



Cambridge City Council  
**Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee**

**Date:** Tuesday, 29 June 2021

**Time:** 5.30 pm

**Venue:** Cambridge Corn Exchange, Wheeler Street, CB2 3QE

**Contact:** democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk, tel:01223 457000

**Agenda**

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Minutes (Pages 5 - 12)
- 3 Declarations of Interest
- 4 Public Questions

**Decisions for the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport**

- 5 Annual Report of 3C Building Control Service & Planning Shared Service 20/21 (Pages 13 - 28)
- 6 Review of the Design Review Service (Design and Conservation Panel in Cambridge City Council and the Design Enabling Panel in South Cambridgeshire District Council) (Pages 29 - 106)
- 7 Review of Taxicard and Transport Initiatives (Pages 107 - 148)
- 8 Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (Pages 149 - 224)
- 9 To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken
- 10 ROD Greater Cambridge Brownfield Register (Pages 225 - 226)
- 11 ROD: Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five Year Housing Land Supply (Pages 227 - 228)
- 12 ROD: Changes to the Current Planning System Consultation Response (Pages 229 - 230)
- 13 ROD:Cambridge Re-signalling Project C3R Scheme (Pages 231 -

	Consultation Response	232)
14	ROD:Joint Response to Uttlesford District Council's (Regulation 18) Local Plan issues and Options consultation	(Pages 233 - 234)
15	ROD East West Rail Informal Consultation Stage - Consultation Response	(Pages 235 - 238)

**Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee Members:** D. Baigent (Chair), S. Smith (Vice-Chair), Bick, Bond, S. Davies, Wood, Page-Croft, Pounds, Sargeant and Scutt

**Alternates:** Bennett, Bird, O'Reilly and Porrer

**Executive Councillors:** Collis (Executive Councillor for Open Spaces, Sustainable Food and Community Wellbeing) and Thornburrow (Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport)

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- Email: [democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk)
- Phone: 01223 457000

## Public health and well-being for meeting arrangements

Whilst the situation with COVID-19 is on-going, the Council will be following the latest Government guidance in organising and holding its meetings.

We ask you to maintain social distancing at all times and maintain your face covering unless you are exempt or when speaking at the meeting. Hand sanitiser will be available on entry to the meeting.

If members of the public wish to address the committee please contact Democratic Services [democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk) by 12 noon two working days before the meeting.

We would strongly encourage you to take a lateral flow test in the 7 days in advance of the meeting (ideally two 3 or 4 days apart). Lateral flow tests can be ordered here [Order coronavirus \(COVID-19\) rapid lateral flow tests - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests) or obtained from your local pharmacy. There is a rapid testing centre at the Meadows Community Centre open Mon-Sat early til late also [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Rapid community testing - Cambridgeshire County Council](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-rapid-testing)





## **PLANNING AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

23 March 2021

5.30 - 7.40 pm

**Present:** Councillors Bird (Chair), D. Baigent, Bick, Chadwick, Collis, Green, Hipkin, Porrer and Sargeant (Vice-Chair)

Executive Councillors: Massey (Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety) and Thornburrow (Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces)

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### **Officers:**

Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development: Stephen Kelly Strategic Director: Fiona Bryant

Strategy and Economy Manager: Caroline Hunt

Principal Urban Designer: Jonathan Brookes

Principal Planning Policy Officer: Terry De Sousa

Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

Meeting Producer: Liam Martin

<b>FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL</b>
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### **21/12PnT Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

### **21/13PnT Re-Ordering of the Agenda**

Under paragraph 4.2.1 of the Council Procedure Rules, the Chair used her discretion to alter the order of the agenda items. However, for ease of the reader, these minutes will follow the order of the published agenda.

**21/14PnT Declarations of Interest**

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Baigent	All	Personal: Member of Cambridge Cycling Campaign.

**21/15PnT Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**21/16PnT Public Questions**

A member of the public asked the following:

CycleStreets, a local not-for-profit organisation, has been working over the last two years on a website, StreetFocus, to make planning application data more openly available to citizens, and moreover to determine automatically cases where a planning application could fund Section 106 projects. This highly innovative work has had support from the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy.

Working with PlanIt, a national project, the webpages in the IDOX planning system have been converted into an API (a system usable by programmers), enabling innovative uses: <https://www.planit.org.uk/api/>

This is in line with the government's clearly-expressed view that the planning system needs to be made more digital. We use a web scraper system, carefully designed to avoid making extraneous requests or overloading the IDOX webpages, in order to convert the webpages into data, though would strongly prefer an official feed to be enabled to avoid any scraping.

However, the council has recently enabled a 're CAPTCHA' system which prevents automated but well-behaved processes like ours obtaining this data from scraping the webpages.

Would the Committee:

- 1) Firstly commit clearly to the principle that planning application information from the council should be available as raw data (in the form

of an API), not purely as webpages, published on a live daily basis; and  
2) Commit in practice in the short term to either  
    (a) removing the reCAPTCHA system,  
    (b) whitelisting our scraper system address,  
    (c) switching on a proper data feed, as we understand IDOX may  
    now be able to provide as a result of changes being required of them by  
the GLA in London.

The Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development responded that the council were supportive in exploring the ideas put forward but earlier in year there had been an extremely high volume of apps seeking to scrap the data; the system then ceased to function for officers and became unstable. IDOX issued an upgrade which prevented data from being scrapped.

Acknowledged that IDOX as a system was not particularly well configured for open access to the data download. The question if certain websites could be whitelisted had been escalated, if possible, this would be made available to 'friendly' scrappers to safeguard the integrity and functionality of the system. This had been supported by the LGA who had been faced with a similar challenge. The issues of the hyper-links had also been raised. Would not be able to advise time scales on when this may occur.

The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces reiterated the support in exploring the ideas put forward by the member of the public. It was always a good thing to make planning data more accessible and hoped that this would be available as soon as was practicable.

The member of the public welcomed the support expressed by both the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development and the Executive Councillor; also pleased that the hyper-links issue was being investigated as this was a continued source of frustration. Requested a comment on the principle of switching on a proper data feed.

The Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development advised the council were keen to explore and open up planning data like Leeds City Council had done. Was committed to a fully digital Local Plan process and senior officers were committed to determine how far the digital aspects of planning applications could be available. Had made enquiries to work with the LGA in making the data open and accessible.

**21/17PnT Making Space for People: Progress report**

## **Matter for Decision**

The report referred to the Making Space for the People document prepared to act as a co-ordination tool to align thinking on future street, public space and movement projects between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

At the January 2021 committee meeting, officers committed to bring a Progress Report to the March committee if a full report was not possible at that point. The report provided a progress update on the Making Space for People project.

## **Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces and Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety.**

- i. Noted the Progress report

## **Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the Officer's report.

## **Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Not applicable

The Committee received a report from the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development, and the Strategy and Economy Manager advised it was not now possible to progress the Making Space for People document in 2021 alongside the other priorities for the planning service.

In response to comments made by the Committee the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development and the Strategy and Economy Manager said the following:

- i. Had met with representatives from Cambridge Past, Present and Future and Historic England to discuss the points raised at the previous meeting.
- ii. Had received correspondence challenging legal status of the document as highlighted in the report; having reviewed the document further officers felt it could be developed into a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which would take additional time.
- iii. The suggestion was the document had the properties of an SPD; it was on this basis the challenge had been put forward to the Council. Rather

- than expose the Council to additional cost and with funding needed to be allocated elsewhere it was felt that it was best to revisit the process later.
- iv. The interpretation of the status of planning policy documents was not straight forward, with there being a category beneath an SPD that could have some limited weight as material consideration.
  - v. The primary objective of bringing the document to the last Committee was as a mechanism to bring the Council and external partners together around a set of unifying principles, not policies, particularly in respect of transport scheme development, which seemed appropriate before the question about its legal status was made.
  - vi. There was a congested work plan which included, but was not limited to, the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan and the North East Cambridge Area Action Plan, at least until the end of 2021 when it was anticipated they will have reached their next milestones. This would then allow officers the time to further develop the document.
  - vii. Officers remained committed to achieve the objectives around the street and spaces of the city for the benefit of all.
  - viii. Had explored other options such as reframing the Making Space for People document as a corporate (non-planning) document and bringing it to a different committee for endorsement but this was not possible as not only were there legal issues to consider but the matter of perception.
  - ix. Noted the comment as made at the previous meeting that the document needed to be improved regardless of the legal status. Had looked at potential for the vision and principles to be taken forward by external partnerships such as the Greater Cambridge Partnership and Cambridgeshire County Council in their transport schemes.
  - x. Not clear at this point if they would be willing to formally endorse them.
  - xi. Understood Members' frustration at the delay of the project but suggested an update be given in the summer and expand on the options available and explored with external partners.

### The Committee:

As there was no decision the report was noted, two members did not note the report and three abstained.

Both the Executive Councillors noted the report.

**21/18PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces**

ROD:Response to Government Consultation - Supporting Housing Delivery & Public Service Infrastructure

The decision was noted.

**21/19PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety**

ROD Interim Amendments to Cambridge City Council's Taxicard Scheme

The decision was noted.

ROD Parking Permits March 2021

The Strategic Director said the following in response to comments made by Councillor Bick.

- i. There were several factors that had been considered when making this decision which included government legislation and their roadmap to ease restrictions during the pandemic and health and safety regulations.
- ii. The roadmap offered an opportunity for all business to re-open over the next three months.
- iii. The work of external partnerships also had to be considered. The County Council were currently studying the lifting of restricted bus services from the park and ride sites across the city and opening public transport.
- iv. The requirements of the community and voluntary sector workers (low paid and those who gave their time for free) who supported community aid and those who supported essential business which were open had also been considered.
- v. The Council supported the reduction in the excess use of private vehicles.
- vi. Income from the car park was essential in allowing the Council to supply other services to the community.
- vii. Free parking had been allocated to public and voluntary sector workers in a previous Record of Decision also to those workers for essential businesses open during the lock down period.
- viii. Important to take into consideration the council resources to manage free or discounted permits; also, the physical changes to tariffs on car parks which took time to change.

- ix. The Council had taken the view that over the next three months that most business would be able to operate.
- x. There were numerous public and voluntary sector workers who travelled across the city providing support and aid and therefore it was relevant to extend the free parking to these groups.
- xi. Discounted permits were also available for the next three months for low paid workers who had supported essential business.

The Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety stated it was important that public transport was not a casualty of the pandemic.

Many council officers were working from home while some had been redeployed elsewhere to assist with essential services. Believed the amount of city council officers using the car parks would be minimal and the benefit to the wider public sector would be greater.

Councillor Bick requested his dissatisfaction to the responses given be minuted.

It was not a question at how essential the services were that people were providing but they had employment contracts in which they had no choice in delivering them. This applied to both those in the public and private sector, public money was being used to provide free or discounted parking which those in the private had contributed to who were being denied this substantial benefit.

The decision was unfair and unreasonable, people should be treated the same.

The decision was then noted.

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm

## **CHAIR**





## Item

### **ANNUAL REPORTS OF 3C BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE 2020/21 AND GREATER CAMBRIDGE SHARED PLANNING SERVICE 2020/21**

#### **To:**

Councillor Katie Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport

Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee 29th June 2021

#### **Report by:**

Fiona Bryant, Strategic Director Tel: 01223 - 457325 Email:  
[fiona.bryant@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.bryant@cambridge.gov.uk)

#### **Wards affected:**

All

The appendix to the report contains exempt information during which the public is likely to be excluded from the meeting subject to determination by the Scrutiny Committee following consideration of a public interest test. This exclusion would be made under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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## **Not a Key Decision**

### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report summarises the performance of the 3Cs Building Control Shared Service and the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service during 2020/21.
- 1.2 The principle of producing a single Annual Report for each the 3Cs and Greater Cambridge (2Cs) shared services was agreed at committee in July 2015.
- 1.3 The overarching Annual Reports for the 3Cs Shared Services and the Greater Cambridge Shared Services cover ICT, Legal and Building Control Planning, Waste and Audit Shared Services. At the City Council, only the Building Control and Planning services fall under the remit of this Committee, and therefore their Annual Reports are extracted from the overarching reports and enclosed below.

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to note the content of the report.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council commenced sharing Legal, Building Control and ICT Services in October 2015 (known as 3C Shared Services). The shared services are based upon a “lead authority model” where an agreed lead Council is responsible for the operational delivery of the service. The formal partnership agreement between the authorities contains a requirement that an Annual Report is prepared on the services’ activities and performance. The original Shared Services Agreement for the 3C services was in place from 2015 and until 30th September 2020. The renewal process as defined in that Agreement was followed, with the result that a new Agreement was completed to last until 30th September 2025.
- 3.2 South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council have also developed a range of shared services comprising planning, waste and internal audit (known as Greater Cambridge Shared Services). The services have each identified service objectives.
- 3.3 The overarching Shared Services’ performance is monitored through the Shared Services Management Board (containing the lead directors from each authority), the Chief Executives’ Board and the Joint Shared Services Group (comprising of Executive Councillors of each of the Councils).
- 3.4 This report provides Members with the opportunity to consider the performance of the Building Control and Planning services that are being administered on a shared basis.

## **4. 3Cs Building Control Shared Service Annual Report 2020/21**

### **4.1 General Information**

- 4.1.1 3C Building Control was set up in October 2015 with the following objectives:
- Protection of services which support the delivery of the wider policy objectives of each Council.
  - Creation of services that are genuinely shared between the relevant councils with those councils sharing the risks and benefits whilst having in place a robust model to control the operation and direction of the service.
  - Savings through reduced managements costs and economies of scale.
  - Increased resilience and retention of staff.
  - Minimise the bureaucracy involved in operating the shared service.

- Opportunities to generate additional income, where appropriate.

4.1.2 When creating the shared service, the priorities were to improve capacity by expanding the skilled team with management arrangements that enabled resources to be deployed effectively and efficiently, the adoption of best practices and processes and to improve recruitment and retention in local authority building control services.

4.1.3 This Annual Report reflects progress against the Business Plan for 2020/21. The Plan contained detailed service information and was approved at partner committees in March 2020. Given the commercial nature of the service, only limited information has been included in this public report.

### **General Progress**

4.1.4 The service review growth strategy is now complete and the new structure is in place as of 1 April 2021. Although the impact of Covid-19 caused some delay in implementation it provided a real opportunity in respect of transforming the service position in respect of future ICT and accommodation.

4.1.5 Recruitment has therefore been deliberately limited due to the service review and Covid-19, recruitment during the year consisted of one apprentice assistant and a fixed term administrative support assistant. One senior surveyor has moved to promotion at another Council and one technical support officer has recently decided to retire.

4.1.6 The Street Naming and Numbering function has now transferred to 3C Building Control from 3C ICT for all three partner Councils, along with demolitions. This ensures consistency across the partners and allows for resilience and greater efficiencies in the technical support function.

4.1.7 The team continues to improve its processes. Most applications are submitted electronically, and the service incorporates digital processes. The planned programme of scanning of live historical files during 2020/21 has been delayed due to Covid-19 and will now take place in the new financial year.

4.1.8 In terms of the recognition received by staff during the year, the team were finalists again in the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards in March 2021 for the efficiency and effectiveness category, winning either bronze, silver or gold. The order will be announced in September 2021. One member of the team is also a finalist in the European WICE (Women in Construction and Engineering) awards for her success in mentoring newly appointed team members within 3C Building Control, judging will be on 22 April 2021.

### **Financial Performance**

4.1.9 The outturn position for 2020/21 is recorded in the table below:

£	Budget	Actual	Variance/Outturn
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3C Building Control	1,910,120	1,740,221	-169,899 Underspend
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- 4.1.10 It is a requirement that each Council contributes to the non-fee earning account for all statutory works for which the service is unable to charge.
- 4.1.11 The service is forecasting an increase in the deferred income.

### **Service Performance**

- 4.1.12 Building Control had eight Key Performance Indicators for 2020/21 ranging from acknowledging and determining applications to customer satisfaction levels. These KPIs form part of the quality management system adopted by the service. The performance indicators for 2020/21 indicate the service continues to provide a quality service to its customers and exceeds performance targets.

### **Customer Feedback**

- 4.1.13 For 2020/21 the Building Control Partnership has been collating data on the percentage of customers who overall have rated the service as good and above. The service forwards customer satisfaction surveys to all customers, including those who submit regularisations. This is captured via an online survey forms utilising Microsoft teams and returns are generally positive. An interim target of 75% has been exceeded with an actual rate of over 87% satisfaction which is an increase from last financial year.

### **Key Projects**

- 4.1.15 3C Building Control has four projects identified in 2020/21 Business Plan.
- 4.1.16 The first two projects consist of a full review of the ICT infrastructure to maximise effectiveness of the team and enable agile working. This is interlinked with the second project, change management and implementing a digital service. The service is now progressing these with an ideology of a fully digitalised service and use of automation to improve the customer experience. A project initiation document will be submitted into CCC corporate programme office.
- 4.1.17 Various workstreams have been identified in the final two projects to extend discretionary services to customers and to regrow market share and develop commercial opportunities. These include providing energy, sustainability and climate change advice, clerk of works service and peer reviews in other Councils. These are all in train.
- 4.1.18 The team are currently reviewing requirements for office accommodation in the mid term and a project initiation document will be submitted to CCC corporate programme office. This will be a proof of concept on accommodation in the guise of a digital welfare workspace.

## **5. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Annual Report 2020/21**

### **5.1 General Information**

5.1.1 The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service was created in 2016 through the commitment to merge South Cambridgeshire District Council's Planning function with Cambridge City Council under a common management team. Following the appointment of the Joint Director of Planning in June 2016 the service has re-structured through 2017 around a single new management team structure and in April 2018, TUPE transferred nearly all of the staff within the service onto a single suite of job descriptions and to employment with SCDC. Following procurement and process design work in 2019, in February 2020 the service migrated all of its systems and working onto a single, shared ICT solution based upon the former City Council Idox application solution.

5.1.2 Following its inception, the shared planning service management team adopted a vision for the service with four core objectives:

- To create and deliver an effective programme for the creation of a single, unified "Greater Cambridge" planning capability serving the Planning Committees of each of the participating Councils.
- To build a shared capacity and capability within the combined teams (and provide opportunities to support others) in a way that seizes opportunities for greater efficiency and improvements to the quality of service and subsequent development across the area by providing services and products (including additional charged services) that meet the needs of users and the community at the lowest net cost.
- To deliver a service that can be flexible - in deployment and delivery.
- To build/retain a reputation for professionalism, staff development, the delivery of high-quality outcomes and competent "business management" amongst peers and partners.

5.1.3 In line with other shared services, the Planning service seeks to deliver outcomes defined through an annual service plan which is agreed through the shared services board and associated Council portfolio holders. The 2021/22 service plan was considered by the Shared Services Board earlier this year. Since that time, the magnitude of the Covid impacts upon income, and ongoing challenges in securing staff resources have compounded existing costs pressures facing the service. A comprehensive service review – which will review existing service plan commitments is now underway.

### **5.2 Outcomes 2020/21**

5.2.1 The global pandemic, through 2020/21 has significantly impacted upon the SPS, along with many other parts of the Council. Through March and April, as local authorities (and the regulatory environment) adjusted to the system shock caused by Covid the shared planning service focused upon establishing new working arrangements for both remote working and the administration of decisions – notably through the appropriate changes to enable "virtual" planning committee

meetings. At the same time, as a result of external factors, including the County Council withdrawal from joint decision making via the Joint Development Control Committee, and as a result of challenges to the service's scheme of delegation for South Cambridgeshire, a substantial amount of time has been spent on evolving the existing standing orders and constitution underpinning decision making in the shared service.

- 5.2.2 Across the Delivery team, 2020/21 has seen the roll out of "area based" teams with meet and greet and quarterly engagement meetings now established. The service has also focused on improving assurance across the new ICT system, as well as rolling out enhancements to the utility of the system for consultees and Parish Councils. This work is ongoing. The considerable challenges caused by covid and the adaption of a "new" set of processes, alongside initial restrictions on movement of staff, has nevertheless impacted both officer productivity and management capacity to deliver service change and performance improvements. In parallel, uncertainty over income and the ongoing challenge of recruitment of senior professionals has continued to result in workloads within some teams that are above recommended and desirable levels for a number of officers.
- 5.2.3 Headline development management performance has proven challenging not withstanding improved reporting systems and addressing the backlog of applications which is impacting officer caseloads remains one of the challenges for the year ahead. The service has also introduced new pre-app and PPA offers seeking to improve both internal arrangements for cost recovery and to respond to feedback from users. The suitability and sustainability of these services alongside other pressures will be reviewed through 2021.
- 5.2.4 Progress on housing delivery objectives remains good, and the shared planning service has met both the housing delivery test performance requirements and demonstrated, in March 2021, a 6.1-year position on the 5-year land supply across the area. Permissions for a number of strategic sites were also progressed, including Waterbeach, Land North of Cherry Hinton and Bourn airfield, meaning that every strategic site in the 2018 adopted Local Plans now benefits from either a resolution to grant or outline planning permission as a minimum. Across the district, this means that over 30,000 new homes have been permitted.
- 5.2.5 Alongside strong delivery through planning permissions the service has also progressed the delivery of its Development Plan documents – with the North East Cambridge Area Action Plan concluding its consultation in February 2020 leading to series of workshops with members and stakeholders through 2020. The Greater Cambridge Joint Local Plan is also progressing towards preparation of a preferred option – following the publication of a substantial volume of early evidence and the call for sites in Autumn 2020. This has also been progressed in digital format and is one of the first examples of this approach in the UK which is progressing towards the digital planning transformation proposed by Government in the forthcoming raft of planning reforms. After The initial pause of neighbourhood planning following government covid directions (and the suspension of the Cottenham referendum) in early 2020, three neighbourhood

plans, Cottenham, Waterbeach and Foxton are now heading towards referendums as part of the local government elections in May 2021.

- 5.2.6 The service has also provided support for strategic planning activity by the two Councils and substantial officer engagement with strategic growth and infrastructure matters has occurred through the year. Alongside the emergence of the OxCam project themes and workstreams, the service has engaged with the economic growth and infrastructure projects of the GCP, Anglian Water, E-W Rail, A428 dualling and Combined Authority whilst also supporting work by the “UK Innovation Corridor,” Water Resources East and sub national transport boards.
- 5.2.7 The promotion of heritage management through 4 Conservation Area Assessments and participation in a range of “live” agendas on “building beautiful” as well as local ambitions around green infrastructure, climate change, doubling nature and biodiversity net gain have also been carried out by officers within the service. A review of design review process has also been carried out and in February 2022, the service once again supported the Cambridge Design Awards programme in partnership with the CFCI.

### **5.3 Budget**

- 5.3.1 The service is awaiting a finalised end of year outturn report but has faced considerable financial challenges that have led to an overspend of around £1,200k for the year. This overspend is due to a combination of additional staffing costs caused by hard to fill vacancies (and a need for the associated skills) and reduced income as a result of the Covid pandemic, although this was mitigated, to a degree, by the MHCLG compensation scheme.
- 5.3.2 The biggest impact was felt in the Delivery team, which had an overspend for the year of £1,000k. However, the Planning Policy team had an overspend of around £300K (this figure is being investigated further and may reduce as year-end accounting processes are completed by the SCDC Finance team). This overspend was reduced by £100k through the holding of vacancies in the Operations team for much of the year. The budget pressures are likely to continue through the next financial year due to two key financial variables:
  - 5.3.2.1 A significant reduction in income derived from planning application fees. This impact is compounded by an earlier assumption that managing historically declining City Council application fee income (as a result of the shift in development activity from the City to SCDC area on strategic sites) could be achieved by increased income from pre-application and related services predicated on a growing economy and developer confidence. As a result of Covid 19 impacts, this did not materialise during 2020 and remains an uncertain prospect for 2021.
  - 5.3.2.2 Continued difficulties in recruiting senior and experienced staff– leading to a reliance upon agency staff, a situation that has been intensified by the range, volume and complexity of some of the Strategic Sites workload. The services ongoing underspend in staff (some £950K

under the budget figure) has been overtaken by significantly greater costs of filling vacancies through more expensive agency and contract staff. Some of these costs have been offset by re-charges through Planning Performance Agreements. The curtailment of activity to address recruitment and the development of the systems to allow the service to reduce demand for staff have compounded this cost pressure. The agency spend associated with filling vacant officer posts across the service is accordingly significantly greater than the saving in salary costs at £1.9m.

- 5.3.3 Since December, and notwithstanding a bid for growth funding through the City budget process, the service has therefore embarked on a wholesale review of all costs and activity across the service aimed at addressing the current cost and income imbalance. This is likely to require some reprioritisation of existing work commitments and acceleration of service improvement programmes aimed at improving efficiency/reducing net cost. The service review is being programmed through the SCDC transformation team with oversight by the City Council's transformation lead. An associated set of revised performance indicators, to reflect the new service priorities and including a focus on reducing net cost will be introduced shortly – alongside the revised service “plan” for 2021/22.

## 5.4 Staffing

- 2.4.1 The service comprises some 143.8 fte posts. Notwithstanding recruitment through 2020/21, some 18% of posts in the service are filled by contact/agency staff. Carried through to a full year cost (noting not all current posts are filled for 12 months), existing agency staff cost impacts across the service is as follows:

<b>CURRENT AGENCY SPEND 2021/22 BREAKDOWN</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Delivery - DM	£352,002
Strategic Sites	£377,222
Planning Enforcement	£220,579
Strategy & Economy	£436,000
Business Support	£58,142
Application Support	£110,000

- 5.4.2 Through 2020, the service has sought to roll out time recording systems to improve insight into staff activity and cost recovery against PPA and related project work. Benchmarking of staff resources against forecast work suggests that in areas such as development management, staffing levels are not excessive



although recent investigations by officers of service transformations elsewhere suggest that there remain opportunities to improve upon historical benchmarking averages in terms of reducing the amount of non-productive time in particular through increased digitalisation. This will be important as the service seeks to manage officer workloads, notably those of managers who have been adversely impacted by the challenges of remote working and the impacts upon productivity associated with remote working and the immaturity of recently rolled out processes.

- 5.4.3 Notwithstanding the difficulty in attracting new staff, staff turnover across the service through 2020/21 has slowed with a 93% retention rates (target 90%) although there is some evidence of increasing movement in some areas (such as DM). Regular staff surveys by SCDC have nevertheless highlighted concerns about workloads and management support during the year as key issues for the workforce alongside frustrations with ICT infrastructure impacting productivity.

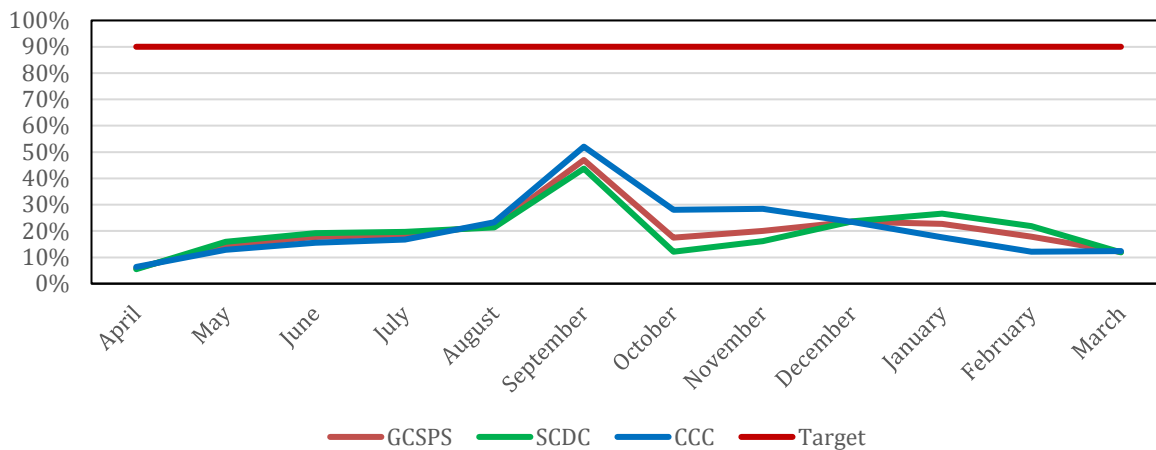
## **5.5 Governance**

- 5.5.1 The shared service board has overseen the activity of the Shared Planning service through 2020/21. Monthly member and Chief Executive board meetings have also tracked performance of the service and in recent months, have sought to engage with the funding challenges facing the service. Both Councils are undertaking transformation programmes with associated governance arrangements. The shared Planning service review is being prioritised in the SCDC transformation programme. The review board includes both SCDC and Cambridge City transformation Leads.

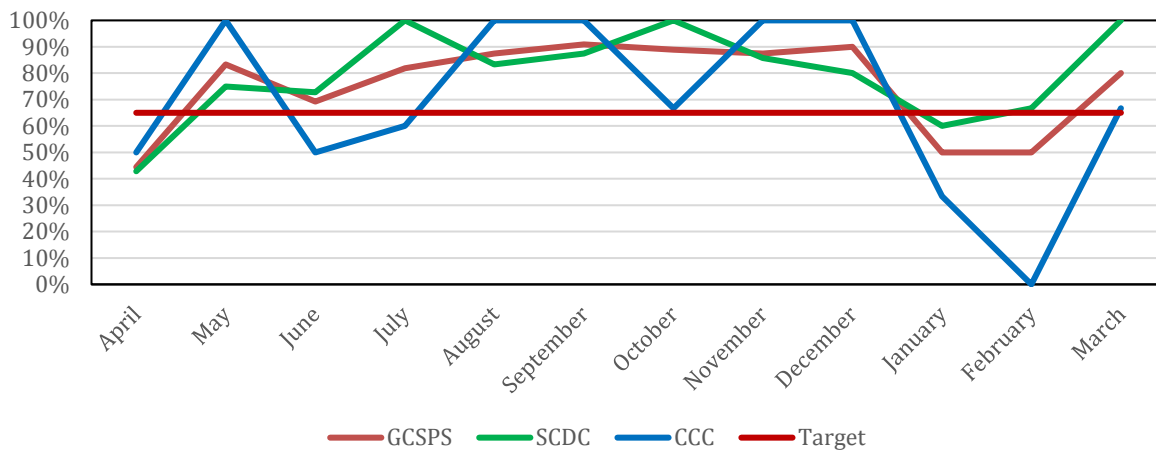
## **5.6 Performance**

- 5.6.1 The annualised performance of the service against its “headline” indicators is reported below. The challenges facing the delivery team through 2020 (and reduced capacity caused by measures associate with Covid – and the collateral effects on staff productivity such as the closure of schools -especially during the second lockdown) have impacted upon both process performance as well as headline performance as reported to MHCLG across the year.
- 5.6.2 The service has nevertheless been able to support housing delivery through 2020 at over 100% (for both authorities) in the annual housing delivery test and in turn, this has had a positive impact upon the authorities 5-year housing land supply position (now 6.1 years). Additional management support has been provided in Q4 to help the service to tackle validation performance in the application support team (seen as critical in securing the turnaround of overall DM performance) whilst the service improvement projects underway, and the planned service wide reviews for 2021 will also focus on DM process performance, improving the user experience and resilience. Changes to the methodology used by the service to recording “extensions of time” – following external challenge have also set back Q4 performance in association with efforts to tackle a backlog of undetermined applications.

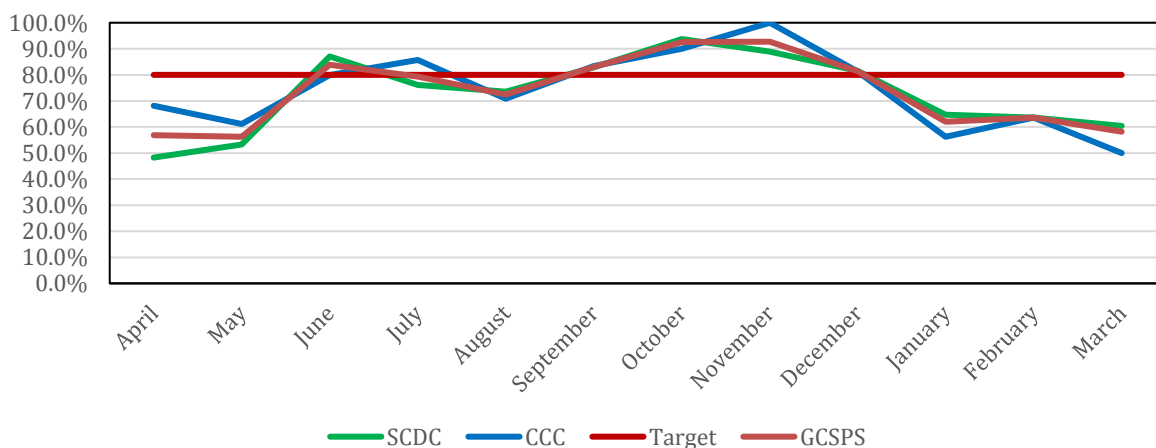
**Table 1: Validation Performance: Applications validated within 5 working days of receipt:**



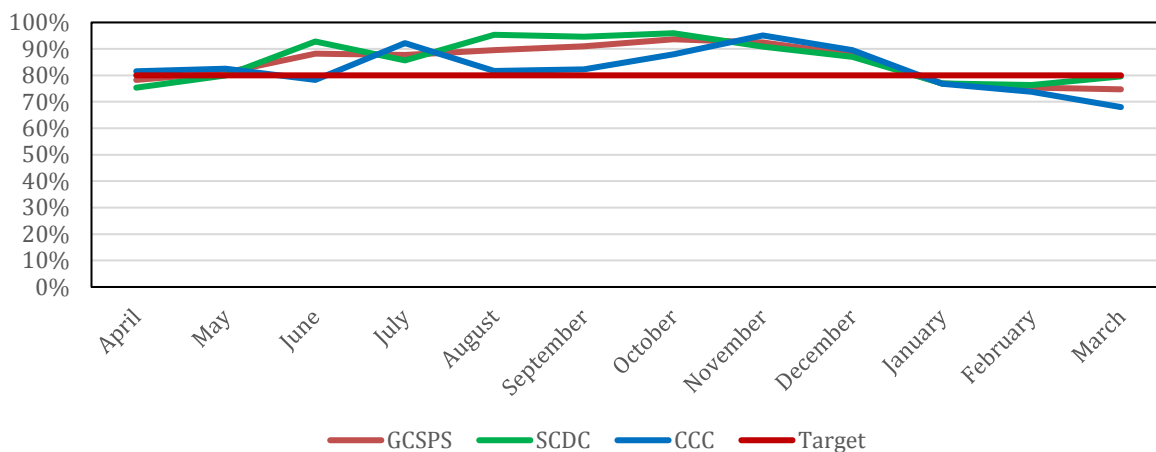
**Table 2: Major application performance: Target 60% of applications determined within 13 weeks or an agreed time period.**



**Table 3: Minor Applications Performance: Target 80% of applications determined within 8 weeks or an agreed time period.**



**Table 4: Other Applications performance: Target 80% of applications determined within 8 weeks or an agreed time period.**



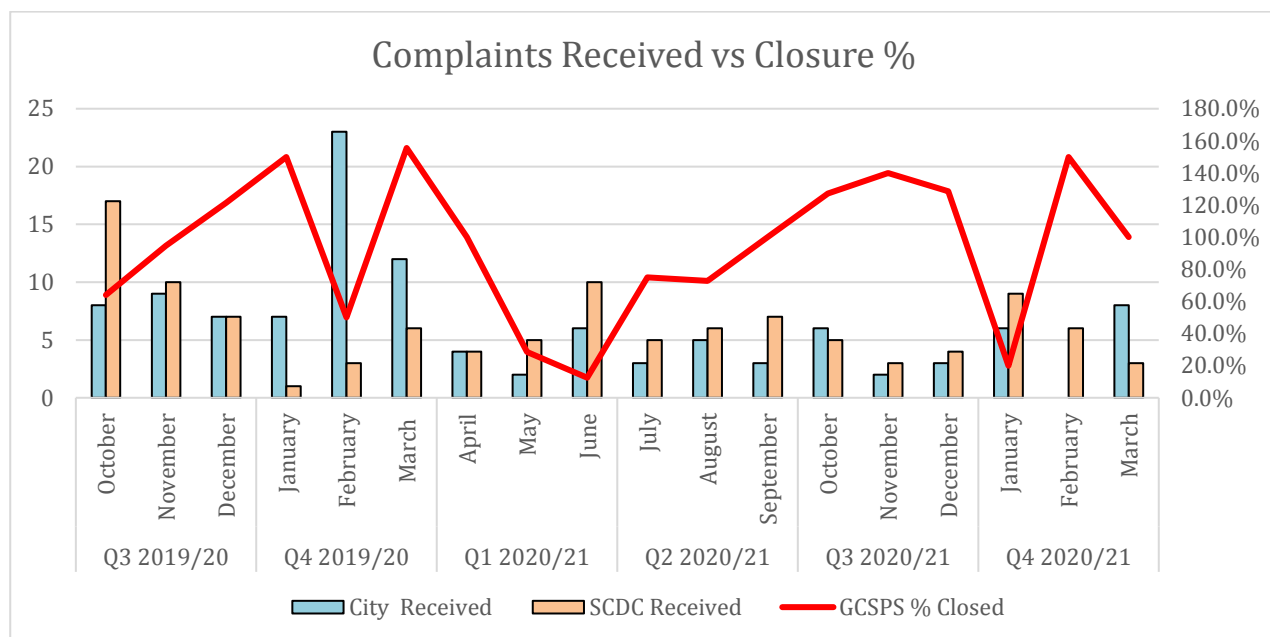
5.6.3 The service has faced close scrutiny of both its performance and its processes through external challenges on housing delivery and its returns to MHCLG in SCDC. The shared Internal audit service have undertaken 2 investigations in the year, firstly into errors in processing planning applications and secondly around the submission of performance returns to MHCLG. A further investigation into incorrectly processed applications is pending the receipt of the external investigators report by the service. Ongoing development of the services Idox Enterprise ICT system including an upgrade to the host server to improve resilience, has continued through 2020/21 as the service has increased its reliance (during remote working) on the workflow and system processes.

## 5.7 Customer satisfaction

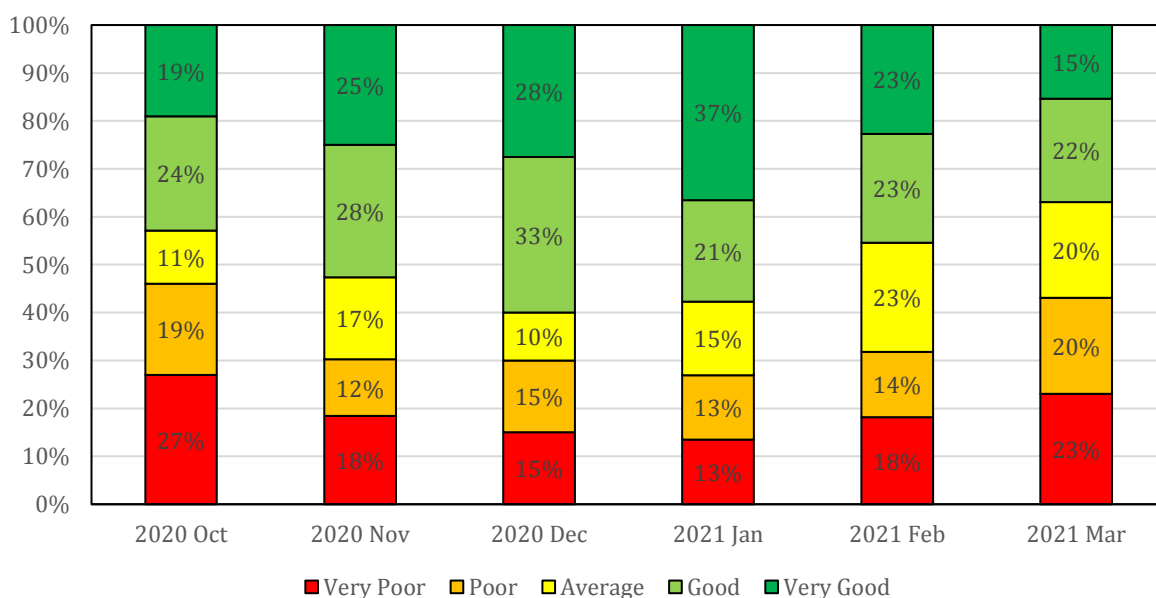
5.7.1 Through 2020/21 the service implemented a new customer complaints process. This replaced reliance on the separate corporate processes of the constituent authorities. Alongside the improved survey/data capture the service initiated a pre-emptive process to address the high volume of “chase up” complaints. This has significantly reduced the number of complaints from 206 to 114 with numbers reducing considerably since the Operations teams introduction of a 24-hour call back process in January 2020, designed to engage customers before issues reach a complaint stage.

5.7.2 Complaints received are distributed across the service but with the majority (88% of complaints) associated with the development management process. The remaining 14% were spread across BNE, Strategic Sites, Application Support and Policy. Complaints are relatively evenly split between the two council areas with 49.8% coming from Cambridge City and 50.2% from South Cambridgeshire. Performance in responding to complaints remains an area of under performance with average responses times for stage 1 complaints of 31 days and stage 2 complaints 68 days. Alongside new processes, the service has developed much tighter monitoring and tracking arrangements and updated material and processes to manage expectations (about the extent of the process and its purpose) and to support managers in teams with performance management. Further work is ongoing with regard to clearing the backlog of older complaints and increasing

the number of complaints investigators within the delivery service to spread the complaints workload and thereby improve performance against the required targets.



5.7.3 The revised survey and reporting data (below) now gathered around the development management process also shows evidence of some positive improvement through to January in customer satisfaction but more recent declines. Officers are currently seeking to address the reasons for the declining satisfaction levels within the teams.



## 5.8 Engagement

5.8.1 The roll out of the area planning teams in delivery has seen quarterly meetings with associated Parish Councils taking place through the year, following the move towards virtual meetings. Through 2020, the service was also able to roll out

tailored weekly application reports to members and Parish Councils on applications received in their wards. With the shift to virtual meetings, both through planning committees and engagement forums associated with the Local Plan/planning policy workstreams the service has noticed greater participation amongst community organisations and individuals in planning related activity. The significant work associated with introducing standing orders to accommodate virtual meetings in Q1 has allowed the service to maintain live speaking at planning committee meetings after the move to virtual meetings.

- 5.8.3 Through 2020, the service has also begun to add content to its dedicated shared planning service web site, building upon digital versions of its emerging planning policy documents. Capacity created by training staff within the service, on uploading web content will play an important part in planned migration of information online as the service seeks to pre-empt information requests and support users through 2021.

## **6. Implications**

### **a) Financial Implications**

The financial implications are shown in sections 4.1.9 and 5.3 above.

### **b) Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications.

### **c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

Not required for this report.

### **d) Environmental Implications**

None for this report.

### **e) Procurement Implications**

None specific related to the service. Any procurement relating to the service provision is carried out in line with the Councils' policies.

### **f) Community Safety Implications**

There are no community safety implications.

**g) Consultation and communication considerations**

This will be conducted in accordance with the Council's agreed policy.

**h) Background papers**

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

Shared Service Quarterly reports  
GCP and 3C Shared Services 2019/20 Annual Reports  
GCP and 3C Shared Services 2020/21 Business Plans

**i) Appendices**

CONFIDENTIAL appendix for Building Control

**j) Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Fiona Bryant, Strategic Director, tel: 01223 - 457325, email: [fiona.bryant@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.bryant@cambridge.gov.uk).

