Draft Cambridge Skyline Guidance

October 2011

Guidance note in respect of the application of Policy 3/13 (Tall Buildings and the Skyline) of the Cambridge Local Plan (2006)

Appendix A

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Scope, Purpose and Status

1.1.1 This guidance is intended to provide clarity on saved Policy 3/13 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2006). Policy 3/13 states:

"*New buildings which are significantly taller than their neighbours and/or roof-top plant or other features on existing buildings, will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that they will not detract from:*

a. local residential amenity;
b. *ancient monuments and their settings;*
c. *Listed Buildings and their settings;*
d. *Conservation Areas and their settings;*
e. *historic landscapes and their settings; and*
f. ***key vistas, the skyline and views within, over and from outside the City".***

1.1.2 This guidance will set out in more detail how Policy 3/13 can be applied to proposals for tall buildings or those of significant massing in the City. The guidance is for the benefit of developers, landowners, the community and the Council in exercising its decision-making powers on planning applications. The guidance does not create new 'policy' but instead will help interpret and assist in the application of Policy 3/13 and other relevant policies that govern the consideration of proposals for tall buildings which could impact on the City skyline. **This document, when approved, will represent informal Council guidance but will be a material consideration in the review of planning applications submitted to the Council.**

1.1.3 The purpose of the guidance is fourfold:

- To provide a working definition of a "tall building" in the context of Cambridge and scope of Policy 3/13;
- To outline the characteristics of the Cambridge skyline, its setting and landscape and townscape character and identify valued views and vistas;

- To set out the relevant background documents, policy and guidance that underpin Policy 3/13 and their application in the assessment of tall buildings in the City skyline; and
- To provide specific criteria which must be considered in the preparation and assessment of a proposal for a tall building.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Cambridge is one of England's most important historic settlements and possesses a fascinating, varied skyline composed of towers, spires, cupolas, lanterns, chimneys and spires, many of which are associated with the City's historic core. Famous buildings, such as King's College Chapel, St John's College Chapel, the Roman Catholic Church and the University Library, are treasured landmarks. The view of King's College from The Backs presents a world-renowned skyline synonymous with Cambridge.

1.2.2 The modest scale of Cambridge combined with the overall flat topography of the city and the surrounding area limits the number of vantage points which afford city-wide panoramic views. There are however several key long distance views across the City from the southeast, southwest, and west, as well as from other parts of the city's Green Belt that are important. These are discussed further in Section 3.0. The overall character of the city skyline is one of building 'incidents' of both historic and new buildings emerging above a landscape and townscape with a comparatively high tree cover. Many of these building 'incidents' comprise tall, slender spires, with a general absence of large modern towers. In addition to these 'incidents', there are the clusters of bulky hospital buildings at Addenbrooke's and the hangars at Cambridge Airport which are juxtaposed against a domestic-scaled suburban area on the periphery of the City.

1.3 Vision

1.3.1 Vision for the Cambridge Skyline Guidance:

'To maintain the overall character and qualities of the Cambridge skyline as the city continues to grow and develop into the future.'

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The overall aims of the Cambridge Skyline Guidance are to:

- Maintain the character and quality of the Cambridge skyline;
- Ensure that tall buildings, as defined in this guidance, which break the established skyline are well considered and appropriate to their context;
- Support only new buildings which are appropriate to their context and contribute positively to both near and distant views; and
- Provide clarity to the public and the development industry about the expectations of Cambridge City Council when considering 'tall' buildings.

1.4.2 Based on this vision and with these overall aims in mind, the specific objectives of the Cambridge Skyline Guidance will be to:

- Provide a definition of 'tall buildings' for Cambridge;
- Set out the existing baseline situation in relation to the landscape and townscape character of Cambridge;
- Identify key views from around and within the city;
- Provide a review of 'best practice' and reference to other 'skyline strategies' appropriate to the Cambridge context;
- Provide assessment criteria to articulate Policy 3/13 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2006) and explain terminology;
- Provide the basis for positive engagement of members, stakeholders and the public to achieve support for the guidance;
- Provide guidance which forms a 'material consideration' in the determination of planning applications;
- Feed into the forthcoming review of the Cambridge Local Plan and Policy 3/13 with a view to informing new policy.

1.5 Definition of Tall Buildings and Skyline

1.5.1 Policy 3/13 of the 2006 Cambridge Local Plan does not contain a definition of what constitutes a "tall building". The 'Guidance on Tall Buildings' note published in 2007 by English Heritage and CABE states:

"It is not considered useful or necessary to define rigorously what is and what is not a tall building. It is clearly the case that a 10-storey building in a mainly two-storey neighbourhood will be thought of as a tall building by those affected, whereas in the centre of a large city it may not."

1.5.2 The definition of tall buildings as defined by other local authorities in the country ranges significantly. Bristol City Council, for example, identifies that buildings over 27m (approximately 9 floors) will automatically trigger the need for applicants to address the assessment criteria set out within their Tall Building Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Bristol City Council SPD notes that buildings between six to nine storeys located within the city centre would be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Newcastle City Council adopt a far looser definition of tall buildings, whilst Brighton and Hove adopt a fairly complex definition of what constitutes a tall building.

1.5.3 In the application of this guidance, the following working definition shall apply to the term "tall building" as based on the wording in Policy 3/13:

A tall building is any structure that breaks the existing skyline and/or is significantly taller than the surrounding built form.

1.5.4 The word 'skyline' is not defined within the Cambridge Local Plan 2006. The Oxford Dictionary of English defines it as "an outline of land and buildings defined against the sky: the skyline of the city". For the purposes of this guidance, a 'skyline' can be defined as one being seen from distant and proximate, level and elevated views across the city.

1.5.5 In Cambridge's historic core[1], 'background buildings' tend to rise to between three and five storeys tall, are generally of pre-1950s construction, and include occasional 6 storey modern building such as the Grand Arcade. However, the height of storeys varies notably between buildings. These 'background buildings' are interspersed by taller landmark buildings within the historic core. In the suburbs, overall building heights tend to be two storeys, with limited areas of three storey buildings focused principally along the key approach roads leading into the city.

When will this guidance be applied?

1.5.6 Within the historic core, a 7-storey building (22m above ground level) would automatically trigger the need to address the criteria set out within the document. However, dependent on the exact location within the historic core, buildings between four and six storeys within this area may also need to be evaluated against the assessment criteria herein due to proximity to heritage assets and potential impacts on cherished views. Within the suburbs, five storey buildings (16m above ground level) will automatically trigger the need to address the criteria set out within the document. All areas of 'Major Change' within the Southern Fringe of the City are already subject to maximum building height parameters and sites in Northwest Cambridge are already, or will be, subject to maximum building height parameters.

1.6 Process of Preparation

1.6.1 The Cambridge Skyline Guidance has been prepared following discussion and debate locally since 2009. The following key events and milestones have helped inform this guidance:

- September 2009 – 'Is tall beautiful?' - A debate about tall buildings held jointly with the City Council and Cambridge Association of Architects as part of the annual Urban Design Group conference held at Peterhouse in Cambridge;

[1] The Historic Core is defined within the document 'understanding the city' of the Historic Core Appraisal Conservation Area Appraisal (Cambridge City Council, 2006) http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/content/planning-and-building-control/historic-environment-and-trees/historic-core-appraisal.en

- March 2010 – A public debate and workshop sponsored by the City Council, Cambridge Past Present and Future, and Cambridgeshire Horizons, with support from the Federation of Cambridge Residents' Associations and the Royal Society;
- April 2010 – preparation of Sustainability Appraisal scoping report and work programme for preparation of the guidance as a possible Supplementary Planning Document (SPD);
- January 2011 – agreement on work programme and approach to preparing guidance with Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Growth for agreement at Development Plan Scrutiny Sub-Committee;
- March 2011 – consultation on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report to support possible SPD status of the guidance.

