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**CAMBRIDGE GREEN BELT STUDY  
A Vision of the Future for Cambridge  
in its Green Belt Setting**

**FINAL REPORT**

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Cover: The background illustration is from the Cambridgeshire Collection, Cambridge City Library. The top illustration is the prospect of Cambridge from the east and the bottom illustration is the prospect from the west in 1688.

## SUMMARY

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### Appointment and Brief

South Cambridgeshire District Council appointed Landscape Design Associates to undertake this study to assess the contribution that the eastern sector of the Green Belt makes to the overall purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt.

The brief was shaped by RPG6, which requires that “*A review of the Cambridge Green Belt should be carried out and any proposals for changes to its boundaries included in development plans. The review should start from a **vision of the city and of the qualities to be safeguarded.***” (DETR and Government Office for the East of England 2000, Policy 24).

The brief requires the study to focus on the fourth purpose of including land in Green Belts as set out in PPG2 which is “*To preserve **the setting and special character of historic towns.***” (DETR 1995, Para 1.5). This purpose is of particular relevance to the historic city of Cambridge.

This study, therefore, describes and illustrates the factors that contribute to **the setting and special character of Cambridge**. It then focuses on **the qualities to be safeguarded** to preserve this setting and special character, before setting out a **vision of the city**. The vision is a strategy for safeguarding and enhancing the setting and special character of Cambridge while recognising that there is likely to be a need for some urban expansion, through Green Belt releases, in order to contribute to the development targets of RPG6.

A detailed assessment, following the same steps set out in the paragraph above, is made of the east side of Cambridge to identify whether there is scope for urban expansion, through Green Belt releases, without harming Green Belt purposes.

The requirement for this study has arisen because Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have submitted differing views on the extent of development that should be allowed on the east side of the city. Cambridge City Council consider that substantial development should take place on the land currently occupied by Cambridge Airport, but also east of Airport Way around the villages of Teversham and Fulbourn. South Cambridgeshire District Council have accepted the principle of development on the Airport site, but consider that development east of Airport Way would be harmful to the setting and special character of Cambridge. The County Council’s deposit draft Structure Plan (Cambridgeshire County Council 2002) proposes that the Airport should be substantially developed before 2016 and that land east of Cambridge Airport should be considered for development after 2016, provided that a joint study shows that it can be developed whilst maintaining the fundamental purposes of the Green Belt.

### The Special Character of Cambridge

The origins of the Green Belt around Cambridge go back to the Plan for Cambridge produced by Professor Sir William Holford and H. Miles Wright in the aftermath of the Second World War (Holford W and Miles Wright H 1950). They set out their vision of the city and described Cambridge as “*one of the most pleasant places on earth in which to live... The Cambridge tradition is cherished by the present*

*inhabitants, not merely as something to be preserved but to be continued. Planners who suggest improvements must therefore be certain either that change is inevitable or that clear advantage is to be gained from it.”*

Despite considerable change in the last 52 years, some of which has been damaging to the setting and special character of the city, Cambridge remains one of England’s finest historic cities and retains many of the qualities identified by Holford and Miles Wright. However, these remaining qualities are fragile. Vitally, they are also irreplaceable. It is important, therefore, that whilst embracing the challenges posed by pressure for change and development, the need to safeguard the special qualities of Cambridge is given very high weight when facing the planning challenges of the future.

### **Development Pressures and the Planning Context**

The Cambridge area faces a considerable challenge to accommodate new development, largely as a result of a booming economy based on the high-technology sector. The Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia RPG6 (DETR and Government Office for the East of England 2000) requires the Cambridge Sub-Region to plan for an additional 22,000 homes above existing commitments by 2016. A review of the Cambridge Green Belt to allow the urban expansion of the city is the second in a sequential procedure of search set out in RPG6.

The economic success of Cambridge, combined with the restrictions on population growth, has led to an imbalance between jobs and housing, with large numbers of the employed population having to travel long distances from home to work, promoting unsustainable travel patterns and placing increased pressure on the city’s transport infrastructure, which is inadequate to cope with the demands now being placed on it. This has led to the approach set out in RPG6, requiring the development of a vision and planning framework for the Cambridge sub-region which provides a more sustainable balance between the rates of growth in jobs and housing, to allow the sub-region to accommodate a higher proportion of the region’s housing development, while at the same time protecting and enhancing the historic character and setting of Cambridge and its important environmental qualities.

PPG2 states that “*once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances.*” The circumstances affecting Cambridge are exceptional and the need for a review of the Green Belt, as required in RPG6, is generally accepted. This study has been commissioned by South Cambridgeshire District Council to provide an input into this review of the Green Belt and inform the Structure Plan process.

### **Main Conclusions**

#### *The Special Qualities of the Green Belt in 2002*

A number of qualities that contribute positively to the setting and special character of Cambridge, and which are essential to Green Belt purposes, have been identified. These are summarised as:

- A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole
- A city focussed on the historic core

- Short and/or characteristic approaches to Cambridge from the edge of the city
- A city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle
- Key views of Cambridge from the landscape
- Significant areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape
- Topography providing a framework to Cambridge
- A soft green edge to the city
- Green fingers into the city
- Designated sites and areas enriching the setting of Cambridge
- Long distance footpaths and bridleways providing links between Cambridge and the open countryside
- Elements and features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting
- The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of necklace villages
- A city set in a landscape which retains a strong rural character.

These qualities are finite and irreplaceable, and should be safeguarded.

### *The Vision of the Future for Cambridge*

This report gives a strategic vision for the whole of Cambridge and its Green Belt, and a more detailed vision for East Cambridge. These visions are strategies and initiatives to safeguard and enhance the setting and special character of Cambridge, while recognising that there is a need for some urban expansion, through Green Belt releases, in order to contribute to the development targets of RPG6. The visions for the whole of Cambridge and its Green Belt and for East Cambridge safeguard the key qualities of the setting and special character of Cambridge as primary objectives.

### *Potential for Green Belt Releases*

This study, which analyses Cambridge at a broad scale, is not intended to be used to support or argue against development on any specific sites, except in the area of more detailed study in East Cambridge. Thus, there may be individual peripheral development opportunities within an area identified as inappropriate for development at a strategic level; this is unlikely to apply, however, to 'strategic' scale peripheral developments. This study is intended to assist the local planning authorities to find land that can be released from the Cambridge Green Belt and enable the urban area of the city to make as great a contribution to the development needs of the Cambridge sub-region as possible, whilst ensuring that the setting and special character of Cambridge remains intact for future generations.

Policy P9/3c of the draft of the Structure Plan (Cambridgeshire County Council 2002) suggests a number of locations that Local Plans should consider for development. Our broad scale study of the whole Green Belt indicates that there might be some potential to develop parts of five of the areas suggested in the draft Structure Plan (north of Newmarket Road, North of Cherry Hinton, Cambridge Airport, at Clay Farm and areas east and south of Trumpington, and between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road), without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes. Our broad scale assessment has not identified opportunities for

large scale development in the two other areas suggested in the draft Structure Plan (south of Addenbrooke's Hospital or between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road). More detailed assessment might, however, identify some sites in these areas, or in other parts of the Green Belt, that could be developed without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes.

The detailed assessment of East Cambridge has confirmed that there is potential to develop land west of Airport Way and north of Newmarket Road. This also presents opportunities to enhance the setting and special character of Cambridge as part of the vision for East Cambridge. Delivery of much of the vision is, therefore, likely to be in the hands of landowners and the development industry, as well as the planning authorities through their development plans and statutory powers

The detailed assessment has also identified that land east of Cambridge Airport cannot be developed without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes. Large scale development east of Airport Way around Teversham, Fulbourn and east of Cherry Hinton, would have adverse effects on the setting and special character of Cambridge, and should be resisted.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Appointment and Brief

South Cambridgeshire District Council appointed Landscape Design Associates (LDA) to undertake this study to assess the contribution that the eastern sector of the Green Belt makes to the overall purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt.

The brief was shaped by RPG6, which requires that “*A review of the Cambridge Green Belt should be carried out and any proposals for changes to its boundaries included in development plans. The review should start from a **vision of the city and of the qualities to be safeguarded.***” (DETR and Government Office for the East of England 2000, Policy 24).

The brief requires the study to focus on the fourth purpose of including land in Green Belts as set out in PPG2 which is “*To preserve **the setting and special character of historic towns.***” (DETR 1995, Para 1.5). This purpose is of particular relevance to the historic city of Cambridge.

This study, therefore, describes and illustrates the factors that contribute to **the setting and special character of Cambridge**. It then focuses on **the qualities to be safeguarded** to preserve this setting and special character, before setting out a **vision of the city**. The vision is a strategy for safeguarding and enhancing the setting and special character of Cambridge while recognising that there is likely to be a need for some urban expansion, through Green Belt releases, in order to contribute to the development targets of RPG6.

A detailed assessment, following the same steps set out in the paragraph above, is made of the east side of Cambridge to identify whether there is scope for urban expansion, through Green Belt releases, without harming Green Belt purposes.

The requirement for this study has arisen because Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have submitted differing views on the extent of development that should be allowed on the east side of the city. Cambridge City Council consider that substantial development should take place on the land currently occupied by Cambridge Airport, but also east of Airport Way around the villages of Teversham and Fulbourn. South Cambridgeshire District Council have accepted the principal of development on the Airport site, but consider that development east of Airport Way would be harmful to the setting and special character of Cambridge. The County Council’s deposit draft Structure Plan (Cambridgeshire County Council 2002) proposes that the Airport should be substantially developed before 2016 and that land east of Cambridge Airport should be considered for development after 2016, provided that a joint study shows that it can be developed whilst maintaining the fundamental purposes of the Green Belt.

This study of Cambridge and its setting is a strategic one, covering broad tracts of land but, nevertheless, considering some aspects in a fairly high level of detail. Being strategic, however, it is not concerned with a field-by-field analysis or with identifying, precisely, any recommended changes to the Cambridge Green Belt boundary, except for the inner Green Belt boundary in East Cambridge, as required by the brief. The study may have implications on the broad scope for development

around the periphery of Cambridge, and might be used, in a strategic way, to influence the degree to which Green Belt releases may be used to meet the scale of development identified in RPG6. However, it is not intended that this study should be used to support or argue against housing development on any specific sites, except in the area of more detailed study in East Cambridge.

### 1.2 The Special Character of Cambridge

The origins of the Green Belt around Cambridge go back to the Plan for Cambridge produced by Professor Sir William Holford and H. Miles Wright in the aftermath of the Second World War (Holford W and Miles Wright H 1950). They set out their vision of the city and described Cambridge as *“one of the most pleasant places on earth in which to live... The Cambridge tradition is cherished by the present inhabitants, not merely as something to be preserved but to be continued. Planners who suggest improvements must therefore be certain either that change is inevitable or that clear advantage is to be gained from it.”*

Despite considerable change in the last 52 years, some of which has been damaging to the setting and special character of the city, Cambridge remains one of England's finest historic cities and retains many of the qualities identified by Holford and Miles Wright. However, these remaining qualities are fragile. Vitally, they are also irreplaceable. It is important, therefore, that whilst embracing the challenges posed by pressure for change and development, the need to safeguard the special qualities of Cambridge is given very high weight when facing the planning challenges of the future.

### 1.3 Development Pressures and the Planning Context

The Cambridge area faces a considerable challenge to accommodate new development, largely as a result of a booming economy based on the high-technology sector. The Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia RPG6 (DETR and Government Office for the East of England 2000) requires the Cambridge Sub-Region to plan for an additional 22,000 homes above existing commitments by 2016. A review of the Cambridge Green Belt to allow the urban expansion of the city is the second in a sequential procedure of search set out in RPG6.

The economic success of Cambridge, combined with the restrictions on population growth, has led to an imbalance between jobs and housing, with large numbers of the employed population having to travel long distances from home to work, promoting unsustainable travel patterns and placing increased pressure on the city's transport infrastructure, which is inadequate to cope with the demands now being placed on it. This has led to the approach set out in RPG6, requiring the development of a vision and planning framework for the Cambridge sub-region which provides a more sustainable balance between the rates of growth in jobs and housing, to allow the sub-region to accommodate a higher proportion of the region's housing development, while at the same time protecting and enhancing the historic character and setting of Cambridge and its important environmental qualities.

PPG2 states that *“once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances.”* The circumstances affecting Cambridge are exceptional and the need for a review of the Green Belt, as required in RPG6, is generally accepted. This study has been commissioned by



South Cambridgeshire District Council to provide an input into this review of the Green Belt and inform the Structure Plan process.

#### 1.4 **Report Structure**

**Section 2** sets out the planning context that has led to the current planning framework within the Green Belt.

**Section 3** describes the methodology used in carrying out this study of Cambridge and its Green Belt.

**Section 4** of the report describes the results of the baseline studies, setting out facts and survey results about the townscape and landscape setting of Cambridge.

**Section 5** analyses the qualities that contribute to the setting and special character of Cambridge.

**Section 6** draws out the qualities of the setting and special character of Cambridge to be safeguarded and puts forward a vision of the city, based on these analyses and on a creative and positive view of Cambridge in the future.

**Section 7** focuses on appraisals of East Cambridge and on more detailed recommendations for the inner Green Belt boundary in the vicinity of the airport.

**Section 8** provides draws together the main conclusions.

## 2.0 CAMBRIDGE GREEN BELT: PLANNING CONTEXT

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### 2.1 The Origins of Green Belt Policy

The origins of Green Belts can be traced back to the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, but are more usually associated with Ebenezer Howard and the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The first official proposal “*to provide a reserve supply of public open spaces and of recreational areas and to establish a Green Belt or girdle of open space*” was made by the London County Council in 1935. However, the lack of planning controls at the time meant that land had to be purchased to ensure its protection.

At that time interpretation of the Green Belt concept differed throughout the country. The objectives of Sir Patrick Abercrombie’s Greater London Plan in 1944 were concerned with “*restriction of urban growth, the definition of an outer limit or boundary to restrictions and the provision of recreation as a primary land use*”. The Green Belt around London was to prove a blueprint for Green Belt policy adopted by other conurbations in the early post-war period.

At about this time, the leading planners of the day were also proposing the adoption of Green Belts as a means of protecting the special character of historic cities. Thus, Sir Patrick Abercrombie proposed a Green Belt for Edinburgh in his Civic Survey and Plan published in 1949. The landscape context of each historic city is different, but in the case of Edinburgh the purpose of the original Green Belt was to help protect the “*spectacular open spaces of world-wide renown*”, and important views of them, which help to give Edinburgh its unique character. At about the same time, proposals for a Green Belt around Cambridge were being put forward by Holford and Miles Wright, as discussed below. These early post-war plans were influential in shaping the formulation of national Green Belt policy, as discussed briefly below in section 2.3.

### 2.2 The Vision of the Original Cambridge Green Belt

The Green Belt around Cambridge has been an enduring feature of planning policy since the War. It has successfully achieved its main objectives of shaping settlement policy and maintaining the unique character of Cambridge.

Its origins go back to the Plan for Cambridge produced by Professor Sir William Holford and H. Myles Wright in the aftermath of the Second World War (Holford W and Miles Wright H 1950).

Holford and Miles Wright’s introduction describes their feelings for Cambridge as a special place:

*"Cambridge is one of the most pleasant places on earth in which to live... The Cambridge tradition is cherished by the present inhabitants, not merely as something to be preserved but to be continued. Planners who suggest improvements must therefore be certain either that change is inevitable or that clear advantage is to be gained from it."*

Fifty years after Holford and Miles Wright’s Plan was prepared, we can now say

that change is inevitable. However, any change should not compromise the objectives of the Green Belt (PPG3, para 68) (see discussion of PPG2 and PPG3 in section 2.6 below).

Holford and Miles Wright recommended that the city:

*"should be kept at a level that will retain the general advantages of a medium sized town and the special advantages of Cambridge, and future development should be compact rather than sprawling." (Para 426 Holford and Miles Wright Report 1950).*

Holford and Miles Wright drew the conclusion that Cambridge should have an ultimate population ceiling of 100,000, if the *"present character and fine qualities of Cambridge"* were to be retained (Para 281) and came to the view that *"it is impossible to make a good expanding plan for Cambridge"* (Para 272), while large scale growth was seen as hindering the work of the University (Para 279).

Most importantly, Holford and Miles Wright set out the qualities which he considered most people would wish to retain and which he considered would be *"diminished or lost"* with large growth:

- *"Full employment*
- *Good houses*
- *The university*
- *The central open spaces*
- *The countryside near the town*
- *Plenty of gardens and allotments*
- *Short distances between homes and work*
- *Short distances between homes and the central shops*
- *Good services, education, medical, shopping, entertainment*
- *Maintenance of Cambridge as a good centre for country residents and visitors*
- *Its distinctive market town character" (Para 275).*

Holford and Miles Wright suggested a *"green line"* beyond which building should not be permitted in order to prevent coalescence with Girton, Cherry Hinton and Grantchester which should be *"permanently safeguarded"*. He added that the boundary would also maintain *"green wedges along the river, keep the open countryside near the centre of the town on its west side, and exclude development from the foothills of the Gogs."* (Para 299). Similarly it was recognised that villages near the city boundary would require *"Green Belts"* between them and the town (Para 304). This concept is shown in Figure 1, reproduced from Holford and Miles Wright's report.



**Figure 1 Holford and Miles Wright's Plan of Urban Cambridge: Built-up area, open spaces and green wedges**

Thus was born the concept of a city with a special character which had an optimum size, and whose qualities and setting should be protected by a Green Belt.

At the same time it was not envisaged that Cambridge should be prevented from having some growth. The ceiling proposed by Holford and Miles Wright allowed for the continued development of housing up to that point, and it was clearly indicated that there should be growth in what became known as the necklace villages.

### 2.3 The Post-War Development of Government Green Belt Policy

The publication of Circular 42/55 marked the first attempt by Government to promote a consistent approach to Green Belt policy throughout England.

Circular 42/55 proposed three main purposes for the establishment of Green Belts:

1. to check the unrestricted sprawl of urban areas
2. to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another
3. to preserve the special character of towns

It is the third of these purposes that is most important in the Cambridge context.

This policy on Green Belts was maintained in successive circulars until they were superseded by PPG2 (discussed in section 2.6 below). This refined and strengthened the policy. Thus, support for Green Belts has been a consistent feature of Government planning policy since 1955.

#### **2.4 The Development of Plans for Cambridge and its Green Belt Since the 1950s**

The first County Development Plan was approved by the Minister in 1954. In the Cambridge area, this was closely based on Holford and Miles Wright's plan, in particular in adopting the proposal to restrain population growth of the city to 100,000 and disperse new population into the surrounding villages.

The boundary of the Green Belt was defined for the first time in the reviewed Town Map No.1 (for Cambridge City)(Amendment No. 2), which was approved by the Minister in 1965. This defined the inner boundary of the Green Belt around the city. The boundaries around the necklace villages was defined in the parallel 1965 review of Town Map No. 2. This was never formally approved by the Minister, but he advised that its provisions should be treated as a material consideration and that planning applications should be determined as if the Green Belt were formally approved.

The Written Statement for the Town Map of Cambridge added by Amendment No. 2 (1965) states that the special character of Cambridge would be prejudiced by further development outside the areas permitted by the Town Map and hence the Green Belt had been defined to protect the rural character of the surrounding area.

The evolution of the early County Map and Town Maps into Structure Plans and Local Plans is discussed below in section 2.9. For completeness, it is worth mentioning in this section a review of planning policy and proposals for the Cambridge Sub-Region carried out by Professor Parry-Lewis in 1971. This was concerned with the impact of development pressures on the historic centre. This study looked at a number of ways of accommodating growth including village dispersal and expanded city options. His preferred solution (Expanded City South) was rejected as being unfeasible and undesirable by the County Council and District Councils.

#### **2.5 The Relevance of Green Belts to Current Planning Policy**

Current planning policy is dominated by the promotion of sustainable development. The 3rd Revision of PPG 1 *General Policy and Principles* (DETR 1997) puts the promotion of sustainable development at the heart of the Government's approach to planning. The first sentence of the first paragraph of PPG 1 states:

*" A key role of the planning system is to enable the provision of homes and*

*buildings, investment and jobs in a way which is consistent with the principles of sustainable development."*

Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy (1994) defines four key roles of the planning system in promoting sustainable development:

- To provide for the nation's needs for commercial and industrial development, food production, minerals extraction, new homes and other buildings, while respecting environmental objectives.
- To use already developed areas in the most efficient way, while making them more attractive places in which to live and work.
- To conserve both the cultural heritage and natural resources (including wildlife, landscape, water, soil and air quality) taking particular care to safeguard designations of national and international importance.
- To shape new development patterns in a way, which minimises the need to travel.

PPG 1 identifies urban regeneration and re-use of previously developed land as important supporting objectives for creating a more sustainable pattern of development. In this context, the Government is committed to:

- concentrating development for uses which generate a large number of trips in places well served by public transport, especially in town centres, rather than in out of centre locations; and
- preferring the development of land within urban areas, particularly on previously developed sites, provided that this creates or maintains a good living environment, before considering the development of greenfield sites.

Green Belt Policy was conceived in an era before sustainable development became the over-riding objective of planning policy.

There is much debate about the form of urban development that minimises energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The European Commission's Green Paper on the Urban Environment (1990) advocates the high density compact city as the ideal urban form that not only makes urban areas more environmentally sustainable but also improves the quality of life. Cambridge could perhaps be regarded as the archetypal compact city. The Commission identifies problems of urban sprawl and the spatial separation of functions as leading to the current problems of environmental degradation and poor quality of life in many urban areas.

Others such as Owens (Department of Geography, University of Cambridge) and Rickaby (Rickaby Thompson Associates) suggest that concentration of activity, but not necessarily centralisation would help to promote public transport use while avoiding the congestion associated with a traditional single core compact city (Breheny 1992).

We believe that Green Belts are not only compatible with the thrust of new policy promoting sustainable development, they positively reinforce the policy in a number

of ways:

- Promoting urban containment, thereby directing growth pressures to the existing urban area and aiding urban regeneration.
- Protecting the countryside and associated natural resources.
- Conserving the character and setting of historic towns and cities.

Indeed, as David Banister (Bartlett School, University College, London) has put it: *"the concept of the sustainable city goes beyond one which is energy efficient or transport efficient and explores the city as a place in which people want to live"* (Breheny 1992). This can be seen as a modern echo of the principles first enunciated by Holford and Miles Wright about the features of Cambridge that make the city an attractive place to live. This guided his thinking about the finite limits to growth in order to safeguard the special character of the city.

The continuing relevance of Green Belts to current planning policy is also confirmed in the recent Statement by the Deputy Prime Minister in Parliament on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2002. He said:

*"Since 1977, I have increased the greenbelt by 30,000 hectares. Today I can announce, for the first time, a Public Service Agreement target which commits us to protecting the valuable countryside around our towns, our cities and in the greenbelt.*

*Mr. Speaker, we will not tolerate urban sprawl."*

An accompanying press release stated that *"growth will be concentrated in the Thames Gateway, Ashford in Kent, Milton Keynes and the London-Stansed-Cambridge corridor. There, increased densities and higher design quality mean the greenbelt will be either maintained or increased."*

There have been some suggestions that green belts can be traded, in the sense that removal of some areas from the Green Belt to promote sustainable development can be compensated by the addition of other areas to the Green Belt. (The Government's position on this is defined in PPG3 and is quoted in section 2.6 below.) While this might be appropriate in relation to some areas of Green Belt around the major conurbations, it is inappropriate in the context of the setting of a historic city, such as Cambridge.

## 2.6 **PPG2: Green Belts (revised 1995) and Other Government Planning Policy Guidance**

PPG 2 defines the intentions of Green Belt policy as follows:

*"The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness. Green Belts can shape patterns of urban development at sub-regional scale, and help to ensure that development occurs in locations allocated in development plans. They help to protect the countryside, be it in agricultural, forestry or other use. They can assist in moving towards more sustainable patterns of urban development."*

There are five purposes for including land in Green Belts:

1. *"To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas*
2. *To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another*
3. *To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*
4. *To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*
5. *To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land"*

The guidance states that once Green Belts have been defined they have a positive role to play in fulfilling the following objectives:

- *"To provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population*
- *To provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas*
- *To retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live*
- *To improve damaged and derelict land around towns*
- *To secure nature conservation interests*
- *To retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses"*

Thus there is a two tier approach to Green Belts. Firstly the inclusion of land in the Green Belt must fulfill one of the 5 main purposes, and its continued protection is of paramount importance with regard to these purposes. Secondly, after land has been included within the Green Belt, there should be a pro-active approach to its management to allow the land to make a positive contribution to the 6 objectives identified. PPG2 stresses that the purposes of including land in the Green Belt should take precedence over the land use objectives. Thus, while Green Belts often contain areas of attractive landscape, the quality of the landscape is not relevant to the inclusion of land in the Green Belt or to its continued protection.

