Cambridgeshire
Quality Charter for Growth

mixed recycling
paper & card
glass bottles & jars

Foreword

The planned growth for Cambridgeshire provides an exciting opportunity to create sustainable and vibrant new communities. It is crucial that we build high quality housing with a unique identity that will provide visually pleasing environments where people will want to live. The **Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth** sets out core principles of the level of quality to be expected in new developments in Cambridgeshire.

Commu**nity**

Connect**ivity**

Clima**te**

Charac**ter**

Successful housing growth cannot be achieved in isolation, and it is vital that partners are able to work together towards common goals, sharing a common understanding of the kind of communities we wish to create. This charter will equip key stakeholders with a clear and shared language, enabling closer working in the creation of sustainable and successful developments.

An important part of creating any successful new development is to learn from the experiences of elsewhere, and I am pleased to see that those involved in developing this charter have taken the time to visit new developments both regionally and internationally to share their experience and research.

I am pleased to recommend the Quality Charter as a document that sets out shared principles for successful developments. It is now for planning authorities and developers to use it to ensure that together we build sustainable communities that can stand the test of time.

Minister for the East of England

Barbara Follett

The **Quality Charter** is:

- **Short** so it can be read without having to wade through a mass of guidance or research

- **Compatible with other plans** e.g. Local Development Frameworks, Local Area Agreements and covering all the key aspects, not only design

- Drawn up with the active engagement of the different **stakeholders**

- **Supported by** local authorities, statutory agencies like the Homes and Communities Agency, utilities, and major landowners and developers so that it will make a difference.

The big **picture**

▲ Orange areas are major growth sites. Green areas are planned infrastructure projects. Dark blue line shows the Guided Bus route.

The Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth is designed to help people understand the 'big picture' of housing growth in Cambridgeshire. It sets out a series of basic principles for achieving higher quality under four broad themes built up by learning from experiences elsewhere. Most important of all is building a sense of community through providing a greater choice of housing along with the active participation of people in the way their neighbourhoods are run. New developments should be located where people can benefit from high connectivity to jobs and services, and the infrastructure upgraded to match the pace of development. Climate change should be tackled through imaginative landscaping that treats water as a friend not an enemy, and through innovative approaches to transport, energy and waste. Finally, places of character should be created, with distinctive neighbourhoods and a first class public realm.

The Quality Charter has been drawn up over the course of two years with the help of over a hundred practitioners. With rising expectations, much more care needs to be taken so that both residents and developers know what to expect and what is expected of them. This charter applies 'state of the art' experience in both the East of England and Europe. The briefings and reports of visits and events are set out on the Cambridgeshire Horizons website www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/qualitycharter

Origins

The idea for this charter grew out of work on the new town of Northstowe and the need to 'look and learn' from other places. Inspiration came from the Charter for New Urbanism in the US www.cnu.org, pioneering work on the New Zealand Design Protocol www.mfe.govt.nz, and the Bristol Accord for Sustainable Communities www.ascskills.org.uk. Cambridgeshire Horizons and Inspire East, who sponsored URBED's initial work, recognised the value of bringing together leading local politicians, officers, landowners, and representatives of the voluntary sector to craft a unifying vision for delivering high quality growth.

Early models: Letchworth ▸
Recent triumphs: Accordia, Cambridge ▸
Quality streets: Vauban, Freiburg ▸
Learning from elsewhere: Vathorst, Amersfoort ▸

Aims

The Quality Charter has three overriding aims:

- **To inspire innovation** and the pursuit of higher standards by using examples of what works.
- **To help communication** by crossing professional boundaries and providing a simple common framework.
- **To support a genuinely cooperative approach** between stakeholders and consequently secure better value from investment by helping investors align their spending plans.