2.0 Background

2.1 Reasons for preparing guidance

2.1.1 In recent years, the City Council has received a number of planning applications for buildings significantly taller than their surrounding neighbours. These applications were subject to considerable debate before being determined. The applications included proposals in and around the Station Area (CB1), the area around Cambridge Leisure (near the junction of Cherry Hinton Road and Hills Road), Botanic House at the junction of Station Road and Hills Road, the "Eastern Gate" (the area surrounding the Newmarket Road/East Road roundabout), the Fire Station at Parkside / East Road, the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, and the Varsity Hotel on Thompson Street.

2.1.2 All of these proposals aroused debate in respect of the matter of building height. The question has consistently been asked as to why the Council does not have guidance beyond Policy 3/13 on planning for tall buildings to address such situations. This guidance is prepared in response to that question.

2.2 Policy and literature review

2.2.1 There is already a considerable amount of both policy and literature nationally on the matter of tall buildings and their impact on skylines.

2.2.2 As noted earlier, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and English Heritage published "Guidance on tall buildings" in 2007. This document sets out how CABE (now part of the Design Council) and English Heritage evaluate proposals for tall buildings and is a useful reference nationally. Several local authorities have also produced detailed guidance on tall buildings and the skyline, including Bristol, London, Plymouth, Liverpool, Leeds, Swansea, Torbay, Brighton and Hove, Nottingham and Newcastle. Other cities have specific policies in their Local Plans/Local Development Frameworks including Oxford, Edinburgh, Sheffield and Northampton. In most cases the policies contained in these plans seek either to define key views, settings and vistas and protect them from new tall buildings, or

provide guidance which sets out what is expected in the submission of a planning application for a tall building.

2.2.3 There are two important local written works on the subject of tall buildings, specifically “Cambridge Planning Proposals: A report to Cambridgeshire County Council” by William Holford and Myles Wright (1950) and “Dreaming Spires and Teeming Towers: The Character of Cambridge” by Thomas Sharp (1963). Holford and Wright’s publication suggested that building height limits be imposed near the centre of Cambridge with a maximum height limit of 55 feet (approximately 17m). “Dreaming Spires and Teeming Towers” was a report examining the character and scale of the centre of Cambridge with the objective of serving as a guide for developers and the Council at the time. The author advocated restraint and caution in dealing with any proposals for tall buildings within the centre of the City. Both documents reveal that concerns over tall buildings within Cambridge are nothing new.

2.2.4 In addition to Policy 3/13, all applications will be subject to policies 3/2 and 3/4 which are of particular relevance to tall buildings. Policy 3/2 ‘Setting of the City’ states:

“Development will only be permitted on the urban edge if it conserves or enhances the setting and special character of Cambridge and the biodiversity, connectivity and amenity of the urban edge is improved.”

Policy 3/4 ‘Responding to Context’ states:

“*Developments will be permitted which can demonstrate that they have responded to their context and drawn inspiration form the key characteristics of their surroundings to create distinctive places. Such development will:*

a. *identify and respond positively to existing features of natural, historic or local character on and close to the proposed development site;*
b. *be well connected to, and integrated with, the immediate locality of the wider City; and*
c. *have used the characteristics of the locality to help inform the siting, massing, design and materials of the proposed development”*

2.3 Skyline guidance

2.3.1 Consultation events co-hosted by the Council in 2009 and 2010 revealed a range of views on the potential benefits and drawbacks of tall buildings and their impact on the Cambridge skyline. These events generally concluded that a 'tall building' is a relative term and that it would be better to talk about 'taller buildings' or buildings that were significantly taller than their neighbours. While there seemed little support for taller buildings within the city's historic core, there were a variety of views on taller buildings at other locations in the city. There was general agreement that any new taller buildings must be sympathetic to their context and position, that they should have a 'sense of place', and be of high quality both in respect of design and materials. It was considered that tall buildings must also be sustainable, environmentally friendly and connected to established infrastructure, particularly public transport. Finally, it was felt that a more proactive "strategy" was needed in order to avoid the potential for a piecemeal approach to the location of tall buildings across the city.

2.3.2 While there has been an expressed desire to create a 'tall buildings strategy', it is important to note that this guidance is not intended to promote tall buildings in Cambridge. Instead, it is intended to provide an understanding of the skyline and then provide a robust set of criteria to assess applications against with a view to preserving the special character of Cambridge. A 'zoning-based' approach to tall buildings is considered potentially detrimental to the character and appearance of certain areas of the City, as they could become the target for excessive development or redevelopment for tall buildings. However, the review of the Local Plan, which is now beginning, does present an opportunity to review Policy 3/13 and this guidance will help feed into the process.

2.4 Approach in the guidance and what needs to be managed

2.4.1 As part of consultation undertaken in March 2010, representatives of the development industry advised that whilst Cambridge remains an attractive place in which to invest and build, tall buildings are expensive to build and "premium" locations are likely to face difficulties in terms of being able to gain

permission either because of site sensitivity or availability. This means that Cambridge will be unlikely to experience pressure for very tall buildings as is experienced in larger cities such as London, Birmingham or Manchester, but rather buildings that are taller than the prevailing built form across the City, which is generally three to five storeys across the Historic Core and two to three beyond. Pressure is more likely to be experienced in parts of the city for buildings of heights between five to ten residential storeys. However, given the relatively low scale nature of the Cambridge, buildings of this height are still likely to have both immediate and wider impacts on the skyline.

2.4.2 The Council has considered the key findings and issues emerging from consultation to date and due to the factors limiting the preparation of any new policy, this guidance is set out as a set of robust, practical criteria to assist in the evaluation of the likely impact of a tall building (or buildings) on the immediate and wider city skyline. Most of the criteria herein are already used in other policies and guidance nationally and so are considered the basis for good practice. The guidance should be used either for the purposes of pre-application discussions with the Council or as part of the submission of formal planning applications.

3.0 Cambridge - Landscape Character, Urban Analysis and City Skyline

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Cambridge is one of England's finest historic towns. It is a contained, compact, collegiate city in a rural setting. Its character is influenced by many physical elements, notably its green open spaces that encircle and penetrate the historic core and the relatively flat topography of the city itself. The existing characteristics of the city need to be understood if the essential qualities of Cambridge are going to be maintained into the future. This section provides a description of Cambridge in respect to its setting, topography, character, skyline characteristics, urban structure, key approaches and gateways, and key views to and within the city.

3.1.2 This section has been informed by recent site appraisals and research undertaken by the Council but also draws upon and makes reference to several existing studies including 'Cambridge City Landscape Character Assessment (Cambridge City Council, 2003), the 'Cambridge Green Belt Study' (Landscape Design Associates, 2002), Cambridge City Council's 2002 'Inner Green Belt Boundary Study' and various Conservation Area Appraisals and 'Suburbs and Approaches' studies undertaken by the Council in recent years. This document does not provide a detailed character assessment or explain the historic evolution of the City as this information can be found in these other guidance and studies.

