

C THE SITE AND ITS SETTING

OBJECTIVES

1. Site

C1/a To meet the requirements of Policy P9/3 of the Structure Plan.

2. Green Belt

For the Cambridge Green Belt to:

C2/a Ensure that the development of Northstowe does not detract from the setting of Cambridge;

C2/b Ensure that Northstowe will not merge with any of the surrounding villages;

C2/c Provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and public access to the open countryside around Northstowe

3. Landscape

For the countryside in the vicinity of Northstowe to be landscaped and managed to:

C3/a Create an appropriate setting for the new town, minimising any adverse visual or landscape impacts on the surrounding area including the setting and character of the surrounding settlements, in particular the closest villages of Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick and their Conservation Areas as well its more distant neighbours at Rampton, Willingham and Over;

C3/b Enable the landscape around Northstowe to provide an environment suitable for the mitigation of adverse wildlife impacts and to maximise benefits to wildlife;

C3/c Enable the landscape around Northstowe to contribute to the informal recreation needs of those living, working and visiting the town;

C3/d Develop appropriate management strategies to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption and maintenance of the landscape areas.

C1 THE SITE FOR NORTHSTOWE

POLICY NS/3 The Site For Northstowe

The site for Northstowe of approximately 350 hectares (excluding the minimum amount of land needed for Green Separation to protect the village character of Longstanton and Oakington) will accommodate a new town of 8,000 dwellings (6,000 dwellings by 2016) and associated employment, services, facilities and infrastructure and is located to the east of Longstanton and to the north of Oakington. The site is shown on the Proposals Map and is bounded by:

West

- (i) Longstanton Road between Longstanton and Oakington villages;**
- (ii) Green Separation adjacent to Longstanton village;**
- (iii) The B1050 Station Road north of Longstanton as far as the disused St Ives railway line;**

North and East

- (iv) The disused St Ives railway line between Station Road, Longstanton and Station Road, Oakington;**

South

- (v) The C197 Station Road between Oakington village and the disused St Ives railway line;**
- (vi) Green Separation adjacent to Oakington village.**

C1.1 The Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia (RSS6) identifies the Cambridge Sub-Region as a growth area for the period up to at least 2016 where the intention is to increase the rate of development from about 2,200 dwellings to 2,800 dwellings per year. The development of a new town is a major part of the sub-regional strategy which sets six objectives for selecting the preferred location for the town:

- Close to Cambridge;
- Located on or facilitating the provision of high quality public transport;
- Avoid national nature and historic environmental designations;
- Avoid major groundwater protection areas and floodplains;
- Make best use of previously developed land; and
- As far as possible, avoid the loss to development of high quality agricultural land.

C1.2 These regional objectives have led the County Council to identify Longstanton/Oakington as the preferred location for a new town of 8,000 to 10,000 dwellings in the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan.

C1.3 The Structure Plan sets out a number of policy requirements for locating the new town:

- Be located at Longstanton/Oakington, located to the east of Longstanton and to the north of Oakington;
- Make best use of previously developed land at Oakington Airfield;
- Be well served by a rapid transit system based on the St Ives railway line to provide high quality links to Cambridge and Huntingdon;
- Accommodate approximately 8,000 dwellings in total, with approximately 6,000 by 2016;
- Include an effective and dedicated local busway through the town to maximise the opportunities offered by the Guided Bus route;
- Be a small town with a town centre catering for the town's residents but also the immediate surrounding area;
- Include proposals for Green Separation between the development and existing communities to maintain the village character of Longstanton and Oakington; and
- Be a strategic employment location to provide opportunities for the long term growth of the high technology clusters in the Cambridge Sub-Region as well as provide employment opportunities that serve local needs.

C1.4 As a further steer to the development of the new town, the Structure Plan also requires that provision is made in the Area Action Plan for:

- High Quality Public Transport links to employment and other facilities in Cambridge;
- New or improved road links from the town to the A14;
- Affordable and key worker housing;
- Secondary school and primary schools;
- Health facilities, community and social infrastructure;
- Shopping facilities;
- Recreation, including rights of way within and adjoining the town;
- Appropriate waste management facilities; and
- Flood control and sustainable drainage systems including to avoid any additional risk and to mitigate current flood risks affecting Oakington village.

C1.5 These requirements have provided the basis for the policies and proposals in the Area Action Plan for Northstowe and will be included in the Masterplans, development briefs and planning applications which will follow.

C1.6 The site for Northstowe comprises Oakington Airfield, Oakington Barracks, Longstanton Golf Course and a number of agricultural fields south and west of the disused St Ives railway line.

