

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Growth and Sustainable Communities / 14 November 2007
Planning Services Portfolio Holders
AUTHOR/S: Joint Meeting
Corporate Manager (Planning & Sustainable Communities)

CAMBRIDGE EAST AREA ACTION PLAN GREEN SEPARATION PUBLIC CONSULTATION – COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

Purpose

1. To agree the Council's response to the current consultation on potential changes to the submission Cambridge East Area Action Plan (AAP) to delete the Green Separation policy and make consequential changes to the AAP.
2. This is a key decision because it is in conflict with a policy, plan or strategy approved by the Council or a committee of the Council. However, the impact of the potential changes is not considered to be significant if terms of their effect, particularly if the further changes recommended in this report are made to the plan.

Background

3. The Cambridge East Area Action Plan, produced jointly with Cambridge City Council, was the subject of an independent examination in July 2007. The Councils received the attached letter from the Inspector dated 21 September 2007. It advised that on the basis of present evidence the Inspector concludes that the inclusion of Policy CE/6 (Green Separation from Fen Ditton and Teversham) will lead to a finding of unsoundness for the AAP. In the Inspector's view, the Policy duplicates Green Belt policy but with an even greater level of restriction, and is also over-prescriptive. He advised that the deletion of the Policy and its supporting text would render the plan sound but the plan had not been the subject of consultation on the basis of the deletion of the policy. To overcome this procedural defect and make the plan sound, the letter advises that the Councils should advertise changes to the submitted AAP to delete the policy and make consequential changes to the AAP.
4. This consultation is being held over a 6-week period 12 October to 23 November. As these potential changes are not being proposed by the Council, it is possible for the Council to make representations to the Inspector during the consultation period.
5. The City Council has agreed to submit the following response to the consultation:

“The City Council notes that the policies and proposals of the AAP after the required changes would continue to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with the City and would continue to provide green separation between the existing settlements of Teversham and Fen Ditton and the Cambridge East urban expansion to maintain the identity of those settlements. It will do this by maintaining land around Fen Ditton and Teversham as Green Belt land, which is protected by strong national policies concerning its use and protection from built development. It follows that whilst the City Council would prefer the AAP to remain unchanged, it has no

objection to the AAP references to green separation being amended as required by the Inspector.”

Considerations

6. The Inspector has made his views on the principle of the Green Separation policy clear. It is reassuring that he is proposing no change to the Green Belt policy or to the boundaries of the Green Belt on the Proposals Map. It seems that the Inspector's concerns are about the principle of a local designation that duplicates or seeks to place more onerous controls on development than national policy, and is not raising questions about the importance of maintaining separation as a matter of principle.
7. The deletion of the Green Separation policy on its own is not considered to be a major change to the plan, so long as it is made explicit in the plan that the parts of the Green Belt between Cambridge East and the villages of Teversham and Fen Ditton is providing a green separation function to maintain their individual identity. The Northstowe AAP Inspectors' Report made clear the Inspectors' views on the restrictions on urban related open uses within the areas of green separation. The Council put its case to the Inspector on that issue at the examination.
8. The specific issue that has not been addressed by evidence to date, is the landscape treatment of the areas of green separation. The Council maintained at Northstowe that effective green separation was not just about distance but was also about the appropriate landscape treatment of such areas. The Northstowe Inspectors' Report made clear that this principle was endorsed by the Inspectors. The principle applies equally to Cambridge East. As such, it is recommended that the Council's response to the Green Separation consultation seeks the retention in the plan of those parts of policy statements and supporting text that address the landscape treatment of the areas of Green Belt that provide green separation from Teversham and Fen Ditton. The recommended changes and the reason for them are contained in the attached schedule.

Options

9. The Council makes representations on the consultation as recommended in the report, which seek to ensure an effective policy framework is retained even if the green separation policy is deleted, by retaining in the plan the requirement for an appropriate landscape treatment of the parts of the Green Belt that provide green separation from Teversham and Fen Ditton.
10. The Council could decide to make no representations, but this would mean the Inspector would not have before him the importance of the treatment of green separation as well as its extent.
11. The Council could make representations that object to the deletion of the green separation policy. However, the Inspector's letter makes clear he considers that the plan would not be sound without its deletion and it is recommended that this would not be an effective form for any representations.

Implications

12. No major implications are anticipated for the matters listed in the table below.

13.

Financial	none
Legal	none

Staffing	none
Risk Management	none
Equal Opportunities	none

Consultations

14. A full public consultation is in progress and representations received will be put before the Inspector, who has indicated he will take account of them in finalising his report.
15. Local Members for Teversham and Fen Ditton have been consulted and support the recommendations in the report.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

16.	Affordable Homes	N/a
	Customer Service	N/a
	Northstowe and other growth areas	Whilst the loss of the green separation policy would be unfortunate, the Green Belt will ensure separation of necklace villages from Cambridge East. The recommended additional changes to retain the parts of the plan that address the treatment of the separation would minimise the impact of the potential changes identified by the Inspector.
	Quality, Accessible Services	N/a
	Village Life	See growth area comment above.
	Sustainability	N/a
	Partnership	N/a

Recommendations

17. That the Inspector be advised that whilst the Council would prefer to see the AAP remain unchanged, it does not raise objection to the deletion of Policy CE/6 Green Separation and consequential changes, subject to additional changes being made in respect of the treatment of the parts of the Green Belt that provide green separation from Teversham and Fen Ditton, as set out in Appendix 1.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Cambridge East Area Action Plan – Potential Changes resulting from the deletion of the Green Separation Policy – consultation document September 2007

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