



Statement of Common
Ground as agreed
between Cambridge
City Council and
Natural England

Cambridge Local Plan
2014 - Examination in
Public

May 2016

1. Purpose

- 1.1 During the preparation of the Cambridge Local Plan, Natural England expressed concerns about a number of issues in relation to the natural environment. The purpose of this Statement of Common Ground is to inform the Inspectors and other parties about the areas of agreement between Cambridge City Council and Natural England in relation to detailed policy wording and supporting explanatory text within the Cambridge Local Plan 2014: Proposed Submission¹ document and its Sustainability Appraisal².

2. Background

- 2.1 Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Natural England's statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.
- 2.2 Cambridge City Council and Natural England have been in correspondence to discuss Natural England's representations to the Cambridge Local Plan 2014: Proposed Submission. This Statement of Common Ground reflects the agreed position between Cambridge City Council and Natural England following discussion and exchange of correspondence.
- 2.3 During Proposed Submission consultation, Natural England made thirteen representations to both the Cambridge Local Plan 2014: Proposed Submission and its Sustainability Appraisal:
- 28305 on Policy 69: Protection of Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance;
 - 28306 on Policy 70: Protection of Priority Species and Habitats;
 - 28307 on Policy 29: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation;
 - 28308 on Strategic Objectives;
 - 28309 on Policy 67: Protection of Open Space;
 - 28310 on Policy 8: Setting of the City;
 - 28311 on Policy 4: The Cambridge Green Belt;
 - 28312 on Policy 13: Areas of Major Change and Opportunity Areas – General Principles
 - 28313 on Policy 18: West Cambridge Area of Major Change
 - 28314 on Policy 68: Open Space and Recreation Provision through New Development

¹ RD/Sub/C/010

² RD/Sub/C/030

- 28315 on Policy 85: Infrastructure Delivery, Planning Obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy
- 28316 on the Sustainability Appraisal, Part 4: What are the next steps (including monitoring)?
- 28317 on the Sustainability Appraisal, Part 3: Section 15 – Methodology.

3. Areas of Common Ground

3.1 This section of the Statement of Common Ground identifies issues raised within Natural England’s representations and addresses them in turn.

Sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance

3.2 Natural England recognised in their representations 28305, 28306 and 28307 that components of local ecological networks including Protected Open Space, City Wildlife and County Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are all mapped on the Draft Submission Policies Map³ in line with paragraph 117 of the NPPF⁴. It was also noted that Policies 69: Protection of Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance and 70: Protection of Priority Species and Habitats address the needs of City Wildlife and County Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, priority species and habitats. However, Natural England wished to see changes made to the Local Plan in respect of criteria based policies for the protection of nationally and internationally designated sites in order to reflect the NPPF which confirms that any proposal that adversely affects a European site, or causes significant harm to a SSSI, will not normally be granted permission (paragraph 118).

3.3 Furthermore, Natural England also raised objection 28308 regarding geodiversity and the need for this matter to be addressed by a criteria-based policy. The only known site of geodiversity interest within Cambridge’s administrative boundary is the Traveller’s Rest Pit SSSI at North West Cambridge. The North West Cambridge Area Action Plan (RD/AD/290) remains an adopted part of the Development Plan for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire and will continue to be so once the new Local Plans are adopted. It should be read in conjunction with Cambridge City Council’s Policies Map (RD/Sub/C/020), which shows the boundary of the Traveller’s Rest Pit SSSI.

3.4 In terms of coverage of the Traveller’s Rest Pit SSSI and its geological importance, the objectives of the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan include:

³ RD/Sub/C/020

⁴ RD/NP/010

p) To protect special geological interest, existing wildlife and wildlife corridors and secure a net increase in biodiversity.⁵

3.5 Policy NW2: Development Principles within the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan picks up the theme of geodiversity in parts 2f and 3n, which state:

2. Development proposals should, as appropriate to their nature, location, scale and economic viability:

f) Protect and enhance the geodiversity and biodiversity of the site and incorporate historic landscape and geological features;

and

3. Planning permission will not be granted where the proposed development or associated mitigation measures would have an unacceptable adverse impact:

n) On biodiversity, archaeological, historic landscape and geological interests;

3.6 Additionally, the final sentence of paragraph 2.10 of the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan confirms that:

Development proposals will need to take into account advice from Natural England that a 10m buffer around the SSSI will be required during the masterplanning and planning applications stages to ensure that the scientific value of the site is not compromised by the development of North West Cambridge.