3.2 Topography and geology

3.2.1 "The topography of the area is a direct consequence of the geology and one of the most important characteristics of Cambridge is the relationship between the City and its rural setting and the notion of a contained town sitting in a partial bowl of generally low lying landscape with higher ground to the south east, south and west and low lying fen and clay lands to the north and east" (Cambridge City Council, 2003). The topography of Cambridge and the

surrounding area is shown in Figure 3.1 (note - all figures are attached at the back of the written part of this guidance).

3.2.2 To the north of the city lie extensive areas of flat and low-lying fen peat. To the southeast of the city lies a broad chalk ridge rising up to 74 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the Gog Magog Hills. To the west of the city, two gault clay ridges (north and south of Coton) run in a broadly east-west direction. The northernmost ridge rises up to 62m, south-west of the American Cemetery at Madingley.

3.2.3 Broad valleys through the chalk and clay have been eroded by the rivers Cam, Granta, Rhee and Bourn Brook to form the low-lying land immediately to the south and south east of Cambridge (LDA, 2002). The lowest land in the city lies below the 5 metre AOD contour along the River Cam, which in effect bisects the city.

3.2.4 The built environment of the city occupies a level area of land generally between 5 and 15 m AOD with a discrete area of land above 20m AOD around Castle Hill, to the north of the River Cam and at the 'West Cambridge University' site. Castle Mound, a man made structure which forms part of Castle Hill, rises up to approximately 32m AOD, and affords the only significant panoramic view within the city and which is not taken from a building.

3.3 National Landscape Character

3.3.1 Cambridge sits at the boundary of three national character areas identified by the Countryside Agency in 2005.

- The *'East Anglian Chalklands'* (NCA 87) to the southeast rise to 74m AOD at Gog Magog Hills, from which there are extensive views of the city and surrounding countryside. The high ground and open countryside close to the city centre is a highly valued resource;

- The *'Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands'* (NCA 88) to the west comprise typically open, rolling countryside rising to a height of about 60m AOD close to the village of Madingley;

- The *'Fenlands'* (NCA 46) to the northeast where the most obvious character is the low-lying, level terrain, mostly below the 10m AOD point.

3.4 Local townscape and landscape character

3.41 In 2003, Cambridge City Council published a 'Landscape Character Assessment' of the city and its environs. The study identifies a number of physical features or resources, which define the character of the city and are essential to its character. These are as follows:

- Buildings and The Historic Core;
- Green Fingers and Corridors;
- Open Green Spaces within the city;
- Water Courses and Bodies;
- Setting and views of the city skyline; and
- Separation.

3.42 The following sections examine some of these characteristics, which have particular relevance to proposals for buildings that are likely to change the existing skyline of the city. Such proposed buildings, by virtue of either overall height or massing, could negatively impact on the character of Cambridge if their potential impact is not considered from the outset. For further background reading, detailed townscape assessments of large parts of the city are given within the various Conservation Area Appraisals produced by the Council which are available at http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/planning-and-building-control/historic-environment-and-trees/conservation-areas/

3.5 The setting of the City

3.5.1 The setting of Cambridge is an important issue when assessing the impact of tall and larger buildings. The City sits within a partial bowl of low-lying land surrounded by higher ground to the south and southwest. The Landscape Character Assessment published in 2003 states the following: "Cambridge is a contained collegiate City in a rural setting. The notion of the countryside being close by and accessible to people is an important one. The rural

hinterland is especially close to the west of the city centre but nowhere in Cambridge is very far from the countryside or the green corridors which link it to the city centre. Combined these give the perception of compactness and accessibility to rural space".

3.5.2 The wider setting of the city and its compactness has been largely preserved over the years by the surrounding Green Belt established in 1965 and the green fingers extending into the city which are also partially designated as Green Belt. Cambridge City Council commissioned the 'Inner Green Belt Study' in 2002. A comprehensive assessment of the Green Belt was also carried out in 2002 as part of the Cambridge Green Belt Study (2002) prepared by Landscape Design Associates on behalf of South Cambridgeshire District Council. This study identified significant areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape character (including the historic core, West Cambridge and the river corridors). Tall buildings or buildings of significant massing, especially groupings of tall buildings, have the potential to alter the setting of the city by impacting on these areas of distinctive townscape and landscape. The setting of the historic core has also been preserved by the substantial areas of open space which encircle it, including The Backs, Midsummer Common, Jesus Green, Sheep's Green and Coe Fen, and Parker's Piece.

3.6 Watercourses and water bodies (Figure 3.2)

3.6.1 There are a variety of watercourses across the city and its rural hinterland with the River Cam being the most prominent of these watercourses. The river bisects the city in a broadly southwesterly to northeasterly direction along the periphery and in a northerly and easterly direction within it, changing direction at Bridge Street. The river flows through a variety of open spaces of differing in character and scale. These spaces are described further in section 3.7.

3.6.2 The river corridors around the city serve as key approaches to the city. This factor, combined with their open character, make them particularly sensitive to new development and in particular to taller buildings. As the 2003 Landscape Character Assessment notes, some of the best panoramic views

of the city are afforded from the south west of the city, including Grantchester Meadows.

3.6.3 Notwithstanding the potential adverse impacts of future tall buildings, existing views of tall, slender structures such as the various churches across the city and the chimney at Cambridge Technology Museum provide interest and variety to the skyline when viewed from the river corridors. These buildings contribute to the character of the river corridor and improve the legibility of the city.

3.7 Green fingers and open green spaces within the City (see also Figure 3.2 and 3.4)

3.7.1 One of the most important and defining characteristics of Cambridge are the green fingers and corridors that penetrate into the city from the rural hinterlands. Large portions of these green corridors are designated as Green Belt. The open spaces associated with the River Cam vary in character, from open rural landscapes outside the city to the commons such as Midsummer and Stourbridge Commons, the College 'Backs', and the more enclosed urban landscapes found to the south of Castle Hill, the city's historic river crossing point.

3.7.2 The College Backs are the most evocative of these open spaces affording memorable views to King's College and the other colleges across the college lawns. These views are particularly vulnerable to change.

3.7.3 In addition to these linear green spaces, there are a number of other key open spaces which encircle the city's historic core such as Parker's Piece, Christ's Pieces and the Botanic Gardens. Proposals for tall buildings within close proximity to these areas of open space are likely to be particularly contentious due to their increased prominence and visibility, as well as given the historic associations of many of these green spaces.

3.7.4 It is therefore clear that views from the city's open spaces within and surrounding the historic core are arguably the most sensitive to change within the City.

3.8 Heritage Assets (see also Figure 3.3)

3.8.1 Cambridge is an internationally recognized city with an outstanding collection of listed buildings and buildings of local interest (or "BLI's"). The historic core's diverse character is defined by the intermingling of the generally larger-scale collegiate buildings and the more 'domestic scale' market town buildings described further in Section 3.9. The historic core of the city is covered by the Central Conservation Area, which has helped preserve the character of the historic core. The surrounding ten other Conservation Areas (listed below) have protected the setting of the historic core although these areas have been designated in their own right and not specifically to protect the setting of the historic core. Many of the college grounds lining the River Cam which form The Backs are designated as 'Registered Parks and Gardens'.