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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## Item X

### Changes to the Design Review Service in Greater Cambridge

**To:**

Councillor Katie Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport  
Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee [29/06/2021]

**Report by:**

Stephen Kelly, Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire  
Tel: 01223 – 457009; Email: [stephen.kelly@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.kelly@cambridge.gov.uk)

**Wards affected:** Abbey, Arbury, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, East Chesterton, Kings Hedge's, Petersfield, Romsey, West Chesterton, Castle, Market, Newnham, Trumpington, Queen Ediths.

## Non-Key Decision

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Design Review advice is an important and valued, if discretionary, service and it is recognised as such in the National Planning Policy Framework. Design review in Cambridge City Council (CCC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) is provided by two panels with different processes and different charges:

- The Design Enabling Panel (DEP) was set up in 2014 by SCDC to review significant planning applications and pre-applications within SCDC area boundaries. There is a charge for using the panel. The panel has never been reviewed.
- The Design and Conservation Panel (DCP) was set up in 2006 (based on an earlier panel established in 1973) by CCC to review significant planning applications and pre-applications within Cambridge City boundaries. It was

last reviewed in 2013 by the independent architect Barry Shaw. It is currently provided as a free service.

- 1.2 The DCP and DEP are administered by the two councils that have come together to form the shared planning service and they have been operating for over 5 years without a review. For those reasons, the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP) committed to reviewing its design review service in its 2020/2021 Business Plan. Last year, GCSP appointed the independent expert Esther Kurland, from Urban Design Learning (UDL), to review the two panels. The findings and recommendations from this review were submitted to GCSP in March 2021 (Appendix A). This report seeks approval for the proposed arrangements (including charges) set out in the Terms of Reference (Appendix B), which are informed by the recommendations of that review.
- 1.3 The proposal is to replace the two separate design review panels with a new single panel, operating in a consistent manner across the CCC and SCDC areas, and with a common charging regime. The service will be cost neutral to the councils as it will be funded from charges paid by applicants, with the potential for generating some surpluses. This service offer will sit alongside the statutory planning application process (where fees and process are determined nationally) and which is unaffected by these proposals.
- 1.4 The GCDRP is intended to be an independent, peer review of significant development proposals that will work alongside other discretionary and statutory tools and processes of the development management process. It supplements the community engagement and consultation that is expected to take place as well as pre-application meetings. Our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out GCSPs functions in relation to preparing planning policy, including Neighbourhood Planning, determining planning applications and how local community groups should be involved. The SCI is unaffected by these proposals, however GCSP keeps under review how it carries out its engagement. There may be potential to set up a separate community review panel in the future, however this would need to be

considered as part of a broader review of community engagement and capacity building in our communities.

- 1.5 This report also sets out changes to the format of reviews carried out by the current DCP for its remaining tenure. These are proposed to be implemented from July until the launch of the proposed new panel.
- 1.6 This proposal is also due to be considered in parallel by SCDC and will be considered by the Cabinet of SCDC at their meetings in July.

## **2. Recommendations**

1. That the Committee recommend for the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport to agree the proposals to introduce the new design review service offer and charging schedule set out in this report for the Greater Cambridge Area from January 2022. Given that the report is also going to SCDC Cabinet, delegated powers are also sought should there be any minor changes made by that process - to be delegated to the Joint Planning Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor.
2. That the Committee recommend to the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport to agree the proposals for CCC to introduce interim changes to the DCP's terms of reference from July 2021 until the launch of the new design review panel.

## **2. Background**

- 3.1 The GCSP design review service has been operating using two existing panels: the DCP, administrated by CCC for the Cambridge City area; and DEP, administrated by SCDC for the South Cambridgeshire area. These panels are formed of built environment professionals who work in the public interest to provide independent expert advice to developers, design teams, planning officers and Planning Committee, to improve the design of buildings and places within the GCSP area.

- 3.2 The DCP meet monthly to review a range of schemes within the CCC area. The panel mostly reviews student accommodation, hotels, and commercial buildings. In the three years from January 2017-January 2020, the panel carried out 37 reviews, and of these, 15 were of schemes that returned to the panel for a second or third review. During this period, 32 reviews were carried out for projects during the pre-application stage and 5 reviews were carried out for projects after an application had been submitted to the council. The DCP is a free-to-use service and does not recover its costs.
- 3.3 The DEP meets every six weeks to review schemes within the SCDL area. The work of the panel is mainly made up of housing, hotels, and commercial buildings. In the three years from January 2017- January 2020, the panel carried out 67 reviews, 11 of which were repeat reviews. During this period 53 reviews were carried out for projects during the pre-application stage and 14 reviews were carried out for projects after an application had been submitted. The DEP charges users £650+VAT per review, and this does not cover the full cost to the council of administering the panel.
- 3.4 There is also a third panel, the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel (CQP), which was set up in 2010 to review major growth sites across the County of Cambridgeshire. The CQP is administered by the Cambridgeshire County Council. It has its own governance arrangements and focuses on strategic growth across the region. The CQP operates beyond the administrative boundaries of the shared planning service and therefore it is outside the scope of the recommendations of this report.
- 3.5 The two design review panels administered by the councils that have come together to form the shared planning service have different referral criteria, membership arrangements, processes, governance and charging schemes. Neither panel has been reviewed in over 5 years. The DCP was last reviewed in 2013 and the DEP has not been reviewed since it was set up in 2014. The GCSPS Business Plan 2020-2021 includes a commitment to review the operation of the existing panels and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the discretionary design review service. The objectives included an aspiration for a single unified process and

charging scheme that adds value to the process for all stakeholders and results in high quality outcomes.

- 3.6 GCSP appointed an independent expert consultant to review the two panels. Between November 2020 and February 2021 Esther Kurland and her team at UDL observed panel meetings and carried out surveys and interviews with users of the service including agents, applicants, and their design teams; chairs and members of the two panels; Members and planning officers, and stakeholders including parish councils and residents' associations. UDL also looked at the potential role of the community in the proposed GCDRP and recognised the potential for a separate community review panel in the future, which could be considered as part of a broader review of community engagement and capacity building in our communities. The feedback from this engagement, and an assessment of the operation of the design review service against established best practice approaches, have informed the recommendations of this report.
- 3.7 Alongside the independent review, officers have been working with the existing DCP to improve the operation of this panel in the interim. This report therefore also sets out proposed amendments to the terms of reference for the DCP to be implemented from July until the launch of the new panel.

### **3. Considerations**

- 3.1 Design review is an established process that will help GCSP deliver high quality development to the benefit of the Greater Cambridge area and its residents. It is strongly encouraged by Government policy through the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 129 of the NPPF (2019) states that 'Local Authorities should ensure that they have access to and make use of appropriate processes for assessing and improving the design of developments, which include design advice and review arrangements'. It goes on to say that 'in assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels'. The benefits of design review are also reflected in the Living with Beauty report (January 2020).

- 3.2 The panel review offers an independent and impartial evaluation of the design of significant proposals, at the pre-application and application stages, by a panel of built environment experts. The advice of the panel is advisory, with the aim of identifying where improvements can be made, to influence the planning process and improve the quality of buildings and places for the benefit of the public. The advice of the panel is reported in a letter, attached to committee, and delegated reports, to give decision makers the confidence and information to support innovative, high quality designs and to resist poorly designed schemes.
- 3.3 Design review provides an opportunity to engage with developers at an early stage to address key issues rather than at the planning application stage when this will otherwise result in delays and the need for re-consultation in many cases. It can therefore help save applicants, agents, and developers time and cost by ensuring they submit high quality schemes and applications that stand a greater chance of being granted approval within the statutory timescales. For the Planning Authority, improving the quality of application submissions in this way, can also improve process efficiency whilst helping to drive up the quality of the outcome secured. Design review does not replace the on-going dialogue that it is possible to have with design officers through pre-application meetings. Design review and pre-application advice from officers are most effective when working together and in parallel with community engagement.
- 3.4 The independent review into the GCSP design review service looked at the potential role of the community in the proposed GCDRP. The review concluded that the purpose of the panel is to provide an expert and independent peer review process that is distinct from the community engagement which takes place during the pre-application stages. GCSP have established mechanisms in place to ensure that the community are engaged during the pre-application design stages and GCSP's expectations for this are set out within the GCSP Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). GCSP keeps under review how it carries out its engagement e.g. the focus on harder to reach groups as part of the local plan consultation. There may be potential to set up a separate community review panel in the future,

however this would need to be considered as part of a broader review of community engagement and capacity building in our communities.

- 3.5 Nationally, there are different approaches to managing and administering design review services. Some Local Planning Authorities provide their service in-house, whereas others use external providers. The GLA, Design Review Survey (2018) showed that 86% of London Authorities were operating, or were in the process of setting up, design review panels (DRPs). Of those London Authorities who used Design Review to support good quality outcomes, two thirds had panels managed in-house by officers, with the remaining third subcontracted to external partners to administrate and manage. Overall, 76% of Design Review services, whether inhouse or external, charged fees to users (applicants). Given that planning application fees are set nationally, and historically have not covered fully the costs of delivering the application process, design review charges can play an important part in helping authorities to offset the costs of providing planning advice.

### **Review Process**

- 3.6 The brief for the independent expert consultant to carry out the review was agreed by the SCDC Lead member for Planning and the CCC Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, in consultation with senior officers and the existing panel chairs. The agreed objectives were to assess the way in which the existing design review panels operate and provide recommendations for an effective, consistent, and cost neutral approach to design review across the two boundaries.
- 3.7 The consultant considered 3 options as part of the review and recommendations:
1. Continuing with the status quo of two design panel formats for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils
  2. A single design panel for both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council
  3. Two design panel formats for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils with a common administrative arrangement

3.8 The independent review was carried out in several stages:

- a. A baseline report was prepared by officers in consultation with the DEP and D&C panel chairs and managers. This report collated factual data on the two panels, including their terms of reference, operational processes, costs, expertise, and projects reviewed over the last 3 years. This report was issued to the consultant and formed part of the evidence base for their review.
- b. The consultant observed meetings of the Design and Conservation Panel, the Design Enabling Panel, and the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel (not part of review) to understand how the design review process operates across GCSPS.
- c. The consultant analysed three, randomly selected, case studies from each of the DCP and DEP to assess the quality of the review letter and the impact of the reviews on the planning process.
- d. The consultant conducted semi-structured interviews with the chairs of the DCP, DEP and CQP, members of the senior management team (Joint Director of Planning, Assistant Directors and BNE Manager), the two panel managers/administrators, the SCDC Lead member for Planning and the CCC Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, the chairs of the planning committee of both councils, and two planning agents to understand the stakeholders' experience of the existing panels and their requirements for design review.
- e. The consultant conducted surveys with stakeholders including DCP and DEP members, those who have brought schemes to the panels in the last 12 months; planning officers; planning committee members; residents associations and parish councils. A summary of the feedback received is set out in Appendix C.
- f. The consultant conducted interviews with the panel managers of other design review panels that operate across multiple local authority boundaries to understand what has worked well.
- g. The consultant analysed the findings from points a-f against established best practice approaches to design review, including the potential role of community in design review, and made recommendations to GCSP for a



consistent, cost neutral efficient, and effective service. The findings and recommendations were presented to GCSP in a report (Appendix A).

## **Recommendations**

3.9 The review proposed the following 3 strategic changes to the existing design review service and set out detailed recommendations for achieving these.

### **1. Create a single Design Review service with specialist sub panels:**

because there are significant differences in approach between the panels, leading to differences in attitudes from those involved and the quality and consistency of advice. This is likely to be undermining the potential usefulness of reviews for the shared planning service.

### **2. Refresh and improve delivery systems:**

because Design Review has expanded and matured across the country since the panels were set up, leading to improvements in established best practice. The Cambridge service would benefit from updating its Terms of Reference and day to day practices to reflect what others have found to work well elsewhere.

### **3. Integrate Design Review with wider Design Quality approaches:**

because Design Review is only one tool and can work best when clearly integrated with all other design related planning work from policy writing to pre-application negotiations, community engagement to committee deliberations.

## **Proposed Approach**

3.10 The terms of reference (Appendix B) propose to implement the recommendations of the review and create a single panel: Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel (GCDRP). It is proposed that the new GCDRP would replace both the Design and Conservation Panel and Design Enabling Panel. It would operate across the Greater Cambridge area, managed by the shared planning service and overseen by an Independent Advisory Group. Given the volume of applications, it is recommended the Panel should have two chairs, two vice-chairs and a single pool of 20-30 panel members with diverse expertise. Where appropriate, sub-panels

may be formed from the panel membership to respond to the different development pressures or types of schemes within Greater Cambridge areas.

- 3.11 It is envisaged that the Panel would usually meet twice per month and review up to two schemes per meeting, although additional meetings and reviews may be organised when required. Meetings will normally be held in Council offices in either Cambridge or South Cambridgeshire unless they are required to be held remotely, for example due to social distancing restrictions being in place. The panel will charge applicants to use the service and the fees will cover the cost of providing the advice and generate additional surplus for design training for officers and Councillors, which is now common practice around the country. Feedback would regularly be sought from users of the panels to inform further service improvements. Up-to-date information about the panel and its membership would be published on the GCSP website.

#### **Remit**

- 3.12 The GCDRP will be one of two panels operating within the GCSPS area: the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel and the Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel.
1. The [Cambridgeshire Quality Panel](#) was established in 2010. It is administered by Cambridgeshire County Council and governed by its own terms of reference. Within the Greater Cambridge area, it reviews strategic scale allocations within the adopted local plans including: infrastructure projects such as stations, transport interchanges, road bridges; all new schools; school extensions where they give rise to significant effects on the locality; large public buildings which are likely to establish, or need to fit in with an already established form of high architectural quality. In Cambridge City, this Cambridgeshire Quality Panel reviews sites that are covered by the City Fringes Joint Development Control Committee. The Cambridgeshire Quality Panel may also review policies, guidance and documents that have a strategic and spatial implications at a sub-regional scale.

2. It is intended that the GCDRP would review major or significant planning and pre-planning applications for sites within the Greater Cambridge area, that fall outside of the remit of the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel. The GCDRP will normally review:
- schemes because of their scale, size and use of development (including developments of over 10 dwellings, a site with a gross area of over 0.5 hectares, or any building over 1000m<sup>2</sup>);
  - the site is particularly sensitive; and/or the proposals are significant because of a local issue, specific impact exceptional challenge, or public benefit;
  - The GCDRP may also review any policies, guidance and documents that related to these sites.

For full criteria details of the schemes to be considered refer to the Term of Reference (Appendix B)

### **Governance and Monitoring**

- 3.13 In accordance with good practice, it is recommended that an Independent Advisory Group (IAG) is established to oversee the panel to ensure its effectiveness and accountability in the public interest. It would also make recommendations to adjust working practices and make minor adjustments to the terms of reference, these would be made to and require the approval of the Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Members.
- 3.14 It is recommended that the IAG comprise two independent built environment experts with significant experience and external to the panel (such as chairs or experts of other design review panels), the 2 panel chairs, senior officers from the planning service, the lead members and planning committee chairs of both councils.
- 3.15 It is envisaged that the IAG would meet once a year to review an Annual Report of the panel's activities, planning impact, and an analysis of survey feedback collected

after each review. The Annual Report and IAG meeting minutes will be publicly available on the GCSP website.

## **Management**

3.16 The GCDRP will be managed by the Council's Built and Natural Environment Team.

There are two main roles required to administer the panel: a Panel Manager (which will equate to 0.25 FTE of an existing Principal Urban Designer) and 0.25 FTE Admin Support. The panel manager, supported by the administrator, will be responsible for organising panel meetings, preparing the Annual Report. Importantly, the panel manager will liaise with panel members, officers, and Councillors to promote the use of design review within the service and provide design training sessions and site visits.

3.17 The benefits and disbenefits of administering the panel in-house, versus using an external provider, were considered as part of the review. Interviewees value the existing in-house arrangements because this is seen to facilitate the sharing of knowledge of projects and policies, between officers, councillors, and panel members (Appendix C). The review recommended that this positive aspect of the in-house service could be improved through the appointment of an urban design officer as panel manager, who will take ownership over the panel, raise the profile of design review with councillors, panel members and officers to integrate it into the councils' wider design management processes. Administering the panel in-house means that surplus income could be invested in design training, advice and site visits to the benefit of the planning service as a whole.

## **Charging**

3.18 The GCDRP will be a pay-to-use service with a charging schedule that fully recovers its costs.

3.19 The purpose of design review advice is to ensure that applicants can prepare and submit high quality applications which can be supported without the need for amendment. The cost of service should incentivise early engagement and repeat reviews for the panel to have the greatest influence on the design process. To this end it is envisaged that the GCDRP offers 3 types of review with different rates:

- a full design review with a site visit (fee £4,000 +VAT)
- a subsequent design review without a site visit (fee £3,500 +VAT)
- a desktop chairs review (fee £2,000 +VAT)

Where possible the same Panel Members will be used for subsequent reviews.

3.20 In recognition of the discretionary nature of the service, and to encourage users to engage with the service, in exceptional cases, the fees may be reduced by up to 50% where the service wants to support community organisations, charities, and small businesses in accessing the panel. For schemes which are particularly complex and/or required a bespoke review format (such as specialist sub panel) the fees outlined may be increased to cover additional administration costs. Reviews for projects outside of the GCSP area will also incur a fee increase and the amount charged will depend on the specific project requirements.

3.21 The setting of discretionary charges is covered by the Local Government Act and such charges cannot be levied to deliver a profit for the provider. The recommended rates are based on an analysis of design review charging schemes and panel members remuneration rates at other comparable local authorities. Charges have been formulated based on an analysis of costs of officer time required to administer the design review panel, including the time set out within the terms of reference for monitoring and training and engagement activities. Fees and review types will be monitored as a standing item at the annual IAG meeting, to ensure the GCDRP remains attractive to applicants and financially viable. Any changes to charges would be considered as part of the annual review of service-wide charges.

#### **Panel member recruitment**

3.22 The membership of the current DEP and DCP have not been refreshed in line with their terms of reference and as a result both panels are lacking in diversity and in some areas of expertise e.g. environmental sustainability. Existing panel members will therefore be stood down and encouraged to re-apply for a place on the new panel if they wish to continue.

- 3.23 It is proposed that the GCDRP would be made up of 20-30 members, 2 Chairs and 2 Vice Chairs. GCSPS will openly recruit a diverse panel of nationally respected professionals from Cambridge and across the UK, with expertise that cover the range of specialisms within the field of the built and natural environment. Applications from panel members will be scored according to a marking scheme, with chairs and vice-chairs interviewed for the role.
- 3.24 It is proposed that Panel Members and Chairs would be appointed for a period of 3 years and refreshed thereafter following a review of attendance and performance. Panel members and Chairs will be paid for their attendance and travel expenses.

### **Improved Stakeholder Experience**

- 3.25 Feedback from review will be in the form of a letter authored by the Chair that will be shared with applicants and officers involved in assessing the application. It will be written in plain English and structured under the headings of the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter's four 'C's: Community, Connectivity, Climate, Character. Planning officers should attach the review letter in full to the planning officer/committee reports and articulate where the scheme has and has not considered the panels comments and why. The Chair may occasionally be asked to attend Planning Committee meetings when requested by the lead member. The role of the GCDRP is advisory but the comments are a material consideration as set out in the NPPF.
- 3.26 In the interest of transparency and public accountability, information about the panel will be published on a dedicated web page including, Terms of Reference, a Handbook for the management of the Panel, a Quick Guide for applicants, an annual report and minutes from the annual Independent Advisory Group meeting. Once an application has submitted to GCSP, the review letter will be published on the GCSP website to inform consultation responses.
- 3.27 The quality of the service will be monitored through recording the impact of reviews on the planning process and through surveys of stakeholders. This information will be collated in the Annual Report, scrutinised by the Independent Advisory Group. The information will help to inform how the panel evolves and address any issues raised. It will also be used to highlight the benefits of the panel to the wider

community. A site visit of completed projects reviewed by the GCDRP may also inform the annual review.

## **Risk Management**

- 3.28 Improving the design review service will help to mitigate both the authorities and applicants' risks with the planning application process, and in turn should support both applicant and the Councils to reduce the costs of failure demand, including the risk of planning appeals or poor quality and inappropriate development, and contribute towards the improved reputation of the service.

## **Interim Service Improvements to the DCP**

- 3.29 Stakeholder engagement during the review highlighted issues with the current arrangement of providing feedback in the DCP which currently uses a 'red/amber/green verdict' to customers. The DCP current terms of reference include the requirement that panel members must vote for a red/amber/green verdict at the end of each review. This verdict is noted within the review letter and in addition to notes of the panel discussion. The independent review recommends that the D&C Panel should move away from the traffic light voting system as this wrongly gives the impression that it is the role of the panel to 'sign off' projects for planning approval, rather than advise on how they can be improved. This report therefore seeks approval to remove this requirement from July 2021 until the new panel is launched.

# **4. Implications**

## **(a) Financial Implications**

These proposals do not impact planning application fees - which are set nationally. Instead, the proposals seek to address the service's need to manage the cost of its discretionary services and aim to increase a greater proportion of that cost through charges. For design review advice, (where the service provided can lead to significant financial benefits accruing to property/land owners and developers) the charging schedule reflects a need to support community organisations and small businesses, whilst reducing the subsidy provided by both Councils for this service

for more substantial development projects – and help respond to the growing pressure on costs and income facing both Council Planning Services.

It is intended that the charging scheme is reviewed in 12 months' time from the launch of the panel, when feedback from and stakeholders and data on the costs of running the service will be analysed to ensure the service is cost neutral and attractive to applicants.

An analysis of the projected income and costs associated with administering the panel has been carried out. Scenario testing has shown that the income generated by the panel over a 3-year period is expected to cover the cost of setting up the panel and for annual training for planners and elected members and forum events for agents. Financial risk is limited because panel members are paid per review and therefore the overheads are reduced if the panel carries out fewer reviews.

### **(b) Staffing Implications**

There are currently two separate design review panels and officers are working with two separate processes. Aligning the processes to a single panel will reduce officer time and improve capacity as well as addressing will overall workloads.

Officer time will be needed to deliver the new arrangements service including recruitment to the proposed new Panel, whilst maintaining a Design Review service until the transition is complete.

Two part-time roles required to administer the revised service – which equate to 0.25 FTE Principal Urban Designer (Grade 6) and 0.25 FTE Admin Support (Grade 4). It is envisaged these will be existing roles within the Built and Natural Environment Team, with the charges going towards the cost recovery approach for that team.

### **(b) Equality and Poverty Implications**

GCSP will improve the diversity of the membership pool of the design review service by recruiting a new panel of professionals from Cambridge and across the



UK, with expertise that cover the range of specialisms within the field of the built and natural environment. Recruitment will encourage applications from people with protected characteristics. Applications from panel members will be scored according to a published marking criterion. Chairs and vice chairs will be interviewed for the role.

The approach to charging does recognise that there may be some applicants e.g. a community group that may have more limited ability to access the service and allows for reductions in fees in these circumstances

An EQIA has been carried out for this proposal (Appendix E).

### **(c) Environmental Implications**

Delivering timely, and early advice, notably around the adopted policy framework which seeks to support the move towards a low carbon and climate sensitive future will have a positive impact upon the Council's objectives.

The new Panel will ensure that the relevant expertise is incorporated on matters such as environmental sustainability and the proposed reframing of the Panel comments around the 4 'c' of the Quality Charter - which includes climate - should ensure applicants focus on this important objective in the scheme design.

### **(e) Procurement Implications**

None

### **(f) Community Safety Implications**

None

## **6. Consultation and communication considerations**

As part of the independent review, semi-structured interviews and discussions were carried out with the chairs of the DCP, DEP and CQP, members of the senior

management team (Joint Director of Planning, Assistant Directors and BNE Manager), the two panel managers/administrators, the SCDC Lead member for Planning and the CCC Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, the chairs of the planning committee of both councils, and two planning agents.

In addition, the consultant carried out surveys with stakeholders including DCP and DEP members, those who have brought schemes to the panels in the last 12 months; planning officers; planning committee members; residents associations and parish councils.

Whilst the review was underway, details were advertised in the Councils' website and any interested parties were asked to contact us to participate.

The service improvements that are proposed to be introduced result from the feedback received, particularly with regards to improving communication to promote the service more widely and encourage reviews earlier in the pre-application process; providing a consistent approach to design review across the service; ensuring panels continued development through monitoring and training. A summary of the feedback received is set out in Appendix C.

## **7. Background papers**

- None

## **8. Appendices**

- Appendix A: DCP and DEP Findings and Recommendations Report
- Appendix B: GCDRP Terms of Reference
- Appendix C: Summary of Engagement Feedback
- Appendix D: Milestones for Implementing the GCDRP
- Appendix E: Equality Impact Assessment

## **9. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact

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# Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service: Design Review Recommendation Report

February 2021

# Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service: Design Review Recommendation Report

AUTHOR Urban Design London

## Contents

- 1 [Introduction](#)
- 2 [Executive Summary](#)
- 3 [Analysis and review of DEP and D&C Panels](#)
- 4 [Recommendations](#)
  - A. [Create single Design Review service with specialist sub panels](#)
  - B. [Refresh and improve delivery systems](#)
  - C. [Integrate Design Review with wider Design Quality approaches](#)
- 5 [Appendices](#)
  - 1 Appendix 1 – Interview Notes
  - 2 Appendix 2 – Case Studies Notes
  - 3 Appendix 3 – Performance Criteria
  - 4 Appendix 4 – Cambridge Panel Observations
  - 5 Appendix 5 – Notes from Conversations with External Panel Managers
  - 6 Appendix 6 – Survey Results

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## 1 Introduction

This report has been produced by Urban Design London for the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS). It examines two existing Design Review Panels and considers whether changes are needed to make the most of Design Review processes for the area. The two panels considered are the Design Enabling Panel (DEP) which was set up by South Cambridgeshire and the Design and Conservation Panel (D&C), established by Cambridge City Council.

To understand how these panels work at the present time, and consider future options the study included:

- Observations of panel sessions
- Interviews with panel managers and chairs, council leaders and planning committee members, those bringing schemes to panels and planning officers

- An online survey of panel stakeholders including those interviewed, panel members and community groups
- Examination of case studies of schemes seen by the panels
- Desktop review of existing Terms of Reference, website information and other background data on the panels
- Evaluation against current Design Review best practice as used and published elsewhere

## 2 Executive Summary

There is a clear commitment to delivering good design by both Councils and the shared planning service. Bringing together the planning functions has led to challenges and opportunities in this regard, which we felt were being addressed in an impressive way, not least by examining the work of the panels.

Design can be a subjective issue and we observed some differences in views over what 'good' might be across the different groups interviewed. This is a very normal situation, potentially helped by policy and other work we understand to be planned, but Design Review can be an important part of ensuring consistent, robust and appropriate interpretations of design requirements are applied. However, to do this the review system itself needs to be consistent, robust and appropriate, which our analysis showed was not always the case. To this end we recommend three key changes:

### A. Create a single Design Review service with specialist sub panels

Because there are significant differences in approach between the panels, leading to differences in attitudes from those involved and the quality and consistency of advice. This is likely to be undermining the potential usefulness of reviews for the shared planning service

### B. Refresh and improve delivery systems

Because Design Review has expanded and matured across the country since the panels were set up, leading to improvements in established best practice. The Cambridge service would benefit from updating its Terms of Reference and day to day practices to reflect what others have found to work well elsewhere

### C. Integrate Design Review with wider Design Quality approaches

Because Design Review is only one tool and can work best when clearly integrated with all other design related planning work from policy writing to pre app negotiations, community engagement to committee deliberations.

## 3 Analysis and review of DEP and D&C Panels

The extensive analysis undertaken used the Baseline Report, Interviews, Survey, Observation of Reviews, UDL Criteria Analysis, Best Practice.

From this work we identified strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement as set out below. These are summarised across both panels. A more detailed breakdown for each against the assessment criteria used is provided in the appendix.

## Strengths

- Both Panels have delivered a significant number of reviews over the last decade.
- There is recognition across all groups who interact with DR that is a useful and important process that can help deliver better quality built outcomes.
- There is significant gratitude and warmth for existing panel managers, chairs and members and the significant commitment, hard work and dedication they have shown.
- Both Panels hold within their membership and collective work a wealth of knowledge and experience of the specific contexts within which they work. People on the panels know their geographical areas, their characters, pressures and history. They remember many schemes seen have observed how the areas have changed over time. They understand the specifics of their work, for example the D&CP understands the 'colleges' as developers while the DEP has good experience of the kind of issues and community concerns that may relate to village extensions. The manager of the DEP, in particular, is committed to making the panel a success and appears to have the relevant experience and skills to make this happen if our other recommendations are taken forward. Although, future roles will need to be defined through the Terms of Reference and a fair selection process.

## Weaknesses

- Wider knowledge of and respect for the Panels
  - There is little wider knowledge of the panels' existence or role. 67% of community representatives who responded to the survey had never heard of either panel
  - The three Panels in Cambridge are perceived differently by those who know about Design review with the Cambridge Quality Panel (CQP) seen as the best managed, best quality and most capable Panel.
  - Three different panels operating in the same area with different processes can be confusing for applicants and others not directly involved in one or another panel.
  - Planning Committee Members vary in their knowledge of DR, with some suspicion and concern about DR role in the planning process.
- Relationship with Planning Process
  - There is inconsistency and a lack of clarity about the role of the Panels in terms of their relationship to the work of planning officers and Planning Committees.
  - There seems some confusion and inconsistency of approach over whether panels should 'green light' or 'sign off' schemes going to committee as opposed to providing advice to officers as part of the negotiation and assessment work.
  - There appears to be a lack of a positive connection between the panels/officers/councillors, of the three being part of the same team working to the same objectives.
  - Panel members and chairs do not seem to know a lot about how the shared planning service works while some officers and councillors do not seem aware of how the panels work.
- Governance and Transparency
  - Some of the governance and review arrangements are poor and out of date, for example the way panel membership is refreshed, or not, and how briefings are provided to panel members.



- There appears to be little and inconsistent managerial oversight or ownership of the panels from within the shared planning service.
  - The panels are not transparent, there is little public information about the process, no consistent Annual Reporting and little guidance or training for those involved.
- Skills and Attitudes
    - The panels themselves have varying levels and ranges of skills within them. We noted people calling for more landscape design and street design skills, but we did not audit panel members skills at this time.
    - There does not seem to be mechanisms in place to review the performance and usefulness of the panels or assess whether panel members should continue to take part.
    - There are no systems in place to openly advertise for and refresh panel membership in a consistent, fair and transparent fashion.
    - Panels did not appear diverse in terms of the 12 protected characteristics defined by the Equalities Act (2010).
    - Knowledge within the panels of the policies and design objectives for the area seemed patchy, no training on this had recently been given and panel members did not come together to share experiences and concerns at annual meetings or similar.
    - We saw that some were looking forward to improving the panels and felt this would be very useful, but others did not feel there was a need for change. A shared willingness to improve and accept change would seem important at this time.
- Adding Value
    - Panels can act as a useful local resource with members providing training for officers and councillors, advice on strategy or policy and supporting community conversations and workshops on design issues. Such opportunities do not appear to have been taken to date.
- The Review Process
    - Both Panels processes fail to meet current best practice in terms of how reviews are organised and run although the DEP is closer to this than the D&CP. In particular:
      - Criteria for deciding which schemes should be seen and when, are not clear and consistent and decisions seem too influenced by the need to fill a 6 week timetable.
      - This timetable may also be limiting the number of schemes seen and may mean schemes are not seen at the most appropriate point in their development.
      - There is a lack of consistency in how officers brief panels, who attends the reviews and how review comments are fed back and used by both officers and Committees.
      - Panel reports are produced in different ways between the panels.
      - Not all reviews involve a site visit to fully understand the context for proposals.
      - Not all reviews include briefings on background information and what officers would like the panel to advise before the review or constructive debriefs following the panel review.
      - Both panel reviews involve significant discussions without the applicant present.
      - The use of the 'traffic light' system by the D&CP does not appear to work well and does not allow for a rounded summary of advice.

## Opportunities

- We found significant skills and enthusiasm across the different groups involved. These could be cherished and made good use of to improve review delivery.
- There are clearly two very different areas within which developments are proposed – within and outside the City. The need for specialisms to deal with this was clear, although the need for different processes across both was less well formed.
- The shared service is undertaking policy, pre app process review and other work, while nationally changes to the planning system, including greater use of design codes, is being proposed. A refreshed design review service could support and work with such changes in the shared service area.
- We heard ideas around introducing a new design quality management system. If this is taken forward design review could play an important part in its work.
- Nationally, almost all design review services are now funded by review charges to applicants. We found no resistance, including from developers, to doing this in the shared service area, as long as the service charged for was good quality.
- There is some evidence that community members are interested in design review. This could help to link community engagement and review systems in some areas or support the creation of a community design review panel. However, the priority should be to get the expert design review panel in place first.

## 4 Recommendations

### A. Create a single Design Review service with specialist sub panels

The analysis of the existing panels demonstrates that despite the hard work and commitment of those involved they are not delivering the quality of Panel process needed by GCSPS. A change of approach is needed to deliver a consistent and highly respected Design Review process. This report provides advice on how a more streamlined and consistent approach to delivery would lead to it having a greater impact.

Whilst recognising that the areas covered by the two panels are very different it is also clear that running the Panel process is quite a generic activity and in itself does not have to differ due to the location within it operates. A new single Panel would ensure efficiency, clarity, and a strong message that the shared planning service has a consistent approach to the requirement for and delivery of design quality.

A single panel could be managed by a team rather than individuals, ensuring consistency and backup should any single panel manager be unavailable. If the team was also responsible for other design quality delivery work, this would help embed the panels across such activities.

Combining panel management activities may offer efficiency savings but we are not in a position to say as we do not have information on how the shared service is set up and run. Certainly ensuring a particular team, and manager, is clearly responsible for the delivery of the design review service, including deciding on which schemes are seen when, the role of case officers at the review and having oversight of how review comments and advice will be used, will help reduce inefficiencies caused by confusion and lack of clear responsibilities. Such clear management should also ensure better overall review service.

In terms of opportunities to use reviews to support other work, for example if design code evaluations are needed, a single management structure would make updating the way it works and taking such opportunities easier and simpler. The clarity and strength of a single large, very active panel could also make it more relevant and useful as a training and community engagement resource.

A single panel would require just one set of Terms of Reference (including issues like which schemes would be seen when, and panel refresh and training), one funding/charging mechanism and one panel of advisors. This would reduce the administrative burden as well as being a much clearer situation for applicants, communities and councillors.

A single panel could have multiple chairs and sub panels made up of specific sets of advisors for particular areas or types of scheme. There could be specific sub panels that focused on city centre historic areas, village residential extensions or country house proposals. In this way a new single Panel could have sub/specialist panels within it that respond to the different typologies and uses.

Panel membership could be flexibly shared across sub panels to ensure best fit of experience for particular proposals. For example, if it is hard to find enough people with street design experience and this specialism is most required when looking at village extensions, those with this skill would sit on that sub panel. If the issue is occasionally relevant for city centre schemes, a specialist street design panel member could be added to a city centre panel for those particular schemes.

Other areas use single panels and sub panels. For example, both Essex and Hertfordshire now have large single panels serving a variety of district councils. In both cases the service is managed by the County council, provided to district planning authorities by agreement. Both have large panel pools and can set up area or scheme type specific panels as required. But they both have single payment and terms of reference systems. They are slightly different to the option for Cambridge as they provide arms-length provision for planning authorities, but they show how a single larger panel can work (Essex is better established than Hertfordshire at the moment).

One Panel can achieve everything required and deliver a flexible responsive service. But all panels would work to the same delivery standards and use the same methods to ensure consistency, transparency and efficiency across panel work.

Although outside the remit of this report, there may come a time when the CQP would wish to join a combined single design review service. They are a large and very well respected part of the Cambridge Design Review story – and better connections between them and other panels work would be of benefit to all.

## **B. Refreshed and improved delivery systems**

Design Review is an exacting and demanding process that requires great attention to detail to ensure it is respected and utilised.

The Sub recommendations set out below describe all the ingredients needed for a new single panel. They are arranged under the UDL Criteria for a successful Panel.

- B1 A Design Review Service that is governed well
- B2 A Design Review service that is managed well
- B3 A Panel and Chair with skills to meet the needs of all schemes
- B4 A Scheme Selection Process providing clarity for all involved
- B5 A well-managed Scheme Review Process
- B6 Panel Outcomes that are useful to all involved
- B7 A Panel that Influences design quality and knowledge
- B8 A Panel that is trusted and respected by all involved

## **B1 Establish a new approach to Governance with an Independent Advisory Group**

To ensure that the **Design Review Service is governed well**, with independence and transparency, a new approach is needed for the Governance of the Panel.

Governance is the overarching management and scrutiny of the Panel. Design Review Principles and Practice (CABE, 2013) sets out why it is important.

*‘Establishing a governance structure, a design review panel must be seen to be independent from both the local planning authority and the developer, free to give impartial advice to all parties. Governance by an advisory board or steering group representing key stakeholders and acting solely in the public interest is one effective way of ensuring accountability’*

An Independent Advisory Group will provide an independent body to ensure accountability in the public interest. The Group will meet at least once a year and review the Annual Report and assess any issues. It is suggested that the Group consists of three/four people including the Chair(s) of the Panel and two external DR Panel experts, such as Chairs in other panels, or professionals involved in managing panels. The Group could also include senior officers and planning committee Chairs.

We suggest that you set up such a group to oversee any new service you wish to create, and that the group advise on many of the issues covered below.

## **B2 Write a Terms of Reference to set out the Governance and Management of the Panel**

Drafting and agreeing new Terms of Reference (ToR) will help ensure the refreshed service is robust, transparent and appropriate. It is also your opportunity to clearly set out how you want the service to work for the shared planning service and committees, stating this in one place.

We suggest that you use the creation of new ToR as an aid to pulling together stakeholders and discussing varying views and ideas. The ToR should be understood, owned and accepted by all involved. The ToR may cover:

- **Purpose**  
For example - to provide impartial advice to all involved in raising the standard of design, supporting good design and to be a critical friend.

- **The Approach**  
For example, explaining the use of a single Panel for GCSPS area with a single group of Panel members and sub panels within to respond to the different needs of City Centre and South Cambridgeshire.
- **Principles and Practice**  
This may include issues such as how the panel sessions will be formatted, when site visits will or will not be required, what is expected from applicants who are presenting schemes, your charging mechanisms and costs etc. You may also like to set out how information about the panel will be made public, for example on your website.
- **Governance**  
Explaining who is responsible for the panel at senior officer/councillor level and the role of your Independent Advisory Group.
- **Management**  
Setting out who will manage the day to day running of the panel, what they will do and what they will be responsible for. For example, the ToR might require the publication of a single design review service contact details, which may be a generic email address.
- **Panel Members and Chair Recruitment and skills**  
Explaining how you will advertise and select panel members and chairs, what is required of them and how you will support them. For example, through updates on local issues and policies Length of term, expected number of schemes each panel members will be invited to review etc may also be included in the ToR , or if not made clear in the Handbook Set out how you will refresh or expand panel membership and how and why you will end involvement from particular panel members if required.
- **Remit**  
Explaining which schemes will be seen when, by who, why and how. You may wish to set out a protocol covering how schemes will be seen by different panels – i.e. when the CQP or the new combined panel will see a scheme. Criteria on scheme types either within a protocol with another panel or relating to which schemes your panel will see when often include:
  - Scale – more likely in SC due to large sites.
  - Site – more likely in City Centre with sensitive sites in conservation areas and listed buildings.
  - Local Issue, Exceptional Challenge, Public benefit – can include policy documents and strategies.
- **Panel Review Types**  
Explaining the different types of review your panel/s may perform and when you would use these, for example: Full Panel Sessions, Workshops, Chair Reviews.
- **Meeting Advice Outcome**  
Setting out how the thoughts, comments and written report from reviews will be drafted, agreed, shared and used within your planning processes.
- **Conflicts of Interest**  
Explaining clearly your processes and responsibilities for managing conflicts of Interest.  
*(Definition: A conflict arises if there is any suggestion that a Panel Member, either as an individual or a member of a group or organisation, might have a financial, commercial or professional interest in a project, its client or its site).*

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Setting out your process for monitoring and evaluation. This may include individual feedback and an Annual Report.

### **B3 A Design Review service that is managed well**

For the DR process to function well and have credibility everyone involved should have a good understanding of how it works. Transparency is therefore key and there needs to be information on process publicly available to meet all needs. This should include the Terms of Reference, a Handbook for the management of the Panel and a Quick Guide for applicants.

A handbook can set out processes to be used by all involved in Reviews, including planning officers, the wider council and panel members.

A Quick Guide for Users of the service for applicants will help ensure they know how to get the best from the review, including how to send in pre review information, present and access the subsequent report.

Here are some suggestions as to what such documents might include:

#### **Handbook for Panel and Council**

- Introduction, Statement from Chair, Aspirations, Map
- Role and Remit, The Panel's Independence, Concept of Panel, 10 Principles of Design Review (CABE, 2013)
- Relationship with Planning Service, Pre application process, The Review, Using the Panels advice
- Being a panel member, The role, The type of panel we are running, How we manage Conflicts of Interest, The importance of Confidentiality, Do you need Professional Indemnity?, How we manage Fees and Expenses, What about Intellectual property, What to do if there is a problem
- How the panel process works, How the process is managed within the planning process – process maps, How each review is managed, from set up on the day to outcome
- Panel recruitment, term of service, how to apply
- Panel communications, How we will let you know what's going on, Newsletter, Annual meeting

#### **The Quick Guide for Applicants**

- Design Review - what is it?
- GCSPS Design Review Panel - why do we need it?
- The Panel - who are they?
- The Review Process - what applications does the Panel review?
- How to apply for a review
- The Review Session - how does it work?
- Confidentiality - what information is public?
- Conflicts of Interest - how are they managed?

A web page for the new service is a vital part of better communication about the Panel and its outcomes. The web page should include:

- Terms of Reference
- Quick Guide
- Information on Schemes after Planning decision, including advice letters
- Annual Report

One key issue to be clarified is the role of the panel/s in 'signing off' or green lighting schemes before they go to committee. Some seemed to see the panel/s as replacing the role of officers in assessing and evaluating schemes, while others felt the panel/s should be supporting and advising the officers. This needs clarifying within your planning service, but our recommendation is that panels should support and advise officers, not look to replace their or planning committee roles in any way. As such an officer might like to talk to the chair or request a second review of a scheme if they are not sure if it has adequately taken on board earlier panel session, but it is up to the officer and councillors to weigh up the merits of the scheme and come to a rounded judgement on it. Officers should be able to interpret panel advice to be able to consider compliance with it themselves in many cases and should not look to the panel to say yes or no to a scheme. For this reason we recommend you move away from the traffic light system as it looks to give one definitive answer on the acceptability of a scheme rather than rounded description of varying issues.

#### **B4 Establish a costed service**

A service that meets best practice will need sufficient resource. In order to achieve this, it is recommended that you charge fees for reviews. You may wish to include your fee structure in your ToR, it should be publicly visible and reasonable.