Green Belts are established through Structure Plans, which provide the strategic context, and Local Plans, which set the actual Green Belt boundaries. PPG2 states that any proposals or policies affecting the Green Belts should be *"related to a timescale which is longer than that normally adopted for other aspects of the plan."* PPG2 states that *"once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. If such an alteration is proposed, the Secretary of State will wish to be satisfied that the authority has considered opportunities for development within the urban areas contained by and beyond the Green Belt"*.

PPG3, Housing (DETR 2000) qualifies this policy as follows:

*"The Government is strongly in favour of maintaining the Green Belt. There may be occasions however, where Green Belt boundaries have been tightly drawn and there may be a case for reviewing these boundaries and planning for development where this would be the most sustainable of the available options. An extension of an urban area into the Green Belt may, for example, be preferable to new development taking place on a greenfield in a less sustainable location. Nonetheless, the government regards this as an exceptional policy that should not compromise the objectives for which Green*



*Belts were designated.”*

For Cambridge, the objectives for which the Green Belt was designated includes the need to protect the special character of the city and its setting, including the “*necklace villages*” and hence these objectives should not be compromised.

Any review of Green Belt boundaries that might be necessary due to changes in settlement policy to accommodate long term growth would normally be considered as part of the process of drawing up and reviewing regional guidance and strategic guidance.

PPG7 sets out Government policy on planning for the countryside. The Government’s policy is that the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake and non-renewable and natural resources should be afforded protection. The guiding principle where development is proposed is that it should both benefit economic activity and maintain or enhance the environment.

In addition to general restraint policies designed to protect the countryside, the best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected (i.e. grades 1,2 and 3a) in keeping with the principles of sustainable development, which protect such national resources for future generations.

There are also other nationally significant countryside designations that apply policies of restraint against development. These include special protection policies for the National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and Nature Conservation Sites. In such areas, the priority is the protection of each area’s unique natural beauty and conservation of ecological and archaeological resources.

## **2.7 Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia**

Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia to 2016 (RPG6) was published in November 2000 (DETR and Government Office for the East of England 2000). In relation to the Cambridge Sub-Region, it notes that:

*“Planning policies in the past have sought to restrain development with the objective of protecting Cambridge’s historic character and to disperse both housing and employment development. While research and technology based firms have been resistant to locating far from Cambridge, housing development close to Cambridge has been constrained. Among the effects have been:*

- *housing development in locations further from Cambridge, unsupported by local employment;*
- *concerns that the character of some villages and towns have been compromised or that development has reached limits which threatens that character;*
- *the extension of Cambridge’s commuting hinterland with commuters overwhelmingly traveling by car;*
- *high land and house prices and difficulties for many people in affording housing that meets their needs; and*
- *skill shortages and recruitment difficulties for employers.”*

RPG6 notes that “*the challenge is to develop a planning framework which will allow*

*the sub-region's development needs to be met in a sustainable way, while protecting and enhancing the important environmental qualities of the city and surrounding area and achieving new development of the highest quality. The approach adopted should take account of the strong likelihood of continued employment and population growth after 2016.”* Again, this relates to the whole of the Cambridge sub-region, not just Cambridge itself. These considerations guided Policy 21 of RPG6, which sets out the requirements for a vision and planning framework for the Cambridge sub-region:

*“The local authorities, supported by EEDA and other local partners, should develop a vision and planning framework for the Cambridge sub-region which will:*

- allow the sub-region to develop further as a world leader in research and technology based industries and the fields of higher education and research;*
- foster the dynamism, prosperity and further expansion of the research and technology based economy;*
- protect and enhance the historic character and setting of Cambridge and the important environmental qualities of the surrounding area;*
- provide a more sustainable balance between rates of growth in jobs and housing, allowing the sub-region to accommodate a higher proportion of the region's housing development;*
- promote a more sustainable and spatially concentrated pattern of locations for development and more sustainable travel patterns;*
- facilitate the provision of an attractive, accessible, ecologically rich countryside;*
- secure development of the highest quality;*
- provide a high quality of life and seek to avoid social exclusion, including by addressing the issue of housing affordability in the area;*
- be based on a co-ordinated approach to development, which maximises and integrates the different sources of investment; and*
- allow scope for, rather than constrain, continuing development beyond 2016.”*

RPG6 notes that the requirements for a significant amount of new development in the Cambridge sub-region should be accommodated in a number of locations, but that the priority order for consideration of options was firstly within the city's built-up area, secondly urban extension subject to a Green Belt review, followed by a new settlement and development in market towns, larger villages and existing new settlements.

RPG 6 recommends that a review of the Cambridge Green Belt should be carried out and proposals for any changes should be included in development plans.

The Panel's report into the examination of the Draft RPG for East Anglia states that the Green Belt review *“should not simply be a “site finding” exercise, but should examine the fundamental purposes of the Green Belt and the extent to which they are being achieved by its present form. In our view the purpose of this Green Belt extends beyond simply safeguarding the city's historic core to preserving the setting and special character of Cambridge as a whole. The review should start from a vision of the city and of the qualities to be safeguarded before looking*

*at, among other things, the extent to which the Green Belt is currently fulfilling its intended purposes and its influence on urban form. If it is found that sites could be released without significant detriment to the Green Belt, their possible development should be assessed against such criteria as proximity to public transport, the City Centre, employment and services.” (Our emphasis.)*

The Panel’s recommendations were embodied into Policy 24 of RPG6, which states:

*“A review of the Cambridge Green Belt should be carried out and any proposals for changes to its boundaries included in development plans. The review should start from a vision of the city and of the qualities to be safeguarded. It should consider how far the Green Belt is fulfilling relevant green belt purposes and its influence on settlement form. Where land is fulfilling such purposes, development plans should include proposals for its use on the basis of the objectives set out in paragraph 1.6 of PPG2. If sites could be released without significant detriment to Green Belt purposes, their suitability for development should be assessed against criteria including proximity to public transport, employment and services and environmental quality.”*

## **2.8 The Cambridge Sub-Region Study, 2001**

As noted above, Policy 21 of RPG6 requires the local authorities to develop a vision and planning framework for the Cambridge Sub-Region. In the light of this, SCEALA (Standing Conference of East Anglia Local Authorities) commissioned Colin Buchanan & Partners (Colin Buchanan and Partners 2001) to carry out a review of the Sub-Region, appraising key options for development to inform the development strategy as an input to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan Review and the plans of adjoining counties.

Strategies were examined to maintain the economic vibrancy of the Sub-Region, to meet development needs (particularly housing needs) and foster a more sustainable pattern of development.

The study examined the capacity of villages, towns and cities to accommodate new development. The study also included a fundamental review of the Cambridge Green Belt and identified possible locations for a new settlement.

The Vision for the Sub-Region that emerged from this study defined qualities and features that should be promoted and safeguarded, ranging from the protection of the Sub Region’s countryside and historic built environment and the encouragement of sustainable travel patterns, to promotion of the Cambridge area’s internationally significant research and technology base.

The Green Belt Review carried out as part of this study established that the primary purpose of the Green Belt is to preserve the special character of Cambridge and to maintain the quality of its setting. The secondary purpose is to prevent further coalescence of settlements.

The study produced a definition of setting and special character in the context of the Cambridge Green Belt. This defined special character to mean the city’s historic core and associated university colleges, the green corridors and wedges

connecting the city with the countryside and the separation between settlements to ensure their clear identity. The setting was defined to include views of the city and the placement and character of villages surrounding the city and the interface between the city and the countryside.

A review of Green Belt land was undertaken to establish the extent to which they contributed to the two main purposes of the Green Belt. This identified sites for further assessment. This further assessment included consideration of the capacity to accommodate change, including landscape character, topography, vegetation structure and cones of view. The review concluded that 12,250 dwellings could be accommodated without harming the two main purposes of the Green Belt, at densities considered appropriate for peripheral urban expansion, subject to more detailed planning to accommodate all appropriate uses.

The Cambridge Sub Region Study largely endorsed results of a study by David Brown Landscape Design *Cambridge Green Belt Landscape Setting Study* (David Brown Landscape Design 1998), commissioned by South Cambridgeshire District Council. This study concluded that other options for development in the Cambridge sub-region should be fully explored prior to any alteration of the Green Belt boundary. It did, however, identify some areas where sensitive development may be possible without undue harm to the setting of Cambridge.

## 2.9 The Development Plan, as Currently Approved

The approved Development Plan for the Cambridge Green Belt areas is derived from a number of sources:

- The 1995 Structure Plan
- The 1992 Cambridge Green Belt Local Plan
- The 1996 Cambridge Local Plan

### 2.9.1 The Development of Structure Plan Policy

The first Structure Plan for the Cambridge area was the 1980 Structure Plan. This recognised that the Cambridge Sub-Area was *“especially vulnerable to development pressures both from Cambridge itself and from the London area. ...the Green Belt will help the local authorities to withstand these pressures, to protect the open countryside around Cambridge and to ensure that the villages within it do not coalesce”* (Para 19.24 Structure Plan 1980).

Policy P19/3 of the 1980 Structure Plan addressed these points:

*“a Green Belt will be maintained around the City of Cambridge having a depth of about 3-5 miles from the edge of the built-up area of the city. The precise boundaries of the Green Belt will be defined in local plans. Where the boundaries enclose settlements, including the city, they will be defined by reference to the degree of expansion of the settlements which is acceptable in the context of:*

*the desirability of checking the further expansion of Cambridge; of preserving its special character; and of preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another; and*

*the structure plan policies for housing and employment. Within the Green Belt, permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for development for purposes other than agriculture, outdoor participatory sport and recreation, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds, or other uses appropriate to a rural area.”*

The 1980 Structure Plan was replaced by the 1989 Structure Plan. This maintained the general thrust of Green Belt policy from the earlier Plan. In particular, it confirmed that the Green Belt will be maintained around the City of Cambridge to “*contain its urban growth, preserve its unique character, maintain its present setting and prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another.*”

The principles of maintaining a green belt around Cambridge were again confirmed in the current approved Structure Plan of 1995. This stated that the Green Belt was essential in containing the growth of the city and maintaining its character and setting, protecting the countryside around Cambridge and ensuring that villages within it do not coalesce.

### **2.9.2 Local Plan Policy**

Whilst the Structure Plan remained consistent in its aims for a Green Belt around the city, the precise boundaries were defined in the Cambridge Green Belt Local Plan (Cambridgeshire County Council 1992). This covered the area of jurisdiction of three authorities (Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council) and was prepared by the County Council in collaboration with the three district councils. This Plan reviewed the boundaries that had been established in earlier Town Maps. The main change that was made to previously established boundaries was the release of a large area in the Northern Fringe, responding in part to the changed character of this area following the construction of the Cambridge Northern Bypass and partly to cater for the long term development needs of Cambridge.

The 1996 Cambridge Local Plan (Cambridge City Council 1996) took forward the boundaries of the Green Belt that had been established in the 1992 Green Belt Local Plan, with only minor adjustments in the west of the city. This followed the firm line taken by the Inspector on the City Local Plan about the need for further review of the Green Belt, and the similar line taken by the Inspectors on the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, which confirmed that land previously identified for inclusion in the Green Belt fulfilled valid Green Belt functions.

### **2.10 The Emerging Structure Plan**

The latest draft of the Structure Plan is the March 2002 Deposit Draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan Review (Cambridgeshire County Council 2002). This proposes three policies on the Green Belt:

Policy P9/3a – Green Belt  
Policy P9/3b – Review of Green Belt boundaries, and  
Policy P9/3c – Location and phasing of development land to be released from the Green Belt

Policy P9/3a sets out the general purpose of the Green Belt around Cambridge,

which is broadly unchanged and refers to its purpose as *“defining the extent of its urban growth, maintaining the quality of its setting and preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with Cambridge.”* The subtle difference proposed is that the new policy is to *“define the extent of its urban growth”*, whereas previously the purpose was *“to contain its urban growth”*.

Largely on the basis of the Cambridge Sub-Regional Study’s conclusions on possible changes to the Green Belt, Policy P9/3b states that *“local plans will identify the boundaries of land to be released from the Green Belt to serve the long-term development needs of Cambridge.”* This review should *“retain any areas required to maintain the essential purposes of the redefined Green Belt, provide green separation between existing villages and any urban expansion of Cambridge, and ensure the protection of green corridors running from open countryside into the urban area.”* This policy also states that the local planning authorities will *“review the outer boundary of the Green Belt to determine if additional areas can be identified which serve the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt and should be included within it.”*

Largely on the basis of the Cambridge Sub-Regional Study’s conclusions on possible changes to the Green Belt, Policy P9/3c identifies areas for potential release from the Green Belt for new housing and mixed use development. This suggests that Local Plans should consider the following locations for early development:

- North of Newmarket Road
- North of Cherry Hinton
- Cambridge Airport (subject to availability)
- South and west of Addenbrooke’s Hospital
- Clay Farm and areas east and south of Trumpington

Policy P9/3c also identifies the following locations, which it says *“should be reserved for development when required”*:

- Between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road
- Between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road

It further goes on to state that *“land east of Cambridge Airport is to be safeguarded for development after 2016 and only developed following the substantial development of Cambridge Airport and provided that a joint study shows it can be developed whilst maintaining the fundamental purposes of the Green Belt.”*

## 2.11 Conclusions on Planning Policy Context

The Green Belt has been a constant factor in the post-war planning of Cambridge. Its purpose has been to protect the special character of the city, including the landscape setting and the surrounding villages, and at the same time to place an upper limit on the city’s urban expansion, especially its resident population.

The world-wide reputation of Cambridge University has driven the economic vibrancy of the city and especially its leading role in high tech industry. To accommodate this growth, there have been some adjustments to the Green Belt boundaries over the years, especially in the northern fringe. However, the restraint on new housing development has meant that the growth of housing (whilst

significant) has not kept pace with the growth of employment.

There is now a recognition that the economic success of Cambridge, combined with the restrictions on population growth, has led to an imbalance between jobs and housing, with large numbers of the employed population having to travel long distances from home to work, promoting unsustainable travel patterns and placing increased pressure on the city's transport infrastructure, which is inadequate to cope with the demands now being placed on it. This has led to the new approach set out in RPG6, requiring the development of a vision and planning framework for the Cambridge sub-region which provides a more sustainable balance between the rates of growth in jobs and housing, to allow the sub-region to accommodate a higher proportion of the region's housing development, while at the same time protecting and enhancing the historic character and setting of Cambridge and its important environmental qualities.

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1 Introduction

The study methodology involves a broad appreciation of the planning context and issues, linked with a range of landscape and townscape appraisals aimed at analysing the landscape setting of Cambridge, its urban structure and character, and the characteristics of the urban margins. It uses a variety of well-established assessment techniques drawn from published guidance and widely used practice. In addition, as matters of professional judgement are involved, the findings of the study are underpinned by the experience and expertise of the Consultant; Landscape Design Associates' projects are featured as case studies in national guidance on both landscape and townscape assessment (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002) and landscape and visual impact assessment (The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2002), and its relevant work has been recognised through Landscape Institute Awards. The practice has undertaken many studies of settlements and their landscape settings in order to inform planning and development strategies and decision-making for both public and private sector interests. It has also worked on many projects concerned with historic towns and Green Belts and associated development issues.

The Consultant's study team has drawn on a range of expertise from within the practice, ensuring a full range of relevant professional skills were brought to bear on the project. The senior team was as follows:

- Professor Robert Tregay, BSc (Hons), Dip LD, FLI, Senior Partner, a Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner: Partner in Charge of project.
- Nick Shute, BSc, DipTP, MRTPI, Director of LDA Urban Design: a Planner and Urban Designer.
- Philip Brashaw, BSc (Hons), BLD, MLI, Principal Consultant, a Landscape Architect: Project Leader.
- Alison Farmer, BA (Hons), MLD, MLI, Principal Consultant, a Landscape Architect: responsible for overseeing the specialist aspect of the Study concerned with the application of the 'Winchester Methodology'.
- Marion Frandsen, BSc (Hons), DipLA, MSc and Fiona Fyfe, BSc (Hons), DipLD, MA: specialists in townscape and landscape assessment.

This senior team has specialist experience in the fields of landscape and townscape assessments, historic environments, development and Green Belt appraisals, and was supported by further landscape architects and assistants responsible for research, detailed desk studies and field appraisals.

The consultants met on a regular basis with senior personnel, including the Planning Director, at South Cambridgeshire District Council to ensure regular briefings and inputs from a planning perspective.



### 3.2 Methodology

The methodology for this study has been shaped by the planning policy context as set out in section 2. The landscape, and also the townscape, character assessment follows guidance set out in the Countryside Agency's *Landscape Character Assessment (2002)*. The assessment of landscape and townscape role and function broadly follows the approach adopted by Landscape Design Associates in its study on *Winchester and its Setting (1998)* which is described in and implicitly endorsed by the Countryside Agency in its Guidance (page 70).

The sequence of baseline studies and analysis make specific reference to key planning statements in RPG6 (DETR and Government Office for the East of England 2000) and PPG2 (DETR 2002). The highlighted sections of the following extracts are the key references.

Policy 24 of RPG6 states:

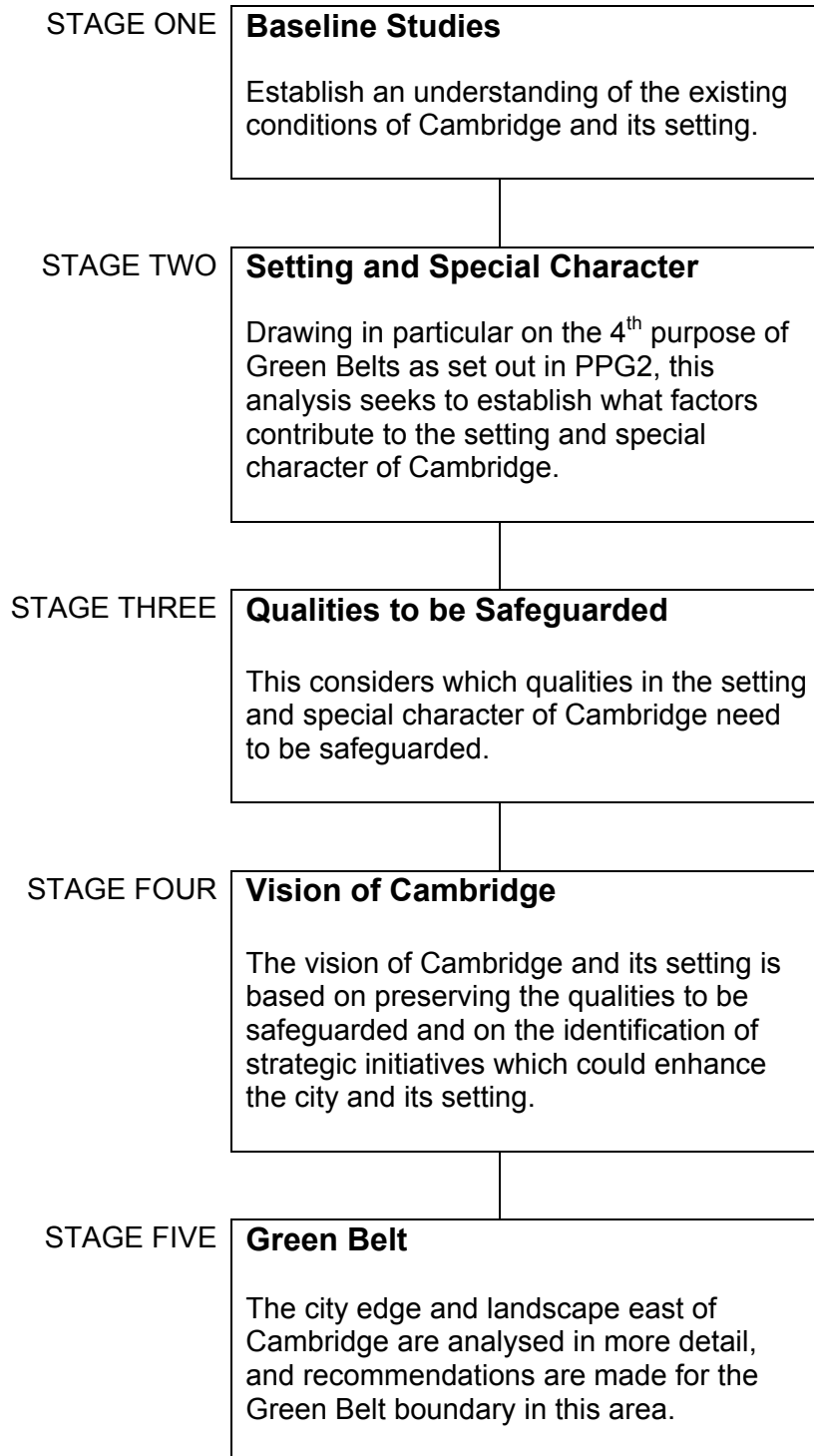
*“A review of the Cambridge Green Belt should be carried out and any proposals for changes to its boundaries included in development plans. The review should start from a **vision of the city and of the qualities to be safeguarded.**”*

One of the five purposes for including landing Green Belts set out in PPG2 is:

*“To preserve **the setting and special character of historic towns.**”*

Whilst Cambridge clearly includes areas of more modern development, most would agree that it falls within the definition of an historic town.

The study methodology, therefore, is structured broadly as follows:



The process set out above is described in more detail below. The analysis process is explained by reference to a sequence of plans, supported by explanatory text. The plans are grouped into the five stages:

### **Stage One : Baseline Studies**

A series of six plans (drawing numbers 1641LP/01 to 06) have been prepared to illustrate the baseline conditions applying to Cambridge and its setting. The studies are intended to identify the key townscape and landscape features which help us to understand Cambridge and its setting. The six plans are as follows:

- **Policy Context : Environmental Designations:** *This plan illustrates key environmental planning policies as statutory environmental designations.*
- **Policy Context : Cultural and Access Designations:** *This plan illustrates a range of historic and other cultural designations as well as public rights of way.*
- **Topography:** *This plan illustrates the topographic context of Cambridge.*
- **Townscape Character:** *This plan illustrates townscape character types and areas in order to understand the variations in character across the built up area of Cambridge.*
- **Landscape Character:** *This plan illustrates the range of landscape character types and areas in the Green Belt based on a study by Landscape Design Associates.*
- **Visual Assessment:** *This plan represents a typical landscape analysis, helping to understand the visual factors which contribute to the special character of Cambridge and its setting, including its approaches.*

These plans set out the baseline factual information about Cambridge and its setting that is then analysed in Stage Two.

### **Stage Two : Analysis of Setting and Special Character of Cambridge**

This analysis draws on the baseline studies and relies on further studies to understand the factors which contribute towards the special character and setting of Cambridge. Two plans are used to present this analysis (drawing numbers 1641LP/07 and 08):

- **Landscape and Townscape Analysis:** *This focuses on how Cambridge is experienced through the process of arrival. The analysis focuses on routes through the setting of the city, on gateways and on changes of character from the outer rural areas through to the historic core. This is fundamental to understanding the significance of scale in contributing to the special character of Cambridge and in appreciating how the character of routes to and through the city play a fundamental role in giving Cambridge its special and historic character.*
- **Townscape and Landscape Role and Function:** *This method of analysis uses the “Winchester Methodology” as set out in Box 8.7 (page 70) of the*

*Countryside Agency's Landscape Character Guidance (2002). The purpose of the analysis is to identify, in a fully integrated way, the role of different areas of townscape and landscape in contributing to the distinctiveness and setting of the historic city.*

### **Stage Three : Qualities to be Safeguarded**

This stage brings together the analysis in Stage Two and focuses, specifically, on identifying which are the qualities of the setting and special character of Cambridge which most need to be safeguarded. Whilst this stage of the analysis draws logically from the studies in Stages One and Two, it inevitably involves the strong degree of professional judgement.

