

9. Delivering High Quality Homes

- 9.1 Building new market and affordable homes to meet the housing needs will support the creation of healthy communities and contribute to the success of the local economy. Building the right type of homes in the right places can also promote energy efficiency and help to reduce fuel poverty. The Local Plan needs to do this whilst ensuring the protection and enhancement of our natural, built and historic environment.
- 9.2 The Local Plan needs to consider the housing needs of the whole community including single person households, families, elderly people, people with disabilities, service families, Gypsies and Travellers, and people wishing to build their own homes. A proportion of the housing will need to be available to buy or rent at below market costs to help households who cannot open market prices or rents.
- 9.3 Housing needs and aspirations can often be met by extending existing homes or by replacing them. Where non-residential buildings lie vacant, turning them into homes can provide attractive places to live provided that this is not at the cost of providing appropriate local places of employment. National planning policy requires that the Local Plan considers restricting inappropriate development in gardens and limiting new housing development in the countryside.

Key Facts:

- High house prices in relation to earnings and in 2010 average house prices were 7.4 times average household incomes.
- In December 2010 the average house price in South Cambridgeshire was £306,032, compared to an average price across England of £215,337.
- A large and growing housing register with over 4,000 households seeking affordable housing in April 2012, with around 500 affordable lets per year.
- A net annual need for affordable housing of 1,372 affordable homes per year over the next 5 years which include making up the current backlog of need, with 527 affordable homes a year required after that..
- 1,273 new affordable homes built between April 2007 and December 2011 including 215 built on exception sites
- The Gypsy and Traveller community, the District's largest ethnic group, has a need for additional site and pitch provision
- South Cambridgeshire has an ageing population with growth forecast between 2001 to 2021 of 95% of the 60-74 age group and 108% for those 75+
- In 2001 the census recorded that 44% of homes were detached houses or bungalows, 35% semi-detached houses of bungalows, 17% terraced houses or bungalows, 4% flats or maisonettes, and 1% were caravans and other dwellings.
- In 2001 the census recorded that 24.4% of households were of one person (12.2% pensioners), 29.3% were households with dependent children, 9% were households with non-dependent children, 32.8% were households with no children (10% pensioners), and 4.5% were other types of household.

Housing Density

- 9.4 The density of residential development describes the number of houses or flats that are developed on an area of land. Achieving the right density of

development for a location is important to the character of a place and impacts on quality of life. The appropriate density for any particular location is determined by the nature of the area and by its surroundings. If designed well, higher densities can produce high quality, sustainable developments with a strong sense of place. In other circumstances, lower densities are required to fit in with existing character, but also need to be carefully designed so not to create developments which contribute little to local character.

- 9.5 Previous national planning guidance discouraged developing land at densities below 30dph and encouraged higher density development in town centre locations and where there is good accessibility by public transport. This policy approach has increased the efficiency with which land is used but may have given insufficient recognition to local character and amenity. In recognition of these concerns the National Planning Policy Framework does not set minimum density requirements, but instead requires Councils to set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances but expecting developments to make best use of development sites.
- 9.6 The issue of car parking standards is addressed in Chapter 12: Promoting and Delivering Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure. The options consider the case for varying the parking standards for different size of villages, reflecting that car ownership is higher in areas with poorer public transport. These can all be accommodated within the density options without needing a different approach.

Issue 43: Housing Density

A number of choices exist concerning our approach to the density of development.

- a. Provide no guidance on density - development proposals would be decided using the National Planning Policy Framework guidance on the optimisation of site potential, and other local plan policies dealing with design, amenity, housing mix and heritage.
- b. Include a policy setting an average density target of 30 dph across all sites in the District but allowing for variation from site to site to reflect local circumstances – most of Cambourne has been developed at 30dph.
- c. Include a policy with higher average target densities in the most sustainable locations and lower densities in the less sustainable but allowing for variation from site to site to reflect local circumstances. This would reflect differences in access to services and facilities, jobs and ability to get around without using a car.

Cambridge Fringe	40 dph
New Settlements	40 dph
Rural Centres	30 dph or 40 dph
Minor Rural Centres	30 dph
Group Villages	30 dph

It would not be appropriate to apply density policies to small scale development in infill villages, which should be guided by a design-led approach taking account of the character of the area in which it is located.

Question 47: Which of the following options do you agree with?