Status

The participating councils and agencies are adopting the Quality Charter as a clear policy statement of the aspiration to create major new developments that offer future communities a fulfilling, visually pleasing and environmentally sensitive way of life. All of the principles of the charter are underpinned by national, regional and local planning and environmental policies and it seeks to interpret these rather than to repeat them. The local planning authorities will use the charter as a material consideration in their decision-making, especially in determining planning applications. The partners urge other organisations to support the Quality Charter as a sign of their commitment to raising standards.

Uses

The Quality Charter provides a basis for:

- **helping communication** with existing communities, including those who may want to move into the new settlements;
- **equipping councillors and officers** with a common language, and enabling them to demonstrate their commitment to achieving quality growth;
- **securing investment commitments** from government agencies and public utilities, and enabling them to align their spending plans with the growth of new settlements;
- **encouraging the private sector** to develop better masterplans and development frameworks, and to build quality into their design and management.

The Quality Charter is also being used for councillor and officer training with supporting material. The principles will be refined through successive events and wider consultation, and another version produced in a couple of years. The charter is organised around the '4 Cs' of Community, Connectivity, Climate and Character. There is also a cross-cutting 'C' of Collaboration which runs through everything.

CHARTER PRINCIPLES
Community

Places where people live out of choice and not necessity, creating healthy communities with a good quality of life

Many new housing schemes have suffered from high rates of turnover, aggravated by large numbers of homes being bought to let, which makes it harder for a new community to put down roots. As well as creating places that are active, inclusive, safe, and fair to everyone, the Quality Charter aims to create a better balance with a mix of house types and tenures. It also recognises that successful communities are made up of people from many different backgrounds but who benefit from the 'social capital' and the sense of wellbeing created through positive interaction.

1 **Community involvement** throughout the process is crucial, which means consulting with people who are going to move in, or are similar to the groups that are expected to move in. Resources have to be provided to facilitate this and to continue seeking the community's views as the settlement grows, acting upon these where possible, as well as engaging positively and creatively with neighbouring communities.

2 Housing in all tenures should allow for **changes in needs and lifestyles** so that as people's circumstances and ages change, they can remain fully included in their neighbourhood. New forms of intermediate tenure and also live-work units should be actively promoted. Careful design is needed so that differences in tenure are not obvious. Opportunities should be provided for people to set up cooperative and affordable forms of housing to be commissioned by local groups, as well as some self-build.

3 People should be encouraged to take active roles in the development and continuing **management of their community** and engage in local democratic processes. The establishment of appropriate forms of governance should be built into the planning of new communities from the early stages.

Local services as community hubs: Rieselfeld, Freiburg ▸
Communal space overlooked by housing: Accordia, Cambridge ▸
Creative space run by Caterham Barracks Community Trust, Surrey ▸
Trusts as steward of public space: Shenley Park ▸

4 The '**social infrastructure**', such as health, education, and leisure is just as important as the physical infrastructure of roads and utilities. 'Community hubs' should be provided in a phased, predictable and flexible way in line with population growth and demographic change. Leisure and play facilities should be affordable to all residents.

5 There should be a mixture of **formal and informal green space**, and interconnectivity between new and existing Green Infrastructure. It is important to consider function as well as location, for example, cemeteries and play areas.

6 Initial and on-going **community development support** should be provided to 'build your own community', with interim spaces to meet such as cafés and market stalls, as well as their IT equivalents.

7 Public spaces should encourage social interaction (which could include specific cultural activities) and support healthy lifestyles. There should be a clear allocation of responsibilities for **managing communal spaces** and the public realm. Activity and maintenance make places feel safe, and increase the sense of wellbeing.

8 **Community** (and other key) **buildings** should be designed to be flexible, and make use of the latest technology, for example, wired-up communities, and should support the widest possible community use.

9 Space should be made available for **local shops and services** to set up, both to build a sense of community and to minimise car dependence. This may include providing interim facilities or giving short-term rent subsidies.