Fees vary from panel to panel across the country but tend to be between around £1,000 to £2,000 for a returning scheme or chairs review (shorter sessions with less people involved). A first review of a significant scheme might have a fee around the £4,000 mark.

It is suggested that you use the following type of calculation when deciding on your fee structure:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Staff costs}^1 + \text{panel member costs}^2 + \text{overheads}^3 &= \text{cost (per review)} \\ \text{Cost} + \text{uplift}^4 &= \text{price to charge (per review)} \end{aligned}$$

<sup>1</sup> You can calculate this from an estimate of staff time needed per review x the relevant hourly/daily rate for those staff

<sup>2</sup> Most panels use 4 panel members and a chair for most reviews. Panel members are generally paid around £200 to £300 per half day, £300 to £500 per full day each, and chairs closer to £500 to £700 but this depends a little on how much of the report you wish the chair to write. These fees are generally much lower than the commercial day rates for the panel members, they tend to see design review as a pro bono exercise.

<sup>3</sup> You should be able to estimate your overhead costs, both for your staff if you have not included this in their cost, and for the actual review venue, catering, facilities, travel costs etc.

<sup>4</sup> You may wish to charge more per review than it costs to run it. this uplift might be used to cover the cost of reviews or other panel support for community groups, to fund design training for councillors, officers or panel members or other relevant activities.

Your per review costs and charges may be affected by the number of reviews you carry out a year in so far as the overheads might be lower per review and your uplift might be spread across more charges. So you may wish to test out your fee structure using a few review number scenarios. We expect a combined panel would see around 45 schemes a year, but this will depend on how you set out which schemes are to be seen.

You may wish to charge different amounts for different types of reviews – if so you will need to factor this into your calculation – for example cost - 50% for a minor residential scheme but cost + 50% for a very large housing scheme etc.

It is recommended that the skills for the staff involved include an urban design officer, and an administrator.

## **B5 Set up a monitoring and evaluation process and produce a public Annual Report**

A consistent evaluation process will provide evidence of impact, helping justify your use of design review and charges. But it will also, very importantly, allow you to critique your processes and evaluate opportunities for improvement. A robust monitoring system also helps to ensure all involved know their performance is of interest and will be looked at.

Your monitoring system should fit in with your wider Key Performance Indicators or other evaluation processes. But you might find it useful to look at the monitoring templates on the Public Practice website which have been developed by other panel managers. Closer to home, the CQP has a process that could be adopted.

Here are a few key points to consider when setting up a system:

- Monitoring should look at both attitudes and experiences of those who have been involved in reviews and tracking the progress of at least a sample of schemes seen to see if the review impacted the design and decision.
- You will need good record keeping noting what versions of schemes were seen at reviews when to be able to tell if the schemes seen changed/improved and where granted or refused permission.
- Everyone involved in the process should be offered the opportunity to comment on their experience, annually or more frequently.
- It is useful to follow up on schemes seen to understand impact. This can be done using a reminder and questionnaire system set to trigger 6 or 12 months after every review.

The findings of the regular evaluation put into an Annual Report, a public document prepared by the panel manager and scrutinised by the Panel Advisory Group.

## **B6 A Panel and Chair with skills to meet the needs of all schemes**

Panel/s are only ever as good as their members and chairs. Therefore, recruiting and supporting these people will be an important element of future success.

The planning authority should openly recruit, using public advertisements and clear selection criteria. People should be appointed on their own merits, not as representatives of any organisation.



You should be clear about who will make decisions, for example the appointment of Panel members may need to be agreed by Advisory Group, Chief Planner, Chair Planning Committee etc.

You should give clear information you will require from applicants. Some panels interview prospective chairs but not panel members. Some use test reviews. It is also useful to think early about issues such as insurance. Some panels are limited in who they can appoint as they have overly onerous liability insurance requirements. These may be ok for architects working in private practice, but they might exclude people in public organisations or other jobs elsewhere. Panel members are giving advice, they are not designing projects and the insurance requirements should be proportionate.

In general, the skills needed for a good chair are not the same as a panel member. The chairs need to be able to summarise many points into a coherent conclusion. They also need to steer the discussion making sure all relevant issues are covered. Good chairs listen and ask pertinent questions of both applicants and panel members more than they put forward their own views on a scheme, although these of course will be influencing their questions and summaries.

Panel members need to be articulate and constructive. They need to be able to understand a scheme quickly and apply their experience to what they are seeing. They need to be collaborative and build on the thoughts of other panel members, but they need to know their own mind and be confident enough to say what they think. Although it is important to have varied background skills on a panel, panel members should not feel that they can only talk about their 'specialism' or that they have to say something about that issue at every review if it is not particularly relevant for the scheme. Good designers do not always make good panel members and vice versa.

A recruitment process needs to reach out to a diverse range of built environment professionals to ensure a Panel with appropriate skills. The process should also reach out to particular groups currently underrepresented, such as women and BAME.

There are no fixed rules as to how often you should renew your panel, but 3 or 5 years are often used. You may wish to refresh and change the panel bit by bit, so say a third of the panel every 2 years. This is more work for the administrators but ensures both consistency and freshness across the panel.

The professional range of skills your panel/s need to cover should include, but not be limited to: architecture, urban design, planning, landscape architecture, public realm, green infrastructure, sustainability, highway engineers and designers, transport planning, conservation, biodiversity, active travel, town centre management, water management etc. you may also want to ensure panel members have between them experience relevant to the type of schemes seen, such as large scale housing, education buildings, scientific research hubs, country houses etc.

We recommend a panel of about 40 people, with 2 to 3 chairs and 2 to 3 vice chairs. Larger than this and you may find you are using panel members very rarely, so they do not connect well to your work, smaller and you might find it hard to find people available for all reviews.

Some panels look for people who live or work in the area covered. Some do not. There is no fast rule here, but panel members should of course understand and value the area and be committed to delivery of good design within it.

### **B7 A scheme selection/referral process providing clarity for all involved**

A well-defined Scheme Selection process helps to ensure that the Panel reviews the most significant proposals in the area. The Panel Manager, Planning Committee Chairs, Lead Members and planning officers should be involved in these discussions to ensure that appropriate schemes are identified at an early stage in the design process. Within GCSPS there will be a wide range of schemes seen at Design Review. Within the City the main focus is education related schemes and those related to tourism. Within the SCDC area it is predominately large scale residential.

We have already mentioned that scheme selection, or remit, should be set out in the ToR. These are the type of issues you might wish to include:

- **The scale of development and land uses**

The criteria can set a lower limit on number of units, and/or size of site. You may wish to review commercial, industrial or educational buildings based on floor space but residential schemes based on number of units or site area.

You can specify your approach to infrastructure projects, Public realm schemes, Masterplans, policy development, design codes and any change or proposal that may not require express planning permission but which the council has responsibility or interest for. You may even wish to set out if you would like the panel to advise on schemes outside your area which you are consulted on.

Some local authorities use their design review panels to advise on their own housing and other development schemes. But if this is done then clear separation between panels used for this, and for planning functions, is needed.

- **The Site**

You can specify particularly sensitive areas or sites where you will always wish to review proposals. For example, sites which have a significant impact on their area such as heritage or views or areas with significant flooding issues.

You may wish to explain how reviews will work in different types of local plan designation areas.

- **Local Issue, specific impact, Exceptional Challenge, Public benefit**

You may feel that irrespective of the first two types of criteria you wish to ensure schemes where there is significant public debate or concern, or impact beyond the physical form of the scheme, for example to the standing or image of your area, are reviewed.

### **B8 A well-managed Scheme Review Process**

As mentioned regarding the ToR, we recommend that you propose, discuss and agree new review processes from scratch. There are some good practices within your current set up, but there are many inconsistencies and some ways of working are worrying.

Your new process may involve all aspects of review from preparation to the advice letter. Some aspects of the new process will differ from the existing. In particular;

- Site visits, including going onto sites and other private land to ensure full understanding of context are recommended for all schemes (only one visit needed for recurring schemes)
- the briefing of Panel members must be thorough and held before the review, with the case officer and other relevant officers present at the pre review briefing
- notice of any conflicts of interest and clear introductions of all present (including observers) should be carried out at the start of the session.
- the presentation materials required and how these will be shared should be well defined
- a site visit must always be held unless it is a returning scheme
- Panel members should have only a brief time for points of clarification and spend the majority of their time on comments
- The Panel should hold all their discussions with the applicant present, apart from the briefing
- De briefing with officers is best practice after a review. It helps the panel members and chair consolidate what they have learnt themselves from the session, and helps the officers clarify what has been said and how they may use the advice going forward. The debrief helps develop a partnership approach between panel and officers

The process will be set out in the ToR, Handbook and Quick Guide so it is transparent.

### **C. Integration of Design Review with wider Design Quality approach**

We learnt through interviews that the shared planning service may be looking to refresh its design quality management approaches generally. If this is the case, we recommend that design review is fully integrated into any new system within a Design Quality Charter or similar.

We found, through our research, that lack of integration and inconstant approaches could be hampering both design review practice its eventual impact on place quality. We set out below recommendations as to how better integration might be achieved.

#### **C1. Link to Pre App Processes and Planning Performance Agreements**

An effective local authority Panel will have a close working relationship between the panel process and the planning application process, A process agreed by the GCSPS and the Panel Manager should be set up to embed DR in the PPA process, and also in the Policy Development process.

Agreeing referral criteria and how reviews will be structured/who should attend/how outputs should be used will help. But in addition, we recommend that the use of reviews is specified in any PPA including their number, the stage in the process when they will be used and the fee.

To help you may wish to provide information on the role of DR on your website where you set out your Pre App process [here](#).

You may also like to consider setting up a checking process for new schemes at validation stage to identify if they should go to design review. More information on this approach can be found at Public Practice (<https://www.publicpractice.org.uk/resources/in-house-design-review-dashboard-template>).

You may feel that regular updates on Design reviews with planning officers, particularly if you have major scheme management meetings or similar would be helpful and show reviews as an integral part of the process.

Planning Officers attending DR can enhance their understanding of the process. For each scheme, the Case Officer should be there and in addition their Senior Manager, and anyone else relevant to the application. It will also be useful if officers from Senior Management downwards observe Panel sessions.

## **C2      Raise the profile of Design Review**

If people across the shared planning service and the separate councils are more aware of DR and its potential benefits for them, they may be more willing to integrate it into their work. As such you may wish to set up a programme of training/information and discussion events and encourage other Council services to use DR for example regeneration, housing, parks and recreation.

## **C3      Integrate more fully with Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Authority**

As is often the case with DR, there can be a disconnect between advice given by the panel and that provided by the highways authority. This can be particularly difficult where new roads are required as part of significant housing schemes, or where car and cycle parking and other facilities can be seen as at odds in urban areas.

We recommend that you work to agree a protocol with the Highways Authority that sets out how they will use and respond to design review advice, attend and interact with panel sessions and move to

## **C4      Consider creating a Community Design Review Panel**

A Community Review Panel operates alongside but separately to the DR Panel. It provides a consistent involvement for representatives of the community to have their say on planning applications and other proposals. They are selected by a recruitment process and given support and training on Design Review and design issues.

To facilitate communities involvement in a Design Review process GCSPS should consider a Community Review Panel.

## **C5      Develop a closer relationship with CQP**

The CQP is the most respected Panel in the Cambridge area and there is an opportunity to develop a closer relationship with the new Panel. This could start with CQP sharing their approach and experience with the new Panel. There could also be regular meetings (every 4 months) to keep in touch about the schemes and issues being reviewed. In the future it might be possible to consider a single Panel for the whole area.

The CQP uses the Cambridgeshire Quality Charters format for its reviews called the 4Cs (connectivity, character, climate, community) to ensure key issues are considered for all schemes. This might form the basis for a new structure of the shared planning service reviews.

The relationship with CQP should be set out in the Terms of Reference. The remit of schemes reviewed by the CQP is set out within its Terms of Reference and these should also be reflected in the Terms of reference of the new panel.

## **C6 Promote good design including but not limited to the use of Design Review**

Consider a package of actions including

- Regular meetings and communication with the established developer forum.
- Set up a planning officer group for those with an interest in design.
- Provide public feedback on the benefits of DR.
- Use the Panel Members to support design training within the Council.

## **5. Conclusion**

Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire areas are wonderful places with a wealth of environments, communities, and activities to be proud of. There is much energy and potential for development and a real enthusiasm to protect and enhance the areas as they change.

The coming together of the two local authority planning services has created challenges and opportunities. In relation to this report, it opened the door to a review of the two existing design review panels, with the opportunity of creating a better service in the future.

We have learnt much about the existing panels, and have found real enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism from officers, councillors and panel members which should be commended. But at the same time we have found some significant failings in the current set up, which have likely contributed to the existing panels not being consistently seen in an entirely favourable light by those who come into contact with them, and not having the impact they should.

Although we are not grading the existing panels against each other, it is fair to say that the C&DP has more problems than the DEP. This is probably because it was set up a very long time ago, when Design Review was a different thing, and does not benefit from 'ownership' within the council. As such it has not modernised and is not well linked to planning services.

The DEP is a newer panel and exhibits many good qualities. However, it also has weaknesses, including a lack of refresh and training of panel members.

This report summaries the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities we discovered across both panels. It sets out a number of specific recommendations for change and provided advice on how these could be taken forward.

But in summary, it is our view that the shared planning service would benefit from a full-scale reworking of the Design Review services, forming one new, openly appointed panel, strengthened review practices, both within the sessions themselves and in the wider management and use of panel advice. We also recommend tackling some of the external issues that may be preventing design review from being as useful as it should be, including linking it better into other planning processes and any future Design quality Management system and agreeing how Highway advice from the County Council will relate to panel advice.

We hope our assessment of the current situation and recommendations are of help and wish the shared planning service the best as they reform and improve their design review service.

## **GCSP Design Review Panel: Terms of Reference**

### **Contents**

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Purpose
- 3) Remit
- 4) Approach
- 5) Principles and Practice
- 6) Governance
- 7) Management and Roles
- 8) Panel Members and Chair
- 9) Remit
- 10) Types of Review
- 11) Meeting Advice Outcome
- 12) Conflicts of Interest
- 13) Monitoring and Evaluation
- 14) Transparency and Confidentiality

### **1. Introduction**

The terms of reference outline the purpose of the Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel (GCDRP) and explains how it is intended to work. The GCDRP replaces the Design and Conservation Panel and Design Enabling Panel and implements the recommendations of an independent review carried out in 2020-21.

### **2. Purpose of the Panel**

The Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel (GCDRP) supports Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS), for South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Cambridge City Council (CCC), in achieving excellent design in new development. It offers multi-disciplinary advice from leading built and natural

## Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference

environment professionals through a robust design review process consistent with the Cambridge Quality Charter for Growth.

The GCDRP is set up to raise the quality of development by identifying where designs can be improved to achieve the best possible outcomes. This is in line with the planning authority's aspirations and in accordance with the local plans for the two councils. It is a critical friend to all parties, offering impartial advice to developers, planning officers and planning committee. It helps inform the planning process and gives greater confidence to decision makers to support innovative, high quality design. The Panel operates in the public interest and always considers the best outcome for the whole community.

### 3. Remit of the Panel

GCSPS benefits from 2 design review panels: the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel and the Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel.

1. The [Cambridgeshire Quality Panel](#) is administered by Cambridgeshire County Council and it is governed by its own terms of reference. Within the Greater Cambridge area, it reviews strategic scale allocations within the adopted local plans infrastructure projects ; all new schools and extensions In Cambridge City, the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel reviews sites that are generally covered by the City Fringes Joint Development Control Committee. The Cambridgeshire Quality Panel may also review policies, guidance and documents that have a strategic and spatial implications at a sub-regional scale.
2. The **GCDRP** is set up to review major or significant planning and pre-planning applications for sites within the Greater Cambridge area, that fall outside of the remit of the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel. The GCDRP may also review any policies, guidance and documents that related to these sites. Occasionally, the GCDRP may also review projects from outside of the GCSPS area in agreement with the Local Planning Authority.



## Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference

### 4. Approach

The GCDRP will operate across Greater Cambridge. It will be managed by GCSPS and overseen by an Independent Advisory Group. The Panel will have two chairs, two vice-chairs and a pool of 20-30 panel members with diverse expertise. Where appropriate, sub-panels may be formed from the panel membership to respond to the different development pressures or type within Greater Cambridge areas.

The Panel will usually meet twice per month and review up to two schemes per meeting, although additional meetings and reviews may be organised when required. Meetings will normally be held in Council offices in either Cambridge or South Cambridgeshire unless they are required to be held remotely, for example due to social distancing restrictions being in place. Up-to-date information about the panel and its membership is to be published on the GCSP website.

### 5. Principles and Practice

Design review is an independent and impartial evaluation process that should meet high standards to be respected and effective. In undertaking its advisory role, the GCDRP will adhere to the following established best practice principles:

- The 10 principles of design review—independent, expert, multidisciplinary, accountable, transparent, proportionate, timely, advisory, objective, accessible, developed jointly by the RIBA, Landscape Institute, Design Council (formerly CABI) and RTPI developed.
- The integrity of the panel is essential to its success and for this reason, all panel members will abide by the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life—selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. Conflicts of interest procedures are set out in Section 12.
- Design review aims to provide a rounded assessment that considers the aesthetic, sustainability, and functionality of a project. For this reason, the GCDRP will assess schemes against the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth, within the context of the adopted planning policy framework.

## **Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference**

- The GCDRP will operate within the National Planning Policy Framework and policies within the Local Plan, taking into account the climate emergency that have been declared by both councils.
- The panel will be formed of professional experts from the field of the built and natural environment.
- The advice will be integrated into the pre-planning and planning application processes and considered as a material consideration in determining planning applications. The outcomes of panel meetings will be reported as part of the planning officers report.

### **6. Governance**

An Independent Advisory Group (IAG) will ensure the effectiveness and accountability of the panel in the public interest and, in consultation with the Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development, make recommendations to adjust working practices in accordance with these terms of reference.

The IAG will comprise; two independent built environment experts with significant experience, reputation and external to the panel (such as chairs or experts of other design review panels), the 2 panel chairs, senior council officers, the lead members and planning committee chairs of both councils (excluding the joint development control committee as these developments are reviewed by the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel).

The independent built environment experts will rotate annually as the chair of the IAG. They will be appointed initially for a 3-year term by The Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Members.

The IAG will meet once a year to review an Annual Report (see section 13), assess any issues, advise on improvements and the future direction of the panel. The Annual Report is a public document, comprising the feedback, finance and summary of the outcome of the panel's advice within the planning process and as development is built. The Annual report will be prepared by the IAG Chair and

## **Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference**

circulated to the group in advance of the meeting. The IAG meeting minutes will be taken by Panel Manager, checked with the IAG Chair and shared with the group and the panel membership.

A review of the Panel and its Terms of Reference should be conducted after a maximum period of 5 years.

### **7. Management and Roles**

The GCDRP is managed by the Council's Built and Natural Environment Team, with independent governance provided through the Independent Advisory Group.

**The Panel Manager** is responsible for the delivery of the panel process, including the selection of schemes and panel members for each review, the review agenda, collating the materials for review, arranging site visits, managing the review session and issuing the panel letter and collecting feedback from stakeholders using surveys and will be supported by an administrator. The Panel Manager will collate factual information to assist the IAG Chair in preparing the Annual Report, including stakeholder feedback, finance and summary of the outcome of the panel's advice within the planning process and built development.

**Planning Officers** must attend reviews to brief the panel on their planning application schemes. Planning officers will receive training on the design review panel to make sure they can participate fully in the process. Planning officers should attach the review letter in full to their planning officer/committee reports and provide a commentary where advice has not been followed and why. Planning officers are also expected to observe the panel from time to time as part of their continuing professional development because the discussion can be a helpful way to learn about design quality.

**Panel Members** are expected to commit to approximately 5-8 reviews per year. They should provide their availability in advance to the panel manager and must be able to attend, to contribute to reviews when selected. Panel members must also

## **Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference**

attend an induction and/or briefing session set up to update the panel on any issues, changes to its processes or policies, to ensure that they have the information they need to fully participate in the panel process. Panel members are responsible for reporting conflicts of interest as set out in Section 12.

**The Panel Chair** is responsible for chairing the review sessions and writing the review letter with the assistance of the Panel Manager. In exceptional circumstances, the Chairs/Vice Chairs may also be asked to attend Planning Committee at the request of the planning committee chair in agreement with senior officers of GCSPS.

**The Planning Committee** will receive an annual briefing to explain the role of the GCDRP and Members are encouraged to attend reviews as observers. The GCDRP letter will be included within the planning committee report. The GCDRP comments are a material consideration in determining planning applications and should be given appropriate weight by the Committee.

**The Developer** attends the review session and has an opportunity to present and answer questions raised by the panel.

**The Design Team** prepares the briefing and presentation material for a review session (set out in section 9) and attends the review session. They present their scheme to the panel and have an opportunity to answer questions raised by the panel.

**The Independent Advisory Board (IAB)** is responsible for overseeing the governance of the panel and meets once a year (See section 6).

**Observers:** Observers may attend review sessions, with the consent of the Chair and Panel Manager.

## **Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference**

### **8. Panel Members and Chair**

GCDRP is to be made up of 20-30 members, with a balance of skills that address the themes of Community, Character, Connectivity and Climate. The members will be diverse and nationally respected professionals from the fields of architecture, urban design, planning, landscape architecture, public realm, green infrastructure, sustainability, highway engineers, transport planning, conservation, biodiversity, active travel, town centre management and water management. There will be a mix of Panel members from the Cambridge region and beyond who understand the region, its context and are committed to delivering the high aspirations stated in the Cambridge Charter for Growth. The roles and responsibilities of panel members are set out in section 7.

Chairs and Panel members will be appointed via an open recruitment process, that encourages applications from people with protected characteristics. Panel members will be selected on their own merits using a clear and published set of criteria. Panel members and Chairs will be asked to submit a CV and covering letter stating how they meet the listed criteria. Chairs will be interviewed for the role by a panel that will include senior officers and the lead members from both authorities. The Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Members, has final sign off on the appointment of Chair and Panel Members.

The Panel Members and Chairs will be appointed for a period of 3 years and refreshed thereafter following a review of attendance and performance in consultation with the IAG. If necessary, additional members may be recruited by the council following the process set out above, to fill any gaps in expertise. The performance of Panel Members and Chairs will be reviewed by the IAG at the annual meeting. Panel members and Chairs will be paid for their attendance. In addition, expenses will be paid to cover travel. The Chair will also be paid for half a day when they attend Planning committee.

### **9. Referral Criteria**

The GCDRP will review schemes that meet the following 3 criteria:

## Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference

1) The **scale, size and use** of development, including:

- larger scale buildings and groups of buildings generally over 1000m<sup>2</sup> (gross) or where there is a site area of more than 0.5 hectares
- large public realm schemes
- housing schemes generally over 10 or more dwellings or a site area of more than 0.5 hectares

2) The **site** is particularly sensitive, irrespective of their scale, size and use. For example:

- developments affecting significant views and heritage assets or have a major impact on their surroundings

3) The proposals are **significant** because of a **local issue, specific impact exceptional challenge, or public benefit**, including:

- design policies and guidance including, frameworks, masterplans, design codes and development briefs
- design for climate adaptation and mitigation
- schemes involving major public investment or council-led regeneration
- proposals that are unique and likely to set a precedent

The panel manager, in consultation with planning officers, will confirm when a project is suitable for review.

Schemes benefit from being brought for review early in the pre-application process as designs have not been fixed, enabling the panel to be most effective in influencing the design and suggesting improvements. Schemes are encouraged to be brought to design review at least twice.

Design Reviews should be specified in any Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) entered with the planning authority as part of the planning process. The PPA should include the expected number of reviews and the stage in the process when the scheme will be reviewed. The fee for design review is separate to the PPA.

## **Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference**

### **10. Panel Review Types**

The GCDRP offers 3 types of review: A full design review with a site visit, a subsequent design review without a site visit and a desktop chairs review. Where possible the same Panel Members will be used for subsequent reviews. Site visits will be grouped together and undertaken at the beginning of the meeting.

Fees and review types will be monitored as a standing item at the annual IAG meeting and adjusted accordingly to ensure the GCDRP remains financially viable. In exceptional circumstances the fees outlined below may be reduced to support community organisations and charities, in accessing the panel. For schemes which are particularly complex and/or required a bespoke review format (such as specialist sub panel) the fees outlined below may be increased to cover any additional costs to GCSP. Reviews for projects outside of the GCSP area may also incur an additional fee and this will be agreed with the panel manager.

#### **Full Design Review**

A full design review is for a first review of the scheme, ideally at pre-application stage. It includes a site visit and a review by the Chair and 3-4 Panel Members. It will be attended by the planning officer and other key stakeholders such as officers from the County Council and Historic England.

**Fee:** £4000 + VAT

#### **Typical Agenda** (approx. 3 hours in total):

- Site visit, 60 minutes (Panel Manager, Planning Officer, Panel Members and the architect and developer from the design team)
- Panel briefing by Planning Officer, 15 minutes (panel and officers only)
- Chair introductions and notice of any conflict of interest, 5 minutes
- Project team presentation, 30 minutes
- Panel questions and clarifications, 10 minutes
- Panel discussion following the structure of the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter with a summary from the chair, 60 minutes

## Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference

### Subsequent Design Review

A design workshop is used for second and subsequent reviews, or less complex schemes that do not need a site visit. The format may also be useful for reviewing internal council policies and design guidance. A design workshop usually takes 2. hours per review.

**Fee:** £3500 + VAT

**Typical Agenda** (approx. 2 hours in total):

- Panel briefing by Planning Officer, 15 minutes (panel and officers only)
- Chair introductions, 5 minutes
- Project team presentation, 30 minutes
- Panel questions and clarifications, 10 minutes
- Panel discussion following the structure of the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter with a summary from the chair, 60 minutes

### Chair's Review

The Chair's review will be used for a limited number of schemes with the agreement of Senior Officers within GCSPS. It provides a desktop review and advice on schemes that have already been to a Full Review and Subsequent Review at pre-application stage. In exceptional cases it may also be used for smaller, less complex schemes. The review will usually 1 hour and be conducted by the Chair plus 1 Panel Member. The design team is not present, only the planning officer presents.

**Fee:** £2000 + VAT

### Meeting Advice Outcome

The review letter must be written in a clear and accessible language and reflect the main points made by the panel at the meeting. It will be structured under the headings of the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter's and should include the four 'C's':

- **Community:** Building a sense of community by providing a greater choice of housing along with community facilities which assist active participation of



## Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference

people in their neighbourhoods (including encouraging developers to set up proper systems of governance for their developments early in the process).

- **Connectivity:** Locating new developments where they can benefit from high connectivity to jobs and services and provision of sustainable infrastructure to match the pace of the development.
- **Climate:** Tackling climate change through good design, site layout and imaginative landscaping, including innovative approaches to energy, transport, waste and water (water treated as a friend not an enemy).
- **Character:** Creating places of character with distinctive neighbourhoods and public realm that encouraged people to walk and cycle

The Panel Chair will write the review letter and send it to the panel manager within 7 days of the review. The Panel Manager will check the letter for factual accuracy, ask the chair for clarifications if required, and issues the final review letter to the design team, planning officer and other stakeholders (who attended the meeting) within 10 working days of the review.

Planning officers should share review letters with all relevant officers and stakeholders (subject to confidentiality issues) involved in assessing a scheme at pre-application and application stages. The design team should refer to the review letter within the Design and Access Statement of the planning application, which should set out how the panels comments have been addressed through the design process. Once an application has been submitted to GCSP and made public, the review letter will also be made available on the GCDRP webpage.

Planning officers should attach the review letter in full to the planning officer/committee reports and articulate where the scheme has and has not considered the panels comments and why. In exceptional cases, the Chair may be asked to attend Planning Committee meetings when requested by the planning committee chair in agreement with the Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Members. The role of the GCDRP is advisory but the comments are a material consideration as set out in the NPPF.

## **Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference**

### **11. Conflicts of Interest**

A conflict arises if there is any suggestion that a Panel Member, either as an individual or a member of a group or organisation, might have a financial, commercial or professional interest in a project, its client or its site.

Panel Members must check panel meeting agendas and report any conflicts or perceived conflicts of interest to the Panel Manager as soon as they become aware. The Panel manager will then decide if it is a conflict. The Panel Member will not attend a review if the Panel Manager confirms there is a conflict, and the conflict will be recorded for future reference. If uncertain, the Panel Manager can discuss the conflict with the Panel Chair to reach an agreement. If any potential conflict is revealed during the meeting, the Panel Member must immediately report it to the Chair or Panel Manager. In some circumstances an association may not be considered a conflict but in the interests of transparency the relationship will be recorded by the Panel Manager and mentioned by the Chair at the beginning of the review. This will also be noted in the advice letter. If an observer is invited to the meeting they will be asked to check for conflicts of interest before the review and must not attend if the Panel Manager confirms there is a conflict.

### **12. Monitoring and Evaluation**

To understand the impact of the review process, the Panel Manager should record the panel's activity and follow up on the evolution and planning outcome of projects once they have passed the review stage. The Panel Manager will also use a survey to collect feedback from stakeholders (Agents and Design Team, Panel Members, Councillors, Officers) following each review and report on its findings annually. The IAG Chair will prepare an Annual Report, collating the panel's activities, planning impact, and analysis of the feedback received. The Annual Report to be presented and reviewed by the IAG which will inform how the panel evolves and address any issues raised. It will also be used to highlight the benefits of the panel to the wider community. A site visit of completed projects reviewed by the GCDRP may also inform the annual review.

## **Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference**

### **13. Transparency and Confidentiality**

The GCDRP is open and transparent regarding its processes and explains how it operates in the public interest. Information about the panel and its membership is to be published on the GCSP website, including:

- Terms of Reference
- Quick Guide for applicants
- Handbook setting out the processes for all involved
- Information about the panel chairs and members
- Information about the Independent Advisory Group members
- Annual Report and minutes of the annual meeting with information on the impact of the panel and feedback received by stakeholders
- The review letters and planning outcome of schemes reviewed will be published once a planning application has been made public (see below)

There will be circumstances where a pre-application review concerns commercially sensitive information and the developer/design team may request that the review letter is kept confidential. When the Panel Manager and Chair support the request the letter only goes to the applicants team and the planning officer and is not made publicly available. For reviews at application stage the review letter is published as part of the planners report and will be made available on the GCSP website.

Panel Members and observers will be provided with confidential information as part of their role in pre-application discussions. They shall not disclose or use that information for their own benefit, nor disclose it to any third party. Any press and media queries should be redirected to GCSP officers.

### **Freedom of information and Data Protection**

As a public authority, the GCSPS is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act). All requests for information about the GCSPS will be handled according to the provisions of the Act. Legal advice may be required on a case by case basis to establish whether any exemptions apply under the Act.

## **Appendix B Greater Cambridge Design review Panel Terms of Reference**

To facilitate the operation of the GCDRP the Council needs to collect, store and process the personal information (data) of Panel Members, including contact information and certain professional details. This data will be stored in a central database of the GCSPS network, where it is only accessible from relevant GCSPS accounts. The data will be used to contact members of the Panel to inform them of the dates and locations of the GCDRP sessions and make other communications relating to the running of the GCSPS. The Council expects Panel Members receiving this data to take reasonable steps to ensure its security. This data will be held for as long as the Panel Members remains on the GCDRP; after they have left, the information will be held for one year to allow for any post-membership communication that is required, before being securely disposed of in line with the GCSPS's retention and disposal schedule.

## **Review of the Design Enabling Panel (SCDC) and Design and Conservation Panel (CCC): Summary of Engagement Feedback**

### **Summary of suggested improvements to the GCSP design review service**

The following suggestions were made during semi-structured interviews conducted by Urban Design Learning. Interviews were carried out with the chairs of the DCP, DEP and CQP, members of the senior management team (Joint Director of Planning, Assistant Directors and BNE Manager), the two panel managers/administrators, the SCDC Lead member for Planning and the CCC Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, the chairs of the planning committee of both councils, and two planning agents.

- Change name from the Design Enabling Panel to Design ‘Encouraging’ Panel. Interviewee did not feel the Panel should be enabling all the schemes they see.
- The Council should brief the Panel on policies, and what they want to achieve, so that Panel recommendations are directly linked to this.
- Increase community involvement. However, interviewees were not sure the community knows about the Panel.
- Increase use of masterplans, design codes and statements to explain what is ‘good’ for a place and help decision makers make the right decision.
- Evaluation of panel impact would be useful, especially if going to ask developers to pay.
- New local plan policies could be an opportunity to include a charter on design quality process and aims to help with embedding and improving responsibility for design quality in planning officers’ minds.
- There is concern over managing change in both panels, how those involved at present will respond.
- Earlier engagement by Panels would help steer the scheme in the right direction and would be less time consuming and costly.

## **Appendix C** Review of the Design Enabling Panel (SCDC) and Design and Conservation Panel (CCC): Summary of Engagement Feedback

- There are concerns across both panels that officers are not wedded to design quality requirements. Part of the challenge of bringing two planning services together—officers should own the issue, which may need cultural change and embedding ownership of panel/s with officers.
- Interviewees want officers, councillors, panel, local plan policies all working together using similar questions so consistency and constructive build-up of information across all planning processes that can be consistently explained in officer reports.
- Important the panel/s know the questions the local authority is asking them to advise on. They should approach critical issue of design through broadly the same lens as the officers and councillors.
- Cost is not an issue for applicants - although a sliding fee scale - determined by the scale of the development would be welcomed. Would be happy to pay more for a better service where the applicant had more time to explain the scheme / longer pre submission and an understanding of key discussion topics in advance. No concern that the chair and panellists are remunerated if the service is provided is high quality.
- Some feel running two panels side by side is nonsensical. A single panel with a clear remit and scheme selection criteria is preferable. It would be more independent and provide a wider range of expert opinions.
- Some feel sharing back office functions and potentially larger single panel pool is okay – there are common themes - but need to ensure capacity and skills of the Panels are not damaged.
- With regard to community connections to the Panels, there were questions about who might be involved- parish council? neighbourhood groups? Do they properly represent people's views? They may not be interested in commenting on schemes outside of their area. A separate community panel may be better? This is something the council will have to grapple with in light of the current White Paper's desire to involve community in planning.
- In the future it would be good to see public realm and highway schemes (that do not require planning permission) at design review which have a major impact on quality of place

## **Appendix C** Review of the Design Enabling Panel (SCDC) and Design and Conservation Panel (CCC): Summary of Engagement Feedback

- New ToR should be shared across Panels. This could include the role of Panel/s on coding and placemaking through proactive planning. Reference was made to Haringey and Essex approaches. Haringey uses a quality charter that looks at design process, context, understanding site, how scheme contributes positively to area – (or similar questions), panel/s work as part of this charter - asked to respond to issues it sets out in a consistent way – not just ‘tell us what you think about this scheme’. In Essex the panels link to the clear and consistent design guide, the issues outlined in policy and guidance helped inform the skills needed on the panel.
- The CQP 4 C’s are a useful device to structure a presentation and review and worth considering this for new ToR.
- ToR should help reach agreement over issues to cover at review in advance that reflect officer concerns.
- There were suggestions that in the future a single DRP--modelled on the DEP – would be best. This would provide consistency and reflect the shared planning service and joint working on the emerging local plan.
- Interviewees wanted to dispel the myth that design review can fix all problems. A more constructive relationship between panel/s and officers where latter step forward to panel, not back form it would help find collaborative solutions to problems.
- Some interviewees would like better monitoring of impact – understand what gets built at end of process and understanding whether this is better because of the review.
- There was some concern over having one panel. But recognition that a big pool of panel members might work – but would have to be able to focus onto very different places and schemes.
- Panel/s need good support. There was recognition that good Panel management and administration needs significant amounts of knowledge and skills.
- Future DR set up needs to be flexible enough to deal with changes to the planning system – e.g. codes and proactive planning
- System of evaluation and monitoring would be useful. QP has annual meetings to go over key themes from reviews, identify problems etc

## **Appendix C** Review of the Design Enabling Panel (SCDC) and Design and Conservation Panel (CCC): Summary of Engagement Feedback

### **Feedback from Parish Councils and Residents associations on Design Review services across GCSP**

A total of 75 Parish Councils and Residents Associations provided survey responses:

- 66.7% of respondents had not heard of the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel, Design Enabling Panel or Design and Conservation Panel.
- 58.3% of those who had heard of one of three panels had also read a panel report.
- 57.1% answered 'neutral', 35.7% agreed, and 7.1% strongly agreed to the question 'do you find the panel's comments helpful?'
- 89.3% of people agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to know more about design review in their area
- 39.8% agreed or strongly agreed, 49.3% were neutral and 10.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed that design review improves design in their area
- 91.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would like more information about design review to be available to the community.



## Milestones for setting up the Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel

The table below sets out the main stages and deadlines for implementing the new Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel. The Design and Conservation Panel (CCC) and Design and Enabling Panel (SCDC) will continue to provide design review services until the launch of the new Panel.

<b>Task no.</b>	<b>Actions for implementing the new GCDRP</b>	<b>Completion date</b>
1	Prepared quick guide, project information form, planner process note, admin process note, application form and feedback survey	End Aug 2021
2	Prepare comms and marking criteria for recruitment of panel members and advisory board members	End Aug2021
3	Launch webpage for new panel including all documents from task 1	End Sept 2021
4	Recruit Panel Advisory Board Members and Panel Members	End Sept 2021
5	Set up payments to panel members with input from finance	End Oct 2021
7	Deliver training on new panel to officers, councillors and panel members	End Nov 2021
8	Comms – outreach to Residents Associations, Parish Councils and Agents Forum (may include film) and publicise new panel on social media	End Dec 2021
9	Launch panel	Jan 2022

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# Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA): Changes to the Greater Cambridge Design Review Service

## Introduction – Please read


The Public Sector Equality Duty, introduced under the Equality Act 2010, requires all public bodies, including local authorities, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) allow the Council to:

- Show that we are meeting this legal duty by demonstrating due regard for the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Identify possible negative impacts on individuals and groups with protected characteristics, plan mitigating action and seek to maximise opportunities to advance equality within our activities.

EqIAs provide a methodical approach to the assessment of impacts across the [nine protected characteristics](#) and should be completed during the development and review of all Council policies, strategies, procedures, projects or functions. Where there is any doubt, the completion of an EqIA is always recommended.

Throughout the course of this form, please hover over the [] symbol for guidance in relation to specific questions. When the form is completed, please send an electronic copy to [equality.schemes@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:equality.schemes@scambs.gov.uk). If you require any additional support completing the form, please email the above address.

## Equality Impact Assessment Complete Form

### Section 1: Identifying Details

- 1.1** Officer completing EqIA:  
Joanne Preston
- 1.2** Team and Service:  
Built and Natural Environment Team, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service.
- 1.3** Title of proposal:  
Changes to the Design Review Service in Greater Cambridge
- 1.4** EqIA completion date:  
June 2021
- 1.5** Proposal implementation date:  
Launch of the new Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel currently anticipated January 2022.
- 1.6** Who will be responsible for implementing this proposal:  
Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service

### Section 2: Proposal to be Assessed

- 2.1** Type of proposal:  
Service
- 2.2** Is the proposal: Change to Established  
The proposed Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel (GCDRP) is a new design review panel that will replace two existing panels administered by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (The Design Enabling Panel for the South Cambridgeshire District Council area and the Design and Conservation Panel for the Cambridge City Council area). The terms of

reference for the new panel aims to achieve a consistent approach to design review within GCSP and align the design review service with the latest best practice guidance.

- 2.3** State the date of any previous equality impact assessment completed in relation to this proposal (if applicable):

N/A

- 2.4** What are the headline aims of the proposal and the objectives that will help to accomplish these aims? (Approximately 250 words)

Design Review advice is an important and valued, if discretionary, service and it is recognised as such in the National Planning Policy Framework. It offers an independent and impartial evaluation of the design of significant proposals, at the pre-application and application stages, by a panel of built environment experts. The advice of the panel is advisory, with the aim of identifying where improvements can be made, to influence the planning process and improve the quality of buildings and places for the benefit of the public.

Design review in Cambridge City Council (CCC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) is currently provided by two panels with different processes and different charges. GCSP committed to reviewing its design review service in its 2020/2021 Business Plan and in 2021 appointed an independent expert to review the two panels.

The Terms of Reference for the new Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel are informed by the recommendations of the 2021 review. The proposal aims to replace the two separate design review panels with a new single panel, operating in a consistent manner across the CCC and SCDC areas, and with a common charging regime.

This will be achieved by meeting the following objectives:

- Establish a pay to use service that recovers its costs and remunerates panel members

- Establish a new governance arrangement with an Independent Advisory Group.
- Recruit a diverse panel of 20-30 members built and natural environment experts. Applications for panel members will be scored according to a published marking criteria and chairs and vice chairs will be interviewed for the role. Recruitment will encourage applications from people with protected characteristics.
- A new clear scheme referral criterion based on a proposals' scale, site or significance
- Align the panels feedback with the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth's 4 C's 'Character, Climate, Context and Connectivity'.
- Improve communication, through a dedicated web page with Terms of Reference, a Handbook for the management of the Panel, a Quick Guide for applicants and an annual report.
- Establish ongoing monitoring with questionnaires after every review and an Annual Report, scrutinised by the Independent Advisory Group.

**2.5** Which of South Cambridgeshire District Council's business plan priorities does this proposal link to?

- Helping Businesses to grow - ✓
- Building homes that are truly affordable to live in -
- Being green to our core -
- A modern and caring council - ✓

**2.6** Which of South Cambridgeshire District Council's equality objectives (as detailed in SCDC's Equality Scheme) does this proposal link to or help to achieve?

- Identify, prioritise and deliver actions that will narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community- ✓
- SCDC is an employer that values difference and recognises the strength that a diverse workforce brings - ✓
- Protected characteristic groups have a voice and are represented in forming the future shape of the district - ✓

**2.7** Which of Cambridge City Council's equality objectives (as detailed in CCC's Equality Scheme) does this proposal link to or help to achieve?

- To further increase our understanding of the needs of Cambridge's growing and increasingly diverse communities so that we can target our services effectively - ✓
- To continue to work to improve access to and take-up of Council services from all residents and communities - ✓
- To work towards a situation where all residents have equal access to public activities and spaces in Cambridge and are able to participate fully in the community - ✓

**2.8** Which groups or individuals will the proposal affect:

- |                           |                 |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| • Service Users ✓         | • Councillors ✓ |
| • External Stakeholders ✓ | • Other ✓       |
| • Employees ✓             |                 |

If other, please specify – all residents and visitors to the Greater Cambridge area.

**2.9** How will these groups or individuals be affected?

The terms of reference for the new GCDRP has been prepared to provide a consistent, efficient and effective design review service. The advice of the independent panel aims to improve the design of new development across the Greater Cambridge area. As the design review advice will apply to new development across the Greater Cambridge area. There is potential for it to affect a large and wide-ranging proportion of existing and future communities by improving the design quality of new buildings and public spaces.

The design review panel provides an independent review of schemes at pre-application and application stages. The panel provides advice on how the design of the proposal can be improved. The advice is for applicants and their design teams, councillors, officers and the public. The advice from the review is published as letter which is attached to committee and delegated reports. This gives confidence to decision makers to support well designed schemes and resist poorly designed schemes. In this regard, the Design Review Panel

will specifically affect applicants, councillors, officers and the public by providing additional guidance about the quality of planning applications.