- a. Provide no specific guidance on density.
- b. Include a policy setting an average net density target of 30 dph across all sites in the District but allowing for variation from site to site to reflect local circumstances.
- c. Include a policy with higher average target densities for development on the edge Cambridge and in any new settlements and 30dph in villages but allowing for variation from site to site to reflect local circumstances.

Please provide any comments.

Housing Mix

- 9.7 In order to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, it is important that we plan for a mix of housing based on the needs of different groups in the community including families with children, older people, people with disabilities and people wishing to build their own homes. The high cost of housing in South Cambridgeshire also affects the size of home that many people can afford, even if their preference would be for a larger property, and it is important to provide for everyone's needs and help create mixed and balanced communities.
- 9.8 The current plan includes targets for housing mix to reflect the trend over the previous 10-15 years for a very high proportion of very large new homes, with more than 50% of housing over that period being of 4 bedroom or larger. That trend has started to change since the introduction of the policy and a better overall mix has been achieved.

Issue 44: Housing Mix – House Types

A number of choices exist concerning our approach to housing mix (house types).

- a. Provide no guidance on the issue, development proposals would be decided on a site by site basis after consideration of local circumstances, affordable housing need and the National Planning Policy Framework guidance on the optimization of site potential and plan policies dealing with design, amenity, and heritage.
- b. Provide guidance only for the market housing (the affordable housing mix will always be determined by need).
- c. Apply the policy guidance to all housing sites or only to larger sites providing 10 or more homes.
- d. Provide housing mix guidance which seeks to balance demographic trends for smaller homes with market preferences for larger homes:
 - At least 30% 1 or 2 bedroom homes,
 - At least 30% 3 bedroom homes
 - At least 30% 4 or more bedroom homes
 - With a 10% allowance for flexibility which can be added to any of the above categories taking account of local circumstances.

Question 48: Which of the following options do you agree with?

- a. Provide no guidance on housing mix (house types).
- b. Include a policy on housing mix (house types) but only for market housing.
- c. Any policy on housing mix (house types) should only apply to sites of 10 or more homes.
- d. Any policy on housing mix (house types) should seek to balance demographic trends for smaller homes with market preferences for larger homes by seeking the provision of market housing as follows:
 - At least 30% 1 or 2 bedroom homes,
 - At least 30% 3 bedroom homes
 - At least 30% 4 or more bedroom homes
 - With a 10% allowance for flexibility which can be added to any of the above categories taking account of local circumstances.

Please provide any comments.

9.9 The Lifetime Homes Standard (November 2011) is a widely used national standard for ensuring that the spaces and features in new homes can readily meet the needs of most people, including those with reduced mobility. The Government's strategy requires all new housing built with public funding to meet the Lifetime Home standard by 2011.

9.10 Having homes built to the Lifetime Homes Standard helps to ensure that housing suits householders' needs and changing circumstances. Whilst lifetime homes can accommodate or adapt to the needs of many wheelchair users, the standards do not match the enhanced accessibility provided by a property constructed to the Wheelchair Housing Design standards. At present provision of fully wheelchair accessible housing is only made as part of the affordable housing element of schemes and in response to identified need.

Issue 45: Housing Mix – Flexible Housing to Support Reduced Mobility

Choices exist concerning our approach to housing mix to provide for changing needs and reduced mobility.

- a. Provide no guidance on making provision in new developments for those with reduced mobility and an ageing population. Provision would be regulated by the Building Regulations which currently do not go so far as the Lifetime Homes Standard.
- b. Include a policy in the Local Plan to require 5% of market housing and all affordable housing to meet Lifetime Homes standards. The policy would not require a set provision for fully wheelchair accessible housing. Such provision to be limited to the affordable housing element of developments and then only in response to an identified need.

Question 49: What approach do you think the new Local Plan should take to securing houses adapted to meet the needs of people with reduced mobility, looking at the following options?

- a. Provide no guidance on the provision of housing for people with reduced mobility.
- b. All affordable and 5% of market housing should be designed to Lifetime Homes standards

Please provide any comments.

