

East Cambridgeshire District Council Supplementary Planning Document

Renewable Energy
Development
(Commercial Scale)

October 2014



East Cambridgeshire
District Council



EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Farsi

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope of this document

- 1.1.1 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out East Cambridgeshire District Council's approach to renewable energy proposals. It is aimed at developers, local communities, Parish Councils and landowners and seeks to provide people with a better understanding of how planning applications for renewable energy proposals may be assessed by the Council.
- 1.1.2 East Cambridgeshire District Council is responsible for determining planning applications for renewable developments of 50 megawatts or less installed capacity. This excludes the installation of solar panels and wind turbines on domestic land and buildings which are considered to be 'permitted development' and therefore do not require a planning application (subject to a number of specific limitations). Renewable energy applications over 50 megawatts are decided by the Secretary of State for Energy as set out in the Planning Act 2008¹.
- 1.1.3 This SPD focuses on larger 'stand alone' renewable energy schemes which are of a commercial scale. It is also intended to cover large scale community led renewable energy schemes which are proposed by local communities and community organisations e.g. Community Land Trusts. Advice on smaller renewable energy generation as part of the buildings is contained in the District Council's Design Guide SPD. The Council is generally supportive of small or micro scale renewable energy development where it can be demonstrated that there are limited or no adverse impacts.
- 1.1.4 This SPD relates to Policy EN4 in the Council's Core Strategy (2009). The Council's emerging Local Plan (as at October 2014) also contains a similar policy on renewable energy development. The policies set out criteria against which planning applications for renewable energy development will be assessed.
- 1.1.5 Public consultation on a draft Supplementary Planning Document took place in April/May 2014. A revised version of the document was adopted as SPD by the Council on 16th October 2014.

1.2 Further information

- 1.2.1 The SPD and other policy documents can be viewed on the Council's website at: <http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/local-development-framework>. Please also see section 11 of this SPD for details of where to obtain further advice on renewable energy development.
- 1.2.2 If you have any comments relating to this document, please contact the Forward Planning Team on 01353 665555 or e-mail ldf@eastcambs.gov.uk

¹ New infrastructure projects which are considered to be of national significance include airports, roads, harbours and energy and waste facilities are set out in the Planning Act 2008. These will be determined in accordance with the relevant National Policy Statements.

2 Overview of renewable energy

2.1 What is renewable energy?

2.1.1 Renewable energy is defined as the energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of oceans, from the sun, from biomass and geothermal heat. It can also include the combustion of waste.

2.1.2 There are a number of different renewable energy technologies which can be employed as follows:

- Anaerobic digestion: is a method of waste treatment of organic materials when they decompose under the action of bacteria in a closed vessel and produce methane which can be used to produce heat, electricity or a combination of the two.
- Biomass (dry): dry biomass fuels including straw and wood can be used to generate electricity and heat through combustion of these materials.
- On-shore wind: wind turbines can utilise the wind to generate mechanical power for electricity generation.
- Solar power: sunlight can be converted into electricity through the use of photovoltaic cells located on buildings or mounted on frames set into the ground.

2.2 What are the benefits of renewable energy?

2.2.1 Renewable energy schemes can contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions, and can also have wider environmental, economic and social benefits as set out in the following table.

Environmental benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reducing carbon emissions.• Creating new habitats suitable for rare species (relevant to biomass schemes).• Managing existing environments.• Reducing flooding and/or flood risk.• Air quality improvements by reducing fossil fuel emissions.
Economic benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job creation (direct and indirect).• Expertise in manufacturing.• Research & Development.• Increased security and reliability of electricity supply.• Shareholding (where investment is made in wind turbines or solar farms).• Cheaper fuel bills.• Farm diversification/revitalisation.
Social benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retention of population (by providing direct employment).• Community pride.• Ground rent (where the community has ownership of the land).• Educational opportunities.• Longer term health and quality of life benefits.

2.3 The renewable energy potential of East Cambridgeshire

2.3.1 The Cambridgeshire Renewable Energy Infrastructure Framework² (CRIF) was commissioned by Cambridgeshire Horizons on behalf of the Cambridgeshire authorities to assess the potential for further renewable energy generation schemes to 2031. This study showed that the District has the potential to provide additional energy by employing a variety of renewable energy technologies.

2.3.2 There have been a number of significant renewable schemes which have been developed in East Cambridgeshire as set out below. To date there has been limited wind energy development of a commercial scale – although a number of proposals have been received.

Operational renewable energy sites

- Mushroom farm and anaerobic digestion Plant at May Farm, Whitehouse Road, Littleport (1.2 MW)
- Straw burning plant at Elean Business Park, Sutton (40 MW)
- Solar farm at Stowbridge Farm, Newmarket Road, Stretham (20 MW)
- Solar farm at land south of Mingay Farm, Wilburton (5MW)

Renewable energy sites (with the benefit of planning permission)

- Erection of anaerobic digestion plant at Hall Farm, Newmarket (0.5 MW)
- Anaerobic digestion plant at Ely Road, Chittering (3.5 MW)
- Extension to existing solar farm at Mingay Farm, Wilburton (17 MW)

2.4 The District Council's approach to renewable energy

2.4.1 This section provides an overview of the District Council's approach to commercial scale renewable energy development. It sets out key policies in the Core Strategy and draft Local Plan and relevant planning considerations, against which planning applications for renewable energy development will be assessed. The key policies referred to below are set out in full in Appendix 1 of this SPD.

Policy on renewable energy development

2.4.3 The Core Strategy (2009) includes a specific policy on renewable energy development. Policy EN 4 seeks to support renewable energy schemes and is used to assist planning applications for renewable energy development (see text box below). The emerging Local Plan (February 2014 as amended) also includes a similar policy on Renewable Energy Development. Policy ENV 6 is also set out in the text box below (as modified at April 2014). Policy ENV 6 seeks to support renewable energy schemes and will be used to assess applications for renewable energy development. The wording is taken from the Pre-submission Local Plan (February 2013), but also shows a number of changes which the District Council agreed on the 14th April 2014. These modifications will be considered by the Inspector during the examination process. The proposed changes are shown using **bold** for new text and ~~strikethrough~~ for deleted text.

²Cambridgeshire Renewables Infrastructure Framework Baseline Report
http://www.sustainabilityeast.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=99&Itemid=155

Core Strategy

Policy EN4: Renewable Energy

Development comprising 10 or more dwellings of 1000m² gross non residential floorspace or more is required to provide at least 10% of its energy requirements from decentralized and renewable and low carbon sources.

Proposals for renewable energy and associated infrastructure will be supported wherever possible, unless their wider environmental, social and economic benefits would be outweighed by significant adverse effects on:

- a. The Environment and amenity (impacts can be minimised through careful siting, design and use of landscaping);
- b. Key views, in particular those of Ely Cathedral;
- c. Protected species; and
- d. Residential amenity

Sites of international nature conservation importance should not be adversely affected unless there are no alternative sites and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

Sites of national or local nature conservation importance and Green belt areas should not be adversely affected unless there any significant adverse effects are outweighed by wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

Provision should be made for the removal of facilities and reinstatement of the site, should the facilities cease to operate.