The purpose of the panel is to provide an expert and independent peer review process that is distinct from the community engagement which takes place during the pre-application stages. GCSP have established mechanisms in place to ensure that the community are engaged during the pre-application design stages and GCSP's expectations for this are set out within the GCSP Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

Design review does not replace the on-going dialogue that it is possible to have with design officers through pre-application meetings or the advice provided by the Inclusive Design Panel. Design review, inclusive design advice and pre-application advice from officers are most effective when working together and in parallel with community engagement.

**2.11** How many people will this proposal affect?

The Greater Cambridge Design review Panel has the potential to affect all existing and future residents, workers, and visitors to the Greater Cambridge area.

**2.12** If any part of the proposal is being undertaken by external partners, please specify how SCDC will ensure that they will meet equality standards?

The Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel will be managed and administered by the GCSP. The proposal involves recruiting a diverse pool of 20-30 independent built environment experts as panel members, plus 2 chairs and 2 vice chairs. Panel members and chairs will be paid for attending the panel meetings. The pool of panel members will be refreshed after 3 years.

The panel recruitment process addresses tackling inequalities in employment and equal opportunities for our communities. It will encourage applications from people with protected characteristics. Applications for panel members will be scored and appointed according to a published marking criteria and chairs and vice chairs will be interviewed for the role.

An Independent Advisory Group (IAG) will ensure the effectiveness and accountability of the panel in the public interest and, in consultation with the



Joint Director of Planning & Economic Development, make recommendations to adjust working practices in accordance with these terms of reference.

The IAG will comprise; two independent built environment experts with significant experience, reputation and external to the panel (such as chairs or experts of other design review panels), the 2 panel chairs, senior council officers, the lead members and planning committee chairs of both councils (excluding the joint development control committee as these developments are reviewed by the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel).

The IAG will meet once a year to review an Annual Report, assess any issues, advise on improvements and the future direction of the panel. The Annual Report is a public document, comprising the feedback, finance and summary of the outcome of the panel's advice within the planning process and as development is built.

Data about the make-up of the panel and IAG will be monitored and analysed as part of the Annual Report so that recruitment of new members can be targeted to ensure people with different protected characteristics are represented.

## Section 3: Evidence and Data

- 3.1** Describe any research (this could include consultation) and analysis you have undertaken to understand how [protected characteristic groups](#) are likely to be affected? Please list any key sources that you used to obtain this Information. [📖](#)

The South Cambridgeshire District Council [Equality Scheme](#) (2020-2024) describes the district as a rural area with a population which is expected to grow at faster than the national average. A growing elderly population, greater mobility, immigration, and other social trends are making changes to the population. These changes will accelerate as a result of the population growth facing the district in the future, leading to a more diverse society than previously.

The Cambridge City Council [Equality Scheme \(2018 – 2021\)](#) sets out the Council's proposed objectives related to equality and diversity work over the three year period and includes useful data regarding the nine protected

characteristics collated from a range of Council services and functions. It describes the city as an urban area which is experiencing growth. The following is a snapshot of the residents of Cambridge:

There is little evidence to suggest that the GCDRP will have specific impacts upon protected characteristic groups. However, the GCDRP will have wide-reaching impacts on communities across Greater Cambridge by improving the design of buildings and public spaces for local communities.

- 3.2** Describe any research (this could include consultation) and analysis you have undertaken to understand any effects on any other groups of people not mentioned in the nine [protected characteristic groups](#) (for example people who live in rural areas, who live in areas of high growth, or from low-income backgrounds). [📖](#)

Design review is a discretionary service provided by GCSPS and changes to the service do not require statutory consultation to be carried out. However, targeted consultation and engagement exercises with key stakeholders were undertaken as part of the review and recommendations for improvements to the service.

The consultant who carried out the review conducted semi-structured interviews with the chairs of the existing Design Review Panels, members of the senior management team (Joint Director of Planning, Assistant Directors and BNE Manager), the two panel managers/administrators, the SCDC Lead member for Planning and the CCC Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, the chairs of the planning committee of both councils, and two planning agents to understand the stakeholders' experience of the existing panels and their requirements for design review.

The consultant conducted surveys with stakeholders including existing panel members, those who have brought schemes to the panels in the last 12 months; planning officers; planning committee members; members of residents' associations and parish councils.

The consultant conducted interviews with the panel managers of other design review panels that operate across multiple local authority boundaries to understand what has worked well elsewhere.

The main finding from the consultation was that many Parish Councils and Residents Associations were unaware of the GCSP design review service. These groups would benefit from improved access to communications about the role and impact of the service.

- 3.3** If you have not undertaken any consultation, please detail why not, or when consultation is planned to take place. [!\[\]\(746d018fdf6ab02bf5fb7681133e8b29\_img.jpg\)](#)

N/A

## Section 4: Impact of proposal on those with protected characteristics


### 4.1 Age:

#### 4.1.1 Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

The advice provided by the panel will apply to new development and has the potential to improve the design of new public spaces and buildings within Greater Cambridge. This includes improvements to connectivity and access to natural green spaces and areas of play. Improved access may be beneficial to specific age groups. For example, the provision of well-designed play spaces within a new residential development may be of particular benefit to younger residents. Well-designed streets and spaces that promote walking and cycling over car use may be of particular benefit to residents of age groups who are less likely to drive. i.e., younger or older age groups. The provision of natural green spaces within a new business park may be particularly beneficial to people of working age as it may be possible to access these during the working day.

Evidence suggests that a relatively high proportion of people within older age groups may not have access to the internet and therefore they are less able to access information about the design review panel on the GCSP website. A contact telephone number for the relevant officer within the Built and Natural Environment Team is provided on all briefing materials, so that viewing arrangements can be made.

#### 4.1.2 Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Impact – Neutral

**4.1.3** Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
Ensure hard copies of all public information about the panel are available for viewing. Include contact details for responsible officer on all public information	Built and Natural Environment Team	Ongoing from July 2021, if GCDRP is approved at committee	The project sponsor (Trovine Monteiro) will check all public information before publishing


## 4.2 Disability:

**4.2.1** Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

Whilst no specific impacts on this protected characteristic have been identified, the advice of the GCDRP has the potential to improve access for less mobile individuals and groups to public spaces and buildings within or around new developments in Greater Cambridge. GCSP have an Inclusive Design Panel and the GCDRP will work alongside this existing service with the aim of improving the accessibility of proposals in the Greater Cambridge Area.

The Planning Service has been mindful of this protected characteristic by ensuring all published documents relating to the panel are made available in an accessible format. Braille and large print versions of the documents will be made available on request.

**4.2.2** Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Impact – Neutral

**4.2.3** Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?
Ensure copies of all public information about the panel are made available in an accessible format.	Built and Natural Environment Team	Ongoing from July 2021, if GCDRP is approved at committee.	The project sponsor (Trovine Monteiro) will check all public information before publishing

### 4.3 Gender Reassignment:

**4.3.1** Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

**NO.**

**4.3.2** Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. [📖](#)
- approximately 250 words per impact

Impact – Neutral

**4.3.3** Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?

#### 4.4 [Marriage and Civil Partnership:](#)

**4.4.1** Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

**NO.**

**4.4.2** Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. [📖](#)
- approximately 250 words per impact

Impact – Neutral

**4.4.3** Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:


Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?

## 4.5 Pregnancy and Maternity:

**4.5.1** Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

**NO**

**4.5.2** Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Impact – Neutral

**4.5.3** Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:


Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?



#### 4.6 Race:

**4.6.1** Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

**4.6.2** Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Impact – Neutral

**4.6.3** Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:


Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?

#### 4.7 Religion or Belief:

**4.7.1** Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

**NO**

**4.7.2** Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Impact – Neutral

**4.7.3** Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:


Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?

#### 4.8 Sex:

**4.8.1** Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

**NO.**

**4.8.2** Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Impact – Neutral

**4.8.3** Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?


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#### 4.9 Sexual Orientation:

**4.9.1** Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

**NO.**

**4.9.2** Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Impact – Neutral

**4.9.3** Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?

#### 4.10 Other: (e.g., rurality, growth, socio-economic status etc.)


**4.10.1** Has your research identified that the proposal will have an impact on this protected characteristic?

People from lower income groups may not have access to the internet and therefore they are less able to access information about the design review panel on the GCSP website. A contact telephone number for the relevant officer within the Built and Natural Environment Team is to be provided on all briefing materials, so that viewing arrangements can be made.

The GCDRP will charge the applicants to use the service. This may reduce access to advice for small businesses and community organisations. The proposals seek to address the service's need to manage the cost of its discretionary services and aim to increase a greater proportion of that cost through charges. For design review advice, (where the service provided can lead to significant financial benefits accruing to property/land owners and developers) the charging schedule reflects a need to support community organisations and small businesses, whilst reducing the subsidy provided by both Councils for this service for more substantial development projects – and help respond to the growing pressure on costs and income facing both Council Planning Services.

Fees and review types will be monitored as a standing item at the annual IAG meeting and adjusted accordingly to ensure the GCDRP remains financially viable. In exceptional circumstances the fees outlined below may be reduced to support community organisations and charities, in accessing the panel.

**4.10.2** Describe the impacts of the proposal on this protected characteristic group identified through your research, including

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. 
- approximately 250 words per impact

Impact – Neutral

**4.10.3** Please complete the table below to detail actions that need to take place to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts raised in the previous question:

Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale for completion	How will the actions be monitored?

## Section 5: Summary

- 5.1** Briefly summarise the key findings of the EqlA and any significant equality considerations that should be taken into account when deciding whether or not to proceed with the proposal (this section can be included within the 'equality implications' section of any committee reports). (Approximately 250 words).

GCSP will improve the diversity of the membership pool of the design review service by recruiting a new panel of professionals from Cambridge and across the UK, with expertise that cover the range of specialisms within the field of the built and natural environment. Recruitment will encourage applications from people with protected characteristics. Applications from panel members will be scored according to a published marking criterion. Chairs and vice chairs will be interviewed for the role.

The approach to charging does recognise that there may be some applicants e.g. a community group that may have more limited ability to access the service and allows for reductions in fees in these circumstances.

Equalities Impact Assessment will continue to form part of the ongoing process of refreshing the panel (every 3 years).

- 5.2** Confirm the recommendation of the officer completing the EqlA:
- Approved (No major change): Your analysis demonstrates that the policy is robust, and the evidence shows no potential for discrimination and that you have taken all appropriate opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations between groups.

- 5.3** Signature of individual completing EqlA:  
Joanne Preston

- 5.4** Date of completion:  
June 2021

## Section 6: Sign Off

**6.1** Approving officer EqlA review outcome: (delete as appropriate):

- Approved (No major change): Your analysis demonstrates that the policy is robust, and the evidence shows no potential for discrimination and that you have taken all appropriate opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations between groups.

**6.2** Do you give permission to publish this EqlA on SCDC website (delete as appropriate)? If no, please state reason.

Yes.

**6.3** When will this proposal next be reviewed and who will this be?

In January 2025, when the panel membership is refreshed. To be undertaken by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Built and Natural Environment Team.

**6.4** Approving officer signature:



**6.5** Date of approval: 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021



Item

## REVIEW OF TAXICARD AND TRANSPORT INITIATIVES

**To:**

Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport  
Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee 29/06/2021

**Report by:**

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**Wards affected:**

All

Key Decision

### 1. Executive Summary

This report sets out a number of recommendations in relation to transport initiatives funded by Cambridge City Council and in particular the Taxicard scheme. This report follows a review of the Taxicard scheme, outlines a need for clarity on officer delegations in relation to transport initiatives and a proposed wider review to be undertaken working with our partners including the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP).

A review of Cambridge City Council's Taxicard scheme has recently been carried out with the aim of increasing usage by its members, within the remit of providing a more flexible Taxicard scheme. Following the review, recommendations for a new scheme, with a review during the first 6 months, from 1 October 2021 are now presented for consideration by the Committee.

The Council funds a number of transport initiatives and these have not been reviewed for some time. These services are;

- Taxicard Scheme

- Dial-a-Ride Grant Agreement
- Bus Subsidy payments for Citi 1,2,3 and 114

## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- (1) Note this report and that a further report will come to this Committee in January 2022, following the implementation of approved changes and the outcomes of the proposed reviews.
- (2) Approve the proposed changes to the Taxicard scheme for existing and new Taxicard members to operate from 1 October 2021, with a review during the first 6 months, as set out in section 3.3 of this report.
- (3) Approve the undertaking of review work in relation to the Council's Transport Initiatives, working with our partners including the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP).
- (4) Note that there will be further consideration of where delegations and responsibility for policy decisions on transport initiatives should be placed.
- (5) Approve that the Head of Human Resources be given delegated authority, in liaison with the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport, and consultation with the Chair and Spokes for Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee, to make any changes that may be necessary to support the transport initiatives and schemes going forward, until such time as a wider decision around the policy and strategy decisions is agreed.

## **3. Background**

3.1 In 2018/19 the support for the Cambridge City Council transport initiatives transferred in their entirety from the Planning Department's Transport Policy Team to Business Support (now within the Human Resources Service). The involvement of Business Support in these initiatives until that point had been to process invoices and to assist with the administration and renewals for the Taxicard scheme. Following the creation of the shared service this has included all elements.

In mid-2019 a review of Transport Initiatives was agreed with the Executive Councillor, to look at the arrangements in place for each of the transport initiatives; to include usage figures, cost effectiveness, the administration and to identify how best to deliver these services going forward. The review included the three areas of:

- a) Taxicard Scheme
- b) Cambridge Dial-a-Ride



### c) Bus Subsidy payments for Citi 1,2,3 and 114

Each of these transport initiatives have been looked at with the initial findings set out below. To date the review has been completed by officers within Cambridge City Council who do not have the strategic knowledge or transport / policy expertise.

Following changes in the Council's officer structure and scheme of delegations over time, Taxicard is no longer listed as a delegated power to any officer as a direct reference. Clarity is now required as to where the policy and strategy decisions around the transport initiatives should be placed, they are currently within the Human Resources service.

## **3.2 Taxicard**

The Taxicard scheme helps the elderly and disabled people on low incomes pay for taxi journeys. Each Taxicard holder has previously been issued with a book of 100 vouchers valid from 1 April to 31 March. A renewal letter is sent annually to each applicant, asking them to confirm eligibility if they would like to renew.

The scheme is currently administered and is being reviewed by Business Support who; administer the annual applications process and checks for eligibility, liaise with taxi companies over invoicing of reimbursement for vouchers used, manage the contract for and arrange printing of vouchers, hold the budgets and records for the scheme.

### **Budget and Membership**

The minimum cost of a taxi fare where a Taxicard can be used is currently £4.80. If the trip costs £4.80, the Taxicard subsidy is £3.80 (this increases by 10p each year) and the Taxicard holder pays the remaining £1. If the trip costs more than £4.80, the Taxicard holder's contribution increases and the subsidy remains at £3.80.

The budget for 2021/22 is £139,610. The budget for 2019/20 was underspent by £60k. The budget for 2020/21 was underspent by £92K, however due to Covid-19 there was reduced usage of the scheme.

There are two costs associated with the provision of this service, the cost of the suppliers for the provision of the books of vouchers and the database to enable the administration of the scheme, and the second being the cost

of reimbursement to taxi companies who take the vouchers, via monthly invoicing.

The Taxicard budget has been underspent for a number of years. A Committee Report in January 2009 highlighted an estimated £27k underspend that was expected due to a reduction in the demand of the service. However, a 20p rise in voucher prior to 2009 saw a 7% increase in voucher use. The usage on the scheme continues to see a downward trend over the years with associated membership numbers and associated spend continuing to reduce. See tables below.

<b>Reduction in Taxicard Spend 2016/17 to date</b>					
	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>
<b>Budget</b>	£118,260	£120,540	£123,750	£124,090	£124,450
<b>Spend</b>	£71,149	£64,597	£60,503	£63,328	£32,251

The criteria for joining the scheme changed in 2006 to be means tested. For members aged 80 or over, at the time of the change, 'Grandfather' rights (GFR) were granted and those aged over 80 before 2006 were automatically issued with a Taxicard on what was called 'GFR'. That right was removed for new applicants after 2006. This means that those 'GFR' members do not need to meet the financial criteria to remain on the scheme. 5 years ago we had a total of 598 members, 107 of which were 'GFR' scheme members.

As at 21 May 2021 the scheme has a total of 314 members, 9 of which are 'GFR' scheme members.

<b>Reduction in Membership to the Scheme from 2016/17 to date</b>						
	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>21-May-21</b>
<b>Members</b>	491	481	470	454	372	305
<b>Members (GFR)</b>	107	74	49	29	18	9
<b>Total</b>	598	555	519	483	390	314

Age Analysis of Members from 2016/17 to date								
	One-15	16-18	19-29	30-59	60-79	80-84	85+	Total
<b>22016/17</b>		1	8	114	192	69	214	598
<b>2017/18</b>	1	1	10	110	183	57	193	555
<b>2018/19</b>	1		11	106	184	56	161	519
<b>2019/20</b>	1		15	97	173	68	129	483
<b>2020/21</b>			12	78	142	53	105	390
<b>21-May-21</b>			12	65	125	39	73	314

## The Review

During 2020 and early 2021 there was a review of Taxicard. The aim of the review was to;

- Understand the Usage / Budget Underspend
- Identify how vouchers are being used
- See whether the scheme still supports members in the same way it used to (scheme has not changed in many years)
- Look at the potential to further develop the scheme over time to a card-based system. (This would be a separate project)
- Make recommendations to improve take up of the scheme

Following the first part of the review, on 2 March 2021 the Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety approved an out of cycle decision regarding an amendment to the Taxicard scheme from 1 April 2021 (see Appendix A). The Chair and Spokes of the Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee were consulted in line with procedures set out in the Council constitution. Informal consultation with our stakeholders took place and the changes were implemented to the scheme from 1 April.

From 1 April the scheme changed to support it's members during the pandemic in the form of issuing a book of 50 vouchers from 1 April to be used until 30 September but allowing members to choose to use 2 vouchers per trip if they so wish. From the information we have received for April and May 2021, 1171 journeys were made using vouchers for the £3.80 subsidy. On 923 of those journeys 1 voucher had been used and on 247 of those journeys 2 vouchers had been used, so the change introduced to support our members is already being taken up by some.

See Appendix B for further information on the work carried out as part of the review.

### **3.3 Proposals with effect from 1 October 2021**

In preparing this report, informal stakeholder engagement was undertaken by way of meetings and correspondence as outlined in Section 5. The results and findings of this helped to shape the decision and confirm the way forward for changes.

As a result of the work carried out in the review the following changes are proposed;

- 1) To continue to allow the use of more than one Taxicard voucher per journey beyond 30 September. Up until April this year only one voucher was permitted
- 2) To cease the annual issuing of books of 100 vouchers each currently worth £3.80 (£380) and replace with one book of 50 vouchers worth £150 made up of 25 x £5 vouchers and 25 x £1 vouchers
- 3) From 1 October to 31 March a book of 25 vouchers worth £75 will be issued
- 4) To allow the use of Taxicard vouchers on Cambridge Dial-a-Ride
- 5) To introduce an admin fee for the replacement of lost books (suggested figure of £10)
- 6) No additional book to be issued in the same year once vouchers have been used with the onus being on members to manage their use. This will be reviewed during the first year of the new scheme, once further publication of the scheme has been carried out and we can see how many additional members the publicity and changes to the scheme brings
- 7) To review the application form criteria so it reflects current requirements to eligibility for those who cannot use public transport in line with the current benefit requirements. To include the amendment of the application form to include the addition of; Higher Care Component of the Disability Living Allowance and Daily Living Enhanced Personal Independence Payment
- 8) To remind members and taxi companies to ensure vouchers are handed over to the taxi driver so the driver has their membership number and voucher number for invoicing purposes
- 9) Ask taxi companies to ensure invoices for vouchers used in one financial year are invoiced within 2 months of the new financial year
- 10) To agree to a move to a card-based system, over time. This would be a separate project given the complexities

- 11) If approved, implementation of the new scheme would be from 1 October 2021 and will be reviewed within the first 6 months
- 12) Approve the delegation to the Head of Human Resources that additional criteria can be added to the form in the future to include reducing the Mobility and Daily Living Enhanced PIP to Standard, and to include War Disablement Pensions and Armed Forces Independence Payment

To explain point (2) above further. At first sight it might appear that members will lose out as the books of vouchers will be worth less than they currently are. However, following the work carried out on usage of the vouchers, the majority of members used between 1 and 50 of their 100 voucher allocation. Therefore, it is considered that to provide books of 50 vouchers totalling £150 (or proportionate amounts if joining the scheme after the first month) which can be used how the holder would like, will be more beneficial and we would hope to see the majority of our members using the majority of their vouchers. This would also allow within the budget for an increase in membership following the proposed changes to the scheme (including eligibility changes on the application form) and the proposed publicity.

The total subsidy each member will have had available to use from 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021, is £190.00 based on half of the existing allocation. If approved, from 1 October 2021 members would receive 25 vouchers (half of the proposed annual 50 voucher allocation) totalling £75.00.

Whilst based on the existing scheme, books of vouchers have totalled over £300, work carried out as part of this review identified that on average 28% of vouchers are used per member per annum totalling an average spend of around £106.00 per member, so in effect a book of vouchers worth £150 with increased value and different denominations and the choice to use more than one voucher, should see members using more of their vouchers and even their full allocations.

Under the proposed new scheme, the annual subsidy for each member valid from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 would be £150.00 made up of 50 vouchers; 25 x £5 and 25 x £1.

The proposal has been designed to allow more people to use the vouchers in a meaningful way, within the current budget.

Therefore, by issuing one book of vouchers per financial year to members will allow an increase in membership of up to 391 per year based on all 50 vouchers being used, so the scheme has the potential to have 705 members on board, membership figures we haven't seen since 2015. Thereby giving other eligible residents of Cambridge City the opportunity to benefit from the scheme as opposed to 38 new members if two books were to be issued in a financial year – a significant difference.

See Appendix B for cost analysis of the current scheme versus the new scheme, showing what the spend would be should membership increase to 500 and the capacity of the scheme if one book of vouchers is issued versus two books.

Data analysis work will continue to take place to identify how members continue to use their vouchers between 1 April and 30 September 2021, and going forward on the scheme from 1 October to 31 March 2022.

Towards the end of the year, existing Taxicard members will be asked if they are interested in providing feedback on the Taxicard schemes in place since April 2021, to find out how the different schemes have been perceived by members, how members have used their vouchers during this time, and whether there are suggestions to improve how the scheme has operated.

It is hoped the findings of the data analysis work and consultation with Taxicard members will be fed back to Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee in January 2022. At this Committee, the outcome of the review will be reported back with any proposals for any suggested adjustments to the scheme to be implemented from 1 April 2022.

The Council's supplier of the vouchers will require at least 2 months' notice of any changes required to the scheme and vouchers in order to implement ready for 1 April 2022. Business Support will also need to work to this timescale to ensure a smooth renewals / transition process.

### **3.4 Cambridge Dial-a-Ride**

Cambridge Dial-a-Ride (DaR) is a charitable organization set up in 1996 to help those people, who through disability, old age, and / or infirmity, are unable to travel on alternative public transport. There are two types of membership individual and group. Individual Membership is intended for

people over the age of 16 years who have difficulty using public transport because of disability, infirmity, age or mental disability, but who still like to travel independently in and around Cambridge. An annual membership fee is payable and a fare for each journey is paid at time of travel. Group Membership permits organisations, clubs, community groups and care homes to organise travel for their members as a means of enriching their quality of life or facilitating group attendance at events or meetings, or day trips, which otherwise would be difficult for group members to attend. An annual membership fee is payable by the organisation. Bookings for group journeys are made by the organisation on behalf of its members and payment is made by the organisation against an invoice issued by DaR.

This weekday community bus service is provided to residents of Cambridge and some surrounding villages outside of the City Boundary, providing door-to-door pick up and drop off and escort to properties where necessary. It provides users (individuals or groups) with a friendly point of contact and gives members the opportunity to interact with other members of the public by attending day centres / lunch clubs / activity centres that they would be unable to attend without using DaR. DaR can also transport its members to hospital, dental surgeries, local doctor, supermarkets and during the summer provides daytrips to the seaside and other attractions.

Although less flexible than a taxi, DaR drivers are trained to help people with health and mobility problems and DaR journeys can give vulnerable people the social contact that they often lack. Users of the service may bring a friend or family member as their official escorts, and an additional fare of £5 is charged for them. Guide dogs and help dogs are also welcome and travel without charge.

It is financed through membership fees and fares but does receive support from regular funding agencies. These include Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge City Council.

Cambridge City Council has supported the work of DaR since before 2004. In 2019, the budget for this service, along with responsibility for the provision of the Grant Agreement, and attendance at the quarterly DaR Funders Meetings was transferred to Business Support.

The budget associated with the provision of this service for 2021/22 is £50,510. The budget for 2020/21 was £47,010 with expenditure of £43,954. The expenditure is made up of the Grant Agreement and the reimbursement to DaR for journeys made by the visually impaired where 50p a single trip and £1 a return journey is reimbursed to DaR.

For a number of years Cambridge City Council has provided a Grant Agreement to DaR. The Grant is related to the provision of a community bus service. The funding through this grant agreement is used to finance the service for use by residents within the Cambridge local authority area. The money is used in a number of ways to maintain this service including assisting in the replacement of their aging bus fleet.

If approved, the review will look at the Grant Agreement currently in place with DaR. Following this review we will identify where responsibility for the policy decisions around this is best placed.

### **3.5 Bus Subsidies**

Cambridge City Council have been funding certain bus services from 2000. Earlier information is not available.

The services are provided by Stagecoach and Star Cabs and are funded through a contract with the County Council for 4 bus services used by the public. These services are run at various times and include late night / early hours of the morning and a Saturday service for a few hours. These services had originally been subsidized to enable some services to continue due to other routes in the City being cut.

The original aim was that with the funding from the City Council the services could be run at times when they might otherwise have stopped, therefore supporting the night time economy and also providing a service to those on routes where other services were no longer provided. The services are;

#### **Citi 1 (Stagecoach)**

**(to note this service paused operations on 27 March 2020)**

Who uses this service: Members of the public.

The Route: Arbury – City Centre – Rail Station – Addenbrookes Hospital – Cherry Hinton – Fulbourn

Days / Times of Operation: Fridays and Saturdays 0040 hrs – 0247hrs

#### **Citi 2 (Stagecoach)**

Who uses this service: Members of the public



The Route: Addenbrooke's / Sainsbury's / City Centre / Chesterton / Cambridge North Station / Milton / Waterbeach

Days / Times of Operation: Monday – Friday: 1910 – 1955 hrs / Saturday: 1910 – 2025 hrs / Monday's to Saturday's: 2010 – 2338 hrs (variations on route)

### **Citi 3 (Stagecoach)**

Whose uses this route: Members of the public

The Route: Fison Road – City Centre – Rail Station – Cherry Hinton

Days / Times of Operation: Monday – Friday: 2015 – 2307 hrs (variations of route) / Saturday: 1932 – 2307 hrs

### **114 Star Cabs (formerly Big Green Bus Company)**

This service is made up of 2 separate contracts;

Contract 1: A contract for the Monday to Friday journeys, subsidised by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (not addressed in this report)

Contract 2: A contract for the Saturday journeys, subsidised by Cambridge City Council.

Who uses this service: Members of the public, primarily the elderly due to the route.

The Route: Cambridge City Centre – The Grafton Centre – The Beehive Site (Coldhams Lane), Addenbrookes Hospital

Days / Times of Operation: Saturday 1010 – 1425 hrs

In 2019 the Head of Human Resources, Corporate Business and Executive Support Manager and the City Council's Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety, met with the Public Transport Network Co-ordinator and Public Transport Manager from Cambridgeshire County Council. A discussion was had around possible future investment by the GCP to these routes. As a result contracts for these services have been renewed on a short term rather than an annual basis over the last 12-18 months. Approval has recently been given to extend these contracts for a further 6 months, from 1 July through to 31 December 2021.

If notice was to be given for any of these routes, notice provisions and potential exit charges could apply. Any changes might also require some public consultation.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority manage the contract documentation with the suppliers, however if the existing arrangement is to continue long-term, they have advised a full procurement exercise should be carried out which they could assist with.

The 2021/22 budget associated with the provision of these services is £134,090. The total spend for 2020/21 was £128,820. All services have continued to be funded during Covid-19.

The patronage figures collected for the last 5 years, shown below, indicate a reduction in use of most of these services, with reduced cost efficiency on this travel initiative.

<b>Usage Figures for 2015/16 - 2019/20</b>				
	<b>114</b>	<b>Citi 1</b>	<b>Citi 2</b>	<b>Citi 3</b>
<b>2015/16</b>	1524	9994	54033	53908
<b>2016/17</b>	2400	9521	20028	55844
<b>2017/18</b>	2392	3053	80521	44562
<b>2018/19</b>	2526	2304	86158	43808
<b>2019/20</b>	2063	2195	71429	43927
<b>2020/21</b>	Services Disrupted Due to Covid-19			

Looking at the patronage figures and costs of running the services, it is proposed that a review is undertaken of the cost effectiveness of this and other transport initiatives, working with our partners including the GCP. Wider discussions are also underway with the GCP over the provision of these services in the future.

### **3.6 Review of Transport Initiatives**

A number of senior officers met to discuss where the policy and strategy decisions for these initiatives should sit. The agreed outcome was the proposal for a review using expertise not available in-house, and the recommendation to approach GCP for advice and support in this review. The aim of the review would be to ensure that whatever services the City Council chooses to continue to provide, and that the policies around these, are coherent alongside the other services provided or supported by the

GCP, the County Council and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. An initial discussion with the GCP has taken place.

A review will provide us with proposals for how these services fit in with other transport initiatives across the organisation and indeed other organisations and as these services haven't been reviewed for many years whether the budgets for these initiatives could potentially be spent differently. Consideration is also required as to where the policy and strategy decisions around the Transport Initiatives should be made in the future.

If the review is approved by this Committee, an outline scope and timeline will be prepared, subject to agreement with the Executive Councillor. The target timeline for completion would be by the Autumn allowing for any proposed changes to be reflected in the budget process. It is thought any changes to these schemes as a result of the review would take effect from 1 April 2022. The findings from this review, along with any recommendations for change, would be presented back to Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee in due course.

Following the review and the need to make decisions around Taxicard with effect from 1 April, it became more evident that the existing service area is not where the long-term future of transport policy decisions should be provided. Taxicard is no longer listed as a delegated power (to any officer) as a direct reference. The last review of this service had been in 2009 when it went to the Executive Councillor for the decision. This year as a result of no delegations and being outside of the committee cycle, an out of Committee Decision was required.

Until such time as the review is complete (if approved), it is proposed that the delegations for these 3 transport initiatives should be with the Head of Human Resources.

## **4. Implications**

### **a) Financial Implications**

- Taxicard - The operational changes implemented to the Taxicard scheme from 1 April 2021 and those proposed from 1 October 2021 will be met from the existing Taxicard budget.
- Dial-a-Ride - Budget provision would be reviewed as part of the wider review.

- Bus Subsidies – There is a potential for savings should these cease to be provided by Cambridge City.
- The Review - Any costs associated with the review of these transport initiatives will be met from existing transport initiative budgets.

**b) Staffing Implications**

No additional resource was provided to support this work when transferring from the Planning department in 2018. The work carried out to date on these initiatives is provided through existing resources within the Business Support Team, Human Resources.

**c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

The Taxicard scheme should be accessible to all City residents who are eligible. An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted. Please see Appendix C.

**d) Environmental Implications**

There are no changes proposed to the existing transport initiatives that would change the current environmental implications. It is the increased use of Taxicard vouchers which is anticipated, however we anticipate more members to the scheme.

**e) Procurement Implications**

- Taxicard - The current suppliers of the Taxicard vouchers are providing the service until 31 March 2022. A full procurement exercise will be required in time to secure a supplier for the provision of the vouchers from 1 April 2022 in line with the relevant procurement regulations.
- Dial-a-Ride- None.
- Bus Subsidies - If Bus Subsidies remain the City Council's responsibility, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority have advised a full procurement takes place to ensure value for money.
- Review - None.

**f) Community Safety Implications**

- Taxicard -To ensure those with disabilities are supported to move around the City safely.
- Dial-a-Ride - Drivers are CRB checked and trained to work with those with disabilities.
- Bus Subsidies - If services are not provided by Cambridge City and services change, the nighttime economy may be affected and those out late at night are required to walk rather than getting a taxi to their destinations.

- Review of Transport Initiatives - None.

## **5. Consultation and communication considerations**

Consultation and communication to date has consisted of;

### **Taxicard**

- All existing users written to and made aware of changes from 1 April 2021 and proposals from 1 October 2021
- Website pages updated accordingly with changes from 1 April 2021
- Attendance at Cambridge City Council Taxi Trade Forum on 19 March 2021 to explain proposals to the Taxicard scheme from 1 April 2021 and 1 October 2021 (if approved)
- Communication sent to all Taxi Drivers and Operators on 18 March 2021 about the change to the Taxicard scheme from 1 April 2021
- Shared future proposals with representatives from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Healthwatch, Disability Cambridge and Camsight
- Met with Cambridge Dial-a-Ride to explain future proposals
- Press release issued about changes to the scheme from 1 April 2021 and the review underway, proposals, if adopted to be implemented from 1 October
- Out of Committee Decision made on 2 March 2021
- Discussions with colleagues in Revenues and Benefits around the eligibility criteria for the scheme and possible changes to the application form

### **Dial-a-Ride**

- Cambridge DaR have been made aware of the proposal to allow Taxicard vouchers to be used on DaR in future
- Conversations around the existing Grant Agreement arrangement have been had with Cambridge City Council's Community Funding service.

### **Bus Subsidies**

- Ongoing dialogue with the Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety with regards to the future provision of these services.

### **Review of Transport Initiatives**

- Meeting held with various City Council Heads of Service
- Initial discussion with GCP Officers around the review

Planned consultation and communication following the outcome of proposals put to this meeting will include;

### **Taxicard**

- Written communication to all existing Taxicard members

- Updates to the City Council's website
- Outcome shared with representatives of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Healthwatch, Disability Cambridge and Camsight
- Outcome shared with Taxi Drivers and Operators
- Outcome shared with Cambridge Dial-a-Ride
- Press release issued
- Article promoting the scheme published in Cambridge Matters
- Article promoting the scheme published in Open Door
- Article promoting the scheme published in Camsight's Newsletter
- Depending on the number of new applications received, further publication of the scheme may be provided in the form of leaflets at various centres around the City
- Discussion with the existing supplier of the vouchers confirming new voucher arrangements

### **Dial-a-Ride**

- Confirm whether Taxicard's are to be permitted for use on DaR from 1 October 2021

### **Bus Subsidies**

- Should these remain with Cambridge City Council, and the services are to be provided in a different way, public consultation may be required.
- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to be made aware of any changes.

### **Review of Transport Initiatives**

- If approved, communication and consultation will be considered as part of the scope of the review.

## **6. Background papers**

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

- Record of Executive Decision
- Existing Taxicard scheme eligibility criteria

## **7. Appendices**

- Appendix A – Record of Executive Decision
- Appendix B – Taxicard Review (including Usage), Cost Analysis of the Current Taxicard Scheme versus Proposed New Scheme

- Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment

## **8. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Sharon Line, Corporate Business & Executive Support Manager, tel: 01223 – 457570, email: [sharon.line@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.line@cambridge.gov.uk) or Deborah Simpson, Head of Human Resources, tel: 01223 - 458101, email: [deborah.simpson@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:deborah.simpson@cambridge.gov.uk).

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## Record of Executive Decision

Interim Amendments to Cambridge City Council's Taxicard Scheme
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**Decision of:** **Councillor Nicky Massey:** Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety

**Reference:** 20/URGENCY/P&T/03

**Date of decision:** 22.02.21 **Published on:** 02/03/21

**Decision Type:** Non-Key

**Matter for Decision:** Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety is recommended to:

- i. Agree a proposal to allow members of Cambridge City Council's Taxicard Scheme to use two vouchers on each trip from 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021. This would allow the user up to £7.60 towards the cost of a taxi trip as opposed to one voucher of £3.80. Recognising members may have financial difficulties as a result of Covid or have additional health problems and are relying on taxis to get them from A to B, it would help to provide additional financial support to Taxicard members (disabled people on low incomes) to help to pay for their taxi journeys.
- ii. Agree for Taxicard members to receive a book of 50 vouchers valued at £3.80 each from 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021 and to be able to use two vouchers per trip if so choosing to whilst a review of the Taxicard scheme is progressed.

iii. Agree that a further book of vouchers will be made available to Taxicard members during this period if requested. In this event, a proportionate amount of vouchers will be issued for the remainder of 6 the month period

**Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options):**

The Taxicard is a Scheme that helps disabled people on low incomes pay for taxi journeys. The scheme operates by issuing members with a book of 100 vouchers running from 1 April – 31 March each year. Each voucher is currently worth £3.70, this figure increases by 10p each year.

Officers are currently carrying out a review of the existing Taxicard Scheme with the aim of increasing usage by its members with the remit of a more flexible Taxicard scheme. Whilst the review is being undertaken it is considered to be prudent to only issue only 6 months of vouchers at this time so that a revised scheme, if approved can then be introduced in 2021/22.

During the covid pandemic and reduced public transport provision on some routes members of the Taxicard scheme may need to use taxi's more. By allowing the use of two vouchers per trip it will provide more support to members but will remain within the overall provision of the scheme. This scheme supports disabled people on low incomes to pay for taxi journeys, this decision would provide additional financial support to its members at this time.

The renewals process for the issue of Taxicards takes place during the months of February and March and therefore a decision is required on this proposal now to link in with the renewals process. The next Planning and Transport Committee is in March and this would be too late to make the arrangements for the new vouchers to be printed and issued and would leave the Taxicard members without provision for a period of time.

Taxi companies will need to be made aware of any approved changes, so they are ready to take two vouchers if presented with them from 1 April. This proposal does not affect the amount the Taxi

Companies receive as their costs will continue to be reimbursed on a monthly basis.

**The Executive**

**Councillor's decision(s):**

- i. Agreed a proposal to allow members of Cambridge City Council's Taxicard Scheme to use two vouchers on each trip from 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021. This would allow the user up to £7.60 towards the cost of a taxi trip as opposed to one voucher of £3.80. Recognising members may have financial difficulties as a result of Covid or have additional health problems and are relying on taxis to get them from A to B, it would help to provide additional financial support to Taxicard members (disabled people on low incomes) to help to pay for their taxi journeys.
- ii. Agreed for Taxicard members to receive a book of 50 vouchers valued at £3.80 each from 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021 and to be able to use two vouchers per trip if so choosing to whilst a review of the Taxicard scheme is progressed.
- iii. Agreed that a further book of vouchers will be made available to Taxicard members during this period if requested. In this event, a proportionate amount of vouchers will be issued for the remainder of 6 the month period.

**Reasons for the decision:**

As detailed in Appendix 1 which can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13471>

**Scrutiny consideration:**

The Chair and Spokesperson of Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee were consulted prior to the action being authorised.

**Report:**

See Appendix 1 which can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13471>

**Conflicts of interest:** None

**Comments:** The decision will be reported back to the Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee.

## Record of Executive Decision – Appendix 1

### Interim Amendments to Cambridge City Council's Taxicard Scheme

The Taxicard Scheme is a scheme that helps disabled people on low incomes pay for taxi journeys. To join the Taxicard scheme members must be in receipt of certain benefits set out in the criteria of the scheme for example; income support, pension credit, income based jobseekers allowance, housing benefit, universal credit, attendance allowance etc.

The scheme operates by issuing members with a book of 100 vouchers running from 1 April – 31 March each year. Each voucher is currently worth £3.70, this figure increases by 10p each year. Vouchers can be used on fares of £4.70 or more – with the member paying at least £1 towards the fare. Members are asked to show the driver their voucher before starting the journey.

If the scheme is joined after 1 April members are issued a proportionate amount of vouchers for the remainder of the year. All members are contacted before April each year to confirm their continued eligibility and to arrange a new book to be issued.

In 2019 it was agreed a review was required of this scheme looking at the arrangements in place, usage figures, cost effectiveness, the administration and to identify how best to deliver the scheme going forward. Part of the review is looking at different ways of providing the vouchers in the future, how they are used, the role of Taxi Companies, and discussions will take place with them along with representatives from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Healthwatch, Disability Cambridge and Camsight.

Due to the changes proposed to be made to the scheme as a result of the review, a report will be presented to the Planning and Transport Committee in June 2021 suggesting, if approved, the changes are implemented from 1 September 2021.

However, it is felt that Taxicard members should be supported before September, especially given that their circumstances may have changed as a result of Covid and therefore consideration should be given to Taxicard members being able to use two vouchers per trip from 1 April 2021 as opposed to one voucher which is currently how the scheme works, until any such changes are approved and implemented later in the year.

Therefore Taxicard members would receive a book of 50 vouchers valued at £3.80 each valid from 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021 rather than 100 vouchers from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022, but will be able to use 2 vouchers per trip rather than the existing one voucher per trip.

One of the main reasons for this is as a result of Covid-19 and members may need to use Taxi's more, and by allowing the use of two vouchers per trip will reduce the amount Members themselves will have to pay towards the cost. Some members may have been affected financially as a result of Covid and as this scheme supports disabled people on low incomes to pay for taxi journeys, this decision would provide additional financial support to its members at this time.

The renewals process for the issue of Taxicards takes place during the months of February and March and therefore a decision is required on this proposal now to link in with the renewals process. A report to the next Planning and Transport Committee in March would be too late.

Taxi companies will need to be made aware of the change, if approved, so they are ready to take two vouchers if presented with them from 1 April. This proposal does not affect the amount the Taxi Companies will receive as their costs will continue to be reimbursed on a monthly basis.

A report on the findings, next steps and final proposals following the review will be presented to the Planning & Transport Committee on 29 June.

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## **The Review of Taxicard and Cost Analysis of the Current Taxicard Scheme versus the Proposed New Scheme**

A review of Cambridge City Council's Taxicard scheme has recently been carried out as it was some time since a review had been undertaken. This review was carried out in discussion with the Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety. Information on the review and outcome is set out below;

### **Research and findings**

As part of this review we;

- Looked at membership numbers and voucher usage
- Reviewed what parts of the scheme worked well and not.
- Researched and benchmarked with the County Council on their Taxicard scheme, Taxicard in general and other local authorities schemes
- Reviewed links with other schemes / concessionary bus passes / Dial-a-Ride
- Reviewed the eligibility criteria of the Taxicard Application form with colleagues in Revenues and Benefits
- Reviewed renewal lengths (we currently do annually)
- Carried out cost modelling options for Taxicard Vouchers
- Reviewed where Taxicard Vouchers can be used i.e., allow use on Cambridge Dial-a-Ride
- Reviewed the number of vouchers that can be used at any one time
- Looked at the budget allocation and spend for the past few years
- The scheme had not changed since being introduced – did it support its members in the same way as it used to?
- Considered the further development of the scheme to a card based system, which would be a separate project in itself

Discussions with other local authorities centered on - pattern of membership/reduction, how many vouchers are in their books, value of vouchers, if they increase the voucher values annually and how many vouchers are permitted each journey. It seemed that a reduction in members was a general trend.