1. Brooklands
2. Chesterton
3. Conduit Head Road
4. De Freville
5. Ferry Lane
6. Newnham Croft
7. Southacre
8. Storey's Way
9. Trumpington
10. West Cambridge

3.9 The urban structure of the City

3.9.1 The historic core of the city comprises a mix of grand, collegiate, and civic commercial and ecclesiastical buildings together with more vernacular, market town buildings. These buildings are all set in an irregular, medieval pattern of narrow streets, alleys and squares. The historic core is the city's main retail area comprises a diversity of shops, offices and dwellings of varying styles and ages but with a high proportion of 18th and 19th Century buildings, although many of these represent the rebuilding and intensification of earlier plots. The street layout affords a great variety of small scale views

and vistas which are often terminated by buildings with towers and spires creating a highly attractive and legible townscape.

3.9.2 The historic ‘town’ buildings often have narrow plot widths and are generally three to four storeys in height, with some two and five storey buildings. Taller buildings within the historic core are predominately post WWII construction. Many of the streets within the historic core include relatively high buildings in proportion to the street width, providing a pronounced sense of enclosure to the street, notably such as at Rose Crescent.

3.9.3 The collegiate buildings are typically laid out around large courts. The buildings and landscape that back onto the River Cam create a distinctive area known as The Backs. The relationship between the built form and open space is part of what makes historic Cambridge so distinctive and unique.

3.9.4 The character of the town to the north, east, south and west of the historic core differs significantly. To the west and south west of the River Cam, the townscape is characterised by college and other university buildings set amidst expansive playing fields and grounds. In addition, large private houses and gardens are set within a rectilinear street pattern. The western edge of the city has been developed at much lower densities than the areas to the north and east. On the far western edge of the city lies the ‘West Cambridge University Site’ which includes a number of generally four storey research and office buildings with large floor plates set out in a formal landscaped campus.

3.9.5 Immediately to the north of the core, there are extensive areas of Edwardian and Victorian terraces and townhouses, which have subsumed the ancient village centres of Chesterton. Chesterton has retained its more irregular, intimate pattern of streets, in marked contrast to the surrounding rectilinear street patterns.

3.9.6 At the far northern edge of the city is the Science Park, a collection of large research and office buildings set amidst landscape grounds built from the 1970s onwards.

3.9.7 The east of the city is characterised by substantial areas of relatively higher density development and includes small to medium sized Victorian, Edwardian and interwar terraces set out on relatively tight, rectilinear street patterns which run perpendicular to the main approach roads into the city. Large scale post WW2 development has occurred at Cherry Hinton on the far eastern edges of the city, and include the substantial aircraft hangars and works of Marshall's Airport which sit prominently within a flat, open landscape.

3.9.8 The arrival of the railway to the city in 1845 allowed the gradual expansion of both residential areas around Mill Road and New Town as well as enabled the development of industry. Today, the railway corridor is characterised by large industrial and commercial developments (though some of these areas are being redeveloped presently) and is relatively open in character, allowing open views and vistas not afforded elsewhere in the city. The station area is one of the few areas in the city where the industrial heritage of the city is still partly evident, primarily in the form of Foster Mill, a prominent landmark building visible from the city's rural hinterland.

3.9.9 Further south in the city are large areas of early to mid 20th Century terraced, detached and semi-detached homes, which are often well set back from roads on wide, tree lined avenues. The Addenbrooke's hospital area forms its own distinct character area comprising large hospital buildings at the southern edge of the city.

3.10 Movement corridors, approaches and gateways (see Figure 3.4*)*

3.10.1 Understanding the approaches and gateways to the city is important in order to assess the potential impact of any tall building proposal. Given their high level of accessibility, the main approach roads, particularly towards the edge of the historic core, are potentially going to be a desirable location for developers of future tall buildings. This is evident from development of the Belvedere at Hills Road railway bridge and recent applications along Newmarket Road. Tall buildings on these roads, or those with a considerable mass, are likely to be prominent but could have the potential to serve as positive gateways and landmarks to the city if well designed.

3.10.2 In the LDA Green Belt Study of 2002, the following is stated: “Approaches to and within the urban area provide the viewpoints from which most visitors see the City and gain their perception of its scale. Distance and travel time between open countryside and distinctive Cambridge, and the character of the approaches, play an important role in determining people’s perception of the character and scale of the city. The length of approaches therefore provides a fair representation of how people perceive the scale of Cambridge” (LDA, 2002). The impact of tall buildings on vistas along these approaches needs to be assessed by applicants.

3.10.3 The city has retained much of its original medieval street pattern and generally avoided the worse excesses of the 1960s and 70s highway engineering, with some notable exceptions such as Elizabeth Way. The complex, irregular street pattern leads to a variety of small-scale views and vistas within the city. The centre is served by a number of broad radial and relatively straight routes into the city, many of which have long historic associations. The Belvedere is an example of a tall tower, which forms a prominent terminus of long vistas along straight approach roads and the rail line to the City. The Catholic Church at the corner of Hills Road and Lensfield Road is probably the best example of a tall building terminating views along key approaches into the City.

3.10.4 Figure 3.4 illustrates the key approaches and gateways into Cambridge. Illustrated views from approaches and gateways should be provided when considering key views for the purposes of evaluating a tall building proposal. Views along road approaches into the city tend to be linear vistas, constrained by physical features such as trees and buildings, although the river and rail approaches to the city are often more panoramic and extensive in character. Examples of approaches and gateways based on the LDA 2002 Green Belt study include the following:

Tree Lined approaches including:

- Hills Road;
- Hauxton Road/Trumpington Road;
- Barton Road; this approach is particularly sensitive to change.

- Madingley Road;
- Huntingdon Road and ;
- Grantchester Road – this approach is particularly sensitive to change. There is a particularly strong connection between the Historic Core and its rural hinterland (LDA, 2002)

Suburban approaches:

- Histon Road
- Milton Road
- Cherry Hinton Road

Commercial Approaches:

- Newmarket Road
- Mill Road

River Approaches

- Fen River Way and Harcamlow Way
- Approach from Grantchester

Railway Approaches from London, Ely and Ipswich

3.10.5 Reference should be made to three existing 'Suburbs and Approaches' studies prepared by Cambridge City Council which provide information on the significance of buildings, views and settings in the following areas:

- Barton Road
- Huntingdon Road
- Madingley Road
- Newmarket Road

3.10.6 Similar studies have been prepared for Hills Road, Long Road and Trumpington Road and are currently under review.

3.11 Characteristics of the City Skyline

3.11.1 Skylines of cities evolve and change over time in response to increasing urban expansion and renewal. The Cambridge skyline has undergone just such a process, albeit until recently in a relatively small scale and incremental way. Up to the mid 19th Century, open panoramic views of the Cambridge skyline were afforded from near vantage points within the city. 'Buck's Prospect of Cambridge from the North West, 1743' provides a fascinating, annotated lithograph of the city skyline, dominated by King's College Chapel with a scattered collection of college and ecclesiastical towers and spires set against a strong landscape backdrop, rising up to the Gog Magog Hills. By the late 19th century and early 20th century, the construction of substantial areas of new housing gradually blocked pre-existing panoramic views of the historic core.

3.11.2 The skyline of any city will clearly vary in accordance with the location from which it is viewed. The opportunities to experience wide, panoramic views of the city are limited due to the generally level topography combined with the modest scale of buildings within the city. These factors make the Cambridge skyline highly vulnerable to change. In the early 1960s, in response to rising concern in relation to the emergence of tall building proposals, Cambridge City Council commissioned Thomas Sharp of Liverpool University to assess the character of the City and address the issues relating to tall buildings. He expressed opposition to tall buildings in his report 'Dreaming Spires and Teeming Towers', recommending that no 'normal' building should exceed five storeys. However, Sharp noted: "it cannot be held that the Cambridge skyline is as fine or distinguished as might be expected from a place of this character. Nor is it anywhere to be seen to much advantage as a whole. Only from Madingley Hill, among public places, does one get a general panoramic view, and that somewhat too distant view to be fully effective. Inside the town only Castle Hill provides a wide close prospect."