3.7 As outline planning permission and some reserved matters applications have already been granted for development at North West Cambridge, development at North West Cambridge has been the subject of ongoing consultation with Natural England to ensure that there are no detrimental impacts on the Traveller's Rest Pit SSSI. The Council will continue to maintain regular dialogue with Natural England regarding further reserved matters applications near to the SSSI.

3.8 In order to address concerns raised in representations 28305, 28306, 28307 and 28308 regarding development affecting sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance, Cambridge City Council and Natural England have agreed a number of modifications to Policy 69 and its supporting text (see Appendix 2 of this document).

Soils and Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

3.9 Natural England also made representations 28309, 28310 and 28311 in relation to the protection and enhancement of soils and the need to retain best

⁵ Objective p), page 10 of RD/AD/290 North West Cambridge Area Action Plan.

and most versatile agricultural land (BMV land). These representations were tied to policies 67: Protection of Open Space; 8: Setting of the City; and Policy 4: The Cambridge Green Belt respectively.

- 3.10 When considering the impact of land use change on the national stock of best and most versatile land, a key question is the reversibility of the change in use and whether the land be returned to high quality agricultural use in the future, if required. ‘Hard’ development such as built development is seldom reversible whilst some ‘softer’ development such as recreation, amenity or nature conservation uses may be reversible, depending upon the amount of soil disturbance or other interventions involved beyond normal agricultural production. However, in terms of overall sustainability, it is better at the outset to plan to minimise development on high quality agricultural land rather than to rely on the possibility that it may be reversible at some point in the future. Planned avoidance of high quality agricultural land at the outset has the potential benefit of reducing the pressure for agricultural intensification on the remaining stock of agricultural land. Cambridge City Council recognises these issues and has only sought to release four small parcels of land (on the city’s urban edge from the Cambridge Green Belt through the plan-making process. This is necessary for Cambridge to meet its objectively assessed need for housing and employment.
- 3.11 Amendments to Policy 8 and its supporting text to address Natural England’s concerns are included in Appendix 1.

Public Rights of Way

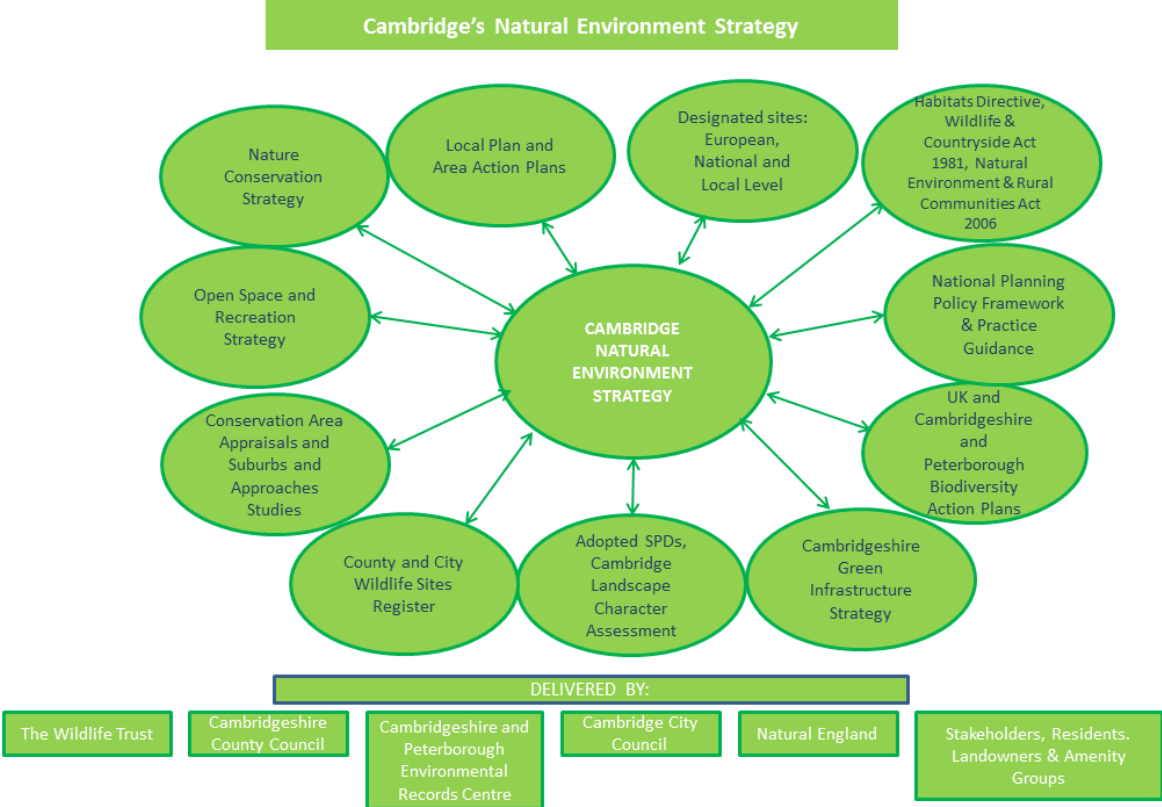
- 3.12 In representation 28312, Natural England welcomed criterion j. of Policy 13: ‘Areas of major change and opportunity areas – general principles’ that ensures that public rights of way are protected and enhanced, where possible, by development in Areas of Major Change and Opportunity Areas, in line with paragraph 75 of the NPPF. However, Natural England wished to see a more general policy to cover all development, not just in these particular areas.
- 3.13 Cambridge City Council considers that criterion b (5), Policy 80: ‘Supporting Sustainable Access to Development’ sufficiently protects public rights of way. This policy makes specific reference to the need to safeguard existing and proposed routes for walking, cycling and public transport, which includes public rights of way. Furthermore, criteria (a) and (b), Policy 56: ‘Creating successful places’ address the need for development proposals, whatever their scale, to provide a comprehensive design approach to achieve the successful integration of buildings, routes and spaces, where streets respond to their level of use and vehicular traffic does not dominate. Paragraphs 7.5 to 7.8 of the supporting text to Policy 56 highlight the importance of well-planned buildings, streets and spaces in producing safe, inclusive and accessible

