

8. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

OBJECTIVES

- NE/a To address climate change mitigation and adaptation issues including the need to ensure that new developments are “climate proofed”.**
- NE/b To protect and enhance the character and appearance of landscapes and natural heritage.**
- NE/c To protect and enhance biodiversity.**
- NE/d To protect and improve the quality of the water environment.**
- NE/e To protect and improve the ambient noise environment.**
- NE/f To minimise light pollution.**
- NE/g To safeguard resources by maximising the re-use and recycling of materials.**
- NE/h To ensure that any risks to human health or the environment are addressed in the re-use of land.**
- NE/i To protect and improve air quality.**
- NE/j To protect high quality agricultural land.**

INTRODUCTION

- 8.1** The need to conserve and protect the Earth’s natural resources underlines the importance of ensuring future development is achieved within known biophysical limits. This now lies at the heart of international commitments on sustainable development and sustainability. These same principles also need to be applied within the context of South Cambridgeshire where large-scale developments are now proposed.
- 8.2** It will therefore be important for the strategy to contain policies which ensure that this wide range of issues is taken into account. Climate proofing aims to ensure buildings and associated infrastructure are capable of enduring the future impacts of climate change, for example minimising risk of flooding, minimising risk of subsidence, installing water saving measures and devices (greywater, rainwater harvesting systems, water efficient systems and appliances), fitting and / or making future provision for installing heating and power systems that have low or zero carbon dioxide (CO₂) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, constructing buildings that are naturally ventilated and

capable of enduring higher diurnal and nocturnal temperatures without the need to install air conditioning systems, and using materials that have low / zero CO₂ and GHG emissions (i.e. wood rather than concrete etc.).

ENERGY

- 8.3 The UK is committed to reducing its CO₂ and GHG gas emissions by 12.5% from 1990 levels by 2012. At the same time there is a target to reduce CO₂ emissions in the UK by 20% by 2010, and the target is 10.4% of electricity to be from renewable sources by 2011.
- 8.4 South Cambridgeshire District Council signed the Nottingham Declaration on climate change in February 2002. As a signatory the District Council is committed to complying with the Kyoto Protocol (an international signed in 1997 which included a binding commitment to reduce CO₂ emissions) and producing its own climate change strategy for reducing CO₂ and GHG. The authority is also participating in the European Climate Menu Programme (see www.climatemenu.org) that will produce a European-wide version of the climate change menu currently used by over 250 local authorities in the Netherlands. South Cambridgeshire's involvement will help deliver a fully costed climate change action plan for the authority.

POLICY NE/1 Energy Efficiency

Development will be required to demonstrate that it would achieve a high degree of measures to increase the energy efficiency of new and converted buildings, for example through location, layout, orientation, aspect, internal and external design and the use of improved insulation. Further guidance on the way in which development should increase energy efficiency of new and converted buildings is contained in the district-wide design guide, which will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Developers are encouraged to reduce the amount of CO₂ m² / year emitted by 10% compared to the minimum Building Regulation requirement when calculated by the Elemental Method in the current building regulations for notional building of the same size and shape as that proposed, particularly for new or substantially demolished buildings.

- 8.5 The building regulations are proposed to become more stringent on energy conservation over time, so encouraging energy conservation above the current minimum requirement is appropriate.

POLICY NE/2 Renewable Energy

The District Council will grant planning permission for proposals to generate energy from renewable sources, subject to proposals

according with the development principles set out in DP/1 – DP/4 and complying with the following criteria:

- 1. The proposal can be efficiently connected to existing national grid infrastructure;**
 - 2. The proposal makes provision for the removal of the facilities and reinstatement of the site, should the facilities cease to be operational.**
- 8.6 Given the commitment by Government and the District Council to reduce the use of fossil fuels, opportunities to increase the proportion of energy, especially electricity, generated from renewable sources will be permitted unless there is clear adverse impact on the environment or amenity of the area.
- 8.7 In South Cambridgeshire, with greater than the UK average levels of sunshine, solar power can make a significant contribution. The District Council will seek the incorporation of measures such as solar panels or electricity generation from photo-voltaic cells in new or converted buildings and structures.
- 8.8 Individual or small groups of wind turbines may also be appropriate. However, large wind farms would be likely to compromise the need to maintain the quality of the historic and natural landscape, and the objectives of the Cambridge Green Belt, which is an important part of the attractiveness of the area and underpins its economic vitality.