3.11.3 Sharp observed that the skyline of the suburbs required diversification but not domination. This observation is still valid today. Large areas of the suburbs, notably the eastern and southern sections of the city, lack any notable buildings and lack inter-visibility with the historic core. The majority of these

suburban areas are characterised by two storey buildings with occasional three storey buildings. The notable lack of church towers and spires throughout these areas has contributed to this lack of diversity in character. The Belvedere, a ten storey building close to the railway station, is a particularly prominent building which terminates a number of vistas across the city, including vistas along Hills Road and Cherry Hinton Road and from various bridges passing over the main railway line. Since Sharp's report the skyline of Cambridge has changed markedly. Throughout the 1960s and 70s a number of relatively tall buildings were constructed across Cambridge, many of them built by the University. Within months of Sharp's publication, the eight storey William Stone Building for Peterhouse was opened. The building occupies a particularly prominent location adjacent to the Fitzwilliam Museum and is visible from Coe Fen, albeit it rises above a strong belt of trees. The construction of the hangars at Cambridge Airport and the hospital buildings at Addenbrooke's arguably had the biggest effect on the broader, more distant views of the city, notably from the south and south west.

3.11.4 The low density residential areas to the west of the historic core generally lack any prominent, focal buildings. Trees, rather than the built form, generally define the skyline within this part of the city. There are, however, some exceptions within this part of the city, including architecturally prominent university buildings, most notably the tall orthogonal tower of the university library. This part of the city has been identified within the LDA Green Belt study as one of the 'distinctive areas' of townscape and landscape which are quintessential to the character of the City.

3.11.5 There is a great variety of rooflines within the historic core, characterised by spires, cupolas, chimneys and towers. Whilst many places within the core have fairly uniform rooflines, in other places, notably along King's Parade, five storey buildings are juxtaposed against three storey buildings. The predominantly narrow plot widths help give the historic core highly varied rooflines. Above the roofline of 'town' buildings, emerge the taller, ecclesiastical college and university buildings. The level of enclosure created by relatively tall buildings and narrow streets does mean that some of the taller buildings constructed throughout the City in 1960s and 1970s (notably University buildings) have remained visually discrete.

3.11.6 More bulky structures within the historic c ore include six storey units on Malcolm Street/King Street and the New Museums Site University. The New Museums building is comparatively well hidden amidst the tight street network, albeit the tower is visible within many sections of the historic core. The six storey University engineering block on Fen Causeway is more visible owing to its location next to a wider road and its proximity to Coe Fen.

3.11.7 The recently completed Grand Arcade is six stories in height, its upper floors are well set back avoiding the structure becoming overly dominant within the local street scene. The Varsity Hotel at Thompson Lane is seven storeys in height with a roof terrace. The building forms a particularly dominant element within the skyline of the city when viewed from Jesus Green which sits in marked contrast to the surrounding low level residential buildings.

3.11.8 Beyond the historic core, the prevailing height of residential buildings is generally two storeys with substantial numbers of three storey Victorian and Edwardian buildings on the main approach roads, notably the 'City ends' of Regent Street, Hills Road, Trumpington Road, and to a lesser extent, Chesterton Road.

3.11.9 Trees form an important element in the Cambridge skyline, within both the historic core and the suburbs. Many of the elevated views of the city from the rural hinterland and from Castle Mound show a city of trees with scattered spires and towers emerging above an established tree line. Trees form both ordered interventions in the townscape such as those delineating the edges of open spaces such as Parker's Piece as well as either natural or naturalistic planting of the green corridors running into the city. In addition, single mature specimen trees such as the Horse Chestnut outside King's College play important roles in greening streets and off-setting the scale of buildings around them.

3.11.10 Taller buildings outside of the City core include six storey apartment units recently constructed at Chesterton facing onto the northern edge of the River Cam and six storey apartment buildings on the southern edge of the Cam at Riverside Place. The bulky, eight storey block at Hanover Court off Coronation Street is well screened, predominantly due to the presence of

relatively tall buildings on Hills Road and the scale of the Chemistry Building on Lensfield Road.

3.11.11 Cromwell Road includes a cluster of taller, developments at Winstanley Court and Hampden Gardens, which rise up to 5 stories in height. The area around the railway station includes a number of large footprint buildings such as Cambridge Leisure. Whilst the Cambridge Leisure building is not particularly tall, it has a large mass and is relatively visible from distant viewpoints to the south of the city, including from Little Trees Hill (the highest point on the Gog Magog Downs) and appears as a strong horizontal intervention in this part of the city. Such developments highlight the importance of considering not just building height, but also the mass and the continuity of roofscape of development proposals.

3.11.12 Outside the historic core, rooflines generally tend to be more uniform. However, subtle variation within the extensive Edwardian and Victorian suburbs is to be found through the use of dormer windows, most notably to the north of the city core.

3.11.13 The eastern suburbs tend to feature smaller, more uniform buildings and rooflines with regularly spaced chimneys. The eastern suburbs lack distinctive landmark buildings. What is important to note in these locations are the breaks between buildings and the scale of development that allows vegetation to be seen above rooftops.

3.12 Landmark buildings

3.12.1 The Oxford English dictionary defines a landmark as “an object or feature of a landscape or town that is easily seen and recognized from a distance, especially one that enables someone to establish their location *e.g. the spire was once a landmark for ships sailing up the river”.* The Dictionary of Urbanism (Cowan, 2005) defines a landmark as “a conspicuous building or structure; one that stands out from the background buildings; a point of reference in the urban scene.” Interestingly, Kevin Lynch notes in his important work ‘The Image of the City’ that a landmark need not be tall. For the purposes of this guidance, the principal landmark buildings on the city

skyline are listed below and are identified by merit of their relative visibility within the city. They are also shown on figure 3.5:

(i) Medieval to Early Modern

- King's College Chapel (45m) - four spires
- St Mary the Great - orthogonal tower
- St Mary the Less - orthogonal tower
- Trinity College Library - cupola
- St Andrew's Church – spire
- Holy Trinity Church - spire

(ii) 19th Century

- St John's College - octagonal pendant (known as the Wedding Cake)
- St John's Chapel – orthogonal tower
- Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs (the Catholic Church) (65m) – spire;
- All Saint's Church on Jesus Lane – spire
- St Luke's Church, Victoria Road – spire
- Cambridge Museum of Technology – chimney
- Foster Mill at the railway station – ten storeys
- Emmanuel United Reformed Church – orthogonal tower
- Gonville and Caius College – various towers
- Mill building at Ditton Walk
- Chimney at the Cambridge University, Engineering Department
- University Arms Hotel - four corner towers on a bulky four storey building
- Fitzwilliam Museum (not overly prominent at a larger scale)

(iii) 1900-1945

University Library (48m) – tower

(iv) Post War

- Aircraft hangars at Cambridge Airport
- Addenbrooke's Hospital – a cluster of large buildings and a double headed incinerator chimney at 72m
- The Belvedere – generally four stories with a fifth storey set back and an eleven storey tower
- Botanic House – seven storey lens shaped building
- Varsity Hotel – seven storeys plus roof terrace
- The Schlumberger building
- Carter Cycle bridge – prominent piers
- William Stone Building for Peterhouse – eight storey tower
- Chemistry Building, Cambridge University, Lensfield Road – prominent copper flues
- Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy - Corn Exchange Street - Twelve storey tower

3.13 Viewpoint analysis

Overview

3.13.1 The generally level topography of the city and its environs results in limited vantage points to enable views of the whole city skyline. Notwithstanding this fact, there are some good vantage points and the 2003 Landscape Character Assessment notes the importance of distant views from the south, southwest and west.