Affordable Housing

- 9.11 Affordable housing is housing that is subsidised and provided to eligible households in the district whose needs are not met by the market. It includes rented housing and housing where occupiers purchase part of the property.
- 9.12 The provision of affordable housing to meet housing need is a key issue for the Council. The Housing Strategy 2012-2016 aims to deliver a range of homes that are affordable to all and where people want to live that will support economic growth and economic activity. The key driver affecting the need for affordable housing is the high cost of buying or renting on the open market in comparison to local household incomes. There is a high level of housing need in the district, with provision in the order of 15,049 affordable dwellings being required to fully meet identified needs in the period to 2031.
- 9.13 The NPPF states that where there is a need for affordable housing, Local Plans should set policies for meeting this need on site, unless off site provision or a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value can be justified. The policies should contribute to the creation of mixed and balanced communities and be sufficiently flexible to take account of changing market conditions over time.
- 9.14 Affordable Housing in South Cambridgeshire is provided by the District Council and a number of Registered Providers (Housing Associations). Over the last twenty years new Affordable Housing has been provided mainly by Housing Associations but the Council is now able to deliver its own affordable housing. This will include the replacement of old, unpopular and difficult to manage housing stock with more modern accommodation, as well as providing additional new homes. Nevertheless, the main source of new affordable housing will continue to be through market housing developments and it is important to ensure an appropriate policy in the Plan to address housing need.

Issue 46: Affordable Housing

Given the scale of need it would not be reasonable to stop seeking affordable housing contributions from housing development schemes, but a number of choices exist concerning our approach to affordable housing.

- a. We could choose to maintain the current 40% level of affordable housing provided it is accompanied by policy provisions which allow greater flexibility to

- take account of current and changing market conditions over time. Evidence from the Annual Monitoring Report shows that in almost all cases the Council has been able to secure 40% affordable housing from new housing development, either on site or via financial contributions as an exception to the normal policy of provision on site. However it is proving to be challenging to achieve this level for very large strategic scale sites and there is viability evidence undertaken as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment which shows that achieving this level currently in some parts of the district with low house prices would threaten the viability of development.
- b. A specific reduction in the level of affordable housing to be sought to 30% for very large strategic scale sites and in those parts of the district with low house prices, with 40% elsewhere. Such a change could be accompanied by policy text which would allow flexibility to increase the level to 40% in response to changing market conditions over time.
 - c. A separate issue is the appropriate threshold for provision of affordable housing to be made. There is evidence that the current threshold of 2 dwellings is discouraging small scale development by placing a greater requirement on very small schemes. The Council could increase the threshold to 3 or more subject to viability to encourage more small scale developments to come forward.

Question 50: What approach do you feel the Local Plan should take as a target to address the need for affordable housing?:

- a. The target for affordable housing remain at 40% of the number of dwellings granted planning permission accompanied by policy provisions which explicitly allow greater flexibility to take account of current and changing market conditions over time.
- b. The target for affordable housing be reduced to 30% of the number of dwellings granted planning permission in relation to very large strategic scale sites and in those parts of the district with low house prices and remain at 40% elsewhere. Such a change could allow flexibility to increase the level to 40% in response to changing market conditions over time.
- c. The threshold for seeking affordable housing provision could be increased to 3 dwellings.

Please provide any comments.

Exception Sites Affordable Housing

- 9.15 Many of our rural villages face particular difficulties in securing an adequate supply of land for affordable housing to address local needs. Village house prices are often high and existing social rented housing is usually under long term occupancy and properties are rarely available to re-let. An exception site is currently a site that provides 100% affordable housing provided within or adjoining a rural settlement, as an exception to normal planning policy.
- 9.16 There is a high level of unmet need for local affordable housing in our rural villages as revealed by village need surveys. The Council has a very good record of delivering exception sites and much progress has been made to deliver new local affordable housing in this way. However more could be done if landowners were prepared to make additional land available and the

NPPF asks that the Local Plan consider allowing some market housing to enable the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs.

Issue 47: Exception Sites Affordable Housing

The Local Plan could continue to require that all the housing provided on exception sites is affordable. However, it is no longer expected that there will be government grant available to help fund affordable housing and therefore some new method needs to be identified to help secure funding for affordable houses on exceptions sites. As set out in the NPPF, the proposed method is to allow some market housing to help cross fund affordable housing. Options are:

- a. To provide for the minimum amount of market housing necessary on a site to facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing.
- b. Considering the wider issue of housing provision in smaller villages as discussed in Chapter 4: Spatial Strategy, to provide for a little more market housing to achieve dual objectives of securing affordable housing and also some limited additional market housing in villages. The level could be set greater than 40% so that a greater proportion of affordable housing is secured than on normal market sites.
- c. A further issue is whether it would provide greater flexibility in providing for local needs if the policy allowed the housing needs of a group of neighbouring villages to be taken into account in bringing forward an exception site, particularly to assist those villages where need is very low and it is proving difficult to identify suitable exception sites or villages where need is high but there are no suitable exception sites. This would allow the occupation of exception site affordable housing to include:
Those resident in the parish within which the exception site is located, and
Those resident in the group of neighbouring villages even if outside the parish, and
Those who have an employment connection to the village within which the exception site is located; and
Those who have a family connection to that local community

Question 51: What approach do you think the Local Plan should take for exception site affordable housing?