Some authorities have ceased to provide this service due to other financial pressures. From those conversations it was highlighted that

Cambridge City Council's scheme was more comprehensive compared to others.

In 2020 the City Council provided books of 100 vouchers each worth £3.70 off a journey. This price increases by 10p each year. We also pay a 5% admin fee to taxi companies who accept the vouchers. Some other authorities vouchers vary in numbers issued to users from 20-75 with the total value of vouchers ranging from £36.00 to £100, with no annual increase so the Council's scheme of offering 100 vouchers at £3.80 (£380 pa) with an annual 10p increase is more generous. Others would allow unlimited numbers of vouchers to be used, up to £20 at one time, and once they were gone, there were no more issued until the next financial year. Our voucher supplier has indicated that our scheme has more vouchers/amount than other schemes they administer.

A factor for a reduction in members use of Taxicard may be due to the use of a bus passes, which enable passengers to use public transport free of charge. This alleviates the requirement to pay the remainder of any taxi fare once the £3.80 subsidy has been applied. The eligibility criteria for a concessionary bus pass is very similar to a Taxicard.

In each of the other authorities spoken to, the taxi voucher scheme is used as an alternative to the Bus Passes which are issued from within the same team, with taxi vouchers being available to those who use a wheelchair day-to-day and expect this to continue. Those authorities were also responsible for issuing the concessionary bus passes and applicants can choose whether they wish to apply for a concessionary bus pass or taxi vouchers but users are only allowed to apply for one.

That is not the case within the City, with the City Council issuing Taxicards and Cambridgeshire County Council issuing the concessionary bus fares. Applicants are able to apply for, and use both, which may be a factor in a reduction in use.

The eligibility criteria for a concessionary bus pass is very similar to the City Council's requirements for a Taxicard. Each council sets its own eligibility criteria for the Taxicard scheme.

Some data analysis work was carried out to identify the number of vouchers issued in one particular financial year to our Taxicard members. From that, a large piece of data analysis work was carried out to identify how many vouchers each member used in that year.

## **Consultation on Proposals for 1 April changes**

Conversations were also had with our existing supplier of the Taxicard vouchers to see whether the books could be produced in different ways going forward, i.e., a mix of voucher values in each book, and issuing throughout the year to new members. They agreed this could be done, with sufficient notice.

We consulted with representatives from Camsight, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and Disability Cambridge over the proposed changes to the Taxicard scheme from 1 April and also on our proposals from 1 October. These organisations supported the proposals and thought what was trying to be achieved was positive, including the use of vouchers on Cambridge Dial-a-Ride whose drivers are trained to work with those with disabilities, the use of 2 vouchers rather than one if chosen to and the move to a card based system in the future was also welcomed. There were concerns around the low number of members, lack of publicity around the scheme, some organisations weren't aware of the scheme. Going forward publicity will include a press release, an article in Cambridge Matters, consideration for an article in Open Door and flyers / posters in public buildings, community centres and Shopmobility.

We ensured Taxi Drivers and Operators were kept informed of the changes to the scheme from 1 April, and also made them aware of the proposals which may be introduced from 1 October, if approved. Cambridge City Council's Taxi Trade Forum was attended and communication sent to all Taxi Drivers and Operators making them aware of the changes to 1 April. At the Forum attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions or to make contact should they have any comments or concerns. No feedback was received. Further communication and conversations will be required going forward with regards to how the scheme will operate from 1 October and ensuring information provided on invoices is uniform across the providers.

## **Use of the Scheme**

The review looked at journey information, spend, and use of the vouchers issued. A sample of invoices received from Taxi Companies during the 2019/20 financial year were analysed to identify how members use their vouchers to travel.

This analysis identified that the top destinations for trips taken are;

- shops / town
- hospital
- recreational purposes
- railway station
- doctors

The review also enabled analysis of the data for invoices received relating to journeys taken for the financial year ending 31 March 2019. This showed an estimated 14,618 single journeys had been made (or vouchers used) out of the 51,900 issued to the 519 Taxicard members. Therefore, on average, members used around 28 of the 100 voucher allocation i.e, 28%. As the average member uses around 28 of their existing 100 voucher allocation, it is felt that a scheme which offers less vouchers with varying denominations of subsidy would be more beneficial to users going forward.

Figures were not taken for end March 2021, as the usage had reduced significantly due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Information has been obtained from 1 April when the change was made to allow members the option to use 2 vouchers per trip, if choosing to do so. From the information we currently have for April and May indicate there have been 1171 journeys made using vouchers for the £3.80 subsidy. 923 journeys using 1 voucher and 247 of those journeys having used 2 vouchers. The change introduced to support our members is being taken up by some of the existing members.

### **Application Form Eligibility**

Discussions were had with colleagues in Revenues and Benefits over the current eligibility for the scheme and how this may be amended to include other residents of the City who could benefit from the scheme.

As a result it is proposed to include the following eligibility criteria to the application form from 1 October 2021;

- The Higher Care Component of the Disability Living Allowance
- The Daily Living Enhanced Personal Independence Payment

Going forward further additional eligibility criteria could include;

- The Mobility and Daily Living Enhanced Personal Independence Payment be reduced from Enhanced to Standard
- War Disablement Pensions
- Armed Forces Independence Payment

### **Cost Analysis of the Current Taxicard Scheme Versus the Proposed Scheme**

Based on the information collated as part of this review, the data we have and average percentage of vouchers used for the end of financial year 2019 and 2020, the approximate total usage of vouchers is 28%. This figure of 28% is used in modelling in the tables below.

For modelling purposes, we have assumed 314 scheme members using £150 of vouchers (£47,100). Whilst this could be viewed as not being as generous as £380 of vouchers the current usage of the scheme has shown that not all users take up all 100 vouchers. The financial provision has never been based on full take-up of the vouchers.

If we were to offer 2 books per person for an improved scheme with increased take up and usage of vouchers we would exceed the budget.

The proposal has been designed to allow more people to use the vouchers in a meaningful way, within the current budget.

The proposals are to;

- Change the existing voucher denomination
- Allow members to choose how many vouchers per trip they use (so more than one)
- Make changes to the application form to improve the eligibility criteria
- Increase publicity around the scheme

For this reason no additional book of vouchers is planned to be issued to members in the same year once vouchers have been used. The onus will be on members to manage the use of their vouchers as is the case with some other local authorities who administer such schemes. This will be reviewed, once further promotion and publication of the scheme has been carried out and we can see how many additional members that publicity may bring to the scheme.

The cost analysis showing what this might look like and how many new members could benefit from the scheme if the changes are approved are as below.

Examples of what the budget might look like for the issue of two books as against one book per financial year is also shown in the table below.

Therefore by issuing one book of vouchers per financial year to members will allow for an increase in membership of up to 391 per year based on all 50 vouchers being used, so the scheme has the potential to have 705 members on board, membership figures we haven't seen since 2015. Thereby giving other eligible residents of Cambridge City the opportunity to benefit from the scheme as opposed to 38 new members if two books were to be issued in a financial year – a significant difference.

<b>Existing Scheme and Voucher Arrangement</b>						
<b>No. of Members as at 21 May 2021</b>	<b>Vouchers Per Member</b>	<b>Voucher Subsidy Value</b>	<b>Total Amount of Subsidy Per Member</b>	<b>Average Cost Per Member based on 2019 Average Usage (i.e., 28%)</b>	<b>Total Cost of Scheme if All Members Use All Vouchers</b>	<b>Total Cost Based on 2019 Average Usage (i.e 28%)</b>
314	100	£3.80	£380.00	£106.40	£119,320.00	£33,409.60

<b>Proposed Scheme and Voucher Arrangement (based on issue of 50 vouchers)</b>						
<b>No. of Members as at 21 May 2021</b>	<b>Vouchers Per Member</b>	<b>Voucher Subsidy Value</b>	<b>Amount of Subsidy Per Member</b>	<b>Total Amount of Subsidy Per Member</b>	<b>Total Cost of Scheme if All Members Use All Vouchers</b>	
314	25	£5.00	£125.00	£150.00	£47,100.00	
	25	£1.00	£25.00			
500	25	£5.00	£125.00	£150.00	75,000.00	
	25	£1.00	£25.00			

The above table shows what the spend would be should membership increase to 500.

Proposed Scheme and Voucher Arrangement If Issuing an Additional Book If Requested										
No. of Members as at 21 May 2021	Total Amount of Subsidy Per Member	Total Amount of Subsidy Used - 1st Book	Total Amount of Subsidy Used - 2nd Book	Cost Per Member Based on Total Use of All Vouchers	Total Cost of Scheme if Issuing Additional Book to Members	Total Budget for Usage 2020/21	Difference from Issue of 2 Books	New Member Availability Based on issue of 2 Books	Difference from Issue of 1 Book (£47,100)	New Member Availability Based on Issue of 1 Book
314	£150.00	£150.00	£150.00	£300.00	£94,200.00	£105,850	£11,650	38	£58,750	391

The above table provides modelling showing the capacity of the scheme if two books of vouchers are issued versus one book.



## Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

This tool helps the Council ensure that we fulfil legal obligations of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Guidance on how to complete this tool can be found on the Cambridge City Council intranet. For specific questions on the tool email Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer at [equalities@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223 457046.

Once you have drafted the EqIA please send this to [equalities@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@cambridge.gov.uk) for checking. For advice on consulting on equality impacts, please contact Graham Saint, Strategy Officer, ([graham.saint@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:graham.saint@cambridge.gov.uk) or 01223 457044).

<b>1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service</b>
Review of Cambridge City Council's Taxicard Scheme.

<b>2. Webpage link to full details of the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service (if available)</b>
<a href="https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/taxicard">https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/taxicard</a>

<b>3. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?</b>
<p>The Taxicard is a scheme that aims to help disabled people on low incomes to afford to use taxis for essential journeys. It is not known when the last review of this scheme was carried out, so a review was requested in an attempt to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Increase usage by existing members</li> <li>2) Generate more members</li> </ul> <p>In order to do this, the administration of the scheme has been looked at in so far as the arrangements for how the scheme operates, usage, the invoicing and a review of the Application Form to ensure it meets the requirements in so far as eligibility criteria is concerned. As a result of the work carried out, and consultation carried out, we are proposing the following changes;</p>

- To allow the use of Taxicard vouchers on Cambridge Dial-a-Ride.
- Allow the use of more than one Taxicard voucher per journey (up to 2)
- To review the application form criteria so it reflects correct requirements to include eligibility if you cannot use public transport in line with the correct benefit requirements
- To cease issuing books of 100 vouchers each worth £3.80 and replace with a book of vouchers worth £150 made up of 25 x £5 vouchers and 25 x £1 vouchers
- To consider the introduction of a discretionary admin fee for the replacement of lost books
- To remind members, taxi drivers and operators to ensure vouchers are handed over to the driver so the driver has their membership number and voucher number for invoicing purposes.
- Ask taxi operators to ensure invoices for vouchers used in one financial year are invoiced within 2 months of the new financial year.

#### 4. Responsible service

Business Support – Human Resources

#### 5. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

(Please tick all that apply)

- ☒ Residents  
☐ Visitors  
☒ Staff

The client groups affected by this review will include;

**Staff:** The renewals process is administered by the Business Support Team. They will need to be made aware of any changes which might impact on them. In particular when consulting existing members which may require letters to be sent explaining the proposals. Colleagues in other departments will also be called upon to assist and provide expertise on certain areas of the review, for example the review of the application form where advice will be sought from Revenue & Benefits.

**Members of the Public - Existing Members:** All members were written to during the renewals process prior to April 2021 making them aware of changes to be made to the scheme from 1 April and the changes proposed going forward being presented to Committee in June. The proposals were listed in the correspondence and all were asked to get in touch should they have comments or questions around the changes from 1 April or the wider review taking place.

**Taxi Companies:** Liaison with taxi drivers and operators to inform them of the changes proposed around the vouchers included areas surrounding the invoicing for the reimbursements of the vouchers, so we receive the same information on invoices from each company. Further communication will be had with the taxi drivers and operators after the outcome of the committee meeting is known.

Cambridge Dial-a-Ride: Our proposals are linked with this service which Cambridge City Council supports in the form of a Grant Agreement. Officers at DaR are aware the proposal going to Committee around allowing the use of Taxicard vouchers on their buses. Further communication will be had with DaR after the outcome of the committee meeting is known.

The Council's supplier of the Taxicard Scheme Vouchers: Our existing provider has been made aware there could be a change to the denomination and value of vouchers from the 1 October. Any amendments to the way in which the books are currently issued, will need to be discussed with them. Further communication will be had with them once the outcome of the committee meeting is known.

**6. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this?**

- ☐ New  
☐ Major change  
☒ Minor change

**7. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick)**

- ☒ Yes  
☐ No

If 'Yes' please provide details below:

- Cambridge Dial-Ride
- Taxi Drivers and Operators
- The Council's provider of the Taxicard book of vouchers
- Revenue & Benefits Team
- The Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety approved an the out of cycle decision and the Chair and Spokes were consulted in line with procedures set out in the Council constitution in relation to the amendments to the scheme from 1 April 2021.
- Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee Members were also formally informed by way of an out of cycle decision on the amendment to the scheme from 1 April.

**8. Has the report on your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service gone to Committee? If so, which one?**

The proposals will be presented to Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 29 June.

**9. What research methods/ evidence have you used in order to identify equality impacts of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?**

Discussions with 7 local authorities (including South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council) on similar schemes they operate were held to identify if the pattern being seen for reductions in our membership was being experienced by others, how many vouchers are in their books, the value of their vouchers, if they increase the voucher values annually and how many vouchers are permitted each journey.

A conversation was had with our existing supplier of Taxicard Vouchers to see whether the books could be produced in different ways going forward, i.e, a mix of voucher values in each book, and issuing throughout the year to new members.

Some data analysis work was carried out to identify the number of vouchers issued in one particular financial year by our Taxicard members. From that, a large piece of data analysis work was carried out to identify how many vouchers each member used in that year.

Information was obtained on a sample of journey destinations to see how members are using their vouchers. This identified that, in the main, they are being used to go to the shops / town, hospital, for recreational purposes, railway station and the doctors.

Consultation has taken place with disability organisational groups including Camsight, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Disability Cambridge on the changes to the scheme from 1 April and on the proposals from 1 October. Feedback received from disability organisational groups supported the proposals. Some were unaware of the scheme which has highlighted the need for further publication of the scheme going forward which will be addressed as part of the review.

Informal consultation was also undertaken with taxi drivers and operators, the Council's provider of Taxicard vouchers and existing members in relation to the changes to the system from 1 April and proposed changes from 1 October.

**10. Potential impacts**

For each category below, please explain if the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could have a positive/ negative impact or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is. Consider impacts on service users, visitors and staff members separately.

**(a) Age - Please also consider any safeguarding issues for children and adults at risk**

The scheme is open to disabled people of all ages and especially benefits older people who may be more likely to have disabilities to qualify for the scheme.

The criteria for joining the scheme changed in 2006 to bring in a means tested element to the eligibility. At the time of the change, special rights were granted for those aged 80+ before 2006 who were automatically issued with a Taxicard. That right was removed for new applicants after 2006. That means that those members aged 80+ before 2006 do not need to meet the financial criteria to remain on the scheme.

**(b) Disability**

The scheme is to benefit people with disabilities who live within the Cambridge City Boundary and the review aims increase usage by existing members and to increase membership, which would mean it benefits more disabled people.

Currently, to qualify members must indicate how they meet one of the following;

- Income Support / Pension Credit / Income Based Jobseekers' Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Universal Credit
- Council Tax Reduction including Disability premiums / reductions, but NOT including 25% single occupancy reduction
- Income – related Employment and Support Allowance (not contribution – based ESA)

(Applicants are asked to provide the letter sent to them when awarded the allowance or benefit)

Applicants must also provide proof of one of the following;

- Higher Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Mobility Enhanced Personal Independence Payment
- Attendance Allowance
- War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement
- Be registered blind or partially sighted

(Applicants are asked to provide the letter sent to them when awarded the allowance or benefit)

Or

- A permanent wheelchair user
- You cannot walk without a walking aid such as a frame crutches etc
- Cannot walk more than 100 metres

- Unable to stand unsupported for more than 5 minutes

(A medical practitioner is required to complete part of the form here for compliance)

Proposals will include reviewing the existing eligibility criteria which, if approved, will provide opportunities for those who are not currently eligible, to apply to join the scheme.

We consulted with the following groups on the approved amendment to the scheme from 1 April 2021 and also the proposals being presented to Committee in June;

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Healthwatch
- Disability Cambridgeshire
- Camsight

(see 9 above for feedback received)

Existing Taxicard members were written to informing them of the changes to the scheme from 1 April and also the proposals going to Committee in June, which if approved would be implemented from 1 October 2021. No feedback positive or negative has been received on this, however indication shows that some members are choosing to use 2 vouchers per journey as opposed to the 1 previously permitted. Data analysis work on this is ongoing.

### **(c) Gender reassignment**

No Impact identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

### **(d) Marriage and civil partnership**

No Impact identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

### **(e) Pregnancy and maternity**

No Impact identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

**(f) Race – Note that the protected characteristic ‘race’ refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.**

No Impact identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

**(g) Religion or belief**

No Impact identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

**(h) Sex**

No Impact identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

**(i) Sexual orientation**

No Impact identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

**(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular, please consider the impact of any changes on low income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty**

It is hoped the proposals will benefit low income groups as use of the Taxicard scheme is means-tested.

See (b) for qualifying criteria.

**11. Action plan – New equality impacts will be identified in different stages throughout the planning and implementation stages of changes to your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service. How will you monitor these going forward? Also, how will you ensure that any potential negative impacts of the changes will be mitigated? (Please include dates where possible for when you will update this EqlA accordingly.)**

However we will seek to obtain feedback from Disability Groups on how any changes may have impacted on the users, addressing any negative impacts where possible but also hopefully to gain

some insight into whether the changes have made a positive impact on users, which is the aim of the review.

This assessment will be reviewed once the consultation has taken place.

We will carry out consultation with existing members to see how the scheme implemented from 1 April to 30 September has supported them more, or otherwise and consultation will take place with members again, once any new system has been in place so feedback is received and can be actioned accordingly.

Following this, we would look to review this EqlA again in January 2022.

## 12. Do you have any additional comments?

The review was carried out in an attempt to increase the usage of the scheme, to encourage existing members to use it more, to obtain new membership and to adapt the scheme to make it more appealing to members. Another part of the review was to look at the back office administration of the scheme in conjunction with taxi drivers and operators, and look at the Cambridge Dial-a-Ride scheme and how we could work with them when considering our proposals for the Taxicard.

## 13. Sign off

Name and job title of lead officer for this equality impact assessment: Sharon Line, Corporate Business & Executive Support Manager

Names and job titles of other assessment team members and people consulted: Deborah Simpson, Head of HR

Date of EqlA sign off: June 2021

Date of next review of the equalities impact assessment: January 2022

Date to be published on Cambridge City Council website: [Click here to enter text.](#)

**All EqlAs need to be sent to Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer. Ctrl + click on the button below to send this (you will need to attach the form to the email):**

**Send form**





## Item 2

### Biodiversity Supplementary Planning

### Document:

### Report

**To:**

Councillor Katie Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport.  
Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee [29/06/2021]

**Report by:**

Stephen Kelly, Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

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**Wards affected:**

All

### Key Decision

#### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This new Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (BSPD) has been drafted in consultation with Members and technical officers of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) and is headed toward public consultation prior to amendment and later proposed adoption by this Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council under the auspices of GCSP. Once adopted, this SPD will provide guidance to users on how to meet the current policy requirements to protect and enhance biodiversity through the planning process as set out in existing Local Plan policy, and national legislation.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive Councilors are recommended to:

1. Approve this SPD for public consultation phase to begin in July 2021.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 This BSPD was approved as a project by GCSP Place Board in December 2020, after a period of evaluating the pros and cons of investing in a new SPD for biodiversity, or whether a Technical Note would have met the need for improved guidance. However, it was suggested that the relative weakness of a Technical Note in the planning process did not do justice to the need to have robust, clear and up-to-date guidance around biodiversity matters in the GCSP planning process which carried the weight of an SPD. The age of the existing SCDC SPD for biodiversity (2009), and the lack of a biodiversity SPD for City were also contributing factors in the decision to progress the SPD.
- 3.2 The outline plan for the SPD was taken before SCDC Climate and Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) in January 2021 and the drafting stage of the document began in late January, after meeting with the drafting consultants, Essex Place Services (EPS) and agreeing a scope of work. Since January, EPS have been drafting sections, making these available and getting feedback from a project team which includes technical specialists from Communications, Policy, Ecology, Development Management, Landscape and Trees. In addition, we have sought engagement with Members from both Councils and held meetings to discuss progress and receive feedback.

### 4. Considerations

- 4.1 Once adopted, this BSPD will supersede the current guidance document (SCDC 2009), but it will only advise on *existing* regulations within Local Plan policies and current national legislation, like the NPPF. As an SPD it will *not* create any new policies around biodiversity but seek to amplify and clarify rules that development schemes must follow in order to protect and enhance biodiversity in Greater Cambridge.

- 4.2 We anticipate that the publication of the UK Gov Environment Bill will take place during the consultation period of this SPD, or, immediately after it, during the second round of Member committees to adopt the SPD. As such, language has been used in the SPD that points to a Biodiversity Net Gain percentage in line with that anticipated in the Environment Bill (10% BNG), as a minimum. However, we have also included language which clearly describes the *aspiration* of both Councils toward a higher percentage (suggested as 20% BNG), for all new development within Greater Cambridge. While not binding, this messaging sets the expectation reflected in the approach of both Councils toward improving biodiversity and Doubling Nature.
- 4.3 The timeline for bringing this SPD before the Member committees in both Councils is extremely tight (throughout June). This is a function of the committee calendar, but also the need to avoid a later Autumn window, as the new Local Plan consultations will be underway then and we have been advised not to clash with that process. As such, there is little wiggle room for delays to approval of this SPD for the next phase, (public consultation).

## **5. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

No additional costs beyond those previously anticipated as part of preparing an SPD.

### **(b) Staffing Implications**

To progress the BSPD, officer time will be required to ensure that it moves smoothly through the consultation phase, is amended and then bought back to this body for adoption. Staffing requirements were set out in the PID for this project and are on-track.

### **(c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

Equality Impact Assessment (attached)

#### **(d) Environmental Implications**

A Strategic Environmental Assessment has been produced for this SPD.

#### **(e) Procurement Implications**

None

#### **(f) Community Safety Implications**

None

### **6. Consultation and communication considerations**

Consultation on an SPD is required to be in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement and the consultation period for this SPD is planned for July and August. The timing to avoid consultation overlap with other consultations being run by the Shared Planning Service, interrelated wider council or external partner consultations.

Given that the report is also going to SCDC Cabinet, delegated powers are also sought should there be any minor changes made by that process - to be delegated to the Joint Planning Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor.

### **7. Background papers**

- None

### **8. Appendices**

- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Habitat Regulations Assessment
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Consultation Statement

## **9. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact

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# Greater Cambridge Shared Planning

## Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document

DRAFT  
June 2021

## Contents

1. Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document.....	5
1.1. Introduction .....	5
1.2. Status of the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document .....	5
1.3. Purpose .....	6
2. UK legislation .....	8
2.1. Current Legislation.....	8
3. Planning Policy.....	12
3.1. Planning context .....	12
3.2. National Policy and Guidance.....	12
3.3. Existing Local Policies .....	13
3.4. Local Biodiversity Strategies.....	15
3.5. Permitted Development .....	17
4. The Biodiversity Resource .....	20
4.1. Introduction .....	20
4.2. Statutory designated sites.....	20
4.3. Non statutory designated Local Sites.....	23
4.4. Protected Species.....	24
4.5. Priority Habitats .....	24
4.6. Priority Species.....	25
4.7. Red List species .....	25
4.8. Non-native invasive species .....	26
5. Biodiversity in the development management process .....	27
5.1. Introduction .....	27
5.2. Overarching Principles.....	27
5.3. Site selection stage.....	29
5.4. Pre-application stage .....	30
5.5. Design stage.....	33
5.6. Application stage .....	43
5.7. Construction stage.....	51
5.8. Post - Construction stage.....	51



## Figures

Figure 1 National Character Areas within Greater Cambridge .....	17
Figure 2 Internationally designated sites.....	21
Figure 3 Nationally designated sites .....	22
Figure 4 Locally designated sites.....	23
Figure 5 Stages within the development management process.....	27
Figure 6 Even small sites can support protected and Priority Species.....	34
Figure 7 Hedgehog Highway gaps in boundary fence. ....	36
Figure 8 Landscaping and soils .....	37
Figure 9 Integrated nesting habitat for birds or bats.....	38
Figure 10 A biodiverse roof.....	39
Figure 11 SuDS feature in a new development.....	40
Figure 12 Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC .....	47

## Appendices

Appendix 1 Local Plan policies to be supported by this Supplementary Planning Document

Appendix 2 Protected species and ecological survey seasons

## Index of Biodiversity Issues

B1	Mitigation hierarchy	27
B2	Protection of irreplaceable habitats	29
B3	Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing	31
B4	Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity habitats & species	33
B5	Biodiversity provision in the design of new buildings & open spaces	35
B6	Provision of biodiverse and living roofs	38
B7	Biodiversity Net Gain	41
B8	Habitats Regulations Assessment	44
B9	Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation bat protocol	46
B10	Recreational pressure on sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest	47

## Biodiversity SPD foreword – PLACEHOLDER TEXT ONLY – YET TO BE APPROVED

Greater Cambridge is one of the fastest growing areas in the country, yet has relatively small amounts of land managed for nature. It is vital that we protect, enhance and grow our biodiversity, both in terms of the amount of land managed specifically for nature, and the richness of biodiversity throughout our urban and rural environments.

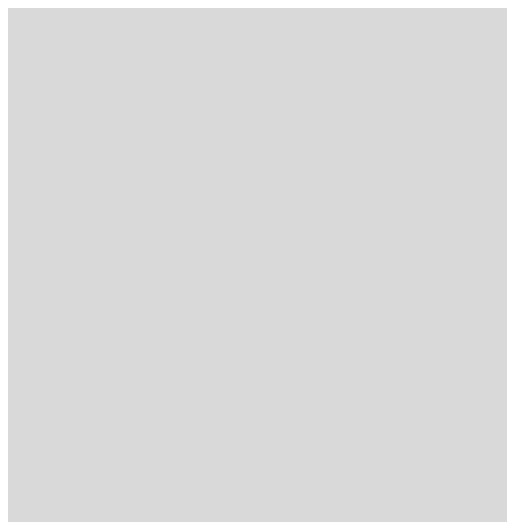
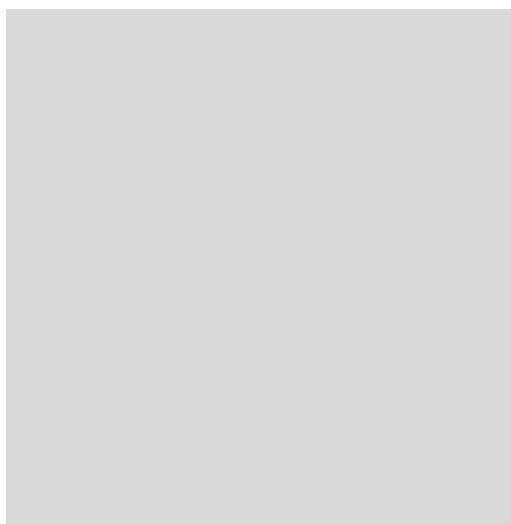
This Supplementary Planning Document sets out guidance to assist applicants in meeting the policies of the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans as well as the relevant national legislation. It provides clear guidance on how developments should consider biodiversity in their plans and includes important practical considerations which can be taken into account early in the planning process to ensure that biodiversity is increased and enhanced as an outcome of development. This will help to ensure improved quality of new developments while reducing environmental impact as we deliver the new homes and businesses we need.

We look forward to applicants and developers applying this guidance across all scales of development and helping us create a greener and more biodiverse Greater Cambridge for future generations.

Cllr Katie Thornburrow  
Executive Councillor for Planning Policy, Cambridge City Council

Cllr Dr. Tumi Hawkins  
Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, South Cambridgeshire District Council

IMAGES OF COUNCILLORS TO GO HERE



## **1. Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document**

### **1.1. Introduction**

- 1.1.1. Biodiversity, a term coined in 1985 as a contraction of “biological diversity” describes the variety of life on Earth, in all its forms and all its interactions. It incorporates all species and habitats, both rare and common, and includes genetic diversity. Biodiversity at local, national and global levels is under pressure as never before from climate change, habitat loss, species decline, and the threat of invasive species. Much of the habitat loss is driven by urban development fuelled by the need for housing and infrastructure. Species once considered to be common in Greater Cambridge are facing increasing stresses upon their populations and the rate of species loss has never been higher. International initiatives exist to reduce the rate of species loss and at the national level lists of species and habitats that require particular measures to halt their decline have been produced.
- 1.1.2. Our goal in Greater Cambridge is to build *quality* places, rich in biodiversity and green infrastructure, good for people and good for nature. Both Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have declared a biodiversity emergency, and strongly support a step change in the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Greater Cambridge. This is further amplified in initiatives like South Cambridgeshire’s Doubling Nature Strategy and Cambridge City’s upcoming Biodiversity Strategy. These documents pave the way for greater aspiration and more robust biodiversity policies in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- 1.1.3. As development forms one of the largest threats to biodiversity through the loss of natural habitats, it is incumbent on planning authorities and developers to recognise the importance of biodiversity protection and enhancement through provisions made in Local Plan policies, and through the enforcement of relevant national legislation. However, we can only do that if developments coming forward incorporate the correct elements from the beginning of the design process through to their build out.
- 1.1.4. Enhancing biodiversity through the planning and development process brings numerous benefits. These will include, but not be limited to; improved habitats for species, flood protection, carbon sequestration as well as the broader secondary benefits for people, like improved mental health from access to natural green spaces.
- 1.1.5. Going forward, biodiversity will not be peripheral to the planning process but will be fully integrated into the design stages. Consideration will be given, wherever possible, to the retention of biodiversity features within developments and to incorporating new habitats or specific biodiversity features into designs.
- 1.1.6. Biodiversity is a valuable addition to any development, often helping to create attractive natural green spaces which integrate development of a high-quality design into the local landscape or townscape.

### **1.2. Status of the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document**

- 1.2.1. When adopted, this draft Supplementary Planning Document will support existing policies for both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council ahead of the

adoption of a Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which is in preparation jointly by both authorities.

- 1.2.2. This Supplementary Planning Document provides practical advice and guidance on how to develop proposals that comply with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and the district-wide policies in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, adopted in September 2018, as well as those in the Cambridge Local Plan, adopted in October 2018. It also references policies in individual Area Action Plans for major developments, which may vary from the policies in the two adopted Local Plan documents.
- 1.2.3. The existing policies seek to ensure that biodiversity is adequately protected and enhanced throughout the development process. This Supplementary Planning Document provides additional details on how local policies will be implemented while also building on relevant legislation, national policy, central government advice, and the British Standard BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development. Available information about the contents of the emerging Environmental Bill has been referenced and, after adoption, this Supplementary Planning Document will be updated once the Bill becomes an Act.
- 1.2.4. This Supplementary Planning Document will supersede the South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document, adopted in 2009 to support adopted Development Control Policies. It will in time support the Greater Cambridge Local Plan when this is adopted.

### **1.3. Purpose**

- 1.3.1. The objective of this Supplementary Planning Document is to assist the delivery of the Local Plan policies for both Councils relating to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.
- 1.3.2. The Supplementary Planning Document does not create policy, but explains how Local Plan policies should be interpreted and applied and provides guidance, setting out with clarity, the expectations that the Councils have for the treatment of biodiversity within the development management system and how those should be reflected by developers, their agents and their consultants in their submissions.
- 1.3.3. Reference is made throughout, with links where appropriate, to other available guidance that can help to direct and refine the design of development sites to ensure that opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity are incorporated from the very start of the development process.
- 1.3.4. Specific objectives for this document are:
  - To explain terminology associated with biodiversity conservation to assist applicants' understanding of the importance of biodiversity within the wider environment of Greater Cambridge

- To be clear on the ways in which development proposals in Greater Cambridge can be formulated in an appropriate manner to avoid harm to biodiversity and to provide a long-term, measurable net gain for biodiversity
- To encourage applicants to protect, restore and enhance locally relevant natural habitats and ecological features on their sites and to create new habitats, as part of a high-quality design
- To assist applicants to gain planning permission in Greater Cambridge more quickly by informing them of the level of information expected to accompany planning applications

## **2. UK legislation**

### **2.1. Current Legislation**

- 2.1.1. In their planning submissions, applicants are expected to demonstrate that their proposals are compliant with all relevant legislation regarding the protection of wildlife and habitats and should ensure that they receive the necessary professional advice to be able to do so. This legislation applies equally to projects that do not require planning consent (see section 3.5).
- 2.1.2. The principal legislation relating to biodiversity conservation in the UK, as it interacts with the planning system, is summarised below.

#### **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)**

- 2.1.3. These Regulations, often referred to as the Habitats Regulations, were the mechanism through which the European Commission Habitats and Wild Birds Directives were incorporated into UK law. The Habitats Regulations have been amended to reflect the consequences of Brexit, but their substance has been retained to provide protection for sites, habitats and species considered to be of international importance, including the designation of Habitats Sites (see Section 4.2).
- 2.1.4. Local Planning Authorities have the duty, by virtue of being defined as 'competent authorities' under the Habitats Regulations, to ensure that planning application decisions comply with the Habitats Regulations. If the requirements of the Habitats Regulations are not met and impacts on Habitats Sites are not mitigated, then development must not be permitted.
- 2.1.5. Where a Habitats Site could be affected by a plan, such as a Local Plan, or any project, such as a new development, then Habitats Regulations Assessment screening must be undertaken. If this cannot rule out any possible likely significant effect on a Habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans & projects, prior to the consideration of mitigation measures, then an Appropriate Assessment must then be undertaken. The Appropriate Assessment identifies the interest features of the site (such as birds, plants or coastal habitats), how these could be harmed, assesses whether the proposed plan or project could have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Habitats Site (either alone or in-combination), and finally how this could be mitigated to meet the Stage 2 Habitats Regulations Assessment "integrity" test.
- 2.1.6. The aim of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process is to 'maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest' (The European Commission Habitats Directive, 92/43/EEC, Article 2(2)). The Habitats Regulations 2017 have transposed the European Union Habitats and Wild Birds Directives into UK law to make them operable from 1 January 2021. These remain unchanged until amended by Parliament so the requirements for Habitats Regulations Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) have been retained.

### **Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012**

- 2.1.7. These regulations set out the procedures for making Tree Preservation Orders and the activities that are prohibited in relation to trees protected by these orders. Tree Preservation Orders can be made for trees or groups of trees because of their nature conservation value, as well as for their amenity value.

### **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006**

- 2.1.8. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act places a duty on public bodies in England to conserve biodiversity. It requires local authorities and government departments to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity in a manner that is consistent with the exercise of their normal functions such as policy and decision-making.
- 2.1.9. Section 41 requires the Secretary of State to publish and maintain lists of species and types of habitats which are regarded by Natural England to be of "principal importance" for the purposes of conserving biodiversity in England, and these are known as Priority Species and Priority Habitats.

### **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**

- 2.1.10. Amongst other things, this act strengthens the protection afforded to Sites of Special Scientific Interest, including greater powers for Natural England to be able to secure their appropriate management and a requirement for Local Authorities to further their conservation and enhancement.

### **Hedgerow Regulations 1997**

- 2.1.11. Although outside of the development management process, these regulations provide a convenient framework for the identification of hedgerows with importance for wildlife, landscape and heritage. For projects that do not require planning consent, the requirements of the regulations would need to be met to permit the removal of any hedgerow or hedgerow section, except if it forms a curtilage to a property.

### **Protection of Badgers Act 1992**

- 2.1.12. This Act refers specifically to Badgers, and makes it an offence to kill, injure or take a Badger, or to damage or interfere with a sett unless a licence is obtained from a statutory authority.

### **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)**

- 2.1.13. The Wildlife and Countryside Act is the primary mechanism for the protection of all wildlife in the UK and includes schedules that set out those species with additional levels of protection. It also provides the basis for the identification of sites of national importance for nature conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

### **Emerging UK Environment Bill**

- 2.1.14. Government published the draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill in December 2018, with an updated statement on policy in July 2019. The Bill reached the

report stage on 26th January 2021, but then the passage of the Bill was postponed until the next parliamentary session, meaning that the earliest it will be enacted is the autumn of 2021.

- 2.1.15. Full details of the requirements of the legislation will not be available until nearer that time, when the wording of the Bill and any associated regulations is finalised, but what is known in relation to biodiversity and planning is summarised here. It should be noted that this is only a small part of a wide-ranging Bill with broad coverage of environmental matters.
- 2.1.16. Based on current indications, the Bill is likely to mandate the delivery of a minimum percentage net gain for biodiversity by way of a general condition on grants of planning permission requiring that the biodiversity value of the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the site by a minimum value, which is currently set at 10%. Biodiversity value will be measured using a Metric produced by Defra and the baseline value will be calculated from the condition of the site before any intervention has occurred. The development's biodiversity value will include the post development biodiversity value of the site, together with the value of any off-site biodiversity measures and the value of any biodiversity credits purchased.
- 2.1.17. Mandatory net gain for biodiversity will not apply to permissions granted under Development Consent Orders, such as those made for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, and the Secretary of State can apply other exceptions by regulations. Once the Environment Bill is enacted, there will be a transition period of two years before this requirement becomes mandatory.
- 2.1.18. Net gain requirements will not undermine the existing range of protections in planning policy and legislation for irreplaceable habitats and protected sites and species.
- 2.1.19. There will be a statutory requirement introduced for Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be produced by a responsible authority appointed by the Government. The responsible authority will be a relevant local public body and is likely to be a Local Nature Partnership or a County Council. These strategies will map important habitats and areas where there is an opportunity to improve the local environment as a means to guide biodiversity net gain and other policies.
- 2.1.20. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act will be amended so that biodiversity duty for public bodies in the exercise of their functions, set out in Section 40, will be strengthened to include enhancement in addition to conservation. The amendment will require public authorities to actively carry out strategic assessments of the actions they can take to enhance and conserve biodiversity. Designated public authorities will also be required to produce a five-yearly report on the actions taken to comply with the new duty.



2.1.21. The Councils' interim expectations in relation to net gain for biodiversity and our approach to assessment within the planning process, pending the clarification of legislative and regulatory requirements, is set out under Biodiversity Issue B7.

### **3. Planning Policy**

#### **3.1. Planning context**

3.1.1. As local planning authorities, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council have a statutory duty to carry out certain planning functions for their administrative areas. These functions include the preparation of a Local Plan and the determination of planning applications. The way these functions are to be carried out is governed by legislation and specified within the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), with reference to further guidance, standards and best practice focussed on different considerations that influence planning decisions.

3.1.2. The following sections summarise current planning policy, as relevant to the subject of conserving and enhancing biodiversity. It should be noted that the subject of biodiversity overlaps significantly with other policy and strategy areas, including landscape, arboriculture, green infrastructure, health and wellbeing, sustainability, and climate change.

#### **3.2. National Policy and Guidance**

3.2.1. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) promotes sustainable, well-designed development. Within this aim, it seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment and ensure that biodiversity and appropriate landscaping are fully integrated into new developments in order to create accessible green spaces for wildlife and people, to contribute to a high quality natural and built environment, and to contribute to a better quality of life.

3.2.2. Section 15 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) covers the role of the planning system in conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 170 states that planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things:

- protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value;
- minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

3.2.3. Paragraph 171 states that development plans should take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure.

3.2.4. Paragraph 174 states that to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping-stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

- 3.2.5. Paragraph 175 restates the principle that in making planning decisions, a hierarchical approach should be followed, so that significant harm should be avoided, but if it can't be avoided must be adequately mitigated, or as a last resort compensated.
- 3.2.6. Paragraph 175 also introduces the idea of irreplaceable habitats, development resulting in the loss and deterioration of which should be refused apart from in exceptional circumstances and where a compensation strategy has been produced. Within the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), the definition given for irreplaceable habitats is: "Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen."
- 3.2.7. Additional national guidance on biodiversity and planning matters is provided on the [Government's Planning Practice Guidance](#) webpages, under the Natural Environment section. This includes links to Natural England's standing advice on protected sites and species, which provides information to Local Planning Authorities on how to assess ecological issues in the determination of planning applications. Other sections provide developers with advice on how to prepare a planning proposal in such a way as to avoid impacts to protected species.
- 3.2.8. [Government Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and geological conservation – statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system](#) provides further guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation. This clarifies the need for information submitted in support of planning applications to be sufficient to provide local planning authorities with certainty of likely impacts and certainty that mitigation can be secured, giving weight to the conservation of biodiversity within the development control process to avoid decisions being challenged.

### **3.3. Existing Local Policies**

- 3.3.1. The policies from the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the Cambridge Local Plan that include an aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and that this Supplementary Planning Document supports and expands upon, are set out below. Full wording of these policies is included in Appendix 1.

#### **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan**

- NH/2 Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character
- NH/3: Protecting Agricultural Land
- NH/4 Biodiversity
- NH/5 Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance
- NH/6 Green Infrastructure
- NH/7 Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees
- CC/8 Sustainable Drainage Systems
- HQ/1 Design Principles

### **Cambridge Local Plan**

- 7 The River Cam
- 8 Setting of the city
- 31 Integrated water management
- 52 Protecting garden land and the subdivision of existing dwelling plots
- 57 Designing New Buildings (criteria h.)
- 58 Altering and extending existing buildings
- 59 Designing landscape and the public realm
- 66 Paving over front gardens
- 69 Protection of sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance
- 70 Protection of Priority Species and Habitats
- 71 Trees

### **Area Action Plans and Neighbourhood Plans**

3.3.2. Area Action Plans are documents that are adopted as part of the Local Plan and that set out policies and guidance for specific areas within the Council's administrative area. Neighbourhood Plans provide a similar function but are prepared by local communities. Both kinds of documents usually include policies that refer to biodiversity features, adding to the planning policy context for development management.

3.3.3. Neighbourhood Plans are an opportunity for communities to improve their local environment, including protecting and enhancing existing assets, such as local parks, nature reserves and other green spaces. Making biodiversity an integral part of neighbourhood planning can also help to manage environmental risk and improve resilience to climate change. For example, identifying a local biodiversity network and integrating with land use policies could help to manage the risk of flooding by protecting natural blue and green spaces from development as well as designate these as Local Green Spaces where they provide public benefits.

3.3.4. Information about existing Area Action Plans, the areas designated for Neighbourhood Plans and the status of the plans can be found on the [South Cambridgeshire District Council website](#) and the [Cambridge City Council website](#).

### **Other relevant adopted Supplementary Planning Documents**

3.3.5. Other Supplementary Planning Documents have been produced individually or collaboratively by the Councils, and these should be read alongside this one to ensure cross compliance and integration. The following documents are of direct relevance to Biodiversity, but this does not represent a complete list of Supplementary Planning Documents.