CHARTER PRINCIPLES

Connectivity

Places that are well-connected enable easy access for all to jobs and services using sustainable modes

New communities that are not linked to public transport force residents to rely on cars, and can also deny them the benefits of the natural social interaction that accompanies more sustainable travel modes. As well as helping to create places that are linked to effective public transport, the Quality Charter aims to minimise unnecessary car use (and hence congestion, pollution and CO^2 emissions) by ensuring that other modes are attractive and have primacy.

1. Having **public transport in place** at the start of the development encourages people to get used to green options. New developments should be easily accessible by high quality public transport systems. The quality of the experience, such as the Guided Bus route, will provide incentives to reduce car use.

2. Public transport should **integrate** with existing transport systems, with frequent service and stops. Bus services should operate to high quality standards.

3. **Linkages** with existing and potential employment opportunities should be recognised, and where needed developed or integrated with existing provision.

4. **New developments** should contribute to the wider environmental goals for the Cambridge area and enhance the feasibility of walking and cycling. They should provide opportunities to work close to (if not at) home for part of the time, with broadband and other network links and services.

5. The streets, footpaths and other links on major urban extensions should be designed as a **user hierarchy** so that it is clear and obvious who and what they are for. Primacy should be given to walking, cycling and community transport.

Child-friendly streets and spaces: Vauban, Freiburg ▸
Fastrack bus: Dartford, North Kent ▸
Primacy for pedestrians and cyclists: Rieselfeld, Freiburg ▸▸
Safe to cycle to school: Kattenbroek, Amersfoort ▸

6 **Easy mobility for all**, including those using wheelchairs and pushchairs should be taken into account. This should involve targeted services, for example Dial-a-Ride, and ease of access to transport nodes.

7 **Bus stops** should offer well designed waiting areas, providing information on services and local facilities, and should feel safe and overlooked.

8 **Parking management** such as charges and the provision of car sharing/car clubs should be used to discourage unnecessary car use.

9 **Road design** should include permeable surfaces. To avoid roads being continually dug up by services (water, power, communications, and waste) these should go in green space corridors or in distribution ducts.

CHARTER PRINCIPLES

Climate

Places that anticipate climate change in ways that enhance the desirability of the development and minimise environmental impact

Increasing attention is being paid to the environmental sensitivity of schemes, yet new settlements in the UK still lag far behind their equivalents in the Netherlands or Sweden, for example, in promoting healthier lifestyles, lower carbon emissions, and community wellbeing. Cambridgeshire is in a good position to demonstrate the feasibility of zero carbon housing, given its low rainfall and high levels of sun and wind for much of the time. In addition to ensuring new schemes are environmentally sensitive, the Quality Charter will ensure that developments use appropriate measures to reduce environmental impacts.

1. Major new developments should enable residents and workers to **adopt sustainable lifestyles** that minimise the use of energy and other resources, by reduced car use, for example. The new building regulations will not have their intended benefits unless the same kind of principles are applied to the whole of the neighbourhood, including transport.

2. **Environmental targets should be challenging** and where possible go beyond the minimum standards so that new schemes act as exemplars. Where appropriate, each development could feature an exemplar element or area that will apply international best practice and that would demonstrate the marketability of new forms of technology or construction (especially those developed locally).

3. New development should not be located in areas of **unacceptable environmental risk**, such as areas which are liable to flooding.

4. Arrangements for **sustainable waste management** should be built into new developments to make recycling easy and unobtrusive, and encourage people to waste less. Developers and construction teams should minimise and manage construction and demolition waste.

Renewable energy: Vauban, Freiburg ▸
Combined Heat and Power Plant: Vauban, Freiburg ▸
Sustainable Urban Drainage System: Upton, Northants ▸
Green infrastructure: Rieselfeld, Freiburg ▸▸

5 The utilities should be engaged in a collaborative design process to help promote **energy and water conservation** and the potential for as much local energy generation as possible.

6 Public buildings, housing and neighbourhoods as a whole should be designed to **anticipate climate change** so they are capable of being upgraded and adapted easily and economically to minimise the resources used in both their construction and operation, and to cut down on air pollution.

