
5 Plans for the Area as Envisaged by Higher Levels of Government

5.1 Central Government

5.1.1 Parish Plans

In November 2000 the Government's Rural White Paper "Our Countryside The future" launched the concept of the Parish and Town Plans whose purpose is to:-

"set out a vision of what is important, how new development can best be fitted in, the design and quality standards it should meet, how to preserve valued local features and to map out the facilities which the community needs to safeguard for the future."

Plans should *"identify key facilities and services, set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how distinctive character and features can be preserved."*

5.1.2 Village Design Statements

A Village Design Statement (VDS) describes the surrounding countryside, the shape of the village and the nature of the buildings themselves. A VDS puts forward design guidance for prospective developers based on distinctive local character. It is drawn up by local people and demonstrates local commitment to high quality design and appropriate development. It is relevant to all villages and settlements, not just those in Conservation Areas or within national landscape designations. Village design statements can help to manage change and ensure that new development, at any scale, is in harmony with its surroundings. They cannot challenge whether development can take place, since that is the responsibility of the local development plan. Since 1996, around 386 VDS's have been produced and 87 of these have been adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

While developing the scope of the Parish Plan, it may become evident that the design of new development in the village is an issue of concern to the community, and that a Village Design Statement is needed. Some of the Parish Plan grant may be used to help the community produce a design statement, as a separate document, but as part of a broader based Parish Plan.

Advice on how to produce a Village Design Statement was originally published by the Countryside Commission in 1996 (Village Design, making local character count in new development CCP 501). This publication is being revised and updated and will be available in summer 2002. Further information is available on the Countryside Agency website www.countryside.gov.uk

5.1.3 Quality Councils

Quality Council quality test likely to include: Notes for Comberton

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| Electoral mandate – every councillor to have stood for election | Elections due to take place in May 2003 |
| Minimum number of meetings pa | In place |
| Trained parish clerk | QCA qualification or similar required. |
| Published Annual Report | The first Annual Report was published in 2000 both in 'Contact' and on the parish website www.comberton.org.uk |
| Up-to-date audited accounts | In place |
| Best Value (compare, challenge, consult, competition) possible annual performance plan cleared by auditor | The beginnings of this are already in place. More information is awaited on several aspects. |
| Minimum requirements for parish councils wishing to take on District Council services (i.e. above £100,000 income) | Possible partnership with neighbouring parish to achieve this |

How the Quality Council would work:

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| PC to demonstrate it is representative of the community | Parish plan and support local biodiversity plans Consultation: newsletters/working parties involving non-councillors/stakeholder and public meetings/events |
| Undertake services funded from own resources – looking after village environment | Provide playgrounds and village halls. Look after village greens, bus shelters etc Support voluntary community groups |
| Take on delivery of some services | Include things currently within the remit of other agencies, e.g. street lighting, litter. |
| Wired up through ICT | Access point for information about local services (bus timetables, concessionary fares, council tax agendas and minutes etc) |

5.2 Cambridgeshire County Council

5.2.1 Structure Plan

5.2.1.1 Background

A Public Issues Consultation took place in February/April 2001, the results of which were analysed to help inform the content of the Draft Structure Plan. The Draft Structure Plan consultation was placed on Deposit in Spring 2002, followed by the Examination in Public in November and December with the resulting Panel Report being published in February 2003. The Panel Report recommendations have been considered by the Councils together with objections received at Deposit stage and have helped in determining the Proposed Modifications, consultation upon which took place in May/June 2003.

The Structure Plan is a statutory document establishing broad requirements for new homes and industry, supporting services and infrastructure. The Structure Plan itself does not show specific sites for development, but can indicate general strategic locations. A more detailed Local Plan (or Local Development Framework) will be developed by South Cambridgeshire District Council in accordance with the principles and policies of the Structure Plan.

The main approach to development across Cambridgeshire will be to target most growth in sustainable locations, and make conservation of the environment a high priority to protect the character and setting of our villages.

5.2.1.2 Housing

One of the particular strategic concerns is the need to address the housing-employment imbalance, which is causing longer-distance commuting problems for the Cambridge area and throughout South Cambridgeshire.

The Structure Plan has set South Cambridgeshire a target to provide 20,000 homes between 1999 and 2016, based on an overall housing levels set by regional planning guidance of 70,200 (see Policies P5/1 and P9/2). This includes developments that have already been allocated and follows a sequential approach in identifying housing land. South Cambridgeshire has a target to achieve or surpass 37% of homes being constructed on previously developed land (see Policy P5/2). All development must take into account meeting locally identified housing needs, such as for affordable housing (see Policy P5/4), and specified density requirements (see Policy P5/3).

The Panel Report also recommended that the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan review the contribution that Cambourne might make to help meet housing needs and make it a more sustainable development.

