

Local Development Framework Update –October 2010

Cambridge Local Plan 2006

The Cambridge Local Plan 2006 was adopted in July 2006. It is the main consideration in the determination of planning applications and forms part of the development plan for Cambridge, setting out a vision, policies and proposals for future development and land use in Cambridge to 2016.

While we are preparing the documents that comprise Cambridge's Local Development Framework (which will replace the Local Plan), the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 made provision for Councils to retain their Local Plan policies by application to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State issued a formal direction on 2nd July 2009 saving the majority of policies in the Cambridge Local Plan and list of the deleted policies can be found by visiting the Councils Planning Policy web pages¹.

North West Cambridge Area Action Plan

The North West Cambridge Area Action Plan (AAP) is a joint plan prepared by South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council. It allocates land for development on the northwest edge of Cambridge, between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road, primarily to meet the needs of the University of Cambridge.

Following the Examination in Public into the North West AAP, the City Council received the final binding report from the Inspectors, which found the AAP to be sound. The Councils formally adopted the AAP on the 22nd October 2009.

The University is now progressing work on the masterplan for the North West Cambridge site, with a number of stakeholder workshops undertaken before Christmas 2009. The University is looking to submit the masterplan as part of an outline planning application for the site in early 2011.

Mill Lane/Old Press area

The City Council have prepared a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to guide the future development of the Mill Lane/Old Press area of the City. This document has been prepared in partnership with the University of Cambridge in order to ensure that future development on the Mill Lane/Old Press site safeguards the architectural, historic, cultural and archaeological importance of the area, and takes proper account of its setting on the river frontage within the historic City Centre. Following public consultation, a number of changes were made to the SPD, notably in relation to the quantum of retail development, changes to the Vision for the site and removal of references to the colonnading of Silver Street. The SPD was adopted at Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 12th January 2010.

¹ <http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/content/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/cambridge-local-plan.en> .

Public Art

The City Council have also prepared a Supplementary Planning Document in relation to Public Art, which guides the City Council on the provision of public art in Cambridge through setting out clear objectives for public art, the ongoing development of policy and means of delivering public art.

Following public consultation in May 2009 the SPD was adopted at Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 12th January 2010.

Planning Obligations

The City Council started preparing a review of the 2004 Planning Obligations Strategy in 2007. Following public consultation a number of changes were made to the SPD, and a revised version of the document was adopted at Environment Scrutiny Committee on 16th March 2010 minus the education section, which required further revisions.

During the consultation period, the City Council received a representation containing significant revisions to the education section of the SPD from the County Council. Discussions are still being carried out with the County Council regarding the proposed education contributions and an additional round of consultation will be required before a revised education section can be incorporated into the adopted SPD. In the interim period, the education section of the 2004 Planning Obligations Strategy will continue to apply. It is hoped that the education issues can be resolved (including undertaking any necessary consultation) over the next few months.

Core Strategy (Cambridge Development Strategy) and Development Control Policies and Site Specific Allocations Development Plan Documents

The coalition government intends to publish a draft Localism Bill this year to reform the planning system (amongst many other measures). The new Act would come into force from November 2011. The bill is expected to move away from the system of Local Development Frameworks and towards a new Local Plan format which is more about building up plans from below and less about meeting targets for development imposed from above.

Clearly we will now to able to set our own targets for development, and to defend these targets we will continue to need robust and credible evidence including evidence of public participation and support. Arbitrary targets and policies are unlikely to be given much weight by planning inspectors when tested at appeal and examined in public before their adoption.

Given the timetable for the Localism Bill it would not make sense to press on with the Core Strategy, Development Control, and Site Specific Allocations plans at this time. This will help avoid abortive work and expense. Work on putting together a credible evidence base will continue as this will be needed to support the plans prepared under the new system to be put in place.

The Coalition Government guidance for local planning authorities

The new government has issued transitional guidance stating that:

- Local planning authorities should determine planning applications having regard to their Local Development Frameworks, saved policies and any old style Local Plans that have not lapsed, as well as national policy and any other material considerations.
- Local planning authorities should continue to work on their Local Development Frameworks. They may use the revocation of Regional Strategies as an opportunity to revisit policies in adopted LDFs if they wish.

Given that Cambridge has a clear spatial strategy which provides for very considerable future growth over a 20 year period there is no imperative for the City to bring forward new LDF documents before there is clarity on the future nature of the planning system.

The Coalition Government's Localism Bill is proposed to be taken to Parliament in November 2010 and it is expected to be passed by November 2011. This should provide information in relation to any reforms to the plan making system. It has been indicated that a new National Planning Framework will be introduced as well as a new system of Local Plans. At this stage, there is no more information available. When more information does become available this will be shared with Councillors and a report will be taken to Development Plan Scrutiny Sub Committee outlining any proposals and implications for Cambridge.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

The role of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is to help assess reasonable housing capacity in the City taking into account deliverability and amenity considerations. The SHLAA will seek to identify land to address future housing targets.

A number of assessment criteria were produced for the evaluation of sites, and these were subject to consultation with key stakeholders and residents associations in July - August 2009. Officers are now in the process of assessing all of the SHLAA sites against these criteria, and a total of 879 sites from around the City are being considered. Further public consultation will be carried out once all of the sites have been assessed, and it is hoped that this will take place around February 2011.