places. On balance, it is considered that further reference to the protection of public rights of way is not necessary. Natural England has confirmed that this approach is acceptable.

Green Infrastructure

- 3.14 In representations 28313, 28314 and 28315, Natural England highlighted that paragraph 114 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should "... set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure." As such, whilst welcoming the inclusion of Green Infrastructure in Policy 8: 'Setting the City', in the overall Spatial Strategy, in Policy 18: 'West Cambridge Area of Major Change' and Policy 85: 'Infrastructure delivery, planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy,' Natural England wished to see the inclusion of an overarching Green Infrastructure policy in the plan.
- 3.15 The Council considers that it has an overall vision for the delivery of its natural environment strategy, including green infrastructure. Given the multiplicity of sites which make up Cambridge's natural environment and the strategic objectives of this local plan, the strategy for its management and enhancement is, in itself, one of a multi-document, multi-layered approach. This approach includes a number of interrelated initiatives, policies and players. Together, as illustrated in the diagram overleaf (Figure 1: Cambridge's Natural Environment Strategy), they represent Cambridge's natural environment strategy to deliver new green infrastructure and enhance existing blue and green infrastructure and deliver biodiversity enhancements, the components of which will be added to and updated as necessary and provide the necessary tools to realise the ongoing management of the city's natural environment.

Figure 1: Cambridge's Natural Environment Strategy



- 3.16 Figure 1 sets out the different strands of the Council's strategy, which is made up of a suite of documents, including the Local Plan. The Council has suggested the inclusion of further reference to the Council's strategic approach to plan positively to address green infrastructure and biodiversity.
- 3.17 Within the Local Plan, green infrastructure and biodiversity are addressed by a number of the Plan's strategic objectives (pages 12 and 13), policies 7, 8, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 26, 54, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, and 85 and Appendices I and J. Policy 8, as amended at Appendix 1 of this Statement of Common Ground, makes reference to the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, and supports proposals for green infrastructure.
- 3.18 In terms of areas of current deficit in relation to green infrastructure, the Council has sought to address this matter through the Open Space and Recreation Strategy 2011, which assessed around 400 sites across the city for their environmental and recreational importance. These sites are recognised to form an essential network of open spaces of different types and with differing levels of biodiversity. Together with blue infrastructure in the form of the River Cam corridor (addressed by Policy 7 in the Local Plan), these green spaces form the city's ecological network. The assessment of sites is both quantitative and qualitative. The Open Space and Recreation Strategy 2011 sought to identify areas for improvement, both recreational and environmental.