In rural areas, Policy P5/5 states that small-scale housing will be permitted in villages where appropriate to meet local needs. Consideration will be given to the need of affordable housing, the character and setting of the village and the level of jobs and amenities in the local area.

5.3 South Cambridgeshire District Council

5.3.1 Priorities, Objectives and Strategies

The Council must continue to work within a framework set by central government and with other public organisations.

5.3.1.1 National Priorities

Government Priorities include:

- Health and reducing crime.
- A sustainable pattern of land use, promoted by an efficient planning system
- Enhancing opportunity and tackling social exclusion through promoting sustainable rural areas with a dynamic and inclusive economy, strong rural communities and fair access to services
- Effective community leadership and high quality public services through elected local government.
- Providing efficient and accessible services and promoting the involvement of the public in local democracy through e-government.
- Providing support for people in need through Supporting People.
- Sustainability and challenging targets for recycling.

All these priorities are reflected in the Council's Corporate Objectives and other long term aims; most are directly tackled in the Council's priorities for 2002/03.

5.3.1.2 Priorities of Partner Organisations

It is important for the Council to reflect and work with the plans and policies of other local organisations such as the South Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust, the County Council and other neighbouring authorities and the Police.

The County Council has entered into a Public Service Agreement with the Government by which the Council could receive grants of up to £8.9m if it achieves targets in relation to a range of services, including recycling, helping elderly people to live at home, youth involvement and prevention of drug use.

As part of the Waste Management Strategy development work, discussions are being held with the County Council about the possible sharing of PSA income with districts where joint action is required to meet PSA targets.

5.3.1.3 The Council's Corporate Objectives

The Council has adopted Corporate Objectives in order to give direction to the services of the Council and ensure that spending and management focus reflect the real needs of the area. The Council's current Corporate Objectives are:-

- Maintaining, improving and sympathetically developing the character, environment, economy and social fabric of our parishes.
- Enabling our communities to lead safer and healthier lives.
- Providing services which are efficient, responsive to people's views and accessible to all sections of the community.
- Working towards a more sustainable future, balancing our needs and the needs of future generations

These objectives reflect current and future issues affecting South Cambridgeshire and the concerns of local people. They also provide a firm basis for joint work with other organisations.

The following achievements in the last year have contributed substantially to the Corporate Objectives:-

- Extending a kerbside collection of recyclables to the whole district in order to increase recycling and sustainability
- Working with other councils to develop the Joint Waste Management Strategy to improve public services and achieve long term recycling and waste minimisation targets.
- Improving the level of service to users by establishing an appointment system for housing repairs and a 24 hour out of hours service for Environmental Health.
- Continuing to influence regional and structure plan policies and developing the local plan to protect villages from the impact of growth.

5.3.1.4 The Community Strategy

The Local Government Act 2000 requires all councils to work with local organisations and communities to prepare a Community Strategy to improve the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of their area. A strategy should be based on vision about what the area should look like in 10 – 15 years' time and the sorts of communities in which people want to live.

The Council and the County Council have decided to prepare a single strategy for the South Cambridgeshire area. In order to involve a wide range of interests in the preparation of the strategy a Local Strategic Partnership will be formed which will include representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors and will ensure that the views of the public are reflected in the strategy.

The Community Strategy is likely to be adopted in 2003 and will impact on the Council in many ways including:-

The Strategy will form an overall context for the Council's objectives and strategies.

The Strategy and the LSP will enable the Council to address some of the wider concerns of the public such as transport, affordable housing, development pressures and the environment. In particular, the Council will seek to form a closer connection between the Strategy and the Development Plan framework.

Greater focus on Quality of Life indicators will enable the Council's services to be more directed towards achieving real improvements in people's lives. It will become increasingly important to carry out more rigorous research and policy evaluation to ensure that the Council is investing in the right services to achieve Community Strategy objectives.

Working with the County Council, South Cambridgeshire has taken the first steps towards establishing a Local Strategic Partnership and this will be developed as a priority in 2002/03.

5.3.1.5 Other Factors influencing the Corporate Plan

5.3.1.5.1 New Technology

The Council has embarked upon a substantial programme to improve its ICT capacity with the purpose of providing the public with efficient, responsive services delivered through a range of means – for example through an improved web-site; one stop shops; improved telephone service and potentially in the future through digital TVs. In the last 2 years the Council has:-

- Appointed a new lead officer and team to advance this initiative
- Developed improved interdepartmental working.
- Established a robust reliable network within the Council.
- Appointed an IT partner, ITNET, to provide support.
- Established effective working relations with the County Council's Cambridgeshire Community Network.

- Joined with the County Council to establish the first one-stop-shop at Gamlingay library which will have telephone and computer links with the Council.
- Installed an Environmental Health computer system to improve customer services and established projects to replace or improve financial; housing; and planning systems in 2002 - 2003
- Installed an intranet which to improve communication and efficiency within the Council.