3.13.2 Views can be divided into a variety of types. Long to medium distance views are views which are taken from outside of the city within its rural hinterland, some of which allow panoramic views of the entire city skyline or large portions of it. These can be further divided into elevated or level views.

3.13.3 Many of the best views of the Cambridge skyline are afforded from private buildings within the historic core, including from multi-storey car parks. Views from the tower of St Mary's the Great are particularly impressive and may be experienced by the public for a small fee. From these points, the city's surrounding topography can be appreciated and experienced, which would otherwise not be possible from large parts of the city at street level.

Long to medium distance views towards Cambridge

3.13.4 Long to medium distance key viewpoints of the city are identified on figure 3.6. The actual views from some of the locations listed in this section are shown in the photographs on figure 3.7. These views are taken from the rural hinterland of Cambridge and from both elevated and level views. The views of the spires and towers of the historic core from the rural hinterland are limited and are generally distant. Dependent on the scale and location of individual applications, the following views should normally be assessed as part of a tall building application.

(i) Views from the southeast

From the southeast of the city, panoramic views are afforded from the following locations around Gog Magog Hills (associated with Wandlebury Country Park) and elevated land to the south east of Cherry Hinton. The view from the junction of Shelford Road/ Worts Causeway and the Harcamlow Way is one of the few viewpoints where a panorama is afforded that takes in both Addenbrooke's, the city centre and the hangars at Cambridge Airport.

- Little Tree Hill on the Gog Magog Hills;
- Junction of Shelford Road and Harcamlow Way;
- Limekiln Road lay by.

(ii) Views from the east

- South of Teversham from Airport Way;

(iii) Views from the north east and north

- Stourbridge Common
- Ditton Meadows south of Fen Ditton.

(iv) Views from the west

- Madingley Road;

- Red Meadow Hill - open panoramic views of the city are afforded from Red Meadow Hill within Coton Countryside Reserve;
- Barton Road, east of the junction 12 of the M11.

(v) Views from the southwest and south

- Grantchester Road;
- Grantchester Meadows;
- View from Hauxton Road, north of junction 11 of the M11.

Local or short distance views

3.13.5 While it is relatively simple to create a common list of a limited number of distant/long range views of the city, being able to fix a list of local views within the city is clearly dependent on the location and scale of a proposed tall building. If the current "pattern" of tall building proposals continues whereby buildings of between six to ten stories are proposed, it is arguably the more local parts of the skyline within the city which are more vulnerable to change than the wider skyline experienced from the city's rural hinterland. Local views must be considered on a case-by-case basis as part of the pre-application process. The guidance set out in Chapter 4 will describe in greater detail the approach that should be taken to selecting local views of a given proposal. It is also worth noting that paragraph 3.40 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2006) does set out some of the important, localised views of the historic core, such as from Castle Mound and across open spaces such as Midsummer Common, Lammas Land and The Backs. In and around the city core, the following key local views are likely to be important:

- Parker's Piece;
- Jesus Green;
- Midsummer Common;
- Coe Fen;
- Sheep's Green
- Lammas Land
- College grounds within The Backs.
- Stourbridge Common

- Coldham's Common

3.13.6 The following elevated city views may also need to be assessed:

- Hills Road railway bridge looking towards town
- Coldham's Lane railway bridge
- The Backs (Queen's Road)
- Carter Cycle Bridge
- Mill Road railway bridge
- Castle Mound
- Elizabeth Way Bridge
- Long Road Bridge

3.13.7 Applicants for tall buildings should consider other local views on key approach roads (see section 3.10) for assessment. The main approach roads to the city are where a high proportion of visitors and residents experience the scale of the city.

3.13.8 Applicants for tall buildings also need to assess key views from footpaths along the river corridor within the city which do not fall within the commons or backs.

3.14 Sensitivity and significance of views

3.14.1 The Cambridge Local Plan (2006) does not include any detailed policy or commentary about the significance of views to and across the city. As such, it is not possible to set out protected view cones which go beyond policy already set out in Policy 3/13.

3.14.2 The Cambridge Local Plan (1996) identified 'Cones of View' from various elevated viewpoints around the City. Policy NE2 sought to control development within view cones and stated: "Any new development proposed within or close to the cones of view…shall be of a height, scale and mass which will not significantly detract from these views. Enhancement of these views will be sought where development is permitted". It is worth noting that these cones of views were subsequently removed from the 2006 Local Plan.

3.14.3 It is possible, however, to attach a degree of weight to those views which relate to the buildings, landscapes and settings which Policy 3/13 particularly seeks to protect e.g. Listed Buildings and their settings, Conservation Areas and their settings, etc.. Views of the historic core and the key buildings within the core are therefore particularly important to protect. In this case, distant views of the historic core from Red Meadow Hill, Lime Kiln Hill, and the Gogs are especially important, as are more localised views of the historic core from Castle Mound, The Backs, and open spaces within and around the historic core. The views from open spaces within the city to the historic core are very important and arguably the most important views by the very nature of their inherent openness. Other views of particular note include those experienced from the south west of the city. The 2003 Landscape Character Assessment notes: "views across from the Grantchester area are so special and evocative of Cambridge they are part of the Defining Character of the setting and views". The Inner Green Belt Inner Boundary Study (2002) notes the areas of land between Newnham and Grantchester Meadows as particularly sensitive to development and is identified as land which defines the character of the city.

3.15 Conclusion

3.15.1 The city skyline comprises a mix of spires, towers and chimneys, which emerge as a series of incidents above a background of lower buildings and trees. The city generally lacks the tower blocks which have come to define the character of many cities in the late 20th century, although clusters of large buildings are clearly evident at Addenbrooke's Hospital and Cambridge Airport.

3.15.2 The relatively modest scale of the city, combined with the generally flat topography, means there are limited opportunities to view the skyline in its totality. However, there are key views within the city and views from The Backs are world-renowned. The modest scale of the city and the low lying topography means that the skyline is highly sensitive to change with few opportunities to mitigate the effects of tall buildings. Consequently, the location, scale, massing and design quality of proposed tall buildings are of vital importance. Local views within and across the historic core, in particular

from open space immediately surrounding the historic core, will continue to be of the greatest importance and significance within the city. In addition, long distant views from Gog Magog Hills and Grantchester Meadows towards the historic core are also of great value and the key characteristics of these views need to be protected.

3.15.3 With appropriate, robust assessment of proposals for tall buildings, combined with a high quality design for any new tall buildings, the key characteristics of Cambridge's skyline can be preserved and indeed enhanced for the future.

4.0 Assessment criteria

4.1 Explanation of assessment criteria

4.1.1 The assessment criteria outlined on the following pages are intended to help provide a framework for informing a detailed, evidence-based process to help address the policy requirements in Policy 3/13 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2006. The criteria are widely used in similar guidance, policies and strategies across the country and should, if properly understood and applied, provide an objective, factual and realistic portrayal of proposals for tall buildings. The criteria cover a broad range of matters relevant to the evaluation of a tall building proposal and are included in order to ensure that the highest quality of submissions are put forward.