Draft Local Plan

Policy ENV 6: Renewable energy development

Proposals for renewable energy and associated infrastructure will be supported, unless their wider environmental, social and economic benefits would be outweighed by significant adverse effects that cannot be remediated and made acceptable in relation to:

- The local environment and visual landscape impact.
- **Heritage assets.**
- Impact on the character and appearance of the streetscape/buildings.
- Key views, in particular those of Ely Cathedral.
- Protected species.
- Residential amenity; and
- Safeguarding areas for nearby airfields.

Renewable energy proposals which affect sites of international, national and local nature importance or other irreplaceable habitats will be determined against the relevant sections of Policy ENV 7.

The visual and amenity impacts of proposed structures will be assessed on their merits, both individually and cumulatively and measures to **remediate ameliorate** adverse impacts **and make them acceptable** will be required.

Provision should be made for the removal of facilities and reinstatement of the site, should they cease to operate.

- 2.4.4 The Core Strategy also contains a number of generic policies which applications for renewable energy development will need to consider. This includes policies relating to the impact on the landscape (EN 1), design (EN 2), biodiversity and geology (EN 6) historic environment (EN 5), built environment and highways (S 6). The Draft Local Plan also contains similar policies; for example policies ENV 1, ENV 2, ENV 7, ENV 12-15 and COM 7. Community-led renewable energy schemes will also be expected to be considered against the criteria outlined in Policy GROWTH 6 in the emerging Local Plan.
- 2.4.5 In summary proposals for renewable energy generation will be considered on their merits, on a case by case basis. The Council will take account of any environmental, economic or social benefits (as outlined on page 3), and will consider whether there are any adverse impacts, for example on landscape character, the natural and historic environment, public rights of way and highway network, residential amenity and the operation of aviation sites. The Council will refuse planning permission for commercial scale renewable energy schemes where it is considered that there are significant adverse impacts which outweigh the wider benefits of renewable energy development identified above. The Council will also consider to what extent any adverse impacts can be mitigated through the design and siting of proposals or by applying appropriate planning conditions. The views of local communities, residents, parish and town councils, community groups and all elected representatives relating to commercial scale renewable energy schemes will also be given significant weight in the determination of planning applications.
- 2.4.6 The SPD seeks to provide guidance for applicants on the Council's approach to commercial scale renewable energy development, and the key issues that applicants will need to address. The key issues are listed below and explored further in sections 3 to 9:
- Visual landscape impact and key views (see section 3 below).
 - Heritage assets of national, regional or local significance (see section 4 below).
 - Biodiversity and geology (see section 5 below).
 - Residential amenity (see section 6 below).
 - Safeguarding areas (see section 7 below).
 - Highways and Public Rights of Way (see section 8 below).
 - Site restoration (see section 9 below).

The Planning application process

- 2.4.7 Applicants who are putting together a renewable energy scheme are advised to speak to the District Council's Planning team as soon as possible for advice on the planning application process. Planning officers will be able to provide informal advice and guidance on the siting and design of renewable schemes and the relevant information needed to accompany an application. The contact details for the Planning Team are set out in Section 11 below.
- 2.4.8 Applicants should also consult relevant bodies including Cambridgeshire County Council, Historic England, Environment Agency, Highways Agency, MOD, Natural England, and Internal Drainage Boards as part of the pre-application process to seek agreement on issues relevant to proposals at an early stage.

2.4.9 Applicants will be expected to provide sufficient information to the District Council to enable the planning application to be registered and determined. They will be expected to provide the following information when proposing a renewable energy scheme:

- Details of community consultation undertaken and the outcomes of this work (see section 2.5 for further details).
- Design and Access Statement including the justification for the proposed location and design of the wind turbines, photovoltaic panels or plant and security fencing and lighting etc.
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (see section 3 for further details).
- Heritage Statement outlining any adverse impacts on the significance of heritage assets and their setting (see section 4 for further details).
- Sufficient information relating to any adverse impacts upon biodiversity including ecological assessments, surveys and ecological management plans and proposed mitigation measures (see section 5 for further details).
- Noise impact assessment (see section 6 for further details).
- Air quality impact assessment (see section 6 for further details).
- Transport Statement (see section 8 for further details).
- Information relating to the potential loss of high quality agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) (see section 9 for further details).
- The expected energy generating capacity of the proposal.

2.4.10 Applicants may be required to provide an Environmental Statement with a planning application in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2011. The District Council is required to provide advice to applicants regarding the need for an Environmental Statement to be prepared (known as a Screening Opinion).

2.4.11 Where two or more wind turbines are proposed or the hub height of any wind turbine exceeds 15 metres as outlined in Schedule 2 of the Regulations it will need to be screened to determine whether significant effects are likely and an Environmental Statement should be prepared. Wind turbine development which does not exceed these thresholds is unlikely to require an Environmental Statement. In relation to other types of renewable energy development these are not specifically listed in Schedule 2 of the Regulations. Therefore the District Council will determine whether a development will require an Environmental Statement dependent upon whether it will have significant effects on the environment. Where an Environmental Statement is required the District Council can also provide advice to applicants on the content and matters which should be included in the statement (known as a Scoping Opinion).

2.4.12 The District Council's Planning webpage also provides information needed to accompany an application.

- Procedures for pre-application advice
<http://www.eastcamb.gov.uk/planning/preapplication-advice-scheme>

- Validation Checklist setting out what basic information is required. For details see the following link.

<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/planning/planning-application-forms>

2.4.13 Please note that the District Council now charges for pre-application advice. Further details relating to these charges are available to view on the District Council's website.

2.5 Community engagement

2.5.1 The District Council will expect applicants to demonstrate that they have fully engaged with all local communities affected by the presence of the proposal, residents and community groups in the development of renewable energy proposals. The exact details of consultation are not prescribed as this should be proportionate to the scale of development and issues involved. However, applicants will be expected to make use of public events and exhibitions in suitable venues in settlements/parishes which will be affected by the proposed development (including any areas outside of the district). Where two or more wind turbines or a wind turbine is greater than 15m in height are proposed applicants will also be required to undertake pre-application consultation as set out in current legislation.³

2.5.2 Applicants will be expected to engage with the local community as early as possible in the development of renewable energy proposals. Engagement with the local community should not be limited to those within the immediate vicinity of proposals as there are likely to be wider impacts.

2.5.3 Applications for renewable energy proposals should include a statement which provides details of what consultation has been undertaken, including:

- Copies of publicity undertaken relating to the proposal e.g. inclusion of article in parish magazine or press releases.
- Details of meetings/briefings/presentations with parish, city, town and village councils or district/county councillors.
- Details of public exhibitions/event(s) which have been held.
- Information from consultation websites or forums which have been used by the applicant(s) to publicise the proposed development.
- Schedule of comments and feedback from residents and community groups, and how this has been taken into account as part of the planning application.

2.5.4 The District Council will take account of all responses received as part of consultation on planning applications for large scale renewable energy development proposals. The views of affected local communities, residents, parish and town councils, community groups and all elected representatives will be given significant weight in the decision making process.

³ Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure and Section 62A Applications (England) (Amendment) Order 2013

3. Visual landscape impact and key views

- 3.1 East Cambridgeshire has an attractive and distinctive landscape which is characterised by three main landscape types: the fens, chalk and clay hills. The visual impacts on the landscape as a result of renewable energy development will come about as a result of changes in the available views through intrusion or obstruction and whether these views may be improved or reduced. Applicants will need to consider the impacts of renewable energy development on these landscapes and existing views within the district as outlined in policies EN 1, EN 2 and EN 4 in the Core Strategy (and policies ENV 1, ENV 2 and ENV 6 in the emerging Local Plan).

Landscape and key views – potential impacts

- 3.2 The following is a (non-exhaustive) list of potential impacts as a result of renewable energy development:
- Wind turbines (particularly those which form part of wind farms) are large structures that will have significant effects on the landscape and visual amenity of an area for a significant distance.
 - Solar farms can change the character of an area particularly where sites are likely to be more visible e.g. located in a hilly area.

Requirements for applicants

- 3.3 Applicants will be expected to consider the following issues when making an application for renewable energy development:
1. **Impacts upon views:** The potential impact the development may have on views within the district and potentially neighbouring districts (both during and after construction). Given the low lying nature of the district it will important to consider the impact on any long distance view(s). In doing so applicants should have regard to views which are currently available from and to settlements, roads, railway lines, publicly accessible land, public rights of way and designated heritage assets (Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Historic Parks and Gardens). Applicants will be expected to undertake a desktop review which identifies sensitive receptors from the above list which are relevant to the proposed development.
 2. **Ely Cathedral:** The potential impact that development may have on the views and wider landscape setting of Ely Cathedral should be fully considered, given its national and international importance. Proposals which are visually dominant and have an adverse impact on views of Ely Cathedral and its landscape setting, including those outlined in the Council's Ely Environmental Capacity Study or successor document, are unlikely to be acceptable.
 3. **Wicken Fen and strategic green infrastructure:** Wicken Fen is one of the few remaining fragments of fenland wilderness in East Anglia. Its biodiversity is considered to be exceptional but there are concerns that it is too small and isolated to support sustainable populations of its special and rare species. The Wicken Fen Vision will create a large new area open to the public between Wicken Fen and Cambridge. Policy CS 6 (Environment) in the Core Strategy and Policy COM 5 of in

the emerging Local Plan state that development that causes loss or harm to existing strategic green infrastructure will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the benefits of development outweigh any adverse impacts. Applicants will need to consider any adverse impacts on views which are currently available from and to strategic green infrastructure sites including the Wicken Vision Area and the Ouse Washes and the Devil's Dyke.

4. **Associated buildings and infrastructure:** Consideration should also be given to the design of associated buildings and infrastructure on the landscape and neighbouring land. For example connections to the electricity supply have a significant visual impact dependent upon the location and scale of such infrastructure and will need to be considered by the applicant where these form part of the planning application. Applicants will also be expected to provide sufficient detail relating to the design of associated infrastructure including any access roads/tracks and security fencing to enable the application to be determined.
5. **Cumulative landscape and visual impacts:** Where more than one renewable energy scheme is proposed, or where a single scheme is proposed in an area with existing schemes, the combined effect of all schemes taken together is known as the 'cumulative effect'. Guidance relating to the issues which need to be considered in assessing cumulative effects of wind farms is outlined in the Government's 'Planning Practice Guidance'⁴. Applicants will be expected to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that these issues have been fully assessed.

Similar considerations are relevant to development of solar farms within the district. However it is important to note that the impacts of ground mounted panels can be mitigated with effective screening. Where new hedging is proposed the expectation is that native species will be provided as part of the development.

6. **Mitigation measures:** Where it is possible to mitigate any landscape impacts sufficient detail should be provided of any proposed landscaping to enable the application to be determined. Any off-site landscape mitigation would need to be secured through a Section 106 agreement.
7. **Cambridge Green Belt:** The area around the villages of Bottisham, Lode and Swaffham Bulbeck forms part of the Cambridge Green Belt. Policy EN 9 of the Core Strategy and Policy ENV 10 in the emerging Local Plan seeks to strictly control development in the Green Belt. When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy proposals could impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Applicants will need to demonstrate to the District Council that there are very special circumstances that clearly outweigh any harm as a result of inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
8. **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment:** A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will be required for renewable energy proposals identifying changes to existing view(s) and the significance of any impacts relative to the sensitivity of the landscape. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of renewable energy proposals provided should be consistent with the methodology set out in 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', 3rd Edition (2013). Applicants should

⁴ <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

also have regard to the Landscape Institute's published advice relating to the use of photomontages (Advice Note 01/11). Reference should also be made to the guidance relating to the landscape character within the district provided in the following sources:

- Natural England's National Character Area Profiles (currently under review)
- Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines (1991) (Cambridgeshire County Council)
- Cambridgeshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (Cambridgeshire County Council)
- Ouse Washes Landscape Character Assessment (Ouse Washes Landscape Partnership) (2014)

4. Heritage assets

- 4.1 Within East Cambridgeshire there are almost 930 listed buildings, 27 Conservation Areas and a number of designated Historic Parks and Gardens. The District Council is also in the process of establishing a register of buildings of local interest (details can be found on the Council's website). East Cambridgeshire also has a rich and varied archaeological heritage which includes 50 Scheduled Monuments and sites of local or regional, national and international significance, as identified in the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record⁵.
- 4.2 Applicants will need to consider the impacts of renewable energy development (both during and after construction) on the district's designated and non-designated heritage assets and potentially heritage assets in neighbouring districts. Heritage assets are defined in the NPPF as "*A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest*".

Heritage assets – potential impacts

- 4.3 The following is a (non-exhaustive) list of potential impacts as a result of renewable energy development:
- The construction of renewable energy development in close proximity to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, where the development is visually dominant, may be inappropriate;
 - The construction of renewable energy development may have the potential to damage any underlying archaeological remains; and
 - Certain types of renewable energy development may have the potential to impair the setting of Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Historic Parks and Gardens due to the potential scale and character of the development.

Requirements for applicants

- 4.4 Applicants will be expected to consider the following issues when making an application for renewable energy development. These issues are outlined in more detail in Policy EN 5 (Historic Conservation) in the Core Strategy and policies ENV 12, 13, 14 and 15 of the emerging Local Plan.
1. **Impact on heritage assets:** Consider the potential impact the development may have on heritage assets. Any assessment should address impacts on the integrity, visual amenity and setting of heritage assets. The setting of heritage assets includes the surroundings from which an asset is experienced which may be more extensive than its curtilage.
 2. **Advice relating to heritage assets:** Applicants will be expected to seek advice, at an early stage in their proposals, from the District Council's Conservation Officer and/or where appropriate the Historic Environment Team at Cambridgeshire County Council and Historic England. Reference should also be made to Historic England's

⁵ http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20011/archives_archaeology_and_museums/318/archaeology/5

current guidance relating to the setting of heritage assets and renewable energy development.