A high priority will be given to continuing this work in 2002/03

5.3.1.5.2 Move to Cambourne

The Council has decided to move its main offices to Cambourne with effect from 2004. The move will be financed substantially by the disposal of current properties at Hills Road and Great Eastern House, but there will be costs to be met from the Council's reserves and in future annual revenue costs.

The move to Cambourne has been necessitated by the growth in staff and the increasing operational difficulties of operating in Cambridge and on split sites. The move will also help the Council to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding population of the district. The move will provide a real opportunity to address many of the major issues facing the Council and a springboard for change. The move will provide:-

- Improved working conditions (with built in IT facilities) to assist in staff recruitment and achieve efficiencies.
- A building designed on principles of sustainability.
- An opportunity to "redesign" the organisational structure of the Council and working arrangements to meet the future agenda of the Council and customers needs.

The arrangements will include the retention of an office in Cambridge for people who find it most convenient to visit a City centre office. The Council will also carry out a more fundamental review of how, in the context of the Cambourne move and IT opportunities, it can make services more accessible to the public. Preparing for the move to Cambourne will form an important priority for the Council in 2002/03.

5.3.1.6 Enhancing Scrutiny and Strategic Policy Development in the decision making process

In May 2001 the Council adopted a new Constitution which replaced the former committee system with a leader and cabinet. While this approach has led to quicker decision making and other benefits, the Council has decided to improve the Constitution for 2002/03 in a number of ways including:-

- a single Scrutiny Committee to replace the four select committees in order to focus more clearly on scrutinising the performance of the executive and on performance review.
- more ways in which non-Cabinet members can influence policy development through Advisory Groups; participating in policy forums; and better opportunities to influence the Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee.
- a more strategic role for the Cabinet and more emphasis on the development and implementation of Council priorities.

In 2002/03, the Cabinet will address a number of important policy areas through holding policy forums.

5.3.1.7 Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Best Value

The Government's White Paper, *Strong Local Leadership - Quality Public Services*, has set out many changes for local government in the next few years. For Best Value the future focus will be more on a wider assessment of how well the Council is run and is addressing the needs of the population.

Between October 2002 and October 2003 all district councils will undergo an Audit Commission Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The CPA will be based on the Council's performance on national performance indicators, inspection results and a review of management arrangements (at Member and officer level). The Council will be given a score (High Performing, Striving, Coasting or Poor Performing) and recommendations for future action.

Best Value is entering a more challenging phase. The emphasis will be less on the processes of Best Value reviews and more on identifying areas where improvements can be made and on action to identify and deliver real benefits, in many cases across service boundaries. An essential part of this will be a performance management approach, whereby the Council identifies priorities and objectives and there is focus at all levels to achieve those objectives.

As part of its preparations for the CPA the Council will give high priority to introducing improved performance management arrangements in 2002/03.

5.3.2 Local Plan for Comberton

This section contains the detailed planning background, policies and proposals for Comberton. It must be read in conjunction with the general policies set out in Part I of the Local Plan and the accompanying village inset maps.

See proposals map on page 13 of this section.

5.3.2.1 Location

Comberton is 4 miles to the west of Cambridge astride the B1046. It is linked by Long Road to the A428 which is less than 2 miles away to the north. The land rises north of the village to around 36 metres (120 feet), but the village is on low lying ground. The parish covers 790 hectares (1,954 acres).

5.3.2.2 History and Settlement

Comberton's parish boundaries follow ancient mereways on the east and west and the parish boundaries of Madingley and Barton. The Tit Brook crosses the parish from east to west dividing the main village from the settlement around the parish church. An ancient stone cross marked the junction of the village streets where there is a large village pond and in the school playground there was an ancient maze covered before 1960. The village streets had wide verges before the enclosure; a green on the north side was divided in the sixteenth century and reduced in size in the nineteenth century. It was bounded by Hines Lane on the eastern side. Swaynes Lane was the back lane to the main Toft-Barton road.

The parish church lying on higher ground forms a small hamlet with Rectory Farm and a number of cottages. There were three manors - Greens, Birdlines and Rectory Manor. They survive today as farms beside their moated sites.

The farmhouses and cottages date from the sixteenth century with the exception of Glebe Cottage in Church Lane which has a fourteenth and fifteenth century medieval hall. The traditional building materials of timber frame, plastered, and plain tile or thatch roof covering continued to be used into the 1800's. The larger farms were built of local field bricks until the nineteenth century when manufactured Cambridgeshire bricks were used. Clay bat, a locally made unfired brick was used in cottages and outbuildings from the early 1800's; natural slate for roofs was introduced at this time.