3.3.6. South Cambridgeshire District Council has adopted the following Supplementary Planning Documents

- [Biodiversity SPD](#) (adopted July 2009),
- [Landscape in New Development](#) (adopted March 2010)
- [Trees and Development Sites](#) (adopted January 2009)
- [Open Space in New Development](#) (adopted January 2009)

- [District Design Guide SPD](#) (adopted March 2010) particularly Chapters 2 & 3
- [Bourn Airfield New Village](#) (adopted October 2019),
- [Waterbeach New Town](#) (adopted February 2019),
- [Cottenham Village Design Statement](#) (adopted November 2007)
- [Fen Drayton Former Land Settlement Association Estate](#) (adopted May 2011)

3.3.7. Both Councils adopted the [Cambridgeshire Flood and Water](#) Supplementary Planning Document in 2018, which includes a strong focus on design and management of Sustainable Drainage Systems to enhance biodiversity value.

3.3.8. Both Councils adopted a [Sustainable Design and Construction](#) Supplementary Planning Document in January 2020 and are currently developing a new Local landscape character area study Supplementary Planning Document.

### **3.4. Local Biodiversity Strategies**

3.4.1. The following paragraphs summarise the range of strategies and projects of relevance to Greater Cambridge that are aimed at enhancing biodiversity or that provide technical support to focus measures that will achieve this. All of these have been endorsed or adopted by the Councils and should be used to guide decisions on habitat creation and species protection included within planning proposals. Reference to these initiatives would demonstrate the strategic basis of applicants' decision making around biodiversity matters.

3.4.2. Natural Cambridgeshire is the Local Nature Partnership covering the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, providing strategic leadership for the recovery of nature under their [Doubling Nature vision](#). This vision seeks to achieve an increase in the amount of land managed for nature from 8% to 16%, by 2050. One of the main areas of focus to achieve this vision is securing high quality green and blue infrastructure within new residential and commercial developments.

3.4.3. Natural Cambridgeshire has developed a '[Development with Nature Toolkit](#)' to provide developers with a means of demonstrating their commitment to achieving a net gain in biodiversity on major developments. The optional toolkit provides standard guidance that, if followed from the earliest stages of development planning, will determine whether nature is enhanced by the scheme or not. This best-practice document is endorsed by both Councils.

3.4.4. The [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Future Parks Accelerator Project](#) follows a collaborative approach, seeking to safeguard the future of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough parks and green spaces by finding new ways to deliver, manage and fund parks and open space, with a shared vision across a wide range of partners and stakeholders. This work may identify future design principles and models for ongoing management of new natural green space provision that will require consideration during the planning process.

- 3.4.5. [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre](#), hosted by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire, and [Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Group](#), have prepared habitat opportunity maps covering grassland, woodland and wetland, identifying locations where habitat creation would have the most ecological benefit by connecting existing habitats where environmental conditions are most appropriate.
- 3.4.6. South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council combined to produce a [Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping report](#), which provides an evidence base of green infrastructure assets and networks across Greater Cambridge and identifies specific and deliverable opportunities to enhance and expand the network. This document has been prepared as part of the evidence base for the forthcoming Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- 3.4.7. [Cambridge City Council produced a Nature Conservation Strategy](#) that was adopted as part of the Local Plan in September 2006. The strategy is currently being reviewed but will continue to act as a guiding document for Cambridge City Council's general approach to biodiversity conservation across its range of functions. The Strategy will act in parallel to the new Supplementary Planning Document. It details the biodiversity resource within Cambridge City, sets out strategic aims and principles to be implemented in order to further nature conservation, and includes action plans to address a wide range of identified key issues. Cambridge City Council passed a motion in May 2019 to declare a [biodiversity emergency](#) and their [biodiversity webpage](#) provides links to initiatives and projects implemented as part of their Nature Conservation Strategy.
- 3.4.8. Cambridge Past, Present and Future is a charity focused on protecting and enhancing Cambridge's green landscape. In partnership with Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, it has prepared a [Cambridge Nature Network](#), covering an area within a ten-kilometre radius of Cambridge. It identifies five priority landscape areas and highlights the best opportunities for the creation of new habitats and large-scale natural greenspaces. It also sets out the mechanisms by which the Nature Network can be grown, which includes the development process.
- 3.4.9. The [Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams Project](#) seeks to protect and improve the chalk streams in and around Cambridge. The report (published in Dec 2020) provides an overview of the main problems affecting each chalk stream and the key opportunities to improve each one. It also identifies some potential projects for delivery in partnership with stakeholders and landowners.
- 3.4.10. The importance of the landscape is reflected in national planning guidance with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) stating that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. The South Cambridgeshire landscape has several distinctive and readily identified characters. These have been identified by Natural England as five distinct [National Character Areas](#):



- The Fens
- South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands
- East Anglian Chalk
- Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
- Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge.

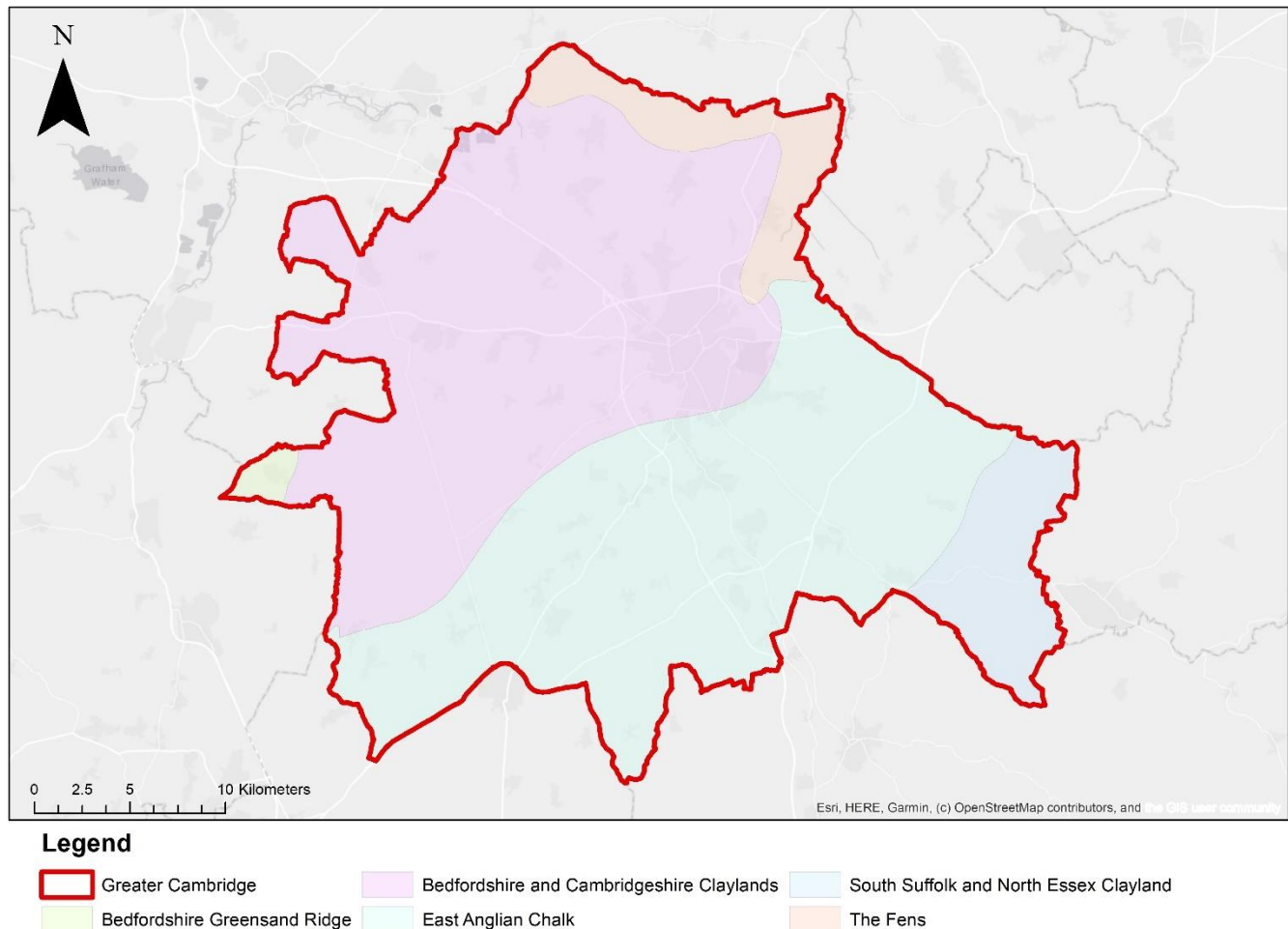


Figure 1 National Character Areas within Greater Cambridge

### 3.5. Permitted Development

- 3.5.1. [Permitted development](#) rights derived from [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015 \(as amended\)](#) mean that certain types of development can be performed without the need to apply for planning permission. However, although this would be outside the normal planning process, there remains a need for the Councils to consider the effects that any development relying on permitted development rights might have on biodiversity. Legal protection for wildlife still applies and so any legally protected animals, plants or habitats that may be affected will need proper consideration for the development to be lawful.
- 3.5.2. Certain types of development are granted planning permission by national legislation without the need to submit a planning application. This is known as 'Permitted Development'. To be eligible for these permitted development rights, each 'Class'

specified in the legislation has associated limitations and conditions that proposals must comply with.

- 3.5.3. One such condition on certain classes of permitted development is the need to submit an application to the Local Planning Authority for its 'Prior Approval'; or to determine if its 'Prior Approval' will be required. This allows the Local Planning Authority to consider the proposals, their likely impacts regarding certain factors (such as transport and highways) and how these may be mitigated. Where natural habitats and wildlife are likely to be present, adequate information must be provided to the Councils to support the assessment of the ecological implications of the development, the need for mitigation, and if necessary, the need for a licence from Natural England.
- 3.5.4. Work must not commence on the development until the Local Planning Authority has issued its determination or it has received 'deemed consent' when the time period for a determination to be issued expires. By default, this is an 8-week period from when the application is received, but this can vary depending on the type of proposal and may be extended if all parties are in agreement.
- 3.5.5. Article 4 directions are made when the character of an area of acknowledged importance would be threatened, most commonly in Conservation Areas. Where properties are affected by such a direction, some of the permitted development rights can be removed by the Councils issuing an 'Article 4' direction, which then means planning consent will be needed for work that normally does not need it.
- 3.5.6. Class Q applications are applications for Prior Approval for a change of use or conversion of a building, and any land within its curtilage, from a use as an agricultural building to that of a dwelling. Where the buildings are likely to support bats or other legally protected species, there is a risk that they may be affected by the proposals, and it is therefore essential that the Local Planning Authority has certainty of impacts prior to determination of any application. Sufficient information, including appropriate survey results, will be needed to support such an application.
- 3.5.7. Permission in Principle applications do not include a consent as this is a separate step in the planning process. The scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. Issues relevant to these 'in principle' matters should be considered at the permission in principle stage. Other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage. In addition, local authorities cannot list the information they require for applications for permission in principle in the same way they can for applications for planning permission.
- 3.5.8. Change of use applications can bring benefits if properly planned and sensitively managed. The use of grassland sites by horses for equestrian purposes can sustain their botanical interest. However, there is also much potential to damage the interest of grassland sites through overgrazing. Over-grazing may lead to the proliferation of certain undesirable species, increased soil erosion, and diffuse pollution. Development proposals for stabling or for Change of Use to paddock land will be subject to ecological



assessment based on the likelihood of protected and Priority species being present and affected, as well as impacts on the local landscape character.

## **4. The Biodiversity Resource**

### **4.1. Introduction**

- 4.1.1. Biodiversity exists everywhere and includes the ubiquitous species as well as rarities, but the designation of species and sites has been used as a means of identifying relative value and for the prioritisation of nature conservation action. This chapter provides a summary of the sites designated for their nature conservation value across the Greater Cambridge area, and of the legally protected and Priority species present.
- 4.1.2. All such sites and species are material to planning decisions, and the sites provide the core of the local ecological network as well as being integral to developing Nature Recovery Networks. Detailed information about designated sites and existing records of protected and Priority species can be obtained through a data search from [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre](#).

### **4.2. Statutory designated sites**

#### **Habitats (European) Sites**

- 4.2.1. Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation are sites of international importance protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) as a requirement of the UK's commitment to international commitments. These were formerly known as European or Natura 2000 sites. Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance that have been designated under the criteria of the international Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Collectively, these sites are now known as Habitats Sites as defined by [National Planning Policy Framework](#).
- 4.2.2. The potential impact of planning proposals on Habitats Sites inside and outside of the Greater Cambridge area will need to be covered within supporting ecological information, as guided by defined Zones of Influence agreed with Natural England. These are likely to be based on a particular impact type and are shown as Impact Risk Zones on [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) around the underpinning Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- 4.2.3. There is one Habitats Site - Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation - located within the Greater Cambridge area, and a further four within 20km of the Councils' administrative boundaries. The distribution of these sites is illustrated in Figure 2, but [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) should be consulted for boundaries and site information:
- Ouse Washes Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar - abutting the Local Plan area to the north at Earith; designated for its internationally important breeding and over-wintering assemblages of birds, for its population of Spined Loach and for the presence of other nationally rare plants and animals
  - Portholme Special Area of Conservation - 4 km to the northwest; designated for its lowland hay meadow habitat
  - Devils Dyke Special Area of Conservation - 5.8 km to the northeast; designated as an important orchid site on semi-natural dry grassland habitat

- Fenland Special Areas of Conservation, which also covers the land designated as Wicken Fen Ramsar and Chippenham Fen Ramsar – approximately 1 km to the northeast; designated for its fen meadow and calcareous fen habitats

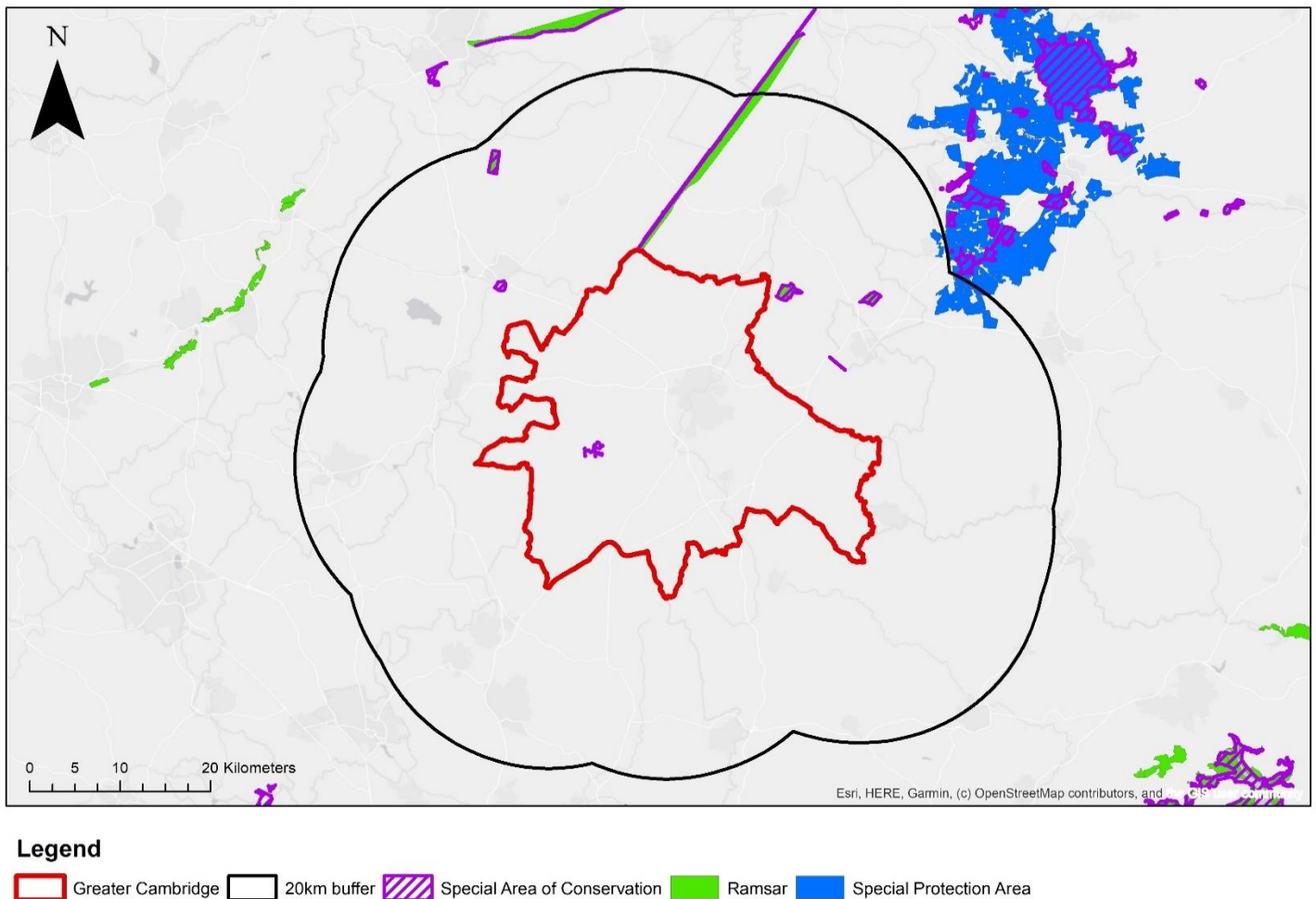
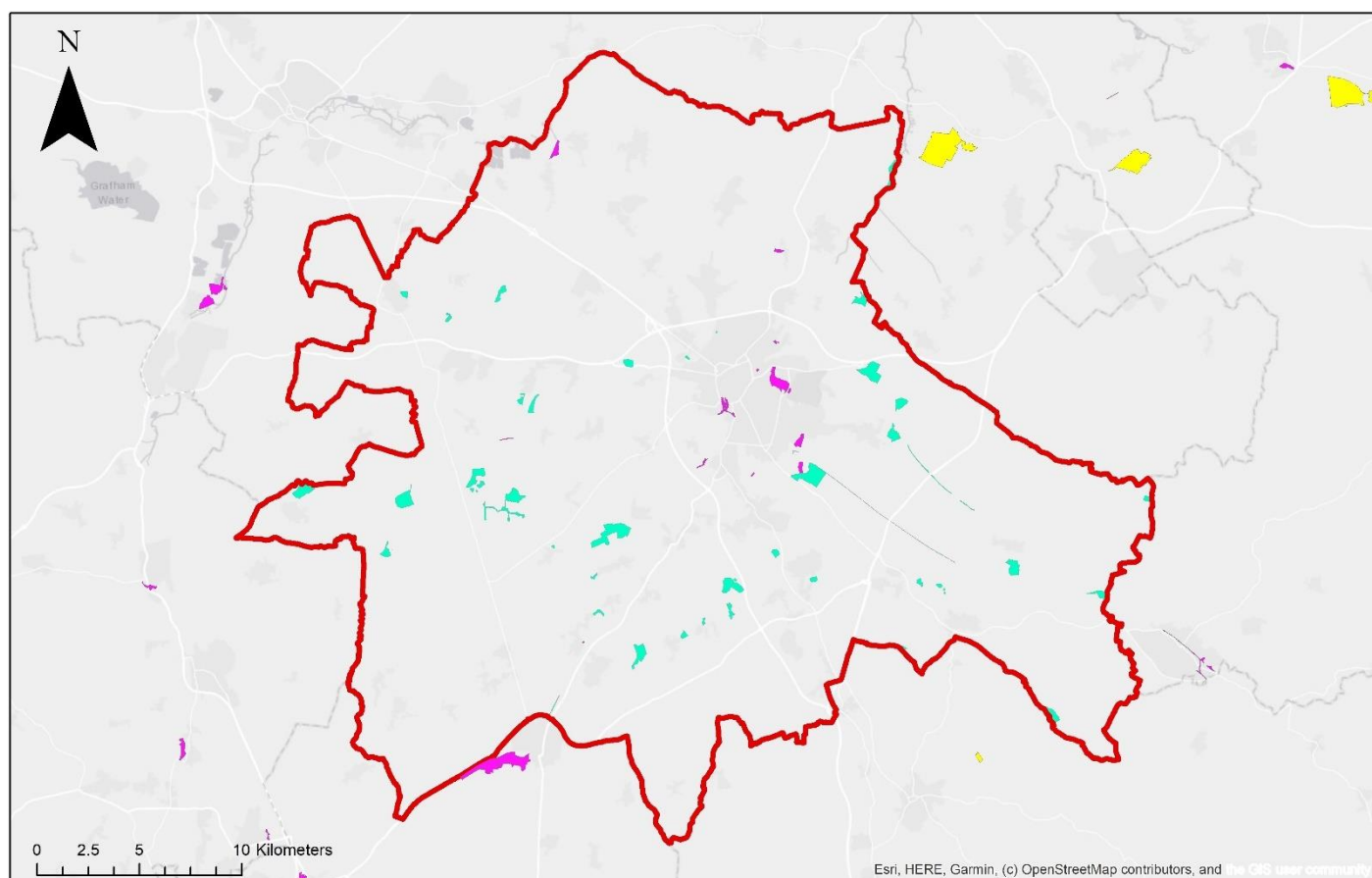


Figure 2 Internationally designated sites

- 4.2.4. The Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation comprises a mixture of ancient coppice woodland (Eversden Wood) and high forest woods likely to be of more recent origin (Wimpole Woods). Wimpole Woods holds the summer maternity roost of a population of Barbastelle bats (*Barbastella barbastellus*). The bats also use suitable habitat within the Special Area of Conservation to forage and it provides commuting routes followed when they forage outside of the site's boundary, where they utilise wet meadows, woodland streams and rivers.
- 4.2.5. Surveys to support development proposals have identified summer roosts of male Barbastelle bats in old and unmanaged woodland outside of the Special Area of Conservation, using loose bark on dead trees and crevice features caused by damage. Barbastelle bats can range 20 km per night, further for non-reproductive females, and they frequently switch tree roosts throughout the year within their territory. Barbastelle bats will remain in tree roosts over winter unless temperatures dip below freezing, when hibernation roosts have been found in features such as caves, old buildings and basements.

## Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- 4.2.6. Sites of Special Scientific Interest are designated in accordance with the duties in law placed upon each of the country nature conservation bodies to notify as a Sites of Special Scientific Interest any area of land which, in its opinion, is of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, geological, geomorphological or physiographical features.
- 4.2.7. There are 41 Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Greater Cambridge area, covering a range of habitats and geological formations, including chalk grassland, species-rich neutral grassland, reedbed and fen, Ancient Woodland, chalk pits, gravel pits and clay pits. Further information can be obtained through the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) including boundaries and links to site descriptions.



### Legend

- Greater Cambridge Local Nature Reserves National Nature Reserves Sites of Special Scientific Interest

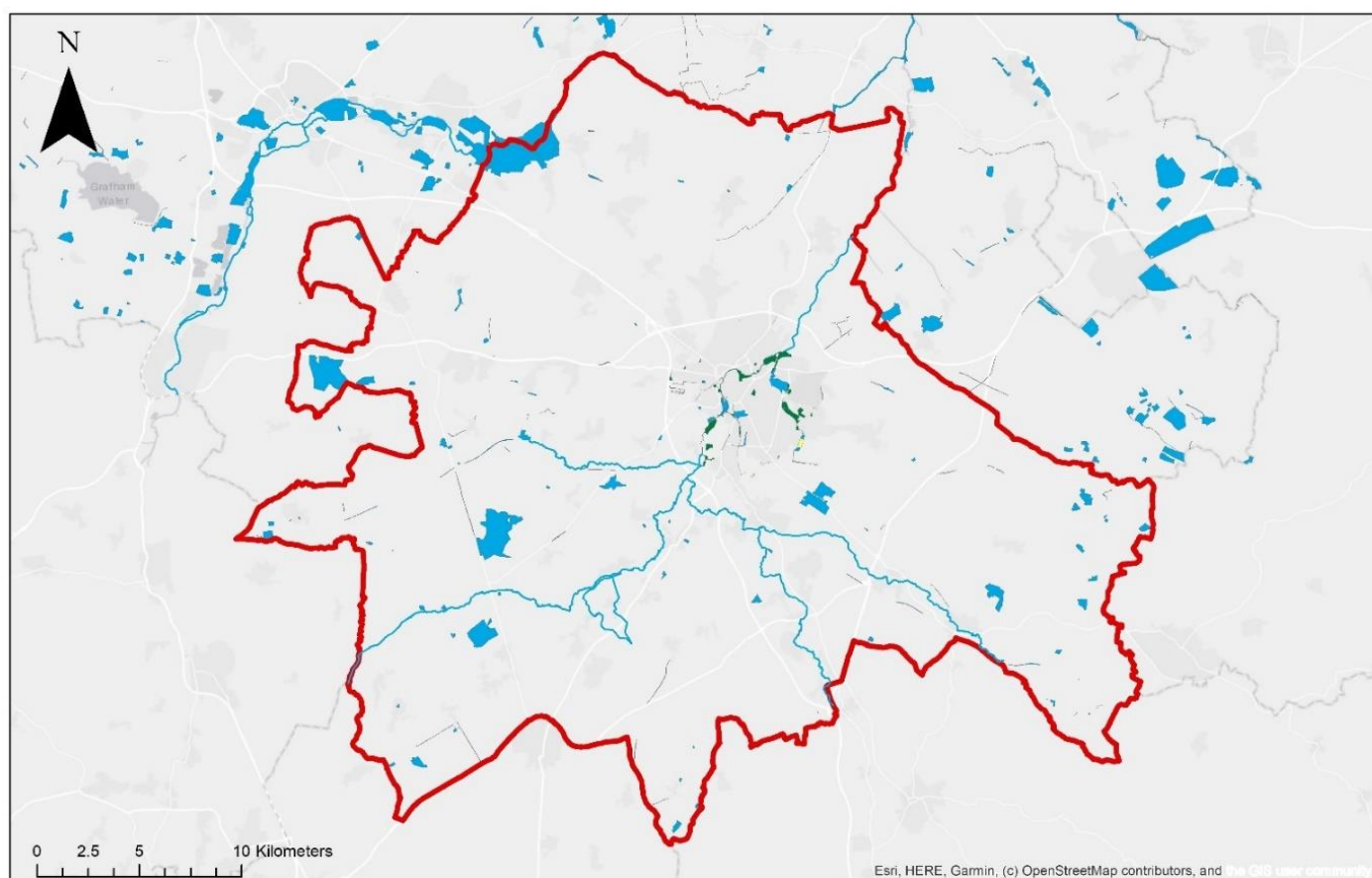
Figure 3 Nationally designated sites

## Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)

4.2.8. Local Nature Reserves are statutorily protected sites of land designated by Local Authorities because of their special natural interest, educational value and access to nature. There are 13 statutory Local Nature Reserves within the Greater Cambridge as illustrated on [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#). More information on individual Local Nature Reserves is available on the [Cambridge City Council](#) and [Cambridgeshire County Council](#) websites.

## 4.3. Non statutory designated Local Sites

4.3.1. Local Sites, as defined by [National Planning Policy Framework](#), have been identified for all Councils in Cambridgeshire and are referred to as County Wildlife Sites. These are designated for their importance for nature conservation at a county level and are identified on the Councils' Local Plan Policies Maps. County Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites identified against a set of locally developed [criteria](#), produced by Cambridgeshire & Peterborough County Wildlife Site Panel and covering both habitat and species.



### Legend

Greater Cambridge  Local Geological Sites  County Wildlife Sites  City Wildlife Sites

Figure 4 Locally designated sites



- 4.3.2. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) requires these sites to be protected through the Local Plan system as part of a Local Ecological Network. As well as supporting the majority of Priority Habitat within a given area, County Wildlife Sites often present opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, by improving existing management.
- 4.3.3. Within Cambridge City, a second layer of non-statutory sites have been identified and are referred to as [City Wildlife Sites](#), recognizing the importance of natural green space and habitats within the urban context. These sites are identified under a separate set of criteria with a lower threshold than for County Wildlife Sites.
- 4.3.4. Cambridgeshire's [Protected Roadside Verges](#) represent the best examples of road verge grassland across the county, identified for special management by Cambridgeshire County Council against a defined set of criteria based upon the presence of rare species or those indicating quality grassland habitat. Road verges constitute the largest area of unimproved grassland within the Greater Cambridge area and will be protected from development impacts. Many Protected Roadside Verges are also designated as County Wildlife Sites.

#### **4.4. Protected Species**

- 4.4.1. The presence of any legally protected species is a material consideration in the determination of a planning application. Populations of most species are dynamic and so existing records can only be used as a guide to likely presence and should be tested by appropriate field survey work.
- 4.4.2. European Protected Species with known populations within the Greater Cambridge area are Great Crested Newts, 12 species of bats (including the population of Barbastelle bats at Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation) and Otter, with a very few records of Dormouse.
- 4.4.3. A range of other UK species are protected by various pieces of legislation, primarily the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Those protected by their inclusion in the Schedules of the Act and known to be present in the Greater Cambridge area include White-clawed Crayfish, Water Vole, Badger, Common Lizard, Grass Snake and Barn Owl. The area also supports populations of Fairy Shrimp, including at the Whittlesford Thriplow Hummocky Fields Site of Special Scientific Interest.

#### **4.5. Priority Habitats**

- 4.5.1. Priority Habitats are those included within the list prepared under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. The distribution of Priority Habitats in South Cambridgeshire district and Cambridge City can be identified on the [Cambridgeshire Habitat Opportunity Map](#). Priority Habitats are largely represented by small, fragmented blocks, but there are clusters reflecting the varied environmental character of the area.
- 4.5.2. Lowland Calcareous Grassland is predominantly found to the south east of the Cambridge, within the Gog Magog Hills. To the east and north east is the fenland, with

concentrations of Lowland Fen, Reedbeds and Lowland Meadows. The corridor of the River Cam and its tributaries supports Floodplain Grassland Mosaic, Wet Woodland and Lowland Meadows, as well as the River habitat itself and Chalk Stream sections. To the west of Cambridge are Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Hedgerows, Lowland Meadows and Traditional Orchards on the boulder clay. To the north of Cambridge, the presence of Traditional Orchards on the fen edge reflect the significance of former land uses.

- 4.5.3. Natural England maintains inventories of Priority Habitats, which can be viewed on the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) map. These inventories should only be viewed as provisional, with the presence or absence of Priority Habitats to be confirmed by field survey results, with reference to the published [UK Priority habitat descriptions](#).

#### **4.6. Priority Species**

- 4.6.1. Priority Species are those included within the list prepared under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. Over 200 UK Priority Species are found in Cambridgeshire as a whole, which includes recognisable but declining species such as Common Toad, Brown Hare, House Sparrow and Hedgehog alongside a range of lesser known invertebrates, and plants such as Purple Milk-vetch.
- 4.6.2. Given the largely agricultural character of the area, there is also good representation of farmland bird species such as Skylark, Turtle Dove, Tree Sparrow, Grey Partridge and Yellowhammer, whose populations could be affected by any development on arable land. The loss of breeding territories of such farmland birds is likely to require compensation by provision on nearby farmland. Over-wintering birds such as Lapwing and Golden Plover are also important farmland species to be considered in ecology surveys.
- 4.6.3. [The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Group](#) provides a full list of Priority Species known to be present in the county.
- 4.6.4. Priority invertebrate species may be poorly recorded, but the identification of habitats and features of likely value to invertebrates should serve as a trigger to consider the need for specialist survey. The national invertebrate conservation charity Buglife has created a map of [B-Lines](#) as a strategic initiative to target habitat creation and connectivity for pollinators and has also mapped Important Invertebrate Areas, landscapes that are of particular significance for invertebrate populations, where a greater focus on impacts to favourable habitat may be required. The Fens [Important Invertebrate Area](#) lies within Greater Cambridge.
- #### **4.7. Red List species**
- 4.7.1. The nature conservation status of species has been determined by the assessment of populations against threat and rarity criteria, often at local, national and international levels. Species with higher rarity and threat statuses are generally known as Red List species. In the UK, information on national reviews and species statuses is available from the [Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#). As there is no centrally coordinated

approach to these reviews, the coverage of species groups, the age of the information, and the criteria used vary.

- 4.7.2. There is no Cambridgeshire Red List, but there is a list of [Additional Species of Interest](#), which provides comparable information and includes the [Cambridgeshire Plant Species of Conservation Concern](#).

#### **4.8. Non-native invasive species**

- 4.8.1. Vigorous or invasive non-native plant species can impact negatively upon biodiversity by out-competing native flora. This can then lead to a negative impact upon fauna by limiting the available feeding and cover areas. Species of particular concern include Signal Crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), American Mink (*Mustela vison*), Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Indian Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Floating Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*), Parrot's-feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) and Water Fern (*Azolla filiculoides*). More information is available on the webpages of the [GB Non-native Species Secretariat](#).
- 4.8.2. Where proposals at development sites are likely to result in the spread of non-native invasive plant species the development may not be permitted until suitable measures have been agreed and / or undertaken to control the invasive species. It should be noted that it is an offence to spread, or cause to grow, certain plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 as amended.



## 5. Biodiversity in the development management process

### 5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. As biodiversity is a material consideration for planning, this section covers the need to consider biodiversity at every stage in the planning application process and what form that consideration should take to ensure that progress is not held up. It sets out the types and quality of information that applicants and their ecological advisers are expected to achieve when preparing an application for submission.

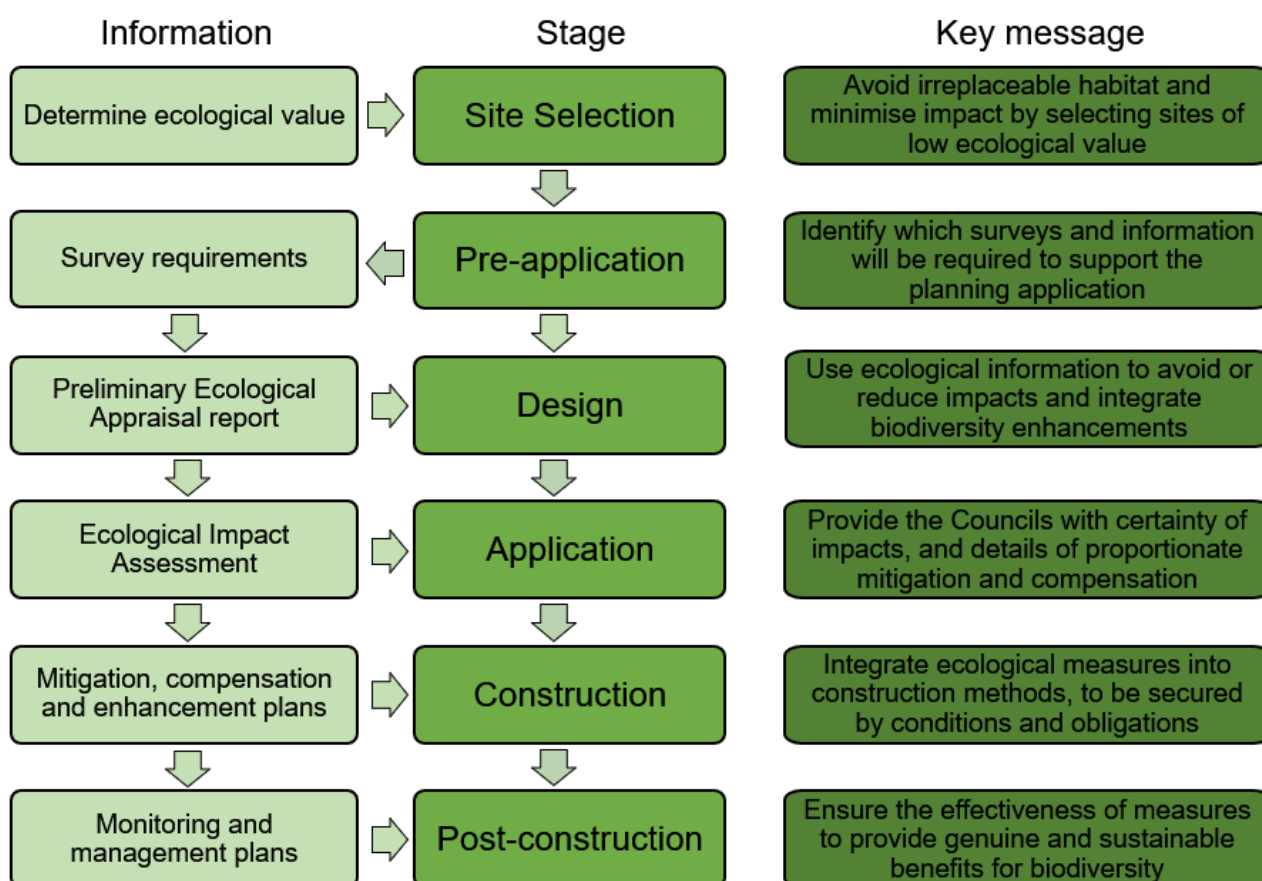


Figure 5 Stages within the development management process

### 5.2. Overarching Principles

#### Biodiversity Issue B1 - Mitigation Hierarchy

To meet national and local policy requirements (NH/4 Item 3 and Policy 70), submitted ecological reports are expected to explain how the hierarchy of mitigation measures (Avoid, Mitigate, Compensate) has been embedded into the design of the development. Where impacts on habitats and species cannot be avoided, a clear explanation of why alternative sites are not feasible and what proposed mitigation and compensation measures are necessary to address all likely significant adverse effects is needed.

5.2.1. The mitigation hierarchy aims to prevent net biodiversity loss and is included in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and also in ecological best practice guidelines.

Definitions vary, but usually include the following steps that must be implemented in order:

- Avoid - Anticipated biodiversity losses should be avoided and reduced by using alternative sites and designs, retaining habitats of value for enhancement and management and retaining species in situ.
- Mitigate - Impacts considered unavoidable should be mitigated where the impact occurs, by replacing lost protected and priority habitats and accommodating displaced species within the site boundary.
- Compensate - If mitigation measures are insufficient then, as a last resort, off-site compensatory measures should also be implemented in proportion to the harm, by creating suitable habitat off-site and relocating species.

5.2.2. As required by the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and as a key principle of delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (see Biodiversity Issue B6), applicants must demonstrate that, in the design of their proposals, they have followed the mitigation hierarchy with respect to ecological impacts.

5.2.3. Ecological consultants can advise on avoiding negative impacts on the biodiversity of a development site by involvement throughout the planning application process, but most importantly at the site selection and design stages. Homeowners and developers will often require an ecologist to undertake ecological surveys and mitigation work in relation to a building project to meet the Councils' requirements for ecological information. Contracting a member of a professional institute such as the [Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management](#) means that you are engaging a professional who is working to high standards and there is a complaints procedure if anything goes wrong. Applicants needing to [find a consultant](#) to support their planning application can use the tool on the [Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management](#) website which also provides further information on [ecological surveys and their purpose](#), which describes the different types of reports that you may be asked for by the Councils, [what to expect from a bat survey](#) and a [householder's guide to engaging an ecologist](#).

5.2.4. The approach to following the hierarchy should be informed by the ecological value of the habitats and species to be affected. Impacts to Priority habitats and species should always be avoided, if possible, but mitigation or compensation for other species and habitats is also desirable.

#### **BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development**

5.2.5. This British Standard gives guidance on how development might affect biodiversity, provides recommendations on how to integrate biodiversity into all stages of the planning, design and development process, and provides a rigorous framework for assessing impacts and for securing mitigation, compensation and appropriate biodiversity enhancements. Compliance with the standard in the ecological information submitted by applicants can be seen as an indication of its validity and relevance to the determination process and is encouraged. It is intended to assist those concerned with ecological

issues as they arise through the planning process and in matters relating to consented development that could have site-specific ecological implications.

- 5.2.6. BS42020 states that high quality ecological information is important for effective decision making as well as for compliance with legal obligations and policy requirements and successful implementation of the practical conservation and biodiversity enhancement measures identified in the ecological reports submitted with planning applications. The standard identifies the ecological data required and considerations for its assessment, and its use in the design of mitigation measures, to give certainty, clarity and confidence to those involved at all stages of the planning process.
- 5.2.7. Compliance with this standard is an important and credible way to demonstrate the validity of the ecological information you will bring forward in support of your planning application. Any deviations from this British Standard will need to be fully justified and they may be challenged by the Councils or external consultees, leading to delays in the decision process.

### **5.3. Site selection stage**

- 5.3.1. The easiest way to avoid a negative impact on species and habitats and to maximise the gain for biodiversity that can be achieved from a development is to select a site that has low existing ecological value and low strategic potential for habitat creation, buffering or connectivity. This could include sites that have been intensively managed or where land use has resulted in degraded habitats. It should be noted that ecological value should be measured by a suitably qualified professional and not judged on appearance, as sites that may appear to be degraded could include features of particular significance to certain species.

### **Biodiversity Issue B2 – Protection of irreplaceable habitats**

Developers will be expected to avoid direct and indirect impacts on irreplaceable habitats and embed measures to achieve this within the design of any development proposal.

To meet policy requirements (NH/4 item 6, NH/7 and Policy 71), the Councils will refuse applications that would result in the loss, deterioration or fragmentation of irreplaceable habitats unless the need for, and benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss, and a suitable compensation strategy exists. In these situations, biodiversity net gain is not achievable.

- 5.3.2. Irreplaceable habitats are defined in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) as “habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity.” In addition to Ancient Woodland and veteran trees, other types of habitat such as unimproved grassland, lowland fen and ancient hedgerows are also considered to be irreplaceable. The loss of these habitats cannot be compensated for by gains elsewhere and so they are excluded from Biodiversity Net Gain calculations.
- 5.3.3. All development predicted to result in impacts on irreplaceable habitat will need to be accompanied by detailed survey information and evidence to support the exceptional

reasons that justify such a loss. Compensation strategies should include contribution to the enhancement and management of the habitat.

- 5.3.4. Ancient woodland shall be identified by having regard to the presence and combination of Ancient Woodland Indicator Species, as presented in the [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough County Wildlife Sites Selection Guidelines](#). The Woodland Trust's [Planning for ancient woodland – planners manual for ancient woodland and veteran trees](#) should be used as a guide to avoiding and minimising impacts from development proposals.

#### **5.4. Pre-application stage**

##### **Pre-application advice**

- 5.4.1. There are many advantages to seeking pre-application advice from the Greater Cambridge Planning Services at an early stage in the preparation of development proposals, particularly for ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain. This frontloads the process and avoids risks of delays and additional costs on submission, by providing the developers and their agents with clarity on the scope of information that will be expected to enable the application to be determined.
- 5.4.2. Where there is a predictable impact on biodiversity and insufficient ecological information is submitted to support determination, the Councils are likely to refuse an application.
- 5.4.3. The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service offers a [pre-application service](#) that can save time and money for anyone considering submitting a planning application, and it also offers design workshops to applicants. This may be particularly valuable to householders and those who are not regularly involved in development, who may not routinely seek professional ecological support or be aware of all of the relevant issues.
- 5.4.4. Developers wishing to seek substantive advice on recreational pressure impacts and mitigation relating to Sites of Special Scientific Interest should be directed to Natural England's [Discretionary Advice Service](#).