The assessment team works extensively in the development field for both private and public sector interests and, in making judgements about the qualities of the setting and special character of Cambridge which need to be safeguarded, have been fully cognisant of the planning and development context and, specifically, the need for Cambridge and its sub-region to accommodate significant levels of new development, as set out in RPG6.

Significant roles have been played in making these judgements by Senior Partner, Professor Robert Tregay, a landscape architect with extensive Green Belt, development and assessment experience, and also Nick Shute, Director of Urban Design, a qualified Planner who has also been involved in many Green Belt studies.

### **Stage Four : Vision for Cambridge**

This stage of analysis represents a creative step forward from Stage Three, specifically involving the identification of strategic initiatives, which could enhance Cambridge and its setting. These initiatives cover the edges of the city and its setting, and relate to Green Belt purposes and to the potential uses of land within the Green Belt, as set out in paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6 of PPG2.

### **Stage Five : Green Belt**

RPG6 makes it clear that the review of the Cambridge Green Belt should arise from the process set out above.

It is not the purpose of this study to recommend any detailed changes to the Cambridge Green Belt. However, the studies are intended to inform any Green Belt review which might be considered. The exception to this generalisation is East Cambridge, where the analysis has been undertaken at a greater level of detail, yet based on the strategic study of Cambridge and the methodology set out above. In making the recommendations on the Green Belt boundary in East Cambridge, we have taken account of:

- The potential role of development allocations on the edge of the city in providing for housing development, as set out in RPG6 (the sequential test).
- Support that South Cambridgeshire District Council has given to the concept for development on the Cambridge Airport site, west of Airport Way.

- More detailed site appraisals of East Cambridge undertaken by Landscape Design Associates, as set out in section 7 of this report.

## 4.0 BASELINE STUDIES

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### 4.1 Introduction

Factual baseline data on Cambridge and its setting is set out in this section. This does not involve analysis of how this data contributes to the setting and special character of the city. This is done in section 5.

### 4.2 Historical Development of Cambridge and the Villages

#### 4.2.1 Cambridge

##### *Landscape and Location*

The varied landscape around Cambridge was fundamental to the location, development and character of the city.

The settlement which was to become Cambridge developed at a crossing point of the River Cam (formerly known as the River Granta). It was the meeting point of a number of trackways. It was also the meeting point of several landscapes: to the north the undrained wetlands of the fens- a valuable source of wildfowl, fish and reeds for thatching. To the west the densely forested claylands- a source of timber and game. To the south and east a chalk ridge provided pasture and easily worked arable land. Cambridge was situated in a position to take advantage of all these resources, and was established on dry land adjacent to the river which was also easy to defend. Although the landscapes around Cambridge have been modified by man over the subsequent centuries, the position of Cambridge at a meeting point of different landscapes, which contribute different qualities to the setting of the city, remains unchanged.

##### *Early Origins*

The earliest archaeological finds from the Cambridge area date from the Neolithic period, although the earliest evidence for a settled community dates from the late Bronze Age. Evidence of metal working, trading and habitation from the Bronze and Iron Ages has been found in Cambridge, including a large Iron Age farm on the site of the Addenbrooke's Hospital.

##### *Roman Occupation*

By 70AD the Romans had built a road from Colchester to Godmanchester, which crossed the River Cam close to the present Magdalene Bridge. A castle was constructed on Castle Hill and a small town developed adjacent to it. The construction of the fenland canal system by the Romans led to Cambridge becoming an inland port. Evidence of traffic has been found in the form of Peterborough Pottery and Nottinghamshire stone.

##### *Saxon and the Danelaw*

The town remained occupied throughout the Dark Ages, but it is not known to what extent. It is likely that the town was on the front line of battles between the kingdoms of Mercia and East Anglia, until the East Angles' victory in 634. A new

bridge over the river Cam was built in the eighth century, and the town began to revive.

However, in 871, invading Danes plundered and burnt the town. Later an Anglo-Danish settlement was established and Cambridge became within the control of the Danelaw until 921.

The town thrived in the latter part of the Saxon period. It was a port to boats coming down from the Wash, and traded with Ireland and the Continent. It established a mint in 975, and flourished as a business, military, administrative and legal centre.

### *The Medieval Period and the Following Centuries*

William the Conqueror built a castle at Cambridge and quickly established control of the town. The town and county continued to prosper, and several churches, religious houses and a hospital were constructed, including the Round Church. Land was granted to the religious houses which has remained as open space within the city, such as Jesus Green and Midsummer Common.

Cambridge was already known as a centre of learning in 1209, when a group of scholars fleeing from riots in Oxford settled in the town. From this point, the University rapidly expanded in size and power, and gained royal support. Over the following 800 years, the colleges were established, including several on former monastic sites following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536.

Between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the town was rocked by events including uprisings by Hereward the Wake, the peasants' revolt, dispossessed barons marauding from the Fens, the Black Death, numerous plagues and civil disturbances. However, the town continued to thrive and grow, largely due to the increasing domination of the University. Development took place along the three main routes out of the town to the south-east and south, namely Trumpington Street, St Andrew's Street and Jesus Lane.

### *Tudor*

The university continued to expand, and to become increasingly powerful, with heightening tensions between town and gown. The colleges owned large areas of land within and adjacent to the town, some of which are still preserved as open spaces today. They displaced areas of wharves and housing adjacent to the river to make way for the building of colleges. The University also controlled rents, markets and food prices, and was politically opposed to the town in the Civil War.

By 1600 most of the major colleges had been established, and the town had expanded slightly on the eastern side. However, expansion of the town was restricted by the surrounding common fields. The result was that the built-up areas of the town becoming increasingly cramped, with many houses divided into tenements.

### *The Victorian Era*

Cambridge did not expand much beyond its medieval limits until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1801 the population of the town was only approximately 9000. The southern

limit of the town was extended in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by the building of Downing College, but it was two further factors, the coming of the railways in 1845 and enclosure of land around the town from 1807 which enabled its large-scale expansion. During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the population of the town increased fourfold.

The railway station was sited approximately a mile south east from the centre of the town, as the University would not permit it any closer. Gradually, the land to the south and south east of the historic core was filled with terrace housing, much of which was constructed for railway workers. As the town grew, adjacent villages, such as Chesterton became amalgamated with Cambridge. Land to the west of the river, which had formerly been unsuitable for building, was drained and made available for development. Following a change in University policy allowing Fellows to marry, substantial family houses were built in this area.

When common land and fields were enclosed, they were subdivided and distributed between the people who had formerly used or had rights to the land. In Cambridge, these new landowners included the University, other institutions (such as Addenbrooke's Hospital) and private individuals. Therefore land, which had formerly been a single large field, could be developed by several different people, at different times and in different ways. Usually, land allocated to private individuals was sold relatively quickly to speculative builders, who constructed terraces, which were occupied by the working classes. The University generally did not develop their land immediately. When they did develop it, they generally constructed large detached villas in extensive gardens, which they sold leasehold to maximise profit. These neighbourhoods were occupied by the middle and upper classes, and are still attractive and exclusive residential areas.

Expansion of Cambridge to the north east did not take place until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when the common fields of Chesterton were enclosed. Relatively little development took place on the west side of the city, as the land was largely owned by the colleges. This has affected the development of Cambridge up to the present day and is largely why the historic core and the "city centre" is not the geographical centre.

### *The 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the greatest growth of the city, including residential estates and new University buildings outside the old city limits.

Clare College Memorial Court (built after the First World War) was the first part of the University to cross Queen's Road. Other University buildings developed in this area to the west of the river, including the Library: the monumental tower of which is a landmark for many miles. In the 1960s, construction of faculty buildings took place close by at Sidgewick Avenue, including the Seeley history faculty.

Considerable development has taken place on the outskirts of the city. In addition to academic buildings such as the Institute of Astronomy, developments such as the new Addenbrooke's hospital have had a strong impact on the plan of the city. Since the Establishment of the Cambridge Science Park by Trinity College in the early 1970s, Cambridge has seen extensive developments of business and science parks, including the High Cross Research Park to the west of the city.

Suburbs developed in the inter-war and post-war periods. To the south of the city



are early mid 20<sup>th</sup> century leafy estates. Chesterton also developed as a suburb largely in the inter-war period. The Arbury and Kings Hedges residential areas were developed to the north of the city later, in the 1960s and 1970s.

The establishment of the Green Belt between 1965 and 1992 effectively set a limit to the expansion of the city into the surrounding countryside. In the 1950s/60s, *inner necklace villages* were developed, before development moved to *outer necklace villages* such as Bar Hill.

#### 4.2.2 Villages

##### *Village Location*

Within the Cambridge Green Belt there are a number of villages. These have developed in particular locations for a number reasons. Some, such as Grantchester are at crossing points of roads and rivers. In the southern part of the area, a line of villages including Haslingfield and Harlton are located on the spring-line at the base of the chalk ridge. In lower-lying fen areas, villages such as Cottenham were established on “islands” to reduce risk of flooding.

##### *General Historic Influences on the Form of Villages*

The historic form of a village and the traditional building materials found within it are often associated with the landscape character area in which the village is located. These are described in greater detail in section 4.6. However, there are also historical factors which have influenced village form and which occur throughout the area.

The majority of villages within the Cambridge Green Belt are nucleated in form, often centred around a village green. Their development has been strongly influenced by open field systems which surrounded the village and kept houses and farm buildings concentrated in a single location. Expansion in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century led to the agglomeration of some villages such as Comberton, which incorporated the formerly separate settlement of Green End. Linear Villages such as Histon and Trumpington developed along routeways. In these linear villages, greenspace is usually located in front of buildings or at either end of the village.

The contemporary layout and density of housing is often closely related to historic patterns of agriculture and trade. Where pastures were retained on the edges of villages, they often gave the edge of the village a ragged appearance. The field patterns created following 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure acts are often still visible in the street patterns of villages. Subtle historic features such as the remains of ditches or “lodes” which formerly linked villages with the navigable waterway network are also visible in the landscape.

The later development of villages has also been affected by the location of open space (e.g. the position of village greens, commons used for grazing, and sites of markets and fairs) both within and outside the village. A further factor which affected the development pattern of villages was population decline (particularly due to the black death) which reduced the density of some villages. Many villages were affected by this population decline.

### *Appearance of Villages within the Landscape*

The location and features of some villages make them more prominent than others, although the majority of villages are visible within the wide sweeps of open arable landscape which form the Cambridge Green Belt. The most clearly visible feature of most villages is the church tower; many are visible in framed views from roads and footpaths. Mature vegetation such as trees on village greens or in gardens also stand out, particularly in the very flat landscapes of the fens and river valleys.

The distinctive character of many villages and the landscape features which they contain (such as churches and mature trees), are of fundamental importance to the setting of Cambridge.

## **4.3 Policy Context**

### **4.3.1 Environmental Designations**

There are numerous environmental designations within the Cambridge Green Belt, covering a range of habitats and with many different reasons for designation. These are shown on drawing number 1641LP/01, and their implications are discussed in section 5.

There are a range of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and County Wildlife Sites within the Green Belt, including ancient woodlands, chalk grassland, fen, ditches and streams. There are also two Ancient Woodlands in the Green Belt: Eversden Wood and Madingley Wood. There are many Nature Conservation sites in the Green Belt, including a number with public access. Fleam Dyke, to the south east of Cambridge is a Candidate Special Area of Conservation, a European designation for habitats of rare or endangered species.

To the east and south of Cambridge is a Nature Conservation Zone. This was a Structure Plan designation to safeguard and protect areas from any adverse effect of development because of the range and diversity of habitats, and thus the species which they support. Although this designation has now been dropped, Nature Conservation Zones are shown on drawing 1641LP/01, as they indicate broad areas of land with conservation value. Within South Cambridgeshire, these zones were:

- the chalk belt stretching from Newmarket to north of Royston; and
- the Ouse valley and the valleys of the Cam and Granta and the Ouse Washes.

Floodplains of the rivers Cam, Rhee and Granta, the Bourn Brook and Quy Water are also shown on drawing number 1641LP/01.

Insert drawing 01

#### 4.3.2 Cultural and Access Designations

Drawing 1641LP/02 shows cultural and access designations within the Cambridge Green Belt.

The majority of villages are wholly or partially covered by a Conservation Area. In addition to the land and buildings within the Conservation Area boundary, the open setting of the Conservation Area is also included.

There are some historic parks and gardens within the Green Belt, including Madingley Hall, Sawston Hall and Great Wilbraham.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments are dispersed throughout the Green Belt and represent archaeological sites from Prehistory onwards. There are a number of medieval sites, including manors, moats and earthworks of abandoned villages.

A network of public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways and byways) covers the Green Belt, although links from the city out to these countryside routes are sometimes poor. In addition, two long distance footpaths (The Harcamlow Way and the Fen Rivers Way) pass through the Green Belt. There are a number of Sustrans cycleways within the city, with potential for connection with recreational attractions within the Green Belt.

Insert drawing 02

#### 4.4 Topography and Geology

Drawing 1641LP/03 illustrates the Topography of the Cambridge Green Belt and the surrounding area.

The drawing clearly shows Cambridge in its “bowl”, surrounded by higher land to the east, west and south. The lowest land in the city lies below the 5 metre contour along the River Cam. This narrow corridor of low land spreads out into the flat fens to the north of the A14. There is also a pocket of low lying fen 2 kilometres to the east of the city between Teversham and Great Wilbraham. The closest area of high ground lies just over 2 kilometres from the south east edge of Cambridge at Wandlebury, where the land rises to 74 metres AOD. 3 kilometres west of Cambridge, clay hills rise to 62 metres AOD south of Maddingley. More distant areas of higher ground lie further to the east and west of the city.

The topography closely reflects the underlying geology, which consists of flat and low-lying fen peat to the north, higher gault clay ridges to the west, and a broad chalk ridge to the south and east. The main rivers (Cam, Granta, Rhee and Bourn Brook) have eroded broad valleys through the chalk and/or clay to form the low-lying land to the immediate south and south east of Cambridge.

Insert drawing 03

## 4.5 Townscape Character

### 4.5.1 Introduction

The progressive historic development of the city in response to the river setting has resulted in a distinct pattern of townscape character areas. These areas range from the historic core of the city with its complex stratification of historic layers, to the peripheral areas of residential development whose coherence is principally derived from the unity of housing style and period of development. The River Cam and the alignment of the principal approach roads into Cambridge, a number of which date back to the Roman and earlier periods, have also been influential in determining the distinctiveness of and boundaries to each of the townscape character areas.

The townscape character assessment was a two-stage process. The first stage was a desk study where the urban structure and preliminary definition of urban character types and character areas was determined using aerial photographs together with current and historic maps. In the second stage a field study was undertaken involving the visual analysis of the townscape, recording findings on Townscape Assessment record sheets, and confirming the transitions between townscape character areas.

The results of this townscape character assessment are shown on drawing number 1641LP/04, and described below. Two categories of information are recorded: Townscape Character Types and Townscape Character Areas. Townscape Character Types are generic types of townscape, which may repeat in the city studied and may occur in other cities. They contain broadly similar building types and street patterns. In contrast, Townscape Character Areas are geographically distinct parts of the city and may contain a variety of townscape types.

The assessment was carried out at a broad scale and did not look at every area in detail. The results shown on drawing number 1641LP/04 are broad-brush and not accurate to every street.

There are seven townscape types described in section 4.5.2 and a total of 14 townscape character areas described in section 4.5.3.

### 4.5.2 Townscape Types

#### *Historic Core*

Historic cores are defined as coherent pre-1810 settlement cores with Medieval street patterns including the historic cores of Cambridge, Chesterton, Trumpington and Cherry Hinton.

#### *Bespoke Houses and Colleges*

This townscape type is strongly influenced by the University and is characterised by large late 19<sup>th</sup> Century architect designed houses set in large gardens built for Fellows, and large colleges and university buildings with associated grounds and playing fields.



### *Green Space and Green Fingers*

This townscape type includes green fingers following the River Cam and Vicar's Brook, and significant green spaces including Coldham's Common, the Botanic Garden, Parker's Piece and Christ's Pieces.

### *Victorian/Edwardian Terraced Housing*

Nineteenth century building in Cambridge is characterised by unusual variety in architecture and close juxta-positioning of working class and middle class housing. The variety in buildings is largely due to the fact that the land in the Common Fields was held by the university, colleges and private individuals. The university and the colleges were relatively slow and conservative in developing their lands compared to the private owners, and tended to build higher-class houses on long leases. The private owners were often more interested in shorter-term gains from selling their lands to speculative developers for higher density lower-cost housing. Because of the inter-weaving of different types of land-holdings, there are few areas of nineteenth century building which are monolithic in character.

The initial growth in the period up to about 1830 tended to be high quality housing largely contained within an arc to the south and east of the town which had a radius of three quarters of a mile from the town centre. These high quality houses tended to be built only on the frontage sites along the main roads, leaving significant areas undeveloped behind the frontages. Good examples are to be seen on Maid's Causeway, which date back to 1815-1825, Lensfield Road and the southern part of Trumpington Road.

Several of the major areas of expansion in the nineteenth century were recognised and named as new towns, namely Romsey Town, Sturton Town and New Town. New Town was, and still largely is, a microcosm of the variety of closely interwoven building types which occurred widely in nineteenth century Cambridge.

In the second half of the nineteenth century expansion continued with further building to the south and east but more equally balanced by developments north and west of the river. Building in this later period in the south and east was more compact, with substantial areas of geometric working class terrace housing being constructed. In the north and west of the town the new housing tended to be smaller in scale, less compact in their character and more varied in their design. The Victorian and Edwardian terraced housing areas built in this period generally have narrow streets with back of pavement development, grid-iron street pattern and small yellow brick terraced houses.

### *Commercial / Industrial / Service Development*

Apart from the manufacture in small workshops of service goods for local consumption, the only distinctive industry the town had ever possessed had been printing and bookbinding, stimulated by the presence of the University. The economic prosperity of the town depended mainly on its role as the town and county administrative, service, market and transport centre, and the university. The railways had relatively little impact in terms of initiating industrialisation because the town and East Anglia as a whole lacked the coal and raw materials on which nineteenth-century industry depended. Small brick and tile works developed at

Cherry Hinton and Coldham's Lane, using the outcrop of Gault Clay in the valley of the Coldham's Brook. This accounts for the widespread use in suburban Cambridge houses of the characteristic yellow brick it produces. It was not until the late years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth that industry began to emerge which would have a significant effect on the growth and form of the town. This was the emergence of the scientific industries related to the expansion of science teaching and research at the university. University connections have played an important role in the development of a number of manufacturing organisations in the Cambridge area in fields such as chemicals, plastics, metallurgy and engineering, all with a strong research base underpinning their industrial output.

The growth of industry in the period up to 1939 did not bring about major changes in the physical structure of the city because most of the industrial growth was dispersed quite widely in premises which were generally small and often hidden away in back streets. Examples of this can still be seen in many of the streets leading off Mill Road. The south eastern side of the town near the railway has more industry than any other sector, but for present day manufacturers this tends to be the result of the availability of land and the general nature of the area rather than any particular pull of the railway.

This townscape type is characterised by medium to large-scale industrial, commercial and hospital buildings, often with closed facades, signage, security fencing and extensive areas of hard surfacing.

#### *1900 – 1945 Suburban Housing*

The housing expansion begun in the nineteenth century continued steadily, and suburban development led to growth in all directions, although it was considerably greater on the northern, eastern and southern sides than on the western. The majority of the 1900 – 1945 housing expansion was created by the filling in of land between main roads, especially in the angle between Huntingdon Road and Chesterton Road north of the river and between Newmarket Road and Hills Road south of the river. These areas were developed by a combination of private enterprise, housing associations and council building with detached or semi-detached properties, often with substantial gardens. Despite this expansion, the town remained very compact; for nearly the whole of its built up area was still within one and a half miles of the centre.

The inter-war suburban housing areas are generally composed of red brick and Arts and Crafts style rendered semi-detached houses with front and rear gardens. These residential areas are generally of low density with well-established planting and mature trees.

#### *Post-war Suburban Housing*

Growth of the city did not recommence after the Second World War until well into the 1950's. The character of the post-1950 housing development differed in a number of ways from that of the pre-war period. It tended to include a much higher proportion of local authority building on planned estates such as North Arbury, in which the characteristics of both houses and blocks of flats were markedly different from the styles of pre-war housing. Most obviously many were pre-planned as 'self-contained' estates from the outset in terms of the layout of roads, public utilities,

housing, schools, shops, libraries and other social amenities. The density of housing was higher than in pre-war areas, but the provision of quite large amenity areas and playing fields to some extent compensated for this.

The post-war housing estates comprise a range of building types including bungalows, low-rise flats, terraced houses, semi-detached and detached houses. The street pattern is generally curved with cul-de-sacs and the housing density is generally higher than the per-war housing areas.

#### 4.5.3 Townscape Character Areas

##### *1A. Cambridge Historic Core*

The historic core of Cambridge is very distinctive with grand college, civic and ecclesiastical buildings with towers and spires and an intact medieval street pattern of narrow streets and alleyways and small squares. A unique characteristic of the historic core is that it has retained a green setting. It is encircled and defined by an inner belt of open space, including The Backs and Midsummer Common along the River Cam, Christ's Pieces and Parker's Piece.

The historic city comprises two distinct areas divided by the River Cam and connected by the Magdalene Bridge. Castle Hill on the western side of the river is the site of the Roman settlement and medieval town with grand civic buildings such as Shire Hall. The larger eastern part dates from the late medieval period and is dominated by grand college buildings with large internal courts built between 1300 and 1600. There are also many surviving medieval churches which add considerable character. The historic core is the main retail centre of Cambridge and contains a mix of uses including high street and speciality shops, markets, cafes, restaurants, offices, flats and colleges which contribute to the lively atmosphere of the city. Key landmarks include King's College Chapel, St John's College Chapel, Great Saint Mary's and All Saints Jesus Lane.

##### *1B. Chesterton Village*

Chesterton is an historic village located north east of Cambridge's historic core on the River Cam. The village merged with Cambridge in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and is now surrounded by suburban development. Chesterton village is characterised by small scale Tudor and Victorian yellow brick cottages, lack of pavement development and narrow winding streets and lanes.

##### *2. West Cambridge*

West Cambridge on the western side of the River Cam is a distinctive area of the city dominated by university and college buildings with Grange Road functioning as the main spine road through the area. It comprises colleges, playing fields, large bespoke residential houses built for Fellows of the University, the residential area of Newnham and recent large-scale university development along Madingley Road. Several new colleges are located here including Fitzwilliam College and New Hall along Huntingdon Road and Churchill College along Madingley Road. Most of the west side of the river was unusable for buildings before the river was controlled by locks and drainage around 1875. The scenery of the Backs was therefore preserved. The houses are set back from the road and have large gardens with mature trees giving the area a green, leafy character. A key landmark is the

University Library tower.

### *3A. River Cam Corridor*

The Cam Corridor is a distinctive feature of Cambridge and forms part of an unbroken green finger through the city. The river corridor forms a landscape setting to the historic core unique to Cambridge. The river corridor comprises Sheeps Green, Paradise/Lammas Land and Coe Fen to the south, The Backs in the centre and Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common to the north east. Along the river there are foot and cycle paths, including two long distance paths, Fen River Way and Harcamlow Way, linking Cambridge with the surrounding countryside. The Cam Corridor is characterised by water meadows grazed by cows, and the river is popular for rowing, boating, fishing and the Cambridge tradition of punting.

### *3B. Coldham's Common*

Coldham's Common is an internal open space which follows Coldham's Brook and joins the Cam Corridor. It creates a gap between Romsey Town and the suburban area around Newmarket Road. The Harwich railway line divides Coldham's Common into two separate areas linked by a footbridge. Playing fields dominate the eastern side while the western side is traditional grazed common. From the eastern side the hangar buildings of Cambridge Airport are visible.

### *4A. New Chesterton*

The area north of Midsummer Common between Huntingdon Road and Elizabeth Way, known as New Chesterton, is characterised by narrow streets with small and medium sized Victorian brick terraces with small back yards. Many of the back streets have back of pavement development, creating an intimate scale. Most of this high density terrace housing was built in the second half of the nineteenth century. Along the main roads and along Oxford, Richmond and Halifax Road the terraced houses are larger and of higher quality with small front gardens with walls and the streets are wider. Most of the houses are built of brown and yellow brick and some are painted.

