

Cambridge Local Plan - Towards 2031 Issues & Options Report

June 2012

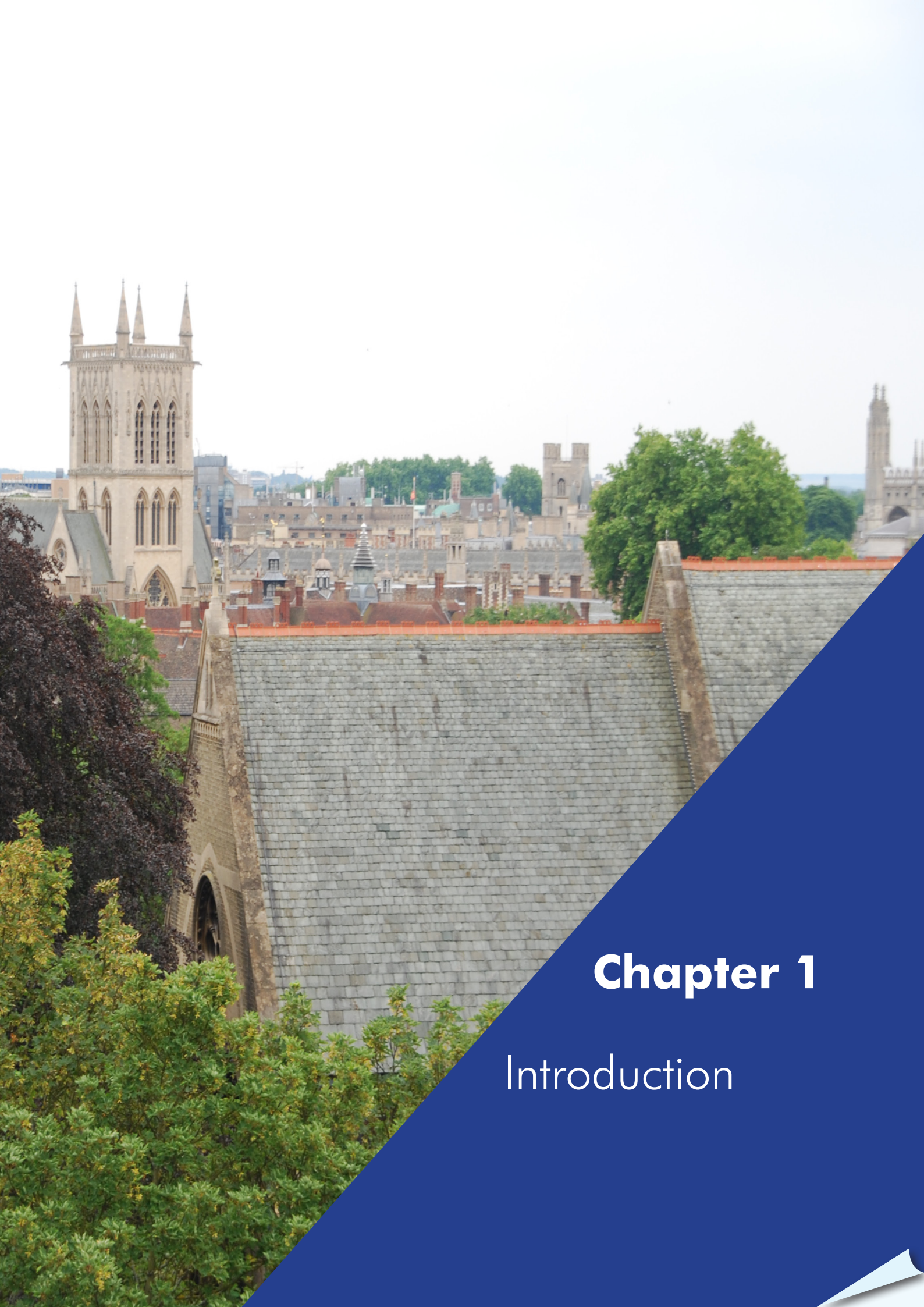


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Chapter 1

Introduction

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

What is the Local Plan and how does it affect me?

- 1.1. The Cambridge Local Plan sets out policies and proposals to guide the future development of Cambridge. It also sets out where future development will take place, and identifies land for new housing, community facilities, shops and employment. In addition the Local Plan identifies land to be protected from development, such as the Green Belt and open space. It is the key document used to determine planning applications for new development in the City.
- 1.2. The current Local Plan was adopted in 2006, and the City Council is required to produce a new Local Plan, which will plan for and manage development to 2031. This report sets out the issues we think are facing Cambridge over the next 20 years and the potential options for dealing with these issues. We are seeking your views on these in order to help us shape the new Local Plan.
- 1.3. Planning is important as it affects many aspects of our lives, from where we live and work, to where we shop and spend our free time. Planning has not only shaped the new development that has taken place in Cambridge but it has also helped to protect much of what makes Cambridge special, from its historic buildings to the parks and open spaces that help to give the City its special character. As we seek to review and update the Local Plan for Cambridge, it is important that we get it right so that Cambridge continues to be a place where people want to live, work, study and visit.