7 Biodiversity and wildlife should be encouraged through a network of green spaces and **Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems** (SUDS). This should be done within a sub-regional strategic context. Surface water should be managed sustainably.

8 Sustainable energy partnerships or trusts should be encouraged, for example, through education, marketing and schemes that help people **cut energy use**.

9 **Trees and planting** should be used extensively to provide cooling in summer and to soak up rain, as well as to provide a landscape that encourages people to walk and cycle.

CHARTER PRINCIPLES

Character

Places with distinctive neighbourhoods and where people create 'pride of place'

Despite a plethora of good design advice, many new developments are criticised for their quality. In part this is due to the use of unimaginative standard house types, and also to highway engineering, where concerns with safety and traffic movement have badly affected the look and feel of places. To create the clear identity for neighbourhoods that people prize, the Quality Charter will ensure that design, the use of good materials and public realm are priorities and recognises that a successful sense of place depends on residents personalising where they live.

1. The **existing landform** and features of the site, such as water and landscape and the relationship to existing settlements, should be used to create varied and memorable townscapes, including vistas, intimate local places, informal natural areas with windbreaks, ponds and waterways.

2. An **overriding masterplan** should aim to provide the vision for the development, with neighbourhood design strategies and design codes establishing the qualities and characteristics that will make the new places distinctive, and providing guidance and inspiration to the architects who will design the new neighbourhoods. It might include the use of competitions and the encouragement of smaller builders.

3. To ensure the successful realisation of the masterplan experienced and fully-skilled masterplanners should be retained for the duration of the project to ensure that the **overall vision is maintained**. Systems should be set up to ensure quality, such as design codes, and where possible the original design team should oversee construction and monitor performance.

4 Densities and massing should vary, with higher densities around local shops and transport nodes, to provide the **full range of house types** that are needed.

5 Creative thinking, **simple designs** – well built, using high quality materials and careful detailing – are often the most successful and durable approaches, particularly if the design allows space for the imaginative use of planting to enable residents to personalise their homes and enrich the biodiversity of their neighbourhoods. It is important to create a high quality public realm and, for instance, to apply the latest thinking on the design of shared surfaces.

6 **Open space requirements** should be integrated with buildings throughout the scheme. There should be a mix of private gardens, balconies and terraces, semi-private and public space depending on the development types.

7 The creation of **good landscapes** is as important as the creation of good townscapes. Different kinds of spaces should be provided to give character to the neighbourhoods and improve biodiversity, ranging from linear parks, squares and crescents to more intimate communal spaces looked after by adjoining properties or community trusts.

8 All buildings – commercial, residential, and public – should be **flexible and adaptable**, which means providing large enough spaces or space for appropriate expansion and changing lifestyles.

9 **Car and cycle parking**, storage and waste recycling should be integrated within the design of the new homes. In higher density developments, where possible, car parking should be located in ways that mean parked cars do not dominate the street, for example underground or undercroft.

◂ Variety of house styles: Newhall, Harlow
◂ High quality materials: Accordia, Cambridge
◂ Distinctive neighbourhoods: Vathorst, Amersfoort
◂◂ New waterways: Vathorst, Amersfoort

Making **things happen**

The Quality Charter can be summarised in four key management principles, which are all about collaboration.

Communicating a shared vision

1

Local authorities exercise leadership in place-shaping, for example through the Joint Development Control Committees that have been set up to handle major schemes. They can thus help to ensure that strategic growth plans enjoy community support, 'selling' the benefits of planned quality growth to overcome the problems associated with piecemeal development. This should ensure that the quality of life is improved for everyone.

Working together over many years

2

The public sector and utilities need to sign up to providing the necessary social and physical infrastructure in a phased way. This will give private investors the confidence to invest in quality. This process should provide benefits for all the stakeholders. Ways have to be found to encourage a spirit of continuity and collaboration, for example, by developers continuing to employ the team that worked up the masterplan. An independent body should help communicate what is being proposed and monitor the results.