### *4B. Newtown, Mill Road, Barnwell and Romsey Town*

The Victorian development on the eastern side of Cambridge is extensive and includes the areas of Newtown, Mill Road, Barnwell and Romsey Town. The Barnwell Field was the site for by far the greater part of Cambridge's nineteenth century expansion, starting early in the century and continuing all through it. The Barnwell and Newtown areas contain a variety of closely interwoven nineteenth century building types including middle class and working class housing. Significant slum clearance and post-1945 redevelopment has, however, occurred in both areas. The development of much of Romsey Town on the south eastern side of the railway bridge did not come until the 1880's/1890's. This area is characterised by long straight terraces of brick-built houses constructed by speculative developers and narrow streets in a gridiron pattern with back of pavement development. The somewhat isolated location accounts for the long run of shops down Mill Road which were established to serve the area. There are a number of schools and churches in the area. Key features of the area are the University Botanic Garden, opened in 1844 and Fenner's Cricket Ground. Key landmarks include the Roman Catholic Church Spire, the Rank Hovis Building and Carter Bridge across the

railway line.

*5A. Cambridge Science Park, St John's Innovation Park and Cambridge Regional College*

Cambridge Science Park, St John's Innovation Park and Cambridge Regional College are located on the northern edge of the city off Milton Road adjacent to the A14. Cambridge Science Park, in particular, is a high quality business park with large-scale high quality commercial buildings in innovative styles housing mainly high technology companies. The buildings and car parks are partly screened by earth mounding and planting, giving it a very green and suburban character. The main spine road through the development is a meandering loop road. St John's Innovation Park also contains high quality commercial buildings, but has a more built-up character.

*5B. Railway Corridor*

The railway corridor is characterised by medium and large-scale commercial, light industrial and office development on both sides of the railway line. There are also extensive areas of hard surfacing for car parks and little vegetation. The approach to Cambridge along Newmarket Road has been particularly affected by commercial development with many closed facades to the street. The northern part of the railway corridor contains the railway sidings and the sewage works.

*5C. Cambridge Airport*

Cambridge Airport located on the eastern fringe of the City contains a number of large hangar buildings which are prominent in views towards the city from the east and from Coldham's Common.

*6A. Trumpington Road and Hills Road*

The residential area around Trumpington Road and Hills Road, south of the historic core, is a leafy suburb mainly comprising large detached and semi-detached houses with large gardens. The area contains a number of bespoke houses built around the turn of the century around Trumpington Road. The houses along Trumpington Road and Hills Road are set back from the road and are almost fully screened by hedges and trees. The area contains a number of schools and colleges with associated playing fields. This character area also includes Addenbrooke's Hospital and Vicar's Brook. Vicar's Brook forms part of a green finger providing an access link between the River Cam Corridor green finger and the wider countryside (at Granham's Road near Great Shelford), along public and permissive footpaths. This green finger also provides an open, rural setting to the approach along the railway line from London.

*6B. South-eastern Suburban Estates*

The south-eastern suburb of Cambridge is a relatively homogenous area containing mainly semi-detached and detached red brick houses with front and rear gardens built in the 1920's and 1930's. There is a large pocket of detached and semi-detached Victorian houses in the angle between Hills Road and Cherry Hinton Road built in the second half of the nineteenth century. The area east of Mowbray Road and south of Cherry Hinton Road mainly comprises post-war

housing. The mature street trees and trees in front and rear gardens give the suburb a green, leafy character. There are several schools with playing fields and a few areas of allotment gardens.

*6C. Newmarket Road Suburban Estates*

The suburb around Newmarket road, separated from Cambridge by Coldham's Common, consists mainly of red brick semi-detached houses with front and rear gardens built in the 1920's and 1930's. The character area also includes the City Cemetery, a post-war housing development and the Abbey Stadium.

*7A. Northern Suburban Estates*

The Northern Suburban Estates, including the Arbury and Kings Hedges estates and Chesterton, comprise inter- and post-war housing. 1920's and 1930's redbrick semi-detached houses with front and rear gardens and Arts and Crafts style rendered houses were built along the approach roads (Huntingdon Road, Histon Road and Milton Road). Post-war housing development has been built between the approach roads and extends close to the A14, and surrounds the historic village of Chesterton. The largest post-war council housing estate, North Arbury, built in the 1970's, contains a range of housing types including buff brick flats and terraced housing and the Kings Hedges estate comprises high density two storey red brick terraced houses around courts.

*7B. Cherry Hinton*

Cherry Hinton, located on the western periphery of Cambridge, consists mainly of post-war housing estates around a village core and is separated from Cambridge by Cherry Hinton Brook, the disused chalk pits and Cherry Hinton Hall. Only few historic buildings in the village core remain. Although there are a range of different housing types most of the housing estates are cul-de-sac developments.

**4.5.4 Conclusion**

Although considerable development has taken place in Cambridge in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city has retained its special character as a historic university city and its relatively small scale. Much of the historic core remains intact with colleges built between 1300 and 1600, medieval churches and narrow medieval streets giving the core of the city its distinctive character. 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban housing development, primarily in the form of semi-detached brick built houses with gardens has mainly occurred to the north, east and south east. The western side of Cambridge is less developed and is dominated by university buildings, colleges, large late 19<sup>th</sup> century houses and playing fields. The River Cam and associated commons and water meadows, which contribute greatly to the character of Cambridge, provide a green corridor through the heart of the city and a green setting to the historic core. The relationship between the city and its setting is especially strong along the River Cam Corridor.

Insert drawing 04

## 4.6 Landscape Character

### 4.6.1 Introduction

The characterisation approach adopted for the built area of Cambridge has been extended into the landscape. Understanding landscape character is fundamental to understanding what gives a landscape its distinctive identity. Where a landscape forms the setting for a settlement, landscape character assessment enables the settlement to be studied within its context, and the relationship between the settlement and its surroundings to be properly understood.

The methodology used for this landscape character assessment of Cambridge is based on the most recent guidelines, laid down in "*Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland*", published by the Countryside Agency in 2002. The undertaking of the landscape character assessment is a two-stage process. Firstly, desk studies were undertaken, investigating factors such as geology, landform, settlement pattern and communication routes. This information was analysed to define areas of common character (landscape types and landscape character areas) that would be tested and validated in the field. Secondly, fieldwork was undertaken, involving the visual analysis of the landscape, recording findings on Landscape Assessment record sheets. The draft landscape types and character areas identified during the desk study were appraised and refined.

The results of this landscape character assessment are shown on drawing 1641LP/05 and described below. Two categories of information are recorded: Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas. Landscape Character Types are generic types of landscape, which may repeat throughout the country. They contain broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, land use and vegetation. In contrast, Landscape Character Areas are geographically distinct parts of a particular landscape type. Each Landscape Character Area has its own character and identity because of its views, location and subtle variations, even though it shares the same generic characteristics as other places of the same landscape type. For example, within the Cambridge Green Belt, there are two Landscape Character Areas within the Fen Landscape Type: the Waterbeach-Lode Fen and Fulbourn Fen.

It should be noted that there is rarely an abrupt change between adjacent landscape types or character areas. For example, although a geology map may show a distinct line between underlying chalk and clay, this change may be less apparent on the ground, and form a gradual transition rather than a sudden change. For this reason, the lines showing landscape character area boundaries on drawing 1641LP/05 should be read as indicative only.

There are six landscape types described in section 4.6.2, and within these there are a total of 13 landscape character areas described in section 4.6.3.



#### 4.6.2 Landscape Types

##### 1. Fen

The Fen landscape type is situated to the north east and east of Cambridge. It is the southern tip of a landscape type, which extends northwards up to the Wash. The Fen landscape is low-lying and flat. (A high proportion of the Fens are below sea level, although in the vicinity of Cambridge they are just above sea level.) Dark peaty soils are clearly visible, and the vast majority of the land is in arable production. Much of the land was reclaimed through pumping of surface water, and there are numerous straight drainage ditches, which divide the regular fields. The landscape often has an artificial appearance, due to the recent and systematic draining of the land. Settlement is dispersed, and is restricted to scattered farms strung out on the higher land alongside roads. Most buildings are of brick construction and date from the draining of the land in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Fen landscape type is found in two areas:

- 1A. Waterbeach-Lode Fen Edge
- 1B. Little Wilbraham Fen

##### 2. Fen Edge

This is a transitional landscape type, situated between the Fens and the higher land beyond. It is relatively low lying, but not as low as the fens. It still appears generally flat, and contains a variety of land uses, including arable and pastoral agriculture, roads and settlement. The Fen Edge has traditionally been an important location for settlement, as it is above the Fen floodplain, and has easy access to both the wetland resources of the Fens and the higher land which is suitable for agriculture. The land to the north-west, north and east of Cambridge can be described as Fen Edge, although the building of the A14 has severed the link between the city and the Fen Edge landscape to the north. The Fen edge villages were traditionally wealthy and contain several fine medieval churches. Building materials traditionally used in the fen edge villages include gault brick, render, and thatch. Only the wealthiest buildings were constructed of stone.

The Fen Edge landscape type is found in two areas:

- 2A. Western Fen Edge
- 2B. Eastern Fen Edge

##### 3. Chalk Hills

The ridge of chalk hills which form an arc around Cambridge from the east to the south west are part of a much longer ridge of chalk. Their landform is gently undulating, with smooth slopes up to relatively high, rounded hills. The chalk ridge is adjacent to Cambridge to the south east of the city, where it forms the Gog Magog Hills. These contain the highest point in the vicinity of Cambridge. The predominant land use is arable agriculture on the chalky soils. There is relatively little settlement due to the shortage of water. Traditional building materials include flint, clunch and pale brick.

The Chalk Hills landscape type is found in four areas:

- 3A. North East Chalk Hills
- 3B. Gog Magog Chalk Hills
- 3C. Newton Chalk Hills
- 3D. Wimpole Ridge Chalk Hills

#### *4. River Valleys*

Cambridge is surrounded by river valley landscapes on its south west and southern edges. These valleys have been formed by rivers eroding the chalk or clay bedrock to create broad valleys, with a very gently undulating landform. There are numerous streams and tributaries. The alluvial sediment makes the land relatively fertile, allowing arable agriculture in higher areas, and pasture/ meadows in flood plains closer to watercourses. Numerous villages have developed in river valleys due to the proximity of fresh water. Many established at the crossing-points of watercourses and grew to become major settlements. Other villages have expanded in a linear form along the roads which follow the river valleys. Traditional building materials include render, stone, thatch, brick and tile. The relative ease of river transport made it relatively easy to import building materials from the surrounding areas.

The River Valleys landscape type is found in three areas:

- 4A. River Cam Corridor
- 4B. Granta Valley
- 4C. Rhee and Bourn Valleys

#### *5. Claylands*

The section of Claylands to the west of Cambridge is the tip of a landscape type which covers most of East Anglia. Clayland landscapes are typified by a topography of gentle ridges and valleys. They are often well wooded (particularly on hill tops) and the main land use is arable agriculture. There are fairly evenly scattered villages, often containing timber framed, rendered and thatched cottages, although in many rural areas the population of the clayland areas is less dense now than it was in Medieval times. The historic importance of the area is often reflected in landscape features such as green lanes, trackways, moats, churches and deserted villages.

The Clayland landscape type is found on one area:

- 5A. Western Claylands

## 6. Airport

Small airports can form landscapes which are neither urban nor rural. Their combination of extensive flat grassy areas, runways, lights and associated large-scale modern buildings create a distinctive landscape type which is instantly recognisable.

The Airport landscape type is found in one area:

- 6A. Cambridge Airport

### 4.6.3 Landscape Character Areas

#### 1A. Waterbeach- Lode Fen

The key characteristics of the Waterbeach-Lode Fen stem from the flatness of the landscape. These are the senses of space and openness, and the importance of the horizon and skylines in the panoramic distant views. It is a very regular landscape, with straight roads, ditches, shelter belts and field boundaries. The peaty soils are dark brown in colour, and support intensive arable agriculture. Lines of willows and poplars mark the course of the river Cam. Settlement is dispersed, and is restricted to scattered farms strung out on the higher land alongside roads. Most buildings are of brick construction and date from the draining of the land in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Views to Cambridge are restricted to the southern edge of the character area, where they are dominated by the hangars of the airport. Links with the city are through an extension to the Cam Corridor, which is a green finger into the city, and contains a long distance footpath and a railway line.

#### 1B. Little Wilbraham Fen

Little Wilbraham Fen is a small pocket of low-lying fen within the Eastern Fen Edge. A regimented pattern of flat arable fields and areas of wetland vegetation is divided by a network of straight droveways and drainage ditches, and the more sinuous path of Quy Water and Little Wilbraham River. Watercourses are often lined with hawthorn scrub or large willow trees. The willow trees are prominent features on the skyline. The Fen is generally quite open, with some enclosure provided by the tree and scrub vegetation, and the sloping landform outside the character area. In addition to Little Wilbraham Fen it includes two other named fens – Teversham Fen and Fulbourn Fen. It contains one SSSI (Wilbraham Fens), which is made up of a large area of fen and neutral grassland with associated scrub and open water communities, with dense stands of common reed *Phragmites australis*. Settlement within Little Wilbraham Fen is limited to isolated farms. There are no surfaced roads within the area.

The Harcamlow Way long distance footpath passes through the Little Wilbraham Fen.

#### 2A. Western Fen Edge

The Western Fen Edge landscape character area extends to the north and north

west of Cambridge. It is a relatively low-lying landscape, and undulates very gently between 5 and 20m above sea level. It is slightly higher than the Fen proper. It is a flat and expansive landscape, where sky and horizons are dominant features. Arable agriculture is the principal land use, and the land is divided into medium-sized regular fields. Hedges and shelterbelts between fields, plus several orchards, add a distinctive pattern of vegetation into the landscape.

Views to Cambridge are restricted by the low-lying topography and the A14. Therefore the only key views to Cambridge from the western fen edge are from the A14 itself. The A14 also acts as an artificial edge to the city, and undermines the gentle transition between the city and the fen edge.

There are several villages within the western fen edge, the majority of which developed on “islands” of higher ground to reduce the risk of flooding. They display a variety of historic forms: Some, such as Landbeach developed along routeways and are linear in form, whilst others such as Histon are nucleated around a village green. The villages closest to Cambridge (Girton, Histon and Milton) have all expanded considerably in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and are now often perilously close to being linked to Cambridge by suburban routes. However, each has retained its individual village character. The Fen edge villages were traditionally wealthy and contain several fine medieval churches. Building materials traditionally used in the fen edge villages include gault brick, render, and thatch. Only the wealthiest buildings were constructed of stone.

### *2B. Eastern Fen Edge*

The Eastern Fen Edge is a transitional landscape between the Fenlands and the Chalklands. One of the key characteristics of this landscape character area is the pockets of Fen and Chalk landscapes around and within it, which contribute to the transition and bring different influences.

The Eastern Fen Edge is open in character, and is generally arable farmland, divided by hawthorn hedges. Views are generally long, and often include the surrounding landscape character areas. In the northern part of the area, variety in the landscape is achieved through designed landscapes at Anglesey Abbey and Bottisham Hall.

There is a gradual transition between the farmland of the Eastern Fen Edge and the chalk hills to the east and south. From this higher land there are distant views to Cambridge, with the city set in a green landscape. There are immediate views to the edge of Cambridge from the western part of the landscape character area. The airport dominates many of these views.

Settlement in the Eastern Fen Edge includes scattered farms and a number of small villages separated by farmland. The villages are located on relatively high ground and their church towers are prominent in the landscape. Of these villages, only Fulbourn has expanded with significant areas of modern housing.

### *3A. North East Chalk Hills*

This landscape character area consists of rolling chalk farmland on the eastern edge of the Green Belt. These chalk hills are lower and less wooded than the Gog Magog Hills, and do not have their recreational function. The transition between the

North East Chalk Hills and the Eastern Fen Edge is very subtle and gradual, the main difference between the two landscapes being their elevation and topography.

The North East Chalk Hills are relatively inaccessible. The A14, A1303 and two minor roads pass through the area, but public access is limited to a few byways and footpaths.

The area contains distant views to Cambridge from the junctions between the A11 and Balsham Road, Mill Road and Little Wilbraham Road. There is also a key panoramic view of Cambridge within its rural setting from the A14 as it descends from Nine Mile Hill. Settlements are limited to a few scattered farms.

### *3B. Gog Magog Chalk Hills*

The Gog Magog Hills are a distinctive chalk ridge, which form an area of high ground to the south east of Cambridge. They are a series of rounded hills, capped with beech, lime and sycamore woodland on their summits. It is an open, elevated landscape with a strong sense of time-depth due to the Iron-Age hill fort at Wandlebury and the Roman road to Cambridge, which runs along the ridge. The majority of land is used for wheat production, but recreation also contributes to the character of the area, which contains a Country Park, Nature Reserve, picnic site and a golf course.

There are several elevated views to Cambridge, which give this landscape character area a strong sense of place. The green edge to Cambridge is strongly apparent in these views, and the Western Claylands also contribute to the green landscape surrounding the city. The summit of Wandlebury is a memorable feature which contributes to the character of the landscape and enriches the setting of Cambridge. Settlement on the Gog Magogs is limited to scattered farms, because of the shortage of water on the chalk.

### *3C. Newton Chalk Hills*

This landscape character area is formed by a small outcrop of chalk between the valleys of the Granta and the Rhee. It is a typical chalk landscape, containing a series of gently rolling hills used for arable agriculture. Public access to the hills is limited, but there are good views of the Granta Valley landscape character area from the obelisk on St Margaret's Mount. The landscape is open and vegetation is limited to shelterbelts and blocks of woodland. The predominant species is beech. Settlement consists of a few houses and farms alongside roads, particularly between Harston and Newton.

### *3D. Wimpole Ridge Chalk Hills*

The south west tip of the Cambridge Green Belt takes in a small part of the Wimpole Ridge Chalk Hills landscape character area. This is a chalk ridge, whose character is strongly influenced by the parkland of Wimpole Hall. This area is characterised by its elevated and rolling topography. On the northern face of the ridge (within the Green Belt), the parkland influence is less pronounced, and the slopes appear as open expanses of fields. However, the summit of the ridge is covered in dense deciduous woodland, including beech, oak, ash and lime.

There are distant views of Cambridge from the ridge, with the most famous from

Chapel Hill (a view referred to in Rupert Brooke's poem "*The Old Vicarage, Grantchester*"). In these views, Cambridge is visible as a compact "island" of green, due to the mature vegetation within the city and its green edge. The historic landmarks of Cambridge are visible on the skyline, and the city can be seen set in a green landscape, with river valleys, chalk hills and clay ridges all contributing to the impression of the city.

Settlement of this character area within the Green Belt is restricted to a few scattered farms.

#### *4A. River Cam Corridor*

The River Cam Corridor Landscape Character Area runs through Cambridge, on a roughly south west to north east course. It is distinctive from other river valley landscapes because of its key views to the landmark towers and spires of Cambridge, and because of its rural and pastoral character, even close to the city centre. It forms distinctive approaches to Cambridge from the south west and the north east along green fingers into the city via footpaths alongside the river. To the north, a long distance footpath provides a link between Cambridge and the open countryside, and a railway line also runs within the valley. The Cam Valley further enriches the setting of Cambridge through the historic association between the city and its river, and through the works of Rupert Brooke, Byron, and other poets who described the Cam valley around Grantchester. Grantchester contains a very attractive historic core containing timber-framed and rendered buildings.

#### *4B. Granta Valley*

The Granta Valley is situated to the south of Cambridge. It has the low-lying, gentle topography of the River Valley landscape type, but its character is distinguished by its wooded appearance and by the relatively built-up and suburban character of its villages. The woodland within the landscape gives it a relatively enclosed character, increases the "greenness" of the landscape setting, and screens views. This restricts views to the villages, as well as more distant views to Cambridge.

Settlement comprises a relatively large proportion of the land area. Many villages have developed along key routes into Cambridge, including the A10 and the A1301. The majority of these villages (which include Sawston, Shelford and Harston) have expanded through cluster or ribbon development, and this has led to a more suburban feel on the approaches to the city through this area.

#### *4C. Rhee and Bourn Valleys*

These valleys form the landscape to the south west of Cambridge. The landscape is comprised of a repeating pattern of subtle ridges and dips which reflect the drainage pattern. However, their overall appearance is relatively flat. Views are long, and framed by the wooded ridges of the western claylands to north and the Wimplote Chalk ridge to the south. The Rhee and Bourn Brook valleys have an open and tranquil character. The low density of settlement and the relatively quiet roads give them a strongly rural feel, although the lines of radio telescopes are highly distinctive features which contribute positively to the character of the landscape. The majority of land is in arable production, although pastures are common alongside streams. Stream corridors are often visible within the landscape as lines of willow trees.

Villages are generally small, and separated by extensive tracts of countryside. There are small areas of modern housing on the edges of some villages, but generally the villages have retained their small scale and historic character, and are key features within the landscape. There is a distinctive line of villages (including Haslingfield and Harlton), which follow the line of the Icknield Way (an ancient trackway) along the base of the chalk ridge at the south-western edge of the landscape character area. They have developed where the Icknield Way crossed streams or springs.

The key views to Cambridge within this character area are seen from the M11. The landmarks of the historic core are clearly visible and form skyline elements. Low lying countryside forms the foreground to these views, and the high quality green edge of the city means that the city appears to merge gradually with the countryside.

#### *5A. Western Claylands*

To the west of Cambridge is the Western Claylands landscape character area. This area is characterised by a combination of open arable fields and mature vegetation. This vegetation includes deciduous woodland on ridge tops, and hedgerows along routes and field boundaries.

The overall impression is of a mature, peaceful rural landscape which enhances the topography of east-west ridges. There are some distant views of Cambridge from high points, but the majority of these views are screened by vegetation in the summer months. An important approach into Cambridge from Bedford passes through the western claylands. Adjacent to the road is the American Cemetery, a memorable feature within the setting of the city. Just beyond the American Cemetery is a key elevated view of Cambridge.

This is an area that has seen population decline since the medieval period and today it contains only scattered villages and farmsteads. Madingley is a particularly attractive village, with its hall and estate cottages.

#### *6A. Cambridge Airport*

Cambridge Airport is situated on the eastern edge of the city. It is essentially a large, flat grassy field, with associated hangar buildings to the north west. The airport separates the city from the countryside beyond. It feels very open, with long views and a homogenous character, all traces of the historic landscape pattern having been removed. Visually, it functions as an open green space on the edge of the city, but it does not provide a public access link between the city and the open countryside.

#### **4.6.4 Conclusion**

There are a variety of landscapes within the Cambridge Green Belt. The diversity of landscapes within the setting of Cambridge is one of the city's defining characteristics.

Insert drawing 05



#### 4.7 Visual Assessment

Drawing 1641LP/06 shows the results of a visual assessment of Cambridge, with particular emphasis on the interrelationship between the city edge and the surrounding landscape.

Key viewpoints are shown, including distant and proximal views, both level and elevated. The viewpoints marked are not intended to be exhaustive, but are considered to be the most significant. There are also many other locations from where parts of Cambridge and its setting can be seen. Also shown is the approximate area of the Green Belt from which Cambridge can be seen. There are potentially a small number of viewpoints from high land outside this area, but they are isolated points, and their views of the city are very distant.

Selected photographs of Cambridge and its setting are shown in Appendix A, some of these from key viewpoints.

Key landmarks within Cambridge have been identified, which include historic and modern buildings and structures. They include buildings that form part of the historic core which would have been important landmarks 150 years ago (such as Kings College Chapel) and more recent buildings of a modern style, which form recognisable elements of 21<sup>st</sup> century Cambridge, but which contrast with and often detract from the historic buildings.

The key distinctive / memorable features in the landscape setting of the city have also been identified. Coincidentally, all are man-made.

Also shown is the interface between the city and surrounding landscape as observed in immediate views from routes around Cambridge. Four broad categories have been identified:

- *Level views, with a countryside foreground and a generally soft urban edge* (the west side of Cambridge and the north east Cam corridor, including views from the M11, northern and southern railway approaches and sections of the A14);
- *Elevated views with a countryside foreground and a generally soft urban edge* (from the Gog Magog Hills to the south east of Cambridge);
- *Level views within little / no foreground and a generally hard edge* (housing and science park as seen from the A14 on the north side of Cambridge); and
- *Level views with a mixed foreground and a mixed urban edge* (The eastern side of Cambridge, which is dominated by the Airport).