POLICY NE/3 Renewable Energy Technologies in New Development

All development proposals greater than 1,000 m² or 10 dwellings will include technology for renewable energy to provide at least 10% of their predicted energy requirements, in accordance with Policy NE/2.

- 8.9 Policy ENV8 of the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (RSS14) requires all Local Development Documents to include policies to promote and encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy. The Government is committed under the 1997 Kyoto Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 8.10 A recent study “Delivering Renewable Energy in the Cambridge Sub-Region” (June 2004) has considered the technical potential for the larger development sites to exploit various renewable energy sources to help meet their energy needs.
- 8.11 Given the scale of new development proposed, the potential contribution which new development can make towards meeting the targets for renewable energy provision is considerable. This could take various forms including localised wind generators, solar panels and photo-voltaic cells being

incorporated into the design of buildings. The provision of these technologies may also be off-site as appropriate.

- 8.12 In terms of electricity generation from renewable resources, the most flexible approach would be for the electricity generated to be directed into the national grid where it could help smooth out fluctuations in supply and demand; it would also not require the developments receiving the electricity to be limited to a single energy supply company. Only the smallest developments should be exempt from this requirement.

LANDSCAPES

POLICY NE/4 Landscape Character Areas

Development will only be permitted where it respects and retains or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the individual Landscape Character Area in which is it located.

- 8.13 Over the years many features of local character and distinctiveness have been lost as a result of changing practices in land management and through development. This is particularly so in South Cambridgeshire where there has been much development in recent decades and where farming is largely arable and intensive. It makes even more important the need to retain the remaining elements of local distinctiveness, and, where possible, to add or restore them.
- 8.14 The 1996 Countryside Agency / English Nature publication "The Character of England - landscapes, wildlife and natural features" marked the first step in providing a framework identifying unique landscape character areas across the country. This was refined in the 1999 publication "Countryside Character Volume 6: East of England".
- 8.15 South Cambridgeshire contains five of the character areas identified in these documents:
- The Fens
 - The East Anglian Chalk
 - The Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
 - The Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge
 - The South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands.
- 8.16 The District Council will prepare a district wide design guide, to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, which will include more detailed guidance to ensure that development respects the local distinctiveness of these landscape character areas. The District Council will carry out Landscape Character Assessments of the landscapes in the District, the results of which will be included in the design guide.

- 8.17 Development on the urban fringe and adjoining the countryside requires special consideration because these areas most vulnerable to a range of adverse environmental pressures. It will be important to maintain a clear transition between the urban areas and the countryside and to ensure that development on the edge of the urban area does not create obtrusive and unattractive skylines. It will also be necessary to enhance the appearance of the urban fringe through landscape treatment and habitat creation. The Area Action Plans for Cambridge East, Cambridge Southern Fringe and Northstowe set out the strategies for the maintenance and enhancement of urban fringe areas at each of the new developments.

POLICY NE/5 Countryside Enhancement Areas

Within Countryside Enhancement Areas particular emphasis will be given to the promotion of schemes for quiet recreation and biodiversity and landscape enhancement.

- 8.18 Structure Plan Policy P7/3 requires District Councils to identify Countryside Enhancement Areas. Countryside Enhancement Areas are areas that have potential for undisturbed enjoyment of the countryside and for their landscapes and habitats to be significantly enhanced. Major improvements to biodiversity and countryside access can be concentrated in these areas with the greatest chance of multiple benefits. The Biodiversity Strategy, which will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, sets out the Council's approach to the identification of Countryside Enhancement Areas in South Cambridgeshire.