3. **Heritage Statement:** Where renewable energy development is proposed which would have an impact on heritage assets or their settings applicants will be required to submit a Heritage Statement. The Heritage Statement should include the following elements (as a minimum the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record should be consulted):
 - Assessment of heritage significance – an assessment of the significance of the heritage assets or assets which may be affected by the renewable energy development.
 - Assessment of impact – an assessment of the likely impact of the proposed development on the heritage asset(s) and their setting.
 - Mitigation - a statement outlining the strategy to address any impacts of the proposed development on the significance of the heritage asset(s).
4. **Ancient Monuments and Historic Parks and Gardens:** In relation to Ancient Monuments and Historic Parks and Gardens, applicants should avoid locating commercial scale renewable energy proposals on or within these heritage assets. Care should also be taken to avoid negative impacts on their setting which could be extensive. The locating of renewable energy proposals on or near archaeological sites of regional, local, national and international significance, as identified in the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record, should also be avoided where possible. Where a pre-submission evaluation identifies newly discovered significant archaeological evidence a mitigation strategy will be required to avoid these areas. The excavation of archaeological remains will be necessary where avoidance strategies cannot be implemented.
5. **Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas:** Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have considered the potential for adverse impacts of renewable energy development on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas within the district. Renewable energy schemes should avoid harming Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and their settings. Applicants should also have regard to the adopted Conservation Areas Appraisals where relevant. A current list of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas within the District is available to view on the District Council's website at the following address:
<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/conservation/conservation-listed-buildings>
6. **Local register of buildings and structures:** The District Council is intending to introduce a local register of buildings and structures of historic importance by 2015. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have considered the impacts of renewable energy development on designated buildings/structures which appear on the local register.

5. Biodiversity and geology

- 5.1 Biodiversity can be described as the 'wealth of wildlife around us'. It includes flora and fauna and is not limited to designated sites but includes environmental features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, wetland and ponds. The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 118) requires that Local Planning Authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity when determining planning applications.

Biodiversity – potential impacts

- 5.2 The following is a (non-exhaustive) list of potential impacts as a result of renewable energy development:
- Wind turbines have the potential to cause harm to birds through habitat loss (both direct and/or indirect), disturbance and displacement from feeding, nesting and migration and the potential for collision with turbines.
 - Wind turbines can also have adverse impacts on habitats for bats including foraging and flight paths;
 - Solar farms have the potential to harm natural habitats during construction, operation or when being decommissioned; e.g. the loss of foraging/roosting sites for birds.
 - Air pollution and noise disturbance associated with energy from waste proposals; and
 - The removal of trees, scrub or hedgerows to enable renewable energy development can affect protected and priority Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Requirements for applicants

- 5.3 Applicants will need to consider the impacts of renewable energy development on designated nature conservation and geodiversity sites, and any functionally linked or supporting habitat, protected and priority species and habitats of local importance to fulfil the requirements outlined in Policy EN 6 in the Core Strategy and ENV 6 and ENV 7 in the emerging Local Plan.
- 5.4 Applicants will be expected to consider the following issues when making an application for renewable energy development:
1. **International, national and locally designated nature conservation sites:** Renewable energy proposals which have an adverse impact on an international nature conservation site will not normally be permitted unless there are exceptional overriding reasons of public interest. Proposals likely to have a significant effect on European sites will be assessed through the Conservation (of Habitats and Species) Regulations 2010 (as amended). Applicants will be required to submit sufficient information to enable the District Council to undertake an Appropriate Assessment. Proposals for renewable energy development will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the objectives of SSSIs will not be compromised by the development, and any significant adverse effects are clearly outweighed by the environmental, social and economic benefits. Similarly renewable energy proposals which cause harm to locally designated sites, ancient woodland, veteran trees, habitats or important species will not be permitted.

When identifying potential sites for wind farms reference should be made to the RSPB's spatial guidance entitled 'Wind Turbines and Sensitive Bird Populations: Spatial Planning for Wind Turbines in the Fens Natural Area (2004)' The zones of relative sensitivity for wind energy development are intended to present a guide only as to the likely intensity of survey and assessment required to assess potential impacts, rather than 'hard lines' to delineate different areas. The maps set out in this report are based on the best available data and expert knowledge available at the time of the preparation of the report. Further data and renewable energy schemes have come forward since its publication which updates the situation reflected in the map. Therefore applicants should also consider any more recent evidence relating to foraging of bird species associated with the Ouse Washes.

2. **Protected species:** The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a renewable energy proposal is being considered which could cause harm to the species or its habitat (including the movement of species). Applicants should have regard to Natural England's current Standing Advice⁶ for Protected Species which outlines the potential impacts of development on individual species, survey requirements and recommended mitigation and compensatory measures. A survey or surveys (if there is more than one species in the vicinity of the site) will be required to establish to what extent these species would be affected by the proposed development.
3. **Environmental features:** Applicants will be required to demonstrate that any renewable energy proposals have considered any impacts on any environmental features including trees, hedges and ponds as outlined in Policy EN 6 in the Core Strategy and Policy ENV 6 in the emerging Local Plan (including those off-site).
4. **Biodiversity mitigation:** The potential for biodiversity mitigation should be considered on a site by site basis as part of renewable energy development. Where it is proposed to develop wind turbines applicants should have regard to Natural England's Technical Information Notes (TIN051 and TIN069). This guidance identifies the potential impacts on birds and bats resulting from wind farm developments and appropriate survey methodologies which should be employed by applicants.
5. **Biodiversity enhancement:** Applicants for renewable energy development will be expected to provide robust evidence as part of their planning application to demonstrate that the proposal will result in a net biodiversity gain as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework. Opportunities to create or improve existing biodiversity should form part of renewable energy proposals. Biodiversity enhancement can include habitat restoration, improved links between sites and the inclusion of new environmental features within the development. For example there is the potential to create new grasslands and hedgerows on the area around solar panels. Where environmental features are removed appropriate compensation measures will be required by the District Council. Applicants should have regard to the best practice guidance for renewable energy developments and biodiversity enhancement measures which has been produced by Natural England, the RSPB and the Solar Trade Association.

⁶ <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningdevelopment/spatialplanning/standingadvice/specieslinks.aspx>

6. **Ecology survey:** Where renewable energy development is proposed within or close to international, national or locally designated sites or the proposed site area is 0.5ha or more an ecological survey and Ecological Impact Assessment will be required. The assessment provided should be consistent with the methodology set out in 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK' (2006). This should include a detailed assessment of the likely impacts on the ecological interest of sites. Where impacts have been identified there will be a need to demonstrate that effective mitigation measures can be provided. Where wind farms are proposed there may also be a requirement for post-construction surveys as outlined in Natural England's current advice⁷ to validate the predictions which have been made and the effectiveness of any proposed mitigation measures. This may result in a requirement to carry out further additional mitigation measures.

7. **Management of sites:** Applicants will also be required to demonstrate that provision is made for the long term ecological management of the site (including screening where relevant). Applicants may be required by the District Council to provide an Ecological Management Plan as part of the planning application which sets out the details of the proposed biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures.

⁷ Assessing the effects on onshore wind farms on birds, Natural England (January 2010)

6. Residential amenity

- 6.1 Applicants will need to consider the effects of renewable energy schemes on residential amenity including the potential for noise, solar glare, air quality, loss of light, and odour both during and after construction. The effects of a renewable energy proposal on residential amenity will vary dependent upon the renewable energy technology employed, the scale of installation, siting and design considerations.