Outside the immediate surroundings of the city, the broader rural setting with scattered villages is shown, as it is important to the context of Cambridge, and fundamental to people's perception of the city as they approach and depart.

Insert drawing 06

## 5.0 SETTING AND SPECIAL CHARACTER

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### 5.1 Introduction

The qualities that contribute to the ***setting and special character of Cambridge*** are identified through analysis of baseline data set out in section 4.

### 5.2 Policy and Geographical Context

Features, sites and areas covered by environmental, cultural and access designations (drawing numbers 1641LP/01 and 02) are important elements that enrich the appearance of the landscape and people's experience of it. They all add to the character, diversity, biodiversity, history and general interest of the setting and special character of Cambridge.

Designated features, sites and areas are spread fairly evenly throughout the Green Belt and there are no obvious concentrations that could be deemed to make one area of the landscape more important to the city and its setting than another. We have therefore not produced a separate plan identifying which designated elements, or areas of landscape containing designations, are most important as all are deemed to be valuable to the setting and special character of Cambridge.

Drawing number 1641LP/03 clearly illustrates the topographical setting of Cambridge. Section 4.2 of the report describes the historical evolution of Cambridge and how it developed at a crossing point of the River Cam. As well as being the confluence of a number of trackways, it was also the meeting point of several landscapes: to the north the undrained wetlands of the fens (a valuable source of wildfowl, fish and reeds for thatching), to the west the densely forested clayland hills (a source of timber and game), and to the south and east a chalk ridge (providing pasture and easily worked arable land). Cambridge was situated on dry land adjacent to the river, which provided important access by boat from the north east. This understanding of the location of Cambridge and how the settlement used the surrounding landscape in an economic sense is part of the understanding of the relationship between the historic city and its current setting.

Although the landscapes around Cambridge have been modified by man over the subsequent centuries, the position of Cambridge set within a framework of hills divided by the River Cam and its tributaries to the west, south and south east, and the open, flat fens to the north (with a small area to the east beyond Teversham) are a subtle but fundamental aspect of the setting of Cambridge.

### 5.3 Approaches and Gateways to Cambridge

#### 5.3.1 Introduction

The following section describes the approaches and gateways to Cambridge shown on drawing 1641LP/07. Approaches to and within the urban area provide the viewpoints from which most visitors see the city and gain their perception of its scale. Distance and travel time between open countryside and distinctive Cambridge, and the character of the approaches, play an important role in determining people's perception of the character and scale of the city. The length

of approaches therefore provides a fair representation of how people perceive the scale of Cambridge.

Both the length and character of the approaches was assessed. The approaches were broadly characterised as green/treed, suburban or commercial. The length of the approach is determined by the distance between the urban gateway and the gateway to distinctive Cambridge.

Three categories of gateways were defined. The First View of Cambridge is the point along the approach route where the city of Cambridge first comes into view. The Urban Gateway is the point at which the character of the route becomes built-up and urban. The Gateway to Distinctive Cambridge is defined as the point at which the traveller feels a sense of arrival.

### 5.3.2 Green/Treed Approaches

#### *Trumpington Road*

The approach to Cambridge along Trumpington Road is an historic road and a distinctive route into Cambridge. The character of the route is suburban through Trumpington, and there are views to the historic village core. The character of the route is then green and treed up to Vicar's Brook and the Botanic Garden, which is a special quality to be safeguarded. This part of the approach does not feel strongly urban because there are mature trees and tall hedges on both sides of the road, the houses are set back from the road on the eastern side and there is the occasional glimpse across fields and the golf course to the west. The gateway to distinctive Cambridge is at the lighted junction with Lensfield Road which defines the edge of the historic core. This approach is of particular note because the gateway to distinctive Cambridge is very close to the urban gateway, enhancing the perception of Cambridge as a compact city.

#### *Hills Road*

The south eastern approach to Cambridge along Babraham Road and Hills Road is another historic route, which passes over the Gog Magog Hills. The first view of the city is an elevated panoramic view from the top of the hill near the Haverhill Road junction. The urban gateway is marked by suburban housing and Addenbrooke's Hospital, which is a prominent landmark on the edge of the city. Hills Road is a green treed road with large detached and semi-detached houses set back from the road. The road passes over the railway across the Railway Corridor with medium and large-scale commercial and office buildings. The gateway to distinctive Cambridge is at the lighted junction with Lensfield Road and Gonville Place which define the boundary to the historic core. Although this is a predominantly green approach there is scope for improvement through the Railway Corridor.

#### *Grantchester Road*

Grantchester Road is also an historic route linking Historic Cambridge and the historic village of Grantchester. The first view of Cambridge is just beyond the village where the towers and spires of the city can be seen above the green fringe with the Grantchester Meadows in the foreground. A view from a field entrance off this road is shown in Photograph 6 in Appendix A. This is an open rural approach up to the urban gateway at Newnham, where Victorian cottages line one side of the

road. The distance to the gateway to distinctive Cambridge, defined by Lammas Land, at the Barton Road and Grantchester Street junction, is short. This approach route is where the link between historic Cambridge and its rural setting is strongest, and relatively unspoilt by suburban development. This is an important quality to be safeguarded.

#### *Barton Road*

The south western approach along Barton Road is also a rural approach with only a short distance travelled through suburban development before reaching distinctive Cambridge, contributing positively to the perception of Cambridge as a compact city. The rural section of Barton Road, from which there are views of Cambridge and its setting, should be safeguarded.

#### *Madingley Road*

From the west Cambridge is approached along the historic route, Madingley Road. The first view of the city is an elevated panoramic view just before the turn-off to Coton. Development has occurred up to the M11, but the distance from the open countryside to distinctive Cambridge is still short, emphasising the quality of Cambridge as a compact city. The urban gateway is near the M11 and defined by the Park and Ride and British Antarctic Survey Building. The development along Madingley Road at High Cross is mainly large-scale University buildings such as the School of Veterinary Medicine, Laboratories and the Observatory. The approach is green and treed up to the gateway to distinctive Cambridge defined by Churchill College and large detached bespoke houses built for Fellows of the University.

#### *Huntingdon Road*

The route to Cambridge from the north west follows Huntingdon Road, which is an historic Roman Road. Huntingdon Road is straight and wide and has a green treed character, with large detached and semi-detached houses set back from the road. The gateway to distinctive Cambridge is defined by Fitzwilliam College and Victorian terraces on the northern side of the road. The route from the urban edge to distinctive Cambridge is relatively short and green, which gives the traveller a perception of a compact city.

### **5.3.3 Suburban Approaches**

#### *Histon Road*

The Histon Road approach from the north has a bland suburban character. The first view of Cambridge is from the A14 and the urban gateway is reached soon after turning off the northern bypass. There is a mix of residential building types along the road including single storey terraces, small flats and red brick semi-detached houses. The busy junction with Huntingdon Road and Victoria Road defines the gateway to distinctive Cambridge where there are views to Castle Hill.

#### *Milton Road*

Milton Road is both a commercial and suburban approach. The built-up area extends all the way up to the A14 at this point and the urban gateway is just off the

A14 junction. Cambridge Science Park and St John's Innovation Park have a business park character with large-scale buildings. The buildings and landscape are, however, of high quality and add to the character of Cambridge as a city of technology and innovation. Beyond the Science Park Milton Road has a suburban character. The street is wide with red brick semi detached and Arts and Crafts style houses. This approach could be improved considerably with street tree planting. The gateway to distinctive Cambridge is by the junction with Victoria Road and Chesterton Road where the traveller meets the traffic on the ring road and enters the Victorian development north of Midsummer Common.

#### *Cambridge Road*

Cambridge Road is a minor road which links Fulbourn village with Cambridge. This is a long suburban approach where the distance from the urban edge to the distinctive part of Cambridge is relatively far. The gateway to distinctive Cambridge is at the Hills Road and Lensfield Road junction.

### **5.3.4 Commercial Approaches**

#### *Newmarket Road*

The Newmarket Road is a long approach with a predominantly commercial character. The first view of Cambridge is near the A14 junction where the large hangar buildings of Cambridge Airport on the eastern fringe are in view. The urban gateway is marked by commercial urban fringe development, such as large car showrooms and the airport buildings. The road then passes through suburban development and the Railway Corridor with commercial and industrial development. The approach is generally unremarkable and sometimes unattractive, with many closed facades. There are two gateways to distinctive Cambridge from this approach. Turning north up Elizabeth Way the gateway is the bridge across the River Cam from which there are excellent views up and down the River. Turning south down East Road the Gateway is marked by Parker's Piece.

### **5.3.5 River Approaches**

The rural approaches to the city along the river corridor are particularly distinctive and differ markedly from the road approaches because of the close links between the pastoral Cam Corridor and the historic core. The landscape of the Cam corridor with views of the landmark towers and spires is distinctive of Cambridge and therefore the gateways to distinctive Cambridge are located where the first view of Cambridge appears, outside the urban area.

#### *Fen River Way and Harcamlow Way*

The first view of Cambridge when approaching the city along the River Cam from the north east along the long distance footpaths, Fen River Way and Harcamlow Way, is from Ditton Meadows. From here the towers and spires of Cambridge can be seen rising above the green edge of the city. The approach along the river is distinctive because of its rural and pastoral character, even close to the city centre. The railway bridge over the river is a prominent landmark. The gateway to urban Cambridge is by the Elizabeth Way bridge where the approach route gains a built up urban character.

*From Grantchester*

The southern approach to Cambridge along the public rights of way following the River Cam through Grantchester Meadows is a very distinctive green approach. From Grantchester Meadows there are views to the towers and spires of Cambridge with the pastoral water meadows in the foreground. The gateway to distinctive Cambridge is on the Grantchester Meadows close to Grantchester where the first view of Cambridge appears. The gateway to urban Cambridge is marked by the Fen Causeway bridge where the Cam corridor becomes more urbanised.

**5.3.6 Railway Approaches***From the South (London)*

The rail approach to Cambridge from the south is mainly green and rural in character, as the railway line passes through a green finger between Trumpington Road and Hills Road. The area between the urban gateway and the station is commercial and industrial in character but the effect on the quality of the approach is limited because the distance is short. Although the station is some distance from distinctive areas of the city, it is an important disembarkation point for many people arriving in Cambridge. The short length of the approach, between the urban gateway and the point of disembarkation, contributes positively to the perception of a compact city in a rural landscape setting.

*From the North (Ely)*

The rail approach from Ely is mainly commercial and industrial in character and relatively long. The urban gateway is by the crossing with the A14 from where there are views to the sewage works, the railway sidings and business park. The railway bridge across the River Cam from where there is a view to the river, Stourbridge Common and the spires of Cambridge, marks the gateway to distinctive Cambridge. The character of the approach between the river corridor and the station is commercial and industrial.

*From the East (Ipswich)*

The rail approach from the east passes through Cherry Hinton, past Cambridge Airport, through Coldham's Common and through the commercial and industrial area along the railway line.

This approach is relatively long, but once past Cherry Hinton, the overall character of the approach is green, due to the screening vegetation alongside the line, and the open landscapes associated with the pits and reclaimed land associated with the old cement works, and Coldham's Common. As the train passes across Coldham's Common, with its mature trees and grazing animals, the views from the train become more rural in character. The last part of the approach is through a commercial and industrial area, but the overall impression of this approach is of countryside almost to the station, contributing positively to the perception of a compact city in a rural landscape setting.

### 5.3.7 Pedestrian Links Between the City and its Rural Hinterland

The countryside setting to Cambridge is within easy access of the city centre and many neighbourhood communities, particularly those areas closest to green fingers and the edge of the city. This is true to the west, where the city centre is close to open countryside, and where the Cam corridor, with its good path network, penetrates through Cambridge along the River Cam. These links all enhance the perception that Cambridge is a compact city.

However, pedestrian links between much of the city and its rural hinterland are poor. To the north the A14 acts as a barrier between the city and the countryside. To the south east the city centre is separated from the countryside by 4 kilometres of urban development and footpath and cycleway links are limited. To the east links are poor, with the large inaccessible area of Cambridge Airport acting as a barrier between the city (including Coldham's Common), and the rural hinterland.

### 5.4 Green Fingers into Cambridge

Green fingers are widths of countryside or green space, with public access, penetrating from the open countryside into the urban fabric. They provide the settings for open approaches into the city, access for pedestrians and cyclists out into the countryside, corridors for wildlife, and a landscape setting to some edges of the city. They are shown on drawing number 1641LP/07. They can also be distinctive or supportive areas of landscape, as shown on drawing number 1641LP/08 and discussed in section 5.6.

The Cam corridor is the most important green finger, and is a continuous corridor passing through the heart of the city. Part of it (The Backs) forms an element of the historic core. This green finger has a number of qualities that are discussed in other sections of this report and is a key defining element of historic Cambridge and its setting.

The green finger between Trumpington Road and Hills Road provides the setting for an important open approach to the city, along the railway line from the south (see section 5.3.6). Links between the city and open countryside for pedestrians and cyclists through this green finger are poor, a single footpath along Vicar's Brook being curtailed at Long Road.

### 5.5 Relationship Between Villages and Cambridge

Cambridge is surrounded by an open rural landscape containing a number of villages. Section 4.2.2 introduces the historical origins and forms of villages, section 4.6 describes the nature of settlements in different landscape character areas in the Green Belt and section 5.3 illustrates the importance of approaches from some villages, such as from Grantchester.

Villages are scattered throughout the Green Belt of Cambridge, with patterns related to their origins and development over time. Drawing number 1641LP/05 shows landscape types and character areas, each with its characteristic settlement pattern. Within the Fen landscape type to the north east of Cambridge villages are limited and would have established on islands to reduce risk of flooding, with scattered farmsteads developing after the fens were drained. The Fen Edge



landscape type to the north and east has traditionally been an important location for settlement, as it is above the Fen floodplain, and had easy access to both the wetland resources of the Fens and the higher land that was suitable for agriculture. Villages in the Chalk Hills landscape type south and east of Cambridge are relatively scarce due to the shortage of ground or surface water and settlement is often limited to a few scattered farms. Numerous villages have developed in the River Valley landscape type to the south due to the proximity of fresh water, many having been established at the crossing-points of watercourses. The Western Claylands landscape type contains only scattered villages and farmsteads and has seen a population decline since the medieval period.

This pattern of villages surrounding Cambridge, separated by a predominantly agricultural landscape, is a fundamental part of the setting and special character of the city.

Each village possesses qualities which contribute positively to their character and therefore to the quality and setting of Cambridge. Chris Blandford Associates, in their capacity study of villages in South Cambridgeshire, identified the following as some of the most common key attributes of villages (Chris Blandford Associates 1998):

- Wooded setting for village
- River valleys and water meadows
- Historic village cores and village greens
- Strong linear form
- Important open spaces
- Parkland setting on village edge
- Village scale
- Areas of tranquillity
- Enclosed pasture forming transition on edge
- Long distance views from village

These illustrate some of the qualities that enhance people's experience and perception of the setting of Cambridge, particularly as they approach the city through and between villages, and view the city in its landscape setting from key viewpoints.

Our analysis has identified a circle of inner necklace villages, which are shown on drawing number 1641LP/07. These are villages that, due to their close proximity to Cambridge, play a particularly important role in the immediate setting of the city. More distant villages also play a role, particularly as people see them as they travel to and from Cambridge, and as they are seen in panoramic views of the city.

The rural landscape separating the inner necklace villages, and separating those villages from Cambridge, plays a critical role in preserving the separate identities of these villages and therefore the immediate landscape setting of the city.

Insert drawing 07

## 5.6 Townscape and Landscape Role and Function

The assessment of the 'function' that townscape and landscape plays in contributing to the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting has been based on a methodology established by Landscape Design Associates, and endorsed by the Countryside Agency (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002). This methodology was piloted in Winchester (Landscape Design Associates 1998) and developed in Salisbury. It was also used by Landscape Design Associates in the public inquiry relating to land at Witchford Road, Ely (1998) and was regarded by the inspector at the inquiry as reflecting a shift in assessment techniques.

*"There has been seismic shift amongst informed opinion ... that the setting of an historic town has to be viewed as a whole. Concentration on views of one aspect of that historic town ... will not suffice."*

### 5.6.1 Definition of the Area that Contributes to the Distinctiveness of Cambridge and its Setting

The area of landscape that contributes to the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting includes areas of the surrounding landscape from where the city is visible, or where it forms part of the foreground to more distant isolated viewpoints. This area is then sub-divided into areas of townscape and landscape that play a greater or lesser role in defining or supporting the distinctiveness of the city and its setting.

Boundaries have been prepared at a broad scale by making judgements in the field, from easily accessible communication routes. They have not been defined as precise lines and, in some instances, are gradual transitions where views of the city become progressively less or more distinct as the viewer moves through the landscape, or where there is only a gradual change in the character of the townscape or landscape.

### 5.6.2 Character

The distribution and pattern of townscape and landscape character within the city and its Green Belt has been described in sections 4.5 and 4.6 above. While all the character types and areas have an identifiable and coherent identity, their effect and relative influence on both the city and its setting is variable. An assessment of the contribution that these character areas make to the 'essence' of Cambridge and the unique sense of place, both within the city and its rural setting, can vary both within as well as between character boundaries. The land covered by townscape and landscape character types and areas will, therefore, often be different to the geographical definition of areas that contribute to the distinctiveness of the city and its setting.

### 5.6.3 Categories of Townscape and Landscape

The townscape and landscape is classified in relation to the function it performs in contributing to the distinctiveness of the city and its setting. The following classification categories established at Winchester were used and their principal characteristics are described below:

*Visually cohesive historic core*

This is the compact medieval core. Elements such as historic street pattern, building type, scale, architectural style, detailing and materials all generate a strong sense of the story of the city. The area may include subsequent nineteenth and twentieth century development, but the depth of historic character and the street pattern remains clearly visible. Areas of visually cohesive historic core also function as distinctive townscape / landscape.

*Distinctive townscape / landscape*

These are areas defined as specifically recognisable and distinctive to the city. They include townscape and landscape components such as quintessential views, the interaction of buildings forming spaces or the setting to local events, landform, setting and backdrops to the city, areas of rich biodiversity, historic approach routes and landmarks of distinctive character. These areas, frequently contiguous with the historic core, often borrow from or bestow character to them.

*Supportive townscape / landscape*

These are areas of townscape / landscape which support the character of the historic cores and areas distinctive to the city. They provide the backdrop and ambience, and bolster the sense of place of the city and its approaches.

*Connective townscape/landscape*

These are areas of townscape / landscape which are an integral part of the city and its environs, but lack individual distinction, or do not play a significant contribution to the setting of the city. This does not signify that these areas are unimportant, or lacking in their own identity. Rather, they are often areas divorced from or weakly attached to their landscape setting, or from landmarks within the landscape or historic cores. The use of mass-produced building materials, standard suburban layouts, styles and details are also contributing factors in the loss of local identity.

*Visually Detracting Townscape/Landscape*

These are areas or elements which detract from the distinctive and special character of the city and its setting. These may include routes, edges, built elements or districts, or degraded landscapes.

*Outer Rural Areas of the Green Belt*

These are areas of landscape from which distinct views of the city are scarce or absent. The function of this landscape is in providing a backdrop to views of the city, and in providing a setting for approaches to connective, supportive and distinctive areas of townscape and landscape.

Although the **cohesive historical core** within the city is pivotal to the essential character, it is not in all respects necessarily of greater importance than the remaining areas of influence. The areas of **distinctive** and **supportive** landscape and townscape play a crucial role in the setting and perception of a city. They may include sites and features of premier importance and are comparable with

elements within the historic core. The **connective** areas may also include significant landscape and townscape features but will not share the strength of characteristics that contribute to the 'essence of the city'. The importance of this final category lies in linking between and forming a foil to areas of **distinctive** and **supportive** landscape and townscape. In addition, all these areas have an importance to local communities and the way they use and identify with 'their' part of the city.

The visually cohesive historic core, and distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape, are areas that are most characteristic of Cambridge, and that contribute most strongly to the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting. They are therefore the areas that are most essential to the setting and special character of the City.

#### 5.6.4 Results

The results of this study are illustrated on drawing number 1641LP/08. This demonstrates the area of townscape and landscape that performs a significant role in contributing to the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting. It is notable that the areas of connective, supportive and distinctive landscape do not extend north of the A14, or as far as Hauxton or Great Shelford to the south of the city. This is largely because the city is not visible due to screening by landform, vegetation or development. To the east and west the area of land that contributes to the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting extends further from the urban area, largely due to the framework of landform providing more distant elevated vantage points of the city.

##### *Visually cohesive historic core*

Of particular note is the compactness and cohesiveness of the historic core of the city and its close visual and physical connection with the River Cam. This area includes townscape character area *1A Cambridge Historic Core* described in section 4.5.3, with its grand college, civic and ecclesiastical buildings with towers and spires and an intact medieval street pattern of narrow streets and alleyways and small squares. It contains areas of green space which play an integral role in defining the historic core, including The Backs, Christ's Pieces and Parker's Piece.

The visually cohesive historic core is a key element of the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting, and a fundamental quality of the setting and special character of the historic city.

##### *Distinctive townscape / landscape*

The colleges west of the historic core, up to the edge of the city, form the largest area of distinctive townscape. Other areas of distinctive townscape extend out from the historic core along two of the historic routes, Huntingdon Road to the north west, and the A1134 Trumpington Road and A1309 High Street to the south. The green space formed by the water meadows and open land along the River Cam form important areas of distinctive landscape running from the historic core, out towards open countryside to the south west and north east of the city.

The areas of distinctive townscape and landscape are key elements of the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting, and a fundamental quality of the

setting and special character of the historic city.

### *Supportive townscape / landscape*

Other green spaces within or on the edge of the city at Coldham's Common and along the River Cam west of Fen Ditton are less distinct to Cambridge but perform important supportive roles. Their roles in providing a setting to views of the city, and in providing green approaches to Cambridge, are an important element of the setting and special character of Cambridge.

Areas of supportive townscape include Chesterton (characterised by small scale Tudor and Victorian buff brick cottages, back of pavement development and narrow winding streets and lanes), New Chesterton (characterised by narrow streets with small and medium sized Victorian brick terraces with small back yards), and Newtown, Mill Road, Barnwell and Romsey Town (characterised by narrow streets in a gridiron pattern with back of pavement development and small brick terraced houses with small yards). The modern Cambridge Science Park and St John's Innovation Park on the northern edge of the city, with large-scale high quality commercial buildings, are also classified as supportive areas of townscape.

A large area of supportive landscape lies to the west of the city, between the colleges and the visually detracting M11. This open area of countryside provides an important foreground to views of the city, including the clearest views of the colleges and the historic core from the landscape anywhere around Cambridge. This area also contains Grantchester, a small village close to the city, and surrounds the Grantchester meadows, an area of distinctive landscape running south from the historic core along the River Cam.

Another large area of supportive landscape lies to the south and east of the city. This area includes a green finger running into the city between the areas around Trumpington Road and Hills Road. The railway line from London passes through this finger, providing an important open approach into the city for rail travellers. Further east the Gog Magog Hills lie close to the city and provide elevated vantage points for panoramic long distance views across open countryside in the foreground, the city in the middle distance, and the open landscape beyond including the flat fens to the north, and the clay hills to the west. This area of supportive landscape sweeps around to the east of the city to include lower land between Fulbourn and Cambridge, and the village of Teversham and its surrounding landscape.

The areas of supportive townscape and landscape are key elements of the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting, and a fundamental quality of the setting and special character of the historic city.

### *Connective townscape / landscape*

Areas of connective townscape / landscape includes much of the large scale suburban development to the north, east and south of the city. These areas are not distinctive to historic Cambridge but act as a relatively modern urban framework to supportive and distinctive parts of the city and landscape.

Connective landscape forms the remainder of the landscape from where the city is visible, or where it forms part of the foreground to more distant isolated viewpoints,

with the exception of the detracting features or areas shown on drawing number 1641LP/08.

*Visually detracting townscape / landscape*

Areas and features of visually detracting townscape and landscape are shown on drawing number 1641LP/08. These include the M11 and A14, the railway corridor within the city, the hangar buildings at Cambridge Airport, Addenbrooke's Hospital and a line of pylons running across the Fen and Fen Edge landscape types east of Teversham.

Views from the landscape east and south east of Cambridge are adversely affected by the presence of large, industrial style buildings and structures in the railway corridor, at Cambridge Airport and Addenbrooke's Hospital. They detract from the edge and skyline of the city, and dominate the more subtle profiles of historic buildings in the historic core.

