

## **Emerging East Cambridgeshire Local Plan**

**This draft Local Plan is for consideration by Full Council at its meeting on 7 January 2016.**

Subject to it being approved by Full Council on that date (with or without amendments), the text will then be inserted into a more user friendly, colour publication, ready for public consultation. This will include a front and rear cover, as well as clear page / paragraph numbering. A contents page will also be included.

# Foreword

East Cambridgeshire is characterised by its rural farming and equine landscape, interspersed with the City of Ely, small market towns and a wide range of attractive small and medium villages.

Within that landscape are some real gems. The magnificent Ely cathedral sitting proud as a the 'ship of the fens'; Wicken Fen, which casts us back to a time before humans dominated the planet; the world famous Newmarket July Racecourse; and Angelsey Abbey, with its beautiful formal and informal grounds attracting visitors from far and wide.

It's no wonder that in 2012, the district scooped top spot in the Halifax's annual rural areas quality of life survey.

But there is so much potential to make East Cambridgeshire an even better place:

- with quality homes people can afford, easier access to shops, workplaces, services and facilities, and new thriving communities, which are welcoming and safe;
- where new facilities and infrastructure mean that businesses choose to expand or relocate here, bringing jobs and stimulating investment.
- to visit, a place where people choose to come to enjoy our nature, our history, our shops, our eateries and attractions, while at the same time significantly contributing to our rural and urban economies.

And, fundamentally, we need to get building. We need to *build a better East Cambridgeshire*.

In 2014/15, we only built 163 homes across the whole district. That simply is not sufficient.

Every week, on average, around 11 new 'households' are created in East Cambridgeshire, whether that be children growing up wanting their own homes; young people in shared accommodation getting married and wanting to start a family; people moving to the area to take a job; or partners deciding to go their separate ways. Yet in 2014/15 we only built 3 homes a week. That leaves, on average, 8 newly created households in East Cambridgeshire having no home to move into, every week. We can't let this continue.

This Council is committed to *building a better East Cambridgeshire*. Yes, we need to protect the very reasons why the district has such a high quality of life. But we also need to facilitate growth in much needed homes and jobs.

We, as a Council, are doing a lot already:

- we are actively working with, and financially supporting, those communities who want to directly build homes themselves in their local area, through Community Land Trusts;
- we are modernising the way our planning services work, so that high quality development gets permission as quickly and efficiently as possible; and
- we are setting up our own company, so the Council can build homes itself, whether on our own land or through partnerships with others.

But a new Local Plan can also help *build a better East Cambridgeshire*.

- It can release much needed land, to help business grow and homes to be built, in places we want such growth to take place (and not in places where speculative developers pick and choose).

- It can have a more positive ‘yes please’ set of essential policies, which support high quality development, rather than lengthy pages of policy hurdles, putting off developers.

But we need your help to get it right.

This is a first draft (of three) of a new Local Plan for East Cambridgeshire.

Inside this preliminary draft Local Plan are an emerging set of planning policy proposals for the growth and development of East Cambridgeshire over the next 20 years and beyond.

It does not yet propose any new sites – these will be consulted upon in summer 2016, though we are asking for your suggestions for new sites.

Once finalised, the policies within the Local Plan will make sure that our settlements grow in the right way, ensure we have homes and employment where we need them, and ensure our new communities are sustainable, accessible and inclusive.

This Local Plan will help *build a better East Cambridgeshire*.

We urge you to take this opportunity and let us know your views.

Thank you

[photo of Leader to be included]

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# Introduction

East Cambridgeshire District Council is reviewing its adopted Local Plan. This is an important document as it will determine what East Cambridgeshire will look like in the future and how it will become an even better place to live, work and visit.

The new Local Plan will replace the Local Plan adopted in April 2015. It will not replace any adopted Minerals and Waste plans.

We are currently at the first stage in the process and are consulting on a Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan, which sets out the emerging planning policies and proposals for growth and regeneration. This is still a draft plan. Your views are therefore essential to help shape the next version of this plan.

## How to make comments

This is the first opportunity for you to make comments on the emerging plan and we encourage you to take this opportunity to let us know your views and help inform the future growth of East Cambridgeshire.

The Preliminary Draft Local Plan can be viewed at: <http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/local-plan-review> where comments can also be made online. Alternatively a Comments Form (Form A) is available at the council's main offices at The Grange in Ely or can be downloaded and returned by e-mail [planningpolicy@eastcambs.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@eastcambs.gov.uk) or post to:

Strategic Planning Team  
East Cambridgeshire District Council  
The Grange  
Ely  
Cambridgeshire  
CB7 4EE

Please clearly let us know exactly which part of the document you are commenting on. The closing date for all comments is **11.59pm on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016**. Please note that all comments will be uploaded to our online consultation portal and will not be confidential.

All comments received will be taken into consideration and will help inform the Further Draft Local Plan to be published for public consultation in late summer 2016.

## What stage are we at?

This is the first stage in a lengthy process of producing a new Local Plan. This Preliminary Draft Local Plan captures the key issues that we already know about and sets a steer as to how we will tackle the gaps. It does not yet include specific allocations for new development, except reference to some existing sites allocated in the current adopted Local Plan April 2015.

To demonstrate that the Local Plan is a fundamental part of the Council's strategy for the district, this Local Plan has been structured to reflect the Council's agreed corporate priorities (2015-19).

A full draft plan incorporating suggested sites for development (including carried over sites from the current Local Plan and some new sites) will be published for consultation in late summer 2016. The Local Plan timetable is summarised below:

Stage	Description	Actual dates stage proposed to take place
Consult on a sustainability appraisal (SA) scoping report	The SA scoping report sets out the sustainability objectives proposed to be used to appraise the economic, social and environmental effects of the emerging Local Plan policies. The SA scoping report is subject to consultation.	Sept – Oct 2015  COMPLETED
Public participation (Regulation 18)	Opportunity for interested parties and statutory consultees to consider the options for the plan before the final document is produced. This stage may involve one or more public consultation rounds, each for a minimum 6 weeks. We intend two rounds for the new Local Plan. The first round includes a ‘call for sites’ for the Council to consider as new allocations; the second round will set out the Council’s preferred sites for allocating.	Feb - March 2016  <b>THIS DOCUMENT</b>
		Aug - Oct 2016
Pre-Submission Publication (Regulation 19)	The Council publishes the Local Plan which is followed with a 6 week period when formal representations can be made on the Local Plan.	Feb – March 2017
Submission (Regulation 22)	The Council submits the Local Plan to the Secretary of State together with the representations received at Regulation 19 stage.	May 2017
Independent Examination Hearing	Held by a Planning Inspector to investigate orally issues raised.	Sept – Oct 2017 (estimate: dates set by Inspector)
Inspector’s Report	This will report whether the Plan is ‘Sound’ or ‘Not Sound’. The Inspector may make recommendations to make the plan ‘sound’	Dec 2017 (estimate)
Adoption of DPD (Local Plan)	Final stage, the Council will formally need to adopt the Local Plan and it will then be used in making planning decisions.	Feb 2018

### Additional Consultation

As well as consulting on the contents of this Preliminary Draft Local Plan we are also giving you the opportunity to suggest:

- New **sites to be allocated** for future housing, Gypsy and Traveller pitches, employment, retail, leisure and any other form of development;
- Any amendments to a **development envelope**; or

- Any sites to be considered as a **Local Green Space**.

**Site Allocations:** This version of the plan does not include any sites for new development, except reference to some existing allocated sites found in the current adopted Local Plan (2015). To submit potential new sites for consideration as new allocations (or already existing allocated sites which you think should be carried forward into this new Local Plan) please fill in the Site Suggestion Form (Form B) and return to us, using the above e-mail or postal address, by 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016. Full details are set out in Part 5 of this plan.

All sites suggested will be assessed against a detailed assessment criteria. The preferred sites will be included in the further draft version of the plan due for publication in late summer 2016. We will also publish an evidence report which will set out the reason for the inclusion of a site or not.

**Development Envelopes (Village Boundaries):** As part of the production of the Local Plan, development envelopes (also known as village boundaries) will be reviewed, to enable growth to happen. The boundaries will be changed if any new sites are allocated at that settlement. We may also make other minor 'tweaks' to the boundary to reflect any changes in the village, or correct current anomalies. As part of the consultation we would like to know if you have any suggested changes to development envelopes. Please fill in the Suggested Changes to Village Boundary Form (Form C) and return to us by 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

All suggested changes will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Is the change needed as a result of a new and suitable allocation for the settlement?
- Would the suggested change be logical (in defining the limits of the built-up area of the village) and follow a physical or natural landscape feature?
- Is the land that would be brought within the development envelope brownfield (i.e. previously developed) or a garden?

If the answer is 'yes' to one or more of the above, then we are likely to accept the change, but not always (e.g. if it is a very large garden, there may be reason to exclude the land). An evidence document will be produced to support the decision. Any proposed changes will be consulted on in late summer 2016.

**Local Green Spaces:** Local Green Space is a national policy designation that aims to protect green areas or spaces which are demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance. Further details of how to submit comments, using Form D, can be found at Policy LP29 of this Local Plan. The preferred areas will be included in the next version of the Local Plan due for public consultation in summer 2016.

## **Policies Map**

Any reference to the terms Policies Map in the Preliminary Draft Local Plan relates to the adopted Policies Map (April 2015). At this stage no changes are proposed to the Policies Map. Any proposed changes to the Policies Map will be included in the next version of the Local Plan due to be published for consultation in late summer 2016.

## Technical Notes

### Status of this Preliminary Draft Local Plan (February 2016) for Decision Makers

When reading this draft Local Plan please note the following information about the status of the Preliminary Draft Local Plan.

This plan has been produced in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF was issued by Government in March 2012, followed by the 'live' National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) from March 2014. This Preliminary Draft Local Plan has been written to complement the NPPF and comply with the guidance in the NPPG. Should the NPPF or NPPG be revised in the future then references to the NPPF and NPPG in this document should be checked against the latest version of the NPPF and NPPG in force at that point in time. This Local Plan does not repeat policies in the NPPF; it builds on them when necessary and ensures locally specific issues are covered.

The NPPF clarifies the position on the status of emerging plans. It states:

*Para 216: From the day of publication, decision makers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:*

- *the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that can be given)*
- *the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and*
- *the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to policies in this framework the greater the weight that may be given).*

In accordance with NPPF paragraph 216, the policies contained within this emerging plan will be used (alongside the current development plans and other material considerations) in determining planning applications, especially where it contains 'new' policy not currently found in either the current Local Plans or the NPPF. In helping determine proposals, the amount of 'weight' to be given to the content of this emerging plan in comparison with the amount of weight given to other plans, strategies and material considerations, will be a matter for the decision maker to decide and will vary depending on the specific elements of the proposal. However, at this draft stage of plan preparation, the weight given to this preliminary draft local plan is likely to be limited.

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# Introducing East Cambridgeshire

## Description of East Cambridgeshire

East Cambridgeshire is a predominantly rural district located to the north-east of Cambridge within the county of Cambridgeshire. The district covers an area of 655km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of about 85,500<sup>1</sup>. The population has increased significantly in recent years and growth is expected to continue.

There are four main settlements namely the cathedral city of Ely, the market towns of Soham and Littleport, and the large village of Burwell. Together, these comprise approximately 56% of the district's population, with the remaining population spread between about 50 villages and other rural parts of the district.

Ely is the largest urban area and acts as a retail, service and administrative centre for a wide rural catchment. The city is also an important tourist destination with its internationally renowned Norman cathedral and links to Oliver Cromwell. However, there are issues with congestion around the station area and a need for further facilities. Soham is a small market town with a range of shops, catering for day-to-day needs. Littleport is a small fenland town with a very localised service catchment due to its proximity to Ely. The villages of Bottisham, Burwell, Haddenham and Sutton play a key service role for their rural hinterlands.

Once an agricultural focused area, the district is now a favoured business location in its own right. Employment rates are higher than the national average, with key sectors including construction, agriculture, and professional/technical services. Despite increases in the number of jobs in the district over the last decade, there are high levels of out-commuting to jobs in the Cambridgeshire area. A very high proportion of local businesses employ fewer than 10 people.

The landscape and economy of East Cambridgeshire can be broadly defined into two sub-areas. The northern part of the district is predominantly intensively farmed fenland, with many settlements located on higher ground on the old 'islands' in the fen. Flood risk is a key issue, with much of the land at or below sea-level. With the possible exception of Ely, incomes are generally lower and deprivation is more marked than the southern part of the district. The south of the district consists of elevated chalk and heath land and contains a range of attractive villages and hamlets. The local economy and landscape is dominated by the horseracing industry with large areas of farmland converted to stud use. Residents in the south of the district mainly look to Newmarket and Cambridge for services and facilities.

The district contains many special landscape, natural and heritage asset features, including:

- An internationally important Norman Cathedral, often cited as one of the Seven Wonders of the World (Middle Ages)
- 1,910 hectares of land within the Cambridge Green Belt, around the villages of Bottisham, Lode and Swaffham Bulbeck



<sup>1</sup> East Cambridgeshire population mid-2013 estimate: Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group



- Four internationally important wildlife sites: Wicken Fen, Chippenham Fen, the Ouse Washes and Devil's Dyke.
- 20 Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- 80 County Wildlife Sites.
- Over 950 Listed Buildings, 27 Conservation Areas, 50 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and four Historic Parks and Gardens.

According to a 2012 survey<sup>2</sup>, East Cambridgeshire's residents have the best quality of life of any rural area in Great Britain. In particular, health and life expectancy are amongst the highest of rural areas. However, as noted above, there are variations across the district, and pockets of deprivation exist.

### Key issues and challenges

The district benefits from an attractive rural environment, and has a good level of overall prosperity. However, a number of specific issues need to be addressed. These are mainly related to the challenges of managing high levels of growth and the effects of population increase.

In particular, the success of the Cambridge economy has had a profound effect as the relative affordability of housing, compared to Cambridge, has stimulated rapid population growth in East Cambridgeshire. This has meant a significant increase in the level of out-commuting and pressures on local house prices. According to the information provided by Census 2011, there were 31,112<sup>3</sup> workers aged 16 to 74 employed in East Cambridgeshire. Out of this over 21,000<sup>4</sup> were commuting to work outside the district. That is a considerable proportion of the local workforce.

### Objectives

A good understanding of the needs, constraints and issues facing East Cambridgeshire is essential to inform the Local Plan. An extensive review of all strategies, plans, policies and other local or national information was undertaken through what is known as the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. An overview of the key issues and how these issues are translated into objectives for both the local plan and the sustainability appraisal process is set out in the table below.

Topic	Local Plan Key Issues	Objectives (for both the Local Plan and the Sustainability Appraisal process)
<b>1 Land and water resources</b>	Limited availability of previously developed land in sustainable locations and this may put development pressure on high quality agricultural land.  New development may sterilise important local sources of limestone, clay, sand and gravel.  New development will place additional demands on water supply and sewerage in an area with limited capacity.	1.1 Minimise the irreversible loss of undeveloped land and productive agricultural holdings.  1.2 Reduce the use of non-renewable resources including energy sources and increase the use of renewable energy  1.3 Limit water consumption to levels supportable by natural

<sup>2</sup> Halifax Rural Areas Quality of Life Survey 2012

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011>

<sup>4</sup> ONS 2011 Census Commuting patterns

		processes and storage systems
<b>2 Biodiversity</b>	<p>Development may affect areas covered by national, international and local designations. These are often very sensitive and can be easily affected by impacts from non-adjacent locations.</p> <p>New development could provide opportunities for habitat enhancement in priority areas, and where appropriate, enhance public access to these areas.</p>	<p>2.1 Avoid damage to designated statutory and non-statutory sites and protected species;</p> <p>2.2 Maintain and enhance the range and viability of characteristic habitats and species;</p> <p>2.3 Improve opportunities for people to access and appreciate wildlife and wild places</p>
<b>3 Landscape, townscape and archaeology</b>	<p>Need to ensure that the character and appearance of the built environment is protected and enhanced, especially within areas of historic importance. It will also be important to ensure that all new development is well designed and locally distinctive. Enhancing the character and distinctiveness of the district will help to benefit tourism.</p> <p>Although the district has a good quality of life overall, there are areas for improvement, many of which are discussed above. There are also opportunities to improve certain parts of the district, including riverside areas and town centres.</p>	<p>3.1 Conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting.</p> <p>3.2 Maintain and enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of landscape and townscape character</p> <p>3.3 Create places, spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look good</p>
<b>4 Climate change and pollution</b>	<p>The district is predominantly rural with a dispersed population, which creates challenges in providing a comprehensive public transport network. Many local communities are reliant on the car as their only transport option. Many settlements also have high levels of road-based freight traffic going through them.</p> <p>These issues impact on carbon dioxide emissions, air quality, noise, public safety and the quality of the environment in towns and villages. The challenge is to ensure that development is directed to sustainable locations where sustainable modes of transport are more likely, rather than the car; and that freight traffic is well managed.</p> <p>There have been improvements in recycling in the recent years, the district council has moved up the recycling league table and currently over 50% of the waste is recycled.</p> <p>The district is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as flooding and drought, because many areas are low lying and within areas of water stress.</p>	<p>4.1 Reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses and other pollutants.</p> <p>4.2 Minimise waste production and support the recycling of waste products</p> <p>4.3 Limit or reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change (including flooding)</p>

<p><b>5 Healthy communities</b></p>	<p>The provision of green infrastructure is recognised as a desirable 'win-win' approach to combating climate change, since it can deliver other social, economic and environmental benefits.</p> <p>Fear of crime in the district is disproportionate to actual crime rate.</p> <p>Maximising the creation of new green infrastructure will help to deliver a sustainable 'green living landscape' and enhance healthy living.</p>	<p>5.1 Maintain and enhance human health;</p> <p>5.2 Reduce and prevent crime, and reduce the fear of crime</p> <p>5.3 Improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space</p>
<p><b>6 Inclusive communities</b></p>	<p>Recent high levels of growth have placed pressure on local services and facilities including health, education and leisure. The provision of a good broadband service is also critical to support business growth, especially in the rural areas where the current service can be poor. The challenge is to ensure that services and facilities are delivered alongside growth.</p> <p>There is a high level of affordable housing need in the district and continuing concerns about housing affordability, with average house prices out of reach for many on lower to middle incomes.</p> <p>The retention of local services is a key issue, particularly for rural communities. The challenge is to resist the loss of important facilities and support the delivery of new ones. This will be especially important in the context of the district's ageing population, and the dispersed rural nature of the district.</p>	<p>6.1 Improve the quality, range and accessibility of services and facilities (e.g. health, transport, education, training, leisure opportunities)</p> <p>6.2 Redress inequalities related to age, gender, disability, race, faith, location and income</p> <p>6.3 Ensure all groups have access to decent, appropriate and affordable housing</p> <p>6.4 Encourage and enable the active involvement of local people in community activities</p>
<p><b>7 Economic activity</b></p>	<p>The district has high level of out-commuting (<i>21,052 out-commute, 8,223 in-commute</i>), with many higher skilled workers commuting to Cambridge (<i>7,200 people commute into Cambridge City, and 4,500 to South Cambridgeshire</i>) (<i>source: 2011 Census</i>).</p> <p>Whilst housing growth has been high, the pace of economic growth has not.</p> <p>East Cambridgeshire is well served by rail, with Ely providing links with Cambridge, Peterborough, Norwich, Stansted Airport and London. However, use of the lines running through Ely for transporting freight is increasing, causing congestion on the A142 as the rail crossing is frequently closed to large vehicles. The A10 and other key roads also experience significant congestion.</p> <p>New economic development needs to focus on the provision of higher skilled jobs and opportunities for homeworking to tackle the increasing levels of out-commuting and its associated congestion and pollution. This help to create more sustainable and</p>	<p>7.1 Help people gain access to local satisfying work, appropriate to their skills and potential</p> <p>7.2 Support appropriate investment in people, places, communications and other infrastructure</p> <p>7.3 Improve the efficiency, competitiveness, vitality and adaptability of the local economy especially Ely and the market towns</p>

	<p>self-contained communities.</p> <p>The city of Ely and the two market town centres of Soham and Littleport form the core of East Cambridgeshire’s retail offer and their vitality and viability are critical to the success of the local economy.</p>	
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**The Vision**

This vision describes the proposed future development of the district until 2036. It goes beyond what can be achieved purely through the planning process, describing overall objectives which can be realised through a variety of delivery means. However, the vision is founded on realistic, achievable goals.