BIODIVERSITY

POLICY NE/6 Biodiversity

New development will have regard to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, and opportunities should be taken to achieve positive gain through the form and design of development. Where appropriate, measures may include creating, enhancing and managing wildlife habitats and natural landscape. Priority for habitat creation should be given to sites which assist in achieving targets in the Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).

The District Council will resist development that would have an adverse impact on the population or conservation status of protected species or priority species or habitat¹ unless the impact can be adequately mitigated by measures secured by Section 46 agreements or planning conditions.

Where there are grounds to believe that a proposal may affect a protected or priority species or habitat¹ applicants will be expected to provide an adequate level of survey information to establish the extent

of the potential impact together with possible alternatives to the development, mitigation schemes and / or compensation measures.

New development will have regard to the impact, either direct or indirect, of a proposal on people's opportunity to enjoy and experience nature on a site together with opportunities to improve public access to nature.

Exceptionally, where the economic or social benefits of a proposal outweighs harm to an important site or species, the approach will be first to avoid or minimise the harm, then to seek mitigation of the impact, and finally to secure appropriate compensation for any residual impact in order to ensure no net loss of biodiversity. Planning conditions and obligations will be used as appropriate to secure this.

- 8.19 The District Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and will work with partners to ensure a proactive approach to the protection, enhancement and management of biodiversity in support of the National, County and District Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs). Whilst the need for development will be carefully considered against its impact on biodiversity, opportunities can arise through sensitively located and carefully designed developments. Change can bring about new opportunities where the use of conditions and Section 46 agreements can be used to create new habitats and manage existing ones. The integration of biodiversity within new developments is an important measure of sustainable development.
- 8.20 Biodiversity Action Plans provide guidance on targets and actions for habitats and species conservation. Further guidance on sites, species and habitats will be set out in the Council's Biodiversity Strategy, which will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Guidance for developers is also set out in the Biodiversity Checklist for Land Use Planners in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (*Cambridgeshire County Council, 2001*).
- 8.21 'Protected species' are those species of plants and animals that are afforded legal protection, for example, under the European Union Birds Directive and Habitats Directive (these "European Protected Species" are the highest priority for protection), or under Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- 8.22 Policy NE/6 is in accordance with species protection legislation and to Biodiversity Action Plan targets, and ensures that any harm to a species or its habitat is weighed against the benefit of a development proposal. The judgement will be made on the basis of the expected effect on the species, the local, national or international significance of the population of the species, and its abundance, rate of decline or degree of threat.
- 8.23 As is detailed in the South Cambridgeshire Design Guide and in this DPD, in developing such proposals it is important to afford first priority to maintaining

and enhancing the existing habitats of species. The translocation of species should only be considered as a measure of last resort. Measures should facilitate the survival of the species' population, reduce disturbance to a minimum and provide adequate habitats to sustain at least the current level of a population.

- 8.24 Mitigation may include the provision of specific measures to reduce disturbance, harm or potential impacts, provision of adequate alternative habitats to sustain, and where possible enhance the affected population, or facilitating the survival of individual members of the species.
- 8.25 Policy NE/6 also applies to the effects of development on people's opportunity to enjoy and experience nature on a site; development on or adjacent to an important site can have an adverse impact upon people's enjoyment of the site's biodiversity and landscape value, for example, through intrusive visual features, restrictions on access or a significant increase in noise levels.
- 8.26 The District Council recognises the importance of the river valley environments within South Cambridgeshire. The most important of these are the River Cam north of Cambridge, the River Rhee to the south and west, the River Great Ouse, the River Granta to the south and the smaller tributary valley of Bourn Brook. In view of the specialist characteristics of river valley habitats and their importance to the biodiversity of the district as a whole, detailed guidance on the way in which development proposals should respect these habitats, natural features and species characteristics of the river valleys is included in the Council's Biodiversity Strategy Supplementary Planning Document.

FOOTNOTE:

- ¹ 'Priority species or habitats' are those identified in a Biodiversity Action Plan, such as the UK, County or District Biodiversity Action Plans.