The M11 and A14 are busy dual carriageway roads that are recent additions to the landscape. They provide fast bypasses to the city. These surround two thirds of the city and bear no relationship to its historical development or character, or to the historical pattern and character of the landscape. They have the effect of breaking up the landscape setting to the west and north of Cambridge and limiting the area of landscape that contributes most strongly to the distinctiveness of Cambridge. This contrasts with landscape to the east of the city, which spreads from the urban edge, unbroken by such major visual detractors.

*Outer Rural Areas of Green Belt*

The remaining areas of landscape within the Green Belt provide a broader rural context to connective, supportive and distinctive areas of the city. These are areas from where distinct views of the city are scarce or absent. The function of this landscape is in providing a backdrop to views of the city and in providing a setting for approaches to connective, supportive and distinctive areas of townscape and landscape. Land beyond the Green Belt boundary would also fulfil this role, to a gradually diminishing extent with increasing distance from Cambridge.

**5.6.5 Conclusions**

The above study has shown that there are defined areas of land (within the parameters of this broad scale assessment) that contribute in different ways to the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting. The visually cohesive historic core, and distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape, are areas that are most characteristic of Cambridge, and these should be protected most strongly. These areas are finite and once they have been lost, for example by developing on supportive countryside, the setting of one of England's most special historic cities will have been irreparably damaged.

PPG3 states that *"There may be occasions ... where Green Belt boundaries have been tightly drawn and there may be a case for reviewing these boundaries and planning for development where this would be the most sustainable of the available options. An extension of an urban area into the Green Belt may, for example, be preferable to new development taking place on a greenfield in a less sustainable location."* (DETR 2000.) (See section 2.5.) It is especially important that distinctive and supportive areas of landscape are not "traded" on these grounds, as it would

cause significant detriment to the Green Belt.

Areas of connective landscape are also important in the role that they play in contributing to the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting, but they are not distinctive to Cambridge. They are, however, finite and worthy of protection through positive management, conservation, enhancement or potentially, and only in limited locations, development. They may have potential to accommodate change that does not cause adverse affects on the setting and special character of the city. This would need to be determined by more detailed assessment.

Outer Rural Areas play a lesser role in contributing to the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting, and are less finite as land that plays this role continues to an undefined extent beyond the Green Belt boundary. Outer Rural Areas might also have the potential to accommodate change (and development) that does not adversely affect the setting and special character of Cambridge, subject to clarification by more detailed assessment.

Policy 9/3b of the latest draft Structure Plan (Cambridgeshire County Council 2002) states that the local planning authorities will *“review the outer boundary of the Green Belt to determine if additional areas can be identified which serve the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt and should be included within it.”* The majority of the outer Green Belt boundary falls within land classified as Outer Rural Areas, and the remainder as connective landscape. There would be little benefit in extending the outer boundary to include Outer Rural Areas, in accordance with the fourth purpose for including land within Green Belts which is *“To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns”* (PPG2 Para 1.5), as none of this land fulfills this Green Belt purpose. There might be some benefit in extending sections of the boundary where the land is connective landscape (subject to clarification by more detailed assessment), but not at the expense of distinctive or supportive landscape closer to the city.



Insert drawing 08

## 6.0 QUALITIES TO BE SAFEGUARDED AND A VISION OF THE CITY

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### 6.1 Introduction

Sections 4 and 5 have illustrated and analysed factors that contribute to **the setting and special character** of Cambridge<sup>1</sup>. This section now takes the process two steps further.

- The first step distils, from the broader analysis carried out in sections 4 and 5, **the qualities that should be safeguarded** in order to protect the setting and special character of Cambridge.
- The second step sets out **a vision of the city**<sup>2</sup>. This is a creative process aimed at identifying strategic initiatives to enhance the setting and special character of Cambridge whilst maintaining those existing qualities to be safeguarded.

### 6.2 Special Qualities to be Safeguarded

The qualities to be safeguarded in order to protect the setting and special character of Cambridge are listed below. Each of these is described in more detail in the following text. They are not listed in order of importance as each has a unique role to play and the degradation of any of these would diminish the setting and special character of the city. Their geographical locations, where they can be easily represented in plan form, are shown on drawing number 1641LP/09.

*The qualities which make Cambridge special*

- A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole
- A city focussed on the historic core
- Short and/or characteristic approaches to Cambridge from the edge of the city
- A city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle
- Key views of Cambridge from the landscape
- Significant areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape
- Topography providing a framework to Cambridge
- A soft green edge to the city
- Green fingers into the city
- Designated sites and areas enriching the setting of Cambridge
- Long distance footpaths and bridleways providing links between Cambridge and the open countryside
- Elements and features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting
- The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of necklace villages
- A city set in a landscape which retains a strongly rural character.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the five purposes for including land in the Green Belt set out in PPG2 is “To preserve **the setting and special character** of historic towns”.

<sup>2</sup> RPG6 requires that “A review of the Cambridge Green Belt ... should start from **a vision of the city and of the qualities to be safeguarded**”.

### 6.2.1 A Large Historic Core Relative to the Size of the City as a Whole

There are probably no towns in England, which are 'historic' in the sense that they are completely ancient, unspoilt and without more modern development. Some small villages are almost entirely 'historic', but none of the classic historic cities, such as Durham, Bath, York or Cambridge are unaffected by more modern development. Nevertheless, we still refer to such cities as 'historic' and it is reasonable to assume that the term 'historic towns' in PPG2 is intended to cover the settlements just mentioned, including Cambridge. Thus, an historic town, for the purposes of PPG2, will have a significant area of historic development, typically the core, and additional areas of more recent development, typically on the peripheries. This is the pattern that we see in Cambridge.

Many towns have older cores, sometimes so ancient that they could reasonably be described as 'historic'. However, where these historic cores are small in proportion to the town or city as a whole, few would argue that this would make the whole settlement 'historic'. For example, Peterborough has an historic core around the cathedral, but that city is dominated by more recent development, including large areas of 'new town'. Cambridge, by contrast, has a relatively large area within the historic core, compared with the size of the city as a whole, and is regarded as an historic settlement.

The contrasting examples of Peterborough and Cambridge explain the significance of the balance between the historic core and the non-historic periphery to the perception of a settlement and whether it could be described as an historic town. If a small historic core is swamped by more modern peripheral development, as at Peterborough, it is difficult to describe the settlement as a whole as historic.

The contrasting examples of Peterborough and Cambridge help explain why the issue of scale is so important when considering the protection of historic towns and cities. In the case of Cambridge, its special historic character depends not only on the relatively large and intact historic core, but also on the fact that this has not been 'swamped' by more recent development. Despite the presence of business parks and more recent peripheral housing estates and other development, the scale of the historic core relative to the whole is such that Cambridge still retains its historic character. If substantial peripheral development were to be permitted in Cambridge, more modern development would begin to dominate and, as the scale of the historic core is fixed, it would be inevitable that the overall historic character of the settlement would begin to be eroded. If Cambridge were to grow beyond a certain point, it would no longer have the character of an historic city, but rather would become merely a city with an historic core - quite a different character of settlement.

In our judgement, Cambridge has grown to the point where the balance of scale between the historic core and more modern peripheral development is such that if further peripheral growth were to be allowed, the character of the city as an historic settlement would reach and pass an unacceptable threshold - it would become an ordinary city with an historic core, and one of the country's finest historic settlements would be irretrievably lost.

The issue of **scale** is, therefore, of vital significance to the protection of the special character of Cambridge. It needs to retain the feeling of being a small city, one still dominated by its historic core, if it is to retain its special character. The relatively

small scale of Cambridge is one of the special qualities to be safeguarded. The Green Belt has a special role to play in preserving this special character.

This over-arching point concerning the balance between the historic core and the size of the city as a whole and, thus, the issue of scale, is further explored in a number of the following sections identifying those qualities which make Cambridge special.

### 6.2.2 A City Focused on the Historic Core

Section 4.2 describes how Cambridge did not expand much beyond its medieval limits until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, despite extensive expansion since that time, Cambridge is formed of a network of neighbourhood hubs and commercial areas or developments (such as industrial development around the railway and Cambridge Science Park) centralised around a single core, which is focused on the medieval area. The core is a vibrant social, cultural and economic focus to the city. There is a finite number of compact, single centred historic cities in the England and this aspect of Cambridge is an important quality that should be safeguarded.

There is a danger that, if the city expands much beyond its current size, the existing core will not be accessible to the people of Cambridge due to the distance, and inconvenience of travelling, between residential areas and the centre. This might lead to the development of alternative urban cores that provide the economic and social focus for large areas of the city, competing with the historic centre and irretrievably altering the historic form and function of Cambridge.

### 6.2.3 Short and/or Characteristic Approaches to Cambridge from the Edge of the City

Approach routes into Cambridge provide the viewpoints from which most visitors see, and gain their perception of, the city. The nature of the approach between the urban gateway and distinctive Cambridge (for example whether it is short, attractive and characteristic of Cambridge or long and unremarkable) will play an important role in determining people's impression of the city, and whether they perceive it as a special 'historic' city. Distance and travel time between open countryside and distinctive Cambridge, and the quality and character of the peripheral development passed through, contributes to people's perception of the scale of the city, and whether it is an **historic city** dominated by the historic core, or an **ordinary city** with an historic core dominated by modern development.

Short and/or characteristic approaches are shown on drawing number 1641LP/09. The shortest and most characteristic approaches between open countryside and distinctive Cambridge lie to the south and west. These are described in section 5.3 and comprise Trumpington Road, Grantchester Road, Barton Road, Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road, as well as the two rural approaches along the green finger following the River Cam. These routes, in particular, should be safeguarded.

Railway lines into Cambridge from the south and east (see section 5.3.6) pass through open countryside or green landscape almost to the station. Although the station is some distance from distinctive areas of the city, it is an important disembarkation point for many people arriving in Cambridge. These approaches should be safeguarded.

It is also important that longer and unremarkable approaches into the city are not degraded further as they all play a role in contributing to people's perception of Cambridge. In particular, ribbon development along all routes into Cambridge should be avoided, especially where this would narrow the gap between the city and necklace villages.

Section 5.3.7 describes how the countryside around Cambridge and penetrating into urban areas is within easy access of neighbourhood communities and the city centre. These links should be preserved, and opportunities for the creation of additional links should be considered.

#### **6.2.4 A City of a Human Scale Easily Crossed by Foot and by Bicycle**

Cambridge has a tradition for cycling. Much of the population, particularly students, travel the city by foot or by bicycle. This is made possible by the relatively small size of the city. As Cambridge expands, so does the distance of travel between different parts of the city.

The average UK cycle journey between 1995 and 1997 was 3.7km (National Cycling Strategy 1999). The distance along certain routes between the city centre and current edges of Cambridge (some of which are labeled on drawing number 1641LP/07) are:

East Cambridge - Hills Road 4.6km, Fulbourn Road 5.5km, Newmarket Road 4.6km, Milton Road 4.9km, Histon Road 3.5km, Huntingdon Road, 3.7km, Madingley Road 3.1km, Barton Road 2.4km, Trumpington Road 4.7km.

The average distance for these approaches is already significantly beyond the national average cycle journey.

The centre and the west sides of Cambridge are of a small, human scale and easily crossed by foot and bicycle. This is a special quality of Cambridge that should be safeguarded.

The north, east and south sides are much larger and the special quality of Cambridge as a city of human scale, easily crossed by foot and by bicycle, has already been eroded. Further erosion of this quality should be prevented by ensuring that Cambridge does not expand beyond certain limits, and by creating and managing a good network of paths and cycleways.

#### **6.2.5 Key Views of Cambridge from the Landscape**

Key views of Cambridge from the landscape are described in section 4.7 and illustrated on drawing number 1641LP/09. These views are limited, largely due to extensive areas of relatively flat topography, with only a few areas of high ground providing elevated viewpoints, but also due to the presence of extensive urban areas separating distinctive landmarks or features of the city from the landscape. Skyline views of college buildings, church spires and towers and other distinctive features are limited and often distant, and frequently spoilt by visually detracting buildings and structures and a framework of extensive, indistinct urban form.

There are, however, a number of viewpoints that are important and the qualities of these views should be preserved and, where possible, enhanced. The viewpoints identified on drawing number 1641LP/09 are the most important as it is from these

locations that people can best appreciate different qualities of Cambridge. All viewpoints identified provide different views of landmark features or defining characteristics of the city.

The three best examples are the Gog Magog hills south east of the city, Chapel Hill on the Green Belt boundary south of Haslingfield and the A1303 (Newmarket Road) where it crosses the A14 on the eastern edge of the Green Belt. From these viewpoints many of the qualities can be appreciated including the compact nature of the city, the rural landscape setting, the proximity and nature of surrounding villages, the green, treed appearance of much of the city and its urban/rural interface, landform providing a framework to Cambridge, and many of the elements and features of the townscape and landscape that contribute positively to its the setting and special character. It is essential that the qualities of these three views in particular be preserved.

The background illustrations on the cover of this report show how Cambridge appeared in 1688. The cover photograph and Photograph 2 in Appendix A shows that, because development has been limited on the west side of the city, the quality of views of that side of the historic city, with open countryside and a soft green edge, and landmark historic buildings clearly visible and largely unaffected by modern development, have remained in tact over the last 300 years. This is the image that many people see of Cambridge as they pass on the M11, and is therefore of great importance. The quality of views, and of the appearance of the city from the west, is a special quality of the setting and special character of the historic city that is important to safeguard. This unique and classic view is fragile and irreplaceable, and any development that would detract from this should be strongly resisted.

The view of Cambridge from all other sides of the city very different and the historic buildings are either dominated by more modern peripheral development, or not visible due to the much greater distance between the historic core and the city edge. Views from the east in 2002 have changed considerably from the top illustration and, although there are some key views of the historic buildings from the countryside, they are more distant and dominated by a foreground of suburban and commercial development including massive elements on the city edge such as the hangar buildings at Cambridge Airport and Addenbrooke's hospital. The nature of these views can be seen from Photographs 1, 3 and 5 in Appendix A. Although these views are spoiled by the mass of peripheral development, any remaining key views should not be degraded further by inappropriate peripheral development.

Many of the qualities of Cambridge can also be appreciated from other viewpoints that are not shown on drawing number 1641LP/09. Views of the whole city in its landscape setting are not possible from these but different qualities can be appreciated to a greater or lesser extent and should be preserved or enhanced.

There are numerous other locations with views of Cambridge and its setting not identified as key views. These are also important and should be safeguarded and, where appropriate, enhanced.

#### **6.2.6 Significant Areas of Distinctive and Supportive Townscape and Landscape**

Section 5.6 demonstrates how areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape contribute most strongly to the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting. They are, therefore, important areas to protect. However, as discussed in

that section, these areas are not in every respect of greater importance than the remaining areas of influence (with the exception of Visually Detracting Townscape/Landscape), as all areas play a crucial role in the setting and perception of the city. The importance of *Connective Townscape/Landscape* and *Outer Rural Areas* lies in linking between and forming a foil to areas of Historic Core and Distinctive and Supportive townscape and landscape.

We have identified on drawing number 1641LP/09 distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape as the most essential areas to be safeguarded, and to be preserved in their current form. However, other areas should also be safeguarded from change which would cause adverse affects on this aspect of the setting and special character of Cambridge.

#### **6.2.7 Topography Providing a Framework to Cambridge**

The landform surrounding Cambridge is discussed in section 4.4 and illustrated on drawing number 1641LP/03. The importance of topography in contributing to the setting and special character of the city as seen from key viewpoints has been discussed in section 6.2.5.

It is important that the historical relationship between built development and landform is understood and preserved. Cambridge was established on a bridging point of the River Cam and has expanded into surrounding low lying areas of landscape. It has not developed up onto the sides of hills to the west and south east, or onto floodplains of the River Cam, its tributaries, or the fens. The lack of development on the floodplain of the River Cam has created the development of a distinctive green corridor through the heart of the historic city, linking open countryside with the historic core. This is one of the key defining qualities of the Cambridge. It is important that any future development respects the historical relationship between built development and landform so that this aspect of the setting and special character of Cambridge is preserved.

#### **6.2.8 A Soft Green Edge to the City**

A distinctive feature of Cambridge is its appearance as a densely treed city with a soft, green edge merging into an agricultural landscape. Where new, and particularly large scale, development occurs on the edge of the city and forms a boundary that appears abrupt and predominantly hard (such as the A14, Cambridge Airport buildings and Addenbrooke's Hospital) it does not contribute positively to the setting and special character of Cambridge.

The area shown on drawing number 1641LP/09 west of the city, between the A1307 in the north and the A1309 in the south, has a high quality landscape merging with a soft green edge. It is important to preserve this edge, taking care not to spoil the relationship between the city and the landscape with inappropriate development and the creation of an abrupt, hard urban edge.

#### **6.2.9 Green Fingers into the City**

Section 5.4 describes the importance of green fingers in providing green links between the city and the open countryside around Cambridge. These should be safeguarded from development which would spoil their character and function.

The Cam corridor is a key defining element of historic Cambridge and its setting

and it is essential that it should be preserved. The green finger between Trumpington Road and Hills Road should remain open and provides opportunities for enhanced access between the city and the countryside.

#### **6.2.10 Designated Sites and Areas Enriching the Setting of Cambridge**

As discussed in section 5.2 all features, sites and areas covered by environmental, cultural and access designations (drawing numbers 1641LP/01 and 02) are important elements that enrich the appearance of the landscape and people's experience of it. They are all part of the setting and special character of Cambridge that should be preserved.

#### **6.2.11 Long Distance Footpaths and Bridleways Providing Links Between Cambridge and the Open Countryside**

Once Green Belts have been defined, PPG2 states that they have six positive roles to play, the first of which is "*to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population*" (DETR 1995). Long distance footpaths and cycleways in the Cambridge Green Belt are discussed in section 4.3.2 and shown on drawing number 1641LP/02. They provide important recreational links between the city and its setting, and also viewpoints and approaches from which people gain a perception of Cambridge. These long distance routes, and also shorter, local footpaths and bridleways providing access into the countryside in the immediate vicinity of Cambridge, are important qualities of the setting and special character of the city that should be preserved.

#### **6.2.12 Elements and Features Contributing Positively to the Character of the Landscape Setting**

There is a pattern of elements and features within the city and the landscape, ranging from large scale features such hills, rivers, woodlands and tall University buildings, to smaller scale elements such as hedgerows, farm buildings, and a network of smaller watercourses (e.g. ditches and streams in the Fen and Claylands landscape types, and spring fed streams in the Chalklands), that are fundamental to the character of different landscape character areas discussed in section 4.6, and also to the setting and special character of Cambridge. These are too numerous and widely spread to illustrate on a plan and many are identified as qualities to be preserved in other sections of this report. Some, such as the river Cam and its flood plain, or the open Gog Magog Hills, are fundamental to the setting and special character of Cambridge and should be preserved as a particular priority. Others, such as hedgerows or small watercourses, will need consideration as part of policy or management initiatives, or on an individual basis. As a broad policy they should be preserved but, subject to detailed assessment, it might be possible to respect or preserve these elements in a new development.

There are some elements and features that are visually detracting to the setting and special character of Cambridge, such as the M11, the A14, pylons running from Cherry Hinton across the landscape east of Teversham, the hangar buildings at Cambridge Airport and Addenbrooke's Hospital (see drawing number 1641LP/08). The adverse effects of these should, where possible, be mitigated against.



### 6.2.13 **The Distribution, Physical Separation, Setting, Scale and Character of Necklace Villages**

Section 5.5 identifies the role that villages play in contributing to the setting and special character of Cambridge. It is essential to preserve their pattern and character throughout different landscape types and character areas, their physical separation from other settlements, their rural landscape settings and their scale.

The Cambridge Green Belt provides protection for the countryside between settlements. The second purpose of Green Belts defined in PPG2 is “*to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another*” (DETR 1995). The latest draft of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan states that one of the general purposes of the Green Belt around Cambridge is in “*preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with Cambridge*” (Cambridgeshire County Council 2002). Although all areas of open countryside in the Green Belt play a role to a greater or lesser extent in separating settlements, those areas of land that are considered to be most critical in separating settlements within the immediate setting of Cambridge, and which should be afforded the greatest protection, are shown on drawing number 1641LP/09.

### 6.2.14 **A City Set in a Landscape which Retains a Strongly Rural Character**

The predominant land use within the Green Belt is arable agriculture with local areas of livestock grazing on areas including water meadows beside watercourses, interspersed with various other land uses, and a variety of elements and features. The overriding character of the setting of Cambridge is rural, with a greater density of settlements in certain areas than others, as described in section 5.5.

It is important that the landscape surrounding Cambridge retains this rural character. The rural nature of the landscape around Cambridge is a defining quality of the setting and special character of the city, particularly in providing a setting to the urban form when seen from key views (section 6.2.3), in providing settings to necklace villages, and in contributing to people’s perception of the city as they approach it along communication routes.

The rural setting of Cambridge is of great significance within the immediate vicinity of the city. It is here that the rural landscape should be most strongly preserved, or opportunities taken to restore or enhance the rural character and the soft green edge to the city. However, this study was carried out at a broad scale and did not assess every area of rural land around the periphery of Cambridge. The degree to which different areas of rural land are important to the setting and special character of Cambridge will vary depending on a number of factors including visibility, character, and importance of other key qualities. More detailed study might identify ‘rural’ sites within areas shown on drawing number 1641LP/09 that are less essential than the broader rural landscape within which they lie, and which could potentially be developed.

Insert drawing 09

## 6.3 A Vision for Cambridge

### 6.3.1 Introduction

This vision for Cambridge sets out a strategy for safeguarding and enhancing the setting and special character of Cambridge, while recognising that there is a need for some urban expansion, through Green Belt releases, in order to contribute to the development targets of RPG6.

Holford and Miles Wright set out their vision for the original Green Belt in 1950 (Holford W and Miles Wright H 1950) (see section 2.2). The key question asked (and answered) in the Holford Report was “*can [changes] be arranged to maintain and enhance the essential character and virtues of the town?*” (Holford and Miles 1950, p.vii). In answering this question, they listed the “*qualities which most people would wish to retain or improve*”, and which therefore should be safeguarded, in a similar manner to this study by LDA.

Holford and Miles Wright drew the conclusion that Cambridge should have an ultimate population ceiling of 100,000, if the “*present character and fine qualities of Cambridge*” were to be retained (Para 281) and came to the view that “*it is impossible to make a good expanding plan for Cambridge*” (Para 272). The estimated population of Cambridge in 2000 was 110,000. Although we have not made a comparison between the city in 1950 and 2002, this study has shown that Cambridge and its setting still possess many qualities that are important to the historic city, and which should be safeguarded. Cambridge remains one of the country's finest historic cities.

Holford and Miles Wright's Report appears to have largely been successful in leading to the protection of the special qualities of Cambridge. However, Holford and Miles Wright's Report is now outdated, and it is necessary to take a fresh look at a vision for Cambridge. This new vision, 52 years after the original vision, is given in section 6.3.

Like Holford and Miles Wright, LDA believe that “Changes can be arranged to maintain and enhance the essential character and virtues of the town”. Although some of these “character and virtues” are beyond the scope of the LDA study, others are highly pertinent, namely:

- the central open spaces;
- the countryside near the centre of the city;
- the compactness of the city and;
- maintenance of Cambridge as a good centre for residents and visitors and its distinctive market town character.

A full explanation of the special qualities of Cambridge identified by LDA in 2002 are described in section 6.2.

LDA's vision for Cambridge is also for a compact and contained city. Although the size envisioned would be larger than that recommended by Holford and Miles Wright, the potential location of further housing on the north and east of the city remains. The limits to development proposed by LDA are in many ways similar to those proposed by Holford and Miles Wright, namely:

- the maintenance of the separation of surrounding villages from Cambridge, and their traditional character;
- the maintenance of green wedges along the river;
- the maintenance of open countryside on the west side of the town, and;
- development is excluded from the foothills of the Gogs.

It is important that the qualities identified by LDA in 2002, and those identified by Holford and Miles Wright and successfully retained for 50 years, continue to be valued and protected. If LDA's vision is followed and developed, that aim should be achieved.

