

2. Commentary

a. Progress against the Local Development Scheme

- 2.1. The adopted Local Development Scheme (LDS) at the start of the monitoring period (1 April 2012) was the LDS adopted in January 2012. This LDS (and a subsequent revision in December 2012) set the timetable that the Council was progressing during the monitoring year.
- 2.2. The January 2012 LDS sets out the stages in the preparation of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. This plan will incorporate a review of the Core Strategy, Development Control Policies DPD and Site Specific Policies DPD. It also includes the policies and proposals for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation as this will no longer be progressed in a separate development plan document.
- 2.3. During the last monitoring year, three stages of public consultation on issues and options for the new South Cambridgeshire Local Plan were undertaken. The first took place between July and September 2012 and was set out in the timetable in the January 2012 LDS. This consultation set out 116 issues that were relevant to the future planning and development of the district with a range options.
- 2.4. An additional consultation jointly carried out with Cambridge City Council took place between January and February 2013. This consultation had not been timetabled in the January 2012 LDS and came as a result of the Council working collaboratively with Cambridge City Council and the need to coordinate on cross boundary issues. The second issues and options consultation was in two parts:
 - Part 1 – this was the joint part of the public consultation with Cambridge City Council. It considered options for the development strategy for the wider Cambridge area, site options for housing or employment development on the edge of Cambridge on land currently in the Green Belt, options on sub-regional sporting, cultural and community facilities, and site options for a community stadium. It built on the issues and options consultations that both Councils had already undertaken. It provided background information in relation to the housing and employment needs for the area as a whole and also outlined what that means for the future development strategy.
 - Part 2 – each Council carried out consultation on other matters for their own areas in their respective Part 2 consultation documents. South Cambridgeshire District Council consulted on new issues arising from the summer 2012 consultation that would be reasonable additional options for the new Local Plan, including possible new site options for development as well as matters such as possible changes to village frameworks and designations to protect village character.
- 2.5. As a result of this additional round of public consultation, the LDS was revised in December 2012 to change the anticipated proposed submission public consultation from June – July 2013 to July – September 2013. The date of submission was also pushed back a month to January 2014. The revised timetable was published on the Council's website.

- 2.6. Between March and May 2013, the Council undertook a single issue consultation on a proposal for a football stadium at Sawston. The site was put forward to the Council by the promoters Cambridge City Football Club relatively late in the Local Plan process, but due to local interest in the issue, the Council decided to carry out a focussed consultation on this single issue. This public consultation was not included in the January 2012 LDS or the revised December 2012 LDS.
- 2.7. The consultation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan consultation started in July 2013 as anticipated in the December 2012 LDS. However the consultation period was extended by two weeks until mid-October 2013 as a background assessment issued at the start of the consultation did not include all of the most up-to-date information. This consultation therefore ran for 13 weeks.
- 2.8. The December 2012 LDS anticipated that the submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State would have been in January 2014. The LDS was updated in June 2013 to show submission in Spring 2014. It is now anticipated to be in March 2014 in order to allow sufficient time to consider all the representations received and to consider any revisions to the draft plan.
- 2.9. A new LDS setting out the timetable for the remaining stages of the preparation of the Local Plan and also the timetable for the preparation of the Cambridge Northern Fringe East Area Action Plan is being considered by the Planning Policy & Localism Portfolio Holder at her meeting on 11 February 2014.

b. Action taken on Duty to Co-operate

- 2.10. The Council produced a **Statement of Compliance with the Duty to Co-operate**¹ in June 2013 setting out how the Council has co-operated with other bodies in preparing the Local Plan. South Cambridgeshire has undertaken a wide range of engagement, discussion and joint working with local authorities and other public organisations to ensure that there has been a high level of cooperation in the preparation of the local plan.
- 2.11. Co-operation with Cambridge City Council is particularly important to ensure that cross boundary issues are addressed in a consistent and joined up manner. The Councils have jointly commissioned evidence base documents on a wide variety of topics. As well as the joint public consultation in January – February 2013 (see paragraph 2.4 above), the two Councils carried out their initial issues and options consultations and also their proposed submission public consultations in parallel, and are both working to March 2014 for submission. There has also been close working by the two Councils with Cambridgeshire County Council on transport modelling and the preparation of a new Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.