POLICY NE/7 Sites of Biodiversity Importance

Planning permission will not be given for proposals that may have an adverse impact, either directly or indirectly, on a Site of Biodiversity Importance.

In determining any planning application affecting international, national or non-statutorily protected sites the District Council will ensure that the intrinsic natural features of particular interest are safeguarded or enhanced having regard to:

- **The nature and quality of the site's features, including its rarity value;**
- **The extent of any adverse impacts on the features of interest;**

- **The likely effectiveness of any proposed mitigation with respect to the protection of the features of interest;**
- **The need for compensatory measures in order to protect and enhance remaining features or to recreate habitats on or off the site.**

Where appropriate the District Council will ensure the effective management of designated sites through the imposition of planning conditions or Section 46 agreements as appropriate.

- 8.27 Sites of Biodiversity Importance are identified on the Proposals Map. Together these sites represent a strategic framework for the conservation of biodiversity. These sites include the statutorily protected international (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) and national (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and the non-statutorily protected County Wildlife Sites.
- 8.28 Sites of Biodiversity Importance provide the most important spatial elements of habitat across the district. The policy applies to both direct and indirect effects; development outside an important site can still have a damaging impact on it.
- 8.29 PPG9 provides for the tiered protection of designated sites of international, national and local importance. Sites of international importance are classified under EC Directives (Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation) or listed under conventions (e.g. Ramsar sites).
- 8.30 At present the only site of international importance within South Cambridgeshire is the Eversden and Wimpole Woods candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC). The site provides a habitat for a colony of the barbastelle bat, one of the rarest bats in Western Europe. The bats have been recorded at a small number of other sites up to eleven kilometres from the Woods. The cSAC and the eleven-kilometre range is shown on the Proposals Map.
- 8.31 The Habitats Regulations, 1994, require all candidate Sites of International Importance to be given full protection. English Nature will be consulted on any planning application in or adjacent to a Site of International Importance. It is therefore a requirement that all proposals that might adversely affect the special interest of a Site of International Importance be given special scrutiny. Any planning application relevant to any site so designated will be judged according to the method set out in PPG9 (Nature Conservation), Annex C.
- 8.32 Applications for development within or near to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will be subject to special scrutiny and particular account will be taken of any direct or indirect effects on the particular features giving rise to designation. Indirect effects can include increased use and disturbance,

hydrological changes (for example, due to increased hard surfaces or underground development), level of noise and pollution.

- 8.33 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are designated by English Nature under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. The sites in South Cambridgeshire are shown on the Proposals Map, although the policy will apply equally to any future sites so designated during the plan period. English Nature will therefore be consulted on any planning application in or adjacent to an SSSI. For any wetland SSSI such consultation may extend up to 2 km from its boundary because development at some distance could have an adverse effect by a lowering of the water table.
- 8.34 In addition to sites which have statutory designation, there are numerous other sites in South Cambridgeshire which have a biodiversity value. These "County Wildlife Sites" are identified by the Wildlife Trust and are marked on the Proposals Map. They will be treated as material to the consideration of development proposals. The knowledge of such sites and their condition is always changing and sites may be added and removed from the list. They include important roadside verges which need to be protected from road improvements or new access points, along with ponds, moats and ditches that can be adversely affected by changes in local hydrology. Management of such features is crucial to maintaining the existing biodiversity interest and to assisting further colonisation of habitats by various species.

POLICY NE/8 Natural Areas

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse impact on the biodiversity of the Natural Areas shown on the Proposals Map.

- 8.35 In 1996 English Nature identified Natural Areas covering the whole of England in "The Character of England: landscape, wildlife and natural features". Natural Areas are identified by a unique combination of physical attributes such as geology, plant and animal species, land-use and culture. These attributes combine to give an area its distinctive biodiversity. The Natural Area concept acknowledges that biodiversity does not recognise administrative boundaries nor does it classify species according to whether they are rare or common. Natural Areas therefore provide scope for the rare and unusual to be conserved alongside the widespread and typical, thus contributing to the overall concept of biodiversity conservation. South Cambridgeshire is covered by parts of six different Natural Areas.
- 8.36 Further guidance on the way in which development proposals should respect the distinctive habitats, natural features and species characteristics of these Natural Areas is included in the Council's Biodiversity Strategy Supplementary Planning Document.