**A vision for East Cambridgeshire**

In 2036, we will have built a better East Cambridgeshire, accommodating the development of new homes and jobs

However, East Cambridgeshire will have maintained a high quality of life and retained its distinct identity as a predominantly rural area of villages and market towns.

Wherever new housing is provided, it will respond to local needs and requirements as far as possible in terms of type, size and tenure. All new housing will be of high quality, with good accessibility and well designed, ensuring that the distinctive character of the district’s towns and villages is maintained and enhanced. More and more homes will come forward through community-led development schemes, with the local community deciding where and what should come forward to help maintain their thriving community.

The district will have taken advantage of the economic vitality of the Cambridge sub-region, and have a diverse and thriving economy, with vibrant and attractive towns and villages which act as employment and service centres for their surrounding rural areas. More residents will have a high quality of life, with increased access to housing, a wider range of local better skilled jobs, and good quality services and facilities.

*[the summer 2016 version of the plan will insert an additional paragraph here on scale and distribution of growth]*

More local employment opportunities will be available, reducing out-commuting, increasing high quality local jobs, and creating more balanced communities with a better level of self-containment. A mix of residential development will be delivered to meet local needs, with Community Land Trusts and other forms of community-led development leading the way in providing high quality, locally supported new homes and other facilities.

Necessary infrastructure and community facilities/services will be in place to support growth. In the wider countryside, appropriate small-scale development will be allowed where this meets local needs and supports the long-term sustainability of a settlement.

Communities will have improved social, recreational, health and educational facilities. The needs of elderly, young and lower-paid people will receive special attention. Existing vital community services will be retained and new infrastructure and services required to support growth will be delivered on time to meet the needs of new residents. The levels of crime and the fear of crime will have been further reduced.

Transport deficiencies will be tackled and accessibility improved. The Ely Station Gateway will be transformed, following the opening of the A142 southern bypass between Angel Drove and the Stuntney Causeway. Accessibility for all between market towns and villages will be improved (including to settlements in neighbouring areas), including public transport. Better cycling and pedestrian facilities and links will continue to be provided, including segregated cycle routes along key routes linking towns and villages. Other infrastructure improvement projects to support growth will be delivered.

The overall diversity and quality of East Cambridgeshire's countryside and natural environment will have improved and the historic environment conserved and enhanced. There will be better access to the countryside and green spaces for local communities which helps to improve people's quality of life and health. The challenges presented by climate change will have been embraced, with new development being located and designed to minimise resource and energy use and reduce the risk of flooding.

### **Monitoring and review**

The Local Plan, when adopted, covers the period up to 2036, but it will respond to changing local circumstances and/or changes in national policy and will review the Local Plan when it becomes necessary. In particular it will be important that there is a sufficient supply of housing and employment land in the district to deliver identified needs.

The Council will regularly monitor the supply of suitable land and the effectiveness and implementation of other policies through the annual Authorities Monitoring Report (AMR) and regular housing supply updates (including covering matters such as the 'five year land supply', as required by national policy). If there is an insufficient supply of land, or other targets are not being met, it may be necessary to carry out a review of the Local Plan. On a lesser level, it may be necessary to produce additional Supplementary Planning Documents to give guidance on the implementation of a particular policy.

The Council will co-operate positively with neighbouring planning authorities and with the joint planning arrangements across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

## Part 1: A Growing East Cambridgeshire

### Introduction to Part 1

This section of the Local Plan sets out the overall strategy for meeting East Cambridgeshire's needs to 2036. At this preliminary draft stage (February 2016), it sets out how much growth we think is needed and seeks views on how it should be distributed.

The section cuts across several of the Council's six corporate priorities, including delivering housing; improving infrastructure and supporting the creation of new jobs.

### A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

In line with national policy, the Local Plan as a whole is based on a presumption in favour of sustainable development, as confirmed by the following proposed policy.

The following proposed policy largely carries forward Policy GROWTH5 from the current Local Plan (2015).

#### **Policy LP1: A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development**

At the heart of the strategy for East Cambridgeshire is a desire to deliver sustainable growth; growth that is not for its own sake, but growth that brings benefits for all sectors of the community - for existing residents as much as for new ones.

When considering development proposals, East Cambridgeshire District Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The district will always work proactively with applicants to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in East Cambridgeshire.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

## Level of Growth - Housing

As required by the NPPF, this Local Plan must define the overall level of growth in East Cambridgeshire between 2014 and 2036, including for housing, new jobs and the provision of retail floorspace.

Growth targets should be informed by need. The 'objectively assessed need' for housing, including market, affordable, and other tenures has been determined through the preparation of a local East Cambridgeshire update (2015) to the more geographically wider Cambridge Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2013) together with associated supporting reports, all of which are accessible via our website.

The headline 'objectively assessed need' for housing, as set out in the 2015 local update, is 14,300 new homes between 2014-2036 (or 650pa). This figure is seen as sufficient to meet not only demographic needs for East Cambridgeshire, but also the forecast growth in jobs (and thus workers) for the area.

However, in 2013 the Cambridgeshire authorities, plus Peterborough, signed a 'memorandum of cooperation' to support a coherent and comprehensive growth strategy across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough between 2011 and 2031. This included the agreement that Peterborough would accommodate 2,500 of the housing need arising in the Cambridge Housing Market Area (which includes areas close to Peterborough, such as Yaxley and Whittlesey). As part of that redistribution, East Cambridgeshire (by 1,500) and Fenland (by 1,000) had their housing targets reduced from the originally identified need figure. This collaborative approach was undertaken as part of the requirements of the duty to co-operate as set out in the Localism Act 2011, and was endorsed by a Planning Inspector in April 2014 (for Fenland) and March 2015 (for East Cambridgeshire). For example, the Inspector for the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan stated in his Inspector's Report (March 2015, para 28) that, following consideration of all the issues, the approach outlined above "*does not therefore appear either unreasonable or inconsistent with the overall policy thrust of the [National Planning Policy] Framework*".

The current intention of East Cambridgeshire District Council is for that agreement to be maintained for this new Local Plan for East Cambridgeshire. It is also note worth that the emerging review of the Peterborough Local Plan also reconfirms its intention to accommodate the 2,500 homes. **As such, the proposal for this new Local Plan is to plan for 12,800 new homes, between 2014-2036 (or 582pa).** This is a substantial increase in homes in the district, and represents would represent a third increase in total housing stock (there were 35,747 homes recorded in the 2011 Census for East Cambridgeshire), and clearly demonstrates the district's commitment to the national policy desire to boost the supply of homes.

However, to determine how much new land we need to allocate, we must take account of any completions since 2014 (the base date of the Local Plan for the purpose of housing and employment forecast). The Council monitors housing completions annually, and the results from the latest Authorities Monitoring Report (AMR) (December 2015, covering the period 2014/15) identifies that between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015 a total of 163 (net) dwellings were completed, or around 3 a week.

The AMR also notes that at the end of March 2015, a total of 226 dwellings remained to be completed on sites where construction had started. Full planning permission existed for a further 479 dwellings on sites where no construction had started, and outline planning permission existed for a further 220 dwellings. These 'commitments' total 925 dwellings, which can be taken off the overall dwelling target of 12,800.

In addition to this, a number of sites have received (or on course to receive) planning permission since 1 April 2015, most notably is the development known as 'North Ely' which in total is likely to deliver 3,000 dwellings. All such permissions can also be counted towards meeting the target figure for this Local Plan.

Together with recent permissions, there are lots of sites in the current Local Plan (April 2015) which are allocated for housing, but for which there is no formal planning permission consent yet in place. Whilst there is no automatic right that these sites will be carried forward into this new Local Plan, the presumption is that most, if not all, will be. The only likely reason for a site to be deleted would be if there is doubt whether the site will be delivered (for whatever reason) in the plan period to 2036.

As an estimate, permissions since April 2015 and carried over allocations from the 2015 Local Plan amount to approximately 6,500 dwellings (which includes the North Ely allocation).

Finally, it is reasonable for a Local Plan to make an allowance for (usually small) sites coming forward on unallocated land for residential development. These are known as ‘windfall’ development. These are typically schemes for 1-9 dwellings, within urban areas, but also includes any isolated rural dwellings or ‘exception’ sites on the edges of villages. As a working guide, a figure of 1,000 homes (approximately 50 per year) coming forward via ‘windfall’ development over the plan period to 2036 is considered reasonable, though this figure will be firmed up, with evidence, as the plan progresses to future iterations.

This leaves a likely figure in the region of 4,212 homes to be allocated on new sites, as confirmed by the table below:

	Net Dwellings
Headline ‘objectively assessed need’ (OAN) for new homes, 2014-36	14,300
Redistribution of need within the wider Cambridge and Peterborough Housing Market Areas	– 1,500
Homes built, 2014/15	– 163
Homes under construction and/or with planning permission, as at 1 April 2015	– 925
Estimate of sites gaining planning permission since 1 April 2015, plus sites allocated in the current Local Plan (2015) but without consent	– 6,500
Provisional windfall allowance	– 1,000
Remaining total (to be allocated on new sites)	4,212

## Level of Growth – Jobs / Employment Land

The job growth target for the Local Plan is based on forecasts by the East of England Forecast Model (EEFM). This suggests we should be planning for 7,100 jobs (total jobs, including part time) for the period 2014 to 2036, which in turn will lead to new employment land allocations to be made in this new Local Plan. We have yet to calculate a precise figure as to how much new land will be required for employment purposes (including some over provision to provide flexibility and choice), but it is possible some new employment allocations will need to be made. We welcome suggestions from you on new employment allocations.



## **Level of Growth – Retail**

As the population grows, additional retail development will be required to provide shopping opportunities at a local level. Whilst it is very difficult to forecast accurately future shopping patterns (and the impact of internet shopping and home delivery, for example), the Council's Retail Assessment (2012) assesses qualitative issues and quantitative requirements for additional retail floorspace to meet future needs. The Study concluded that there will be a need over period between 2012 and 2031 for 3,000m<sup>2</sup> (net) of new Convenience (food) retail and 10,000m<sup>2</sup> (net) of new Comparison (non-food retail).

Further evidence gathering on up to date retail need will be undertaken as this emerging plan progresses, but the figures above remain a guide at this preliminary stage.

## **Broad Distribution of Growth**

Elsewhere in this draft Local plan, we are seeking suggestions for new sites. However, to assist in the selection of those new sites, we are also seeking your views on the broad distribution of growth. Getting this broad distribution of growth right will ensure that growth takes place in the best locations in the district, such as where it is needed, where it is deliverable, and where it is sustainable (taking into account infrastructure capacity/needs and the potential impacts and benefits of growth in different types of locations). Set out on the next four pages are four options for distributing growth, with brief commentary as to what each option would mean. We would welcome your thoughts on each. Or perhaps you have a better alternative, or perhaps a blend of 2 or more options?

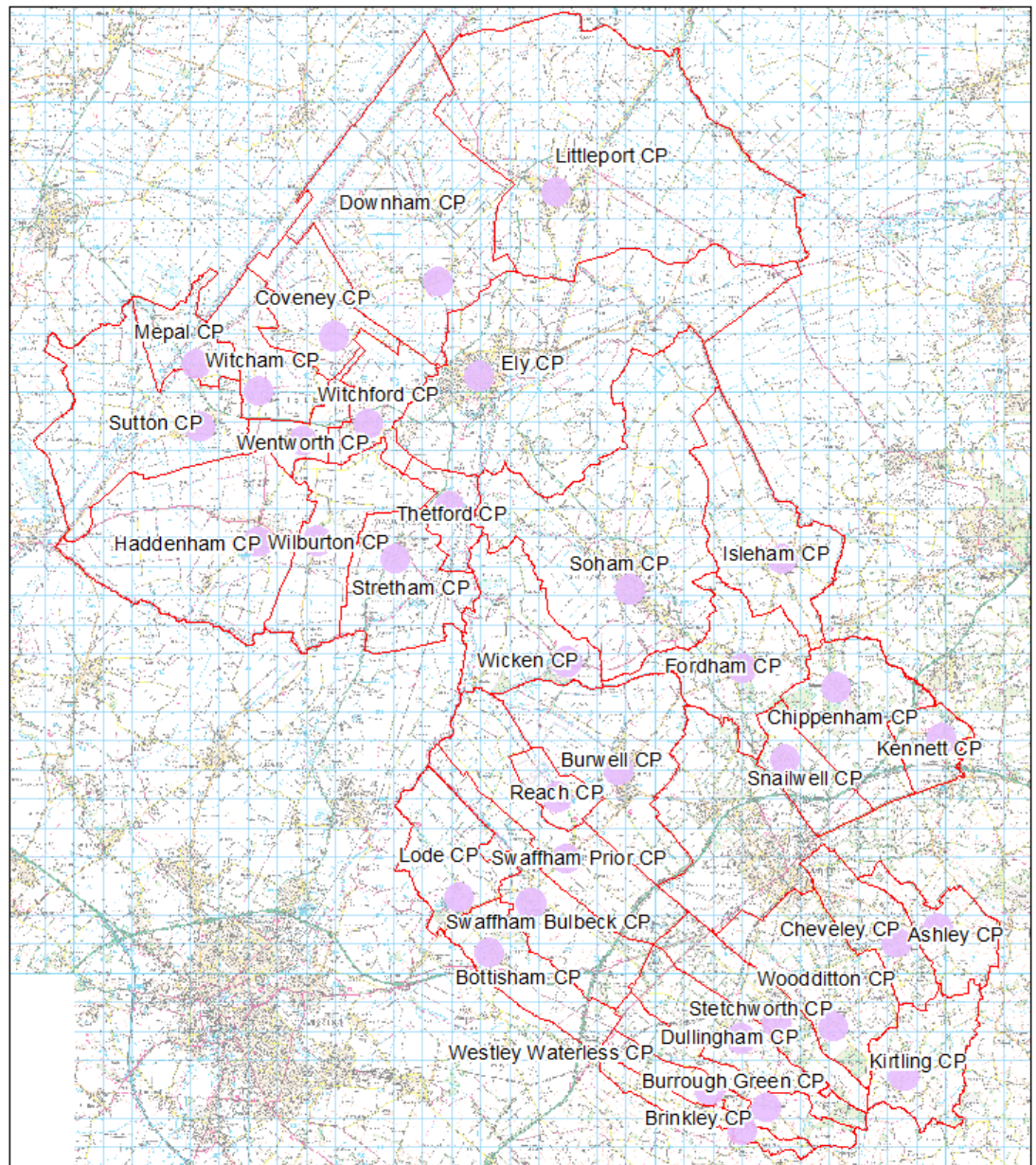
**Option 1**  
**Explanatory Notes:**


New development would be distributed across all settlements on a broadly pro-rata basis. For example, if a village has a population equivalent to approximately 5% of the total population of East Cambridgeshire, the village would receive approximately 5% of total new development.


All settlements would likely receive some development, in an equitable way.

Development in rural areas may help sustain services and infrastructure, provide local housing and address other rural issues. However, some settlements with very limited current services would receive some growth, with residents then having to commute by car to get to services.

It would result in future slower growth in larger settlements, because recently these areas have received greater than pro-rata levels of growth and allocations.



  
**East Cambridgeshire District Council**

  
**Option 1: Proportionate settlement growth**

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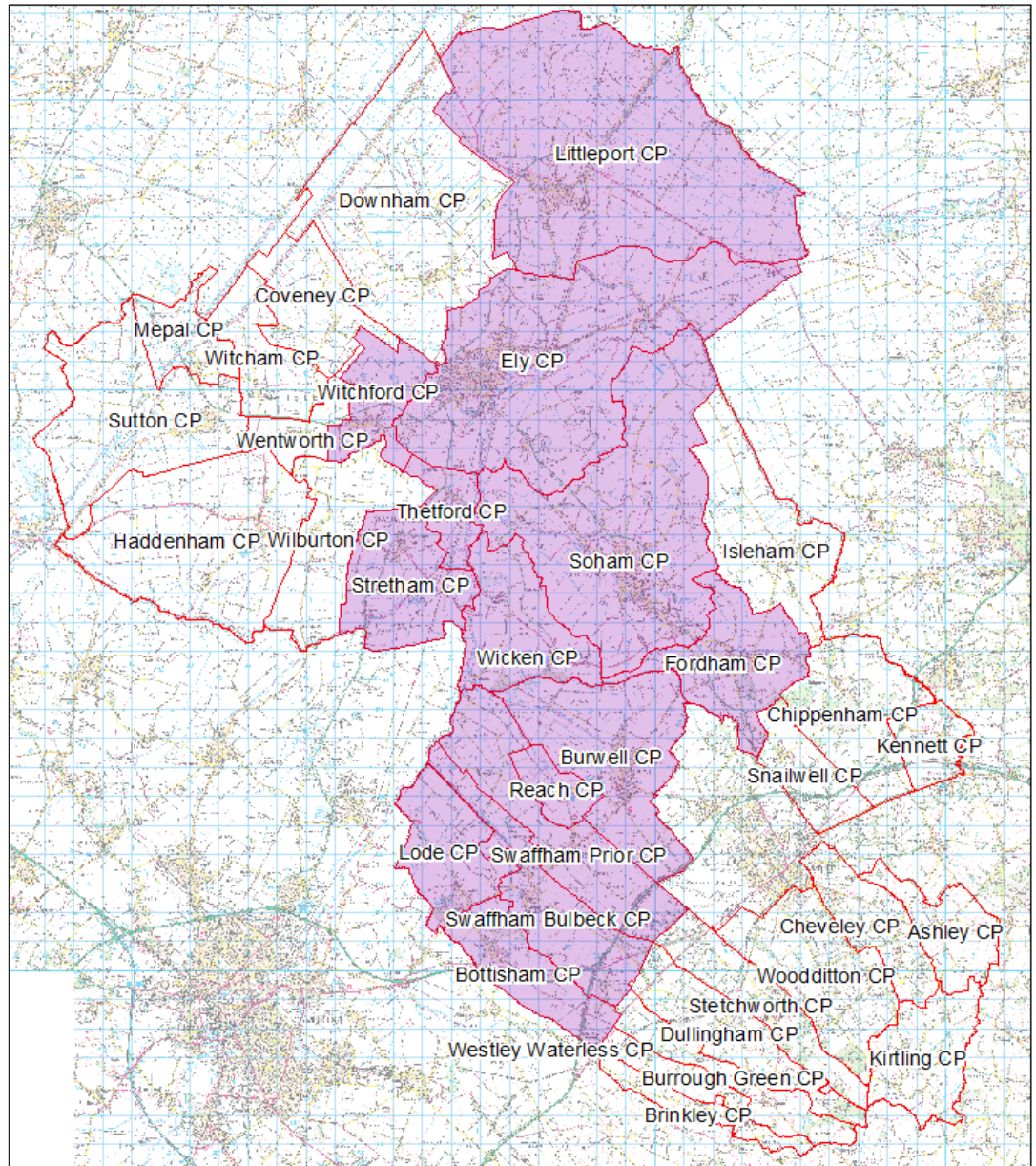
**Option 2**  
**Explanatory Notes:**

New development will be concentrated in parishes with best access to Ely, market towns and other major destinations such as Cambridge and Newmarket. The option seeks to utilise existing infrastructure, including transport infrastructure.