This strategy will be updated again in 2017 and involves planners, landscape architects and ecologists in the assessment process. As sites come forward for development, the need for open space is taken into consideration and the Open Space and Recreation Strategy is used. Once open spaces are brought forward, they are also assessed for protection by the next review of the Open Space and Recreation Strategy.

- 3.19 In terms of green infrastructure projects, the Council has taken and will continue to take opportunities to deliver green infrastructure. Many of our sites in the urban area are small and difficult to develop. Where possible, the Council seeks biodiversity improvements on site and also takes monies via S106 to enhance nearby open spaces. In the case of the urban extensions, many of them have planning permission and have already been subject to considerable development. A significant amount of the Council's landscape architecture and ecology resource has been invested in making sure that biodiversity and green infrastructure is significantly enhanced in the urban extensions. As a result, most of the sites noted as current projects in Cambridge in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy are well underway.
- 3.20 Future green infrastructure projects are referred to in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy. For Cambridge, one of these projects is over the administrative boundary in South Cambridgeshire (NIAB2 or Darwin Green 2), but links with Cambridge's NIAB1 (also known as Darwin Green 1). The Council is working with South Cambridgeshire District Council to deliver green infrastructure across the two sites. The two other future projects lie within areas covered by the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan (RD/AD/290) and the Cambridge East Area Action Plan (RD/AD/280). Development on North West Cambridge is underway and will provide extensive green infrastructure. Cambridge East is safeguarded for future development as Marshall has confirmed that they will not be moving within this plan period. However, the policies covering this area are in the Cambridge East Area Action Plan and do address the need for green infrastructure. The land North of Cherry Hinton and land North of Newmarket Road is likely to come forward for development prior to the rest of Cambridge East. These sites will be required to provide green infrastructure in compliance with policy requirements and will need to link in with any wider development of the area when it takes place.
- 3.21 It has been agreed that the inclusion of a further specific green infrastructure policy is not necessary in the light of proposed modifications to Policy 8.
- 3.22 Amendments to Policy 8: Setting of the city are proposed in Appendix 1 to address Natural England's concerns, given that the urban edge of Cambridge is the area with the most significant scope to deliver new green infrastructure

provision. In tandem with these changes, the Council's policies 67 and 68 on protection and provision of open space respectively address the provision, conservation and enhancement of different forms of interlinked green infrastructure. It is noted that Cambridge City Council has an established mechanism for protecting open space (Policy 67: Protection of Open Space). This approach safeguards over 700 hectares of open space within Cambridge's administrative area. In keeping with the aims of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Council's assessment criteria includes detailed assessment criteria on recreational and environmental importance, including whether the open space is part of a network of open spaces. Sites are assessed as part of the evidence base for plan-making and new sites are included in each assessment round, e.g. new open spaces in Cambridge's urban extensions.

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 3.23 In representation 28316 to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (Part 4: What Are The Next Steps (Including Monitoring?)), Natural England asserted that the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Local Plan must be kept up-to-date. The Local Plan has been subject to an HRA Screening Report⁶. This assessment concluded that there was no likelihood of significant effects on the identified Natura 2000 sites as a consequence of the policies and allocations contained within the plan. These conclusions were supported by Natural England, the statutory consultation body for HRA, in a letter to Cambridge City Council dated 18 July 2013.⁷ When preparing minor modifications as set out in the Schedule of Proposed Changes following Proposed Submission Consultation⁸, Cambridge City Council considered the need to make changes to both the SA and the HRA. It was concluded that none of the proposed minor modifications impacted on the findings of the SA or HRA. In a letter dated 23 February 2016, Natural England also provided confirmation that they were satisfied with the Councils' conclusions that the proposed modifications do not amend the findings of the HRA screening reports and that the Submission Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans including the Proposed Modifications are unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites. A copy of this letter is included at appendix 11 of RD/MC/021.
- 3.24 Any further major or minor modifications will be considered with regard to SA and HRA and commensurate changes will be made, as necessary. Cambridge City Council will consult Natural England in the event that there are any changes in respect of HRA.

⁶ Cambridge City Council Habitats Regulations Assessment Parts 1 and 2 (RD/Sub/C/130).

⁷ For letter, see Appendix 8 of the Council's Statement of Consultation (RD/Sub/C/080).