GEOLOGICAL AND GEOMORPHOLOGICAL SITES

POLICY NE/9 Regionally Important Geological / Geomorphological Sites

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would be likely to have an adverse impact on any Regionally Important Geological / Geomorphological Site unless there are demonstrable reasons for the proposal which outweigh the need to safeguard the conservation value of the site. Where development is permitted, damage to the conservation interests of the site must be minimised and the District Council will attach conditions and / or seek a Section 46 agreement to ensure appropriate mitigation and / or compensatory measures.

- 8.37 In considering any development proposal, the District Council will have regard to the need to allow suitable opportunities to study and record exposures and features, and the opportunity to incorporate within the development the preservation of geological features of interest.
- 8.38 Although there are currently no Regionally Important Geological / Geomorphological Sites in South Cambridgeshire (RIGS), it is possible that one or more could be designated during the lifetime of the plan. Such sites have important geological or geomorphological features but are not significant enough to be designated as a SSSI, which has to be of national importance. Any site designated as a RIGS will be protected by this policy.

WATER AND FLOODING

POLICY NE/10 Groundwater

Development will not be permitted which poses an unacceptable risk to the quality of the underlying groundwater.

- 8.39 Groundwater resources are critical to the public water supply in South Cambridgeshire. The chalk aquifer to the south and east of Cambridge is an important strategic resource and the principal source for the Cambridge Water Company. It is highly vulnerable to any development which could pollute it or prevent it from re-charging. The Groundwater Protection Maps, prepared by the Environment Agency, represent zones where groundwater is at varying degrees of risk from potentially polluting activities and developments. The District Council will be guided by the Environment Agency on all proposals that may pose a threat to ground water resources. The abstraction of water from groundwater sources or watercourses is also controlled by the Environment Agency through abstraction licences.

POLICY NE/11 Water and Drainage Infrastructure

Planning permission will not be granted where there is inadequate water supply, sewerage or land drainage systems (including water sources, water and sewage treatment works) available to meet the demands of the development unless there is an agreed phasing agreement between the developer and the relevant service provider to ensure the provision of the necessary infrastructure.

- 8.40 Most developments require a water supply and adequate arrangements for the disposal of foul and surface water. Where there is an inadequate water supply, sewerage, or drainage system, there is a potential risk to public health which would justify the imposition of planning conditions on a planning permission.
- 8.41 Anglian Water and the Cambridge Water Company are the statutory undertakers responsible for water supply, sewerage and sewage disposal. Water resource management, land drainage, river management, pollution control and regulating the handling and disposal of waste are the Environment Agency's responsibility. Internal Drainage Boards manage all drainage within their districts excluding main rivers. The statutory undertakers may levy an infrastructure charge and they should be consulted by those applying for planning permission.
- 8.42 These organisations rely on the planning system to help prevent problems associated with water supply, land drainage or flood defence arising from development and therefore require close co-operation with the District Council. However, the planning system cannot duplicate controls which are the statutory responsibility of other organisations. Major developments which have strategic implications for service provision need to be co-ordinated and phased by the District Council to avoid danger to public health or safety through the overloading of water, foul or surface water drainage systems and watercourses. Planning obligations or conditions phasing the development in these circumstances may therefore be imposed.

POLICY NE/12 Foul Drainage - Alternative Drainage Systems

Drainage to a public sewer should be provided wherever possible. The development of sites where drainage to a public sewer is not feasible will only be permitted if proposed alternative facilities are considered inadequate and would pose an unacceptable risk to the quality or quantity of ground or surface water, pollution of local ditches, watercourses or sites of biodiversity importance. A package treatment plant will therefore need to be provided. Only where it is clearly demonstrated that neither of these options is feasible will a system incorporating septic tank(s) be acceptable.