- a. Allow the minimum amount of market housing necessary on exception sites to support the provision of more than 40% of any new dwellings as additional affordable housing.
- b. To provide an element of market housing to support local communities, the Local Plan allows a slightly greater amount of market housing on exception sites but still secures the provision of more than 40% of any new dwellings as additional affordable housing.
- d. To allow greater flexibility in the occupation of exception site affordable housing.

Please provide any comments.

Residential Space Standards

- 9.17 The provision of sufficient space within and associated with new homes is an important element of good residential design and new dwellings should provide sufficient space for basic daily activities and needs. The National Planning Policy Framework states that Local Planning Authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community such as families with children, the elderly and people with disabilities. Currently we do not set any guidance with regard to the space within new market homes but all new affordable housing is expected to meet national standards set by the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA). The Council's current Affordable Housing SPD specifies affordable housing 'should meet Housing Corporation Design and Quality Standards or any future replacement', which provide guidance on space standards and layout. The Council's Scrutiny Committee Report on Orchard Park identified small bedroom size as a concern to residents.
- 9.18 One of the Council's Housing Strategy objectives is around making best use of existing homes. Older people and other households wishing to down-size, thus freeing-up family-sized housing, can often be discouraged from doing so if they don't consider the new home to be of a reasonable size.
- 9.19 The introduction of new policy for space standards will help align private market housing with that of affordable housing in South Cambridgeshire, and help to make better use of existing homes. However, it is acknowledged that such a requirement may impact upon the viability of developments, and that developers and landowners may have concerns.

Issue 48: Residential Space Standards

We need to decide whether we should provide guidance on residential space standards. If we provide no guidance space standards in new market housing would essentially be controlled by the market and what people want to buy and can afford to buy. If we wanted to provide guidance we could either include space and layout standards in the Local Plan or include a more general policy in the Local Plan and include the space and layout standards in a Supplementary Planning Document, this latter option would allow the standards to be more easily changed if national standards change or if experience points to the need for changes to better meet local conditions.

Question 52: Do you think that new homes are often too small? How do you think we should deal with the size of new homes?

- a. Not include a policy on residential space standards in the Local Plan.
- b. Include a policy on residential space standards in the Local Plan which would cover both affordable and market housing and which would be consistent with national standards set by the Homes and Communities Agency.
- c. Include a more general policy on residential space standards in the Local Plan and include the actual standards in a Supplementary Planning Document.

Please provide any comments.

Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside

- 9.20 There is a wide range of properties in the countryside outside villages, from large farmhouses and substantial residences to small dwellings built at a time when families had few possessions and were used to living in cramped, crowded conditions, many of whom would have worked on the land. These dwellings although small, often sit on large plots of land. Today these properties can be ill-suited for modern family life but remain expensive to purchase or rent because of the land that comes with the dwelling. Such properties are found across the district but with a notable concentration at the Land Settlement Association Estate at Great Abington (see chapter 11: Site Specific issues).
- 9.21 The existing policy aims to control the scale of extensions to dwellings in the open countryside to avoid a situation where all countryside properties become large and unaffordable to those on more average or lower incomes, particularly those who still work in agriculture or rural businesses. It imposes a limit that prevents increases in floorspace or volume greater than 50% of the original building and, prevents extensions that would enable the creation of a separate dwelling. However, experience of implementing the policy has seen a number of decisions where the policy has been overturned at planning application stage and on appeal.

Issue 49: Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside

A number of choices exist concerning our approach to extensions to dwellings in the countryside. The Local Plan could:

- a. Delete the policy and rely on design policies to consider matters such as design quality, local character, traffic, countryside and landscape character and the scale and nature of the development.
- b. Include a simplified version of the policy which would remove limitations concerning height, floorspace, volume and the requirement for the extension to be in scale and character with the existing dwelling (relying on the design policies to ensure design quality and amenity).
- c. Include a simplified version of the policy as in b, which would in addition remove limitations concerning the creation of a separate dwelling.