The guidance states that SHLAAs should have the involvement of a Housing Market Partnership (HMP) and that HMP should include key stakeholders such as house builders, social landlords, local property agents, local communities and other agencies. As there is no HMP at present, one will have to be set up, ideally in partnership with other Councils in the Cambridge area and the City Council will be seeking representatives from the local community to sit on the HMP.

Section 29 Committee – Cambridge City Fringes Joint Committee

A joint plan making committee (the Section 29 Committee) has been established, consisting of Members of Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. The purpose of this committee is to act as the local planning authority, as far as plan-making is concerned, for cross boundary locations on the edge of Cambridge:

The first piece of work to be prepared under the Section 29 Committee will be a joint Area Action Plan for the Northern Fringe East. A timetable of work (a Local Development Scheme) has been prepared for this document and submitted to the Government Office for approval. The initial phases of work preparing the document has started and it is anticipated that the Area Action Plan could be ready for submission to the Secretary of State by mid 2011 and to be adopted by July 2012.

OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITY POLICY WORK

Cambridgeshire County Council – Consultation on the Submission Draft Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council are jointly preparing the Minerals and Waste Development Plan as part of the Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework. This will guide minerals and waste development in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough until 2026 and will replace the adopted Waste Local Plan (2003) and the Cambridgeshire Aggregates (Minerals) Local Plan (1991).

The examination for the Core Strategy – which sets out the strategic vision and objectives for minerals and waste management – will take place between the 30th November and the 17th December.

The Site Specific Proposals Plan – identifies the site specific allocations and policies to support the Core Strategy. Sites and boundaries are identified for Minerals working, minerals consultation areas, waste management use, areas of search for waste management, waste water treatment works and safeguarding, waste consultation areas and sustainable transport zones and safeguarding. Examination for this document is due to take place in 2011. Further information can be found at Cambridgeshire County Council's website:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/planning/mineralswasteframework/>

Cambridgeshire County Council – Consultation on the updated Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan (LTP3)

The Local Transport Plan sets out existing and future transport issues in Cambridgeshire and how the County Council will seek to address them. The County Council is currently consulting on the updated Local Transport Plan for Cambridgeshire, and more information can be found on the County Council's website: <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/strategies/local/>

Cambridgeshire County Council – Transport Innovation Fund bid

On the 2nd March 2010, the Government announced that they would not be supporting Cambridgeshire County Council's bid for funding as part of the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF), which included proposals for congestion charging and for a railway station in Chesterton. TIF has now been replaced by a new fund, the Urban Challenge. However the Urban Challenge fund is currently on hold and continuation is dependant on the outcomes of the governments comprehensive spending review

There remains a need to agree a Cambridge area transport strategy to make the most of available resources, and keep the City moving into the future, and Councillors from the City, South Cambridgeshire and the County have been discussing this at meetings of the Joint Transport Forum since then.

Cambridgeshire Horizons – Green Infrastructure Strategy

In 2006 Cambridgeshire Horizons launched a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Cambridge Sub-Region (2006). This strategy is currently under review, with LDA Design appointed by Cambridgeshire Horizons to undertake the work in May 2009. Green Infrastructure includes a wide range of places and spaces including:

- Rivers and watercourses
- Commons
- Natural and semi-natural habitats for wildlife
- Country parks and playing fields
- Woodlands and hedgerows
- Historic parks and gardens
- Historic landscapes and ancient monuments
- Wetlands
- Allotments
- Public rights of way, cycleways and other recreational routes.

Officers from the City Council have been involved in the review process via Steering Group meetings and where possible, providing initial comments on the emerging draft, primarily concerning its accuracy and reflection of existing Council policies. The draft Strategy is currently being redrafted in the light of consultation and will be the subject of a second round of consultation in early 2011.

Regional Spatial Strategy

The Regional Spatial Strategy was revoked with immediate effect on 6th July 2010. The plan previously set housing targets and spatial strategies for local authority areas which are no longer applicable. The housing targets will be replaced with new incentives and regulations in the forthcoming Localism Bill.

The practical effect of this is that Regional Strategies no longer form part of the statutory Development Plan and the East of England plan does not apply. In the longer term, the legal basis for Regional Strategies will be abolished through the adopted Localism Bill, which is due to come into operation in November 2011.

There are currently a number of legal appeals into this decision that are underway and there is uncertainty over how strategic planning will be taken forward in the future. However, the Coalition Government has advised that it will introduce new ways for local authorities to address strategic planning and infrastructure issues based on cooperation. The Conservative's Open Source Planning Green paper indicates that a new system of Local Plans will be introduced and to be developed out of a process of collaborative democracy.

Although these changes present opportunities for Cambridge, they also raise concerns, including that the gap left by the abolition of Regional Strategies will open up the authorities to major speculative development pressures and create a strategy driven by planning decisions granted on appeal.

In response to these concerns, the Cambridgeshire authorities have undertaken initial work to:

- Agree a joint position statement, setting out the development strategy for Cambridgeshire in the absence of the RSS
- Scope out what further work may be required for future strategic planning in Cambridgeshire.

The joint position statement essentially seeks to continue the development strategy for Cambridgeshire established by the Structure Plan in 2003, out to 2031 in recognition that enough land has been allocated for development in the County to provide for growth over the next 20 years.

The joint position statement was agreed by the Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Growth at Environment Scrutiny Committee and on 5th October 2010.