Residential amenity – potential impacts

- 6.2 The following is a (non-exhaustive) list of potential impacts as a result of renewable energy development:
- Wind turbines will generate increases in noise levels although any impacts will be reduced with distance;
 - Wind turbines can cast a shadow over neighbouring properties in certain conditions. This can cause an effect known as shadow flicker which can be detrimental to amenity;
 - Solar panels absorb sunlight in order to generate electricity although this can be partially reflected (an effect known as solar glare) which could have a negative impact on nearby properties **and road and aircraft safety**;
 - Dust emissions as a result of construction and the possible effects on local houses and farms;
 - The potential for odour as a result of the operation of an anaerobic digestion plant;
 - Operational noise from traffic and plant operations particularly relevant to biomass developments; and
 - The effect of emissions from construction and operational **processes and vehicles** on local air quality.

Requirements for applicants

- 6.3 Applicants will be expected to consider the following issues when making an application for renewable energy development:
1. **Advice relating to residential amenity:** Applicants will be expected to seek advice, at an early stage in their proposals, from the District Council's Environmental Health Team.
 2. **Safety:** Where wind turbines are proposed the minimum separation distance required for safety purposes from buildings is the fall over distance (i.e. the height of the turbine to the tip of the blade) plus 10%.⁸ Applicants should also ensure that sufficient distance is provided between wind turbines and power lines and the strategic highway network having regard to the current standards of the Highways Agency (see section 8.3 for further details), National Grid or Distribution Network Operator. It should be noted that these are minimum distances for safety purposes only, and that the actual appropriate distance between wind turbines and occupied buildings will be significantly greater, in order to protect residential amenity. The distance will be determined on a case by case basis having regard to the expected

⁸ National Planning Practice Guidance (2014)

noise levels, and visual impacts (please see section 3 for further details on visual impact). Significant weight will be given to adverse impacts on residential amenity and human health arising from noise, shadow flicker, solar glare or other aspects, as a result of renewable energy developments.

3. **Noise Impact Assessment:** Where renewable proposals are being proposed which could result in a significant increase on the local noise environment a Noise Impact Assessment should be submitted with the planning application. Assessments for wind farm proposals should be consistent with the methodology outlined in the Institute of Acoustics 'Good practice guide to the application of ESTU-R-97 for the assessment and rating of wind turbine noise' (May 2013). Developers are encouraged to enter into discussions with the Council's Environmental Health Team at the earliest opportunity.
4. **Air quality impact assessment:** An air quality impact assessment will also be required for renewable energy proposals that have the potential to cause increased levels of air pollution or odour, or have an adverse effect on local air quality.
5. **Shadow flicker:** Where it is proposed to develop wind turbines the potential impact of shadow flicker upon residential dwellings, businesses and other buildings (which are regularly occupied) should be considered by applicants. Where impacts are expected applicants should undertake a quantitative analysis of the anticipated impact(s).
6. **Light/solar glare:** Applicants will also be expected to provide sufficient detail relating to the potential for solar glare and any mitigation measures proposed. For example PV panels on solar farms can be manufactured with anti-reflective materials which reduce the potential for solar glare. Where it is intended to install external lighting full details should be included with the application. The amount of lighting which is to be provided should be fully justified as part of the planning application to avoid unnecessary intrusion in the countryside.
7. Where impacts have been identified, it may be possible to agree effective mitigation measures. Where such measures have been agreed, there may be a requirement for post construction surveys to validate the assessed level of predicted impacts and the effectiveness of agreed mitigation measures. This may result in a requirement to carry out further additional mitigation measures.
8. **Use of planning conditions:** The District Council will apply appropriate planning conditions (dependent upon the proposed renewable technology) in relation to hours of operation and acceptable levels of noise etc.

7. Safeguarding areas

- 7.1 There is a need to ensure that development including renewable energy schemes does not have a detrimental impact on the safe operation of airports and military air bases. Renewable energy development within the district has the potential to have an impact on the airport safeguarding areas identified for both Cambridge Airport and the military airbases at Mildenhall and Lakenheath in neighbouring Suffolk.
- 7.2 Wind turbines can also adversely affect a number of Ministry of Defence (MOD) operations including radars, seismological recording equipment, communications facilities and low flying.
- 7.3 The MOD's Safeguarding Team is a statutory consultee on planning applications to ensure that the operation of MOD sites is not adversely affected by development. In addition, the District Council is required to consult Cambridge City Airport where:
- A proposed building or structure is of a height which would exceed the level indicated on the safeguarding map for the area.
 - Wind farms which are proposed within a 30km radius of Cambridge Airport (which includes about two-thirds of the district).
- 7.4 Applicants are advised to contact the MOD Safeguarding Team and Cambridge Airport's Duty Manager at an early stage when developing wind farm proposals. To assist with pre-application discussions the MOD has produced a pro-forma which is available to view on the Renewable UK website (www.renewableuk.com). Applicants should also consider whether there will be any potential adverse impacts on smaller aviation sites which are not officially safeguarded by legislation.
- 7.5 The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has also produced guidance to assist applicants proposing wind turbines (CAP 764 CAA Policy and Guidelines on Wind Turbines and CAA Advice for Pre-Planning Guidance). Applicants are advised to have regard to the guidance produced by the CAA and MOD.
- 7.6 During the construction phase of renewable energy schemes the presence of a crane or cranes has the potential to affect aviation activities. Applicants should have regard to the Civil Aviation Authority's guidance for crane operators⁹ and liaise with local aerodrome operators and notify the Civil Aviation Authority and Defence Geographic Agency where necessary.

⁹ Guidance to crane operators on aviation lighting and notification – August 2013

8. Access and Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- 8.1 The access and highways considerations associated with renewable energy development are similar to those considered for other types of development. However certain types of renewable energy development such as wind turbines and solar farms can have a significant impact on the local network of roads (due to the level of traffic movements associated with construction). There is also a need to consider the impact of the renewable energy development on the local highway network following construction. This will include the number of traffic movements within and to the site. The number of movements will vary dependent upon the renewable technology employed. For example suitable biodegradable materials will need to be fed into any proposed anaerobic digestion plant to generate electricity. In the case of solar farms and wind turbines any impacts are likely to be limited to those associated with maintenance.
- 8.2 Applicants will need to demonstrate that an appropriate site access can be provided and that any impacts on the local highway network can be satisfactorily mitigated in accordance with Policy S 4 in the Core Strategy (and Policy COM 7 in the emerging Local Plan). Consideration should also be given to the long term maintenance of any access routes which form part of the development.