⁸ RD/Sub/C/050

- 3.25 In representation 28317 to the SA (Part 3, Section 15 – Methodology), Natural England stated that they were broadly satisfied with the appraisal and recommendations. However, they would like to see more details of the SA framework used in order to be satisfied that the appraisal satisfies the requirements of the SEA directive. This should include greater clarity on the sustainability objectives and indicators as well as details of the policy context and baseline data that have informed the appraisal. Natural England would expect to see the full SA provided with the submission version of the Plan to provide a clear audit of how the Plan has been appraised in relation to the SA objectives, how alternatives have been assessed and how the Plan will be monitored.
- 3.26 Natural England were consulted on the development of the Cambridge SA Framework as part of consultation on the Scoping Report. Cambridge's Scoping Report was amended in response to the responses received by Natural England (see Table 3.6, page 139 of the Final SA⁹). As part of the supporting documents for the submission of the Local Plan, the Final SA (RD/Sub/C/030) was produced, bringing together information from the SA documents that were produced at the various stages in developing the Local Plan. Cambridge City Council and Natural England agree that the Final SA provides a clear audit of how the Plan has been appraised in relation to the SA objectives, how alternatives have been assessed and how the Plan will be monitored. Cambridge City Council will consult Natural England on major and minor modifications and any commensurate changes relating to the SA.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Cambridge City Council and Natural England agree that matters of concern originally raised in representations have been and continue to be addressed. Therefore, on the basis of this statement and the modifications proposed by the Council, Natural England conditionally withdraws the following representations:
- 28305 on Policy 69: Protection of Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance;
 - 28306 on Policy 70: Protection of Priority Species and Habitats;
 - 28307 on Policy 29: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation;
 - 28308 on Strategic Objectives;
 - 28309 on Policy 67: Protection of Open Space;
 - 28310 on Policy 8: Setting of the City;
 - 28311 on Policy 4: The Cambridge Green Belt;

⁹ Cambridge City Council Sustainability Appraisal of the Cambridge Local Plan 2014. Volume 1: Final Appraisal for the Submission to the Secretary of State (RD/Sub/C/030)

- 28312 on Policy 13: Areas of Major Change and Opportunity Areas – General Principles
- 28313 on Policy 18: West Cambridge Area of Major Change
- 28314 on Policy 68: Open Space and Recreation Provision through New Development
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AGREEMENT

Signed by:

Sara Saunders

Sara Saunders on behalf of Cambridge City Council

Dated: 3 May 2016



Janet Nuttall on behalf of Natural England

Dated: 3 May 2016

Appendix 1: Proposed Amendments to Policy 8: Setting of the City and its supporting text

Policy Text:

Development on the urban edge, including sites within and abutting green infrastructure corridors and the Cambridge Green Belt, open spaces and the River Cam corridor, will only be supported where it:

- a. responds to, conserves and enhances the landscape setting, approaches and special character of the city, in accordance with the Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment 2003, Green Belt assessments¹⁰, Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy and their successor documents;
- b. promotes access to the surrounding countryside/open space, where appropriate; and
- c. safeguards the best and most versatile agricultural land unless sustainable development considerations and the need for development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of land; and
- e.—d. includes landscape improvement proposals that strengthen or re-create the well-defined and vegetated urban edge, improve visual amenity and enhance biodiversity.

Proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity, particularly proposals for landscape-scale enhancement across local authority boundaries, will also be supported. The Council will support proposals which deliver the strategic green infrastructure network and priorities set out in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Supporting Text:

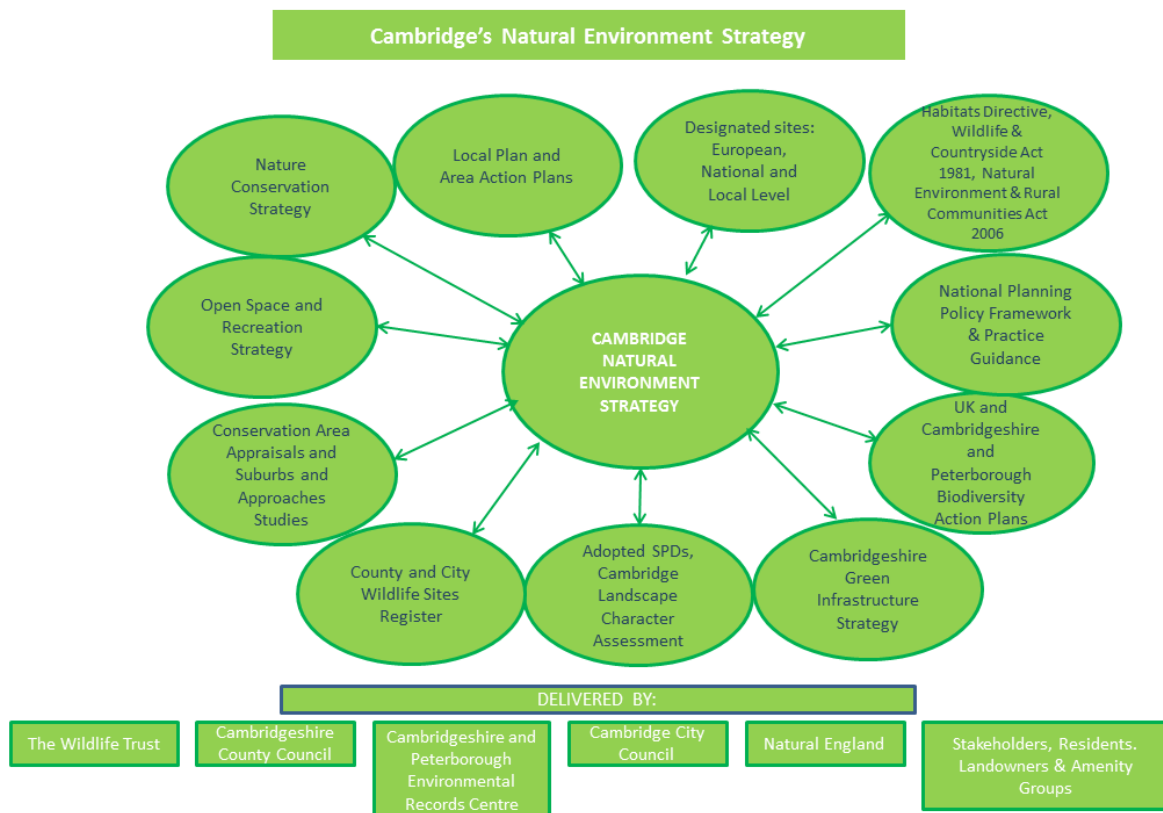
2.73 Cambridge has a distinct and unique character and landscape setting and is surrounded by attractive green space, much of which is accessible. Cambridge is characterised by its compact nature, well-defined and vegetated edges, open spaces, and the green corridors that extend into the city centre from the countryside. These green corridors are protected as part of the Cambridge Green Belt or as Protected Open Space. A number of studies have considered the setting of the city and features that are considered to be critical to this setting. These studies have all highlighted that the interface between the urban edge and the countryside is one of the important and valued

¹⁰ Cambridge City Council (2002): Inner Green Belt Boundary Study; LDA (2002): Cambridge Green Belt Study; Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan— Report of the Panel (February 2003); Cambridge Local Plan Inspector's Report (2006); Cambridge City Council (May 2012): Inner Green Belt Appraisal; Cambridge City Council (December 2012), Inner Green Belt Boundary Study; LDA Design Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (November 2015) and Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (November 2015) Supplement – March 2016.

landscape features of the city, contributing to the quality of life and place enjoyed here.

2.73a Given the multiplicity of sites which make up Cambridge’s natural environment and the strategic objectives of this Local Plan, the strategy for its management and enhancement is, in itself, one of a multi-document, multi-layered approach. This approach includes a number of interrelated initiatives, policies and players. Together, as illustrated in Figure 2.2, they represent Cambridge’s natural environment strategy to deliver new green infrastructure and enhance existing blue and green infrastructure and deliver biodiversity enhancements, the components of which will be added to and updated as necessary and provide the necessary tools to realise the ongoing management of the city’s natural environment.

New Figure 2.2: Cambridge’s Natural Environment Strategy



2.74 To date, Cambridge has retained its historic clear distinction between the city and the rural area that provides its setting. Development on the urban edge of the city, adjacent to the Green Belt, has the potential to have a negative effect on the setting of the city. As such, any development on the edge of the city must conserve and enhance the city’s setting.

2.74a The long term capability of the best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected and areas of lower quality agricultural land should be used for development in preference to the best and most versatile agricultural land, where possible. Retaining the best and most versatile agricultural land enhances future options for sustainable food production and helps secure other important ecosystem services. Development has an irreversible adverse impact on the finite national and local stock of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Avoiding loss of this land is the priority as mitigation is rarely possible. Masterplanning should seek to target development in areas of poorer quality land, where possible, and developers should consider impacts on soil resources during construction and operation, adhering to Defra's Code of Practice to protect soil resources and its successor documents.