### 6.3.2 The Vision for Cambridge in 2002

Drawing 1641LP/LP10 sets out the vision for Cambridge in 2002. It illustrates strategic initiatives which could preserve and enhance the quality of Cambridge and its setting. These relate to Green Belt purposes and to the potential uses of land within the Green Belt, as set out in PPG2 (DETR 1995). This vision is not intended to identify precise Green Belt initiatives, enhancements and opportunities for release; these would need to be the subject of more detailed studies. The exception is longer term development at the Airport, which is addressed in section 7.

Some enhancements to Cambridge and its setting can only be achieved if land and finance becomes available, and it is likely that at least some of these possibilities would relate to, and be delivered as part of, development initiatives. Thus, the vision for Cambridge and its setting should be informed primarily through the analysis set out in this study, but also by delivery proposals which are likely to be primarily in the hands of landowners, the development industry and, of course, the planning authorities through their development plans and statutory powers.

Only if sites can be released without detriment to Green Belt purposes, should they be considered for development. Where development takes place, it is recommended that developers and the local authorities should work together to identify initiatives that will help achieve the vision for Cambridge.

The vision for the future of Cambridge in 2002 is set out below. This vision safeguards the key qualities of the setting and special character of Cambridge described in section 6.2 as a primary objective:

- Ensure that peripheral development does not grow so as to be a threat to the dominance of the historic core and areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape. Maintain a compact city in a rural setting.
- Only limited peripheral development is possible if the setting and special character of the city is to be protected or improved. At the broad scale of assessment carried out in this study this is most likely to be in areas numbered 9, 10 and 11 on drawing 1641LP/10. However, there might be scope for some small scale development in limited locations outside these areas. This would need to be verified by more detailed survey and analysis.
- The long term role of a tightly drawn Green Belt is therefore vital to the protection of Cambridge of one of England's most special historic cities.

- The significant number of short and/or distinctive approaches to Cambridge is a particular feature of its special character, and all these key routes need to be protected. Other routes should be enhanced.
- Ease of travel within the city by foot and by bicycle, particularly between the suburbs and the historic core, is an important part of the vision for Cambridge. Proposed peripheral development should be easily accessible by foot and bicycle and not be beyond certain distances of the historic core.
- There are a number of key viewpoints to Cambridge from where its special character and setting can be perceived; the quality of views from these locations need to be given particular significance when considering any development proposals or changes within the surrounding rural landscape.
- Conservation measures, and especially high standards of development control, design and management, need to be a feature of areas of the historic core, and areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape. Conservation, management, enhancement and development control measures need to be employed to protect and improve all other areas.
- There is a diversity of townscape, landscape and village character across Cambridge and its Green Belt that is fundamental to the setting and special character of the city. Management, enhancement, planning policy and development control measures should be employed to safeguard and strengthen this diversity of character.
- The significance of topography in providing a framework to Cambridge should be appreciated, and measures should be taken to ensure that the contrasts in landform are not masked by inappropriate development or management.
- A distinctive feature of Cambridge is its appearance as a densely treed city with a soft green edge merging into a predominantly arable agricultural landscape. It is important to preserve the soft green edge to the city, and improve certain hard edges through appropriate landscape initiatives and management.
- A number of green fingers provide links between the city and the open countryside. Traditional rural landscapes are brought into the heart of the city, greatly enhancing its character. The green fingers need to be protected and very carefully managed. A new green finger is proposed in conjunction with development of the Airport site, linking the city to the countryside in East Cambridge.
- A wide variety of designated sites and areas enrich the landscape setting of Cambridge. Individually, each of the sites has some level of statutory or non-statutory protection and, together, they enrich the landscape and contribute to the special character of Cambridge. Their protection should continue and, where appropriate, they should be promoted for public access and education.
- A variety of long distance footpaths and bridleways provide links between

Cambridge and the open countryside including Country Parks; they are an important means by which people can appreciate the setting and special character of the city. New urban fringe Country Parks are proposed at Coton and East Cambridge.

- A variety of other elements and features within the city and the surrounding landscape contribute positively to the character and diversity of Cambridge in its surroundings; whilst often not designated or statutorily recognised, these features, in total, contribute significantly to the special character of Cambridge and its setting.
- A particular feature of Cambridge is the distribution, setting, scale and character of the necklace villages. Whilst there has been some development, there is still a strong degree of physical separation between most villages and Cambridge. Maintaining the separate identity of the necklace villages, and particularly the inner necklace villages, is an important feature of the vision for Cambridge.

### 6.3.3 Guidelines for Areas of the Green Belt

The following text expands on the vision above and illustrated in the numbered areas shown on drawing number 1641LP/10.

#### *Areas 1 (East of City) and 10 (Airport)*

South Cambridgeshire District Council supports the concept of development on the Cambridge Airport site west of Airport Way. Our study has found nothing to disagree with this, and has identified that there are potential opportunities to improve the quality of this area with sensitive development and landscape enhancement.

If development were to occur on the Airport site there would be the opportunity to create a new green finger, providing a continuous green recreational space and access, linking Coldham's Common in the city with the public rights of way network in the Fen Edge landscape east of Teversham. Combined with this there might be the opportunity to create a new Fen Edge Country Park east of Teversham, providing a valuable recreational resource in the Green Belt.

It would be important to safeguard and, where possible, enhance the qualities shown on drawing number 1641LP/09 as part of any development. It would be essential to maintain the scale and separate identity of Teversham, ensuring that there is a width of open countryside between this village and the new city edge. Views towards the historic core should be considered in any new development and, where possible, they should be retained or framed through the creation of new vistas. The appearance of the urban edge could be greatly improved by replacing the unsightly hangar buildings (see Photograph Panel B in Appendix A) with a soft green edge to the new development.

#### *Areas 2 (Gog Magog Hills) and 3 (South of City)*

Existing footpath and bridleway links between the city and the countryside in these areas are poor, but the quality of the setting is good. There are potential opportunities to create links between the city and the hills to the south east, from where there are panoramic views of the city in its landscape setting. These

footpath and cycleway routes should link to Wandlebury Country Park and the wider network of public rights of way.

Opportunities should be taken to enhance edges to the city through management and planting.

Again, it is important that the qualities of these areas are maintained or enhanced, and in particular that the open, elevated setting to the city is retained, and that the green finger and open rail approach into Cambridge is safeguarded. Development on the open hills should, in particular, be resisted.

#### *Area 11 (East of Trumpington)*

There might be scope for some development without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes within this area west of Hobson's Brook, subject to clarification by more detailed survey and analysis.

Drawing number 1941LP/09 shows that this area does not possess particular qualities essential to the setting and special character of Cambridge. It is screened from views from the open approach along the railway line and therefore would not damage the qualities of this important open approach. Any development should be sensitively designed and well screened so that it does not adversely affect the wider open countryside south of Cambridge.

#### *Areas 4 (Grantchester) and 5 (West of City)*

These areas possess the greatest concentration of qualities essential to the fourth purpose of Green Belts as defined by PPG2, i.e. *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*. Drawing number 1641LP/09 illustrates how there is almost no separation between areas of the city and the rural hinterland with characteristics contributing to the setting and special character of Cambridge. There is little scope for change in this area if these qualities are to be safeguarded. The strategy should be to preserve the countryside, the edge to Cambridge, and the visual and physical relationship between the city and its setting.

#### *Area 8 (North West of City)*

The only quality identified for this area is in providing a rural foreground to views of Cambridge from the A14, contributing to the perception of a city set within a rural landscape. This quality should be preserved.

There might be opportunities to enhance views of Cambridge, either by additional planting to create a softer green edge, or by additional planting associated with development, maintaining some open countryside as a foreground to these views. Views of historic buildings from the A14 should be protected. The potential for changes to the Green Belt boundary in this area would need to be subject to more detailed landscape assessment and analysis.

The village of Girton almost joins with the city. It is important that the separation of Girton from Cambridge is retained to safeguard the separate identity of this inner necklace village, and to preserve the rural setting and small scale of Cambridge.

#### *Area 6 (Between Railway Line and River Cam)*

This area is important as a setting to the green finger passing through the River Cam corridor, and as a setting to approaches to the city along the railway line and the towpath beside the River Cam. However, the landscape is degraded and there is potential for a programme of general landscape enhancement and management to improve this link between the countryside and the city. With appropriate treatment this area could potentially become an area of landscape distinctive to Cambridge and its setting, in line with the categories described in section 5.6.3.

*Area 7 (North East Cam Corridor)*

This is an area of open, high quality landscape important to the setting and special character of Cambridge. It is the northern part of a green finger passing through the heart of the city, linking the countryside between the north and south of Cambridge. It contains distinctive footpath approaches, linking the countryside with the city. The area provides viewpoints to the historic core from long distance footpaths and other vantage points, and much of the interface between the landscape and the city is soft and green. It also contains the separate village of Fen Ditton, one of the closest villages to the city.

The vision for this area is to preserve all of these qualities by maintaining the extent and quality of the landscape and village, and enhancing the edges of housing to the south through tree planting.

*Area 9 (North East of City)*

There is potential to improve the approach to Cambridge along Newmarket Road through landscape enhancements including tree and shrub planting. There might be scope for some development without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes and this is considered further in section 7.0.

*Outer Green Belt*

The vision for outer rural areas of the Green Belt is to maintain, and where appropriate enhance, the open, rural character of the landscape, the diversity of landscape character and the qualities of views, approaches, landscape elements and villages. *Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines* (Cambridgeshire County Council 1991) provides guidance on landscape enhancement principles related to landscape types around the city. Opportunities should be taken to provide or improve access and recreational facilities, for example by the creation of new country parks and footpaths, and by positive management of existing resources.

**6.3.4 Potential for Green Belt Releases**

RPG6 (DETR and Government Office for the East of England 2000) requires that the first step in identifying where development should be located in the Cambridge Green Belt is to identify whether land is fulfilling Green Belt purposes. Only if sites could be released without significant detriment to Green Belt purposes, should their suitability for development be assessed against other criteria including proximity to public transport, employment and services and environmental quality. The first issue to consider in identifying opportunities for Green Belt releases is, therefore, Green Belt purposes, over and above issues of sustainability.

Policy P9/3c of the latest draft of the Structure Plan (Cambridgeshire County Council 2002) suggests the following locations that Local Plans should consider for



early development:

- North of Newmarket Road
- North of Cherry Hinton
- Cambridge Airport (subject to availability)
- South and west of Addenbrooke's Hospital
- Clay Farm and areas east and south of Trumpington

Policy P9/3c also identifies the following locations, which it says "*should be reserved for development when required*":

- Between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road
- Between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road

It further goes on to state that "*land east of Cambridge Airport is to be safeguarded for development after 2016 and only developed following the substantial development of Cambridge Airport and provided that a joint study shows it can be developed whilst maintaining the fundamental purposes of the Green Belt.*"

Although this study has only been carried out at a detailed enough scale to identify opportunities for Green Belt releases in East Cambridge (see section 7), the broad scale findings given in section 6 suggest that there might be some potential to develop parts of areas north of Newmarket Road, North of Cherry Hinton, Cambridge Airport, at Clay Farm and areas east and south of Trumpington, and between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road, without causing adverse affects to Green Belt purposes. This would, however, need to be clarified by more detailed survey and analysis.

The broad scale assessment has not identified opportunities for large scale development south of Addenbrooke's Hospital, or between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road. However, not every area of land was looked at in detail and more detailed assessment might identify some sites in these areas that could be developed without causing adverse affects to Green Belt purposes.

Insert drawing 10

## 7.0 DETAILED APPRAISAL EAST OF THE CITY

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### 7.1 Introduction

This study started with an assessment of the whole Green Belt in order to identify the qualities which are of greatest importance to the setting and special character of Cambridge. Having carried this out (see sections 4, 5 and 6) it is now possible to identify which of those qualities are important to East Cambridge, which qualities should be safeguarded, and whether land could be released from the Green Belt without causing significant detriment to those qualities and to Green Belt purposes.

This section of the report appraises land east of the city in detail, following a similar method used for the broader assessment of the whole Green Belt. The detailed study is grouped into five stages:

#### **Stage One : Baseline Studies**

This stage sets out factual baseline data on the setting of the east side of Cambridge. Some of this is repeated from the broader assessment of the whole Green Belt (e.g. environmental, and cultural and access designations), and new information provides more detailed data (e.g. public open space, water courses and water bodies, and a finer grain of landscape character assessment). This data is described in section 7.2 and shown on drawing numbers 1641LP/11 and 12.

#### **Stage Two : Analysis of Setting and Special Character of East Cambridge**

This analysis draws on baseline studies, and on analysis already carried out in the study of the whole Green Belt (see section 5), to appraise the factors which contribute to the setting and special character of East Cambridge. This analysis is discussed in section 7.3 and shown on drawing number 1641LP/13.

#### **Stage Three : Qualities to be Safeguarded**

This stage identifies those qualities of the setting and special character of East Cambridge which should be safeguarded. They are discussed in section 7.4 and illustrated on drawing number 1641LP/14.

#### **Stage Four : A Vision for East Cambridge**

A vision for East Cambridge illustrates how certain areas of land could be released from the Green Belt for development without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes. It also demonstrates ways of enhancing the setting and special character of the city by the creation of new qualities on the east side of Cambridge, some of which can only be achieved through the release of Cambridge Airport from the Green Belt. It emphasises the importance of preserving qualities identified in Stage Three. The vision is discussed in section 7.5 and illustrated on drawing number 1641LP/15.

The potential effects of large scale development east of Airport Way are then described in section 7.6.

## 7.2 **Baseline Studies**

### 7.2.1 **Introduction**

Factual baseline data on East Cambridge and its setting described in this section provides a framework for subsequent analysis and judgements in proceeding sections. This section does not make any judgement or analysis. Baseline data is described under the following headings:

- Environmental designations
- Cultural and access designations
- Topography and geology
- Water and trees
- Landscape character
- Visual assessment

The value of these to the setting and special character of Cambridge is then discussed in section 7.3, before identifying which of these are special qualities that should be safeguarded in section 7.4.

### 7.2.2 **Environmental Designations**

Environmental designations for the whole Green Belt are described and illustrated in section 4.3.1. Drawing number 1641LP/11 shows these designations in the more detailed context of East Cambridge.

It can be seen that there are three SSSIs and some Wildlife Sites east of Cambridge. These, and the Nature Conservation Zone (shown on drawing number 1641LP/01) which was abandoned in the Local Plan Deposit (South Cambridgeshire District Council, September 2001), indicate the value of land east of Cambridge for wildlife.

### 7.2.3 **Cultural and Access Designations**

From drawing number 1641LP/11 it can be seen that there is a good network of public rights of way in the landscape east of Cambridge, but that links between the urban areas where people live and the open countryside are poor. Cambridge Airport effectively blocks all access (except along roads to the north and south) between Coldham's Common and adjacent housing areas, and the open countryside.

Conservation Areas cover parts of the villages of Teversham, Fen Ditton, Fulbourn, Great Wilbraham and Little Wilbraham, and Fulbourn Hospital and its grounds. Wilbraham Temple at the extreme east of the detailed study area is on the register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

### 7.2.4 **Topography and Geology**

Drawing number 1641LP/03 in section 4.4 illustrates that the land east of Cambridge is low (below 20 metres AOD) but rises south of Cherry Hinton and Fulbourn to the Gog Magog Hills. To the north the topography flattens out into the fens, where the land all lies below 10 metres AOD. The lowest land east of Cambridge, below 10 metres AOD, runs into the heart of the city across Cambridge Airport and into Coldham's Common.

The underlying geology east of Cambridge is predominantly chalk with some localised surface deposits of terrace deposits and peat.

#### 7.2.5 **Water and Trees**

From drawing number 1641LP/11 it can be seen that there is an interesting pattern of open drains and watercourses east of Cambridge. There is a dense network of straight drains and small winding rivers in areas of fen (Teversham Fen, Little Wilbraham Fen and Fulbourn Fen), which contrasts with other areas of more elevated, freer draining chalk land, including the hills south of Fulbourn, where surface water is scarce or absent.

The scarcity of substantial areas of trees or scrub in the low-lying landscape east of Cambridge is apparent from drawing number 1641LP/11. Areas of trees shown around villages to the east are often associated with historic parklands. However, this drawing does not show smaller woods and shelterbelts, trees along watercourses, roads, or in gardens or fields, which are scattered over much of the landscape. Villages, in particular, stand out in the landscape due to their proliferation of trees, which in the cases of Teversham (see Photograph 7 in Appendix A), Little Wilbraham and Great Wilbraham, largely screen buildings and houses in summer. The urban area of Cambridge also stands out in the landscape due to the density of trees contrasting with the more open, and generally less treed, rural landscape (see Photograph 1 in Appendix A).

Trees on the edges of villages and Cambridge are particularly important in softening the urban edges, and integrating the urban form into the landscape. Some urban edges, such as the buildings at Cambridge Airport, or some areas of newer development on the edges of Cherry Hinton and Fulbourn, stand out due to the lack of trees, hedges or scrub.

Insert drawing 11

### 7.2.6 Landscape Character

Landscape character of the Green Belt has been described at a broad scale in section 4.6. This section now assesses the character of the landscape east of Cambridge in finer detail, where appropriate breaking the larger character areas into smaller, local areas of distinctive character. It uses similar methods described in section 4.6, applying them at a more detailed scale. At this scale boundaries of local character areas often follow visible elements in the landscape such as watercourses or field boundaries.

The character of the villages within these character areas is also described. These are Fen Ditton, Teversham, Fulbourn, Great Wilbraham and Little Wilbraham.

Drawing number 1641LP/12 shows the local landscape character areas described for the land east of Cambridge. The drawing also shows townscape types which have already been described at a fine level of detail in section 4.5 and are therefore not discussed further in this section.

There are six local landscape character areas described below. Two of these, Little Wilbraham Fen and Cambridge Airport, correspond to character areas defined at the broader scale of assessment, as there was no justification in sub-dividing them. The Eastern Fen Edge described in section 4.6 has been sub-divided into Fen Ditton Eastern Fen Edge, Teversham Eastern Fen Edge, Fulbourn Eastern Fen Edge and Fulbourn Hospital. One new character area, Cherry Hinton Works, has been identified.

#### *Fen Ditton Eastern Fen Edge*

Fen Ditton Eastern Fen Edge forms part of a more extensive area of Fen Edge landscape, which is a transitional landscape between the Fenlands and the Chalklands.

Fen Ditton Eastern Fen Edge is an area of flat or gently rolling arable farmland. The land gradually falls from a height of 15 metres AOD where it borders Cambridge and surrounds the Village of Fen Ditton to the south west, to 5 metres AOD where it flattens out and meets the fens to the north and east. As well as bordering the city and fens it meets the River Cam corridor to the west, and further Fen Edge landscape to the south. The underlying geology is mainly chalk with a small area of terrace deposits to the south west.

The open landscape provides a rural setting for the small, linear village of Fen Ditton, and part of the eastern edge of the city. The busy A14 Trunk road cuts through the character area bringing visual and noise intrusion into the countryside, and creating a physical barrier between the south and north parts of Fen Ditton Eastern Fen Edge.

Fields are relatively small and enclosed to the south of the area, becoming larger and more open to the north. A range of elements, including open drains, hedges, plantations or scrub vegetation along a dismantled railway line, defines field boundaries. From a distance, some field boundaries appear to only be marked by a change in crop. There are a number of smaller fields around the edge of Fen Ditton, with more trees, providing a soft green edge to the some sides of the village, particularly on the west side closest to the River Cam. South of High Ditch Road, young plantations break up the open landscape, providing further enclosure

to land. To the north of High Ditch Road the land becomes more open with generally larger fields and less enclosing vegetation.

Fen Ditton lies on the B1047 close to the north eastern edge of Cambridge, about four kilometres from the city centre. The village is on the eastern bank of the River Cam with attractive water meadows lying between it and the river. It is a long, thin village with farmland penetrating into the built up area, with the rural character very much in evidence. It is an attractive village spreading from the older core by the River Cam, along High Ditch Road (Fleam Dyke) to the east.

The parish church is largely enclosed by mature trees and dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There are some old houses, including Fen Ditton Hall originating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, set away from the road, and 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> farm houses, and 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages and cottage rows lining the village streets. Earliest buildings are mostly timber framed and plastered with plain tile or thatched roofs. Later (until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century) red and gault stock brick were commonly used. The village also contains some modern housing including bungalows.

Fen Ditton and the countryside between it and the River Cam, are covered by an extensive Conservation Area (see drawing number 1641LP/11), six grade II\* and 23 grade II listed buildings (South Cambridgeshire District Council February 1999).

The village is separated from Cambridge by a narrow width of countryside north of a dismantled railway line to the south, and by the River Cam corridor to the west.

#### *Teversham Eastern Fen Edge*

Teversham Eastern Fen Edge is an area of flat or gently rolling arable farmland mostly lying between 10 and 15 metres AOD. Underlying geology is mainly chalk, with a small area of terrace deposits to the north.

Teversham Eastern Fen Edge is situated on the edge of Cambridge and Cambridge Airport to the west, higher chalk hills to the south, Little Wilbraham Fen to the east, and Fen Ditton Fen Edge to the north. The open landscape provides a rural setting for the small, densely treed village of Teversham, and the abrupt eastern and northern edges of the city at Cherry Hinton.

Fields are generally large with boundaries defined by open drains or gappy and often overgrown hawthorn hedges with few trees. There are a number of smaller fields around the edge of Teversham, with more trees, providing a soft green edge to the some sides of the village.

The land west of Teversham is strongly influenced by the proximity of the open airport site and the large dominating hangar buildings on the edge of the city. There are clear views of Cambridge from this land, with the tops of buildings and structures, including Addenbrooke's Hospital, Carter Bridge, and the Roman Catholic Church, rising above the densely treed city.

Teversham is a small village with a small and fragmented historic core, and areas of post war suburban housing. It is situated about 4.5 kilometres from the city centre, and 0.6 kilometres from the edge of the city at Cherry Hinton. The flint and stone church dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is set amongst mature trees, on the main road through the village on its west side, and within a rural setting on its south east side (see Photograph 7, Appendix A). The church and a village green lying south east of the church provide a visual focus to the village. Other early buildings



date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and are timber framed and plastered with plain tile or thatched roofs. Gault brick was used to construct some buildings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Older houses are focussed around the church, but are also scattered amongst 20<sup>th</sup> century houses along Church Road and High Street. Post war housing developments have enlarged the village to the south east. These comprise a mixture of styles and materials that are not characteristic of the historical building style, including small developments of orange brick bungalows, grey rendered semi-detached houses with brown concrete roof tiles, and white painted brick council houses.

Individual large older houses and farms lie outside the main built up area of the village.

The village contains a Conservation Area (see drawing number 1641LP/11), one grade II\* and six grade II listed buildings (South Cambridgeshire District Council February 1999).

#### *Fulbourn Eastern Fen Edge*

Fulbourn Eastern Fen Edge is an area of flat or gently rolling arable farmland mostly lying between 10 and 20 metres AOD. Chalk is the bedrock around the villages of Fulbourn, Great Wilbraham and Little Wilbraham, with a substantial area of terrace deposits and smaller areas of peat on lower ground between these villages.

Fulbourn Eastern Fen Edge is situated between higher chalk hills to the south, Little Wilbraham Fen to the north west and further Fen Edge landscape to the north east. Landform is gently rolling with some low-lying flat areas. The landscape provides a rural setting for the small, densely treed villages of Great Wilbraham and Little Wilbraham, and the east side of the larger village of Fulbourn. These villages are set on rolling and slightly elevated ground.

This area contains a larger coverage of trees and woods than other Fen Edge landscapes described above, mostly associated with the grounds of old halls. Some of these include specimen trees in parkland settings. These provide a high degree of enclosure close to villages, with the landscape becoming more open towards Little Wilbraham Fen and the chalk hills. Localised enclosure is also provided by hedges and scrub, and buildings associated with villages.

Fields are variable in size, being smaller closer to villages and woodlands, and larger towards Little Wilbraham Fen and the chalk hills.

Little Wilbraham is a small linear village, separated into two halves by an area of open fields, with a strong rural character. It is situated at approximately 15 metres AOD above Little Wilbraham Fen. It contains a church, a rectory and farmhouses and cottages. The few remaining early cottages are timber framed and plastered with plain tiled or thatched roofs. A common (mainly 19<sup>th</sup> century) building material is gault brick with plain tiles. There are also a number of more modern buildings including some small post-war housing estates, bungalows, and semi-detached and detached houses. There are views from the village out into open countryside. A Conservation Area covers most old properties. There are one grade II\* and 13 grade II buildings (South Cambridgeshire District Council February 1999).