Requirements for Applicants

- 8.3 Applicants will be expected to consider the following issues when making an application for renewable energy development:
1. **Trunk roads:** The Highways Agency is responsible for trunk roads in East Cambridgeshire. Where wind turbines are proposed applicants should refer to the guidance set out in 'The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development (September 2013)'. The minimum separation distance from the strategic highway network is height of turbine plus 50m or turbine height x 1.5 (whichever is the lesser) from the highway boundary. Applicants will need to demonstrate that wind farm proposals which have an effect on trunk roads within the district are acceptable to the Highways Agency.
 2. **Public rights of way:** The NPPF (paragraph 75), Policy S 6 of the Core Strategy and Policy COM 7 of the Council's emerging Local Plan seek to protect the existing public rights of way network from being adversely affected as a result of development. Renewable energy development schemes will be expected to incorporate existing public rights of way without the need for existing routes being diverted. Applicants will also be expected to seek advice when developing their proposals from the Rights of Way and Access Team at Cambridgeshire County Council. Where renewable energy developments adversely affect the existing public rights of way network, provision should be made to offset the disadvantages to the public. Any proposed diversions to the public rights of way network would need to be agreed with Cambridgeshire County Council.
 3. **Transport Statements:** Where renewable energy development is proposed which is likely to have significant transport implications (e.g. level of traffic movements) a Transport Statement will be required.

4. **Catchment restrictions:** The District Council will also consider the need to impose restrictions on the distance travelled by vehicles to provide suitable biodegradable materials to be used in anaerobic digestion plants within the district. Planning conditions will also be applied to require the use of wheel washing equipment to ensure that material is not deposited on the public highway. The Council will also apply appropriate conditions to restrict the hours of operation of anaerobic digestion plants to protect residential amenity, as outlined in Section 6 of the SPD.

9. Site restoration and continuation of agricultural use

- 9.1 The District Council will expect applicants to make provision for the restoration of sites in accordance with the final paragraph of Core Strategy Policy EN 4 and emerging Local Plan Policy ENV 6. This will normally relate to wind turbine sites and solar farm sites, which can be removed at the end of their operational life.
- 9.2 Applications for wind and solar farms should set out details of what will be decommissioned and removed from the site at the end of the project timescale. Wind turbines typically have an operational life of 25 years although this can vary.
- 9.3 The District Council will require applicants to restore land to its former use following the decommissioning of wind turbines or solar farms including the removal of structures and associated buildings and new vehicular access routes to the site. Planning conditions will be used to ensure that renewable energy sites are restored in entirety to their former use. Developers will be required to ensure, and to demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction, that sufficient finance is set aside to enable the full restoration of sites; for example, through a legally binding bond. However applicants will not be required to remove any publicly accessible walking/cycling routes where there is a clear community benefit in these being retained following restoration of the site.
- 9.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance emphasises the need to focus the development of large scale solar farms on previously developed land (which is not of high environmental value) or non-agricultural land. The aim is to ensure that solar photovoltaic (PV) panels are located on buildings or on previously developed land to avoid the need to develop greenfield sites.
- 9.5 Where it is proposed to develop a solar farm on a greenfield site applicants will be expected to provide the following information as part of the planning application:
- The amount of high quality agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) which will be developed as part of the application;
 - Alternative sites which have been considered including the agricultural or environmental value of these sites and why these have been discounted;
 - To what extent the proposed site will remain in agricultural use following development; and
 - How the site is intended to be restored to agricultural use.

10 Wind turbines and electromagnetic transmissions

- 10.1 The operation of wind turbines can potentially affect electromagnetic transmissions (e.g. radio, television and phone signals). OFCOM is responsible for identifying the relevant consultees for a particular site. Applicants for wind turbines will be required to provide sufficient information to demonstrate that they have fully considered the potential interference which may result from development and suitable mitigation measures to reduce the potential interference. This could include the preparation of a desktop assessment or reception surveys where necessary.

11. Further sources of advice

- 11.1 Applicants bringing forward renewable energy development in East Cambridgeshire are advised to contact the District Council for further advice and guidance. In addition to the Planning Department, the County Council, Cambridge Airport and the MoD are able to provide advice on specific issues as set out below. The key contacts are as follows:

Planning Team (Application requirements including landscape and biodiversity issues)

Sue Wheatley, Principal Development Management Officer
E-mail Sue.Wheatley@eastcambs.gov.uk
Tel 01353 665555

Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Buildings of Local Interest

Lorraine Brown, Conservation Officer
E-mail conservation@eastcambs.gov.uk
Tel 01353 665555

Environmental Health

Environmental Health Team
E-mail EnvironmentalHealth@eastcambs.gov.uk
Tel 01353 665555

Archaeology

Historic Environment Team
Cambridgeshire County Council
Box CC 1008
Castle Court
Shire Hall
Cambridge
CB3 0AP
E-mail archaeology@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel 01223 728564

Public Rights of Way

Public Rights of Way and Access Team
Cambridgeshire County Council
Box CC1305
Castle Court
Castle Hill
Cambridge
CB3 0AP
E-mail cst@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel 0345 045 5212

Cambridge Airport Safeguarding Area

Airport Duty Manager

Cambridge Airport

Newmarket Road

Cambridge

CB5 8RX

E-mail: airportsafeguarding@cambridgeairport.com

Tel 01223 373535

MOD Safeguarding Areas

MOD Safeguarding

Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Kingston Road

Sutton Coldfield

West Midlands

B75 7RL

E-mail DIO-Safeguarding-Wind@mod.uk

Tel 0121 311 3847

Appendix 1 Key Development Plan Policies

East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy (adopted October 2009)

Policy CS 6: Environment

All new development should contribute to the delivery of sustainable development, by being designed and located to minimise carbon emissions and the use of non-renewable resources, mitigate/adapt to future climate change, provide attractive and safe places for people, and protect and enhance the quality of the natural and built environment.

Opportunities to minimise air, land and water pollution and improve water quality should be taken wherever possible, and development will be encouraged to make maximum use of renewable energy sources. New development will also be expected to minimise the exposure of people and property to flooding.

Open spaces and amenity areas will be protected against loss or harm, and opportunities will be taken to enhance quality, promote access (particularly by non-car modes), and expand to contribute to green networks. New development will be expected to incorporate open space and high quality landscaping to provide attractive environments for people and wildlife.

Support will be given to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the district, including designated sites of nature conservation importance. Priority habitats and species will be protected, and development proposals will be expected to maximise the retention of biodiversity and mitigate against losses.

In the identified Strategic Areas of Greenspace Enhancement, co-ordinated action will be taken with statutory and other agencies to improve their biodiversity and landscape value, and to promote schemes supporting quiet recreational activity. Development proposals in these areas will need to contribute to these objectives, and enhance biodiversity, landscape and recreational values of these areas.

The quality and distinctiveness of East Cambridgeshire's towns and villages and landscapes will be conserved and enhanced. Historically or architecturally important buildings, areas and landscapes will be protected from loss or harm, and enhanced wherever possible. All development proposals will be encouraged to incorporate innovative and locally distinctive design, and will be expected to provide attractive and safe environments which are accessible to all.

Policy S 6: Transport Impact

Development should be designed to reduce the need to travel, particularly by car, and should promote sustainable forms of transport appropriate to its particular location. Development proposals shall:

- a. Provide safe and convenient access to the highway network;
- b. Provide an appropriate network of routes for walking and cycling;
- c. Be capable of accommodating the level/type of traffic generated without detriment to the local highway network and the amenity, character and appearance of the locality;

- d. Be accompanied by a Transport Statement. Or if proposals are likely to result in significant transport implications by a Transport Statement. The coverage and detail of this should reflect the scale of development and the extent of transport implications;
- e. Be accompanied by a Travel Plan for developments that are likely to have significant transport implications.