Why does the current Local Plan need updating?

- 1.4. The current Local Plan has been successful in helping to deliver new housing and high quality development. A key aim of this Local Plan was to provide for more housing to redress the imbalance between houses and jobs. Land at the edge of Cambridge was therefore released from the Green Belt to provide for new housing, along with new community facilities, open spaces, transport infrastructure, and local shopping, for use by both new and existing communities. These sites are now, for the most part, either being developed or are at the outline planning application stage.
- 1.5. The current Local Plan has, for the most part, been successful in striking the balance between enabling new development and protecting what it is that makes Cambridge special. However, the planning system has undergone a massive change in recent years. The result is that the 2006 Local now needs to be updated.
- 1.6. In addition new planning issues have emerged in Cambridge in recent years, which require the development of new policy. For example, the loss of public houses has become a real concern to local residents in the last year, as has the issue of how to retain a diversity of shopping choice in centres such as Mill Road. By reviewing the Local Plan now, we can take stock of what the key planning issues for Cambridge are and develop new policies to address these issues.

- 1.7. The Council is responsible for looking forward and setting the level of housing and employment provision that we need in Cambridge over the next 20 years. This task is a hugely important one and has the potential to affect the lives of all who live and work in the city now and in future. We are starting that process with this issues and options report as a means of identifying the key questions and issues that lie ahead, and the possible ways that we could respond to those challenges. We want to facilitate the fullest engagement of our communities from the outset of this process and this report will be the subject of a six-week consultation period in June and July.
- 1.8. Land in Cambridge is precious and is under significant development pressure. We enjoy an enviable quality of life and environment here and don't want to lose that. We need to balance the competing demands on the city and also to provide for our needs and those of future generations. The Local Plan is the process by which these competing requirements are managed.
- 1.9. There are fundamental questions that need to be explored at the issues and options stage in order to ensure that the process of delivering a new plan is robust and comprehensive from the outset. These include key considerations around how many new homes and jobs should be provided to 2031 and where they should go?
- 1.10. These questions need to be worked through and informed by the views of our communities. As the preparation of the Local Plan continues, everything will be brought together in order to ensure that the right approach is developed and agreed. This means that whilst the provision of new homes and jobs is important, a balance needs to be achieved with other objectives. Cambridge is a special place and the future shape and function of the city needs careful consideration. There are constraints on the amount of development that can take place within Cambridge, given its constrained area, historic environment, and limited infrastructure as the importance of protecting the Green Belt and enhancing the unique setting of Cambridge. There will be difficult choices to be made but are decisions that we need to make locally, not have handed down to us. This document is the start of that process.

The Localism Act

- 1.11. The Localism Act (2011) sets out proposals to shift power away from central Government and towards local people. In terms of the planning system, the Act contains proposals to make the system clearer, more democratic and more effective. One of the most significant changes made by the Localism Act is the introduction of neighbourhood planning which gives communities the power to ensure they get the right types of development for their area, by measures such as developing policies in Neighbourhood Plans. These Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and so it is important that communities contribute to the development of the Local Plan and that the new Local Plan addresses those planning issues that are specific to certain areas of the City.

- 1.12. The Localism Act, which received royal assent in November 2011, also provides the legal framework for the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). It was this document, the East of England Plan, which previously set the targets for housing and employment provision in Cambridge. More information on the number of jobs and homes to be provided in Cambridge is provided in Chapter 3 of this report.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.13. The Government has recently streamlined national planning policy with the adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012. At the heart of this document lies the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. In terms of plan making and the review of the Local Plan, the NPPF gives a 12 month transitional period for Councils to update their plans to ensure consistency with the policies contained within the NPPF. Emerging plans will also be given weight in the determination of planning applications. Whilst the current Local Plan is considered to be in conformity with the NPPF, it is important that the Council presses ahead with its replacement.

What is Sustainable Development?

- 1.14. The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This concept is hard to define. The NPPF refers to the United Nations General Assembly definition of ‘meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. It also refers to the UK Sustainable Development Strategy ‘Securing the Future’ which set out five ‘guiding principles’ of sustainable development:
- Living within the planet’s environmental limits;
 - Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
 - Achieving a sustainable economy;
 - Promoting good governance; and
 - Using sound science responsibly.
- 1.15. There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. To achieve sustainable development, the NPPF states that economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. For example, economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities.
- 1.16. As referred to above, at the heart of the NPPF is a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’, for both plan-making and decision-making. For plan-making this means that local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. Local Plans should meet needs, which are based upon evidence, and they should be flexible and able to adapt to rapid change, unless any adverse impacts of

doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits, or development is within protected areas.