All of these choices if any were to be followed in the Local Plan would mean that no specific policy would be required for the Land Settlement Association Estate at Great Abington.

Question 53: How do you think the Local Plan should deal with extensions to dwellings in the countryside?

- a. Not include a policy.

- b. Include a simplified version of the policy requiring the extension to be in scale and character with the existing dwelling.
- c. Include a simplified version of the policy as in b), but also remove from it limitations concerning the creation of a separate dwelling.

Please provide any comments.

Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

- 9.22 Similar issues apply to proposals to replace existing dwellings in the countryside outside villages to those for extensions to dwellings and to minimize the impact of development on the countryside. The existing policy limits extensions to no greater than 15% more than the size of the existing dwelling.
- 9.23 This policy may be too restrictive for very small houses and make updating to modern living standards impossible. It may also have had the unintended effects of preventing the re-use of large housing plots to provide high quality executive homes and for small and medium sized plots of preventing their use for self-build housing - one key attractions of self-build is to allow people to live in a more spacious home than could otherwise have been afforded. There is a growing trend for people to build their own homes which is limited by the availability of land and the NPPF asks that this issue be considered by our plans for housing.

Issue 50: Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

A choice exists concerning our approach to extensions to replacement dwellings in the countryside. The Local Plan could:

- a. Keep the existing policy and continue to limit replacement dwellings in the countryside to being no more than 15% larger than the dwelling they replace ; or
- b. Keep the requirement that the use of the dwelling has not been abandoned and that caravans will not be permitted to be replaced by permanent dwellings but delete the remainder of the policy and rely on the design policies of the Local Plan to consider such matters as design quality, scale, local character and countryside impact

Question 54: How do you think the Local Plan should address the issue of replacing existing housing in the countryside?:

- a. Keep the existing policy and continue to limit replacement dwellings in the countryside to being no more than 15% larger than the dwelling they replace.
- b. Include a less restrictive policy on replacement dwellings in the countryside.

Please provide any comments..

Development of Residential Gardens

9.24 Over the years there has been a trend for development to take place in residential gardens as one of the only means available to provide new housing in villages and a means of property owners gaining value from their land. This has led to concerns including impacts on residential amenity, local character, heritage and from increased traffic. In some cases, development on gardens may appropriate as it:

- Reduces the need to extend development into the countryside;
- Creates new homes without the need for significant increased infrastructure provision;
- Provides better use of land in areas where people no longer demand large gardens due to lifestyle changes; and
- Provides small sites appropriate for local developers who employ local people.

However, gardens represent an important part of the character and amenity value of many villages. Other arguments against developing on gardens include:

- Increased building mass;
- Loss of or change in local character;
- Increased population density;
- A gradual associated increase in demand on local infrastructure;
- Loss of green space and paving over gardens;
- A reduction in habitats and biodiversity; and
- An increased risk of flash flooding due to increased run off.

Issue 51: Development of Residential Gardens

Choices exist concerning our approach to the development of residential gardens. The Local Plan could:

- a. Not include a specific policy, relying instead on the design policies of the Local Plan to consider such matters as design quality, scale, mass, siting, materials, local character, residential amenity, and ecology.
- b. Include a policy on the development of residential gardens setting out what factors would be taken into account to determine whether a proposal was appropriate or inappropriate, including residential amenity, access, traffic and parking, local character and heritage, biodiversity and trees, and implications for the development of adjoining sites. The policy would apply where an existing house or houses are demolished, and where an existing house is retained and new dwellings are erected in the garden.

Question 55: What do you think the Local Plan should say about development of residential gardens?

- a. Should the Local Plan include a policy on the development of residential gardens, setting out what factors would be taken into account.

- b. Do you think that no more new homes should be allowed by building in existing gardens.

Please provide any comments.

Re-use of Buildings in the Countryside

- 9.25 South Cambridgeshire has a rich heritage of agricultural buildings, some which are no longer needed for agricultural purposes. The Council is supportive of economic enterprise, including making the best use of our rural assets. Current policy gives priority to re-use for employment purposes and only exceptionally for residential conversion in order to concentrate housing development within our larger villages where residents would have better access to services, facilities and public transport.
- 9.26 The NPPF has changed Government planning policy to be less restrictive stating that such residential conversions are acceptable where there are special circumstances including where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting.