C1.7 Minimising the need to travel and ensuring that local services and facilities have enough people living nearby to make them economically viable is a key plank of government policy and at Northstowe means developing a compact

town at densities which are found locally in the older parts of Cambridge and the market towns – areas which prove to be very popular. To reinforce this approach, policy P5/3 of the Structure Plan sets a target of an average of at least 40 dwellings per hectare (net) in locations such as the new town. Within the new town, higher densities are encouraged at the town and local centres where there is good access to services and public transport.

- C1.8 A new town of 8,000 dwellings is within the range of acceptable town size proposed in the Structure Plan of 8,000 to 10,000 dwellings. This size range was a specific recommendation of the Examination In Public Panel who recommended that the Structure Plan was changed from the draft proposal of "an ultimate size of 10,000 dwellings or thereabouts". In reaching that conclusion, the EIP Panel advised that the principle factors in determining size were likely to be secondary education provision, landscape and design issues and the possible impact on neighbouring communities. The Structure Plan requires that 6,000 dwellings are completed by 2016.
- C1.9 Well resourced secondary education at Northstowe will mean one large school rather than two small schools. At 8,000 dwellings Northstowe would support a secondary school with 8 forms of entry. At the top end of the size range, 10,000 dwellings would support a 10-11 form of entry school. There are only three schools in Cambridgeshire which provide 10 or more forms of entry. Whilst the size of secondary school does not appear to be a limiting factor, the proximity of the site to Longstanton and Oakington villages means that those two villages could be considered for inclusion in the catchment for the Northstowe school which would ensure better integration of Northstowe with existing communities. A site for 8,000 dwellings together with Longstanton and Oakington villages would therefore support a 10-11 form entry secondary school. The provision of a sixth form complex associated with the school site is also being investigated.
- C1.10 This site will have the least impact on the wider landscape by containing Northstowe almost wholly in views from the west by Longstanton village and from the south by Oakington village. Containment by the disused St Ives railway to the east and north will provide the greatest certainty that impact on Willingham and Rampton is minimised.
- C1.11 Given the Structure Plan requirement for the new town to be located at Longstanton/Oakington and make best use of the previously developed land at Oakington Airfield, the impact of Northstowe in such close proximity to these two villages will be minimised by development being at the lower end of the size range. Local impacts can be mitigated further by a number of means but principally:
- The Structure Plan requirement for Green Separation for these two villages which can be supported by locating lower intensity uses on the nearest edges of Northstowe; and
 - Ensuring that access roads avoid traffic passing through the two villages or in close proximity to existing properties.

C1.12 The site has the best fit with the requirement to be east of Longstanton and north of Oakington. The site would be best integrated into the proposed express Guided Bus service running along the disused St Ives railway line by a dedicated local busway (with connections to the Guided Bus route) which can provide a greater frequency of stops through the town. This will provide the opportunity to create a sustainable design of new town with most parts of the town within walking distance of stops on the dedicated busway. This site also minimises the amount of agricultural land (including land of higher quality) that would be taken for development.

C2 THE SETTING OF NORTHSTOWE

POLICY NS/4 Extended Cambridge Green Belt

- a) Northstowe is included within an extension of the Cambridge Green Belt which will reach to the closest edge of the villages of Rampton, Willingham and Over and also includes within it the land providing Green Separation between Northstowe and the villages of Longstanton and Oakington.**

- b) The purposes of the Green Belt in the vicinity of Northstowe are to:**
 - (i) Ensure that the development of Northstowe does not detract from the wider setting of Cambridge;**
 - (ii) Ensure that Northstowe will not merge with any of the surrounding villages;**
 - (iii) Create an appropriate setting for the new town, minimising any adverse visual or landscape impacts on the surrounding area including the setting and character of the surrounding settlements, in particular the closest villages of Longstanton, Westwick and Oakington and their Conservation Areas as well its more distant neighbours at Rampton, Willingham and Over.**
 - (iv) Provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and public access to the open countryside around Northstowe.**

C2.1 There has been a Green Belt around Cambridge since the 1960's. The purpose of the Cambridge Green Belt as a whole is to:

- Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre;
- Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting;
- Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.

C2.2 The Structure Plan proposes that the outer boundary of the Cambridge Green Belt will be reviewed as part of the planning of Northstowe to determine if additional areas can be identified which serve the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt.

C2.3 The Cambridge Green Belt is amongst the smallest in the country and varies in width from 5km to 10km. In the vicinity of Northstowe, the Green Belt is at its narrowest and when developed Northstowe will be the largest urban area close to Cambridge and will be in close proximity to four villages (Longstanton, Oakington, Willingham and Rampton).