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<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/sites/www.scambs.gov.uk/files/documents/South%20Cambridgeshire%20Statement%20of%20Cooperation.pdf>

- 2.12. The Council has co-operated with other local authorities in the preparation of the **Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)** and other evidence base studies. The **Memorandum of Co-operation** was agreed by all Cambridgeshire local authorities and includes an agreement on the objectively assessed housing needs for each of the districts in the Cambridge Sub-Region Housing Market Area.

c. Monitoring the Local Development Framework policies and Sustainability Appraisal objectives

- 2.13. The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) includes over 90 core and local output indicators to measure the performance of the Council's adopted planning policies, and almost 65 significant effect indicators to measure change in the district against the objectives set out in the Council's Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Reports (January 2006 and July 2012) and to look at the wider effects of the Local Development Framework (LDF) on the district. A complete list of indicators is included in Chapter 3, the data for all indicators is included in Chapters 4 and 5, and the commentary is set out in this chapter. The commentary highlights the key messages from the data collected and identifies any areas where policies are not being implemented.

Housing

- 2.14. **Housing completions:** The development strategy for South Cambridgeshire is one of supporting the economic success of the Cambridge area through continued jobs growth, with housing provision at a level, and of a quality, to meet objectively assessed needs
- 2.15. In the last monitoring year, 587 net additional dwellings were completed in South Cambridgeshire; this is 48 dwellings more than the number predicted in the housing trajectory included in the Annual Monitoring Report 2011-2012. In the last five monitoring years net housing completions have consistently been around 600 dwellings reflecting the slowdown in the housing market. Completions at Cambourne and Orchard Park have fallen in the last two years, but this has been balanced by an uplift of housing completions on historic rural allocations at Longstanton and Papworth Everard, and on rural exceptions sites. Although completions are still low, an increasing number of dwellings have planning permission. In the last monitoring year planning permission was granted for approximately 1,155 dwellings on land at North West Cambridge (University Site) and 140 dwellings on land at Orchard Park (including the local centre). These sites are allocated in the Council's adopted Local Development Framework, but now that they have planning permission there is more certainty that they will be delivered as anticipated as construction is underway on both sites. Two new larger windfalls have also been granted planning permission; these are 72 dwellings at SCA Packaging, Histon and 47 dwellings at Long Drove / Beech Road, Cottenham. These sites were assessed through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and proposed as options for allocation in the Local Plan.

- 2.16. **Delivering housing targets:** The housing trajectory identifies predicted annual housing completions from existing and proposed allocations, planning permissions granted or with resolution to grant, and predicted windfalls. Against the **Proposed Submission Local Plan** (July 2013) which requires 19,000 dwellings to be provided between 2011 and 2031, the housing trajectory shows that 22,206 dwellings are expected to be delivered, this is 17% (3,206 dwellings) more than the target. Excluding the windfall allowance of 2,800 dwellings, the housing trajectory shows that 19,406 dwellings are expected to be delivered. Against the **Core Strategy** (January 2007) which requires 20,000 dwellings to be provided between 1999 and 2016, the housing trajectory shows that 12,675 dwellings are expected to be delivered; this is 37% (7,325 dwellings) below the target. The Local Plan has addressed this housing shortfall through the identification of a new housing target for 2011-2031 that will provide for the identified needs of the district.
- 2.17. **Five year housing land supply:** The Council decided in June 2013 that the housing target included in the **Proposed Submission Local Plan** (July 2013) should provide the basis for calculating 5-year housing land supply pending the adoption of the new Local Plan. The housing target is 19,000 dwellings for 2011-2031 and this comprises the current 'objectively assessed needs' required by the **National Planning Policy Framework** and the **draft National Planning Practice Guidance**. It is identified in the **Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for the Cambridge Sub Region Housing Market Area**. Relying on the SHMA to calculate South Cambridgeshire's five-year housing land supply was supported in a planning appeal decision issued in October 2013. For the five year period 2014-2019, the Council has 5.5 years of housing land or 109% of the five-year supply requirement. Including a 5% buffer, as required by the NPPF, the Council has 5.2 years of housing land or 104% of the five-year supply requirement. There is a five-year supply against the draft Local Plan for the whole of the plan period.
- 2.18. **Gypsy & Traveller pitches:** 33 permanent Gypsy & Traveller pitches were completed in the last monitoring year. At 31 March 2013, 10 pitches had temporary planning permission (time limited consent).
- 2.19. **Housing completions on previously developed land (PDL):** In the last monitoring year, 21% of dwellings completed were on PDL and the cumulative percentage is still below the target of at least 37% as required by **Core Strategy Policy ST/3**. It had been anticipated that the percentage would increase when the major developments at Northstowe and Cambridge East, which would involve the reuse of PDL, started delivering towards the end of the plan period (which runs up to 2016), however, this is now unlikely to happen in the near future as progress on the major developments has been delayed. In the last monitoring year, completions at Cambourne, Orchard Park, historic rural allocations at Girton, Papworth Everard and Longstanton, and on affordable housing exception sites at Comberton and Steeple Morden, have contributed to the significant proportion of completions on 'greenfield' sites.
- 2.20. **Housing density:** Over the last 14 years, the average net density of dwellings completed on sites of 9 or more dwellings has fluctuated. It is expected that the average net density of new housing developments will increase in future monitoring years as the major developments on the edge of Cambridge and Northstowe are

