

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Workshops

Sustainability Scoping Report

Executive Summary

The Council is undertaking a review of its existing Local Development Framework to produce a new district wide Local Plan, which will establish growth requirements for the district up to 2031, identify land and areas where growth can take place, and policies to guide its implementation.

Sustainability Appraisal is a process which takes place alongside plan making, to assess the extent to which the emerging policies and proposals will help to achieve 'sustainable development', and by understanding potential adverse effects it provides opportunities for plans to be improved. The overall aim of the appraisal process is to help ensure that the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan makes an effective contribution to the pursuit of 'sustainable development'. The most widely-used definition of this concept is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"¹.

The Scoping Report is the first stage of the Sustainability Appraisal process. It provides the context for the appraisal, and identifies issues of particular importance to the District that should be considered.

Sustainability Themes

Evidence in the Scoping Report has been framed around ten themes, which taken together address the full range of sustainability issues.

Environmental	Social	Economic
Land	Health	Economic Activity
Pollution	Housing	Transport
Biodiversity	Inclusive Communities	
Landscape And Townscape		
Climate Change		

It should be noted that all themes are cross cutting, and address wider social environmental and economic issues. E.g. economic and social impacts of climate change.

The Scoping Process

For each theme, issues are explored through the Scoping process outlined below:

¹ World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987.

The Scoping Process

What is the policy context?

Identifies the objectives and requirements of other plans policies and strategies ranging from national to local level that will influence development of the plan.

What is the situation now?

Existing characteristics of the district.

What will the situation be without the plan?

Considers what the district would be like if the Local Plan wasn't prepared.

What are the Key Sustainability Issues and Problems?

Identifies key sustainability issues for the district to be considered through plan making and the sustainability appraisal.

What are the Sustainability Objectives?

Using the sustainability issues identified above, establishes a framework for testing policies and proposals against.

What indicators will be used to monitor significant effects?

Considers what issues should be monitored in future to establish the actual impacts of the new plan.

Sustainability Issues and Problems Identified

The Scoping Report has identified a wide range of issues. A summary of the key issues identified under each theme is set out below:

Summary of the Sustainability Issues and Problems Identified

Land & Soil

- Limited supply of available Previously Developed Land
- Significant areas of high-grade agricultural land.
- A variety of important minerals, including Sand and Gravel, worked extensively in the north of the district, and Chalk and Lower Greensand areas in the south.

Air Quality and Pollution

- Areas around A14 north of Cambridge, and the centre of Cambridge, are designated as Air Quality Management Areas.
- EU Water Framework Directive requires all inland and coastal waters to achieve 'good ecological status' by 2015 or, where this is not possible, by 2021 or 2027. A total of 25 out of 30 river water bodies in the district are currently below this standard.
- Large area in the south of District designated as groundwater Source Protection Zone.

- Limited existing capacity at Sewage Treatment Works in some areas.
- Some parcels of land in the district are subject to land contamination, from varying sources.
- Existing noise sources in the district, including major roads network.
- Existing sources of light and odour pollution, including Sewage Treatment Works, roads etc.

Biodiversity

- Range of important biodiversity habitats and species, but agriculture causes high level of fragmentation.
- European Protected sites with the district (Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation) and nearby (including Ouse Washes to the north).
- SSSI, County Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodland, and wildlife corridors all present in the district.
- Large parts of the district are deficient in accessible natural green space (according to Natural England's ANGSt analysis).

Landscape and Townscape

- Varied landscape comprising five distinct National Character Areas, erosion of landscape character has occurred in some areas.
- Around 25% of the district is designated as Green Belt.
- Settlements of varied and distinct local character, ranging from compact hamlets to larger villages with linear street patterns.
- Varied historic environment, including historic landscapes with archaeological features such as Fleam Dyke, Schedules Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas, and Listed Buildings.

Climate Change

- Carbon emissions per capita higher than UK average, primarily as a result of road transport.
- Lower levels of renewable energy capacity than other districts in Cambridgeshire (excluding Cambridge)
- The District is in an area of Serious Water Stress as designated by the Environment Agency.
- Areas of the district are subject to flood risk from rivers and watercourses, or other sources such as surface water or groundwater.

Healthy Communities

- The "health" of people living in the district is generally significantly better than the average for England.
- Nationally, the District is one of the least deprived areas in the country.
- Gypsy and Traveller community, the District's largest ethnic group, identified as having relatively poor health.
- South Cambridgeshire has an ageing population. The highest growth is expected to occur in the 65+ age group.

- Health services concentrated in larger settlements. 21 settlements within the district have a doctor's surgery or health centre within their boundaries.
- Many villages do not meet the Council's existing sports and play space standards.
- Levels of crime are lower than the county average, but the fear of crime is disproportionately high when compared to the actual rate of crime, particularly in the younger and older populations.

Inclusive Communities - Housing

- High level of housing need in the district, some to support natural growth but mainly to support the successful economy.
- Adopted plans shifted development patterns towards edge of Cambridge, the new town of Northstowe and larger villages.
- High house prices, and high house price for earnings ratio (7.4).
- High level of need for affordable housing (annual need for 1,372 affordable homes over the next 5 years).
- Around 1% of housing stock in the Cambridge Sub-Region is vacant.
- Need for housing to meet specialist needs of elderly and disabled people, and for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

Inclusive Communities – Redressing Inequalities and Involving the Community

- The Council's Single Equality Scheme 2011 provides useful information about different groups for which the Council has a duty to protect from discrimination, promote equality of opportunities and encourage good community relations.
- Rurality identified as an issue, due to public transport difficulties in accessing local services and facilities experienced by some rural communities. 56% of population live in villages without a Doctors surgery, primary school and food store.
- The percentage of people that feel they can influence local decisions is higher in South Cambs than the national average.