C2.4 The Cambridge Green Belt is extended in the vicinity of Northstowe as follows:

- Rampton Road from Cottenham to Rampton
- The southern edge of Rampton village
- Rampton Road from Rampton to Willingham
- The southern edge of Willingham village
- Willingham Road from Willingham to Over
- The eastern edge of Over village
- Longstanton Road from Over as far as Ramper Road
- Ramper Road as far as Uttons Drove
- Uttons Drove as far as A14
- A14 from Uttons Drove to Bar Hill

C2.5 The site for Northstowe is generally contained by clear physical boundaries as is recommended in government policy for Green Belts – the B1050, the disused St Ives railway line, the C197 and the Airfield Road between Oakington and Longstanton. The villages of Longstanton and Oakington are also clear features adjacent to the town. However, the Structure Plan requires that their village character be maintained by Green Separation. Protecting against coalescence is a key function of the Green Belt and therefore the Green Separation is also defined as Green Belt. The extent of Green Separation is defined in the Area Action Plan by reference to a minimum distance with greater separation in the sensitive areas designated as Conservation Areas, rather than by clear physical features. The Green Belt on the edges of Northstowe closest to Longstanton and Oakington villages is defined by the edges of the Green Separation in this Area Action Plan. The final boundary of the Green Belt will be reviewed once the town is built when it may be appropriate to also include any appropriate open areas on the edge of the town and to reflect features on the ground.

C3 LANDSCAPING THE SETTING OF NORTHSTOWE

POLICY NS/5 Landscaping the Setting of Northstowe

A Landscape Strategy for the countryside surrounding Northstowe must be submitted and approved prior to the granting of planning permission. It will be implemented as part of the planning obligation/conditions for the development of the new town. The Landscape Strategy will:

- (i) Create an appropriate setting for the new town, minimising any adverse visual or landscape impacts on the surrounding area including the setting and character of the surrounding settlements, in particular the closest villages of Longstanton, Westwick and Oakington and their Conservation Areas as well its more distant neighbours at Rampton, Willingham and Over;**
- (ii) Make the best use of the existing tree resource on site as a setting for the development in long distance views;**
- (iii) Ensure that any alterations to the topography of the area are appropriate to local landscape character;**
- (iv) Create a network of green spaces around the town which integrate well with the wider countryside, the town and its green spaces, contribute to legibility, are pleasant, attractive and beneficial for wildlife;**
- (v) To ensure a high degree of connectivity between the new town and the wider countryside for wildlife and people;**
- (vi) Enable landscape areas to provide an environment suitable for the mitigation of adverse wildlife impacts and to maximise benefits to wildlife;**
- (vii) Enable landscape areas to contribute to the informal recreation needs of those living, working and visiting the town;**
- (viii) Include appropriate planting alongside all new access roads and the parallel distributor roads alongside the A14 as well as more substantial planted areas in blocks beyond the highway boundary and in association with balancing ponds.**

C3.1 Northstowe will be a major feature in the landscape and it is therefore important that it is designed and landscaped in a way that respects the landscape character of the area and enhances its landscape setting. To ensure that this is achieved, a landscape strategy will be required at an early stage.

- C3.2 Northstowe lies at a point of subtle transition between relatively high ground south east of the A14 (range 20-70mOD) and the virtually level fenlands 5 km to the north (range 1-5mOD). A sparse network of drains and ditches flow north-east to the River Great Ouse. These drains are not prominent landscape features although a few support significant mature trees such as willow and poplars. This contrasts with the more natural watercourses in the area such as Oakington Brook and Beck Brook, which tend to flow in defined shallow valleys and support considerable tree growth.
- C3.3 The area lies within the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands national landscape character area as defined by the Countryside Agency and in Cambridgeshire as the Western Clay lands. They are characterised by:
- Large scale arable farmland with open fields
 - Sparse hedgerows
 - Scattered woodlands
 - Villages with significant tree cover and grass paddocks on village edges-with church spires enlivening the skyline.
- C3.4 The Northstowe area contains features strongly representative of this landscape character. It is a typical clay land open arable landscape of average quality for the region. Longstanton is the most significant landscape feature in the area, appearing as a substantial belt of trees within an otherwise open landscape, but with few buildings visible. The settlement of Bar Hill to the south-west is also prominent by virtue of its elevated position and visible development as is the Haddenham ridge to the north. From within the Area Action Plan area the skyline is enlivened by the spire of All Saints Church in Longstanton and the windmill and telecommunications mast at Over. The mature Lombardy poplars on the airfield are also prominent skyline features but the large hangers are not, being largely screened by trees and topography, except from the north and north-east. A water tower is prominent in many views. Longstanton and Oakington are fen edge villages with the true fen starting 5 km to the north-east in the vicinity of the River Great Ouse.
- C3.5 Cambridgeshire's villages and towns are important features in the landscape which can be both positive and negative. A characteristic which is common to most which assists with their assimilation into the countryside is a gradation from the edge of the settlements through lowering densities merging into a network of small fields on the countryside edge which gives way to the larger field structure which is typical of much of South Cambridgeshire. Assimilating Northstowe into its countryside setting will require a similar treatment which can include strengthening existing boundary features along field edges, footpaths, bridleways and roads in the vicinity of the town, including new roads constructed to serve Northstowe.
- C3.6 Appropriate management systems will be required to ensure high quality, robust and effective maintenance of the landscape. This is dealt with in the Phasing and Implementation policies.

