

- e. To ensure that all new development provides or has access to a range of services and facilities that support healthy lifestyles and well-being for everyone, including shops, schools, doctors, community buildings, cultural facilities, local open space, and green infrastructure.
- f. To maximise potential for journeys to be undertaken by sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling, bus and train.

2.27 South Cambridgeshire is a prosperous area with high levels of economic activity and low levels of unemployment. Its 350 square miles of countryside provide a high quality setting for its 105 settlements. In recent decades the district has experienced significant growth, reflecting the success of the local economy and the need for new homes. These high levels of growth have managed to balance development with maintaining a high quality social, built and natural environment which is valued locally and has ensured that South Cambridgeshire regularly performs well in national quality of life surveys. Public consultation in updating the Local Plan showed strong support for supporting economic growth, but a degree of nervousness amongst the residents of the district believing that continuing high levels of growth would put the environment and living standards at risk. This then is a clear challenge for the way in which the vision and objectives are implemented through policies and proposals in the Local Plan and decisions on planning applications to provide an appropriate balance between supporting the economy, providing for housing needs and protecting the environment.

Sustainable Development

Policy S/3: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

1. When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals that accord with the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
2. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

(continued)

- a. 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
- b. Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

2.28 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) states that the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development, and the NPPF (2012) has at its heart a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which it says should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking. For South Cambridgeshire, sustainable development means supporting the economic success of the Cambridge area, maintaining the setting of Cambridge as a compact historic city, and providing for development needs in a way that maintains the high quality of life enjoyed by residents that makes it such an attractive place to live, work and study, and locates new homes close to services and employment or on high quality public transport routes. The Local Plan has a number of chapters covering the full range of planning policy issues, which together contribute to the achievement of the three dimensions of sustainability: an economic role, a social role and an environmental role.

Cambridge Green Belt

Policy S/4: Cambridge Green Belt

A Green Belt will be maintained around Cambridge that will define the extent of the urban area. The detailed boundaries of the Green Belt in South Cambridgeshire are defined on the Policies Map, which includes some minor revisions to the inner boundary of the Green Belt around Cambridge and to the boundaries around some inset villages. New development in the Green Belt will only be approved in accordance with Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.29 The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts, and this is set out in the NPPF(2012). The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and a specific function of some Green Belts, such as the one around Cambridge, is to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. Cambridge has had a Green Belt since the 1965 Development Plan, which includes about 25% of South Cambridgeshire. A review of the Green Belt was undertaken in the 1980s resulting in the Cambridge Green Belt Local Plan 1992. A further and more strategically significant review was started in the Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia (RPG6) with locations for Green Belt release identified in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and detailed boundary changes made in the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 and the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007-2010.