The parishes as shaded on the map would be the focus for searching for new sites to accommodate growth.

By providing new homes in the south-west of the district, the option would provide new development in areas where the market for housing is the strongest, and the ability to provide affordable homes the greatest.

However distributing new development in this way may overlook potential sites in the west and south-east of the district (where only limited growth would take place), and may not address rural issues in those locations.



East Cambridgeshire  
District Council



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## Option 2: Infrastructure and accessibility led growth

### Option 3

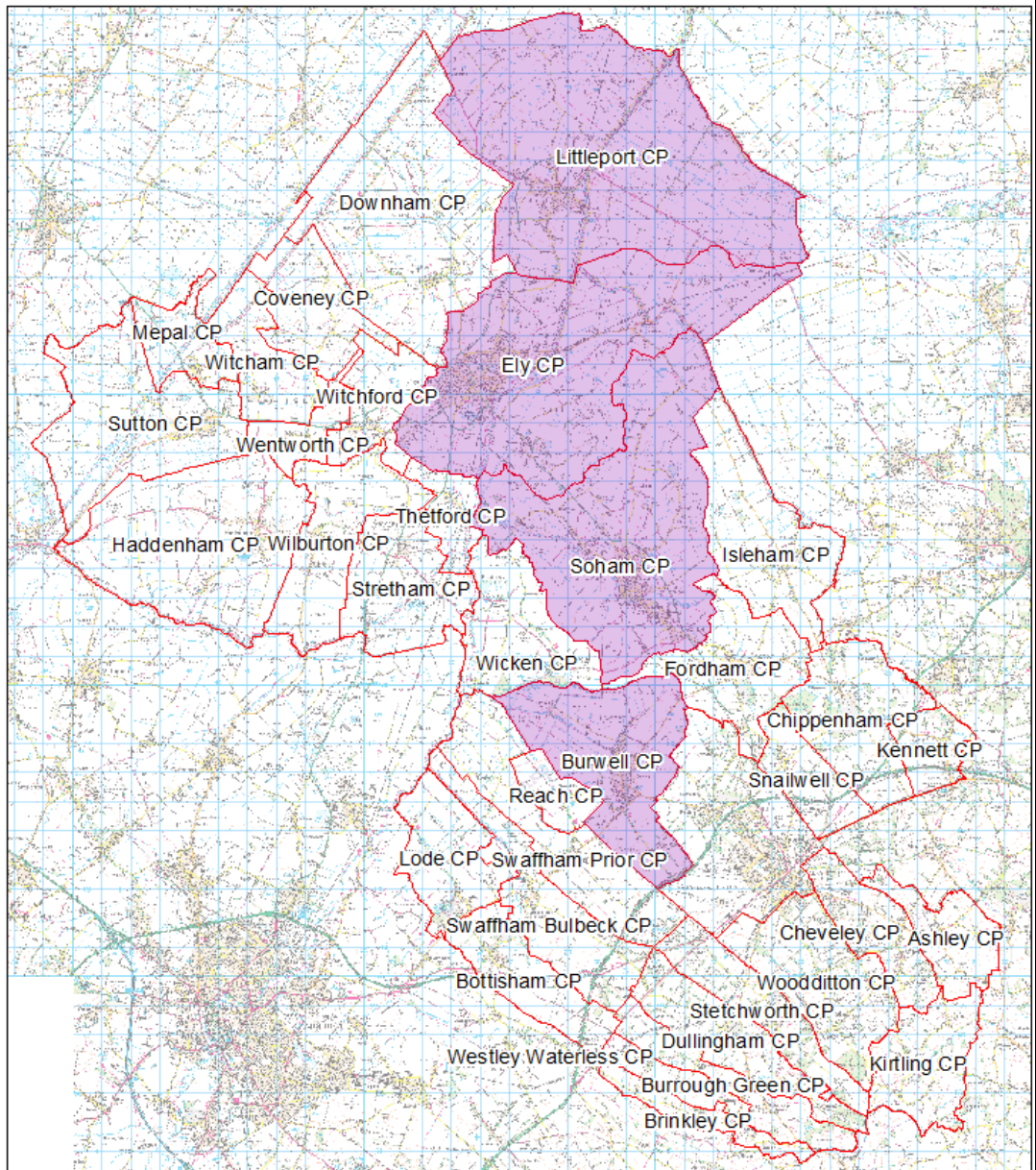
#### Explanatory Notes:

The majority of new development would be concentrated in Ely, Littleport, Soham and Burwell.

A lesser amount (less than pro-rata) of new development would be distributed throughout the rural area.

The four settlements are the current main locations for education, employment, services and facilities and may therefore be well placed to provide opportunities for major growth. However there may be constraints which limit the growth of these settlements.

Concentrating new development in these locations would minimise the amount of new development in rural areas. This could have advantages in terms of protecting the rural character. However limiting development in the rural area may be a disadvantage – new development can benefit rural areas through providing housing, generating new employment opportunities and maintaining services and facilities.



East Cambridgeshire  
District Council

## Option 3: Prioritise larger settlements



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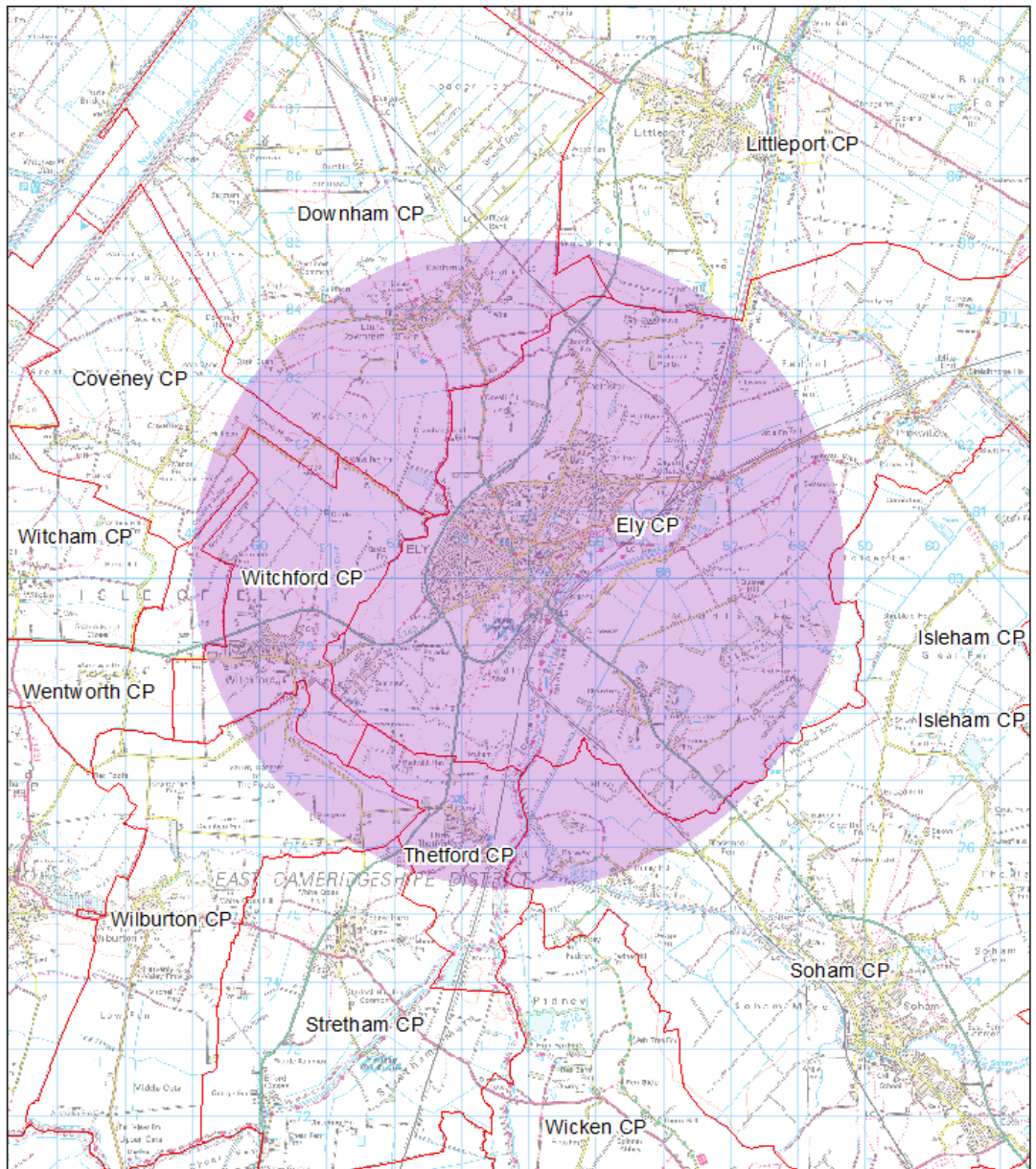
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**Option 4**  
**Explanatory Notes:**


Development would be focussed within a 3-mile radius from the centre of Ely (as identified on the map), where sustainable transport connections with Ely could easily be made. It would involve delivering already identified development (mainly in North Ely) and significant growth in one or more surrounding villages, which includes (in alphabetical order): Chettisham, Little Downham, Little Thetford, Queen Adelaide, Stuntney, and Witchford.

Ely area is the district's principal location for employment, education, services, facilities and onward travel to other major destinations, especially by train. It would build on those strengths, but protect what is special about Ely through greater protection of its landscape setting.

Expansion of one or more of Ely's neighbouring villages could alter the character of that settlement(s), but positively so if well planned.



  
**East Cambridgeshire District Council**

  
**Option 4: Prioritise growth in and close to Ely (within 3 miles)**

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## The Strategy for Growth

The following policy captures where we are at this early draft stage of preparing a new Local Plan. The policy will evolve as the plan continues to be prepared, influenced by your views on the options set out on the previous few pages.

The following proposed policy is similar to Policy GROWTH1, plus elements of GROWTH2, in the current Local Plan (2015).

### Policy LP2: Level and Distribution of Growth

Over the plan period 2014–2036, the Local Plan will facilitate the delivery of:

- 12,800 new dwellings;
- 7,100 new jobs; and
- 3,000m<sup>2</sup> (net) of new Convenience (food) retail and 10,000m<sup>2</sup> (net) of new Comparison (non-food retail) [*provisional figures – may be amended following further evidence gathering*]

*[the next Local Plan in summer 2016 will set out here a preferred way of distributing that growth – see the options on the previous few pages]*

### Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside

A settlement hierarchy ranks settlements, usually taking account of their size and range of services and facilities. It ultimately provides a framework to assist decisions about the scale and location of new development, and the targeting of investment in any new services and facilities. In general terms, a hierarchy helps in decision making that will promote more sustainable communities – bringing houses, jobs and services closer together in settlements that already offer the best range of services and facilities.

A settlement hierarchy also helps to protect the character of the landscape, by maintaining and reinforcing the distinction between built-up areas and countryside, and placing a restriction on the forms of development that would be acceptable in the countryside.

The **settlement hierarchy identified in policy LP3 below is a provisional one**, and will need to be updated in the next version of the Local Plan (summer 2016) to reflect decisions reached on the broad distribution of growth across the district, which is to be set by Policy LP2.

In East Cambridgeshire there are a number of settlements ranging in size from the city of Ely to market towns, villages (of varying sizes), hamlets and individual, isolated dwellings. One of the particular characteristics of the local authority area is that it is not dominated by a single settlement, but rather a collection of settlements, albeit Cambridge to the immediate south exerts a considerable influence on the area.

In order to identify a hierarchy the Council has produced a Settlement Hierarchy Study, published alongside this consultation draft Local Plan. This identifies which settlements should be included in any hierarchy; what tiers should constitute the hierarchy; what criteria have been used to identify the villages that should appear in each tier; and what scoring system should be applied to each of the criterion.

A survey of available evidence was undertaken, to enable testing against the criteria, though we would particularly welcome from you any corrections we should make to the Study. For example, if we list your village as having a shop, but it no longer does, then please let us know.

In the hierarchy set out in policy LP3 below:

**A Main Settlement** is one which has the characteristics of a market town, with a population over 7,000 and with a wide range of services and facilities, of such a degree to attract visitors from a wide catchment area. The range and size of shops is significantly greater than found in a large village, and job opportunities are more substantial.

**A Large village** is a settlement with, normally, a population over 1,500 and which that contains a wide range of services and facilities to meet people's daily needs, including, normally, a primary school, doctor's surgery and a range of shops and services. It should also provides employment opportunities and have good public transport.

**A Medium Village** is a village of population normally over 600 and which includes some, but not all, of the services and facilities that are characteristic of a Large Village. A critical determinant is the presence of a primary school in the village, which might push a village with a population of less than 600 up into this category.

**A Small Village** is a settlement which does not meet the criteria for one of the categories higher in the hierarchy. Typically, a Small Village will have some concentration of dwellings, but with a low population, and a limited range of services, if any. A Small Village will not have a primary school.

It is emphasised that the position of any village in the hierarchy is largely a reflection of its size, and the scale and range of its services and facilities. Whilst this offers a pointer to its suitability (or not) for further development, it does not follow that new development is either appropriate or necessary. For example, if there is no need to identify sites for development in the rural area, then a village which is highly placed in the hierarchy may not need to have any site allocations. A village may be highly placed in the hierarchy, but subject to constraints which restrict the scope for further development. Such constraints would not alter its position in the hierarchy, but would be a critical factor in determining its suitability for any growth.

This policy does not set an absolute restriction on the number of dwellings or other development that would be acceptable. This would be determined by applying Local Plan policies relating to such matters as density, amenity, traffic implications and greenspace provision.

It is emphasised that place names in the policy are references to villages, not parishes, as there are instances where a village extends across parish boundaries and therefore includes properties in more than one parish.

For many years the council has defined on the Policies Map, for each village within the District, a development envelope which sets the limit of the physical framework of the built-up area. The primary purposes of the envelopes, and the policies which apply within and outside them, are to prevent the spread of development into the countryside, to maintain the essential character of each settlement and control the growth within and outside each settlement in accordance with the settlement hierarchy in policy LP3.

Changes to some of the development envelopes will be made in the final version of this Local Plan if a new site is allocated in the village. Also other minor changes may be made taking into account comments received during this consultation. Please see earlier commentary towards the start of this plan on how to suggest changes to the development envelope.

It is Government policy that development in the countryside should be controlled, in order to conserve its character and natural resources. By identifying the settlement hierarchy and distinguishing between settlements and the countryside, the policy approach places a restriction on types of development other than those where a rural location might be justified. Policy LP31 sets out further criteria for development in the countryside, though see also Policy LP5 on community-led development.

This proposed policy is largely a new Policy, though there are elements of Policy GROWTH2 carried forward from the current Local Plan (2015)

### **Policy LP3: The Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside**

The East Cambridgeshire settlement hierarchy is as follows:

- **Main Settlements** – City of Ely; Littleport; Soham
- **Large Villages** – Burwell, Bottisham, Fordham, Haddenham, Islesham, Little Downham, Stretham, Sutton, Witchford,
- **Medium Villages** – Ashley, Burrough Green, Cheveley, Dullingham, Kennett, Little Thetford, Lode and Long Meadow, Mepal, Newmarket Fringe, Stetchworth, Swaffham Bulbeck, Swaffham Prior, Wicken, Wilburton, Woodditton and Saxon Street;
- **Small Villages** - Chippenham, Prickwillow, Witcham, Brinkley, Reach, Kirtling & Upend, Pymore, Aldreth, Coveney, Wentworth, Snailwell, Black Horse Drove, Chettisham, Queen Adelaide, Stuntney, Wardy Hill, Westley Waterless, Barway, Upware.

The proposed strategy for planned growth will be subject to the outcome of Policy LP2, but it will also be informed by the hierarchy above.

Allocations for housing and employment purposes are likely to be made for all settlements in the top two tiers, and potentially some or all of the third tier. The outcome of Policy LP2 will help determine the scale of allocations in each settlement.

Subject to the outcome of Policy LP2, allocations will not be made in this Local Plan for Small Villages, unless a site of significant size (eg 10 dwellings or more) has already received consent. However, small scale development within these settlements, up to 10 dwellings or similar sized employment development, of a scale and design appropriate to that settlement, will be supported in principle.

In addition, community-led development schemes will be supported in principle in, or adjacent to, all settlements listed in all four levels of the hierarchy, subject to Policy LP5.

The settlement boundary for each village is identified on the Policies Map. Land outside the development envelope is defined as countryside. Development in the countryside (i.e. outside the boundary of all settlements in the hierarchy) will be restricted to that which is:

- demonstrably essential to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and access to natural greenspace, transport or utility services;
- community-led development (which satisfies Policy LP5) or rural exception housing sites (which satisfies Policy LP31);
- minerals or waste development in accordance with the separate Minerals and Waste development plans; and
- equine related development (which satisfies policy LP9)



## Green Belt

The NPPF attaches great importance to Green Belts in preventing urban sprawl and keeping land permanently open. Strict control of development should ensure their open and rural character is not eroded.

The Cambridge Green Belt was established in 1965, and includes approximately 1,910 hectares of East Cambridgeshire around the villages of Bottisham, Lode and Swaffham Bulbeck. The purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt are to: Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact city with a thriving historic centre; maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting; and prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.

The boundaries of the Green Belt in East Cambridgeshire were subject to minor changes in the Core Strategy (2009) and again in the Local Plan (2015) to remove anomalies and release a small area of land for residential development on the edge of Bottisham. These changes were informed by the Council's Green Belt Assessment (2005).

At this early stage of preparing a new Local Plan, **there is no intention of the Council to review the Green Belt boundary again.**

Development proposals which come forward in the Green Belt will be assessed against Government policy in the NPPF and other policies in this Local Plan. Development will be strictly controlled. The NPPF sets out clear guidance on the types of buildings and development that may exceptionally be permitted in Green Belt areas.

The following proposed policy is largely a carry forward of Policy ENV10 in the current Local Plan (2015).

### **Policy LP4: Green Belt**

Development in the Green Belt will be strictly controlled, and limited to certain exceptions as prescribed in the NPPF.

Where development is accepted, in principle, 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 considered outside of, but 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.