implemented with higher housing densities reflecting their urban character. Orchard Park has achieved net densities of over 50 dph on a significant number of completed parcels. Over the last 14 years, the completed parcels at Cambourne have achieved an average net density of 30.1 dph. In general, lower densities have been achieved at Lower Cambourne (an early phase in the construction of the settlement), and higher densities have been achieved at Upper Cambourne (a more recent phase that is still being completed). Great Cambourne includes a mixture of densities, with higher densities achieved on parcels located in and around the village centre, where there is good access to services and facilities.

- 2.21. **Affordable housing:** The availability of housing that is affordable to local people is a major issue in the district, especially as median house prices in the district have risen from 4.9 times median earnings to 7.6 times median earnings in the last 14 years. In the last monitoring year, 105 new affordable dwellings were completed; this amounts to 16% of all new dwellings completed. Affordable housing completions have fallen steadily over the last three monitoring years from the high of 41% achieved in 2009-2010. In the last monitoring year, Orchard Park, Summersfield (Papworth Everard) and the large development on land west of Longstanton have delivered 248 market dwellings, but no affordable dwellings. Additionally only two affordable housing exception sites providing 19 new affordable dwellings have been completed to meet identified local need in Steeple Morden and Comberton.
- 2.22. In the last two monitoring years there has been a fall in the proportion of social rented affordable housing completed. Some of this shortfall has been made up by the provision of 'affordable rent' housing. It is likely that 'affordable rent' will make up the majority tenure of future affordable homes due to the new funding regime which provides less subsidy for affordable homes.
- 2.23. In the last three monitoring years, 40% of dwellings permitted on sites of two or more dwellings, where **Development Control Policy HG/3** was applicable, were affordable. This meets the target of 40% set by the policy. The affordable dwellings secured were a mixture of onsite provision and financial contributions that have been converted into notional units that will be provided offsite.
- 2.24. **Housing development by settlement category:** The development strategy for the district was changed by the adoption of the Core Strategy, which focuses the development proposed in a few major developments on the edge of Cambridge and the new town of Northstowe, and provided for more development within the village frameworks of the largest villages. Between 2006 and 2011, this change in development strategy could be seen to be gradually taking effect with an increase in the proportion of completions on the edge of Cambridge and at the Rural Centres, which includes the new settlement of Cambourne, and a decrease in the proportion of completions in the smaller and less sustainable villages. This trend has not continued in the last two monitoring years, due to the completion of 78 dwellings at Summersfield, Papworth Everard, and the completion of 195 dwellings on phase 3 of a large development to the west of Longstanton. Both of these developments are rural allocations carried forward from previous Local Plans. Completions at Orchard Park and Cambourne have also fallen compared to previous years.