4.1.2 Applicants should work through the assessment criteria as they consider proposals for buildings that can be considered 'tall' or whose massing is likely to impact on the Cambridge skyline. Ultimately, applicants should submit a document that addresses all of the assessment criteria as part of the Design & Access Statement or Heritage Impact Assessment.

4.2 Planning application requirements

4.2.1 Submissions for planning applications involving tall buildings will need to include written and illustrative material which provides the evidence-base and policy justification for the proposed building(s). Planning applications for alterations to existing tall buildings in the city which result in major changes to the external appearance of such buildings will also need to address the assessment criteria, as appropriate, listed in this chapter.

4.3 Relevant Policy and Guidance

4.3.1 Applications for planning permission for tall buildings, as defined in this guidance, need to be aware and make reference, where appropriate, to other policy, guidance and documents that are also relevant to the preparation and assessment of a planning application. Some documents have been highlighted already, but are repeated here along with other local policy and guidance. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of all relevant policy and guidance but does represent the most relevant to tall buildings:

- ‘Cambridge Green Belt Study - A vision of the future for Cambridge and its Green Belt Setting’ Landscape Design Associates for South Cambridgeshire District Council (2002);
- **‘**Inner Green Belt Boundary Study’, Cambridge City Council (2002)
- ‘Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment’, Cambridge City Council (2003);
- ‘Cambridge Historic Core Appraisal’, Cambridge City Council (2006);
- Conservation Area Appraisals, Cambridge City Council;
- ‘Public Art Supplementary Planning Document’ (SPD), Cambridge City Council (2010);
- ‘Sustainable Design and Construction SPD’, Cambridge City Council (2007);
- Suburbs and Approaches Studies, Cambridge City Council

Cambridge Local Plan (2006) policies;

- Policy 3/2 – Setting of the City;
- Policy 3/3 – Safeguarding Environmental Character;
- Policy 3/4 – Responding to Context;
- Policy 3/7 – Creating Successful Places;
- Policy 3/11 – The Design of External Spaces;
- Policy 3/12 – The Design of New Buildings;
- Policy 3/13 – Tall Buildings and the Skyline;
- Policy 4/9 – Scheduled Ancient Monuments/Archaeological Areas;
- Policy 4/10 – Listed Buildings;
- Policy 4/11 – Conservation Areas;
- Policy 4/12 – Buildings of Local Interest
- Policy 4/15 – Lighting;
- Policy 8/16 – Renewable Energy in Major New Developments;

National Planning Policy

- Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (2005);
- PPS: Planning and Climate Change – Supplement to PPS 1 (2007);

- PPS 5 – Planning for the Historic Environment (2010);
  (Note: the Government has proposed the replacement of all PPGs and PPSs with a single National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF is anticipated to be in place some time in 2012)
- Building in Context: New Development in Historic Areas (English Heritage and CABE) (2001);
- Guidance on Tall Buildings (CABE and English Heritage (2007);
- Seeing the History in View – A method for assessing heritage significance within views (English Heritage) (2011).

4.4 The assessment criteria

Criteria 1: Location, setting and context

4.4.1 Policy 3/13 states that tall buildings will not be permitted if they detract from key buildings or landscapes and their settings, or from vistas, the skyline and views within, over and from the city. Any new tall building should complement, not detract, from these features and views. The relationship of the proposed building, or buildings, to the surrounding context needs to be carefully examined. A townscape, landscape and urban design appraisal should be prepared which analyses features such as:

- Topography;
- Townscape and landscape types and character areas;
- Site history (see criteria 2);
- Movement and access patterns
- Scale, height and massing of surrounding buildings and set backs of buildings;
- Urban grain – noting typical plot sizes and the rhythm of the street;
- Prevailing architectural language;
- Land-use;
- Areas of open space;
- Listed buildings and Conservation Areas (see criteria 2);
- City gateways and nodes
- Local and long distance views and vistas and local landmarks;
- Opportunities and constraints

4.4.2 Preliminary site and context appraisal work should be used to inform pre-application discussions with the City Council and to inform the final proposals.

4.4.3 Where buildings of a particularly large scale and massing are proposed or are proposed within a particularly sensitive location, a full Landscape and Visual Impact assessment prepared in accordance with the following guidelines should be prepared as part of the planning application.

- 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (Second Edition) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (Spon Press 2002)
- Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland'. The Countryside Agency/ Scottish Natural Heritage (2002)

Assessing visual impact

4.4.4 Illustrations of any proposal must include a range of clear and accurate drawings and images, including photomontages, computer generated images (CGIs) etc., in order to depict the three dimensional qualities of the proposal. They must also be capable of being easily understood for the purposes of stakeholder and public consultation. The production and display of a scale model may also be helpful in assessing the impact, either positive or negative, of a proposal. Illustrations and models must show neighbouring existing buildings, the streetscape and the historic context. This is discussed further in Section 4.5.

4.4.5 Consideration must be given to the visual impact of any proposal from key distant and localised views, including from adjacent streets and open spaces. Three view types should be provided with any planning application, including vistas, panoramas and view corridors. They may be defined as follows:

Vista – a view from a specific viewpoint looking towards a proposed building or structure.

Panorama – a view from a specific viewpoint looking across a wide area at numerous buildings or structures within the setting of the proposed building or structure. Castle Mound is a good example of a panoramic view within the city.

View corridor – numerous views from a variety of viewpoints looking at a proposed building or structure set amongst other buildings or structures. Typical view corridors include the approach roads into the city, railway and open space areas.

4.4.6 The location of proposed viewpoints should be agreed with the City Council as part of the pre-application process. Chapter 3 of this guidance sets out a number of important viewpoints across Cambridge.

Views of existing landmarks

4.4.7 A building with a large bulky form presents a silhouette that has the potential to block views to existing, positive landmark buildings or create unsympathetic backdrops to such buildings. Breaking up the massing of proposals to create more slender buildings can help to avoid these negative impacts.

Enhancing legibility and creating positive views

4.4.8 An appropriately sited tall building has the potential to make a positive contribution to the city, assisting in way-finding across the City.

Landform and Topography

4.4.9 While the city is generally level and low lying, there are areas of higher land located around Castle Hill to the north of the river crossing at Bridge Street. Where possible, taller buildings should be located in lower lying areas of the city. Locating tall buildings on elevated areas of land can result in buildings appearing significantly larger than they actually are. Any tall buildings within raised areas, such as Castle Hill will be subject to particularly close scrutiny.

Summary - Criteria 1

4.4.10 Applicants must demonstrate, by means of a detailed visual assessment/appraisal with supporting visualisations and illustrations, how the proposal will sit within the existing landscape and townscape and describe what impact the development will have within the local and wider context.

Criteria 2: Historical Impact

4.4.11 Applicants should make reference to the 'Historic Core Appraisal' undertaken by the Council and the various Conservation Area Appraisals undertaken across the City. These documents provide detailed assessments of the area in respect to their history, urban form, character, key buildings and views amongst others.

4.4.12 While Policy 3/13 is not specific on the matter, tall buildings within the Historic Core area are unlikely to be supported in order to ensure that the historic integrity of the centre is maintained. Whether the building can be described as a 'tall building' and be subject to the criteria set out herein will be dependent on the exact location of the proposed building within the Historic Core and the prevailing height of surrounding development. However it is assumed that any building within the Historic Core of seven storeys or above will automatically trigger the need to address the criteria set out within this document, lower buildings would be judged on a case-by-case basis.