## Part 2: Delivering Homes and Jobs

### Introduction

The Local Plan needs to consider how employment and homes opportunities can be delivered. This will partly depend on economic factors outside the remit of the planning system. However, ensuring that land is available and appropriate for various types of employment, homes and other uses give some certainty to land owners and developers, and can help facilitate development.

### Community-led development (including Community Land Trust (CLT) schemes)

East Cambridgeshire District Council has a vision to deliver affordable and sustainable development, with communities playing a greater part in delivering growth. It is a corporate priority to help make this happen.

The Council seeks community-led developments, primarily via Community Land Trusts (CLTs), to spring up all over the district. For example, it could be a small affordable housing scheme in a rural village, a mixed housing and commercial scheme in a medium size settlement, or a large scale housing and employment scheme in one of the market towns. This Local Plan will help to deliver whatever it is that community wants to deliver.

Active CLTs across East Cambridgeshire are continuing to move forward bringing together developers, landowners and residents for the good of a town and village. They are delivering new homes, business units, health facilities and community spaces. At the time of this preliminary draft Local Plan, the Stretham and Wilburton CLT is now underway on site, where 50 homes, 15 of which will be affordable, are being built along with a doctor's surgery, small business units and open space. In Swaffham Prior, building is well under way with the allocation of eight new homes now completed with the prospective owners now moving in.

The Thrift CLT for Soham is currently looking for a suitable location with the ambition of providing affordable housing for local people, some employment opportunities and community facilities, whilst the Witchford CLT has one site identified but is currently looking for more land. Meanwhile, Fordham Parish Council signalled they wished to move forward with a CLT for the village.

The Council sees CLT schemes as a great way of helping local residents get affordable homes as well as well as the infrastructure which is often missing in our more rural areas. CLTs are the product of collaboration between developers, landowners and communities – with each project creating lasting benefits for towns and villages for generations to come.

The following proposed policy is a significantly amended version of Policy GROWTH 6 in the current Local Plan (2015)

#### **Policy LP5: Community-led development**

The Council is very supportive of community-led development. This may include schemes involving housing, small business units and other appropriate uses.

In principle, genuinely community-led development schemes will be supported, even on land not allocated for development and including on land outside of settlement boundaries, subject to the following criteria (with further details on these criteria to be set out in an updated Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to be adopted alongside this Local Plan):

- The District Council is satisfied that (i) the scheme was initiated by, and is being led by, a legitimate local community group such as a Community Land Trust or other group as defined in

the relevant SPD and (ii) the scheme has general community support, with evidence of meaningful, but proportionate, public engagement.

- that meaningful, but proportionate, evidence of need for each element of the scheme is provided (eg need in the locality for affordable housing, new employment space, health facilities, open space etc)
- that community benefits provided by the scheme will be retained by the local community in perpetuity.
- the site is well related to a settlement listed in Policy LP3, with no major harm caused to the character or setting of the settlement, or the surrounding countryside.
- that the number of dwellings which are classed as 'affordable' are maximised (subject to viability), and likely of a greater proportion than would be required under Policy LP6 (Meeting Housing Need). The development should also seek to deliver Starter Homes and plots for Self-build Homes.
- there are no fundamental and insurmountable constraints to delivering viable development on the site, such as Green Belt notation, flood risk, highway safety or other lack of infrastructure provision.

*[Note: in addition to the above proposed policy, the Council is exploring whether specific sites (or parts of sites) should be allocated on the Policies Map for exclusive development by a community-led approach. This might be standalone sites, or more likely a requirement for a proportion (say, 25-30%) of a 'normal' housing or employment allocation to be set aside for community-led development purposes. Any ideas or suggestions on this approach would be welcome. For landowners promoting their site for allocation in this new Local Plan, then the Site Suggestion Form (Form B) specifically asks whether you would be willing to set aside an element of the site for community-led development, with the set aside land made available to the community at no more than its current (eg agricultural) value, for a period of at least 10 years after commencement of development on the wider site, and with no impediments (such as ransom strips) imposed on accessing the set aside land, and with the set aside land appropriately serviced (or easily serviced in the future), with infrastructure].*

## Housing

*[Note: Please note that, when reading the following paragraphs and proposed policy, government is currently considering fundamental changes to a wide range of housing matters, including the definition and provision of affordable housing, the provision of 'Starter Homes', and the provision of plots for self-build. Future iterations of this emerging Local Plan will need to reflect such changes as such national policy evolves.]*

It is a key objective of national housing policy that there should be a wide choice, variety and mix of housing, which addresses both market and affordable housing. This will help to achieve sustainable mixed communities in East Cambridgeshire.

Developers will be encouraged to bring forward proposals which will, in overall terms, secure the market and affordable **housing mix** as recommended by the most up to date SHMA. This housing mix is however not prescriptive, and is intended to allow developers to respond to demand and site specific characteristics/circumstances. However, unless financial viability indicates otherwise, the guidance on mix in the most up to date SHMA will be the starting point for discussion.

**Affordable housing** is housing that is provided for eligible households who are unable to meet their housing needs in the open market because of the relationship between housing costs and income. It is tightly defined by national policy. In terms of house prices, the district is heavily influenced by

Cambridge, with prices generally higher the nearer the property is (in accessibility terms, as well as geographically) to Cambridge. Over the next few months, we are re-testing the viability of development across East Cambridgeshire, to determine whether the current Affordable Housing requirements in the adopted Local Plan (2015) need adjusting in this new Local Plan. The current requirements are, in short, 40% affordable housing in the south of the district, and 30% in the north.

Recent changes to Building Regulations (2015) have also tightened up many aspects of **housing 'standards'**, such as thermal efficiency (i.e. energy efficient homes), security, and accessibility. In tightening up such rules, Government prevents Local Plans from introducing their own technical housing standards, such as 'Lifetime Homes', 'Wheelchair Homes', 'Code for Sustainable Homes' and many more.

However, Government has permitted Local Plans to set higher standards in a few small select areas, including additional **higher access standards** so that sufficient choice is available in the market for people with particular needs, such as the requirement for wheelchair accessible homes and homes which can be adapted to suit people's needs over time. Part M (Volume 1) of Building Regulations sets out these optional additional higher standards. Category 1 relates to mandatory access standards (visitable dwellings), Category 2 to accessible and adaptable dwellings and Category 3 to wheelchair user dwellings. Only a Local Plan can decide whether to pursue Category 2 or 3 accessible homes, and whether these should be all homes built, or just a certain proportion.

At the present time, the Council is exploring whether a proportion of some homes, on larger development schemes, should be required to comply with Category 2 accessibility. This would cost the developer (in terms of additional build costs) around £500 per applicable home. However, subject to views you might have, the Council is concerned about the cost to the developer of requiring a proportion of Category 3 homes, as the cost per dwelling is in the region of £20,000 per property. Such costs could impact on viability, or, if such homes are made compulsory, will likely mean that other much needed infrastructure cannot be afforded or provided. As such, the proposed Policy LP6 is suggesting we do not make Category 3 compulsory, but your views on the matter of access standards would be welcome.

The **Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015** places a requirement on Local Planning Authorities to maintain a register of individuals and associations of individuals who have expressed an interest in acquiring land for the purposes of self-build or custom build. The Housing and Planning Bill 2015 which is currently passing through Parliament goes further to require Local Planning Authorities to grant planning permission on sufficient serviced plots of land to meet the identified need for self-build and custom build. As this Local Plan progresses, it will need to reflect the final wording of the Act.

There is a need in the district to provide care accommodation for various groups of people for rehabilitation and out of hospital care, including the elderly, people with disabilities and vulnerable people.

The **care of the elderly or vulnerable people** is moving towards more flexible forms of living and support which seek to maintain their independence and control of their lives. There are several options where residents can enjoy their own self-contained home within a site offering extra facilities. These include retirement homes/villages and 'extra care' housing, where varying levels of care and support are provided in the home. These models often include a restaurant or dining room, health & fitness facilities and hobby rooms on site. Other forms of accommodation include care or nursing homes, which comprise single rooms within a residential setting where residents receive varying levels of care. Care can range from primarily personal care to nursing care for those who are bedridden, very frail or have a medical condition or illness.

Residential care accommodation should normally be located within settlements where there is easy access to a range of services e.g. shops, healthcare and social facilities. This should enable non-car access to local facilities for residents and staff, and ensure the facility is accessible for staff and visitors.

However, as an exception, approval may be granted for care or nursing homes adjoining or close to a settlement – recognising that current provision of nursing/care homes within the district are at the lowest level per population in Cambridgeshire (Guidance Note: Adult Social Care and Planning Policies for Housing Developments – CCC 2013).

For rural housing exception sites, please see Policy LP31.

The proposed policy below has been informed by policies GROWTH 6, HOU1, HOU3, HOU4 and HOU6 of the current adopted Local Plan (2015) as well as introducing new criteria, particularly relating to self-build homes and access standards.

### **Policy LP6: Meeting Local Housing Needs**

Development proposals for housing will be supported where they cater for the needs of all sections of the community, providing a range of high quality homes of varying sizes, types and tenures to meet current need, including homes for market rent and plots for self-build.

#### **Affordable housing**

Development proposals of XX *[to be consulted upon at the next draft plan stage]* or more dwellings should, through negotiation, provide a minimum of XX% *[to be consulted upon at the next draft plan stage]* affordable housing. As a guide, the proportion of these should be XX tenure split *[to be consulted upon at the next draft plan stage and subject to the latest national policy on this matter]*. Affordable housing should be provided onsite, unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated for provision of homes and/or land to be provided off site or through a commuted sum.

If the number of units in a development scheme comes forward which is below the threshold set above (and thus does not require the provision of affordable housing), but the scheme is followed by an obviously linked subsequent development scheme at any point where the original permission remains extant, or up to 5 years following completion of the first scheme, then, if the combined total of dwellings provided by the first scheme and the subsequent scheme/s provide equal to or more dwellings than the threshold set above, then Policy LP6 as a whole will be applied, with the precise level of affordable housing to be provided being ‘back dated’ to include the earlier scheme(s).

#### **Dwellings with Higher Access Standards**

Housing should be adaptable to meet the changing needs of people over time. On all development proposals of XX *[to be consulted upon at the next draft plan stage]* or more dwellings, XX% *[to be consulted upon at the next draft plan stage]* of homes should meet Building Regulations Part M (Volume 1), Category 2.

Whilst there is no requirement to provide any homes to meet Building Regulations Part M (Volume 1), Category 3, should proposals be put forward which meet such standards, then this will be supported.

#### **Self-build Homes**

All development proposals of XX units or more should set-aside a proportion of land for self-build (as a guide a minimum of 5% net developable area) with individual, serviced plots made available for sale, including restrictions on future occupancy.

*[note: this part of the policy is particularly subject to amendment, dependent on the final outcome of the Housing and Planning Bill and any associated Regulations]*

#### **Residential care accommodation**

Residential care accommodation, which are designed to accommodate those who need some form of on-site assistance, should be located in a settlement falling within either tier 1 or 2 of the settlement hierarchy. If a demonstrable need is identified away from these settlements, then the proposal must demonstrate that access to a range of services and facilities is possible, taking account of the likely occupants of such accommodation. Exceptionally, that might include locations outside of settlement boundaries. Isolated accommodation in the countryside will not be permitted.

## **Gypsies, Travelling Showpeople Sites**

The Gypsy and Traveller community in East Cambridgeshire is long established, and as at 2013 comprises about 90 or so families living on a mix of private sites and Council sites, plus other families in permanent dwellings. The Government's overarching aim is to '*ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community*' (Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, August 2015).

The provision of additional permanent pitches can be achieved through the allocation of a site in the Local Plan or through the normal process of the submission of a planning application and the granting of planning permission. Any proposals must take into account the NPPF and the national Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (August 2015).

The latest Cambridge sub-Regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA) 2011 identified a need for 38 Gypsy and Traveller pitches in East Cambridgeshire for the period 2011 to 2031. The Council is currently working with neighbouring districts in order to prepare a new GTANA to support this new East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. It is anticipated that the new GTANA will be published in early 2016 and will identify the need to 2036. The future need and any preferred additional sites to meet this need will be included in the next version of the Local Plan due to be consulted on in late summer 2016. You may wish to submit suitable sites for us to consider as future allocations for Gypsy and Traveller provision.

The current Local Plan (2015) allocates two small sites for Gypsy and Traveller purposes, and it is proposed to carry these forward into this new Local Plan. They are, therefore, listed in the Policy below.

The proposed policy is largely carries forward policy HOU 9 of the current adopted Local Plan (2015), but will be updated in summer 2016 to reflect current and future needs for pitches for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

### **Policy LP7: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople sites**

This Local Plan will make provision for Gypsy and Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople sites to meet identified needs [precise figures to be determined in early spring 2016].

To meet the identified need, the following sites are allocated on the Policies Map for Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision:

- Land at Muckdungle Corner, Newmarket Road, Bottisham (2 pitches).
- Land at Pony Lodge, Grunty Fen Road, Witchford (2 pitches).
- [further sites may be added in the next draft Local Plan, if needed – suggested sites welcome]

Detailed proposals for the above sites, and for other proposals on non-allocated sites, will be considered against the following criteria:

- a. The proposal should not conflict with other local or national policies relating to flood risk, contamination, landscape character, protection of the natural and built environment, heritage

assets or agricultural land quality; and

- b. Must have adequate and safe vehicular access; and
- c. Must have sufficient space for vehicle manoeuvring and parking within the site; and
- d. Should provide an acceptable standard of amenity for the site's occupants, and will not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of nearby residents, including (but not limited to) visual and acoustic privacy; and
- e. Should be adequately serviced, preferably by mains connections, and would not place undue pressure on local infrastructure; and
- f. For non-allocated sites, should be located within reasonable travelling distance to both primary health care facilities and schools, preferably by walking, cycling or public transport. An exception to this may be allowed in the case of Travelling Showpeople, where there is a need to locate the development close to the primary road network: in such event, access to primary health care and schools should still be achievable.

The intensification of authorised Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites (i.e. a net increase in pitches within the established boundary of an existing site) will be permitted provided that:

- The residential amenity of residents on the proposed site and neighbouring land is protected.
- Sites are of a suitable size to enable the creation of additional pitches or plots.
- There is no significant loss of soft and hard landscaping and amenity provision within the existing site, particularly where conditioned by previous consent; and
- There is no adverse impact in terms of highways access and movement.

## **Delivering Prosperity and Jobs**

Future economic growth in the district can only be successfully delivered if there is sufficient land in the right locations for these uses. The Council's current Jobs Growth Strategy (2012) helped inform the current adopted Local Plan, and the intention is to refresh that Strategy over the first half of 2016.

The availability of local employment opportunities is particularly important given the high levels of out-commuting from the district. Existing sites are serviced and add to the variety of stock. The loss of business land can harm local firms, who may find it difficult to find suitable replacement sites. The policy below seeks to retain sites currently or last in employment use, whilst allowing some flexibility to take account of sites that may no longer be suitable or appropriate for employment use.

The Council encourages the development of small businesses. It is known that there is a shortage of small business units throughout the district to cater for current and predicted demand. Some local business needs are likely to be met through the re-use of existing buildings in the countryside. However, in cases where there are no suitable sites within settlements for business development or opportunities for re-use of buildings, new buildings to accommodate small business developments may be appropriate on the edges of settlements. This is particularly likely to be the case in relation to villages, rather than the market towns where there is a greater choice of land and buildings. The scale of development acceptable in these circumstances will depend on the type of business, the nature of the settlement and the character of the area, but is likely to involve the provision of 500m<sup>2</sup> or less of business floorspace. Any such development will only be permitted where it would not adversely affect its surroundings and is easily accessed by foot or cycle from the settlement centre along clear links.

The following proposed policy combines, in whole or part, Policy GROWTH4, EMP1, EMP2 and EMP3 in the current Local Plan (2015), as well as introduces new policy elements.

## **Policy LP8: Delivering Prosperity and Jobs**

The Council will, in principle, support proposals which assist in the delivery of economic prosperity and job growth to the district.

### **Enterprise Zone - Lancaster Way**

This area, the scale of which is to be defined on the Policies Map, is the major strategic employment area for the district. It has national 'Enterprise Zone' status, and will be a focus for job growth for many years to come.

### **Other Strategic Employment Allocations**

This policy, at the next draft stage, will identify other Strategic Employment Sites. Such sites will be reserved for B1, B2 and B8 Uses. The presumption will be for the Strategic Employment Sites to meet the needs for large scale investment that requires significant land take. Small scale and/or piecemeal development that prevents the delivery of large scale investment will be refused.

Any non-B class uses in these areas will only be supported where the applicant can demonstrably show that it is ancillary to the effective functioning of the Strategic Employment Site. Proposals for the development of Strategic Employment Sites should preferably be progressed through a masterplan prior to or alongside a planning application.

The current adopted Local Plan (2015) lists a number of large employment sites, and it is likely most of these will be carried forward. If you think any of these should not be considered, or considered for other uses, or if there are other new sites elsewhere which should be considered, then please let us know.

### **Other Employment Allocations**

This policy, at the next draft stage, will identify other Employment Sites, which are smaller than the Strategic Employment Sites. Such sites will be reserved for B1, B2 and B8 Uses.

### **Other Land in employment uses**

Where land is not allocated for employment purposes, but is currently being used for such purposes (primarily or wholly), the Council will support development related to such uses. As an exception, planning applications for mixed-use re-development involving an element of employment uses may be permitted, where it can be demonstrated that:

- (a) Continued use of the site for 100% employment purposes is no longer viable, taking into account the site's characteristics, quality of buildings, and existing or potential market demand; or
- (b) The redevelopment of the site would bring significant environmental or community benefits which outweigh the partial loss of employment uses.

Applicants will need to provide clear and robust evidence relating to criteria (a) or (b) alongside a planning application. Planning applications for re-development which propose the loss of all employment uses will need to be accompanied by clear viability or other evidence as to why it is not possible to deliver employment as part of a redevelopment scheme.

### **New employment development in the countryside**

New development for small scale (less than 500m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace) businesses (B1, B2 and B8 uses) will be supported on small sites closely related to the built framework of a settlement where:



- There is a lack of suitable buildings and sites within the settlement.
- There is a lack of suitable buildings to re-use or replace in the countryside close to the settlement.
- The proposal would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area, the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, or result in a significant increase in traffic; and
- The site can be easily accessed by foot or cycle from the settlement.

Any extensions to an existing business in the countryside will be considered on their merits, taking account of matters such as location and accessibility to communities, overall scale (especially in relation to the footprint of the existing business), landscape impacts, highway safety and flood risk. The extension must be to support an existing business, not the creation of a wholly separate business

## **Equine Development**

Horse racing and other equestrian-related activities are popular forms of recreation and economic development in the countryside, particularly in the south of the district around Newmarket. These uses, including stud farming, training establishments, riding schools and stables, can fit in well with agricultural activities and help to diversify the rural economy. The Council will support equine development that maintains environmental quality and the character of the countryside.

All equestrian development, whether domestic or commercial, should be of an appropriate scale and design and careful attention should be given to siting, materials and landscaping details to avoid an adverse impact on the countryside and where possible re-use existing buildings. Particular care will be needed where floodlighting is proposed in order to avoid an unacceptable impact on residential amenity. Adequate pasture may be necessary depending on the feeding and grazing regime. The British Horse Society recommends 0.4-0.6ha per horse.

The proposed policy is broadly aligned with policy EMP 5 of the Local Plan 2015.

