Indeed, some village development can help sustain those villages and bring investment to local services, facilities and infrastructure. Conversely, ignoring the role of villages places a strangle-hold on them and prevents investment projects coming forward to meet local needs.
- 1.8 This is particularly important in the context of South Cambridgeshire since the district incorporates a large number of villages and no towns. The village hierarchy identified in Policies S8 to S11 along with the Council's Settlement Hierarchy and Village Classification Report (2012) (Ref: RD/Strat/240) highlight the varying size and nature of these rural settlements. The identification of Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres, which each have a good range of services and facilities to meet day-to-day needs, is an

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acknowledgement that some of these villages can be regarded as being sustainable locations for development. Indeed, a number of these larger villages (such as Great Shelford and Histon and Impington) are located closer and have better accessibility to Cambridge than the majority of the new settlements will be.

- 1.9 Nonetheless, the Plan fails to direct any new development to a number of sustainable villages within the District despite a number of sustainable villages being identified by the Settlement Hierarchy and Village Classification Report. As a result, the sustainability of the villages will be threatened by the lack of development opportunities, and thereby investment opportunities, to help support and improve facilities. For example a large number of Public Houses have closed or are struggling to remain viable; more custom to support such facilities would be of benefit.
- 1.10 Indeed, such an approach is consistent with paragraphs 55 and 56 of the NPPF which underline the need to plan housing to reflect local needs within rural areas and the need to promote sustainable development within rural areas by locating housing where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities such as by supporting local services.
- 1.11 Whilst it is understood that the distribution of housing across the hierarchy must be underpinned by the need to provide sustainable development it is considered that the villages have a greater role to play in meeting identified housing needs in a flexible and responsive manner at the larger villages, so long as the allocation is of an appropriate scale and it can bring benefits to help support service provision within that village. It is considered that identifying additional housing allocations in sustainable village locations would not compromise the overall development strategy and spatial development hierarchy identified within the Plans.

Would this offer a more reliable contribution to land supply and delivery of new housing?

- 1.12 We consider that the allocation of additional sites at sustainable villages within South Cambridgeshire would provide a more reliable contribution to land supply and delivery of new housing within the District.
- 1.13 Such sites tend to be relatively small – less than 200 dwellings and generally much smaller. As such, they tend to:
- Take less time than strategic sites for proposals to be developed and applications to be submitted and determined;
 - Be greenfield sites with no existing uses requiring operations to cease or relocation prior to development commencing;
 - Have limited highway and other infrastructure burdens to facilitate development;
 - Have less complex viability issues as a result of the above;
 - Can usually be delivered in one phase and over the space of a few years.
- 1.14 This is evident from a review of the Council's housing trajectory and the contribution of rural allocation sites to delivery over recent years despite the delays in delivery on the larger strategic sites. This evidence of past delivery underlines the importance of this source of supply to meeting South Cambridgeshire's (and Greater Cambridge's) ongoing housing needs. Without this source of supply over the last 7 years South Cambridgeshire's housing delivery would have been significantly lower than it already has been.



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- 1.15 As a result, it is considered that by including more small sites within the larger villages there would be a more diverse and flexible supply of housing land which is deliverable without extensive infrastructure burdens. This would help to ensure that there is a rolling 5-year land supply including a 20% buffer to take account of past under-delivery, particularly in the event that there are further delays in the delivery of the new settlements and other strategic sites.
- 1.16 As a result, further suitable, deliverable sites should be identified in the more sustainable villages such as the Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres and, if required, certain Group Villages in order to help support local services and facilities and help to maintain flexibility in housing delivery.

Conclusions

- 1.17 It is considered that the planned supply of housing detailed within the South Cambridgeshire Submission Local Plan will not deliver the level of housing required to meet the housing targets and does not provide sufficient housing within sustainable villages to help meet housing needs. As such, the Plan and Policy S/6 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan in particular are unsound as it is:
- not positively prepared;
 - not justified having regard to the entirety of the evidence base; and
 - not consistent with National Policy within the NPPF in relation to housing.
- 1.18 Consequently, it is considered that the Plan should identify further sites within sustainable villages to ensure greater flexibility for the delivery of housing and thereby comply with paragraph 47 of the NPPF and ensure that the Plan is Sound in this regard.

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