- 1.17. For decision-making, this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly outweigh the benefits.
- 1.18. This shows the importance of having an up to date Local Plan for Cambridge, which positively plans for identified needs, and which carefully balances economic, social and environmental aspects in order to achieve the greatest benefits for the City, leading to sustainable development.

Your Local Plan needs you

- 1.19. We need your help to identify all of the planning issues facing Cambridge, in order to develop appropriate policies to address them. As mentioned above, this report has been prepared to invite you to comment on key issues that have been identified, and our suggested policy options to address them. However, it also provides you with an opportunity to suggest any issues that you feel have been overlooked, comment on which of the options you think is most appropriate, or tell us about any other options you have thought of.
- 1.20. The issues in this report have been identified through developing an evidence base about the economic, social and environmental characteristics of Cambridge and how this will change over the next 20 years. This has involved the completion of a number of studies as well as working with key stakeholders, organisations and groups across the city. These studies include the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, an assessment of Open Space provision across the City, an Employment Land Review, Retail Needs Assessment, and an assessment of the renewable energy capacity of Cambridge. Appendix A sets out the studies and surveys that have been produced as evidence.
- 1.21. In addition, ideas have been gathered at a series of workshops. These were held between December 2011 and February 2012, with councillors, stakeholders, developers, agents and residents' associations. The purpose of the workshops was to explain how the Plan will be prepared, to encourage people to get involved and to discuss issues and concerns from an early stage. Reports documenting these workshops can be found on the City Council's website at the following link:
<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/localplanreview>
- 1.22. Attendees of the workshop were also invited to one-to-one meetings with planning policy officers. Several of these meetings were held and the information gathered has fed into the development of issues and options.
- 1.23. The Issues and Options Report pulls all of this information together and provides an opportunity for local residents and other key stakeholders and

organisations to have sight of and discuss a range of issues and options that are relevant to the future planning and development of the city.

Working with Neighbouring Authorities (The Duty to Cooperate)

- 1.24. Planning issues are not constrained to local authority boundaries. The NPPF states that public bodies have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those that relate to strategic priorities. Councils are required to work collaboratively to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans. As such, the Issues and Options Report has been developed through joint working with South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) which encircles the City and Cambridgeshire County Council which is responsible for the planning of transport, schools, libraries and minerals and waste in Cambridge and the County as a whole.
- 1.25. South Cambridgeshire District Council is also developing a new Local Plan, and it is advantageous that this is following approximately the same timetable as the Cambridge Local Plan. Many of the evidence based studies have been carried out jointly, and the identification of possible new broad locations for housing at the edge of Cambridge (see Chapter 3) has been carried out jointly.
- 1.26. In addition, joint working arrangements are also being developed between the City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and the County Council in order to address strategic cross boundary issues as part of the Local Plan review process for each Council as well as addressing transport related issues. The Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and County Council Strategic Transport and Spatial Planning Group has been established.
- 1.27. At a County level, appropriate arrangements have been put in place to facilitate the duty to co-operate on strategic planning issues across the county, with the establishment of a Joint Strategic Planning Unit.

What does the Issues and Options Report cover?

- 1.26. The structure of the Issues and Options Report is provided below. Although chapters relate to different topic areas, we have tried to emphasise the fact that all these topics are very much integrated. For example, in any new development there can be net gains across the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) if this is considered at an early enough stage.
- 1.27. The Issues and Options Report provides a vision for Cambridge to 2031, a number of possible overarching strategic objectives, strategic priorities, a spatial strategy for development in Cambridge to 2031 as well as policy options on a number of different topic areas. Details of the sequence and contents of the individual chapters is provided in the bullet points below.
 - Chapter 2 sets out a possible vision for Cambridge to 2031 and a number of strategic objectives.

- Chapter 3 is concerned with the spatial strategy and focuses on the approach to housing and employment provision.
 - Chapter 4 sets out a number of other strategic spatial options, dealing with matters such as the Green Belt and the City Centre.
 - Chapter 5 deals with potential opportunity areas, which are areas in the city which have been identified as having the potential to be considered for future improvement or development over the plan period.
 - Chapter 6 is concerned with sustainable development, climate change, water resources and flooding.
 - Chapter 7 deals with creating successful places in Cambridge and is concerned with design, landscape, and public realm.
 - Chapter 8 sets out options to protect and enhance both the historic built environment and the natural environment.
 - Chapter 9 is concerned with delivering high quality housing.
 - Chapter 10 deals with building a strong and competitive economy, including sections on employment, retail, higher and further education and tourism.
 - Chapter 11 is concerned with creating successful communities, including the provision of open space, leisure facilities and community facilities.
 - Chapter 12 deals with promoting and delivering sustainable transport and other kinds of infrastructure, and the mechanisms for doing so.
- 1.28. The Local Plan does not cover minerals and waste planning, as this is the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council. Policies in the recently adopted Minerals and Waste Development Plan form part of the wider development plan for Cambridge.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.29. Alongside this Issues and Options Report, we are also consulting on the Interim Sustainability Appraisal (SA). This document assesses the options identified against a range of social, environmental and economic topics and helps to identify all the likely significant effects. The SA advises on ways in which any adverse effects could be avoided, reduced or mitigated or how any positive effects could be maximised. This helps us to ensure that as the policies are developed in the Local Plan, they are in keeping with the aims of sustainable development. We would encourage you to look at this document and send us your comments.