- 2.25. **Housing quality:** All new development has an impact on its surroundings and the predominantly rural character of the district makes it particularly important that new development is sensitively located and designed to a high quality. The Council has assessed 50 developments completed in the last four monitoring years against the original Building for Life (BfL) standard. All of these developments have performed poorly in the use of advanced construction techniques and technologies and environmental performance, and many did not do well in terms of their future adaptability i.e. Lifetime Homes.
- 2.26. Of the eight schemes that were completed in the last monitoring year, six developments have been assessed as 'Average'. These schemes tended to score well on aspects such as their accessibility to services and facilities, the inclusion of a mix of tenures and sizes that reflect community needs and aspirations, and the integration pedestrian and cycle friendly routes. The slowdown in the housing market has impacted on the design quality and distinctiveness of the schemes. Two developments have been assessed as 'Poor', including a Gypsy and Traveller site, which due to its specific requirements struggles to conform to the BfL criteria.
- 2.27. The BfL standard is a useful tool for gaining an indication of the quality of new developments. However, it has certain limitations that may not give a true impression of the quality of a scheme. The scoring system is not a sophisticated tool and schemes can be scored down where evidence is not available at the time of assessment. In the case of a number of the schemes scoring as 'Average', there has not been documentary evidence available to demonstrate achievement of particular criteria and therefore the scheme has been scored down. However, the Council is not complacent about development quality and is taking measures to improve performance including developing contextual design guidance, promoting best practice and using a 'lessons learnt' approach.
- 2.28. **Accessibility to services and facilities by public transport:** Over the last eight monitoring years, less than 20% of new dwellings completed in each year were within 30 minutes public transport time of all six key services (GP surgery, hospital, primary school, secondary school, employment and major retail centre). This is a reflection of the rural nature of the district and also the changes in the provision and / or frequency of rural bus services. Almost all new development is located close to the key local services of a GP surgery and primary school. Access to services and facilities is a key objective of the development strategy, and as the sustainable major developments on the edge of Cambridge and at the new town of Northstowe are implemented, it is expected that accessibility to services and facilities will increase.

Employment and the Economy

- 2.29. **Business floorspace completions:** Business floorspace completions in the last four monitoring years are significantly lower than they were in the early 2000s (at the start of the plan period). This change is a reflection of the economic downturn and a decline in the number of speculative business developments completed. The continued success of policies supporting research and development, hi tech and biotech industries in the district can be seen in the net increase of over 192,500 sqm of B1b (research & development) use completed, largely at research parks such as

Granta Park (Great Abington), Cambridge Research Park (Landbeach) and the Wellcome Institute (Hinxton).

- 2.30. Over the last 14 years, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of business floorspace completed on PDL, and in the last monitoring year it has reached a new high of 85%. At the start of the plan period (early 2000s), a significant proportion of business floorspace was completed on 'greenfield' sites as many of the business / research parks being developed in the district were 'greenfield' sites. However, over the last few monitoring years, significant business floorspace completions have been the result of extensions to existing buildings, change of use of buildings from other business / employment uses, and new buildings at Babraham Hall (Babraham), Cambridge Research Park (Landbeach), Camgrain APC (Balsham) and Iconix Park (Pampisford).
- 2.31. **Supply of business land:** South Cambridgeshire has a large supply of business land with planning permission; at 31 March 2013 this amounted to 121.6 ha, and of this 40% had detailed planning permission. A significant proportion of the Council's supply of business land is from four sites:
- phases 2 and 3 at Wellcome Trust (Hinxton Hall) for research and development uses (13.8 ha);
 - construction of a carbon fibre precursor plant off Hinxton Road, south of Duxford (10.5 ha);
 - phase 2 and other parcels at Granta Park for research and development uses (11.9 ha); and
 - land at Cambridge Research Park, Landbeach for a mixture of business uses (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8) (15.7 ha).
- 2.32. **Economy:** Whilst the Cambridge area has withstood the effects of the recession better than some areas, the recession has had an impact on the vitality of the local economy. The district has consistently shown over 80% of the working age population as economically active, even though there are more employed residents in the district than the number of jobs (workplace population). The number of people claiming job seekers allowance doubled in 2009, from 636 claimants in 2008 to 1,508 claimants in 2009. However, there has been a gradual reduction over the last four years to 1,104 claimants in February 2013. The number of businesses closing outweighed the number of new businesses opening in 2009 and 2010, however this has now reversed.

Climate Change, Resources and the Environment

- 2.33. **Carbon dioxide emissions and air quality:** A key factor affecting climate change is carbon dioxide emissions and the aim nationally, and indeed internationally, is to reduce levels of emissions of this greenhouse gas. The rate of carbon dioxide emissions per person from domestic sources, e.g. through the use of gas and electricity, has shown a small reduction over the last seven years.
- 2.34. Air quality is an issue alongside the A14 and the Council has designated an Air Quality Management Area with the objective of improving conditions in terms of levels of nitrogen dioxide and the particulate PM₁₀. There have been gradual

improvements in air quality recorded at the Council's automatic monitoring stations alongside the A14 at Bar Hill and Orchard Park, although the reason for this improvement is unclear. It is possible that it is due to a combination of improvements in cleaner vehicle engine technologies and changing meteorological conditions. The automatic monitoring station at Impington has seen a sharp rise where the daily mean level has been exceeded. This has been traced to the level of new development, and an increase in transportation and harvesting work from agricultural sites around the monitoring site. A new automatic monitoring station at Girton Road was introduced in 2012.