Encouraging smarter growth through innovative forms of finance

3

A 'rolling fund' has been initiated by Cambridgeshire Horizons with Government support that will enable pump-priming funding for the delivery of infrastructure in advance of the new homes being occupied and which will then be replenished by developer contributions. Other models under consideration include the use of development trusts to act as stewards of environmental assets.

Building skills and capacity at all levels

4

The principle of working together to break down barriers to innovation, to extend knowledge of good practice and to deliver communities that are sustainable is being supported by Inspire East, the Regional Centre for Excellence. It is this ethos of working together, embodied within the Quality Charter, that will enable signatories to deliver on all the components of sustainable communities expressed in the 'Egan Wheel'.

Roundtable workshop to test the charter principles ▸
Study tour to Freiburg ▸
Representatives of the University of Cambridge examine a model of Vathorst ▸

Next steps

The Quality Charter is being discussed at meetings of public, private and voluntary agencies involved in the development of major new communities. Local authorities will also be using it to lead discussions with partners on how to make the planning processes less contentious and more productive.

The process is being continued through further study tours and meetings. The website **www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/qualitycharter** provides a good vehicle for sharing experience and views more widely.

The Egan Wheel

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Contributors

Cameron Adams
David Archer
Julie Ayre
Kerry Babington
Kathy Baldwin
Cllr David Bard
Jonathan Barker
Cllr Ian Bates
Sue Beecroft
Kevin Blencowe
Michael Bingham
David Birkbeck
Elizabeth Bisset
Cllr Peter Bucknell
Paul van de Bulk
Ian Burns
Colin Campbell
Cllr Rod Cantrill
Prof Peter Carolin
Peter Carter
Stephen Catchpole
John Clark
Bruce Collinson
Michelle Crees
Daniel Curtis
Lindsay Dane
Nick Dodd
Daniel Durrant
Tom Dutton
Nicholas Falk
Sheryl French
Martin Garratt
Carolin Göhler
Sarah Greenwood
Sir Peter Hall
Richard Harrington
Cllr Nichola Harrison
Dinah Higgins
Stephen Hill
Roy Hind
Cllr James Hockney
Chris Hodson
Tom Holbrook
Mike Hosking
Nigel Howlett
Brian Human
Cllr David Jenkins
Gwyneth Jones
Melanie Jones
Alan Joyner
Francesca King
Andy Lawson
Cllr Valerie Leake
John Lewis
Jemma Little
Colen Lumley
Sir Richard MacCormac
Simon McIntosh
John Oldham
John Onslow
Diana Oviatt-Ham
Lianne Parrett
Cllr Roy Pegram
John Phillips
Alex Plant
John Preston
Tom Read
Cllr Sian Reid
Cllr John Reynolds
John Richards
Glen Richardson
Janine Richardson
Dinah Roake
David Roberts
Alexandra Rook
Tim Roxburgh
Phil Royston-Bishop
Chris Rudolf
Marilyn Taylor
Jane Thompson
Sir David Trippier
Prof Peter Tyler
Malcolm Sharp
Stephen Sillery
Cllr Catherine Smart
Cllr Daphne Spink
Cllr Sheila Stuart
Peter Studdert
Rachel Underwood
Mark Vigor
Helen Walker
Cllr Tim Ward
Alistair Wayne
Joseph Whelan
Mark White
Bill Wickstead
Cllr Tim Wotherspoon
Cllr Nicholas Wright
Anne Wyatt

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Cambridgeshire Horizons is the not-for-profit organisation charged with driving forward the delivery of sustainable new communities in the County.

Inspire East is the regional centre of excellence for sustainable communities in the East of England. Their aim is to deliver the knowledge, skills and advice that will inspire people to use and apply best practice.

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FINALIST

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