##### **Existing biodiversity information**

- 5.4.1. Biodiversity baseline information from the [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre](#) is needed within all ecological reports, to identify the presence of designated sites and existing records of habitats and species that could be affected by development. Data search requests should be for a minimum 1 km buffer from the red line boundary for protected and Priority species and 2 km for all designated sites. While older data may be less relevant in some cases, it may provide the only baseline available for a site and so should not be discounted.
- 5.4.2. An absence of records does not mean a record of absence and ecological consultants need to use their professional judgment to ensure that biodiversity features are not overlooked. Survey and assessment of all species likely to be present on and adjacent to the development site and any which could be affected indirectly should be covered.

- 5.4.3. Provision of this data within submitted ecological reports needs to be presented in accordance with the terms and conditions of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre and any sensitive records should only be shown at 10km resolution.
- 5.4.4. The consultant ecologist should also determine whether the development site falls within a Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zone, as shown on the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) map, which would indicate that the development could result in indirect impacts that require consultation with Natural England.

### **Biodiversity Issue B3 – Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing**

To meet policy requirements (NH/4 and Policy 70) and support development which is likely to impact on Great Crested Newt, if a developer is accepted to join the Natural England Cambridgeshire Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing scheme, they do not need to carry out their own surveys for this European Protected Species or plan and carry out mitigation work.

If a consent for development is issued, developers do not need to meet the Government's [Standing Advice for Great Crested Newt](#). However, the Councils will still require survey and assessment for other protected and Priority species likely to be present and affected by development, together with delivery of any mitigation needing to be secured by a condition of any consent.

- 5.4.1. Natural England has now launched a District Level Licensing scheme for Great Crested Newt in Cambridgeshire that developers can pay to join for each of their sites, to better protect Great Crested Newt populations as an alternative to conventional site-based survey, licensing and mitigation methods. Full details are available on the relevant pages of the [Government District Level Licensing website](#).
- 5.4.2. As an alternative to Great Crested Newt surveys and assessment, the use of District Level Licensing provides a year-round option for developers to mitigate predicted impacts on Great Crested Newt and can provide certainty of costs and timescales.
- 5.4.3. With an agreement in place with Natural England to use District Level Licensing, the Councils only need an Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate countersigned by Natural England to be submitted with the planning application as evidence of site registration under this strategic mitigation scheme.
- 5.4.4. Participation in the District Level Licensing scheme does not negate the need for proposals to follow the mitigation hierarchy or deliver measurable net gain. The Councils will still require survey and assessment for other protected and Priority habitats and species likely to be present and affected by development, with any necessary mitigation secured by a condition of any consent.
- 5.4.5. A precautionary approach to site clearance, under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist, will be required for all development supported by Great Crested Newt District

Level Licensing, as all protected and Priority species predicted to be on site will need to be moved to a place of safety to avoid reckless actions and prevent wildlife crime. This will include supervision of any habitat works by an Ecological Clerk of Works, who will undertake a fingertip search, and implementation of a Construction Environment Management Plan (Biodiversity).

- 5.4.6. The emerging Natural Environment Bill has indicated an intention to prepare other Strategic Mitigation Schemes in consultation with stakeholders to support delivery of sustainable development.

### **Ecological surveys and assessment**

- 5.4.7. Applicants must ensure that planning applications are supported by adequate ecological information, using up to date desk studies and site assessment to inform survey methodologies sufficient in scope to allow the impact of a proposal to be appropriately assessed. This includes householders and developers of small sites, where they may be unexpected risks of impacts to habitats and species.
- 5.4.8. A [Preliminary Ecological Assessment](#) is often carried out by ecologists as an initial means of recording the habitats and condition of a development site and predicting the likely ecological constraints and impacts that might arise from its development.
- 5.4.9. Preliminary Ecological Assessment Reports are valuable documents that should be commissioned at the earliest stages of design, and their results should influence the layout and form of the proposals. Identifying important ecological resources at the outset and avoiding impacts on them will limit the loss of biodiversity and reduce the need for mitigation and compensation measures. In many cases these reports will include recommendations for further survey, particularly in relation to protected and priority species.
- 5.4.10. All surveys must be carried out in accordance with published standards and best practice guidance, as appropriate to the information they are expected to generate. To ensure the acceptability of impact assessment, any deviations from best practice should be explained and justified.
- 5.4.11. Pre-development biodiversity value must be calculated before any site clearance or other habitat management work has been undertaken, by the applicants or anybody else. However, if this is known to have happened, the condition of the site on or after 30th January 2020 will be taken as the habitat baseline stated in Schedule 14 Part 1 paragraph 6 of the [emerging Environment Bill](#). This is consistent with existing good practice guidelines for ecological assessment, including [CIEEM](#) and [BREEAM](#) guidelines. Where previous surveys are not available, this will be established through [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre](#) records and habitat areas identified through aerial photographs. Where habitat conditions are not known, then a precautionary approach will be applied.



- 5.4.12. Habitat mapping methodologies need to be appropriate to their purpose, which for biodiversity net gain calculations means UK Habitats Classification, as required for the Defra Biodiversity Metric calculation. Phase 1 habitat mapping can still be used for PEA reports, or in circumstances where Biodiversity Net Gain calculation is not required.
- 5.4.13. Where the applicant's commissioned ecology report indicates that further surveys are required to support a planning application, the results of all such surveys and associated details of necessary mitigation measures will need to be submitted prior to determination. This is necessary to provide the Councils with certainty of likely impacts and that effective and deliverable mitigation can be secured either by a condition of any consent or a mitigation licence from Natural England. Where recommended protected species surveys have not been completed, the ecology report will not be sufficient to support a planning application.
- 5.4.14. The Council expects that all biodiversity records obtained during surveys to inform development will be submitted to [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre](#), as required by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management's code of professional conduct. Applicants must not seek to restrict their ecological consultants from submitting biodiversity records.

## **5.5. Design stage**

### **Biodiversity Issue B4 – Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity**

To meet national and local policy requirements (NH/4, NH/5, NH/6, Policy 69 and Policy 70), development should:

1. Secure the conservation management and enhancement of natural and semi-natural habitats in the landscape together with the biodiversity that they contain and seek to restore and/or create new wildlife habitats.
2. Secure the provision of appropriate public access to natural green spaces, particularly within or close to the villages.

Habitats will be considered important for biodiversity where they:

1. Are part of the UK national network of sites (Habitats sites) or are proposed for designation
2. Are nationally designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves or Local Nature Reserves) or are proposed for designation
3. Are non-statutory designated sites of at least County or City importance or are proposed for designation
4. Are likely to support the presence of a Priority species or habitat, or significant populations of a national or local Red list species
5. Have the potential to assist in the delivery of National, County or District Nature Recovery Networks and clearly act as a stepping-stone, wildlife corridor or refuge area within an otherwise built environment
6. Provide for the quiet enjoyment of biodiversity within semi-natural areas of an otherwise built environment or act as an educational resource, such as Local Nature Reserves

- 5.5.1. Proposals that contain or that will affect a habitat of importance for biodiversity will be expected to include measures to protect any existing value and, where possible, to

improve their condition by appropriate enhancement or management measures. Management should be sustainable for the long-term, with clear objectives guided by the site's existing habitat features and species, as appropriate to location and environmental conditions.

- 5.5.2. While it can be possible to combine positive nature conservation management with public access, it should be noted that the potential impact of public access must be fully considered in determining the likely target condition of the biodiversity habitat and its value to any existing species populations. Measures to manage the existing impact of recreation on an area of semi-natural public open space will be welcomed.



Figure 6 Even small sites can support protected and Priority Species

- 5.5.3. Small sites, including gardens and other urban green space, can also support habitats and species of nature conservation value and provide opportunities for enhancement and improved management. The house and garden in the above image appears unremarkable, there are two bat species using the loft, nesting birds in the dense common ivy, and great crested newts in a small pond.
- 5.5.4. Where appropriate, the Councils will secure measures to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying a planning condition requiring the submission and approval of an Ecological Design Strategy or a species-specific Biodiversity Mitigation Strategy, which will include:
- a) The purpose and conservation objectives of the proposed works
  - b) A review of baseline conditions, site potential and constraints
  - c) Detailed designs and/or working methods to achieve stated objectives



- d) The specific extent and location of proposed works shown on maps and plans at an appropriate scale
- e) The type and source of materials to be used, where appropriate, such as specifying native species of local provenance or the type of bird box to be used.
- f) A timetable for implementation, demonstrating that works are aligned with any proposed phasing of development
- g) The persons responsible for implementing the works
- h) Details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance
- i) Details for monitoring and remedial measures
- j) Details for disposal of any wastes arising from works

### **Biodiversity Issue B5 - Biodiversity Provision in the Design of New Buildings & Open spaces**

To meet policy requirements (HQ/1, NH/4, Policy 57 and Policy 59), the Councils will expect:

1. That development proposals will have regard to the biodiversity already present within a development site and to identify opportunities to maximise the provision for biodiversity within new buildings in line with strategic nature conservation priorities.
2. That on all major housing developments 50% of the dwellings/units will have features such as integrated bird, bat or insect boxes provided in close association with the properties. On all other sites suitable provision for biodiversity enhancements shall be negotiated to achieve a similar standard.
3. For minor and householder development, each dwelling/unit will have at least one integrated feature appropriate to the location of the development.
4. That all commercial applications will need to include integrated features in keeping with the scale of development, i.e. minimum of 10 boxes for first 1000sqm footprint and one additional box for every additional 100 sqm.
5. That appropriate new wildlife habitats will be incorporated into landscaping schemes and the general layout of the built environment. All fencing will be expected to be hedgehog friendly and hedgehog highways should be incorporated throughout the development.



Figure 7 Hedgehog Highway gaps in boundary fence.

- 5.5.5. Design of new developments should seek to retain habitats of value to biodiversity wherever possible. Even for small scale developments, this would include boundary hedgerows, trees and any pond on site and these can provide the framework for the setting of the scheme layout as well as contributing to the post development network for nature and people. Fences ensures connectivity between gardens for hedgehogs and other wildlife, increasing the extent of habitat available in a secure way.
- 5.5.6. Landscape design will be required to enhance existing habitats and link them to new habitats created within the development site that are suited to the landscape character (see section 3.13.10). Further information can be found on the [Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method](#) webpage for a Green Guide Calculator and [Building with Nature](#).
- 5.5.7. The use of low nutrient status soils to support diverse habitat mosaics with low maintenance requirements is encouraged and applications within the [B-Lines](#) identified by Buglife will be expected to include sustainable landscaping features of value to invertebrates, especially pollinators, including flowering lawns.



Figure 8 Landscaping and soils

- 5.5.8. The impact of garden extensions into the open countryside needs to be considered as, although these provide an opportunity to diversify arable landscapes, species and features associated with a farmland landscape may not be replicable within the garden environment. Applicants, where appropriate, will be required to plant mixed native species hedges with trees to define boundaries in open countryside as opposed to the erection of fences that may hinder the natural movement of animals. In the above image, a bank and low nutrient substrate with sparse vegetation are incorporated into landscaping to benefit solitary mining bees and other invertebrates.
- 5.5.9. In addition, the provision of integrated boxes (a combination of bird, bat & insect boxes) will be required in new buildings for all types of development and should target protected, Priority and other species associated with the built environment, such as Swift, as promoted by [Action for Swifts](#), house sparrow, starling and pipistrelle bats. Where appropriate, high quality, durable boxes can also be provided on retained trees within the public realm. The integrated nesting provision (below image) is primarily designed for swifts, but will also be used by other species such as house sparrow and are easily built into new buildings in a cost effective way.





Figure 9 Integrated nesting habitat for birds or bats

### **Biodiversity Issue B6 Provision of biodiverse and living roofs**

To meet policy requirements (HQ/1, NH/4 and Policy 31), the provision of biodiverse roofs and walls will be encouraged as a means to maximise biodiversity, particularly where the opportunities for ecological enhancement on a site area are limited, and where such measures will deliver enhancement at a landscape scale.

- 5.5.9 Although buildings can be screened using native species planting, they can also be made attractive to biodiversity by using climbing plants on walls, fitting window boxes or installing biodiverse roofs and walls. Green roofs should support diverse habitats of local relevance rather than sedum monocultures, which have aesthetic appeal, but limited value to biodiversity. Brown roofs, landscaped with exposed substrates and a varied topography, and supporting nectar and pollen rich flowering plants, are a good alternative. Further information can be found on the [Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method](#) webpage for a Green Guide Calculator and [Building with Nature](#).



Figure 10 A biodiverse roof

- 5.5.10. Biodiverse roofs can provide valuable habitat on sites where space for new habitat creation is constrained. In the image above, the living roof shows a diversity of flowering plants in an open grassland structure within an otherwise dense, urban setting. Habitat design and species mixes should reflect local conditions and stated conservation objectives
- 5.5.11. They could also have an especially important role to play in providing new habitat for the species, often ecological specialists, displaced by the development of brownfield sites, and for invertebrates that already live in towns and gardens. Guidance on constructing biodiverse roofs (is available from [Buglife](#) and applicants are encouraged to follow the Green Roof Organisation's [Green Roof Code](#)).
- 5.5.12. Thin substrate sedum systems do not maximize the biodiversity potential of green roofs and would not merit Good condition within the Defra Biodiversity Metric.

### **Sustainable drainage systems**

- 5.5.13. The [Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document](#) was adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council in November 2018 and Cambridge City Council in December 2018 following adoption of the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans and is accompanied by the [Cambridge Sustainable Drainage Design and Adoption Guide](#).
- 5.5.14. Inclusion of sustainable drainage systems within a development site are the preferred approach to managing rainfall from hard surfaces and can be used on any site (CC/8, Policy 31). They provide an opportunity to reduce the effects of development on the



water environment. Good design and management of multi-functional open spaces can mitigate drainage impacts on wetlands via drains and ordinary watercourses as well as delivering biodiversity enhancements and attractive greenspaces that can support Biodiversity Net Gain on site. SUDs, (like the one pictured below) should be designed to provide natural habitats appropriate to the surrounding landscape, using locally native species and managed to combine functionality and opportunities for biodiversity

- 5.5.15. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust have produced a guide to maximising the benefit to [biodiversity from Sustainable Drainage Systems](#) alongside other functions.



Figure 11 SuDS feature in a new development

- 5.5.16. Developers should check details of [Registered Toad crossings](#) listed by Froglife, the national amphibian & reptile charity, (which includes one in the centre of Cambridge) in relation to the development site location and layout. This will help avoid direct impacts on known toad breeding populations from the discharge of the sustainable drainage systems constructed for the development. Similarly, well designed sustainable drainage systems features are likely to attract breeding amphibians and future migrations routes should be considered to avoid creating new road or drain fatality hotspots.
- 5.5.17. Paving of surfaces is likely to contribute to surface water flooding and the Councils will seek to avoid unnecessary paving of gardens by householders (CC/8, Policy 66) and encourage good design to ensure permeable surfaces remain and that there is no net loss in biodiversity. Any trees should be retained within paving and permeable surfaces used, potentially including planting within the design.

## Biodiversity Issue B7 – Biodiversity Net Gain

This SPD is underpinned by national and Local Planning Policies. In keeping with these, and the SPD, development proposals will be required to demonstrate measurable net gain for biodiversity (NH/4, NH/6, Policy 69, Policy 70).

Previous paragraphs have explained the process of how developers will calculate a pre-development baseline for an application site using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 2.0 tool. Also, they explain how a calculation should also be made of the post development baseline seeking to identify a net gain in biodiversity on that site. Achieving a Net Gain of 10% would be consistent with levels expected to be required in the Environment Act 2021, now proposed to be enacted Autumn 2021.

In negotiations with applicants, officers may also discuss seeking further BNG from development proposals. This aspiration is supported by the recently formulated Doubling Nature Vision, adopted by SCDC (Feb 2021). This vision reflects the growing awareness of biodiversity loss and increasing concerns to protect the natural environment, habitats and species. The vision seeks a 20% level of BNG above pre-development baseline conditions. Whilst this SPD does not set this as a figure or fixed target, this aspiration may have further support with the future enactment of the Environment Bill.

Realising the levels of Biodiversity Net Gain set out above should be achieved on site where possible.

In exceptional cases, compensatory arrangements to provide the levels of BNG that are both required and agreed with applicants under the vision can be provided off site.

Where off-site habitat measures are required, they must be consistent with the strategic aims of the [Cambridge Nature Network](#) and [Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping](#) and conform to [Biodiversity Net Gain - Good Practice Principles for Development](#).

To ensure the delivery of BNG measures, the Councils will seek to use planning conditions to secure on site habitat creation and its long-term management, and obligations, such as Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, where BNG is on land outside the applicant's control.

All Biodiversity Net Gain calculations should be submitted using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 2.0 or its successor. Other "bespoke" calculators will not be accepted without clear justification.

5.5.18. There will always be some opportunity within development proposals to create and manage habitats for biodiversity. Development proposals that deliver public open space that also provides new wildlife habitats, with clear management objectives, will be encouraged.

5.5.19. Biodiversity Net Gain has been identified as one of the primary mechanisms for the restoration of biodiversity across the UK and the local need is recognised within the

Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature vision. To achieve the vision, a strategic approach to habitat creation and enhancement will be required in line with the [Lawton principles](#) of more, bigger, better and more joined up.

- 5.5.20. This will require focus on improving the condition of existing Biodiversity Sites, increasing their size, and improving connections between them by creating stepping-stones and corridors of biodiversity rich habitats. The existing [Cambridge Nature Network](#) lays the foundations for this approach and will be supported and clarified by forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- 5.5.21. All development must already demonstrate measurable net gain for biodiversity, in line with the requirements of [National Planning Policy Framework](#). Although a mandatory requirement for 10% net gain in biodiversity value is emerging from the Environment Bill, a value of 20% is likely to be needed in order to meet the Natural Cambridgeshire target of doubling the amount of land managed for nature from 8% to 16% of the county's area.
- 5.5.22. It should be noted that the inclusion of street trees within developments can make a contribution to Biodiversity Net Gain as well as providing a range of other benefits, including to air quality and urban cooling, as mitigation for the effects of climate change. The selection of the right tree species in the right place, where there is enough space to achieve maturity - in terms of height, canopy spread and rooting area - is essential to maximise benefits. Cambridge City Council has a policy to ensure that adequate provision is made for the preservation and planting of trees when granting planning permission (Policy 71).
- 5.5.23. For smaller minor development (fewer than 10 residential units or an area of less than 0.5 hectares) and householder applications, biodiversity net gain measures should be clearly identified in supporting information and illustrated on the relevant plans. Measures should be appropriate to the site's location and surroundings and should be focussed on supporting recognised nature conservation priorities. When the Defra "small sites" Biodiversity Metric is available, this should be used to demonstrate net gain in these circumstances, and it is anticipated that the Environment Bill might offer this scale of development a more simplified requirement. However, until legislation and further guidance from Government is available, small sites should aim to meet the details of B5 above with at least one integrated bird, bat or insect box, hedgehog friendly fencing and habitats as listed in 5.5.4 above.
- 5.5.24. In support of major applications, a Biodiversity Gain Plan will be expected, which should include:
- Steps taken to avoid adverse impacts to biodiversity
  - Pre-development and post-development biodiversity value (including a completed Defra Biodiversity Metric calculation spreadsheet v2.0 or its successor)
  - Additional information to explain and justify the approach to delivering net gain, including notes on the existing and target habitat condition and any assumptions made



- 5.5.25. The Local Planning Authority will verify the accuracy of the biodiversity value calculations and consider the merits of any off-site net gain measures with reference to the Biodiversity Opportunity Maps produced by Cambridge and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre and any other published biodiversity strategies. Any scheme of Biodiversity Net Gain must include a mechanism for delivery of the target habitats, management, and monitoring of their condition, and an approach to remediation in the event of targets not being met.
- 5.5.26. Pre-development biodiversity value must be calculated before any site clearance or other habitat management work has been undertaken, by the applicants or anybody else. If this is known to have happened on or after 30 January 2020, and the onsite habitat condition is lower on the relevant date than it would otherwise have been, the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat is to be taken to be its biodiversity value.
- 5.5.27. Applicants should refer to the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and Construction Industry Research and Information Association [Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles](#) documents for information on the standards that will be expected.

## **5.6. Application stage**

### **Validation requirements for Biodiversity information**

- 5.6.1. The [Cambridge City Council validation checklists](#) and draft [South Cambridgeshire District Council validation checklist](#) are available to ensure that applicants know which documents need to be submitted with a planning application for it to be deemed valid by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service.
- 5.6.2. The Local validation checklist for the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service will include guidance under Local Validation Requirement 2 'Biodiversity - Ecological Impact Assessment' about when an Ecological Impact Assessment is necessary, based on what the development involves and where it is. Guidance is also provided on what an Ecological Impact Assessment should cover for an application to be considered valid, including the need to demonstrate measurable Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 5.6.3. It should be noted that validation does not necessarily mean there is sufficient information to allow for determination. The submitted Ecological Impact Assessment still has to provide the Councils with certainty of all likely ecological impacts on designated sites and protected or priority species and to demonstrate that effective and deliverable mitigation can be secured either by a condition of any consent or a mitigation licence from Natural England.

### **Ecological Impact Assessment**

- 5.6.4. In addition to the information within BS42020, the [Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management](#) provides detailed [guidance](#) about expectations in the reporting of biodiversity information in support of planning applications. In selecting their project team, applicants are encouraged to choose professional ecologists that will comply with these expectations and can demonstrate their suitability for the role. Full

details of those involved in survey work and reporting should be included in all reports with a summary of their experience and competence.

- 5.6.5. The appropriate document type to provide ecological information in support of a planning application is an Ecological Impact Assessment. This type of ecological report needs to contain all necessary survey results and a full assessment of ecological impacts, with proportionate and fully detailed mitigation and compensation measures that can be secured by condition or obligation, or by appropriate species licensing.
- 5.6.6. Surveys and reports have a finite lifespan due to the dynamic nature of species populations and the response of habitats to environmental factors and changes in management. CIEEM have produced [guidance](#) to highlight the issues with lifespan and the validity of reports in different circumstances. Applications supported by reports that are no longer considered valid are likely to be refused and outline or phased developments are likely to require conditions for further surveys to keep the survey information up to date.

### **Biodiversity Issue B8 - Habitats Regulations**

To support the Councils in meeting policy requirements (NH/5 and Policy 69) and their legal duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) – known as the Habitats Regulations - where development is likely to result in a significant effect on a Habitats site, proposals need to be supported by information to support the HRA screening report prepared by the Local Planning Authority. This needs to include the results of any necessary surveys and details of any mitigation measures to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the site(s) embedded into design of the development.

All the Councils' Habitats Regulations Assessment Appropriate Assessments will be sent to Natural England for their formal consultation response on their conclusions before any decision can be issued.

- 5.6.7. The aim of the [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) process is to 'maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest'. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) have transposed the European Union Habitats and Wild Birds Directives into UK law to make them operable from 1 January 2021. These remain unchanged until amended by Parliament so the requirements for [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) have been retained.
- 5.6.8. The Greater Cambridge Local Plan may impact on several Habitats sites and Government advice to Local Planning Authorities on [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) requires assessment of any plan or projects which could adversely affect these internationally important Biodiversity Sites.
- 5.6.9. Where a Habitats site could be affected by a plan, such as a Local Plan, or any project, such as a new development, then [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) screening must be

undertaken. If this cannot rule out any possible likely significant effect on a Habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans & projects, prior to the consideration of mitigation measures, then an Appropriate Assessment must then be undertaken. The Appropriate Assessment identifies the interest features of the site (such as birds, plants or habitats), how these could be harmed, assesses whether the proposed plan or project could have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Habitats site (either alone or in combination), and finally how this could be mitigated to meet the Stage 2 [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) “integrity” test.

5.6.10. Various Court rulings need to be considered when preparing Habitats Regulations Assessment screening reports and developers are requested to provide sufficient information to support this process. Some key rulings from the Court of Justice for the European Union, which remain relevant to [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) in the UK, post-Brexit, are:

- CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17)

In line with the Court judgement mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats Site.

- CJEU Holohan C- 461/17

This Court judgement imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority at Appropriate Assessment stage. These relate to habitats and species for which the site has not been listed and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site. The Appropriate Assessment conclusion must be beyond all reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned.

- CJEU Joined Cases C-293/17 and C-294/17 Coöperatie Mobilisation for the Environment and Vereniging Leefmilieu (Dutch nitrogen court ruling)

These Dutch cases concerned authorisations schemes for agricultural activities in Habitats sites which cause nitrogen deposition and where levels already exceeded the critical load. These are not directly connected with or necessary for the management of a Habitats site. This ruling is relevant to projects which trigger appropriate assessment before any consents are issued so should be considered when identifying other plans and projects for an in- combination assessment.

5.6.11. The following case from the UK High Court is also of key relevance:

- R (on the Application of Preston) v Cumbria County Council [2019] EWCA 1362

This case relates to a High Court verdict which quashed a County Council's decision to vary a planning permission for a water company to construct a sewage outfall on a Special Area of Conservation. Therefore, planning authorities and other competent authorities cannot, in appropriate assessments, simply rely on the competence of other regulators such as the Environment Agency, to avoid conducting their own assessments. They must instead themselves satisfy their own Habitats Regulations duties.

## **Biodiversity Issue B9 – Eversden & Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation Bat Protocol**

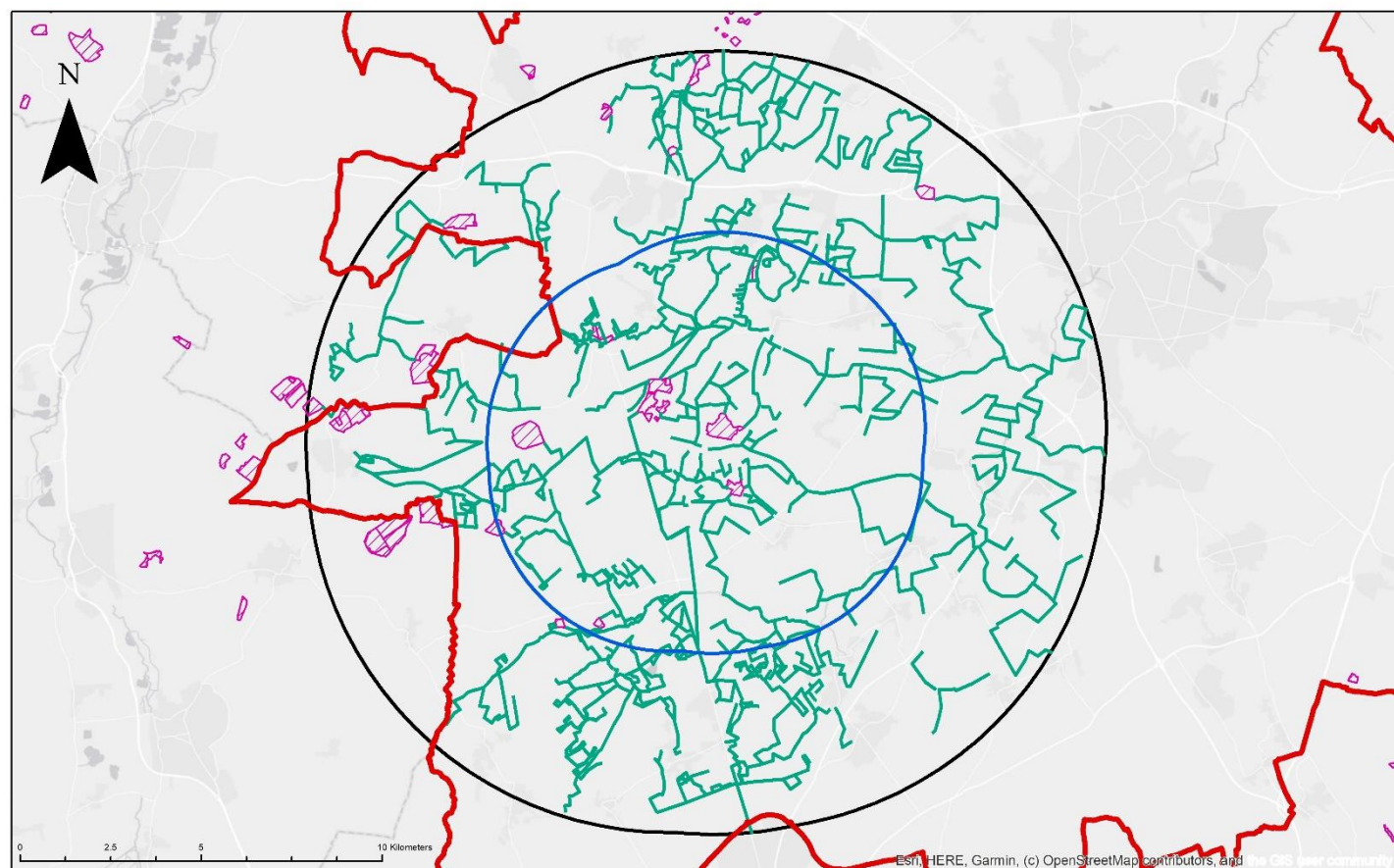
To support the Councils in meeting policy requirements (NH/5 and Policy 69) and their legal duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), appropriate levels of survey, assessment and mitigation will be expected for any development that could have an impact on the population Barbastelle Bats within and around the Eversden & Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation.

- 5.6.12. The Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation supports maternity colonies of Barbastelle bats. In addition to these Special Area of Conservation woodlands containing roosting sites, the bats also require access to habitats outside the boundary of Eversden & Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation. The Habitats Regulation Assessment screening report for Bourn Airfield identified that male Barbastelle bats roosted in woodlands to the north of the Special Area of Conservation and commuted into the woodlands for mating.
- 5.6.13. Habitat that is integral to supporting the functioning of the Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation is referred to as functionally linked land. In the case of this internationally important designated site, the woodlands that the males Barbastelle bats roost in, and any commuting routes between the two, are classed as functionally linked land. The Bat Conservation Trust also defines “Core Sustainance Zones” which refer to the area surrounding a communal bat roost within which habitat availability and quality will have a significant influence on the resilience and conservation status of the colony using the roost.
- 5.6.14. Bats also typically forage and commute along linear features, such as hedgerows, rivers and woodland edges. Flight-lines for Barbastelle Bats are known to extend beyond the designated Special Area of Conservation boundary into the wider local landscape. A narrow strip of woodland and hedge that link Wimpole and Eversden Woods together is known to be a very important flight-line for Barbastelle Bats and other bat species, and Natural England has highlighted the importance of managing this feature carefully including the need to thicken hedges affected with additional planting.
- 5.6.15. A draft protocol has been prepared by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Partnership to facilitate sustainable development and secure a diverse and healthy landscape for bats, people and other wildlife.
- 5.6.16. By following the guidance in the draft Eversden & Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation protocol, the Councils can ensure that Special Area of Conservation bat populations thrive and that developments around the designated site avoid impacts on them, thereby preventing delays during their consideration at the planning stage.
- 5.6.17. The draft bat protocol uses the SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Impact Risk Zones identified on the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) map for Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation which are integral to the long-term survival of the population of Barbastelle Bats. All development proposals within this area, with the exception of householder applications, should aim to retain mature



trees, woods and copses, and to provide new habitat linkages through new tree planting and the integration of existing hedgerow networks with new ones. All development within 5 km of the Special Area of Conservation designated site is considered by Natural England as a key conservation area with a 10 km sustenance or wider conservation area.

5.6.18. The Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation map below, shows the relative Impact Risk Zones and indicative functionally linked habitat (please note that this is for illustrative purposes only and that some hedgerows, copses and smaller woods are not shown).



#### Legend

5km Impact Risk Zone Greater Cambridge Hedgerows Ancient Woodland 10km Impact Risk Zone

Figure 12 Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC

### Biodiversity Issue B10 – recreational pressure on the sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest

To meet national and local policy requirements (NH/5 and Policy 69) for protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value, applications will not normally be permitted where there is likely to be an adverse impact on land within or adjoining such sites. With specific reference to sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest, advice issued by Natural England suggests developers of residential schemes of 50 or more units should seek to provide sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace, (SANG) to avoid and mitigate recreational pressure within and around the SSSI. The sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Greater Cambridge area are listed in Annex B of Natural England's advice ([insert Ref here](#)).

- 5.6.19. Impact Risk Zones are an online mapping tool developed by Natural England to make an initial assessment of the potential risks to Sites of Special Scientific Interest posed by development proposals. They define zones around each Site of Special Scientific Interest which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal that could potentially have adverse impacts. Impact Risk Zones can be viewed via the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#).
- 5.6.20. Natural England has issued advice to Cambridgeshire Local Planning Authorities in relation to Recreational Pressure Impact Risk Zones relating to sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Cambridgeshire and the need for green infrastructure within large scale residential developments. Annex B of this advice lists the component Sites of Special Scientific Interest included within the Cambridgeshire Recreational Pressure Impact Risk Zone, of which there are 16 in Greater Cambridge, with a risk category assigned to each Site of Special Scientific Interest. This list could be subject to change, following any new evidence obtained through a specialist visitor survey, for example.
- 5.6.21. No zone of potential risk was identified by Natural England for Sites of Special Scientific Interest overlapping the Fenland Special Area of Conservation, due to the fact that these sites were not considered to be at significant risk from recreational pressure. In the case of Wicken Fen Ramsar, there is already an evidenced Zone of Influence, but it is the subject of a detailed study from which a new Zone of Influence is emerging. This means that applicants of developments within the Impact Risk Zone of Wicken Fen Special Area of Conservation should seek advice from the National Trust regarding potential recreational pressure impacts and mitigation measures.
- 5.6.22. Where a development location triggers a recreational pressure Impact Risk Zone on the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) plan, a pop-up note will appear advising developers of residential proposals of the need for an assessment of recreational pressure effects on the relevant SSSI and the provision of measures to mitigate potential adverse impact. Whilst current Local Plan policies do not set requirements in respect of SANG, developers need to consider how to implement this detailed advice from Natural England, in conjunction with the councils' Open Space standards to provide access to sufficient greenspace to meet daily recreational needs of new residents. It is expected developers will seek "further advice on this issue from Natural England's [Discretionary Advice Service](#)."
- 5.6.23. Natural England advises that for the purpose of assessing recreational pressure impacts where they fall within Natural England's Cambridgeshire Recreational Pressure Impact Risk Zones, relevant residential planning applications could include the following types of development:
- New dwellings (excluding replacement dwellings and extensions)
  - Houses in Multiple Occupancy
  - Student accommodation
  - Residential care homes and residential institutions (excludes nursing homes)
  - Residential caravan sites (excludes holiday caravans and campsites)

- Gypsies, travellers and travelling show people plots

- 5.6.24. The Councils will take a precautionary approach to avoiding significant impacts on Sites of Special Scientific Interest sensitive to recreational pressure and all developments affecting Habitats Sites will need a Habitats Regulation Assessment screening report.
- 5.6.25. Whilst Natural England is unable to specify development thresholds, taking a proportionate approach they believe it should be possible for most proposals below 50 dwellings to be screened out for likely significant effect. If, in the opinion of the Councils, a smaller proposal closer to a Site of Special Scientific Interest is considered likely to have significant effect, impacts should be assessed.
- 5.6.26. For all residential proposals over 50 dwellings, developers are expected to consider avoidance and mitigation measures to divert and deflect new residents and embed these within the design of the development. The Councils will expect developers to refer to Natural England's Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space guidance which requires a quantum of Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space at a rate of a minimum of 8ha per 1000 population as used for Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework. This advice is greater than the area of informal open space that is required by the Open Space SPD adopted by South Cambridgeshire in 2009. The quantum and quality of Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space is key to the advice issued by Natural England as a mitigation measure to protect designated sites.
- 5.6.27. To avoid and mitigate for recreational impacts on designated sites Natural England advice letter Ref 330067 12 July 2019 is that the design and layout of accessible green space should seek to accord with Natural England's [Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard](#) as far as possible. As a minimum, alternative accessible greenspace should include:
- High-quality, informal, semi-natural areas in accordance with Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space and Accessible Natural Green Space targets, where possible
  - Circular dog walking routes within the site and/or with links to surrounding public rights of way with an average requirement of approximately 2.7 km based on [Planning for dog ownership in new development](#)
  - Dedicated 'dogs-off-lead' areas and dog waste bins
  - On-site signage and/or information leaflets to promote these areas for recreation
  - A commitment to the long-term maintenance and management of these provisions
- 5.6.28. Green infrastructure / Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space should be designed to absorb significant proportions of the daily recreational needs of new residents, such as walking, dog-walking, jogging / exercise, children's play facilities, and other informal recreation including enjoyment of the countryside. It should also aim to provide a semi-natural character, with significant proportion of semi-natural grassland, woodland, scrub and wetland habitat. Dependent upon a range of factors, including the scale of development, consideration could be given to the provision of other amenities such as café / refreshment and toilet facilities. Such facilities could form part of a Biodiversity Net

Gain enhancements offer unless it is required as mitigation under any Habitats Regulations Assessment to avoid recreational impacts on a Habitats site.

There is therefore a need for developers to consider how to implement this detailed advice including provision of high-quality natural greenspace within the red line boundary of a development site. This is necessary to provide access to sufficient greenspace to meet daily recreational needs of new residents and will assist in reducing conflict and adding value by planning for dog ownership in new residential developments.

- 5.6.29. When designing open space within large scale residential developments, developers should consider the Councils' Open Space targets and compare this with Accessible Natural Green Space criteria in [Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17](#). Natural England's advice Annex A (insert ref here) requires an assessment.

### **Determination of planning applications**

- 5.6.30. The Councils need certainty of likely impacts on a Biodiversity Site or protected or Priority species prior to determination to ensure that appropriate and effective mitigation measures can be secured either by a condition of any consent or under a mitigation licence from Natural England.
- 5.6.31. To support determination of planning applications, the Councils therefore expect adequate ecological information to be provided. Where no ecological report has been submitted and there is a likelihood of biodiversity being present and affected by a proposal, applicants will be requested to provide reasonable information in line with [Government Standing Advice](#) which could cause delays for example waiting for surveys to be carried out in the appropriate season. If, despite any request from the Councils, this is not provided to give certainty of likely impacts and details of effective and deliverable mitigation measures, the Councils may refuse an application rather than requiring amendments to avoid impacts.
- 5.6.32. Where ecology reports include recommendations for further surveys, these will be needed prior to determination. The Councils encourage applicants to ensure that recommendations for mitigation and compensation measures have been embedded into the design of a proposal and that they confirm delivery at the appropriate stage to support determination of a planning application.
- 5.6.33. Where impacts on biodiversity will be minimised such that the proposal is acceptable, all ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancements to deliver measurable net gain for biodiversity will either be a condition of the consent or included in a legal agreement. This will not include protected species surveys as this information is needed prior to determination.
- 5.6.34. Updated protected species surveys and mitigation strategies will need to be submitted at reserved matters stage for any measures not fully detailed in the information provided to support determination of outline or phased applications.



## **5.7. Construction stage**

### **Construction and the need for protection of features and ecological supervision**

- 5.7.1. The construction process often involves clearance of vegetation on site which has the potential for impacts on biodiversity and there is therefore a need to manage the risks to wildlife. A process is also needed to ensure that all of the essential mitigation measures identified within the Ecological Impact Assessment are put in place in the right way and at the right time.
- 5.7.2. A Construction Environment Management Plan: Biodiversity will be required by condition for many developments to include details of all necessary ecological mitigation measures, including protection of retained habitats and requirements for ecological supervision during works on site using a suitably experienced Ecological Clerk of Works. The details required are specified in model condition D.4.1 of BS42020:2013.

## **5.8. Post - Construction stage**

### **Management plans, monitoring and enforcement**

- 5.8.1. Where habitats are retained and created within a development site boundary, the Councils will seek to secure their protection during the construction process and their long-term management via conditions of any consent. The Councils will require relevant details to be provided within a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan, either at submission or secured by condition. This type of planning condition will need details of all ecological mitigation measures should be illustrated together with other landscape measures and there should be no conflict between objectives.
- 5.8.2. Where species are predicted to be affected by development proposals and habitat to support their population is retained or created on site, such as receptor sites for translocated animals, the Councils will seek to include monitoring of the effectiveness of mitigation secured. This will be separate from any legal requirement attached to a licence approved by Natural England and will be secured by a condition of any consent. Additional monitoring may be required for novel mitigation solutions, the outcomes of which should be made available to the wider ecological consultancy industry where appropriate.
- 5.8.3. All management plans should include appropriate monitoring to ensure effectiveness and should include a process for remediation and review for any measures that have not been effective. The results of such monitoring should be reported to the Councils for review of management.
- 5.8.4. To deliver Biodiversity Net Gain, sites will require careful design, zoning and management to ensure there are no recreational conflicts with the proposed areas for habitat creation. The emerging Environment Bill is likely to require an audit trail for the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain commitments for a period of up to 30 years.