2.75 The NPPF also sets out the need for local planning authorities to plan for biodiversity and green infrastructure at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries. Green infrastructure enhancement refers to large-scale projects, the principal aim of which is to link together existing habitats by improving the ecological quality of the wider rural and urban landscape.

Appendix 2: Proposed Amendments to Policy 69: Protection of Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance and its supporting text

Policy Text:

Policy 69: Protection of sites of ~~local nature conservation~~ biodiversity and geodiversity importance

In determining any planning application affecting a site of biodiversity or geodiversity importance, development will be permitted if it will not have an adverse impact on, or lead to the loss of, part or all of a site a local nature reserve (LNR), a county wildlife site (CWS), or a city wildlife site (CWS) identified on the policies map. Regard must be had to the international, national or local status and designation of the site and the nature and quality of the site's intrinsic features, including its rarity.

Where development is permitted, proposals must include measures:

- a. to minimise harm;
- b. to secure achievable mitigation and/or compensatory measures; and
- c. where possible enhance the nature conservation value of the site affected through habitat creation, linkage and management.

In exceptional circumstances, where the importance of the development outweighs the need to retain the site, adequate replacement habitat must be provided.

Any replacement habitat must be provided before development commences on any proposed area of habitat to be lost.

Supporting Text:

7.56a In order to minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, paragraph 117 of the NPPF states that planning policies should identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation; and aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests.

7.56b Starting at the top of the hierarchy of sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance, Cambridge does not currently have any sites of European importance for habitats and species. However, in line with paragraph 118 of the NPPF, any potential Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas or Special Areas of Conservation would need to be given the same protection as European sites and permission would not normally be granted where there would be an adverse effect on these sites. Plans or projects which may have a likely significant effect on a European site will require appropriate

assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).

- 7.57 Within Cambridge, there are a number of nationally and locally recognised nature conservation sites, which form an important element of the character and setting of the city. These sites include two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which are designated for their national biodiversity or geodiversity value. SSSIs are statutorily protected by their designation under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Natural England will be consulted on any planning application in or adjacent to a SSSI. The Council will not normally grant permission for any proposal which causes significant harm to a SSSI.
- 7.58 The Council has declared 12 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) on land that it owns and manages, including a number of the city's commons. LNRs are statutorily designated by local authorities under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) and City Wildlife Sites (CiWSs) also include a number of the city's commons. They do not have statutory protection. They have been selected as sites of substantive nature conservation interest, against published criteria, as a result of surveys undertaken initially by the local Wildlife Trust for the Council and maintained by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC). Other undesignated green spaces also make up the ecological network of sites across the city and would be subject to this policy, if they identified as meeting the criteria for city or county wildlife site status.
- 7.59 The policy will ensure that development would only be supported where it can be adequately demonstrated that proposals will not have an adverse effect on biodiversity; and that, where required, suitable mitigation measures are acceptable and deliverable. In addition, the potential for the enhancement of the site and adjacent habitats should also be explored. Proposals on or adjacent to a site of local conservation importance should not be ~~refused~~ granted without proper consideration of the potential to enhance the designated site's biodiversity through enhanced management, habitat creation or the formation of new linkages with adjacent habitat areas.
- 7.60 Development on locally protected sites that would have a significant adverse impact should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, and only if it is possible to compensate for the damage caused. Planning proposals for locally designated nature conservation sites must conserve and/or enhance biodiversity. Where development is proposed within, adjoining or which will otherwise affect a locally-designated nature conservation site, comprehensive surveys of the historic and existing biodiversity importance, a professional ecological assessment of the impact of the proposed development and details

of measures to protect and enhance the habitat or species identified will be required.

- 7.61 Where full protection cannot be satisfactorily achieved, it is for the developer to demonstrate that there is potential to achieve biodiversity of equal worth through appropriate habitat management, enhancement and creation, and relocating flora and/or fauna. The developer must show where, and specify how, this can be achieved and provide proven case studies and a management plan to demonstrate long-term success.
- 7.62 Emphasis should be placed on local habitat action plans (LHAPs) and local species action plans (LSAPs). Where development is permitted, planning obligations or conditions will be required to ensure damage to the nature conservation value of the site or feature is kept to a minimum and agreed mitigation and compensatory measures are implemented.