Where petrol, chemical or oil tanks or other facilities form part of a proposed development, the District Council will require them to be contained by bund walls of sufficient size to prevent spillage or seepage. The drainage of roads, including adoptable highways and

private roads and hard surface areas used by motor vehicles will be required to be connected to trapped gullies and petrol / oil interceptors or suitable other methods of pollution control.

- 8.43 Development in the countryside, normally being development for agricultural purposes, including slurry from large agricultural installations may be unacceptable if untreated effluent could enter local watercourses and the wider water environment. It will therefore be essential for such developments to provide plant which will treat their effluent if connection to the public sewer is not feasible. The policy makes clear that the District Council will not give planning permission for any development where it may prejudice the quality of ground or surface water, watercourses or sites of biodiversity importance unless measures are undertaken to mitigate the harm.

POLICY NE/13 Flood Risk

Planning permission will not be granted where the site is liable to flooding or where development is likely to:

- 1. Increase the risk of flooding elsewhere by materially impeding the flow or storage of flood water;**
- 2. Increase flood risk in other areas due to additional water runoff;**
- 3. Increase the number of people or properties at risk;**
- 4. Have a detrimental effect on flood defences or inhibit flood control and maintenance work;**

unless it is demonstrated that these effects can be overcome by appropriate alleviation and mitigation measures secured by planning conditions or Legal Agreements.

- 8.44 The Proposals Map shows the Flood Zones, produced by the Environment Agency (EA) in 2005. These are defined in accordance with the government guidance PPG25: 'Development and Flood Risk' and support a risk based approach to assessing flood risk. PPG25 requires the use of a sequential test when considering development proposals, to determine the suitability of types of development within the different flood zones.
- 8.45 Although the maps show areas of possible flooding from rivers, streams, watercourses or the sea, they do not take account of flood defences and always take a conservative approach where detailed information is available. The flood zones are regularly updated by the EA and the most up to date maps will be relevant in determining planning applications (These can be viewed on the Agency's Website: www.environment-agency.gov.uk).
- 8.46 Not all development within flood zones 2 and 3 will be refused. Planning applications in flood zones 2 and 3 will be required to demonstrate that the

development and its means of access are not at risk of flood. Development in ALL zones may be required to demonstrate that any risk of groundwater flooding, or local flooding can be mitigated. Development, in all flood zones, can potentially exacerbate the problems of flooding in other areas by causing increased runoff from impermeable surfaces. Development will not be permitted if it would generate additional surface water runoff that would increase flood risk elsewhere. Account will also be taken of the cumulative impact of developments.

- 8.47 Developers will be required to carry out a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) including run off implications of proposals appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and the risks involved. It may be a requirement of the FRA, depending on the type of development, to address the impact of climate change within the FRA.
- 8.48 In any case where flood alleviation works form a necessary pre-condition of development such works must normally be fully funded by the developer, probably through a legal agreement covering the required works and providing for future maintenance in accordance with paragraph 61 of PPG25.

POLICY NE/14 Sustainable Drainage Systems

Where practicable development should be served by sustainable drainage systems.

- 8.49 It is preferable to manage surface water runoff through the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as they provide biodiversity and aesthetic benefits. SuDS may take the form of swales, lagoons, permeable paving, green roofs and sensitively re-engineered channels or reed beds, depending on the nature of the development and the area.
- 8.50 The Council supports the Environment Agency in promoting sustainable drainage systems which maintain or reduce pre-development rates of run-off and will seek advice from the agency to determine allowable rates of run-off. Developers will be required to fund the scheme and Legal Agreements will ensure maintenance and the control of run-off to those levels in perpetuity.

WATER CONSERVATION

POLICY NE/15 Water Conservation

Development must incorporate water conservation measures, such as water saving devices, rainwater harvesting, and greywater recycling. Any measures must avoid adverse impact on the water environment and biodiversity. Major Developments will be required to submit a Water Conservation Strategy, to demonstrate how this is to be achieved.