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Local Plan policies to be supported by this Supplementary Planning Document

Appendix 2 Protected species and ecological survey seasons

## Appendix 1 Local Plan policies to be supported by this Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (Sept 2018)	Chapter 4: Climate Change (Sept 2018)	Policy CC/8: Sustainable Drainage Systems	<p>“Development proposals must incorporate appropriate sustainable surface water drainage systems (SuDS) appropriate to the nature of the site. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that:</p> <p>...</p> <p>b) Opportunities have been taken to integrate sustainable drainage with the development, create amenity, enhance biodiversity, and contribute to a network of green (and blue) open space</p> <p>...</p> <p>d) Maximum use has been made of low land take drainage measures, such as rainwater recycling, green roofs, permeable surfaces and water butts”</p>
	Chapter 5: Delivering High Quality Places (Sept 2018)	Policy HQ/1 Design Principles	<p>“All new development must be of high-quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context. As appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals must:</p> <p>...</p> <p>m) Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation;”</p>
	Chapter 6: Built and Natural Environment (Sept 2018)	Policy NH/3: Protecting Agricultural Land	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Planning permission will not be granted for development which would lead to the irreversible loss of Grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land unless: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Land is allocated for development in the Local Plan</li> <li>b) Sustainability considerations and the need for the development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of the land.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Uses not involving substantial built development but which take agricultural land will be regarded as permanent unless restricted specifically by condition.</li> <li>3. When considering proposals for the change of use or diversification of farmland, particular consideration shall be given to the potential for impact upon Priority Species and Habitats.”</li> </ol>

		Policy NH/4: Biodiversity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity will be permitted.</li> <li>2. New development must aim to maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity. Opportunities should be taken to achieve positive gain through the form and design of development. Measures may include creating, enhancing and managing wildlife habitats and networks, and natural landscape. The built environment should be viewed as an opportunity to fully integrate biodiversity within new development through innovation. Priority for habitat creation should be given to sites which assist in the achievement of targets in the Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and aid delivery of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.</li> <li>3. If significant harm to the population or conservation status of a Protected Species, Priority Species<sup>1</sup> or Priority Habitat resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission will be refused.</li> <li>4. Where there are grounds to believe that a proposal may affect a Protected Species, Priority Species or Priority Habitat, applicants will be expected to provide an adequate level of survey information and site assessment to establish the extent of a potential impact. This survey information and site assessment shall be provided prior to the determination of an application.</li> <li>5. Previously developed land (brownfield sites) will not be considered to be devoid of biodiversity. The reuse of such sites must be undertaken carefully with regard to existing features of biodiversity interest. Development proposals on such sites will be expected to include measures that maintain and enhance important features and appropriately incorporate them within any development of the site.</li> <li>6. Planning permission will be refused for development resulting in the loss, deterioration or fragmentation of irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.</li> <li>7. Climate change poses a serious threat to biodiversity and initiatives to reduce its impact need to be considered."</li> </ol>
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		Policy NH/5: Site of Biodiversity or Geological Importance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Proposed development likely to have an adverse effect on land within or adjoining a Site of Biodiversity or Geological Importance, as shown on the Policies Map (either individually or in combination with other developments), will not normally be permitted. Exceptions will only be made where the benefits of the development clearly outweigh any adverse impact.</li> <li>2. In determining any planning application affecting Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance the Council will ensure that the intrinsic natural features of particular interest are safeguarded or enhanced having regard to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The international, national or local status and designation of the site;</li> <li>b) The nature and quality of the site's features, including its rarity value;</li> <li>c) The extent of any adverse impacts on the notified features;</li> <li>d) The likely effectiveness of any proposed mitigation with respect to the protection of the features of interest;</li> <li>e) The need for compensatory measures in order to re-create on or off the site features or habitats that would be lost to development.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Where appropriate the Council will ensure the effective management of designated sites through the imposition of planning conditions or Section 106 agreements as appropriate."</li> </ol>
		Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Council will aim to conserve and enhance green infrastructure within the district. Proposals that cause loss or harm to this network will not be permitted unless the need for and benefits of the development demonstrably and substantially outweigh any adverse impacts on the district's green infrastructure network.</li> <li>2. The Council will encourage proposals which: a. Reinforce, link, buffer and create new green infrastructure; and b. Promote, manage and interpret green infrastructure and enhance public enjoyment of it.</li> <li>3. The Council will support proposals which deliver the strategic green infrastructure network and priorities set out in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, and which deliver local green infrastructure.</li> <li>4. All new developments will be required to contribute towards the enhancement of the green infrastructure network within the district. These contributions will include the establishment, enhancement and the on-going management costs."</li> </ol>

		Policy NH/7: Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Planning permission will be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland (as shown on the Policies Map) or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.</li> <li>2. Development proposals affecting ancient woodland or veteran trees will be expected to mitigate any adverse impacts, and to contribute to the woodland's or veteran tree's management and further enhancement via planning conditions or planning obligations."</li> </ol>
Development Plan Document	Local Development Framework: Northstowe Area Action Plan (July 2007)	Policy NS/2 Development Principles	<p>"Plans to be Approved:</p> <p>...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The town of Northstowe will be developed: h. Making drainage water features an integral part of the design of the town and its open spaces, so that they also provide for amenity, landscape, biodiversity and recreation."</li> </ol>
		Policy NS/12 Landscape Principles	<p>"The Landscape Strategy will:</p> <p>...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) Ensure a high degree of connectivity between the new town and wider countryside for wildlife and people, including extending the rights of way network (public footpaths and bridleways);</li> <li>...</li> <li>f) Create a network of green spaces which contribute to legibility, are pleasant, attractive and beneficial to wildlife, and integrate well with the wider countryside;</li> <li>g) Enable landscaped areas to provide an environment suitable to mitigate any adverse wildlife impacts and to maximise the benefits to wildlife thus increasing biodiversity.</li> </ol> <p>2. Construction spoil retained on site must be distributed in a manner appropriate to the local topography and landscape character, and can be used for noise mitigation, flood risk management or biodiversity enhancement."</p>
		Policy NS/13 Landscape Treatment of the Wdges of Northstowe	<p>"The Eastern Water Park:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A landscaped water park with appropriate planting and footpaths will be provided on the other edge of Northstowe to the east along the St Ives railway. The water park will provide an attractive amenity for the town and a landscape buffer to the open countryside. It will also provide opportunities to create wildlife habitats and thus increase biodiversity."</li> </ol>

		Policy NS/14 Landscaping Within Northstowe	<p>“Green Corridors ...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. They will have landscaping and biodiversity value and also perform a recreational function for both informal recreation and children's play. Public access will include provision for walking, cycling and horse riding.</li> <li>4. Road and bus crossings through the Green Corridors will be designed to limit any adverse safety implications for people and be low key in character to limit adverse effects on the landscape. Safe and appropriate crossing facilities for wildlife will also be provided, such as tunnels under roads and ditches alongside roads where appropriate.”</li> </ol>
		Policy NS/16 Existing Biodiversity Features	<p>“Biodiversity Surveys:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developers will be required to undertake a full programme of ecological survey and monitoring prior to the commencement of construction. This work should conclude by proposing a strategy for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, and Biodiversity Management Plans, to establish: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Which areas of biodiversity will be protected and enhanced;</li> <li>b. Appropriate mitigation measures;</li> <li>c. Which specific impacts of development will need to be monitored during and after construction</li> </ol> <p>Further ecological surveys will be required during and after construction, and the Biodiversity Strategy and Management Plans will be reviewed in the light of surveys and monitoring.</p> <p>Management Strategy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The developer will be required to develop a Management Strategy to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption and maintenance of the biodiversity areas.</li> </ol> <p>Retention of Existing Features:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Existing features including trees, tree plantations and the lake in the southern section of the airfield and the existing ponds in the golf course will be retained as biodiversity and landscape features where such features can make a significant contribution to the urban environment or to the biodiversity of the site.”</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

		Policy NS/17 New Biodiversity Features	<p>“Eastern Water Park:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The water park along the eastern boundary of the town and west of the disused railway, which will be created to provide for the attenuation of surface water flows, will be managed to enhance the biodiversity of Northstowe by providing an extensive wetland habitat and to maximise its value to key species.</li> </ol> <p>Southern Parkland Country Park:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. A parkland landscape will be created between Northstowe and Oakington to provide a substantial resource of trees, grassland and other areas of semi-natural vegetation. This area will be designed and managed for its wildlife value.</li> </ol> <p>Green Corridors Through and Beyond the Town:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Green corridors will be established through the town to connect where possible to biodiversity features and corridors beyond the town.</li> </ol> <p>Creating Habitats Within the Urban Area:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Every opportunity will be taken to incorporate features within the urban fabric, through urban design and through the use of sympathetic materials to create wildlife habitats.”</li> </ol>
		Policy NS/24 Construction Strategy	<p>Site Access and Haul Roads:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. A scheme will be introduced to avoid construction vehicles travelling through villages in the locality and to ensure that any haul roads are located, designed and landscaped in such a way as to minimise any noise, smell, dust, visual or other adverse impacts on existing residents and businesses, and on the new residents and businesses at Northstowe. They should also avoid adverse effects on the environmental amenities of biodiversity, rights of way and green spaces. Traffic flows will be monitored to ensure that the public have a mechanism to feedback any concerns that arise during development.</li> </ol> <p>Construction Activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Planning conditions will be imposed to minimise the adverse effects of construction activity on residential amenity and the environment”</li> </ol>
		Policy NS/27 Management of Services, Facilities, Landscape and Infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Management strategies for services, facilities, landscape and infrastructure will be submitted to the local planning authority for adoption prior to the granting of outline planning permission to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption and maintenance. Landownership for these uses should be as simple as possible, preferably in a single ownership to avoid fragmentation. In particular, there should be a single agreed Management Strategy covering recreation, landscape and biodiversity. The inclusion of water and drainage features within open spaces would have</li> </ol>



			significant advantages and should therefore be investigated.”
	Local Development Framework: Cambridge East Area Action Plan (Feb 2008)	Policy CE/4 The Setting of Cambridge East	<p>Green Corridor:</p> <p>4. “A green corridor will be retained through the new urban quarter connecting the green spaces of Cambridge to the surrounding countryside, linking from Colham's Common to a new country park located to the east of Airport Way and south of Newmarket Road, and also to the National Trust's Wicken Fen Vision. The green corridor will have width of about 300m, and be significantly narrower only where particular justification is provided and the green corridor function is not inhibited. It will open up to a greater width at the Teversham end of the corridor, where an informal countryside character will be provided to help to maintain the individual identity of the village.</p> <p>5. It will have landscaping and biodiversity value and also perform a recreational function for both informal recreation and children's play.”</p>
		Policy CE/13 Landscape Principles	<p>Landscape Strategy:</p> <p>1. “The Strategy will:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. To ensure a high degree of connectivity between the new urban quarter and the wider countryside for wildlife and people;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">i. Enable the landscaped areas within the urban quarter to provide an environment suitable to mitigate against any adverse wildlife impacts and to maximise the benefits to wildlife thus increasing biodiversity”</p>
		Policy CE/14 Landscaping within Cambridge East	<p>Green Fingers:</p> <p>3. “They will have landscaping and biodiversity value and also perform a recreational function for both informal recreation and children's play. Public access will include provision for walking, cycling and horse riding.</p> <p>4. Road and bus crossings through the green fingers will be designed to limit any adverse safety implication for people and be low key in character to limit adverse effects on the landscape. Safe and appropriate crossing facilities for wildlife will also be provided, such as tunnels under roads and ditches alongside roads where appropriate”</p>

		Policy CE/16 Biodiversity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "The development of Cambridge East will have regard to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, and every opportunity should be taken to achieve positive gain to biodiversity through the form and design of development. As appropriate, measures will include creating, enhancing and managing wildlife habitats and natural landscape. Priority for habitat creation should be given to sites which assist in achieving targets in the Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).</li> <li>2. Development will not be permitted if it would have an adverse impact on the population or conservation status of protected species or priority species or habitat unless the impact can be adequately mitigated by measures required by Section 106 agreements or planning conditions.</li> <li>3. Where there are grounds to believe that development proposal may affect a protected species or priority species or habitat, applicants will be expected to provide an adequate level of survey information to establish the extent of the potential impact together with possible alternatives to the development, mitigation schemes and / or compensation measures.</li> <li>4. Development proposals will take account of the impact, either direct or indirect, on people's opportunity to enjoy and experience nature on a site together with opportunities to improve public access to nature.</li> <li>5. Exceptionally, where the economic or social benefits of a proposal outweigh harm to an important site or species, the approach will be first to avoid or minimise the harm, then to seek mitigation of the impact, and finally to secure appropriate compensation for any residual impact in order to ensure no net loss of biodiversity. Planning conditions and obligations will be used as appropriate to secure this."</li> </ol>
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		CE/17 Existing Biodiversity Features	<p>Biodiversity Surveys:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Developers will be required to undertake a full programme of ecological survey and monitoring prior to the commencement of construction. This work should conclude by proposing a strategy for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, and Biodiversity Management Plans, to establish: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Which areas of biodiversity will be protected and enhanced;</li> <li>b. Appropriate mitigation measures;</li> <li>c. Which specific impacts of development will need to be monitored during and after construction.</li> </ol> <p>Further ecological surveys will be required during and after construction, and the Biodiversity Strategy and Management Plans will be reviewed in the light of surveys and monitoring.</p> <p>Management Strategy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The developer will be required to develop a Management Strategy to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption and maintenance of the biodiversity areas.</li> </ol> <p>Retention of Existing Features:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Existing features including trees in the Park and Ride site will be retained as biodiversity and landscape features.</li> <li>4. Development will not be permitted if it will have an adverse impact on a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), a Country Wildlife Site (CWS), or a City Wildlife Site (CiWS) unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal, which outweigh the need to safeguard the substantive nature conservation of the site. Where development is permitted, proposals should include measures to minimise harm, to secure suitable mitigation and / or compensatory measures, and where possible enhance the nature conservation value of the site affected through habitat creation and management.</li> </ol> <p>New Biodiversity Features:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. As part of the development of the urban quarter, new biodiversity features will be provided in the green corridor and green fingers, together with, in the country park, a substantial resource of trees, grassland and other areas of semi-natural vegetation which is sympathetic to local landscape character.</li> </ol> <p>Creating Habitats within the Urban Area:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Every opportunity will be taken to incorporate features within the urban fabric, through urban design and through the use of sympathetic materials to create wildlife habitats.”</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
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		CE/29 Construction Strategy	<p>Site Access and Haul Roads:</p> <p>2. “A scheme will be introduced to avoid construction traffic travelling through residential areas in the city and villages in the locality and ensure that any haul roads are located, designed and landscaped in such a way as to minimise any noise, smell, dust, visual or other adverse impacts on existing residents and businesses, and on the new residents and businesses at Cambridge East. They should also avoid adverse effects on the environmental amenities of biodiversity, rights of way and green spaces. Traffic flows will be monitored to ensure that the public have a mechanism to feedback any concerns that arise during development.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Construction Activities:</p> <p>8. Planning conditions will be imposed to minimise the adverse effects of construction activity on residential amenity and the environment”</p>
		CE/31 Management of Services, Facilities, Landscape and Infrastructure	<p>1. “Management strategies for services, facilities, landscape and infrastructure will be submitted to the local planning authority for adoption prior to the granting of outline planning permission to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption and maintenance. Landownership for these uses should be as simple as possible, preferably in a single ownership to avoid fragmentation. In particular, there should be a single agreed Management Strategy covering recreation, landscape and biodiversity. The inclusion of water and drainage features within open spaces would have significant advantages and should therefore be investigated.”</p>
		Policy CE/33 Infrastructure Provision	<p>1. “Planning permission will only be granted at Cambridge East where there are suitable arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure necessary to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms. Contributions will be necessary for some or all of the following:</p> <p>...</p> <p style="text-align: center;">g) Landscaping and biodiversity”</p>
	Local Development Framework: Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan (Feb 2008)	Policy CSF/2 Development and Countryside Improvement Principles	<p>“Trumpington West will be developed:</p> <p>...</p> <p>9. To achieve a net increase in biodiversity across the site;</p> <p>10. Making drainage water features an integral part of the design of the urban extension and its open spaces, so they also provide for amenity, landscape, biodiversity and recreation.</p> <p>...</p> <p>12. Trumpington West will connect the green spaces of Cambridge to the surrounding countryside,</p>

			maintain a Green Corridor along the River Cam, and provide landscape, biodiversity and public access enhancements in the surrounding countryside.”
		Policy CSF/5 Countryside Enhancement Strategy	<p>“1. Planning permission for development at Trumpington West will include a planning obligation requirement for contributions to the implementation of a Countryside Enhancement Strategy which will create an enhanced gateway into the City between Hauxton Road and the River Cam and which will comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The creation of a country park, comprising new meadow grassland, to the east of the River Cam, both north and south of the M11, from Grantchester Road to Hauxton Mill;</li> <li>b. Hedgerow planting on field boundaries in the agricultural land between Hauxton Road and the Trumpington Meadows Country Park;</li> <li>...</li> <li>d. Measures to protect and enhance wildlife habitats, including managing public access to the river banks;</li> <li>e. Noise attenuation on the northern side of the M11 through the creation of new landscape features which are compatible with the river valley character.</li> </ul> <p>2. A Countryside Enhancement Strategy will be prepared for the area bounded by the Cambridge City boundary, Babraham Road, Haverhill Road, and the edge of the built area of Great Shelford and Stapleford. The Strategy will comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. New copses on suitable knolls, hilltops and scarp tops.</li> <li>g. Management and creation of chalk grassland</li> <li>h. Management of existing shelter belts.</li> <li>i. New mixed woodland and shelter belts.</li> <li>j. Creation of a landscape corridor along Hobson's Brook.</li> <li>k. Reinforcement and planting of new hedgerows.</li> <li>l. Roadside planting.</li> </ul> <p>3. The Countryside Strategies will include integrated proposals for landscape, biodiversity, recreation and public access improvements, which will be compatible with long-term agricultural production to create enhanced gateways into the City. Provision will be made for maintenance of landscaping and replacement of diseased, dying and dead stock for a period of 10 years, and details of long-term management thereafter.”</p>

		Policy CSF/12 Landscape Principles	<p>1. "A Landscape Strategy for Trumpington West must be submitted and approved prior to the granting of planning permission, of a level of detail appropriate to the type of application. It will be implemented as part of the conditions / planning obligations for the development of the urban extension. The strategy will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. Enable the landscaped areas within the urban extension to provision an environment suitable to mitigate any adverse wildlife impacts and to maximise the benefits to wildlife thus increasing biodiversity;</li> <li>h. Make best use of and enhance existing tree and hedge resources as a setting for the development." </li></ul>
		Policy CSF/13 Landscaping within Trumpington West	<p>Green Fingers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. "They will have landscaping and biodiversity value and also perform a recreational function for both informal recreation and children's play. Public access will include provision for walking, cycling and horse riding.</li> <li>3. Road and bus crossings through the green fingers will be designed to limit any adverse safety implication for people and be low key in character to limit adverse effects on the landscape. Safe and appropriate crossing facilities for wildlife will also be provided, such as tunnels under roads and ditches alongside roads where appropriate"</li> </ul>
		Policy CSF/15 Enhancing Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Outline planning applications for development at Trumpington West will be accompanied by a comprehensive ecological survey of flora and fauna. This will include land bounded by the River Cam and Hauxton Road as far south as Hauxton Mill.</li> </ul> <p>Enhancing Biodiversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. All open areas will be managed and landscaped to encourage wildlife in locally distinctive habitats. Sensitive habitats will be protected by limiting public access to specified areas.</li> <li>3. A Biodiversity Management Strategy will demonstrate how biodiversity will be enhanced and how local communities will be involved. A project officer will be funded to implement the strategy through a planning obligation.</li> </ul> <p>Green Fingers and the Countryside:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Connections will be provided for Green Fingers within the urban extensions to the surrounding countryside by enhanced landscaping, planting and the creation of wildlife habitats to provide links to larger scale wildlife habitats further afield including Nine Wells, the Magog Down, Wandlebury Country Park, the River Cam corridor, Coton Country Park, Wimpole Hall and Wicken Fen."</li> </ul>

		Policy CSF/22 Construction Strategy	<p>Site Access and Haul Roads:</p> <p>2. “A scheme will be introduced to avoid construction traffic travelling through Trumpington and villages in the locality and ensure that any haul roads are located, designed and landscaped in such a way as to minimise any noise, smell, dust, visual or other adverse impacts on existing residents and businesses, and on the new residents and businesses at Trumpington West. They should also avoid adverse effects on the environmental amenities of biodiversity, rights of way and green spaces. Traffic flows will be monitored to ensure that the public have a mechanism to feedback any concerns that arise during development.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Construction Activities:</p> <p>7. Planning conditions will be imposed to minimise the adverse effects of construction activity on residential amenity and the environment”</p>
		Policy CSF/24 Management of Services, Facilities, Landscape and Infrastructure	<p>“1. Management strategies for services, facilities, landscape and infrastructure will be submitted to the local planning authority for adoption prior to the granting of outline planning permission to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption and maintenance. Landownership for these uses should be as simple as possible, preferably in a single ownership to avoid fragmentation. In particular, there should be a single agreed Management Strategy covering recreation, landscape and biodiversity. The inclusion of water and drainage features within open spaces would have significant advantages and should therefore be investigated.”</p>
	Local Development Framework North West Cambridge Area Action Plan (Oct 2009)	Policy NW2: Development Principles	<p>“2. Development proposals should, as appropriate to their nature, location, scale and economic viability: f) Protect and enhance the geodiversity and biodiversity of the site and incorporate historic landscape and geological features;</p> <p>3. Planning permission will not be granted where the proposed development or associated mitigation measures would have an unacceptable adverse impact:</p> <p>n) On biodiversity, archaeological, historic landscape and geological interests;</p> <p>s) On protected trees and trees of significance”</p>
		Policy NW4: Site and Setting	<p>“Land between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road, comprising two areas totalling approximately 91ha, as shown on the Proposals Map, is allocated for predominantly University-related uses. A strategic gap is retained between the two parts of the site to ensure separation is maintained between Cambridge and Girton village and to provide a central open space for reasons of biodiversity, landscape, recreation and amenity, whilst ensuring a cohesive and sustainable for of development.”</p>

		Policy NW24: Climate Change & Sustainable Design and Construction	<p>“1. Development will be required to demonstrate that it has been designed to adapt to the predicted effects of climate change;</p> <p>2. Residential development will be required to demonstrate that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) All dwellings approved on or after 1 April 2013 will meet Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 or higher;</li> <li>c) There is no adverse impact on the water environment and biodiversity as a result of the implementation and management of water conservation measures.</li> </ul> <p>3. Non-residential development and student housing will be required to demonstrate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d) it will achieve a high degree of sustainable design and construction in line with BREEAM "excellent" standards or the equivalent if this is replaced;</li> <li>e) It will incorporate water conservation measures including water saving devices, greywater and/or rainwater recycling in all buildings to significantly reduce potable water consumption; and</li> <li>f) g) There is no adverse impact on the water environment and biodiversity as a result of the implementation and management of water conservation measures. “ </li></ul>
		Policy NW25: Surface Water Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Surface water drainage for the site should be designed as far as possible as a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) to reduce overall run-off volumes leaving the site, control the rate of flow and improve water quality before it joins any water course or other receiving body;</li> <li>2. The surface water drainage system will seek to hold water on the site, ensuring that it is released to surrounding water courses at an equal, or slower, rate that was the case prior to development;</li> <li>3. Water storage areas should be designed and integrated into the development with drainage, recreation, biodiversity and amenity value; and</li> <li>4. Any surface water drainage scheme will need to be capable of reducing the downstream flood risk associated with storm events as well as normal rainfall events. All flood mitigation measures must make allowance for the forecast effects of climate change.”</li> </ul>
Cambridge Local Plan 2018		Policy 7: The River Cam	<p>Development proposals along the River Cam corridor should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. include an assessment of views of the river and a demonstration that the proposed design of the development has taken account of the assessment in enhancing views to and from the river;</li> <li>b. preserve and enhance the unique physical, natural, historically and culturally distinctive landscape of the River Cam;</li> </ul>



		<p>c. raise, where possible, the quality of the river, adjacent open spaces and the integrity of the built environment in terms of its impact, location, scale, design and form;</p> <p>d. propose, where possible and appropriate to context, enhancement of the natural resources of the River Cam and offer opportunities for re-naturalisation of the river;</p> <p>e. enable, where possible, opportunities for greater public access to the River Cam; and</p> <p>f. take account of and support, as appropriate, the tourism and recreational facilities associated with the river.</p>
	Policy 8: Setting of the city	<p>“Development on the urban edge, including sites within and abutting green infrastructure corridors and the Cambridge Green Belt, open spaces and the River Cam corridor, will only be supported where it:</p> <p>d) includes landscape improvement proposals that strengthen or recreate the well-defined and vegetated urban edge, improve visual amenity and enhance biodiversity</p>
	Policy 31: Integrated water management	<p>Development will be permitted provided that:</p> <p>f) any flat roof is a green or brown roof, providing that it is acceptable in terms of its context in the historic environment of Cambridge and the structural capacity of the roof if it is a refurbishment. Green or brown roofs should be widely used in large-scale new communities;</p> <p>...</p> <p>i) development adjacent to a water body actively seeks to enhance the water body in terms of its hydromorphology, biodiversity potential and setting.”</p>
	Policy 52: Protecting garden land and the subdivision of existing dwelling plots	<p>“Proposals for development on sites that form part of a garden or group of gardens or that subdivide an existing residential plot will only be permitted where: b. sufficient garden space and space around existing dwellings is retained, especially where these spaces and any trees are worthy of retention due to their contribution to the character of the area and their importance for biodiversity.”</p>
	Policy 57: Designing new buildings	<p>“High quality new buildings will be supported where it can be demonstrated that they include an appropriate scale of features and facilities to maintain and increase levels of biodiversity in the built environment”</p>
	Policy 58: Altering and extending existing buildings	<p>“Alterations and extensions to existing buildings will be permitted where they: do not adversely impact on the setting, character or appearance of listed buildings or the appearance of conservation areas, local heritage assets, open spaces, trees or important wildlife features;”</p>
	Policy 59: Designing landscape and the public realm	<p>“External spaces, landscape, public realm, and boundary treatments must be designed as an integral part of new development proposals and coordinated with adjacent sites and phases. High quality development will be supported where it is demonstrated that: species are selected to enhance biodiversity through the use of</p>

		native planting and/or species capable of adapting to our changing climate”
	Policy 66: Paving over front gardens	“Proposals for the paving over of front gardens will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: ... c. it will not result in a net loss of biodiversity”
	Policy 69: Protection of sites of local nature conservation importance	<p>“In determining any planning application affecting a site of biodiversity or geodiversity importance, development will be permitted if it will not have an adverse impact on, or lead to the loss of, part of all of a site identified on the Policies Map. Regard must be had to the international, national or local status and designation of the site and the nature quality of the site's intrinsic features, including its rarity.</p> <p>Where development is permitted, proposals must include measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. to minimise harm;</li> <li>b. to secure achievable mitigation and/or compensatory measures; and</li> <li>c. where possible enhance the nature conservation value of the site affected through habitat creation, linkage and management.</li> </ul> <p>In exceptional circumstances, where the importance of the development outweighs the need to retain the site, adequate replacement habitat must be provided. Any replacement habitat must be provided before development commences on any proposed area of habitat to be lost.”</p>
	Policy 70: Protection of priority species and habitats	<p>“Development will be permitted which: a. protects priority species and habitats; and b. enhances habitats and populations of priority species.</p> <p>Proposals that harm or disturb populations and habitats should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. minimise any ecological harm; and d. secure achievable mitigation and/or compensatory measures, resulting in either no net loss or net gain of priority habitat and local populations of priority species.</li> </ul> <p>Where development is proposed within or adjoining a site hosting priority species and habitats, or which will otherwise affect a national priority species or a species listed in the national and Cambridgeshire-specific biodiversity action plans (BAPs), an assessment of the following will be required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. current status of the species population;</li> <li>f. the species' use of the site and other adjacent habitats;</li> <li>g. the impact of the proposed development on legally protected species, national and Cambridgeshire-specific BAP species and their habitats; and</li> </ul>

		<p>h. details of measures to fully protect the species and habitats identified.</p> <p>If significant harm to the population or conservation status of protected species, priority species or priority habitat resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission will be refused.”</p>
	Policy 71: Trees	<p>“Development will not be permitted which involves felling, significant survey (either now or in the foreseeable future) and potential root damage to trees of amenity or other value, unless there are demonstrable public benefits accruing from the proposal which clearly outweigh the current and future amenity value of the trees.</p> <p>Development proposals should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. preserve, protect and enhance existing trees and hedges that have amenity value as perceived from the public realm;</li> <li>b. provide appropriate replacement planting, where felling is proved necessary; and</li> <li>c. provide sufficient space for trees and other vegetation to mature.</li> </ul> <p>Particular consideration should be given to veteran or ancient trees, as defined by Natural England, in order to preserve their historic, ecological and amenity value.”</p>

## Appendix 2 Guidance on protected species and ecological survey seasons

This provides a rough guide to the seasonality of ecological survey to illustrate the potential impact on the submission of information in support of a planning application. A suitably qualified ecologist should always be consulted to provide site specific advice on appropriate methodologies and timing, which may depend on weather conditions.

Page 22

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Preliminary Ecological Appraisals	Surveys are possible year-round											
Botanical Surveys						As appropriate to plant community						
Breeding Birds			Six survey visits across the season									
Wintering Birds	At least monthly										At least monthly	
Badgers	Surveys for evidence can be undertaken year-round											
		Bait marking and sett surveys			Breeding season, limited surveying				Bait marking and sett surveys			
							Licensable season for disturbance					
Bats	Potential Roost Assessment Surveys are possible year-round											
				Possible depending on temperature	Emergence and Activity Surveys						Possible depending on temperature	
Hazel Dormice				Nest tube survey with monthly checks throughout season, to achieve minimum level of effort								
Reptiles				Weather conditions are important								
Water Voles	Habitat assessment possible year-round											
				Two surveys required: the first Apr to end Jun, the second Jul to Sep to identify breeding territories and latrines								
Otters	Surveys are possible year-round											
Great Crested Newts	Habitat assessment possible year-round											
				4 x Aquatic surveys (must include 2 surveys mid-Apr to mid-May); eDNA survey season mid Mar to end Jun								
White Clawed Crayfish	Habitat assessment possible year-round											
							Netting survey					

# Agenda Item 10

## CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

### Record of Executive Decision

#### GREATER CAMBRIDGE BROWNFIELD REGISTER

**Decision of:** Councillor Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces

**Reference:** 21/URGENCY/P&T/04

**Date of decision:** 09 March 2021  
**Published on:** 19 March 2021

**Decision Type:** Non Key

**Matter for Decision:** The purpose of this report is:

- a. To agree the Greater Cambridge Brownfield Register 2020 to be published on the Councils' websites. The register will comprise a spreadsheet (Appendix 1 of this decision) and accompanying spatial data which can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13472>

- b. The Executive Member for Planning Policy and Delivery at South Cambridgeshire District Council is also being asked to agree the Greater Cambridge Brownfield Register 2020 via a parallel decision.

**Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options):**

Government requires all local planning authorities to publish a brownfield land register following specific guidance.

**The Executive Councillor's decision(s):**

That the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces agrees:

- a. The Greater Cambridge Brownfield Register 2020 to be published on the Councils' websites. The register will comprise a spreadsheet (Appendix 1 of this decision) and accompanying spatial data.

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13472>

- b. A parallel decision is being considered by South Cambridgeshire District Council and delegated authority is given to the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development to agree any minor editing, or amendments to the response agreed by the City Council, that are consistent with the overall approach as set out in Appendix 1.

**Reasons for the decision:**

All local planning authorities are required to publish a brownfield land register. This is prescribed by the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017. Further guidance on the practicalities of doing so are set out in the government's Planning Practice Guidance.

**Scrutiny consideration:**

The Chair and Spokesperson of Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee were consulted prior to the action being authorised.

**Report:**

The Greater Cambridge Brownfield Register can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13472>

**Conflicts of interest:**

None known.

**Comments:**

No adverse comments were made.

# Agenda Item 11

## CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

### Record of Executive Decision

#### GREATER CAMBRIDGE HOUSING TRAJECTORY AND FIVE YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

**Decision of:** Councillor Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces

**Reference:** 21/URGENCY/P&T/06

**Date of decision:** 18 March 2021  
**Published on:** 01 April 2021

**Decision Type:** Non Key

**Matter for Decision:**

1. To agree the Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five-Year Housing Land Supply document (see Appendix 1) to be published on the Councils' shared planning service website. The Greater Cambridge housing trajectory and five-year housing land supply calculations have been prepared jointly with South Cambridgeshire District Council, consistent with the adopted Local Plans.
2. To delegate any further minor editing changes to the Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five-Year Housing Land Supply document to the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development where they are technical matters.

**Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options):**

In January 2019, the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces agreed that the Greater Cambridge housing trajectory and five-year supply calculations would be agreed by the Executive Member for Planning Policy and Open Spaces at Cambridge City Council via a decision outside of a meeting (together with the Cabinet Member for Planning at South Cambridgeshire Council).

**The Executive Councillor's decision(s):**

That the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces agreed:

- a. the Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five-Year Housing Land Supply document (see Appendix 1) to be published on the Councils' shared planning service website. The Greater Cambridge housing trajectory and five year housing land supply calculations have been prepared jointly with Cambridge City Council, consistent with the adopted Local Plans.
- b. to delegate any further minor editing changes to the Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five-Year Housing Land Supply document to the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development where they are technical matters.

**Reasons for the decision:**

The Greater Cambridge housing trajectory is used by the Councils to calculate their five-year housing land supply and to demonstrate that anticipated housing delivery will meet or exceed the housing requirements set out in their Local Plans.

National planning policy and guidance requires that a local planning authority should identify and update annually at least a five year supply of specific deliverable housing sites. A new housing trajectory is required to establish the Greater Cambridge five-year housing land supply for the purposes of making planning decisions. In addition, South Cambridgeshire District Council has a planning appeal for development at Mill Lane, Sawston where the appellants are challenging the Councils' five year housing land supply. The assumptions made by the Councils' on the deliverability of sites will be challenged through this appeal and therefore by publishing the updated Greater Cambridge housing trajectory and five-year supply calculations, the Councils will be able to use the most up-to-date information for this appeal.

**Scrutiny consideration:**

The Chair and Spokesperson of Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee were consulted prior to the action being authorised.

**Report:**

The Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five-Year Housing Land Supply can be viewed at link below:

[Document Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five-Year Housing Land Supply - Cambridge Council](#)

**Conflicts of interest:**

None known.

**Comments:**

No adverse comments were made.



# Agenda Item 12

## CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

### Record of Executive Decision

#### CHANGES TO THE CURRENT PLANNING SYSTEM CONSULTATION RESPONSE

**Decision of:** Councillor Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces

**Reference:** 21/URGENCY/P&T/07

**Date of decision:** 25 March 2021 **Published:** 06 April 2021.

**Decision Type:** Non Key

**Matter for Decision:** **Greater Cambridge response to National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code: consultation proposals**

#### 1. Background

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has launched an eight-week consultation on proposals to establish a new Office for Place, which would require all local planning authorities to create their own design codes in consultation with local stakeholders. These design codes would have to be adhered in the planning submission process by all developers, and would entail some alterations to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Link to document:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals>

Deadline: 27th March

#### 2. Context

The consultation follows directly from the 2021 consultations on the Planning White Paper. Last autumn, the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP) responded to the Planning White Paper: Planning For The Future, Changes To The Current Planning System and Land Data consultations last Autumn. A copy of this joint response can be seen here:  
<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s51405/Planning%20ofuture%20and%20Current%20Changes%20Response%20Report.pdf>

The rationale, proposals and specific questions for this consultation, as well as the draft text updates to the NPPF and the annexed draft National Model Design Code can be downloaded from here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals>

In this consultation, the government is acting to implement some of the main recommendations from the Building Better, Building Beautiful Report.

### 3. Proposed Response from Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council

Overall, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Officers consulted agree with the government that the planning system could be improved and should have more emphasis on design. This view echoes Greater Cambridge's response to the Planning White Paper last year where proposals that simplify processes and take advantage of more digital approaches to provide more certainty, design quality, and an emphasis on sustainability were welcomed.

However, there are significant concerns that some of the proposed changes may undermine its stated objectives of achieving good design. This concern is centred on proposed changes to Article 4 directions and the resources to deliver the design codes in a coherent manner.

The full response proposed is included as Appendix which can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13474>

**Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options):**

The consultation raises important issues that the council wishes to respond to.

**The Executive Councillor's decision():**

Approved the proposed response the National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code: consultation proposals, as set out in the document appended to this decision which can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13474>

**Reasons for the decision:**

Outlined in the report why the decision had been made.

**Scrutiny consideration:**

**Report:**

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13474>

**Conflicts of interest:**

None known.

**Comments:**

No adverse comments were made.

# Agenda Item 13

## CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

### Record of Executive Decision

<b>CAMBRIDGE RESIGNALLING PROJECT C3R SCHEME CONSULTATION RESPONSE</b>
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<b>Decision of:</b>	<b>Councillor Massey Executive Councillor, Transport and Community safety</b>
<b>Reference:</b>	21/URGENCY/P&T/08
<b>Date of decision:</b>	09/04/21
<b>Published:</b>	21/04/21
<b>Decision Type:</b>	Non Key
<b>Matter for Decision:</b>	<p>The purpose of this decision is to ensure that a timely consultation response is issued to Network Rail's public consultation on the 'C3R' scheme. This has been prepared on behalf of the Greater Cambridge Planning Service (Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council) and is aligned with the Cambridgeshire County Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council and Greater Cambridge Planning Service (Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council) response.</p> <p>The Cambridge Re-signalling, Re-lock and Re-Control project (C3R for short) is a proposal to renew the signalling systems in and around the Cambridge area and deliver a modern signalling system to improve efficiency and reliability.</p> <p>The consultation opens on 1st March 2021 and closes on 11th April 2021: <a href="#">Home - C3R Consultation</a></p>
<b>Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options):</b>	The consultation response sets out the requirement for Network Rail to undertake formal pre-application discussions with the Councils, and provides comments from the County Council.
<b>The Executive Councillor's decision(s):</b>	To approve the proposed response to the public consultation, as set out in the documents appended to this decision.
<b>Reasons for the decision:</b>	See consultation response letter.
<b>Scrutiny consideration:</b>	The Chair and Spokesperson of Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee were consulted prior to the action being authorised.
<b>Report:</b>	Attached is the consultation response.
<b>Conflicts of interest:</b>	None known.
<b>Comments:</b>	No adverse comments were made.



# Agenda Item 14

## CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

### Record of Executive Decision

<b>JOINT RESPONSE TO UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S (REGULATION 18) LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION</b>
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<b>Decision of:</b>	<b>Councillor Katie Thornburrow</b> Executive Councillor for Planning and Open Spaces
<b>Reference:</b>	21/URGENCY/P&T/09
<b>Date of decision:</b>	13/04/21
	<b>Published on:</b> 21/04/21
<b>Decision Type:</b>	Non Key Decision
<b>Matter for Decision:</b>	Joint Response to Uttlesford District Council's (Regulation 18) Local Plan issues and Options consultation
<b>Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options):</b>	To provide the Councils' comments to this consultation in recognition of the opportunities it provides to influence at an early stage the emerging Uttlesford District Council Local Plan.
<b>The Executive Councillor's decision(s):</b>	To agree the response, jointly with South Cambridgeshire District Council to the Uttlesford District Local Plan Issues and Options (Regulation 18 consultation).
<b>Reasons for the decision:</b>	<p>The Uttlesford Local Plan will provide strategic and local policies to guide development within the district of Uttlesford. This stage of plan-making is the start of the process of preparing a Local Plan. Its scope is to identify strategic issues, set out options and ideas for the strategic policies, levels and locations for potential development. This report focuses on matters of relevance to Greater Cambridge.</p> <p>The consultation can be accessed on Uttlesford's website <a href="https://uttlesford-consult.objective.co.uk/kse/folder/20790">https://uttlesford-consult.objective.co.uk/kse/folder/20790</a></p> <p>The consultation closes on 21 April 2021 at 17:00.</p>
<b>Scrutiny consideration:</b>	The Chair and Spokesperson of Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee were consulted prior to the action being authorised.
<b>Report:</b>	<p>A report detailing the background and financial considerations can be viewed at the link below:</p> <p><a href="https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&amp;cat=13476">https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&amp;cat=13476</a></p>
<b>Conflicts of interest:</b>	None
<b>Comments:</b>	No adverse comments were made.

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<b>EAST WEST RAIL INFORMAL CONSULTATION STAGE - CONSULTATION RESPONSE</b>
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**Decision of:** **Councillor Thornburrow**, Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport

**Reference:** 21/URGENCY/P&T/10

**Date of decision:** 07/06/21 **Published:** 15/06/21

**Decision Type:** Non Key

**Matter for Decision:** **East West Rail Informal Consultation Stage - Consultation Response**

### **1. Background**

East West Rail (EWR) is carrying out a non-statutory public consultation on the East West Rail railway project between 31 March 2021 and 09 June 2021. It forms part of the pre-application public consultation needed to support a Development Consent Order application which would be required to authorise the construction, operation and maintenance of the project. An application for a DCO will be submitted after a further statutory stage of consultation.

The East West Rail railway project aims to deliver transport connections for communities between Oxford and Cambridge. The proposed new link will connect communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge, and will be delivered in three connection stages. It is anticipated that trains running the full length of the line between Oxford and Cambridge by the end of the decade.

The report proposes to respond to East West Rail on a number of issues, in particularly highlighting the importance of the scheme, the need to take account of and co-ordinate with development planned in the area, and the need to continue to work with the Council on local social, environmental and economic issues.

### **2. Context**

As set out in its response to previous East West Rail consultations in 2019 Cambridge City Council supports the principle of the Bedford to Cambridge section of the East West Rail line.

The current East West Rail public consultation seeks comments in respect of customer experience and railway operations, and a range of infrastructure proposals (including route alignments, stations and level crossings).

Page 235

The consultation updates East West Rail's previous conclusion (that the preferred route into Cambridge is from the south).

Options which are now being considered include a station to the north of Cambourne, which could facilitate a northern approach to Cambridge (including a station at Oakington and junction at Milton).

The updated information continues to show that a southern approach is the preference in terms of value for money, benefits and impacts on communities, and in terms of operating the railway.

The infrastructure proposals are located within six identified geographic areas. The developing plans in the areas of relevance to the Greater Cambridge Area are summarised below.

#### Project Section D – Clapham Green to The Eversdens

Construction of a new railway, with an emerging preference for a route alignment from Tempsford station to Cambourne North station, over an alignment with the proposed A428. Construction of a new station and sidings either north or south of Cambourne. After running north of Cambourne, the preferred route would then cross the A428 at the entrance to Bourn Airfield and the northern end of Highfields Caldecote.

#### Section E – Harlton to Hauxton:

Construction of new railway which would enter Cambridge from the south via the West Anglia Line. This would also involve the construction of new railway junction south-west of Cambridge near Harston and Hauxton to join the proposed new railway to the existing Shepreth Branch Royston line (the King's Cross line), which then connects to the West Anglian Main Line at the Shepreth Branch Junction to the north-east. The emerging preferred junction option is a grade separated junction (bridge) which would connect the new railway to the Shepreth Branch Royston Line.

#### Section F (The Shelfords to Cambridge):

Improvements or closure of the existing level crossing on Hauxton Road (between Little Shelford and Hauxton) and the modification of Shepreth Branch Junction. Maintenance of the existing two track railway of the Shepreth Branch Royston line to Shepreth Branch Junction. Construction of two additional tracks in some areas to create four tracks on the West Anglia Main Line between Shepreth Branch Junction and Cambridge station.

This section of the route also proposes additional platforms at Cambridge station (which will necessitate the relocation of the existing station sidings) and the opportunity to stop at the proposed Cambridge South station.

#### Proposed Response

Whilst the Council supports the principle of the Bedford to Cambridge section of the East West Rail line and welcomes the opportunity to provide further comments in respect of the 2021 Public Consultation, significant further work is still needed to



understand the localised impacts of the scheme, the options for mitigation, their effectiveness and implementation including the sequencing with wider strategic infrastructure and development.

The Council has not been able to assess technical issues such as noise or landscape impacts in any detail, given the high level nature of the consultation material, and as such is unable to support any of the options unequivocally at this stage. Thorough and detailed evidence will be expected to demonstrate how issues have been explored and addressed, and why the chosen route is the appropriate one.

### **3. Proposed Response**

4. A detailed response to the consultation can be found in Appendix A

[Document Meeting 29.06.21 ROD: East West Rail Informal Consultation Stage - Consultation Response - Cambridge Council](#)

**Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options):**

The consultation raises important issues that the council wishes to respond to.

**The Executive Councillor's decision(s):**

To approve the proposed response the East West Rail informal consultation, as set out in the document appended to this decision which can be viewed at the following link:

(Insert link)

Delegate authority to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development to make further technical comments in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport.

**Reasons for the decision:**

Outlined in the report why the decision had been made.

**Scrutiny consideration:**

**Report:**

Attached is the Member Consultation Paper\_ appendix A which can be viewed at the link below:

[Document Meeting 29.06.21 ROD: East West Rail Informal Consultation Stage - Consultation Response - Cambridge Council](#)

**Conflicts of interest:**

None known.

**Comments:**

The Chair and Opposition Spokes were consulted. Comments were received from Councillor S Davies regarding the it the seven principles of good consultation laid out by the Consultation Institute (particularly principle 1 on Integrity). These were addressed and the final response updated which can be viewed at the link below:

[Document Meeting 29.06.21 ROD: East West Rail Informal Consultation Stage - Consultation Response - Cambridge Council](#)