- 2.35. **Household waste and recycling:** Over the last eleven years there has been a significant increase in the proportion of waste that is recycled and composted in the district. This is the result of the Council's pro-active approach to recycling through the introduction of blue and green bins, which allow the recycling and composting of a significant amount of household waste. In the last monitoring year, 56% of household waste was recycled or composted.
- 2.36. **Renewable and non-renewable resources:** The Council is committed to encouraging and enabling a reduction in the use of fossil fuels and increasing the proportion of energy used that is generated from renewable sources. In recent years, household consumption of gas and electricity in the district has fallen, while the generating potential of renewable energy sources in the district has increased. Significant completions include 30MW from 13 wind turbines at Wadlow Farm, West Wrattling and 22MW from three solar farms at Bourn, Chittering and Haslingfield. At 31 March 2013, four wind turbines, two biomass boilers and seven schemes for photovoltaic panels had planning permission but had not yet been installed.
- 2.37. In the last four monitoring years, over 80% of planning permissions granted for developments greater than 1,000 sqm or 10 dwellings, included renewable energy technologies to provide 10% renewable energy. Although the remaining planning permissions met the thresholds set out in **Development Control Policy NE/3**, individual circumstances meant that they were not required to meet the policy.
- 2.38. Average water consumption by Cambridge Water Company and Anglian Water customers has fallen in the last monitoring year. There is a general expectation that water consumption will continue to reduce as more efficient devices are installed, more properties are metered and as customer awareness increases. Anglian Water has been running a "Drop 20" campaign that encourages customers to save 20 litres per day and it has carried out many household audits and provided water saving devices. Cambridge Water Company attributes some of the variations over the last eleven monitoring years to weather conditions. In 2012-2013 wetter weather conditions in summer 2012 led to lower water consumption levels, whereas in 2010-2011 drier weather conditions in summer 2010 led to higher water consumption levels.
- 2.39. Water consumption has fallen in the district in the last monitoring year as a result of wetter weather conditions in the summer of 2012. Anglian Water has carried out many household audits and provided water saving devices where appropriate. They have also been running a "Drop 20" campaign that encourages customers to save 20

litres per day. There is a general expectation that water consumption will reduce as more efficient devices are installed, more properties are metered and as customer awareness increases.

- 2.40. **Development in locations of environmental importance:** In the last nine monitoring years no new development has been completed within, or is considered to adversely affect, nationally or internationally important nature conservation sites. In the last seven monitoring years, 19 proposals for development in the Green Belt have been completed that fall within the definition of 'inappropriate' in terms of the uses normally acceptable in the Green Belt. All these proposals were allowed for site specific reasons that were considered to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.
- 2.41. **Biodiversity:** In the last monitoring year, the boundary of the Wimpole Park County Wildlife Site (CWS) has been amended to exclude 27.8 ha of land already designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The boundaries of four other CWSs have also been amended. Lord's Bridge Observatory has been re-surveyed and subsequently reduced by 3.32 ha while the Ruddy Pit has increased by 2.61 ha after the surrounding grassland was formerly added to the CWS designation. There have also been minor increases at Barnard's Wood and Monkshole Wood. There are also small areas of our Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) that are assessed as 'unfavourable declining' or 'unfavourable no change', suggesting that their unique biodiversity characteristics are under threat. Natural England is working with landowners to improve the management and therefore condition of these areas of the district's SSSIs.
- 2.42. Good progress has been made in achieving priority targets in the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan. For example, in the last monitoring year, the Council has provided expert advice on the development and delivery of the Mill Bridge Brook improvement project in Gamlingay. A partnership project has also been initiated with the Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency and landowners to improve the Hoffer Brook. The Council has also provided funding for a wide range of community projects including Barrington Challis Wood, the restoration of Castle Camps pond, and the creation of a meadow at Shelford School.