- 8.51 The importance of water resources in the area was highlighted through the Sustainability Appraisal of the LDF. There are a number of ways water conservation can be achieved, and the policy offers a degree of flexibility on the exact methods used. Large developments, or cumulatively large developments, incorporating such measures could potentially reduce surface water run-off and therefore reduce levels in water courses and water tables, and have an impact on biodiversity. A balance must be achieved between management of water recycling and ensuring no adverse impact on the water environment and biodiversity.

HAZARDOUS INSTALLATIONS

POLICY NE/16 Hazardous Installations

In considering proposals for hazardous substances consent or development in the vicinity of hazardous installations, account will be taken of the amount, type and location of hazardous substances present, and the need for special precautions to protect future users of the site and any other affected land.

- 8.52 Hazardous installations, notifiable pipelines and licensed explosive sites are installations handling or storing hazardous materials. The siting of installations handling hazardous substances are subject to planning controls aimed at keeping them separate from housing and other land uses with which such installations might be incompatible from the safety viewpoint. The operators of such installations are required to notify the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on certain types of development. The District Council is required to consult the HSE on proposals for certain types of development within specified distances of notifiable installations. The District Council will therefore seek the advice of the HSE and other regulatory authorities about off-site risks to the public arising from any proposed development which would introduce one or more hazardous substances.
- 8.53 Within South Cambridgeshire there are currently 9 installations handling hazardous substances and 11 high-pressure natural gas transmission pipelines. Whilst they are subject to stringent controls under existing health and safety legislation, it is necessary to control the kinds of development permitted in the vicinity of these installations. In determining a planning application on land within the specified consultation zone of one of these installations, the District Council will take account of advice from the HSE and other regulatory authorities.
- 8.54 Under the present system of controls over hazardous development and over development within the vicinity of hazardous installations, the activities and substances (and quantities) to which the above statements apply are those defined by the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulation 1992, the Planning (Control of Major Accident Hazards) Regulations 1999 and referred to in the Department of the Environment Circular 04/00 "Planning Controls for Hazardous Substances".

LIGHTING

POLICY NE/17 Lighting Proposals

Development proposals which include external lighting should ensure that:

- 1. The proposed lighting scheme is the minimum required for reasons of public safety and security;**
- 2. There is no light spillage above the horizontal;**
- 3. There is no adverse impact on neighbouring or nearby properties or on the surrounding countryside;**
- 4. There is no dazzling or distraction to road users including pedestrians;**
- 5. Road and footway lighting meets the District and County Councils' adopted standards.**

8.55 Artificial lighting is essential for reasons of safety and security. In some cases it can also add to the amenity of the built environment by highlighting buildings and open spaces of character. However, insensitive lighting can cause what is termed as light pollution. South Cambridgeshire, as a predominantly rural area, is sensitive to light pollution through sky glow which can affect the tranquillity of the countryside. Light pollution can have a negative impact upon biodiversity by affecting the normal diurnal patterns of plants and animals.

8.56 External lighting is needed for commercial use and for some community and sports facilities such as floodlit sports pitches. Whilst the lighting has to be adequate for the purpose, it is important that there is no significant nuisance to the amenity of surrounding properties. This may require the use of planning conditions to limit the times when lighting is used to minimise the disturbance.

NOISE

POLICY NE/18 Noise Pollution

Planning permission will not be granted for development which:

- 1. Has an unacceptable adverse impact on the indoor and outdoor acoustic environment of existing or planning development; or**

2. Would be subject to unacceptable ambient noise levels from existing noise sources.

Conditions may be attached to any planning permission to ensure adequate attenuation of noise emissions or to control the noise at source. Consideration will be given to the increase in road traffic that may arise due to development and conditions or Section 46 Agreements may be used to minimise such noise.