### **Policy LP9: Equine development**

Proposals for horse racing or equestrian development, whether domestic or commercial, will, in principle, be supported. However, the following criteria should be met:

- Where new buildings are proposed, applicants have demonstrated that existing structures cannot be adapted or re-used.
- The siting, scale and design of the proposal is in keeping with the character of the area, with adequate pasture to support the horses where necessary. Particular regard will be had to the cumulative effect of proposals.
- Proposals for larger scale private or commercial enterprises should have access to the public bridleway network or have sufficient space for exercising horses on-site. Such proposals will require a Transport Statement to demonstrate that there are no unacceptable impacts on highway safety.
- The amenity of nearby residential properties is not adversely affected, for example, in relation to floodlighting, changes in levels or noise and disturbance.
- The proposal would not (by itself or cumulatively) have a significant adverse impact in terms of the nature and amount of traffic generated.
- If necessary, restrictive conditions may be placed on any permission, preventing the future conversion to other forms of development of the buildings permitted.

## **Development affecting the horse racing industry**

Given the historical association of the Newmarket area with horse racing, and its importance to the local economy, it is important that development does not have an adverse impact on the industry. Development which harms the long-term viability of operational studs and other racing facilities, or the racing industry as a whole, will be opposed.

The proposed policy broadly reflects policy EMP 6 of the Local Plan 2015

### **Policy LP10: Development affecting the horse racing industry**

Any development which is likely to have an adverse impact on the operational use of an existing horse racing industry related site, or which would threaten the long term viability of the horse racing industry as a whole, will not be permitted.

## **Sustainable tourism**

East Cambridgeshire is an attractive rural district with a range of tourist attractions including Ely Cathedral, Wicken Fen, Anglesey Abbey and Oliver Cromwell's House. The Council is keen to support proposals which sustain and enhance the district's tourism and visitor economy. Tourist facilities and visitor attractions are usually considered to be a 'main town centre use' but they can also play an important role in rural diversification. Certain tourism development may be appropriate in the countryside, for example to support the expansion of existing tourist facilities and attractions, or to create a new attraction from a specific feature.

The proposed policy is largely carried forward from the Local Plan 2015, policy EMP7.

### **Policy LP11: Tourist facilities and visitor attractions**

Proposals for new or extended tourist facilities or attractions will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

- There is a proportionate amount of evidence to demonstrate that the proposal (whether a new facility or expansion/enhancement of an existing facility) is a viable business proposition.
- The proposal is of an appropriate scale and nature relative to its location, and would not (by itself or cumulatively) have a significant adverse impact in terms of the amount and nature of traffic generated.
- The character and appearance of the area and natural assets would be maintained and where possible enhanced.
- The proposal maximises opportunities for sustainable travel including walking, cycling and public transport; and
- Opportunities to reuse existing buildings have been robustly explored.

## **Tourist accommodation**

The district's proximity to Cambridge, Newmarket, King's Lynn and Norwich make it an attractive destination for day visits and an increasingly popular destination for overnight stays. There is a need for additional tourist accommodation, particularly within the hotel, caravan and camping sectors. Additionally, on-going improvements to the navigable waterways, including the Fens Waterways Link, mean that East Cambridgeshire is ideally placed to capitalise on growth within the leisure marine and boating holiday market.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) policy EMP8.

### **Policy LP12: Tourist Accommodation (excluding holiday cottages)**

Proposals for new or extended hotels, caravan, caravan-lodge, camping sites, marinas and moorings will be supported where:

- There is a proportionate amount of evidence to demonstrate that the proposal (whether new accommodation or expansion/enhancement of existing accommodation) is a viable business proposition.
- Proposals are located within, or well related to, an existing settlement boundary, or on sites where existing service providers require additional space to expand.
- There is no significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area or natural assets.
- The proposal is of an appropriate scale and nature relative to its location, and would not (by itself or cumulatively) have a significant adverse impact in terms of the amount and nature of traffic generated; and
- In the case of marinas and moorings, development would not impede navigation or lead to hazardous boat movements, harm the quality of the fisheries, or conflict with traditional river uses such as fishing, sailing and rowing.

Proposals resulting in the loss of sites currently, or last used, for hotel accommodation will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the continued use of a site for hotel accommodation is no longer economically viable, nor has the potential to become viable, and that all reasonable efforts have been made to sell or let the property at a reasonable price for a period of at least 12 months.

### **Holiday Cottage Accommodation (including seasonal occupancy)**

Unserviced holiday cottage accommodation can bring benefits to the rural economy, particularly where under-used buildings are brought back into productive use, or where development forms part of a rural diversification scheme.

For the purposes of this policy, such accommodation has the general appearance and function of a normal home, and excludes all those accommodation types listed in Policy LP12: Tourist Accommodation.

However, development pressures for housing and high land prices in East Cambridgeshire means that there is a potential risk that such units, once permitted, may be used as permanent residential accommodation. If this happened, it would take away the economic benefits which arise from such accommodation (such as visitor spend at local shops, attractions and facilities, whilst placing much less pressure on local services such as doctors and schools, than permanent residential occupancy). This following policy address this risk.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) policy EMP8.

### **Policy LP13: Holiday Cottage Accommodation**

Proposals for holiday cottage accommodation will be supported where:

- Schemes are located within, or well related to, an existing settlement boundary; and
- In the case of schemes in the countryside, they involve the re-use of an existing building in the

countryside for a maximum of 2 dwellings, and do not involve new build accommodation.

Holiday occupancy conditions will be placed on new unserviced holiday accommodation requiring that:

- The accommodation is occupied for holiday purposes only and shall not be occupied as any person's sole or main residence.
- It shall be available for commercial holiday lets for at least 140 days a year and no let must exceed 28 days.
- The owners/operators of the site shall maintain an up-to-date register of lettings/occupation, including the names of all owners/occupiers, their home addresses (i.e. where they are registered for council tax and electoral purposes), and showing arrival and departure dates; and
- The owner/operator shall be prepared to make the register available at all reasonable times to the Local Planning Authority.

A seasonal occupancy condition will be attached where accommodation is not suitable for year-round occupation by nature of its construction, location or design, or proximity to a habitat that needs extra protection at certain times of the year.

### **Supporting retail**

Town and village centres are at the heart of our community, and provide a focus for retail and other town centre uses, including, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural and community facilities. The Government is committed to sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of these centres, and making town centres a particular focus for development.

The policy approach seeks to focus main town centre uses within the identified town centres in the district, wherever possible. The town centre boundaries are shown on the policies map. Edge of centre and out of centre locations may be appropriate in exceptional circumstances, according to the sequential approach and other tests in the NPPF. The sequential approach involves looking at sites in the town centre first, then edge of centre locations – and only considering out of centre locations where suitable sites are not available in more central locations.

A Retail Impact Assessment will be required for retail schemes outside town centres which propose 280m<sup>2</sup> or more of net retail floorspace. Impact assessments can help to establish if retail development proposals will have an adverse effect or not on town centres. Developers planning schemes which incorporate 280m<sup>2</sup> or more of net floorspace will need to agree the scope of any impact assessment with the Council in advance of submitting a planning application. The Planning Practice Guidance provides latest information on scope and content of retail impact assessment.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) policy COM1.

#### **Policy LP14: Location of retail and town centre uses**

Within the defined town centres, proposals for retail and other 'town centre uses' will be supported where:

- The scale and type of development is directly related to the role and function of the centre, in accordance with the hierarchy identified in Policy LP3.
- There would be no adverse effect on the vitality and viability of the centre, or on any other centres.
- The development would enhance the character and attractiveness of the centre and its locality,

and not adversely affect residential amenity.

- The local transport system is capable of accommodating the potential traffic implications, and necessary mitigation measures are provided to make the development viable in transport terms; and
- Proposals on allocation sites accord with relevant site policies in Part 5 of the Local Plan.

Outside the town centres of Ely, Soham and Littleport, proposals for retail and 'town centre uses' may be permitted under the following circumstances:

- The sequential approach has been followed and there are no suitable sequentially preferable sites available.
- The site is suitable for the proposed use and the building form and design is appropriate in the local context.
- The scale and type of development is directly related to the role and function of the centre or its locality, in accordance with the hierarchy in Policy LP3.
- For retail developments of 280m<sup>2</sup> net floorspace or larger, there would be no adverse effect on the vitality and viability of the nearest town centre, or on any other centres, as demonstrated in a Retail Impact Assessment.
- The development would enhance the character and attractiveness of the centre and its locality, and not adversely affect residential amenity; and

The development would be accessible by a choice of means of transport (including public potential traffic implications).

As an exception to this approach, support may be given to:

- The provision of small-scale localised facilities in villages and neighbourhoods outside town centres (such as corner shops, food and drink outlets and small-scale leisure facilities), where it can be demonstrated that:
  - The development would meet a clear localised neighbourhood need (especially if it is part of a community-led development scheme).
  - The development is not of a scale and type which should be located within identified town centres.
- Farm shops, where these are of an appropriate scale and would not detract from the character and appearance of the area, and it can be demonstrated they would make an on-going contribution to sustaining the agricultural enterprise as a whole.

### **Retail uses in town centres**

The health, vitality and viability of town centres depends upon their accessibility, attractiveness and ability to retain and develop a wide range of facilities and attract continued investment. Retaining a significant proportion of A1 retail units in town centres is a key in achieving this vision. Non-retail uses such as financial services, cafés, restaurants and public houses can also play a role in the viability of town centres and may be appropriate complementary uses, provided that the retail function of the centre is not undermined.

The town centres of Ely, Soham, and Littleport are key areas for shopping, leisure and business activity in the district. The current boundaries of the town centres are defined in the current Local Plan (2015), as are 'primary shopping frontage' and 'secondary shopping frontage' for the larger centre of Ely, where

the retail shops are concentrated. The Council does not intend to amend such boundaries in this new Local Plan, though if you think the Council should do so, please explain where and why.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) policy COM2.

### **Policy LP15: Retail uses in town centres**

#### *Ely Primary Shopping Frontage*

Within Ely Primary Shopping Frontage, as defined on the Policies Map, the development of A1 retail uses will be supported in principle. Where planning applications are required, the loss of A1 retail uses will generally be resisted – but may be permitted in exceptional circumstances where the following criteria are all satisfied:

- The proposal would not result in a concentration of non-A1 retail uses in the immediate street frontage.
- The proposal would not detract from the dominant retail appearance of the street frontage, and where appropriate, positive measures to enhance or restore the character of the site or its immediate area have been incorporated.
- The proposal would generate significant pedestrian visits during shopping hours, as well as complement the existing mix of uses/retailers and the shopping function of the city centre.
- The proposal does not involve the loss of a shop unit measuring 200m<sup>2</sup> or larger (gross retail floorspace).
- The proposal does not involve ground floor residential development; and
- The proposal has been marketed for A1 retail at an appropriate price for a minimum of 3 months.

If the unit has remained vacant for a minimum period of six months, a temporary change of use from A1 retail to community use (to be defined) may be acceptable.

#### *Ely Secondary Shopping Frontage*

Within Ely Secondary Shopping Frontage, as defined on the Policies Map, planning applications for changes of use from A1 retail to other uses may be permitted provided that:

- The proposed use provides a service that complements the shopping function of the city centre.
- There is no adverse impact on residential amenity; and
- The proposal does not involve ground floor residential development.

#### *Soham and Littleport town centres*

Within Soham and Littleport town centres, as defined on the Policies Map, planning applications for changes of use from A1 retail to other uses will be supported in principle provided that:

- The proposed use provides a service that complements the shopping function of the centre.
- There is no adverse impact on residential amenity.
- The proposal does not involve the loss of a shop unit measuring 200m<sup>2</sup> or larger (gross retail floorspace).
- The proposal does not involve ground floor residential development.

## **Part 3: Improving Local Transport and Infrastructure**

### **Introduction**

This chapter seeks to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is provided to support new development. The policies in this chapter have been informed by the Council's Infrastructure Investment Plan and discussions with key infrastructure providers.

### **Local infrastructure provision**

When new development takes place, it places additional demands on the existing infrastructure network. It is therefore key that infrastructure requirements are planned for and provided alongside developments to ensure that development remains sustainable.

The proposed growth for East Cambridgeshire will increase demand for and pressure on infrastructure within the district. The impacts of growth on demand for infrastructure and services will be dependent on the scale, distribution and type of growth to take place. Once the 'objectively assessed housing need' for the district is calculated, the specific additional demands for infrastructure within the district can then be identified.

The levels and types of infrastructure required to support development will be informed by the district councils Infrastructure Investment Plan. This has been prepared to inform the Local Plan of the infrastructure provision that will be required as a result of the growth proposed within this Plan. In addition to the strategic infrastructure needs and priorities within East Cambridgeshire, Part 5 of this Local Plan contains locally identified infrastructure priorities for each community.

The district council will work closely with infrastructure providers to ensure the inclusion of infrastructure schemes within their programmes, plans and strategies and to ensure delivery of specific schemes.

This proposed policy is a substitute for Policy GROWTH 3 of the current adopted Local Plan (2015).

### **Policy LP16: Infrastructure to Support Growth**

All new development should be supported by, and have good access to, all necessary infrastructure.

#### **Infrastructure**

Planning Permission will only be granted if it can be demonstrated that there is, or will be, sufficient infrastructure capacity to support and meet all the necessary requirements arising from the proposed development. Development proposals must consider all of the infrastructure implications of a scheme; not just those on the site or its immediate vicinity. Conditions or planning obligations, as part of a package or combination of infrastructure delivery measures, are likely to be required for many proposals to ensure that new development meets this principle.

Consideration must be given to the likely timing of infrastructure provision. As such, development may need to be phased either spatially or in time to ensure the provision of infrastructure in a timely manner. Conditions or a planning obligation may be used to secure this phasing arrangement.

#### **Developer Contributions**

Developers will be expected to contribute towards the delivery of relevant infrastructure. They will either make direct provision or will contribute towards the provision of local and strategic infrastructure required by the development either alone or cumulatively with other developments.

Further guidance on how this policy will be implemented is set out in separate documents. Such documents, including a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD),

an Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP), Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule and other CIL related policies, cover items such as:

- The infrastructure themes where contributions will be sought;
- How, when and who will collect contributions; and
- How contributions are intended to be spent.

Such documents will be kept under review, and may be revised as and when deemed necessary to do so.

### **Providing infrastructure**

Where planning permission is sought in order to deliver infrastructure, then such development will be supported in principle, especially if it is demonstrated that such infrastructure is needed to support growth, quality of life or economic prosperity in the district. Such infrastructure will include, but is not limited to transport, telecommunications, community facilities, energy and water supply.

Provision of new and improved infrastructure within the District should be informed by the Infrastructure Investment Plan and the infrastructure priorities identified by each community, will be set out in Part 5 of this Local Plan.

### **East Cambridgeshire's transport network**

All new development will have an impact upon the existing transport network. Such impacts, though, can be minimised through careful consideration and design. Proposals for new development or new or enhanced transport schemes should ensure that people are well connected to surrounding areas. New developments should also ensure they are safe and accessible for all users and wherever possible are located to reduce the need to travel. Proposals for employment development and new community facilities should be accompanied by a travel plan to improve safety for employees and visitors.

Transport infrastructure should be provided as part of new development, particularly enhancements to walking, cycling and public transport networks. Community transport networks, such as demand responsive services (e.g. 'Dial-a-Ride' schemes) may be appropriate for some groups. Other innovative solutions, such as the introduction of car clubs could be explored.

Where new development is expected to generate significant movements it will be necessary to prepare a Transport Assessment. This should set out the impacts of the development, how the volume of trips generated will be accommodated and how accessibility to the site will be achieved. Mitigation measures providing opportunities for use of sustainable transport modes should be included. In many cases a Travel Plan will also be required to set out what mitigation measures will be implemented and how, along with targets for modal shift.

The Infrastructure Investment Plan identifies strategic transport infrastructure projects that have been identified as necessary (which will be regularly updated) or the District in order to accommodate the increase in movement as a result of expected growth.

### **Promotion of sustainable travel**

The rural nature of the district means that beyond local journeys the distances travelled are much greater as services and facilities are often located further away. However in contrast to this, the compact nature of individual settlements within East Cambridgeshire means that there are relatively short distances between origin and destination for large number of journeys making walking and cycling genuine options for local journeys. Therefore high quality routes and connections should be provided.



Providing opportunities for more people to live close to the services and facilities they use and places in which they work reduces the need to travel, thereby minimising reliance on the private car and preventing exclusion and deprivation. New development should therefore be located in sustainable and accessible locations.

To provide people with real choices about how they travel, new development should promote opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport. Sustainable transport can play a major role in overcoming the environmental impacts associated with private car use. In addition, walking and cycling provides health benefits through encouraging active lifestyles.

Developments in the main settlements and larger villages, in particular, should ensure that connectivity by walking and cycling is of a high quality, enabling occupiers to access local facilities via walking or cycling.

In locations where walking and cycling distances would be too great, public transport provides another alternative to travel by private car. Whilst there is not complete district wide coverage by the public transport network, in settlements on main bus routes there is a good level of daily service provision linking to Cambridge and/or Newmarket, with additional services at peak times.

The IIP identifies a number of sustainable travel related infrastructure improvements that are needed within the district. The identified projects are in response to current issues that could negatively impact upon growth in the future.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) policy COM7.

#### **Policy LP17: Creating a sustainable, efficient and resilient transport network**

Proposals for new development or enhanced transport schemes must:

- Ensure that all users have safe, convenient access to the existing highway network;
- Reduce the need to travel by ensuring development is accessible, being well located in relation to existing services and facilities;
- Ensure that design and layout gives priority to sustainable travel modes, in particular high quality pedestrian and cycle routes that are well connected to the existing highway network;
- Promote road safety and contribute to a reduction in road accidents, particularly in rural areas, by ensuring transport infrastructure is safe and accessible to all;
- Seek to improve sustainable transport links into market towns from the rural area and improve links between villages; and
- Be resilient to the effects of climate change, such as flood events and other extreme weather;

Transport and accessibility should principally be addressed through designing new development to a high standard. Where required to make a development acceptable in planning terms, planning conditions and/or planning obligations will be applied as appropriate.

#### **A cycle strategy for East Cambridgeshire**

Cycling is a convenient way to improve activity levels, making people healthier. Cycling doesn't only benefit cyclists, but also provides emptier less congested roads for remaining car users, which are quicker and safer. Reducing car use in favour of cycling would reduce maintenance and infrastructure expenditure for local councils, and could also reduce travel costs for households.

Many people do already cycle in East Cambridgeshire, such as part of a daily commute to Ely rail station. However there remain many opportunities to substantially increase the uptake of cycling across the district. For example, around Ely, a number of villages are within a reasonable cycling distance. Where this is the case, if improvements to existing rights of way could be improved, it could encourage cycling as a sustainable means of transport.

As the Local Plan progresses, we will consider how the provision for cycling can be supported via the Local Plan. However, as a starter, the following is an emerging policy and your views are welcome.

No corresponding policy is included in the current adopted Local Plan (2015).

### **Policy LP18: Improving cycle provision**

Proposals for new development or modifications to the existing transport network should aim to assist delivery of a substantial increase in the uptake of cycling across East Cambridgeshire.

