



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan

Matter 8 – Flood Risk and Water Management

East Cambridgeshire District Council

Hearing Statement

September 2018

Matter 8: Flood risk and water management

Issue 1: Whether the policies relating to flood risk and wider water management issues are justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

26. Is the application of the Optional Technical Housing Standard for water efficiency justified and consistent with national policy?

The national planning practice guidance (NPPG)¹ enables Local Plan policies to apply the optional technical housing standard for water efficiency where there is “clear local need”.

The NPPG² indicates that the decision to establish whether there is clear need for the optional standard should be based on:

- existing sources of evidence.
- consultations with the local water and sewerage company, the Environment Agency and catchment partnerships.
- consideration of the impact on viability and housing supply of such a requirement.

The NPPG identifies the Environment Agency’s Water Stressed Areas Classification (2013) as a primary source of evidence. This assessment classifies the Anglian Water region, which includes the entirety of East Cambridgeshire district, as an area of “serious” water stress. This is also discussed in the East Cambridgeshire Water Cycle Study (PE17), paragraph 4.1.3.

In its representations (PS568), the Environment Agency expressed its support for the application of the optional technical housing standard:

“We support the target consumption rates of 110 l/h/d. This represents an achievable target using water efficient practices and appliances.”

Similarly, Anglian Water (the local water and sewerage company) expressed its support for applying the standard (PS260).

“Therefore we would support the optional water efficiency standard being applied within the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan area.”

The Council commissioned a Viability Assessment of the Local Plan (PE16). The assessment was based on the assumption that all new development would achieve the optional technical standard, and demonstrates that development viability, and therefore housing supply, would not be adversely impacted as a result.

In summary, there is a clear local need to apply the optional technical housing standard for water efficiency informed by existing evidence, with support at consultation from Anglian Water and Environment Agency, with evidence that development viability will not be adversely impacted. By implication, to not apply the optional standard could result in harm to water resources and the wider environment. The policy is therefore justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

¹ Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 56-014-20150327

² Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 56-015-20150327

27. To what extent is Policy LP25 effective and realistic in mitigating, and militating against flood risk, including the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage systems?

Flood risk is a critically important issue for East Cambridgeshire, due principally to the district's topography. Through policy LP25, the Local Plan seeks to ensure proposals for new development appropriately manage flood risk and protect the water environment. This is supported by an updated evidence base, including the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Level 1 & 2 hybrid report) (PE18) and Water Cycle Study (PE17 & PE17A). In addition, the Council adopted the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document in November 2016, which provides consistent guidance across the county.

The Environment Agency (EA) has generally endorsed the Local Plan's approach to managing water and flood risk. In its representations the EA notes that "...*the Local Plan Proposed Submission and supporting documents generally provide a very good framework for protecting, and even improving, the water environment.*"

However, in its representations, the EA indicated it believes LP25, as currently drafted, to be unsound. The Council therefore believes it is necessary to modify policy LP25 to ensure the policy is effective and consistent with national policy.

The Council has sought expert advice from the EA to modify the policy. The Council has worked with the EA to prepare and agree a Statement of Common Ground through which both parties have agreed necessary modifications to the policy. The Statement of Common Ground confirms that subject to applying a number of agreed modifications, the EA and Council believe that policy LP25 will be sound.

As modified, the policy and supporting text will provide greater clarity on flooding issues affecting the district; provide clearer links to the evidence base; give applicants greater clarity on how they should respond to flood risk; and manage issues such as climate change and residual risk more effectively.

The Council is aware that new national Climate Change projections and design guidance will be published in the near future. In addition, early discussions have taken place to commission a county-wide project to address strategic flooding matters.

This county-wide SFRA will likely provide a greater understanding of flood risk at a catchment scale, including residual risk. It is likely, therefore, that the county-wide SFRA will inform an update to the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD to provide more specific guidance on topics including residual risk and climate change allowances.

The suggested modifications therefore introduce a commitment on the Council to keep its evidence base up to date, and to work with its partners including the Environment Agency, Cambridgeshire County Council, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority and district councils to develop a county-wide SFRA and review the Flood and Water SPD as necessary.

During publication of the Proposed Submission Local Plan (Nov-Dec 17), Little Downham Parish Council also suggested changes to the wording of LP25. The Council expects that the policy, as modified, will adequately address the Parish Council's comments.

The Council requests that the Inspector considers applying the modifications to policy LP25 and its supporting text, as per the Statement of Common Ground between East Cambridgeshire District Council & Environment Agency (31 August 2018).

28. Is Policy LP25 based on up-to-date evidence and worded in such a way as to be effective and both internally, and regionally consistent? How has the Water Cycle Study influenced the policies and strategy of the Plan and what is the implication of the recently produced Addendum to the Water Cycle Study (PE17A) on the wording of the policies?

The evidence which underpins policy LP25 is up-to-date. The primary evidence for the policy is the Level 1 and Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (PE18), which was prepared alongside the Local Plan and published in 2017. In addition, the policy is influenced by national planning policies and the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD. Other related evidence includes the Water Cycle Study (PE17) (WCS) and Anglia River Basin Management Plan.

As discussed in response to Question 27 the Council is committed to keeping its evidence base under review, namely through participating in a project to prepare a county-wide SFRA. This new evidence will likely inform a review of the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD.

The Local Plan's approach of applying a strategic policy, supported by more detailed guidance contained within the SPD, means that the Council's approach to managing flood risk can be kept up to date and be responsive to new evidence. It is more expedient to update an SPD in light of new evidence, than undertake a review of the Local Plan. This approach delivers consistency across Cambridgeshire, as all district Councils in Cambridgeshire have adopted the same Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD. This provides greater clarity and certainty for developers and decision-makers alike.

The Council considers that, subject to the modifications discussed in its response to question 27, that policy LP25 is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. Through achieving consistency with national policy, and through its clear relationship to the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD, the Council considers the policy approach to be consistent with other authorities in the county.

The Water Cycle Study (and addendum) is an assessment of water resources, water supply, wastewater collection and treatment, water quality and the environment, flood risk, and Climate Change. The WCS is fundamental to the plan's strategy and allocation of development sites, as it demonstrates that the overall scale and distribution of growth across the district can be accommodated without significant harm to the water environment. It identifies constraints which will, in many circumstances require the allocation of infrastructure investment through Anglian Water's Asset Management Plan. In addition, the WCS identifies East Cambridgeshire as an area of water stress thereby providing justification for policy LP23: Water Efficiency.

The publication of the Water Cycle Study Addendum Report (PE17A) has no implications on the wording of policies as its findings were consistent with those of the main report. The addendum provides greater clarity on some very specific issues, but does not change the findings or recommendations of the main study report.