Issue 52: Re-use of Buildings in the Countryside

A number of choices exist concerning our approach to the re-use of buildings in the countryside. The Local Plan could:

- a. Not include a specific policy and rely on that in the NPPF.
- b. Include a policy based on the NPPF taking account of local circumstances, setting out the factors that would be taken into account, including whether the building is disused or redundant, the degree of reconstruction required, the need for extensions, their scale and impact, and scope for enhancement of setting.

Question 56: How do you think the Local Plan should address reuse of buildings in the countryside?

- a. Not include a policy on the re-use of buildings in the countryside for residential use?
- b. Include a policy on the re-use of buildings in the countryside for residential use setting out what factors would be taken into account.

Please provide any comments.

Working at Home

- 9.27 A growing number of people are working at home either full time or part time and in self-employment or as an alternative to going into the office. Many successful businesses have been set up and operated from residential properties before moving on to purpose built business accommodation. Home working can help to maintain economic prosperity and employment and

relieve commuting pressure on our roads, and can be expected to grow further as rural broadband speeds increase. Normally the use of part of an existing dwelling for homeworking will not require planning permission. The level of demand for new purpose built properties designed to enable a wide range of home working may have been held back by the lack of a specific plan policy to encourage provision.

Issue 53: Working at Home

A number of choices exist concerning our approach to live/work homes. The Local Plan could:

- a. Not include a specific policy on the issue and rely on other plan policies and the policy of the NPPF that where a plan is silent on an issue grant planning permission unless the adverse impacts of doing so would outweigh the benefits of the development.
- b. Include a policy on working at home stating that proposals will be approved unless there would be an effective loss of residential use, or there would be unacceptable impacts on factors such as residential amenity, local character, heritage assets, and traffic and parking.

Question 57: What approach should the Local Plan take to working at home?

- a. Not include a policy on working at home working and rely on the other policies of the Local Plan and the NPPF to consider proposals.
- b. Include a policy setting out what factors would be taken into account to make it easier for more homeworking to become established.

Please provide any comments.

Countryside Dwellings of Exceptional Quality

9.28 The Council's Economic Development Strategy shows an unfulfilled demand for large high quality homes in the £1 million plus category suitable for business executives. The desirability of the district as a place to live and work is key to attracting and retaining businesses in the area. So too is the availability of homes that meet the needs of top executives.

9.29 The NPPF says we should avoid the construction of isolated country homes which may be suitable for such executives unless there are special circumstances such as the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design, that the house would enhance its immediate setting and that it is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

Issue 54: Countryside Dwellings of Exceptional Quality

A number of choices exist concerning our approach to countryside dwellings of exceptional quality. The Local Plan could:

- a. Rely on the normal policies for housing development in the countryside along with the design policies of the plan and the policy guidance in the NPPF to control such proposals.
- b. Introduce a new policy concerning such homes with criteria based upon the NPPF guidance and taking into account local circumstances.

Question 58: What approach should the Local Plan take to new countryside homes of exceptional quality?

- a. Not include such a policy.
- b. Include a policy on exceptional homes in the countryside.

Please provide any comments.

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation

9.30 The Council has a responsibility to plan for the housing needs of all resident. Gypsies and Travellers form South Cambridgeshire’s largest minority ethnic community, comprising around 1% of its population. The Council’s Gypsy and Traveller Community Strategy commits it to:

- improve access for Gypsies and Travellers to services
- work with partners to address social exclusion
- foster good community relationships
- address accommodation needs, and
- seek to address unauthorised camping in an efficient and effective way, having regard to the welfare requirements, rights and responsibilities of Gypsies and Travellers, the environment and the potential level of nuisance for local residents.

9.31 Over the last few years the Council has twice consulted on the early stages of a Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document, including the criteria for identifying suitable new sites, the role that major developments should have in providing for Gypsy and Traveller needs, and a number of possible site options have also been considered.

9.32 Account has been taken of comments already made in drawing up the options for the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation. These comments will inform the preparation of the draft Local Plan regarding the criteria to be used to guide land supply allocations and the criteria to be used to judge the merits of planning applications for ‘windfall’ site proposals. In term of the site options previously consulted on, several were rejected following the last consultation in the light of views received. The others remain as options that the Council can draw on as appropriate when preparing policies for meeting the needs of this group.