Proposals should ensure that local services, transport hubs and key centres of employment, education and leisure can be accessed safely by cyclists of all ages. This will be achieved through:

- The provision of segregated space on main routes;
- Prioritising cyclists over motor vehicles on other routes (where segregation is not appropriate), such as by marking out cycle lanes, reducing speed limits, blocking roads to motor traffic and managing parking provision;
- Ensuring cycle journeys are connected and unhindered;
- Providing secure cycle storage at key destinations.

Schemes which positively enhance the Ely Cycle Network and/or Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy will be particularly favoured.

As appropriate, development proposals should also meet the applicable Parking Standards as set out in Appendix B

### **Maintaining and improving community facilities**

The provision of community facilities is important for maintaining the quality of life within the district. Whilst retaining facilities is important in all of the towns and villages, in those settlements where there are fewer facilities, or infrequent public transport links the impact of a reduction in facilities can be significant. The loss of facilities will be resisted. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where a loss may be acceptable because the benefits of the new development may outweigh the loss, or there is no demand or need for the facility in its present form. Community facilities include local scale facilities such as community halls and centres, shops, pubs and post offices. It also includes open spaces, but this element is specifically covered by Policy LP21.

There is likely to be a need for new community facilities over the plan period as the population grows. Some additional demand will be met by the improvements to existing facilities, while in other cases, new facilities will need to be provided. The standards for new sports facilities are set out in Appendix A of this Local Plan.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) Policies COM3 and COM4.

### **Policy LP19: Maintaining and improving community facilities**

Loss of existing community facilities will be resisted unless:

- It can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer required;
- The development would provide a replacement community facility of equivalent or better value.

New community facilities should be well located within the community they are intended to serve to enable ease of access, especially by walking and cycling. Provision of new sports facilities should be made in accordance with the standards set out in Appendix A.

## **Green Infrastructure**

Green infrastructure is a strategic, multi-functional network of public open spaces and routes, landscapes, biodiversity and heritage. It includes a wide range of elements such as country parks, wildlife habitats, rights of way, commons and greens, nature reserves, waterways and bodies of water and historic landscapes and monuments. The network comprises rural and urban Green Infrastructure of different sizes and character, and the connections and links between them.

Green Infrastructure provides a range of social, economic and environmental benefits. For example, it helps to regulate the climate; support wildlife; absorb and store water and reduce run-off to minimise flood risk; promotes exercise, health and well-being; improves quality of life; and helps create high quality places in which people want to live and visit.

The Green Infrastructure priorities for East Cambridgeshire are focused on Ely, Littleport and Soham and their surrounding fenland landscape, along with the navigable Ely Ouse. These areas offer significant opportunities for:

- Biodiversity: through enhancing and protecting the nationally important nature conservation areas along the Ely Ouse;
- Climate change: through adaptation measures such as urban cooling through tree planting, local flood alleviation and green space creation;
- Publically Accessible Open Space: through the creation of additional accessible spaces and routes in what is otherwise an intensively farmed area; and
- Rights of way: improve the Right of Way network to allow access to Green Infrastructure sites and the wider countryside.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) Policies ENV7 and COM5.

### **Policy LP20: Delivering Green Infrastructure**

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 the strategic green infrastructure network within the district.

The Council will particularly favour proposals for new and improved strategic green infrastructure where they support the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Development proposals should incorporate, where appropriate, opportunities for green infrastructure provision to enrich biodiversity habitats, enable greater connectivity, provide sustainable access for all and promote diverse patterns of landscape and townscape character.

Where appropriate, the Council may utilise planning conditions, CIL or planning obligations to deliver

strategic green infrastructure projects.

## **New Open Spaces**

Good quality outdoor spaces contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents, providing both active recreation and amenity value. Therefore, it is important that new open spaces are well designed and located to provide maximum benefits for the local population. Good quality access to open spaces, can also have significant benefits by contributing to the options for active recreation, and enhancing the overall usability of the space.

Across the district there is a requirement for additional open space, particularly within the market towns. Residential developments over this plan period will increase demand.

Good quality open spaces can also attract visitors, which in turn can benefit the local economy.

The following proposed policy is a new policy and unrelated to any single Local Plan 2015 policy.

### **Policy LP21: New Open Space**

New residential development should make provision for new or enhanced open spaces in accordance with the standards set out at Appendix A.

Open space, sports and recreation provision requirements should;

- as first preference be provided on-site in a suitable location. Where on site provision is not feasible or suitable within a local context, consideration of a financial contribution to the upgrading and improvement of an existing usable facility will be considered (subject to national legislation on developer contributions);
- be multifunctional, fit for purpose and support health and outdoor recreation;
- consider the context of any existing provision and maximise any opportunities for improvement (including access to such sites) within the wider area where these are relevant to the development of the site;
- when new provision is provided, have appropriate mechanisms secured which will ensure the future satisfactory maintenance and management of the open space, sports and recreational facility.

A holistic approach to the design of new open space should be taken including considering the contribution to place making, the green network and protecting and enhancing nature conservation and the water environment. New provision should also aim to protect, enhance and manage integrated paths for active travel and/or recreation, including new and existing links to the wider countryside.

New development that will result in a loss of established open space provision will not be supported unless:

- The provision can be substantially retained and enhanced through the development of part of the site, and the benefits of such enhancement outweigh the element of loss; or
- Alternative provision of at least equal size can be made available on an alternative site nearby.

# Part 4: A Fantastic Place to Live

## Introduction

The policies throughout this plan meet for need for jobs and housing growth over the plan period, supported by necessary infrastructure, open spaces and community facilities. This chapter seeks to ensure East Cambridgeshire will continue to be a fantastic place to live through requiring new developments to be of high quality design which achieves sustainable development, along with conserving and enhancing the built and natural environment.

The policies in this section aim to support, in particular, the Council's corporate priority 3: *Making East Cambridgeshire an even better place to live* (as set out in East Cambs District Council's Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019).

## Design

Good design is a key element in sustainable development and the Council believes strongly in raising the standard of design in all proposals. Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people.

National planning policy attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and allows for local planning authorities to resist poor design. The following policy, "*Achieving Design Excellence*" sets out criteria which all development proposals must satisfy. In all cases, development proposals should be sensitive to the local context. Further guidance on the character of places is set out in *Part 5: Settlements*.

Proposals for large-scale new development<sup>5</sup>, or any new development in a Conservation Area or affecting a listed building, is required to demonstrate how the development meets the criteria of the policy through a *Design & Access Statement*<sup>6</sup>.

Good design plays an important role in achieving sustainable development, for example good site design can reduce reliance on the private car, reduce crime and improve resource efficiency. Policy 22 sets criteria which all new development must satisfy to ensure good design is delivered. In addition, the policy requires new development to make provision for vehicle parking in accordance with standards (set out in Appendix B) which are carried forward from the Local Plan 2015. A variety of supplementary planning documents also provide policy and guidance to help ensure high quality design across the district.

The policy has been informed by current Local Plan (2015) policy ENV 2: Design.

### **Policy LP22: Achieving Design Excellence**

All development should be of a high quality design which complements and enhances local distinctiveness and character. In addition, new development should:

- Be comprehensively planned to create a sense of place, with masterplans necessary for large scale development schemes ;
- Provide a high standard of amenity for users of new buildings and maintain amenity of neighbours;
- Be designed to reduce crime;
- Promote energy and resource efficiency;

<sup>5</sup> i.e. developments of more than 10 dwellings, 1,000sqm floorspace or 0.5ha land.

<sup>6</sup> For further information on local validation requirements visit [www.eastcambs.gov.uk](http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk)

- Create visual richness through building type, height, layout, scale, form, density, massing, materials and colour;
- Provide a high quality, legible and structured public realm;
- Retain or enhance important features and assets within the building, landscape or townscape and conserve or create key views;
- Be supported by a landscape enhancement scheme; and
- Provide attractive, accessible and integrated vehicle and cycle parking which also satisfies the standards in appendix B.

Development proposals should, in terms of design matters specifically, also have regard to the following SPDs:

- *Design Guide SPD*
- *RECAP Waste Management Design Guide*
- *Shop Front Design Guide*

Major schemes in a sensitive area (such as in the setting of a listed building) should prepare a masterplan, informed by a formal design review process. Consultation with the local community at the pre-application stage will be supported.

### **Water efficiency in East Cambridgeshire**

Where justified through evidence, the Council has the option to set, through the Local Plan, additional technical requirements exceeding the minimum 'Building Regulation' standards in respect of access, water usage and space standard of dwellings.

In terms of water usage, existing sources of evidence demonstrate that in East Cambridgeshire water resources are under stress. Increasing demands from growth, along with reductions in abstraction to improve the quality of the water environment, could result in an imbalance between supply and demand. Minimising the demand for water in buildings is therefore crucial to protecting the water environment.

To reduce impact on the water environment, the following policy requires new development to achieve the nationally set technical housing standard for water efficiency. This standard will reduce water consumption in new dwellings to a level equivalent to 110 litres per person per day (rather than the standard 125 litres), and is described in Building Regulation G2.

This is a largely a new Policy proposed to be introduced into this Local Plan, though it has some similarities with Policy ENV4 of the current adopted Local Plan (2015). Further justification for it will be established (or not) through consultation and engagement with relevant agencies and a full assessment of viability impacts, as required by national guidance.

#### **Policy LP23: Water Efficiency**

To minimise impact on the water environment all new dwellings should achieve the Optional Technical Housing Standard for water efficiency as described by the Building Regulations.

### **Developing renewable energy**

The UK is obligated to reduce its carbon emissions. A key part of the national strategy to reduce emissions is to increase the amount of energy generated from renewable sources. In addition to the environmental benefits, there are strong socio-economic drivers for developing renewable energy. For example the transition to a clean energy economy can create opportunities for economic growth through

investment in projects and employment opportunities. In addition, local and renewable energy can help to achieve energy security, countering the volatile energy prices which have placed many households in fuel poverty.

A range of opportunities for renewable energy generation in the district are likely to be suitable. This could include solar radiation, wind power, anaerobic digestion, biomass, ground heat sources and other technologies. Combined heat and power systems may also be used to provide efficient energy to larger developments.

However, renewable energy proposals can have detrimental implications, such as impact on the landscape, impact on the setting of Ely Cathedral, the impact on protected species, the loss of productive agricultural land, and, for some technologies (eg biomass), the highway impacts associated with the ongoing regular delivery of material by lorries to and from the site.

In October 2014, the Council adopted a Renewable Energy Development (Commercial Scale) SPD. However, national policy has moved on since that date, especially in relation to wind turbine proposals. As such, in preparing the policy below, the Council has taken account of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Greg Clark) Written Statement (HCWS42) of 18 June 2015 which related to wind energy development. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) on wind energy development was amended as a result of the statement. The NPPG now advises that local planning authorities can only approve proposals for wind energy development if:

- the development site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan; and
- following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by affected local communities have been fully addressed and therefore the proposal has their backing.

The SPD will be reviewed alongside preparation of this Local Plan, in order to complement the new Local Plan policy and to reflect national policy.

The following policy is largely a new policy, but would replace policies ENV5 and ENV6 of the current Local Plan (2015)

#### **Policy LP24: Renewable and low carbon energy development**

The Council places significant weight on the wider environmental, social and economic benefits renewable and low carbon energy can deliver. Proposals which support the growth of the renewable and low carbon energy sector, including associated infrastructure and employment opportunities, will be supported.

Development proposals will be considered more favourably if the scheme would make a positive and significant contribution towards one or more of the following (which are listed in order of preference):

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <u>Reducing demand:</u>     | by taking account of landform, layout, building orientation, design, massing and landscaping, development should enable occupants to minimise their energy and water consumption, minimise their need to travel and, where travel is necessary, to maximise opportunities for sustainable modes of travel; |
| <u>Resource efficiency:</u> | development should (a) take opportunities to use sustainable materials in the construction process, avoiding products with a high embodied energy content; and (b) minimise construction waste;  |
| <u>Energy production:</u>   | development could provide site based decentralised or renewable energy infrastructure. The infrastructure should be assimilated into the proposal  |

through careful consideration of design. Where the infrastructure may not be inconspicuous, the impact will be considered against the contribution it will make;

Carbon off-setting: development could provide extensive, well designed, multi-functional woodland (and, if possible, include a management plan for the long term management of the wood resource which is produced), fenland or grassland.

In principle, proposals will be supported where occupiers of existing developments (whether that be a dwelling(s) or business(es)) are seeking to reduce their resource use. However, the Council's preference, if options exist, is as set out above.

Proposals which address one or more of the above principles (whether in relation to an existing development or as part of a wider new development scheme) which are poorly designed and/or located and which have a detrimental impact on the landscape, the amenity of residents, or the natural and built environment, will be refused.

#### Proposals for wind energy development

This Local Plan does not propose to identify areas which are suitable for wind energy development.

As such (and unless future versions of this Local Plan does propose to identify such area or if national policy changes), proposals for wind energy development will only be permitted if:

- the proposal is in an area that has been identified as suitable for wind energy development in an adopted Neighbourhood Plan; and
- following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by affected local communities have been fully addressed and therefore the proposal has their backing.

#### Proposals for other renewable energy development

Proposals for non-wind renewable technology will be assessed on their merits, with the impacts, both individual and cumulative, considered against the benefits of the scheme, taking account of the following:

- The surrounding landscape and townscape;
- Heritage and biodiversity considerations;
- Residential and visual amenity;
- Safety, including ensuring no adverse highway impact;
- Highways impact, both in the construction of the facility and the on-going use of the facility;
- MoD operations, including having no unacceptable impact on the operation of aircraft movement or operational radar; and
- Agricultural Land Classification.

Proposals will be supported where the benefit of the development outweighs the harm caused by the development and reasonable measures for mitigation can be demonstrated

Renewable energy proposals which will directly benefit a local community, have the support of the local community and / or are targeted at residents experiencing fuel poverty, will be particularly supported, even if there is a limited degree of harm resulting from the development. In such events, the harm should be mitigated.

## **Managing Water Resources and Reducing the Risk from Flooding**



Flood risk is an important issue for the district due to the flat and low-lying topography of the area and impact of climate change, with related sea-level rises and increased incidents of heavy rainfall.

Areas close to the major rivers (the Great Ouse, the Cam and the New and Old Bedford rivers) have been subject to periodic flooding in the past, as have several of the smaller river valleys in the south of the district. Flooding causes significant damage to property, infrastructure and agricultural land. Flooding increases the risk from pollution and, in serious cases, is a threat to human life. It is therefore essential that development does not add to these dangers.

As part of the district is at or below sea level there is the potential for it to be highly influenced by marine processes especially those relating to coastal flooding. Due to the tidal reaches of the Old Bedford River, the Council collaborates with the Marine Management Organisation and the Environment Agency to ensure that policies across the land/sea boundary are integrated.

In accordance with national policy, new development should:

- Be generally located away from those areas most at risk of flooding, and designed to be resilient to flooding;
- Not increase the risk of flooding to other areas;
- Provide sustainable drainage solution to manage flood risk and support the environment; and
- Where there is an identified need contribute to the delivery of strategic flood defence infrastructure.

Proposals for new development should give early consideration of climate change in scheme design, such as flood management measures, providing evacuation routes and ensuring new infrastructure is built to withstand projected impacts of climate change. The use of new technologies and designs e.g. permeable paving, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), etc. are encouraged to alleviate risks associated with climate change.

SuDS can provide the best method of minimising flood risk whilst also benefiting biodiversity and the water environment. Design and layout measures and the effective use of features such as permeable surfaces, soakaways and water storage areas should be incorporated in all new developments where technically possible. Systems that mimic natural drainage processes such as retention ponds, swales and wetlands/reed beds will be particularly encouraged.

The Council's Water Cycle Study (2011) indicates that the southern half of the district is suitable for infiltration SuDS. In these areas, developers should provide SuDS that return as much clean runoff as possible to ground. The northern area of the district will generally be reliant on surface attenuation and runoff restriction, requiring land provision within development sites. A risk assessment in line with national guidance should inform the design of surface water systems and address ownership and maintenance issues.

To demonstrate a development can be drained in a sustainable matter and will not result in adverse impacts on neighbouring properties or sites, water resources and the environment, proposals should be supported by a drainage strategy.

Whilst the risk of surface water flooding should be addressed in all locations, the following settlements have been identified as most affected, and should be prioritised for investment: Ely; Sutton; Soham; Six Mile Bottom; Burwell; Stretham; Dullingham; Littleport; Haddenham; and Wilburton. New development could support wider aspirations to improve drainage across those locations and contribute to a reduction in flood risk to the settlement as a whole.

The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development to avoid wherever possible flood risk to people and property and manage any residual risk. Where appropriate, the Exception Test will be applied in accordance with national policy.

The Environment Agency identifies specific zones of flood risk in East Cambridgeshire. The Council refines the flood zone maps, through a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), and may update this work during 2016. This evidence, along with relevant Surface Water Management Plans will be used to inform decisions on planning applications. In certain circumstances, applicants will be required to submit site-specific Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs) to ensure that flood risk and surface water run-off issues are comprehensively considered and addressed.

East Cambridgeshire District Council has worked with Cambridgeshire County Council (the local Lead Local Flood Authority) and other local authorities and relevant organisations to develop a *Flood and Water Management Supplementary Planning Document*. Proposals for new development should have regard to the SPD, and other strategies as appropriate. Applicants should also engage with the Environment Agency, the Lead Local Flood Authority and Internal Drainage Boards at an early stage to obtain further information relating to potential flood risk of their sites.

Policy 25: Reducing flood risk seeks to ensure that proposals for new development appropriately manage flood risk.

The Policy also relates to protecting the water environment. The Council works closely with water companies, the Environment Agency and other relevant bodies to ensure that infrastructure improvements to manage increased waste water and sewage effluent produced by new development are delivered in a timely manner, and to ensure that, as required by the Water Framework Directive, there is no deterioration to water quality and the environment.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) policy ENV 8.

#### **Policy LP25: Managing Water Resources and Flood Risk**

All development proposals will be considered against the NPPF (including application of the sequential and, if necessary, the exception test) and against the European Water Framework Directive.

#### **Flood Risk**

Through appropriate consultation and option appraisal, development proposals should demonstrate:

- (a) that they are informed by and take account of the best available information from all sources of flood risk and by site specific flood risk assessments where appropriate;
- (b) that there is no unacceptable increased risk of flooding to the development site or to existing properties;
- (c) that the development will be safe during its lifetime, does not affect the integrity of existing flood defences and any necessary flood mitigation measures have been agreed with the relevant bodies;
- (d) that the adoption, ongoing maintenance and management of any mitigation measures have been considered and any necessary agreements are in place;
- (e) how proposals have taken a positive approach to reducing overall flood risk and have considered the potential to contribute towards solutions for the wider area; and
- (f) that they have incorporated Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in to the proposals unless they can be shown to be impractical.

A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and risks involved, taking into account future climate change, will be required for development proposals:

- in Flood Zones 2 and 3 and 'Modelled Zone 3'; and
- on sites of 1 hectare or greater in Flood Zone 1; and
- on sites where there is evidence of historic flooding set out in the SFRA and/or a Surface Water

## Management Plan.

New development must demonstrate that appropriate surface water drainage arrangements for dealing with surface water run-off can be accommodated within the site and that issues of ownership and maintenance are addressed.