Summary – Criteria 2

4.4.13 Tall building proposals which have the potential to impact on heritage assets will need to demonstrate and quantify the impact of any proposal for a 'tall' building as defined in this guidance on the heritage asset, be it a listed building, Scheduled Ancient Monument, Conservation Area or Buildings of Local Interest.

Criteria 3: Scale, massing and architectural quality

4.4.14 The appropriate scale and massing of buildings is an important consideration in achieving the good integration of new buildings within established urban

areas and the wider landscape. An understanding of the surrounding context, as required by saved Policy 3/4 of the Cambridge Local Plan, is an important step in achieving appropriately scaled buildings.

4.4.15 Tall buildings are frequently constructed to serve as memorable, landmark features and the silhouette of such buildings are therefore of critical importance. As noted already, the Cambridge skyline is typified by slender 'incidents', such as church spires punctuating the skyline.

4.4.16 In addition to the overall massing of a building, the quality of a scheme can be significantly affected by how roof top plant and telecommunications facilities are integrated.

Summary – Criteria 3

4.4.17 Applicants will need to demonstrate through visual impact and sections, models, etc., the impact of any tall building proposals on near, middle and, if applicable, distant views. A clear building massing strategy also needs to be provided.

Criteria 4: Amenity and microclimate

4.4.18 Tall buildings should be good neighbours. Careful consideration must be given to the design of any new tall building to ensure neighbouring properties are not adversely affected due to the loss of aspect or outlook, loss of daylight and sunlight to adjacent properties, and overshadowing of gardens, noise or any other relevant amenity.

4.4.19 Tall buildings have the potential to adversely affect the impact on the microclimate of the surrounding public realm through the diversion of wind and the effects of overshadowing and loss of daylight and sunlight. In many cases, these impacts can be successfully mitigated through both careful positioning of the building(s) and detailed building form and design.

4.4.20 Critical to an understanding of potential impacts from a tall building are detailed and accurate wind and shadow studies. Shadow studies should be

prepared that assess the impacts of overshadowing of buildings at different times of day and throughout the seasons. Initial shadow studies can be undertaken using SketchUp™ models as part of pre-application discussions. Some schemes may require a formal daylight and sunlight study. Public and private open spaces and amenity areas should not be in shadow for excessive amounts of time of the day/year.

4.4.21 Tall buildings also present opportunities to provide innovative amenity spaces through the creation of spaces such as roof terraces, balconies and internal courtyards, although such spaces are clearly not restricted to tall buildings.

Summary – Criteria 4

4.4.22 Proposals for buildings defined as 'tall' in these guidelines will need to demonstrate the impacts of the proposal on neighbouring properties and open space and be designed to minimise any potential negative impacts. Key matters to address will include overshadowing, wind, and resulting heat "islands" or glare.

Criteria 5: Public Realm

4.4.23 The design of space around buildings is crucial in the creation of good public realm. Tall buildings need to be sensitively located so that they relate well to the space around them. The edges of the public realm need to be well defined by active uses with open or glazed ground floor façades which create activity throughout the day and help to 'animate' the public realm. Mixing uses within larger buildings can help to generate activity throughout the day and into the evening and provide activity and surveillance of the public realm.

4.4.24 The public realm around tall buildings needs to be attractive, safe, appropriately landscaped, well lit and comfortable to sit in or pass through, and should link to existing, surrounding public realm in a seamless manner.

Summary – Criteria 5

4.4.25 Applications will need to provide sufficient information through the use of detailed illustrations and drawings of the proposed public realm around a tall building showing both the detail pertaining to the application site but also how the new public realm on site relates to the wider streetscape/wider public realm and ensures a sense of human scale at street level.

4.5 Process and technical requirements

4.5.1 The following sets out the likely process for agreeing key views and assessment of impact for tall buildings that are identified as having the potential to impact on the skyline of Cambridge.

- Presentation by applicant of details in respect of scale and massing and overall design strategy. Depending on the nature of the proposal, this stage may trigger consideration of the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Initial assessment of proposals by the City Council with initial response and opportunity to identify key viewpoints.
- Applicant to prepare a list of key views based on advice in this guidance and identify on a base map. The list of key views will be checked and agreed with City Council.
- Applicant to prepare digital modelling (at a draft stage) to show possible impact on key views. This should take the form of a basic massing model in SketchUp (or similar) and set within a digital terrain model.
- Discussion with City Council of modelling results. Assessment of impact considered further, with the potential need for additional views to be discussed.

4.5.2 Depending on results of these stages, additional and more detailed accurate visual representations and information may need to be produced and included as part of the planning application.

Digital Visualisation Techniques

4.5.3 The use of 3D digital modelling and visualisation by applicants for planning permission for tall buildings is strongly encouraged at pre-application discussions with applicants. Cambridge City Council has produced a 3D computer model of the wider city area, which is used by planners and urban designers to aid the assessment of proposed developments. As part of the planning process, developers may produce 3D computer models of their scheme to illustrate the scale and massing of proposed development.

4.5.4 Where 3D computer models are made available to Cambridge City Council, these should be produced in SketchUp or AutoCAD (.dwg or .dxf) format. Models should be at the correct scale (1:1), location, elevation and orientation according to Ordnance Survey data, including a reference point of existing nearby building sufficient to allow the proposed building model to be geo-referenced into the wider City model.

4.5.5 The Cambridge Building Heights Data Model has been constructed to two levels of detail, the City Centre model is derived from LiDAR data and provides a height accuracy of +/-15cm, whilst remaining areas are completed to +/-100-150cm using RaDAR data. This data is not available for use by applicants. The City Council will, however, assess imported models from applicants for planning permission for tall buildings to enable an assessment of the impact of proposals on the immediate site locality and the city as a whole. Developers should indicate the level of accuracy used to construct their model and the method used for deriving surrounding building heights.

4.5.6 At the pre-application stage, 3D models should show the basic form of the building with proposed roof forms and any stepped/staggered elevations, and overhangs or defining architectural elements.

4.5.7 Some tall building applications will require ‘verified photomontages’ as part of the submitted planning application documents. The number and location of these viewpoints will need to be determined during the pre-application process. The views will typically include a mix of wireframes and fully rendered images. While best practice in relation to the production of verifiable images is constantly changing and being refined, applicants should

follow recommendations within ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (Second Edition) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (Spon Press 2002) and their subsequent advice note “Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment” (01/11).

4.5.8 Verified images should demonstrate a clear audit trail which can allow the images to be verified by a third party. In circumstances where proposed tall buildings are adjacent to large areas of open space, winter views will be expected.

5.0 Appendices

Appendix A List of Background documents

- “Cambridge Planning Proposals – A report to the Cambridgeshire County Council” by William Holford and H. Myles Wright (Cambridge University Press, 1950)
- “Dreaming Spires and Teeming Towers – The Character of Cambridge” by Thomas Sharp (Liverpool University Press, 1963)
- Cambridge Green Belt Study – A Vision of the Future for Cambridge and its Green Belt Setting (Landscape Design Associates) (2002)
- Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study – Cambridge City Council (2002)
- Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment, Cambridge City Council (2003)
- Cambridge Local Plan (1996), Cambridge City Council
- Cambridge Local Plan (2006), Cambridge City Council
- Guidance on Tall Buildings (CABE and English Heritage) (2007)

Glossary

To be included in final draft for consultation