In particularly sensitive locations, business use development may be restricted to office use only (B1 (a)). The granting of planning permission and compliance with any conditions attached to it will not exempt action under Part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, or subsequent legislation, should a nuisance be found to be occurring.

Where a planning application for residential development is near an existing noise source, the applicant will be required to demonstrate that the proposal would not be subject to an unacceptable noise levels.

The District Council will seek to ensure that noise from proposed commercial, industrial, recreational or transport use does not cause any significant increase in the background noise level of nearby existing noise sensitive property which includes dwellings, hospitals, residential institutions, nursing homes, hotels, guesthouses and schools and other educational establishments.

- 8.57 Planning Policy Guidance Note 24 paragraph 5 requires development plans to include policies which ensure noise sensitive developments are located away from existing sources of significant noise, and that potentially noisy developments are located in areas where noise will not be such an important consideration or where its impact can be minimised.

AIR QUALITY

POLICY NE/19 Emissions

Development proposals will need to have regard to any emissions arising from the proposed use and seek to minimise those emissions to control any risks arising and prevent any detriment to the local amenity by locating such development appropriately.

Where significant increases in emissions covered by nationally prescribed air quality objectives are proposed, the applicant will need to assess the impact on local air quality by undertaking an appropriate modelling exercise to show that the national objectives will still be achieved. Development will not be permitted where it would adversely affect air quality in an Air Quality Management Area.

- 8.58 Air pollutants (including odour) have been shown to have adverse effects on health and the environment. Emissions arising from any development including indirect emissions such as those attributable to associated traffic generation must therefore be considered in determining planning applications. Where emissions from industrial processes are subject to pollution control legislation (PPC, LAPC, LAPPC) the regulatory authority will be consulted with respect to control of these emissions.

LAND CONTAMINATION

POLICY NE/20 Land Contamination

Where development of sites is proposed where there is an issue of land contamination the District Council will, in consultation with appropriate regulatory authorities, require the following:

- 1. A detailed investigation of the site and a proper risk assessment study to be undertaken by the applicant and a report submitted to the District Council; and**
 - 2. That appropriate treatment, monitoring and after-use of the site has been agreed and be capable of implementation.**
- 8.59 In its broadest sense land contamination describes a general spectrum of soil and site conditions. It can include areas with elevated levels of naturally occurring substances, as well as specific sites which have been occupied by former industrial uses which may have left a legacy of contamination from operational activities or from waste disposal. It can also include areas of land where substances have been deposited by direct or indirect events, such as accidents or spillages or aerial deposition.
- 8.60 Contamination of land may threaten public health and safety, the environment, the built environment and economic activities through its impact on the users of the land, and neighbouring users. Land contamination, or the possibility of it, is therefore a material planning consideration in the preparation of development plans and the decisions on planning applications. In some cases the carrying out of remediation activities may itself constitute “development” within the definition at Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and therefore require planning permission.

AGRICULTURAL LAND

POLICY NE/21 Protecting High Quality Agricultural Land

The District Council will not grant planning permission for development which would lead to the irreversible loss of Grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land.

Uses not involving substantial built development but which take agricultural land, such as golf courses and camping and caravan sites, will be regarded as permanent unless restricted specifically by condition.

- 8.61 Most of South Cambridgeshire's farmland is in the higher grades of the Agricultural Land Classification maps produced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Grades 1, 2 and 3a are the grades which comprise the best and most versatile land which is a national resource; this land is flexible and the most productive and efficient for agriculture.
- 8.62 The scale of development in South Cambridgeshire means that there will inevitably be some loss of agricultural land of these higher grades, and the land allocated for development in this plan seeks to minimise this by, for example, making maximum use of previously developed land. Land outside these allocations should therefore remain as an agricultural resource wherever possible.
- 8.63 Some development, such as golf courses and camping and caravan sites, may seek justification on the basis that it would maintain the openness of a site, and it could therefore be returned to agricultural use in the future. However, once land is developed alternative uses, it may not be feasible to return it to its original state and quality. The policy therefore requires any such uses to be regulated by condition.