### **Protecting the Water Environment**

Development proposals should demonstrate:

- (g) that water is available to support the development proposed;
- (h) that development contributes positively to the water environment and its ecology and do not adversely affect surface and ground water quality in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive;
- (i) that development with the potential to pose a risk to groundwater resources is not located in sensitive locations to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive;
- (j) how efforts have been made to maximise the efficient use of water, including water storage and harvesting wherever practical;
- (k) how Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to deliver improvements to water quality, the water environment and where possible to improve amenity and biodiversity have been incorporated into the proposal unless they can be shown to be impractical;
- (l) that relevant site investigations, risk assessments and necessary mitigation measures for source protection zones around boreholes, wells, springs and water courses have been agreed with the relevant bodies (e.g. the Environment Agency and relevant water companies);
- (m) that adequate foul water treatment and disposal already exists or can be provided in time to serve the development;
- (n) that no surface water connections are made to combined or foul systems unless in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that there are no feasible alternatives (this applies to new developments and redevelopments);
- (o) that no combined sewer overflows are created in areas served by combined sewers, and that foul and surface water flows are separated where possible;
- (p) that suitable access is safeguarded for the maintenance of water resources, flood defences and drainage infrastructure; and
- (q) that adequate provision is made to safeguard the future maintenance of water bodies to which surface water is discharged, preferably by an appropriate authority (e.g. Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Board, Water Company, the Canal and River Trust or local council).

In addition to the requirements set out in this Policy, all development should take account of the guidance set out in the Flood and Water Management SPD.

### **Reducing contamination and pollution**

Some development schemes can result in pollution to air, water or land or all three; many will generate waste in some form. The NPPF indicates that pollution from existing and new development should be addressed; and the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the environment.

Air quality in the district is generally good, and there are no designated National Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA). The Council carries out monitoring at roadside sites for nitrogen dioxide, and also monitors for particulates, and all show levels within the national targets. There are concerns about levels in parts of Ely, e.g. the Station Gateway, and the impacts of further development will have to be scrutinised very carefully.

Water quality is particularly important in the district as many watercourses have international or national environmental designations. New development must ensure that increases in run-off and sewage effluent discharge can be achieved without adverse impact on water quality. The Council places a high priority on protecting surface and groundwater from pollution arising from development, and will support

initiatives that result in an improvement to water quality. Regard should also be had to the Water Framework Directive and the objectives of the Anglian River Basin Management Plan.

Land contamination in East Cambridgeshire arises most frequently from former industrial and agricultural uses, but can also result from accidents, spillages or be caused by elevated levels of naturally occurring substances. Land contamination is a key consideration as it causes harm to the environment, has the potential to affect adversely public health and safety, and unless dealt with appropriately, can inhibit the re-use of otherwise suitable brownfield sites. It is important that potential contamination is identified at the earliest stage in the development process to ensure that appropriate remediation measures are identified and addressed early in the preparation of proposals for a site. Remediation should remove unacceptable risk and make the site suitable for its new use. In addition to the NPPF, contamination is subject to pollution control legislation. Additional advice for developers on the process for assessing contaminated sites and information on remediation works is set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), '*Guidance on submitting planning applications on land that may be contaminated*' (2010). A technical note was also produced in January 2015, available on the website.

Low levels of naturally occurring radon are present in certain parts of the district, and properties in these areas may require special basic protection. Further information on areas affected, and control measures for new development are contained in BR211 Radon: Guidance on Protective Measures for New Dwellings (BRE), and Part C of the Building Regulations 2000.

The Council encourages pre-application discussions with applicants involving bodies responsible for pollution control or drainage where pollution is an issue. In some cases this may involve an Environmental Statement, prepared as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to ensure the environmental impacts of a significant development proposal are comprehensively considered.

*Policy LP26: Pollution and land contamination* sets out the criteria against which developments with potential pollution, contamination and waste implications will be considered.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) policy ENV9.

#### **Policy LP26: Pollution and land contamination**

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 air and 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 and impacts.

Proposals will be refused where, individually or cumulatively, there are unacceptable impacts arising from the development on:

- The natural environment, general amenity and the tranquility of the wider rural area, including noise and light pollution.
- Health and safety of the public.
- Air quality.
- Surface and groundwater quality.
- Land quality and condition; or
- Compliance with statutory environmental quality standards.

In exceptional cases, development proposals may be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the environmental benefits of the development and the wider social and economic need for the development substantially outweigh any adverse impact 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 standards.

Development proposals on contaminated land (or where there is reason to suspect contamination) must include an assessment of the extent of the contamination and any possible risks. Proposals will only be permitted where the land is, or can be made, suitable for the proposed use. Development proposals where there is a risk of pollution should include a Pollution Management Plan which includes details of the identified risks and the proposed control measures.

### Protecting and enhancing heritage assets

Investing in heritage assets can have a direct impact on the quality of life of residents. Many assets have a rich historic legacy and contribute to local identity. As demonstrated in the table (below), 'heritage assets' can include a diverse range of features, buildings, sites and areas.

Heritage Asset	Description and status
<b>Conservation Areas</b>	<p>The Council has designated a number of Conservation Areas in the district. These areas have been designated due to their particular architectural or historic interest, taking account of the overall quality of the area, mix and style of buildings, quality of open spaces, and other features which contribute to the overall character.</p> <p>The Council has adopted several Conservation Area Appraisals as Supplementary Planning Documents. These appraisal documents examine boundaries, character and general condition of conservation areas. Where necessary, the Council will use Section 215 notices and Article 4 Directions to maintain and enhance the quality of Conservation Areas.</p>
<b>Listed Buildings</b>	<p>Buildings are listed by the Secretary of State in recognition of their special architectural or historic interest, and any works which affect the character of a Listed Building require Listed Building Consent. Within the district there are almost 930 Listed Buildings, about 100 of which are Grade I or Grade II*. The high ratio of Grade I and II* is due in part to Anglesey Abbey and the Ely Cathedral complex. The main aim of listing is to prevent alterations that are detrimental to the special character of the building or structure, including the interior. The setting of a Listed Building is also important, and should be retained.</p>
<b>Local Register of Buildings and Structures</b>	<p>The Council, in conjunction with local amenity groups, intends to publish shortly a local register of buildings which make a valuable contribution to the local scene, local distinctiveness and/or local history, but which do not merit inclusion on the national list. These will be given additional protection and their status will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.</p>
<b>Archaeological sites and monuments</b>	<p>East Cambridgeshire has a rich and varied archaeological heritage. In the north of the district, settlement from the early pre-historic period focused on the dry land of the Isle of Ely and surrounding fen margins, although well preserved artefacts and organic remains may occur in the areas of fen. Extensive evidence of Roman activity survives throughout the district, and in addition to the historic city of Ely, numerous medieval villages and towns survive to the present day.</p>

	Archaeological remains are finite and non-renewable. As well as having historic value in their own right, they are important for education, leisure and tourism and contribute to the character of the district. The Council will make every effort to safeguard the local archaeological heritage which is vulnerable to the impacts of development. These, and other 'undesigned' assets of local, regional and national significance, are listed in the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record which is maintained by Cambridgeshire County Council, to which more assets are routinely added.
<b>Historic parks and gardens</b>	English Heritage has compiled a 'Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest' which includes 4 sites within East Cambridgeshire. The aim of this register is to draw attention to important historic parklands, pleasure grounds and gardens laid out before 1939 and which are considered to be an essential part of the nation's heritage. The County Council has also identified 6 other historic landscapes as being of local significance.

There is a strong presumption in favour of the retention and conservation of heritage assets. For many heritage assets, the best way of preserving is by securing an active, economically viable use. Sympathetic consideration will be given to proposals that help to secure the long-term future of the building.

Development proposals affecting heritage assets must take special care over the design, layout and materials of development proposals to ensure the character and appearance is preserved and enhanced. Traditional features and local characteristics should be recognised and reflected in development proposals. However, new development does not always have to mimic the past, and high quality schemes that provide a successful visual contrast with their surroundings may also be appropriate.

In addition to protecting and enhancing the asset itself, setting and contribution to the wider environment need to be fully considered. 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. Where a heritage asset has landscape value, contributing to the wider setting of a settlement or the countryside, it will be necessary to demonstrate that development proposals do not adversely affect landscape character or key views.

As most archaeological remains are yet to be discovered it is crucial that sites of potential interest are appropriately assessed. Archaeological assessments are expected to define the location, extent, character, condition, quality and significance of any archaeological remains in order to establish the potential impacts of the development and to enable any preservation or mitigation strategies to be developed.

The Council will monitor Heritage at Risk within the district 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.

Applications proposing full or partial demolition will be required to demonstrate that the viability of continued beneficial use, restoration or conversion has been exhausted and its redevelopment would bring wider public benefits.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) policies ENV11 – 16.

<p><b>Policy LP27: Conserving heritage assets</b></p> <p>The Council will protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets through the special protection afforded</p>
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to listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments, and by carefully controlling developments which may affect such assets.

All new development will protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings. Proposals affecting heritage assets and their settings will:

- Wherever possible retain the historic fabric and seek to preserve, enhance, or better reveal those elements that make a positive contribution to the historic significance;
- Be compatible with, and otherwise conserve character, amenity, architectural integrity and historic significance of the heritage asset;
- Be of a high design standard, utilising attractive traditional materials and features;
- Conserve sites of known or potential archaeological remains; and
- Will not detract from important views of Ely Cathedral by virtue of height, location, bulk or design.

All development proposals which may affect any heritage asset will need to be accompanied by a heritage statement, which as a minimum should cover the following:

- Describe and assess the significance of the asset and/or its setting to determine architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest; and
- Identify the impact of works on the special character of the asset; and
- Provide a clear justification for the works, especially if these would harm the asset or its setting, so that the harm can be weighed against public benefits.

The level of detail required should be proportionate to the assets importance and provide sufficient information enable to understanding of the potential impact of the proposal on its significance and/or setting. Proposals which facilitate the long term preservation of the asset will be particularly favoured. The Council may seek the agreement of a management plan to secure the long-term preservation of the heritage asset promote good land management and encourage best use of resources.

Proposals to demolish all or part of a heritage asset will be permitted in exceptional cases where:

- All possible measures to sustain the existing use or find an alternative use have been exhausted, including active and genuine marketing 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
- Comprehensive proposals for reconstruction or redevelopment have been submitted and have received planning permission.

### **Safeguarding landscape and townscape character**

Attractive and distinctive local landscapes help to raise both the overall quality of the environment and the quality of people's lives. A high priority is therefore given to the protection, conservation and enhancement of traditional landscape character. New development that is well designed and helps to sustain and create landscapes and townscapes with a strong sense of place and local identity is important to achieving this.

The countryside in East Cambridgeshire is characterised by three distinctive and contrasting landscape types which are consistent with the qualities defined in the national Landscape Character Assessment:

- *Fens* – these cover the northern part of the district and are characterised by large open, flat and low lying fields under wide skies, crossed by numerous waterways and drainage channels. There

are fine long distance views of buildings and settlements, and most settlements are located on old 'islands'.

- *Chalk hills* – these extend between Cambridge and Newmarket, and are a broad scale landscape of large fields, low hedges and relatively few trees. Villages are mainly nuclear in form.
- *Clay hills* – these lie to the south-east, and are an undulating landscape of gently rolling hills and scattered woodland. A number of small hamlets and villages have developed in sheltered locations, often originally built to take advantage of the natural springs.

The flatness of the fens and southern rolling hills, interspersed with small low lying villages, results in broad open skies, which are a key part of the distinctive landscape character. At night the rural nature of the area means that only urban areas are brightly lit, islands of light in a dark and tranquil sea. It is important that these qualities are protected from inappropriate development, especially from increased light pollution from street lighting, floodlighting and domestic lighting, and that new development retains the openness and tranquillity of the area.

Character areas are described in the County Council's 'Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines' (1991). The Guidelines stress the need to pay special attention to the design of edges of towns and villages and their integration with and relationship to the wider landscape. This requires the location, scale and height of development, views into and out of the settlement and the detailed edge treatment to be considered carefully. Key views include those of Ely Cathedral and the setting of the City as a historic 'isle' settlement close to the fen edge and the valley of the River Great Ouse.

The Council's 'Ely Environmental Capacity Study' (2001) provides a detailed assessment of the landscape character of Ely and its environs, including an analysis of the distant and near views of Ely Cathedral. The intention is to update or supplement that study during 2016. In addition, the Council has adopted (as Supplementary Planning Documents) a number of Conservation Area Appraisals for various town and villages, providing guidance on landscape / townscape and character of settlements in the district. These documents should be used by developers to ensure that proposals reflect the distinctive character, qualities and sensitivities of the area.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) policy ENV1.

#### **Policy LP28: Landscape and townscape character, including Cathedral Views**

Proposals for development should be informed by, be sympathetic to, and respect the capacity of the distinctive character areas.

Development proposals must demonstrate that their location, scale, form and design will create positive, complementary relationships with existing development and will protect and where possible enhance:

- The pattern of distinctive historic and traditional landscape features, such as watercourses, characteristic vegetation, individual and woodland trees, field patterns, hedgerows and walls;
- Visually sensitive natural and man-made skylines, hillsides and geological features;
- The settlement edge, space between settlements, and their wider landscape setting;
- Key views into and out of settlements and of distinctive buildings and features;
- The tranquil nature and nocturnal character of rural areas, free from light pollution.

For the Ely area, and from any other area from which Ely Cathedral can be seen, no development will be permitted which impacts on either views of the Cathedral or on the general visual distinctiveness of Ely. In this regard, development will not be permitted which in any way introduces visual competition with the Cathedral. This is likely to rule out any development anywhere in the Ely of greater than three storey's high (and less in some parts of the Ely).



Green and natural landscape enhancement measures, such as the establishment of tree belts, woodland, hedgerows, open space and wet fen creation should explore opportunities to support the objectives of the *Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy* as well as reflect guidance in the Ely Environmental Capacity Study.

## **Local Green Spaces**

Local Green Space is a national designation that aims to protect green areas or spaces which are demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance. Local Green Space Designation can be used where the green space is:

- Reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; and
- Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including playing fields), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Local communities have the opportunity through the development of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans in East Cambridgeshire to identify Local Green Spaces for designation.

We are therefore asking you to submit sites that you think are important and that should be considered for designation. To do so, please complete the special form, Form D, and include:

- A map of the space; and
- How you believe it meets the Local Green Space criteria (as set out in the bulleted list above); and
- Any further comments

Please note that before the next round of consultation we will prepare evidence to allocate areas of important open space in East Cambridgeshire. Therefore, Green Spaces should only be submitted if they meet the relevant criteria.

Once identified these spaces as nominated by you will be subject to the following policy. This is a new policy, and is not found in the current Local Plan (2015).

### **Policy LP29: Conserving Local Green Spaces**

Areas allocated on the Policies Map as Local Green Spaces will be protected from development in line with NPPF, which gives Local Green Spaces the same status as Green Belt land. Proposals will only be supported if they enhance the Local Green Space and are demonstrably supported by the local community.

## **Supporting the natural environment**

Biodiversity and environmental features occur on many sites throughout the district. Development proposals should explore opportunities to enhance biodiversity, and seek to create and improve habitat wherever possible.

The District Council will expect all applicants to consider potential biodiversity of sites at the outset, and how harm can be prevented or minimised – and in some cases, compensated or mitigated. Development proposals should be accompanied by sufficient information to enable effects to be assessed, such as a habitat survey or other appropriate ecological report.

Whilst the biodiversity value of all sites is important, certain species, habitats and individual sites have been identified as being of particular importance to protect and enhance. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) considers the conservation of all aspects of biodiversity within the natural environment and identifies habitats and species in special need of protection. On a local level, the Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan identifies habitats (e.g. fens) and species (e.g. great crested newts) in the county where action is needed to enhance and protect biodiversity. A number of species are also protected in their own right by national and European legislation – including bats, barn owls and badgers. A wide range of material is available at <http://www.cpbiodiversity.org.uk/> .

A number of trees and woodlands in the district are also designated for their amenity or landscape value and have 'Tree Preservation Orders' or afforded protection if within Conservation Areas. Similarly, hedgerows considered important for their landscape or wildlife value may be protected against removal. Some specific sites in East Cambridgeshire are also designated for their local, national or international biodiversity value, and their protection and enhancement is a priority for the Council. The different categories of site designation are listed in the table below, and the individual sites are shown in the Policies Map.

Applicants should have particular regard to designated or important species, and habitats. In the case of protected species, applicants are advised to consult Natural England's standing advice. International sites have statutory protection and development proposals trigger specific legal procedures under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010). Further information on County Wildlife Sites is contained in the Council's 'County Wildlife Sites' Supplementary Planning Document (2010).

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre can provide general species distribution data for development sites and further information is available from the local Wildlife Trust and the Greater Cambridgeshire Local Nature Partnership. Where there is reason to suspect the presence of protected species or trees and woodland, the Council will require applications for development to be accompanied by an appropriate survey or impact assessment, assessing their presence and if present, details of how the proposal is sensitive to, and makes provision for their needs.

The following proposed policy has been informed by the current adopted Local Plan (2015) policy ENV7.

### **Policy LP30: Conserving Biodiversity & Geodiversity**

All development should:

- protect, manage and enhance the network of habitats, species and sites of international, national and local importance (statutory and non-statutory), including sites that meet the criteria for selection as a Local Site,
- minimise impacts on biodiversity; and
- seek to deliver a net gain in biodiversity and geodiversity where possible.

Development proposals that will have an adverse impact on a European Site or cause significant harm to a Site of Special Scientific Interest, located within or outside East Cambridgeshire, will not be permitted, in accordance with paragraph 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Planning permission will be refused for development resulting in the loss, deterioration or fragmentation of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss or harm.

Proposals for major development should adopt a landscape scale and ecosystem services approach to biodiversity and geodiversity protection and enhancement.

Development proposals should create new habitats, and links between habitats, to maintain a network of

wildlife sites and corridors to minimise habitat fragmentation and provide opportunities for species to respond and adapt to climate change. Development should seek to preserve, restore and re-create priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species set out in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Action Plan.

Where development is within a Nature Improvement Area (NIA), it should contribute to the aims and aspirations of the NIA.

Development proposals should ensure opportunities are taken to retain, protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity from the outset through site layout, design of new buildings and proposals for existing buildings.

### **Mitigation**

Any development which could have an adverse effect on sites with designated features and / or protected species, either individually or cumulatively, will require an assessment as required by the relevant legislation or national planning guidance.

Where any potential adverse effects to the biodiversity or geodiversity value of designated sites are identified, the proposal will not normally be permitted. Development proposals will only be supported if the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm to the habitat and/or species.

In exceptional circumstances, where adverse impacts are demonstrated to be unavoidable, developers will be required to ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated, with compensation measures towards loss of habitat used only as a last resort where there is no alternative. Where any mitigation and compensation measures are required, they should be in place before development activities start that may disturb protected or important habitats and species.

### **Development in the Countryside**

The countryside is an important and irreplaceable natural resource. It supports biodiversity and defines the landscape setting of settlements. It provides an economic function, supporting the rural economy particularly agriculture, equine industries and other local businesses. The countryside is an important place for leisure with Public Rights of Way and navigable watercourses. In addition, the countryside is a location of rural living, with small rural settlements and isolated dwellings.

Due to the wide range of activities which take place, the countryside can face a variety of development pressures. The Local Plan needs to carefully manage development in the countryside to balance these complex and potentially competing issues.