The open fields were enclosed in 1839, and outlying farms date from this time. The land is farmed mainly as arable today. The village pond is a site of Natural History Interest, and Watts Wood owned by the District Council is a parish nature reserve.

There are a number of sites of archaeological interest on the fringes of the village and near the village settlement. A settlement site west of Townsend Farm (Grid Ref: 395557) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The remains of a Roman building was uncovered in 1842 near Fox's Bridge.
(Source: V.C.H.).

5.3.2.3 Recent Planning History

Following the enclosure in 1839 new building consolidated the crossroads area.

Between the wars local authority houses were built along the Barton Road, and after the Second World War Comberton grew rapidly. The Village College was opened in 1960. By 1969 the Kentings and Janes estates were built adding 350 new homes to the village and extending the village east and west. These were followed by the Barrons Way estate in 1974. More recently local authority housing has been developed at Nursery Way.

Between the end of June 1991 (the base date of the Local Plan) and the end of June 1997, there were 40 dwellings completed. In addition there is planning permission for a further 7 dwellings.

In 1951 the population was 600. By mid 1991 it was 2,280 and by mid 1996 it was 2,330.

5.3.2.4 Services and Facilities

At the time of the Local Plan survey (prior to 1993) Comberton had one post office/shop. There were also 2 public houses, a primary school, a doctor's surgery, a village room, a village hall, a sports pavilion and recreation ground. Adjacent to Comberton, in the Parish of Toft, is a Village College (which has part time banking facilities) with indoor evening sports facilities.

There is permanent accommodation at the primary school for 390 pupils and no temporary accommodation. At the time of survey there were 299 pupils on the roll. At the Village College there is capacity for 979 pupils. At January 1996 there 906 on the school roll.

Sewage is treated by the works at Haslingfield.

5.3.2.5 Planning Constraints

Comberton is surrounded by high grade agricultural land (grade 2) and the Green Belt and is in an Area of Best Landscape.

A Conservation Area at the crossroads and around the church was designated in March 1973.

In the lists of Listed Buildings published by the Department of the Environment there are one Grade I, one Grade II*, and 41 Grade II buildings. These lists are not finite.

5.3.2.6 Planning Policies

Although the overall level of services is consistent with a Limited Rural Growth Settlement, Comberton has been identified as a Group Village because the character of the village and the absence of suitable sites preclude the former scale of development. Groups of development may therefore be appropriate on suitable sites within the defined framework of the settlement. Constraints such as Green Belt will preclude development into the open countryside and as such, new building must take place within the identified framework.

The development of any site which will affect the Conservation Area and the setting of the Listed Buildings will be subject to the policies outlined in Part I of the Local Plan - any proposed new building will have to be sympathetically designed and sited.

POLICY COMBERTON 1: One area is allocated for residential development on the Comberton proposals inset map. The site is south of Barton Road and east of Swaynes Lane and approximately 1.1 ha in extent.

Development of this site will be subject to policies HG9 and HG10 for the provision of affordable housing. Where affordable housing is required, planning permission or renewal of planning permission will not be granted until a legal agreement has been signed ensuring such provision.

The Barton Road site will depend on the Highway Authority's requirements to achieve adequate access to this particular area of land from Barton Road. The District Council will not permit vehicular access from Swaynes Lane. The allocation lies on the edge of the Green Belt and therefore its eastern boundary should be adequately landscaped to minimise the visual impact of built development on the surrounding landscape. A development brief for this site was approved by the District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance in September 1993. Copies are available from the Planning Department.

The framework has been drawn around the existing built-up area and in most cases follows the boundary of the Green Belt. Development at the north western corner of the crossroads will not be permitted as it would further erode the linear character of this part of the village. The Conservation Area covers a number of important open spaces within or adjacent to the village and the District Council will strongly resist development on these sites to maintain its character.

| South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2 : Proposed Modifications to the Deposit Local Plan 1999 | | |
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| <i>Mod No</i> | <i>Proposed Modification</i> | <i>Reason</i> |
| M/2/17.13 (TA) | <p>MODIFY paragraph 17.13 as follows:</p> <p>17.13 There is <u>was</u> permanent accommodation at <u>Meridian County Primary School</u> for 390 pupils and no temporary accommodation. At the time of survey <u>the same time</u> there were 299 <u>324</u> pupils on the roll. At the <u>Comberton Village College</u> there is capacity <u>has permanent accommodation</u> for 979 <u>975</u> pupils. At January 1996 <u>2001</u> there were <u>1,062 students</u> 906 on the school its roll.</p> | In the light of the Inspector's recommendation R263. |
| M/2/17-map A | INCLUDE outer boundary of Lords Bridge Radio Telescope restricted area | Technical amendment to show boundary on inset map |
| M/2/17-map B | INCLUDE outer boundary of Lords Bridge Radio Telescope consultation area | Technical amendment to show boundary on inset map |