C4 MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF NORTHSTOWE ON EXISTING COMMUNITIES

POLICY NS/5 Green Separation from Longstanton and Oakington

- a) **A minimum of 200m of Green Separation will be provided between the village frameworks of Longstanton and Oakington and the built up area of Northstowe. Additional separation will be provided to protect Conservation Areas which extend beyond the village frameworks. The Green Separation will have a high degree of public access where appropriate to character and amenity. It will not contain any urban uses such as playing fields, allotments or cemeteries to ensure effective separation between these communities.**

Extent and Treatment of Green Separation

Longstanton All Saints:

- b) **The landscape character of a series of paddocks with hedgerows and small copses will be maintained and enhanced adjoining Longstanton All Saints.**

Conservation Area, Long Lane, Longstanton St Michaels:

- c) **In addition to the Conservation Area (included in the Core Strategy) a further 50m beyond Long Lane is included in Green Separation to allow for a substantial area of supplemental planting.**

Conservation Area, St Michael's Mount, Longstanton:

- d) **200m separation will be provided from the boundary of the Conservation Area at St Michaels Mount. The landscape character of a series of hedged paddocks and small copses will be maintained and enhanced adjoining St Michael's Mount.**

Oakington:

- e) **The Green Separation on the northern side of Oakington will comprise additional tree planting of individual trees, groups and copses to reinforce the pastoral parkland nature of this local landscape area. Tree groups would be located so as to shield views through the Green Separation but at the same time retain a more open character.**

- C4.1 In order to provide an appropriate landscaped setting for the new town where it is closest to existing villages and to ensure the maintenance of the village character of Longstanton and Oakington as required by the Structure Plan,

there will be suitably landscaped Green Separation between them which will continue to form part of the rural setting of these two villages.

- C4.2 The village character of Longstanton and Oakington and the individual landscape character in the areas adjoining them has been taken into account in determining the minimum extent and landscape treatment of the Green Separation'. An absolute minimum of 200m between the edge of the built up area of the town and the village frameworks of the two villages is required to allow for either woodland copses which are deep enough to close off views through an area, or a series of paddocks and tree lined hedgerows that provides sufficient depth to filter views. The Green Belt will be extended to cover these areas to provide the certainty that they will be kept free from development.

Longstanton

- C4.3 The predominant historic character of land adjoining Longstanton comprises a series of paddocks with hedgerows and small copses. This landscape character will be used as an appropriate treatment to enhance most of the landscape areas adjoining Longstanton, in particular the golf course and land adjoining Magdalene Close. The paddocks bounded by Mills Lane and St Michael's Lane already exhibit that character.
- C4.4 The Conservation Area at St Michael's includes fields and paddocks adjoining the village, and bounded by the tree lined bridleway of Long Lane which lies further than 200m from the village framework. Historically this is an important area and includes fields which still demonstrate remnants of the early ridge and furrow field system. Long Lane is a long established right of way and its sylvan character is a key part of the setting of Longstanton.
- C4.5 The Conservation Area also includes St Michael's Mount, a substantial property in its own landscaped grounds which although it lies immediately adjacent to the Village Framework is perceived locally as being an integral part of the villages. That part of the Green Separation which lies within Oakington Airfield at this point will be landscaped as a series of paddocks with hedgerows as is typical of much of the remaining setting of Longstanton St Michaels.
- C4.6 Toad Acres adjoins Long Lane and will therefore benefit from the proposed 50m strip supplemental planting to the north-east of this historic bridleway which will provide an adequate buffer from the new town.

Oakington

- C4.7 The character of land adjoining Oakington is more consistent along the village edge than at Longstanton, comprising a mixture of small paddocks and larger fields and parts of the Airfield. It has a generally more open aspect than the tightly knit paddocks adjoining Longstanton.