New isolated homes in the countryside will generally be avoided. However there may be some circumstances where the development of new homes in the countryside may be acceptable, for example:

- To support businesses and local employment through the development of homes for rural workers;
- To secure the future use of a heritage asset or bring back into use buildings which enhance the landscape setting.

The following policy applies to proposals for development in the 'countryside' which, in the context of this Local Plan, includes any land or area outside of a development envelope or other policy designation or allocation (as identified on the Policies Map).

The policy has been informed by a number of current Local Plan policies including HOU 4 – 8 and EMP 2 – 4.

## **Policy LP31: Development in the countryside**

### **Part A: Affordable housing exception sites**

Affordable housing development on exception sites outside settlement boundaries will be supported in principle if:

- There is an identified affordable housing local need which cannot be met on available sites within the development envelope (including allocation sites), with identification of need established through either a local survey or through existing available evidence (such as housing register). Local survey's are likely to be required for small villages.
- The site is well related to a settlement in levels 1-3 of the settlement hierarchy, and there is good accessibility by foot/cycle to those facilities.
- No significant harm would be caused to the character or setting of the settlement and the surrounding countryside.
- The scale of the scheme is appropriate to the location and to the level of identified local affordable housing need.
- The scheme incorporates a range of dwelling sizes, types and tenures appropriate to the identified local need; and
- The affordable housing provided is made available to people in local housing need at an affordable cost for the life of the property.

An element of open market housing will only be acceptable where it is demonstrated through financial appraisal that the open market housing is essential to enable delivery of the site for primarily affordable housing.

Community-led housing on exception sites are subject to its own policy, LP5.

*[Important Note for the Preliminary Draft consultation: the above policy is written on the basis of national policy at the time of writing. However, national policy in respect of affordable housing is currently under fundamental review. This may result in the policy requiring significant change as this Local Plan progresses to its future consultation stages, or potentially the policy may be withdrawn entirely if, for example, the last bullet point becomes an unlawful requirement. If it is withdrawn, only community-led development schemes would then be supported, in principle, on exception sites.]*

### **Part B: Dwellings for rural workers**

Permanent dwellings in the countryside for full-time workers will be acceptable where they are essential to support rural operations such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry, equine, stud and other rural activities. Proposals should be accompanied by evidence of:

- a. Details of the rural operation that will be supported by the dwelling;
- b. The need for the dwelling;
- c. The number of workers (full and part time) that will occupy the dwelling;
- d. The length of time the enterprise the dwelling will support has been established;
- e. The ongoing concern of the associated rural enterprise through the submission of business accounts or a detailed business plan;
- f. The availability of other suitable accommodation on site or in the area;
- g. Details of how the proposed size of the dwelling relates to the enterprise; and

Any such development will be subject to a restrictive occupancy condition.

Where the proposal involves a new business that cannot yet demonstrate financial soundness, a

temporary dwelling (in the form of a caravan, mobile home or wooden structure that can easily be dismantled and removed from the site) may be acceptable provided all the other criteria are met.

Applications for the removal of an occupancy condition related to rural workers will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- There is no longer a need for accommodation on the holding/business and in the local area.
- The property has been marketed for a reasonable period (at least 1 year) and at a price which reflects the existence of the occupancy condition; and

The dwelling has been made available to a minimum of three Registered Social Landlords operating locally on terms which would prioritise its occupation by a rural worker as an affordable dwelling - and that option has been refused.

### **Part C: Replacement of a dwelling in open countryside**

The replacement of an existing dwelling outside the developed envelope of a settlement will be supported provided that:

- a. The residential use of the original dwelling has not been abandoned for more than 10 years;
- b. The original dwelling is not of any architectural or historic merit and it is not valuable to the character of the settlement or wider landscape;
- c. The original dwelling is a permanent structure, not a temporary or mobile structure;
- d. The replacement dwelling is of a similar size and scale to the original dwelling; and
- e. It is located on the footprint of the original dwelling unless an alternative position within the curtilage would provide notable benefits and have no adverse impact on the wider setting.

### **Part D: Re-use and conversion of non-residential buildings for residential use in open countryside**

Where a proposal for the re-use and conversion to residential use of buildings outside the developed envelope of a settlement requires planning permission, this will be supported provided that the following criteria are met:

- (a) Comprehensive, but proportionate, evidence is provided to justify either that the building can no longer be used for the purpose for which it was originally built, or the purpose for which it was last used, or that there is no demonstrable demand for the use of the building for business purposes; and
- (b) The building is capable of conversion with minimal alteration, including inappropriate new openings and additional features; and
- (c) The building is of notable architectural or historic merit and intrinsically worthy of retention in its setting.

### **Part E: Mobile homes within the rural area**

Applications for temporary and mobile homes will be considered in the same way as applications for permanent dwellings. The exception to this is cases when a temporary or mobile home is needed during the construction of a permanent dwelling on site or on a nearby site: in such cases more flexibility will be applied. Permission granted in such instances will be subject to time restrictions.

### **Part F: Non-residential development in rural areas**

Proposals for non-residential developments in rural areas will be supported provided that:

- (a) The rural location of the enterprise is justifiable to maintain or enhance the rural economy or the location is justified by means of proximity to existing established businesses or natural features;
- (b) The location of the enterprise is suitable in terms of accessibility;
- (c) The location of the enterprise would not result in conflict with neighbouring uses; and
- (d) The development is of a size and scale commensurate with the proposed use and with the rural character of the location.

### **Part G: Agricultural diversification**

Proposals involving farm based diversification will be permitted, provided that the proposal will support farm enterprises and providing that the development is:

- (a) In an appropriate location for the proposed use (with evidence supplied to demonstrate this);
- (b) Of a scale appropriate to its location; and
- (c) Of a scale appropriate to the business need.

### **Part H: Protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land**

Proposals should protect the best and most versatile agricultural land so as to protect opportunities for food production and the continuance of the agricultural economy.

With the exception of allocated sites, development affecting the best and most versatile agricultural land will only be permitted if:

- (a) There is insufficient lower grade land available at that settlement (unless development of such lower grade land would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations); and
- (b) The impacts of the proposal upon ongoing agricultural operations have been minimised through the use of appropriate design solutions; and
- (c) Where feasible, once any development which is permitted has ceased its useful life (for example, a solar farm), the land will be restored to its former use, and will be of at least equal quality to that which existed prior to the development taken place (this requirement will be secured by planning condition where appropriate).

## Part 5: Policies for Places

### Call for sites

In the Further Draft version of the Local Plan (due summer 2016) this section of the Plan will set out the precise sites required to meet the Local Plan growth targets relating to housing, employment, retail and Gypsy and Travellers. The Local Plan might also consider allocating specific sites for community-led development, new moorings or marinas, or any other form of development.

As part of the preliminary draft consultation we are asking local agents, developers, land owners, parish councils and local residents to suggest sites they want to be considered as potential allocations for future growth. If you would like to submit a site for consideration please fill in the Site Suggestion Form (Form B) and return to us by 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

All sites suggested to us will be assessed against a detailed assessment criteria that will include the following:

- Proximity to local community facilities such as shops, schools, employment and public transport;
- Proximity to and impact on international and national wildfire sites; Impact on the landscape and the wider environment such as listed buildings agricultural land quality;
- Site availability – developer/landowner interest, and the prospects for delivery within the plan period
- Site Suitability – matters such as flood risk, ground conditions, transport and access
- Compliance with national policy and with the Local Plan policies

The assessment criteria is based on the principles of sustainable development and mirrors the sustainability appraisal framework. The site assessment process will follow a very similar approach to that used for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (Review 2013).

During the site selection process we will work closely with other council departments and Cambridgeshire County Council, such as the education, transport and natural environment teams to gain their professional assessments of the sites as well as other organisations such as Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England.

The preferred sites will be included in the further draft version of the plan to be published in summer 2016, at this time we will also publish an evidence report which will set out the full site assessment process and the reason for the inclusion of a site or not.

Please note that different forms should be used for suggestions relating to amendments to development envelopes (Form C) and for proposed Local Green Spaces (Form D).

## **Policies for places - example chapter**

We propose that each town and village as listed in the settlement hierarchy will have its own devoted chapter, which sets out policies relevant and specific to that place, in a similar way to the current adopted Local Plan (2015).

The next two pages provide an example chapter, titled *Policies for Village X* and including three example planning policies to address hypothetical local issues. This is a suggested template we think the “Policies for Places” chapters should look like.

For all settlements except Ely, Soham and Littleport, the intention is that a maximum of two sides of A4 per village will be sufficient, using this suggested template. Only by exception should more than two sides of A4 be necessary, for example if there is to be several site allocations in a village. For Ely, Soham and Littleport, there will be a greater number of pages, reflecting the greater set of allocations and wider issues falling in these settlements.

The template is based on the Village/Town Visions in the April 2015 adopted Local Plan, but is intended to bolster the status of such text found in that plan, by placing more of the text into formal planning policies. We think that by reducing unnecessary explanatory text the chapter will be ‘sharper and shorter’, focussing on the things that really matter for that village.

## **Have your say: Policies for Places**

At this Preliminary Draft Local Plan (February 2016) stage, we are seeking suggested text from you as to what we should say for each particular village. We have made the template chapter available to download on our website, in Word format.

Please use the April 2015 Local Plan for your settlement as a starting point for ideas, as much of that text will remain relevant and valid. We would particularly welcome text from each of the applicable parish councils for village(s) in their parish, or from any other local community groups which represent a village or local community.

Separately, we intend to retain an ‘inset map’ for each village, with a draft of that map available in the next version of the Local Plan for consultation (due late summer 2016). However, if you have suggestions as to how the April 2015 map for your settlement could be amended, please do let us know, perhaps by simply hand scribbling on a copy of the current map any ideas or suggestions. The April 2015 maps are available via the following link:

<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/east-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2015-policies-map>



## Example Chapter: Policies for “Village X”

### Introduction

**Village X** is a large village [x] miles west of Ely, and close to Village Y and Village Z. **Village X** has a range of local services, including three small shops, a takeaway, post office, doctor’s surgery, primary school and a pre-school. In addition there are a number of open space facilities, including [zyx].

### Map of village X

Village X is a thriving local community, with a number of distinct features. Policy 1 aims to preserve and enhance those special qualities

### Policy 1 for Village X : Local Character

Development proposals in *Village X* should contribute to maintaining the village as a thriving, attractive village. A particular emphasis should be on maintaining, and expanding if possible, the range of facilities available to the local community.

Built development should respect the local character of the village, such as [eg description of building materials, height of buildings, typical boundary treatment, open feel or heavily landscaped feel].

Protecting the open spaces at [xyz] will be important, as is the protection of views to, and the setting of, [xyz] building [eg church or a listed building].

*[Note: overall, this policy is aimed at protecting and enhancing the overall special character of that village, but should not repeat generic policies found in the rest of the plan]*

For *Village X*, a number of infrastructure items have been identified, either by the community themselves or by the various infrastructure providers. The following policy captures those items which are considered important and deliverable, and which development in *Village X* should contribute towards.

### Policy 2 for Village X: Infrastructure and community facilities

Development in *Village X* will be expected to contribute towards the following identified infrastructure and community facilities priorities:

- Traffic management at [xyx];
- Improvements to pedestrian/cycle infrastructure, especially at [xyz];
- Improved play facilities at [xyz] park;
- etc

In *Village X*, one site for development is identified. The following policy sets out the requirements for that development site

**Policy 3 for Village X: Land off High Street**

Approximately [x] hectares of land is allocated for [residential/employment] development on land off High Street, Village X.

Development proposals will be expected to:

- deliver [x] homes / [y] sqm of employment floorspace
- set aside a proportion of land for community-led development
- provide a minimum of [x] hectares of public open space on-site, including provision of a play area.
- Provide safe vehicular access from [x] Road.
- Provide a new pedestrian and cycle link to the village centre.
- Ensure the development is sympathetic to, and does not affect the setting of, the nearby [eg listed building]
- [other site specific requirements]

## Appendix A – Open space, sport and recreation standards

The Council has not yet established a set of proposed standards. Instead, the Council would welcome your ideas on what open space standards we should include in the new Local Plan. In the table below is the level of provision we currently think we would like to achieve across the district, for everyone (not just new housing areas). But how can new development contribute to this? What standards should be used for new development?

Open space / sports type	Space / facility	Provision per 1,000 people
Indoor sports facility	Swimming pools	9.81 m2
Indoor sports facility	Sports halls	0.33 courts
Indoor sports facility	Health and fitness suites	3.50 stations
Indoor sports facility	Indoor bowls rinks	0.10 rinks
Indoor sports facility	Squash courts	0.11 courts
Indoor sports facility	Studios	0.14 studios
Open space	Informal open space	2.5 hectares
Outdoor sports facility	Sports pitches	1.33 hectares
Outdoor sports facility	Tennis	0.03 hectares
Outdoor sports facility	Bowls	0.044 hectares
Outdoor sports facility	Netball	0.014 hectares
Outdoor sports facility	Floodlit multi-use games areas	0.038 hectares
Outdoor sports facility	Synthetic turf pitches	0.03 pitches
Play facilities	Toddler play area	0.02 hectares
Play facilities	Junior play area	0.08 hectares
Play facilities	Youth play area	0.1 hectares

The Council's current Developer Contributions SPD (2013) sets out some guidance on standards, but we are intending to incorporate such standards into this Local Plan, and update them if necessary. Alternatively, a completely different way of setting out standards may be appropriate, such as the example in the recently adopted Fenland Local Plan, available here:

<http://www.fenland.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=12064&p=0>

Your views on how we should set out standards would be welcome.

## Appendix B – Parking Provision Standards

The following proposed standards are carried forward from the current adopted Local Plan (2015). If you think any should be amended, please let us know, and why.

<b>Parking provision</b>				
(Measurements of floor space refer to gross areas, unless otherwise stated)				
Use class and nature of activity	Staff/residents cars	Public/visitors cars	Minimum cycle parking provision	Notes
<b>Retail &amp; Financial services</b>				
A1:Retail (food)	Allowance included in standard for public and visitors	Up to 1 car space per 14m <sup>2</sup>	1 cycle space per 25m <sup>2</sup>	
A1:Retail (non food)	Allowance included in standard for public and visitors	Up to 1 car space per 20m <sup>2</sup>	1 cycle space per 50m <sup>2</sup>	
A2:Financial and professional services	Allowance included in standard for public and visitors	Up to 1 car space per 25m <sup>2</sup>	1 cycle space per 30m <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Food and Drink</b>				
A3, A4, A5: Restaurants & cafes, pubs/bars & hot food takeaways	Allowance included in standard for public and visitors	Up to 1 car space per 5m <sup>2</sup>	1 cycle space per 20m <sup>2</sup>	
A: Sui Generis (including, retail warehouse clubs, launderettes, taxi/ vehicle hire premises amusement centres)	Up to 7 spaces per 10 staff members	On merit	On merit	Road side restaurants/transport cafes will require lorry parking provision on merit.
A;Sui Generis (including motor vehicle sales, motor repair garages, petrol filling stations)	Up to 1 car space per staff member	Up to 1 car space per 45m <sup>2</sup> of display area, 1 per 35m <sup>2</sup> for motor service centre, 1 per 20m <sup>2</sup> retail floor area (at petrol filling stations)	On merit	
<b>Business</b>				
B1:Business	Up to 1 car space per 30m <sup>2</sup>	Allowance included in standard for staff	1 cycle space per 30m <sup>2</sup>	
B2:General industrial	Up to 1 car space per 50m <sup>2</sup>	Allowance included in standard for staff	1 cycle space per 50m <sup>2</sup>	

<b>Parking provision</b>				
(Measurements of floor space refer to gross areas, unless otherwise stated)				
Use class and nature of activity	Staff/residents cars	Public/visitors cars	Minimum cycle parking provision	Notes
B8:Storage and Distribution	Up to 1 car space per 100m <sup>2</sup>	Allowance included in standard for staff	On merit	
<b>Communal accommodation</b>				
C1:Hotels	Up to 1 car space per staff bedroom, <u>plus</u> up to 1 space for every 2 non-resident staff members	Up to 1 car space per guest bedroom	1 cycle space per 3 staff members working at the same time	Additional car parking can be provided for bars, restaurants and other facilities available to the public, using the relevant standards for those uses.
C2:Residential Institutions	Up to 1 car space per for each resident staff member, <u>plus</u> up to 1 space for every 2 non-resident staff members	Up to 1 car space per 4 residents	1 cycle space per 3 members of staff	Staff car and cycle parking relates to the total number of workers required on staff at particular times (including overlapping shifts)
<b>Dwellings</b>				
C3:Dwellings (town centres as defined on the Proposals Map)	1 car space per dwelling (average per development)	Up to 1 car space per 6 units	1 cycle space per bedroom	Cycle parking for dwellings can be accommodated within garages, provided there is room for both car and cycle parking
C3:Dwellings (other locations)	2 car spaces per dwelling (average per development)	Up to 1 car space per 4 units	1 cycle space per dwelling	
<b>Community facilities</b>				
D1:Non-residential Institutions (museums, libraries, galleries, exhibition halls)	Up to 1 car space for each staff member	Up to 1 car space per 30m <sup>2</sup>	1 cycle space per 5 staff members, <u>plus</u> at least 1 space per 35m <sup>2</sup>	
D1:Non-residential Institutions (public halls and places of worship)	Allowance included in standard for public/visitors	Up to 1 car space per 4 seats, <u>or</u> up to 1 space per 15m <sup>2</sup>	1 cycle space per 8 seats <u>or</u> at least 1 space per 20m <sup>2</sup>	

<b>Parking provision</b>				
(Measurements of floor space refer to gross areas, unless otherwise stated)				
Use class and nature of activity	Staff/residents cars	Public/visitors cars	Minimum cycle parking provision	Notes
D1:Non-residential Institutions (schools, crèches/ nurseries)	Up to 1 car space for each member of staff	Up to 1 car space per class, up to a limit of 8 spaces	Creche/nurseries: 1 space per 2 staff members working at the same time. Primary schools: 6 cycle spaces per class; Secondary schools: 12 spaces per class	
D1:Non-residential Institutions (clinics, health centres, surgeries)	Allowance included in standard for public/visitors	Up to 5 car spaces per consulting room	2 cycle spaces per consulting room	
D2:Assembly and Leisure (cinemas, and conference facilities)	Allowance included in standard for public/visitors	Up to 1 car space per 5 seats	1 cycle space per 50m <sup>2</sup> , <u>or</u> at least 1 space per 8 seats	
D2:Assembly and Leisure (other uses)	Allowance included in standard for public/visitors	Up to 1 car space per 22m <sup>2</sup>	1 cycle space per 30m <sup>2</sup> of <b>net</b> floor area and 1 space per 15 spectator seats	

<b>Minimum disabled parking provision</b>			
Nature of activity	Staff	Public/visitors	Notes
Existing business premises	At least 1 space for each disabled employee	At least 2% of car park capacity (minimum of 1 space)	Additional spaces may be required for hotels and other places that cater for large numbers of disabled people
New business premises	At least 5% of car park capacity (minimum of 1 space)	Allowance included in standard for staff	
Shopping areas; leisure and recreational facilities; other places open to the public	At least 1 space for each disabled employee	At least 6% of car park capacity (minimum of 1 space)	