Policy EN 1: Landscape and settlement character

Development proposals should demonstrate that their location, scale, design and materials will protect, conserve and where possible enhance:

- a. The pattern of distinctive landscape features, such as watercourses, characteristic vegetation, woodland, trees, field patterns, hedges and walls, and their function as ecological corridors for wildlife dispersal
- b. The settlement edge, space between settlements, and their wider landscape setting
- c. Visually sensitive skylines, hillsides and geological features
- d. The unspoilt nature and tranquillity of the area
- e. Nocturnal character

Policy EN 5: Historic Conservation

Development proposals, within or affecting Conservation Area should:

- Be of a particularly high standard of design and materials that will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area
- Retain attractive traditional features such as original doors, windows and boundary walls
- Only involve demolition of buildings where:
 - The are of little or no importance to the architectural, historic or visual character or appearance of the areas; or
 - They are structurally unsound (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect) and beyond reasonable repair, and measures to sustain an existing use or find an alternative use has been explored and failed; and in all cases
 - Detailed proposals for reconstruction or redevelopment have received planning permission.

Proposals to extend, alter or change the use of Listed Building, or which affect the setting of a listed building will only be permitted where:

- Preserve the building or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses; and
- Support the long term preservation of the building.

Proposals to demolish all or part of a Listed Building will only be permitted in very exceptional cases where:

- The building is structurally unsound (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect); or

- All possible measures to sustain and existing use or find an alternative use have been explored or failed, and preservation in charitable or community ownership is not possible or sustainable; or
- Preservation in a charitable or community ownership is not possible or suitable; and
- Detailed proposals for reconstruction or redevelopment have received planning permission.

Policy EN 6: Biodiversity and geology

All development proposals should:

- a. Protect the biodiversity value of land and buildings and minimise harm to or loss of environmental features, such as trees, hedgerows, woodland and ponds; and
- b. Provide appropriate mitigation measures, reinstatement or replacement of features and/or compensatory work that will enhance or recreate habitats on or off site where harm to environmental features and habitat is unavoidable; and
- c. Maximise opportunities for creation, restoration, enhancement and connection of natural habitats as an integral part of development proposals.

Proposals which would cause harm to sites of national importance for wildlife and geology will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development at the site clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the special interest of the site and any broader impact on the national network of such sites.

Proposals which would cause harm to County Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodland, Local Nature Reserves, Protected Roadside Verges or important species will not be permitted unless the need for, and benefits of development in that location outweigh the potential harm to nature conservation interests.

Where potentially harmful development is permitted, provision for appropriate mitigation measures, reinstatement of features, and/or compensatory work that will enhance or recreate habitats on or off site will be required.

Where there is reason to suspect the presence of protected species, applications must be accompanied by a survey assessing their presence and. If present, the proposal must be sensitive to, and make provision for, their needs, in accordance with the relevant protecting legislation.

Policy EN 8: Pollution

All development proposals should minimise, and where possible, reduce all emissions and other forms of pollution, including light and noise pollution, and ensure no deterioration in water quality. All applications for development where pollution is suspected must contain sufficient information to enable the Council to make a full assessment of potential hazards.

Proposals will only be permitted:

1. Where individually or cumulatively, there are no unacceptable impacts on:
 - The natural environment and general amenity
 - Health and safety of the public;

- Air quality
 - Surface and groundwater quality
 - Land quality and condition
 - The need for compliance with statutory quality standards; or
2. In exceptional cases, where it can be clearly demonstrated that the environmental benefits of the development and any adverse impacts in terms of pollution. In such cases, where pollution is unavoidable, mitigation measures to reduce pollution levels will be required in order to meet acceptable limits.

New development will not be permitted where there is a potential to conflict with existing developments that require particular conditions for their operation, or that authorised or licenced under pollution control or hazardous substances legislation where it would be likely to impose significant restrictions on the activities of the existing use in the future.

Development proposals on contaminated land (or where there is reason to suspect contamination) must include an assessment of the extent contamination and any possible risks. Proposals will only be permitted where the land is, or is made, suitable for the proposed use.

Policy EN 9: Green Belt

There is a presumption against inappropriate development in the Cambridge Green Belt.

Subject to other policies within this plan, the Council may support proposals in the Green Belt for:

- a. New buildings or development in conjunction with agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport and recreation or cemeteries or other uses that preserve the openness of the Green Belt; or
- b. Limited extension, alteration or replacement of dwellings in line with Policy H9;
- c. Affordable housing which meets the requirements of Policy H4; or
- d. Re-use of permanent dwellings in keeping with their surroundings, where the proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt; or
- e. Other development in very exceptional circumstances, where other benefits clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt.

A Green Belt will be maintained around Cambridge which will define the extent of the urban area. The detailed boundaries of the Green Belt releases at Bottisham to accommodate the proposals set out in Policies CS2 and CS4, will be established in a future site specific SPD.

Emerging East Cambridgeshire Draft Local Plan (as at October 2014)

Policy GROWTH 6: Community-led development

The District Council is generally supportive of community-led development. This may include schemes involving affordable housing, small business units, renewable energy generation and other appropriate uses.

Policy ENV 5: Carbon offsetting

Where allowable solutions are required for a development scheme, the Council will be prepared to accept alternative provision in line with the national Allowable Solutions Framework.

Where a local Community Energy Fund exists, developers will be expected to provide financial contributions to this Fund to offset the difference. The contribution will be used to finance specific renewable energy projects within the local area. Financial contributions will be required into CEF where developments do not achieve the CO₂ reductions required under Policy ENV 4.

Policy ENV 7: Biodiversity and Geology

All development proposals will be required to:

- Protect the biodiversity and geological value of land and buildings and minimise harm to or loss of environmental features, such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, wetland and ponds.
- Provide appropriate mitigation measures, reinstatement or replacement of features and/or compensatory work that will enhance or recreate habitats on or off site where harm to environmental features and habitat is unavoidable; and
- Maximise opportunities for creation, restoration, enhancement and connection of natural habitats as an integral part of development proposals.

Development proposals where the main aim is to conserve biodiversity will be permitted; and opportunities to incorporate biodiversity into new development will be supported.

All applications for development that may affect biodiversity and geology interests must be accompanied by sufficient information, including an ecological report, to allow potential impacts and possible mitigation measures to be assessed fully.

Where there is reason to suspect the presence of protected species, applications must be accompanied by a survey carried out by a qualified individual assessing their presence and, if present, the proposal must be sensitive to, and make provision for, their needs, in accordance with the relevant protecting legislation.

Where appropriate, there will be a requirement for the effective management of designated sites and other features, controlled through the imposition of conditions or Section 106 agreements.

~~Planning permission will only be granted for development which adversely affects sites of national or international importance if:~~

- ~~• An alternative site is not available, and~~
- ~~• Sufficient mitigation measures can be implemented; and~~
- ~~• The proposal is of high strategic importance where the need for, and the benefits of, the development, will outweigh the detrimental impacts that the proposal may have on the designated area/asset.~~

- **Proposals will have an adverse impact on a site of international importance will not normally be permitted unless there is an exceptional overriding reasons of public interest (human health, public safety or environmental benefit).**
- **Proposals which have an adverse impact on a site of national importance will not normally be permitted unless the benefits of development at the site significantly outweigh the impacts.**

Proposals which would cause harm to County Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodland, aged and veteran trees, Local Nature Reserves, Protected Roadside Verges, any other irreplaceable habitats, and green corridors or important species¹⁰ will not be permitted unless the need for, and benefits of development in that location outweigh the potential harm to nature conservation interests.