Economic Activity

- A diverse high value economy, with national strengths in Research and Development, high value manufacturing, and software consultancy.
- Unemployment Rate lower than national average, and median pay levels higher.
- Evidence suggests the impact of the economic downturn will be deeper and longer than first anticipated, with jobs growth anticipated to be significantly lower than anticipated by the East of England Plan. The Cambridge area has proved relatively resilient to the impacts of the downturn.
- Shortage of skilled workers in some sectors.
- Primary retail centres that serve the area are outside the district (Cambridge and Market towns).
- The district's (and sub-region's) growing economy and population will make substantial demands on infrastructure requiring investment.

- Despite policies protecting employment land in villages, evidence suggests that there continues to be a gradual loss of employment land in our villages.

Transport

- High levels of congestion on radial routes into Cambridge at peak times.
- Increasing average commuting distances (10.2 miles in 2010 compared to 8.1 miles in 2009), 62% of journeys by car or van.
- Traffic density on Cambridgeshire's rural trunk 'A' roads (A14, A428, A11) is twice the national average, and is 40% above average on other rural 'A' roads. Traffic flow is 94% above the national average on rural trunk 'A' roads in Cambridgeshire and 40% on other rural main roads in the county.
- Good public transport services in larger villages, but limited services in many smaller villages away from the main transport corridors.
- Rate of death and serious injury per head of population in Cambridgeshire is 29% above the national average, although this is primarily a result of volume of traffic travelling though on the major road network (casualties per km travelled is less than the national average) (Road Safety Monitoring Report 2010).
- Cycling levels higher than the national average.

Sustainability Objectives

In order to provide a framework for creating and testing policies and proposals in a consistent and comparable manner, a set of sustainability objectives have been created, drawing on the key sustainability factors for South Cambridgeshire identified through the Scoping process. The objectives reflect desired environmental, social or economic outcomes, rather than measures that would assist in achieving those outcomes (they focus on the ends rather than the means).

THEME	SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVE
LAND	Minimise the irreversible loss of undeveloped land, economic mineral reserves, and productive agricultural holdings
	Minimise waste production and support the re-use and recycling of waste products
POLLUTION	Improve air quality and minimise or mitigate against sources of environmental pollution
BIODIVERSITY	Avoid damage to designated sites and protected species
	Maintain and enhance the range and viability of characteristic habitats and species
	Improve opportunities for people to access and appreciate wildlife and green spaces
LANDSCAPE AND	Maintain and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of landscape and townscape character

TOWNSCAPE	Avoid damage to areas and sites designated for their historic interest, and protect their settings.
	Create places, spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look good
CLIMATE CHANGE	Minimise impacts on climate change (including greenhouse gas emissions)
	Reduce vulnerability to future climate change effects
HEALTH	Maintain and enhance the health of local communities
	Reduce and prevent crime and reduce fear of crime
	Improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space.
HOUSING	Ensure everyone has access to decent, appropriate and affordable housing
INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES	Redress inequalities related to age, disability, gender, race, faith, location and income
	Improve the quality, range and accessibility of services and facilities (e.g. health, transport, education, training, leisure opportunities)
	Encourage and enable the active involvement of local people in community activities
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	Improve the efficiency, competitiveness, vitality and adaptability of the local economy.
	Help people gain access to satisfying work appropriate to their skills, potential and place of residence
	Support appropriate investment in people, places, communications and other infrastructure
TRANSPORT	Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable transport choices.
	Secure appropriate investment and development in transport infrastructure, and ensure the safety of the transport network.

Consultation with Key Bodies

The Scoping Report has been subject to consultation with the Environment Agency, English Nature, and English Heritage who all have a key role in ensuring it addresses environmental issues appropriately.

The Next Stages

Sustainability Appraisal is an integral part of the plan making process. The Scoping process has helped identify issues that need to be addressed by the Local Plan.

The first stage of the plan making process is to identify issues that the new Local Plan should address, and site and policy options for how the plan could deal with them. Options and alternatives will be tested through a Sustainability Appraisal using the Sustainability Objectives, identifying whether an option would have a positive or negative effect in terms of achieving each objective.

This will help options evolve, by highlighting issues that need mitigating, or ways that emerging options can be improved.

The Sustainability Appraisal is published alongside each stage of the Local Plan, to provide supporting information to help people comment on the options and policies suggested. People can also comment on the Sustainability Appraisal itself. At the Issues and Options Stage, the initial Sustainability Report will be published, which will describe how we identified the issues and alternative options for consultation, and the potential impacts of the options identified.

The Council will consider representations received during the Issues and Options consultation before deciding its preferred options and preparing a draft Local Plan. The draft plan will be subject to Sustainability Appraisal as part of an iterative process, which again can highlight potential impacts and help improve the plan. The draft plan will be subject to full public consultation, accompanied by the draft Final Sustainability Report. The Council will consider the results of consultation before submitting the Local Plan for independent examination and adoption.

Once the Local Plan is adopted, we will publish a statement regarding how the Sustainability Appraisal process has helped plan making, and regular monitoring will continue, to highlight the impacts of the plan, and help indicate when a review of the plan is required.