Other Assessments

- 1.30. As part of plan-making, other assessments are required. Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is required under the European 'Habitats Directive' (92/43/EEC). It is an assessment of the potential impacts of implementing a plan or policy on European sites of nature conservation importance (Natura 2000 Sites) and aims to avoid any potential damaging effects.

- 1.31. There are no Natura 2000 sites within Cambridge City Council's boundary, and so any potential impacts would be related to potential changes to the water environment, which could have an impact on more distant sites such as the Ouse Washes. This will be taken into account during the development of the Local Plan.
- 1.32. A formal assessment will be undertaken when a draft Local Plan has been developed, before pre-submission consultation, as it will not be until this time that the potential impacts can be properly assessed. This approach has been discussed and agreed with Natural England.
- 1.33. The Equality Act 2010 requires local authorities to consider how its policies and decisions impact disadvantaged groups and minimise this impact. The Council will undertake this through an Equalities Impact Assessment. This assessment will be undertaken when a draft Local Plan has been developed, before pre-submission consultation, as it will not be until this time that the potential impacts can be properly assessed.

How to have your say

- 1.34. Once you have looked through this Issues and Options Report, please send us your comments. A number of questions have been set out and it would be helpful if you could respond to these. However, you may also make comments on any paragraph of the report. There are a number of ways in which you can do this:
- **Using the Council's online consultation system** - This is the Council's preferred means of receiving representations because it is the fastest and most accurate method and it will help us to manage your representations quickly and efficiently. Separate instructions on how to use the electronic form are provided on the website and officers in the planning policy team are always available to help if you have any queries. Please go to the following link: <http://cambridge.jdi-consult.net/ldf>
 - **Using a response form** - If you do not have access to a computer, a paper form can be completed and sent to the Council. Copies of the response form are available from the planning policy team.
- 1.35. Please note that the deadline for responses is **5pm on 27th July 2012**. Unfortunately responses received after this deadline can only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. If you have any queries as to how to submit a representation please contact the planning policy team.

What happens next?

- 1.36. This Issues and Options Report is just the first phase of developing the new Local Plan for Cambridge. Once consultation on this report has finished we will consider all of the representations received, using them to refine the policies that will be included in the Local Plan.

- 1.37. We will hold a further round of consultation in autumn/winter 2012 on sites which have been identified for allocation for a particular type of development such as employment, community facilities, shopping. It will show specific site boundaries on maps, for your consideration. The consultation will also bring together information from other studies such as the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the Open Space Strategy.
- 1.38. We will then draft the actual Local Plan, which will be subject to a further round of public consultation prior to being submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. At this stage, an independent Government Inspector will consider the ‘soundness’ of the Local Plan in a public examination. In other words the Inspector will consider whether the plan has been positively prepared, and that its policies are justified, effective and are in conformity with the NPPF. Following on from this the Inspector will produce a report of their findings, and then the Council will formally adopt the Local Plan. These stages are illustrated in figure 1 below.

We’re here to help

- 1.39. Your views are important to us, but we recognise that the planning system is not always easy to understand and navigate. We want to make sure that as many people as possible have an opportunity to have their say on the new Local Plan, regardless of their previous experience with planning matters. That is why we are here to help at every stage of the process. Officers from the planning policy team are available to help guide you through the process of preparing the new Local Plan. You can contact us using one of the following methods:
- You can phone us on 01223 457000 (ask to speak to someone in the planning policy team);
 - You can email us at policysurveys@cambridge.gov.uk
- 1.40. There will also be opportunities for you to meet officers face to face throughout the process of preparing the new Local Plan, through exhibitions timed to take place at key points in the preparation of the document. Details of these events and up to date information on the Local Plan review can be found on the Council’s Local Plan website:
<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/localplanreview>
- 1.41. For those who use social media, we shall also be maintaining regular updates on the Council’s facebook page and twitter feed.

Question

- 1.1 What do you like about Cambridge and what do you think makes it special?

Figure 1: Stages in the Preparation of the new Cambridge Local Plan