Policy ENV 10: Green Belt

Development in the Green Belt will be strictly controlled, and limited to certain exceptions as prescribed in the NPPF. Development proposals for exceptions will also need to accord with other policies in the Local Plan.

Where development is permitted within the Green Belt it must be:

- Located and designed so that it does not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt; and
- Subject to landscaping conditions, together with a requirement that any planting is adequately maintained to ensure that any impact on the Green Belt is mitigated.

Where development is permitted adjacent to the Green Belt account will be taken of any adverse impact on the purposes of the Green Belt. Development on the edges of settlements that are surrounded by the Green Belt must include high quality landscape and design in order to protect the purposes of the Green Belt.

Policy ENV 12: Listed Buildings

Proposals that affect a Listed Building will not be permitted where it would have a detrimental impact on the visual, architectural or historic significance of the asset.

Proposals to extend, alter or change the use of a Listed Building will only be permitted where they would:

- Preserve or enhance the significance of the building and not involve substantial or total loss of historic fabric.
- Be compatible with the character, architectural integrity and setting of the Listed Building; and
- Facilitate the long-term preservation of the building.

Proposals that affect the setting of a Listed Building will only be permitted where they would:

- Preserve or enhance those elements that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the heritage asset.

¹⁰ Those included in the UK and Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plans

- Not materially harm the immediate or wider setting of the Listed Building. This setting may extend well beyond the immediate building curtilage and may include an extensive street scene or a wider urban design context, especially when the proposal is within a Conservation Area; and
- Facilitate the long-term preservation of the building.

Proposals to demolish all or part of a Listed Building will not be permitted other than in wholly exceptional cases where:

- All possible measures to sustain the existing use or find an alternative use have been exhausted, including active and genuine marketing¹¹ of the asset.
- Reasonable endeavours have been taken to secure a public or charitable organisation to take on the asset and failed.
- The building is structurally unsound (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect) beyond all reasonable repair and its redevelopment would bring wider public benefits; and in all cases

Comprehensive proposals for reconstruction or redevelopment have been submitted and have received planning permission.

The Council will monitor the Districts Heritage at Risk and will pro-actively engage with key stakeholders in order to secure and improve those heritage assets deemed to be most at risk. The Council will use its statutory powers to enforce the repair of heritage assets where appropriate.

Policy ENV 13: Local Register of Buildings and Structures (formerly entitled as Locally Listed Buildings)

Proposals that affect a ~~Locally Listed Building~~ **building or structure on the Local Register** will not be permitted where it would have a detrimental impact on the visual, architectural or historic significance of the asset.

The Council will resist development that will:

- Involve the demolition or part demolition of buildings or structures on the Local ~~List~~ **register**; and
- Involve the inappropriate alteration or extension to buildings or structures on the Local ~~List~~ **register**.

Proposals to demolish all or part of a ~~Locally Listed Building~~ **building or structure on the Local Register** will not be permitted other than in wholly exceptional circumstances where:

- All possible measures to sustain the existing use or to find an alternative use have been exhausted, including active and genuine marketing of the asset¹².
- The building is structurally unsound (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect), beyond all reasonable repair and its redevelopment would bring wider public benefits; and in all cases

¹¹ Applicants should provide evidence that the building has been marketed for a period of no less than 12 months, at a price that reflects its condition.

¹² Applicants should provide evidence that the building has been marketed for a period of no less than 12 months, at a price that reflects its condition.

Comprehensive proposals for reconstruction or redevelopment have been submitted and have received planning permission.

Policy ENV 14: Sites of Archaeological Interest

Development proposals at or affecting all sites of known or potential archaeological interest will:

- Have regard to their impacts upon the historic environment and protect, enhance and where appropriate, conserve nationally designated and undesignated archaeological remains, heritage assets and their settings.
- Require the submission of an appropriate archaeological evaluation/assessment of **significance** by a suitably qualified person. This initial work may be required prior to the submission of a planning application; and

Not be permitted where ~~there would be an adverse effect on the proposals would cause substantial harm to~~ new or known nationally important sites, including Scheduled Ancient Monuments and their settings.

Policy ENV 15: Historic Parks and Gardens

Proposals that affect **the significance of** a Historic Park or Garden will not be permitted where they would have a detrimental impact on its character, amenity or setting.

As part of any permission, the Council may seek the agreement of a management plan to secure the long-term preservation of the asset promote good land management and encourage best use of resources.

Policy COM 5: Strategic green infrastructure

Proposals which would cause loss of or harm to existing strategic green infrastructure will not be permitted, unless the need for and benefits of the development demonstrably and substantially outweigh any adverse impacts on the green infrastructure.

The Council will support proposals for new and improved strategic green infrastructure where these:

- Are consistent with the objectives of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011).
- Provide increased public access for quiet recreation and/or increased provision for biodiversity.
- Do not harm the character and appearance of any existing buildings or the locality.
- Will have no adverse effects on any existing designated sites of conservation or biological importance and impacts will be monitored to ensure the effectiveness of alternative provision away from more sensitive sites.
- Would not (by itself or cumulatively) have a significant adverse impact in terms of the amount or nature of traffic generated.
- Will not detract from residential amenity; and
- Will aim to achieve Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) through improving accessibility, naturalness and connectivity of

greenspaces, which are appropriate in scale and location to the needs of the local community.

New development will be expected to contribute towards the establishment, enhancement and on-going management of strategic green infrastructure by contributing to the development of strategic green infrastructure network within the district, in accordance with Policy GROWTH 3.

Policy COM 7: Transport Impact

Development should be designed to reduce the need to travel, particularly by car, and should promote **and enhance** sustainable forms of transport appropriate to its particular location. Opportunities should be maximised for increased permeability and connectivity to existing networks.

Development proposals shall:

- a. Provide safe and convenient access to the highway network.
- b. Provide a comprehensive network of routes giving priority for walking and cycling.
- c. Protect existing rights of way or allow for agreed diversions in exceptional circumstances.
- d. Consider the travel and transport needs of people with disabilities.
- e. Accommodate the efficient delivery of goods, supplies and services.
- f. Be capable of accommodating the level/type of traffic generated without detriment to the local highway network and the amenity, character or appearance of the locality.
- g. Be accompanied by a Transport Statement where appropriate; or if the proposals are likely to result in significant transport implications, be accompanied by a Transport Assessment. The coverage and detail of this should reflect the scale of development and the extent of the transport implications.
- h. Be accompanied by a Travel Plan for residential ~~development~~ **schemes of 50 or more dwellings or those which** and ~~non-residential developments that~~ are likely to generate significant amounts of traffic; **and non residential developments that are likely to generate significant amounts of traffic;** and

Within (g) and (h) indicate any steps to mitigate impacts relating to noise, pollution, amenity, health, safety and traffic.