9.33 The Council has now determined that Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople planning issues should be addressed by the new Local Plan, rather than a separate document, reflecting the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework. The main new issue to be considered in this

consultation is the target for making provision of new permanent sites for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

- 9.34 Over the next 20 years assessments show an unmet need for the provision of 85 pitches of which 60 need to be provided in the period between 2011 and 2016. Since 2011 a total of 9 pitches have been developed, and a further site of 26 pitches has been permitted but not yet completed. This leaves a total of 25 pitches for which permanent sites need to be identified to 2016. For the period 2016 to 2031 if site allocations cannot be identified, broad locations should be identified in the plan. For this purpose, the conclusion from earlier consultations was that large scale new housing allocations can be considered to be broad locations as it will not be possible to allocate a specific site until master planning is much more advanced and fixed.
- 9.35 There is an important distinction between individual caravans and what is known as a “pitch” which can accommodate several caravans belonging to an individual family. At January 2011 there were 232 authorised residential pitches in the district. The highest concentrations of authorised sites are in the Chesterton Fen Road area of Milton parish, and Smithy Fen, Cottenham. There are a number of small sites located around the district, including in Rampton, Willingham, Meldreth, and Histon.
- 9.36 At time of writing there were also 69 pitches with temporary planning permission. This allows sites to be occupied for a set number of years. The majority of sites with temporary permission are in Chesterton Fen Road and at Willingham. Sites with temporary permission are not counted as part of supply, because there is no certainty that they will provide for Gypsy and Traveller needs in the long term. If any sites with temporary permission were granted permanent planning permission, they would then count towards the needs of the district.
- 9.37 In respect of Travelling Showpeople the numbers of plots needed is very low, and will arise over a long period. There is uncertainty over whether this will generate a need for a new site in the district in the longer term, or if need could be met on existing sites. It is therefore proposed to rely on additional provision coming forward as windfalls over the period of the plan for the longer term.

Issue 55: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation

The Local Plan must include policies to meet the needs of our Gypsy and Traveller population. A target for the provision of new accommodation must be set to guide delivery of new sites over the plan period and the plan must allocate sites to meet identified needs. The Local Plan could:

- a. Set a target to provide 85 pitches for Gypsy and Traveller occupation over the period to 2031, which means we need to provide an additional 25 permanent pitches by 2016.
- b. Either set a target for Travelling Showpeople of 4 plots to 2016 and an additional 3 to 6 plots to 2031, or rely on an additional windfall site coming forward to meet this need over the plan period.
- c. Explore with adjoining local planning authorities the extent to which local needs can be met in adjoining districts.
- d. Include a policy that requires that site provision be made for Gypsy and Traveller occupation in all new settlements, and other allocated and windfall

developments of at least 500 new homes. Any land not needed during the plan period to 2031 to be safeguarded for occupation after the plan period.

Question 59: What approach shall the Local Plan take to the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople?

- a. Set a target to provide 85 pitches for Gypsy and Traveller occupation over the period to 2031, which means we need to provide an additional 25 permanent pitches by 2016.
- b. Not set a target for Travelling Showpeople occupation and rely on an additional windfall site coming forward over the plan period.
- c. Explore with adjoining local planning authorities the extent to which local needs can be met in adjoining districts.
- d. The Local Plan require that site provision be made for Gypsy and Traveller occupation in all new settlements, and other allocated and windfall developments of at least 500 new homes.

Please provide any comments.

Dwellings to Support a Rural Based Enterprise

9.38 New housing in the countryside is generally resisted. However, the current plan sets out the circumstances in which it will be acceptable to build a new home for an employee of a rural based enterprise to help support successful rural businesses and retain a living countryside. The National Planning Policy Framework says that plans should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances, one of which being 'the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside'.

Issue 56: Dwellings to Support a Rural Based Enterprise

A number of choices exist concerning our approach to dwellings to support a rural based enterprise. The Local Plan could:

- a. Include a policy which sets out the circumstances in which it will be acceptable to build a new home for an employee of a rural based enterprise to help support successful rural businesses and retain a living countryside. The policy would be consistent with the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework, but add additional details concerning such matters as the evidence that would be required from the applicant, any restrictions to be placed on the occupation of such dwellings and when they might be relaxed and that dwellings associated with the keeping of horses would not be appropriate.
- b. Not include such a policy in the plan and rely on the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Question 59: How should the Local Plan address the needs of dwellings to support rural enterprises?

- a. Include a policy which sets out the circumstances in which it will be acceptable to build a new home for an employee of a rural based enterprise.
- b. Not include such a policy and rely upon the policy guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Please provide any comments.