Great Wilbraham is larger than Little Wilbraham, but is still a small village. It is a pleasant village with similar traditional housing styles to Little Wilbraham, including timber framed and plastered with plain tiled or thatched roofs, and gault brick. The church dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and is made of flint bounded by flint walls. Old houses are intermixed with some new dwellings, including small post-war estates, bungalows and semi-detached houses. Great Wilbraham has a large village green bounded by old houses. There are views from close to the edge of the village out into open countryside. Part of Great Wilbraham is covered by a Conservation Area and the village contains three grade II\* and 34 grade II listed buildings (South Cambridgeshire District Council February 1999).

Fulbourn is located four miles to the east of Cambridge. It is a large village with a linear, largely intact historic core focussed on High Street, Manor Walk and Home End. The village contains some attractive historic buildings including Fulbourn Manor and the 13<sup>th</sup> century St Vigor's Church faced with flint. Along the original street there are three village greens at street junctions and a number of 14<sup>th</sup> century medieval farmhouses and other cottages and farmhouses of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century interspersed with newer properties. These are timber framed, plastered, with thatched or plain tiled roofs. Linear development comprising detached and semi-detached housing continued during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century along the approach roads, resulting in a broad range of building forms and age. The area between Cambridge Road and Cow Lane has been infilled with post war housing estates of a variety of building types including system built concrete flats, terraces and red brick detached and semi-detached housing. Newer low density housing estates (1980's – 1990's) are found on the edge of the village. Fulbourn School is an old Cambridge red brick building. Some areas of Fulbourn are quite well treed with grass verges and rural in character. The Local Plan records that Fulbourn contains two grade II\* and 53 grade II buildings but that this number is not finite (South Cambridgeshire District Council February 1999).

The windmill on Cambridge Road just outside Fulbourn and Fulbourn Hospital, a good example of Victorian hospital architecture in a parkland setting, are landmarks. The church tower is not high enough to be seen from the surrounding landscape.

There is some small scale industrial and storage development on the northern side of the village close to the railway line. This, and especially the Fielding Industrial Estate by the approach route from Great Wilbraham, is a significant detracting feature at the gateway to the village.

#### *Little Wilbraham Fen*

The local landscape character area Little Wilbraham Fen covers the same area of land as Little Wilbraham Fen described in the broader scale assessment of the whole Green Belt in section 4.6. The description is expanded below.

Little Wilbraham Fen is a small pocket of low-lying fen (mostly between 5 and 10 metres AOD) within the Eastern Fen Edge. Substantial areas of peat and terrace deposits cover much of this land, with areas of chalk towards the perimeter of the area. A regimented pattern of flat arable fields and areas of wetland vegetation are divided by a network of straight droveways and drainage ditches, and the more sinuous path of Quy Water and Little Wilbraham River. Watercourses are often open, or sometimes lined with vegetation including hawthorn scrub or large willow trees. The willow trees are prominent features on the skyline. The Fen is generally quite open, with some enclosure provided by the tree and scrub vegetation, and

the sloping landform outside the character area.

In addition to Little Wilbraham Fen the character area includes two other named fens – Teversham Fen and Fulbourn Fen. It contains one SSSI (Wilbraham Fens), which is made up of a large area of fen and neutral grassland with associated scrub and open water communities, with dense stands of common reed *Phragmites australis*. Settlement within Little Wilbraham Fen is limited to isolated farms.

The Harcamlow Way long distance footpath passes through the Little Wilbraham Fen. Other footpaths and a bridleway provide further access to this area. There are no surfaced roads within the area.

### *Cambridge Airport*

The local landscape character area Cambridge Airport covers the same area of land as Cambridge Airport described in the broader scale assessment of the whole Green Belt in section 4.6. It includes the open land of the Airport but not the main buildings, which lie within townscape character area 5C (section 4.5.3). The description is expanded below.

Cambridge Airport is situated on the eastern edge of the city. It lies at approximately 10 metres AOD and is essentially a large, flat grassy field, with associated hangar buildings outside the character area to the north west. The underlying geology is chalk with a small area of terrace deposits to the north west. The airport separates the city from the countryside beyond. It feels very open, with long views and a homogenous character, all traces of the historic landscape pattern and rural character having been removed. Visually, it functions as an open green space on the edge of the city, but it does not provide a public access link between the city and the open countryside, or a rural setting to the city.

A small post-war estate of red brick, semi-detached houses and a small nature reserve border the south west corner of Cambridge Airport north of Coldham's Lane. A tall Leylandii hedge planted at the ends of gardens to the houses provides a screen to views of the runway, but creates an unattractive and suburban edge to this built up area of the city.

### *Cherry Hinton Works*

The landscape character area Cherry Hinton Works is a small area of green space enclosed by the city on three sides, and Coldham's Lane and Cambridge Airport to the north. The bedrock is chalk. Much of the area has been altered by mineral extraction for use in the now closed cement works, leaving open pits, which have either been filled and reclaimed, are being developed for retail use, or are areas of open water. The reclaimed land is now slightly higher than the surrounding topography, and is becoming vegetated with grassland and scrub.

The railway line to Ipswich crosses this area, dividing it into two halves.

The south boundary of this area is marked by Cherry Hinton Brook, which forms a pleasant edge to the urban area. On the east side, north of the railway line, a modern estate of red brick houses and flats borders the visually untidy reclaimed land, providing an unattractive and uncharacteristic edge to the historic city.

*Fulbourn Hospital*

Fulbourn Hospital landscape character area is a small area of land covered by Fulbourn Hospital, Kent House, the Ida Darwin Hospital and Tesco Superstore. It is situated on the base slope of the Gog Magog Hills, lying between approximately 10 and 20 metres AOD. The underlying geology is chalk.

The fine Victorian building of Fulbourn Hospital is set within parkland grounds. It provides a prominent landmark, and can be seen rising above the densely treed grounds from the surrounding landscape. The hospital and grounds are designated as a Conservation Area. The Ida Darwin Hospital site, nearer Fulbourn, consists mainly of a series of low density, one storey, brick, flat topped buildings set in landscaped grounds.

These developments have been built between Cambridge (Cherry Hinton) and the village of Fulbourn. The low density of the buildings, combined with the green landscaped grounds, means that the area provides a limited degree of “green” separation between the built up settlements of Fulbourn and Cambridge. However, this area is not strongly rural in character.

**7.2.7 Visual Assessment**

Key views to the city from the landscape east of Cambridge are shown on drawing number 1641LP/06 in section 4.7 and selected views are illustrated in Appendix A.

The nature of views that people experience of East Cambridge and its setting are determined by a number of factors. These include topography, which provides the platform that determines the elevation and extent of possible views, vegetation and topography, which screen certain potential views, and roads and other public rights of way and accessible land, which provide vantage points.

Elevated vantage points, providing panoramic views of the landscape on the east side of Cambridge, and of the city and its wider landscape setting, are located on higher ground on the chalk hills close to the south east side of the city (see Photograph 1 in Appendix A) and east (up to 11 kilometres from the city). The low lying land covered by the detailed study area provides more limited, low level views of Cambridge and its edges. There are views of historic landmark buildings from this low lying land dominated by a foreground of peripheral city development, including the large dominant buildings and structures at Addenbrooke’s Hospital and Cambridge Airport on the city edge. (See Photographs 1, 3 and 5.) The distance between the historic landmark buildings and the city edge is considerable on the east side of the city, so the buildings are often hard to distinguish, or screened by foreground suburbs and industry within the city.

Insert drawing 12

### 7.3 Setting and Special Character of East Cambridge

#### 7.3.1 Introduction

The qualities that contribute to the setting and special character of the whole of the Cambridge Green Belt were analysed in section 5. By drawing on this, and by analysing factual baseline data set out in section 7.2, the qualities that contribute to the setting and special character of East Cambridge are now analysed. Where these qualities can be mapped they are shown on drawing number 1641LP/13. They are analysed under the following headings:

- Environment
- Approaches and gateways to East Cambridge
- Landscape character
- Relationship between villages and Cambridge
- Townscape and landscape role and function
- Key views of Cambridge

The qualities which are important to safeguard, in order to protect the setting and special character of Cambridge, are then discussed in section 7.4.

#### 7.3.2 Environment

##### *Environmental Designations*

Environmental designations east of Cambridge were discussed in section 7.2.2. Designated wildlife sites are considered to be of particular value to the setting and special character of East Cambridge and these are shown on drawing number 1641LP/13.

Wildlife sites and SSSIs form an important part of the character and history of the landscape, and are of particular value to the Green Belt where people have access to them and can learn about their ecology and history. Protected nature conservation sites are often remnants of habitats which would have been much more extensive in the past, when land management and farming practices were different and less intensive. Although all wildlife sites are considered to be important, three SSSIs in this area illustrate the value of such sites:

- Wilbraham Fen is a large area of fen and neutral grassland with associated scrub and open water communities, with dense stands of common reed *Phragmites australis*. Similar fens are now rare in Britain as they have largely been drained and converted to agricultural use, and occur only in a few scattered inland localities, mainly in East Anglia. This SSSI can be accessed by footpaths and a bridleway.
- Great Wilbraham Common is a SSSI supporting rare neutral grassland communities of the calcareous loam grassland type. This site can be accessed by footpaths.
- Fulbourn Fen is an area holding species-rich neutral grassland on calcareous loam and peat, together with remnants of 'fen' woodland. These habitats are now rare in lowland England. The site is of particular educational value in view of the variety of different habitats found at the one location. This site is also accessible via public rights of way.

### *Cultural and Access Designations*

Cultural and access designations east of Cambridge were discussed in section 7.2.3. Public rights of way and Conservation Areas are considered to be of particular value to the setting and special character of East Cambridge and these are shown on drawing number 1641LP/13.

Access to the SSSIs discussed in above illustrates one of the many roles that the network of footpaths, cycleways, byways and bridleways plays in providing access to the Green Belt. The network shown on drawing number 1641LP/13 is of fundamental importance to the setting and special character of Cambridge as it provides the principal means by which people can escape from built up areas and roads and experience the rural landscape within the setting of Cambridge. An example of this is the Harcamlow Way where it passes beside Little Wilbraham River on the edge of Wilbraham Fens SSSI. Here the low, flat, damp fen landscape, with large stands of common reed, and lines of white willow trees along straight ditches, can be experienced. From here the distant skyline of Cambridge can be seen, providing a backdrop to the dense treed form of Teversham set in an open, rural landscape. This is the only area of fen landscape with views of the city, and the footpaths and bridleways provide the only public access to this.

Conservation Areas within Teversham, Fen Ditton, Fulbourn, Great Wilbraham and Little Wilbraham cover the cores of the historic settlements, and the best examples of traditional architecture, building materials, and village layout and character. These areas are largely accessible along village roads and paths and are an important quality of the setting of Cambridge. The fine Victorian building of Fulbourn Hospital and parkland grounds just outside the edge of the city is designated as a Conservation Area and is an important feature in the setting and special character of East Cambridge.

### *Topography*

Landform is an important element of the setting of the east side of Cambridge. Section 7.2.4 describes how the high, rolling chalk hills to the south fall away to the low lying flat fens. Cambridge is located on the lower lying land near the River Cam, but not on land as low as the fens.

The rolling chalk hills of the Gog Magogs rise up to 50 metres AOD and above, and the low flat fens lie below 10 metres AOD, within 1 kilometre of the city edge at Cherry Hinton. The Gog Magogs are the highest land within close proximity of Cambridge, and provide vantage points for possibly the best elevated, panoramic views of the city. The low lying land around Teversham provides the closest areas of land with clear views of Cambridge, and skyline views of the historic core. These contrasting landforms close to the city edge are particularly important to the setting and special character of East Cambridge.

### *Water and Trees*

The pattern of water and trees described in section 7.2.5 are important elements of the setting and special character of East Cambridge.

### 7.3.3 Approaches and Gateways to East Cambridge

The role and importance of approaches and gateways to Cambridge are discussed in section 5.3. These are illustrated on the east side of the city on drawing number 1641LP/13.

The two principal road approaches (Newmarket Road and Cambridge Road), between the urban gateways on the east side of the city and the gateway to distinctive Cambridge, are both long (approximately 4 kilometres) and suburban or commercial in character. On entering the urban edge the traveller passes through extensive areas of indistinct and often poor quality urban development before arriving at distinctive Cambridge. This detracts from the perception that Cambridge is a compact historic city. It is important that these approaches are not degraded further.

The rail approach from the east (Ipswich) described in section 5.3.6 does contribute positively to the perception of a compact city in a rural landscape setting as, although the distance between the urban gateway and the Station is long, much of it is green or rural in character, particularly where it crosses Coldham's Common.

The Cam Corridor west of Fen Ditton provides one of the most important and distinctive approaches to Cambridge. However, this is not analysed in detail as it lies outside the detailed study area.

There are no significant footpath, bridleway or cycleway approaches from the countryside into the east side of Cambridge except along busy roads. There is one footpath approximately one kilometre in length, linking Airport Way with the outskirts of the city at Cherry Hinton. As previously discussed, Cambridge Airport blocks footpath access between the countryside and the city. Overall, footpath, bridleway and cycleway approaches from the countryside east of Cambridge do not play a significant role in contributing to the setting and special character of East Cambridge and present great scope for improvement.

### 7.3.4 Landscape Character

The character of the landscape east of Cambridge is described in section 7.2.6 and illustrated on drawing 1641LP/12. The character of the villages is also described.

The landscape east of Cambridge is comprised of four local landscape character areas with a strong rural character (Fen Ditton Eastern Fen Edge, Teversham Eastern Fen Edge, Fulbourn Eastern Fen Edge and Little Wilbraham Fen), and some areas closest to the city that have less of their rural character remaining (Cambridge Airport, Cherry Hinton Works and Fulbourn Hospital). The areas retaining the strongest rural character play the greatest role in contributing to the special quality of Cambridge as a city set in a rural landscape setting.

The three Eastern Fen Edge landscape character areas play an important role in providing the immediate rural surrounds to the villages east of Cambridge. It is on these areas of slightly raised ground, close to water and where the chalk land was easily cultivated, that villages first established. The situation of the small villages in this rural setting is an important part of the setting and special character of East Cambridge.



The character of these villages in the Eastern Fen Edge landscape character areas is of great importance to the setting and special character of East Cambridge. Fen Ditton, Teversham (see Photograph 7, Appendix A), Great Wilbraham and Little Wilbraham in particular, retain a strong rural character due to their small scale, their permeability to the rural landscape, and their clear separation from Cambridge.

Fen Ditton and Teversham are two of only three villages to retain these qualities within very close proximity to Cambridge, the other being Grantchester to the south west of the city. They are therefore particularly important to the setting and special character of Cambridge. Teversham is the only one of these villages that does not currently have easy walking access into distinctive Cambridge along green fingers.

Fulbourn is also important to the setting and special character of Cambridge, but it is no longer a small village and, although it is separated from Cambridge, this separation is less rural in character.

The flat, low lying, damp, unsettled landscape of Little Wilbraham Fen is particularly important as it is the only area of fen landscape within the visual envelope of the city. Fens to the north have been physically and visually cut off from Cambridge by the A14. Little Wilbraham Fen landscape character area is therefore an important part of the setting and special character of East Cambridge.

Cambridge Airport and Cherry Hinton Works landscape character areas do less to support the rural landscape setting of Cambridge, the historic rural landscape patterns having been largely removed. The open landscape of Cambridge Airport separates the countryside from Cambridge (Photographs 3 and 5, Appendix A), and the landscape of Cherry Hinton Works has been altered by mineral extraction.

### **7.3.5 Townscape and Landscape Role and Function**

Section 5.6 and drawing number 1641LP/08 illustrate how Cambridge and its Green Belt has been classified at a broad scale in relation to the function it performs in contributing to the distinctiveness of the city and its setting. It also emphasises how boundaries cannot often be defined as precise lines, and this becomes more of an issue at this detailed level of assessment. For this reason, the boundaries have not been refined at a more precise level for this study of East Cambridge, and the areas of supportive and connective landscape in particular, should be seen as broad zones with boundaries that might cover quite wide areas.

The Gog Magog Hills lie close to the city and provide elevated vantage points for panoramic long distance views across open countryside in the foreground, the city in the middle distance, and the open landscape beyond including the flat fens to the north, and the clay hills to the west. This area of supportive landscape sweeps around to the east of the city to include lower land between Fulbourn and Cambridge, and the village of Teversham and its surrounding landscape. Teversham is seen as a small settlement separate from Cambridge set within open countryside, with the tower of the village church rising above trees and the roofs of a small number of houses.

From drawing number 1641LP/08 (section 5.6) it can be seen that a substantial part of the detailed study area around Teversham, and west of Fulbourn, is classified as supportive landscape. Areas of supportive landscape are key elements of the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting, and a fundamental quality of the setting and special character of the historic city.

Coldham's Common, within the city, is also classified as supportive landscape and it provides an important green setting for rail travellers approaching from Ipswich. Coldham's Common is separated from the supportive rural landscape around Teversham by a substantial area of connective landscape at Cambridge Airport. The landscape at Cambridge Airport is not distinctive to Cambridge and does not provide a rural, supportive setting to the historic city.

The boundary between connective and supportive landscape west of the Airport is drawn along Airport Way. However, this boundary (in common with some other boundaries, particularly in rural areas) should not be seen as a precisely defined line but as a line marking a broader zone of change. Arable farmland between the Airport and Airport Way is classified as connective rather than supportive as it is adversely influenced by the presence of the relatively new road on its east side, the open Airport on the west side, and modern development at Cherry Hinton on the south side. Arable farmland east of Airport Way is less influenced by the Airport, and more influenced by the small necklace village of Teversham and the adjoining areas of rural landscape.

The landscape north of Newmarket Road (the A1303), east of Fen Ditton, is also classified as connective as its character is not distinctive to Cambridge and it is largely visually isolated from the city.

The connective landscape extends 10 kilometres to the east of the city centre, further than any other area of the Green Belt. This is due to the presence of distant elevated views of Cambridge from the chalk hills. This emphasises the importance of the landscape this side of the city to the setting and special character of Cambridge.

A point to note from drawing number 1641LP/08 in section 5.6 is the extensive areas of connective and visually detracting townscape between the landscape on the east side of Cambridge, and the visually cohesive historic core. It is important to ensure that the affect of this townscape in separating the rural landscape setting from the historic core of the city is not allowed to increase through further inappropriate development.

Another point to note from drawing number 1641LP/08 is that the landscape to the east and south of Cambridge is allowed to run up to the edge of the city, and is not disrupted by a major trunk road, unlike the landscape to the north and west where the extent of supportive landscape is curtailed by the M11 and A14. This is a quality of the setting and special character of East Cambridge that should be safeguarded.

### 7.3.6 Key Views of Cambridge

Key views discussed in section 7.2.7 and shown on drawing number 1641LP/06 (section 4.7) are all important views of the city as they are the points from which people can see different aspects of the special qualities of the setting and character of Cambridge. These are shown on a more detailed base on drawing number 1641LP/13. Glimpses of historic landmark buildings (mainly located in areas of distinctive Cambridge on drawing number 1641LP/13) from the landscape are of particular importance as they have been considerably affected by large scale urban expansion over the last 170 years, and are vulnerable to the affects of further development. These views are defining qualities of the setting and special character of Cambridge.

Insert drawing 13

## 7.4 Special Qualities of East Cambridge to be Safeguarded

### 7.4.1 Introduction

The qualities in the Green Belt that should be safeguarded in order to preserve the setting and special character of the whole of Cambridge in its Green Belt setting are described and illustrated in section 6.2. The specific importance of each of these to East Cambridge, and therefore to the whole of Cambridge and its Green Belt setting, is discussed below. These qualities are:

- A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole
- A city focussed on the historic core
- Short and/or characteristic approaches to Cambridge from the edge of the city
- A City of a Human Scale Easily Crossed by Foot and by Bicycle
- Key views of Cambridge from the landscape
- Significant areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape
- Topography providing a framework to Cambridge
- A soft green edge to the city
- Green fingers into the city
- Designated sites and areas enriching the setting of Cambridge
- Footpaths, bridleways and cycleways providing links between Cambridge and the open countryside
- Elements and features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting
- The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of necklace villages
- A city set in a landscape which retains a strongly rural character.

Their geographical locations, where they can be easily represented in plan form, are shown on drawing number 1641LP/14.

### 7.4.2 A Large Historic Core Relative to the Size of the City as a Whole

Section 6.2.1 describes how an historic town, for the purposes of PPG2, will have a significant area of historic development, typically the core, and additional areas of more recent development, typically on the peripheries. This is the pattern that we see in Cambridge.

A major part of the special historic character of Cambridge depends on the relatively large and intact historic core, and on the fact that this has not been 'swamped' by more recent development. Despite the presence of commercial and industrial development and substantial areas of suburban housing east of the historic core, the scale of the historic core relative to the whole is such that Cambridge still retains its historic character. This is a special quality of Cambridge.

The form of Cambridge in relation to the main historic core can be seen from drawing number 1641LP/04 in section 4.5. There is a considerable amount of suburban development on the south east, east and north sides of the city, which is threatening to swamp the historic core. Drawing number 1641LP/14 shows that large areas of this suburban development on the east side of the city (and an area of landscape at and immediately south of Cambridge Airport) are not distinctive or supportive. The dominance of these areas poses a threat to this special quality of Cambridge.

The east side of the city cannot be developed much further before peripheral development swamps the historic core, and Cambridge changes from being an historic city dominated by the historic core, to a modern city with an historic core dominated by modern development. Substantial development beyond certain limits on the east side of Cambridge would irretrievably damage the scale of one of the country's finest historic settlements. The extent of development that we consider would be acceptable is discussed in section 7.5, which presents a vision for East Cambridge.

Although existing extensive development east of the historic core has undoubtedly caused damage to this aspect of the city, it is important that further harm is not allowed to occur as a consequence of development beyond certain limits.

#### **7.4.3 A City Focused on the Historic Core**

Section 6.2.2 describes how Cambridge is formed of a network of neighbourhood hubs and commercial areas or developments centralised around a single core, which is focused on the medieval area of the city (the historic core). The core is a focus for many aspects of the city.

There are a number of neighbourhood hubs and areas of commercial, industrial, retail or institutional focus in the east of the city. Although we have not carried out a detailed analysis of this aspect of Cambridge, it appears as though these nodes either serve local community needs without seriously competing with the city centre, or specialise in certain services that the city centre cannot cater for, and which would be out of character with the city centre (such as industrial development around the railway and healthcare provision at Addenbrooke's Hospital).

There is a danger that, if the east side of Cambridge expands much beyond its current size, the existing historic core will not be accessible to the people of Cambridge due to the distance, and inconvenience of travelling, between residential areas and the centre. The east side of Cambridge at Cherry Hinton is already the furthest part of the city from the historic core (4 kilometres). Substantial development on this side of Cambridge, beyond certain limits, might require the development of alternative urban cores that provide the focus for large areas of the east of the city, competing with the historic centre and irretrievably altering the historic form and balance of Cambridge. It is important that the role of the historic core, as the dominant focus for the city, is not eroded by development of such alternative centres.

#### **7.4.4 Short and/or Characteristic Approaches to Cambridge from the Edge of the City**

Short and/or characteristic approaches contributing to the setting and special character of the whole of Cambridge are discussed in section 6.2.3. These approaches on the east side of the city are shown on drawing number 1641LP/14.

The only characteristic approach to distinctive Cambridge on the east side of the city is outside the area of this detailed study, and follows the green finger along the River Cam from Fen Ditton. This is an important approach that should be safeguarded.

The rail approach from Ipswich is relatively long, but once past Cherry Hinton, the

overall character of the approach is green, with pasture and cattle grazing almost to the station, contributing positively to the perception of a compact city in a rural landscape setting. This approach should be safeguarded and, where possible, enhanced.

The main approaches into the city from the east side of Cambridge (Newmarket Road, Cambridge Road and Hills Road) are generally long and unremarkable. They are mainly commercial or residential in character and, overall, do not contribute positively to the setting and special character of the city. Although they cannot be classified as special qualities that should be safeguarded, they do play an important role in contributing to people's perception of Cambridge. It is, therefore, important that they are not degraded further.

#### **7.4.5 A City of a Human Scale Easily Crossed by Foot and by Bicycle**

Section 6.2.4 described how much of the population of Cambridge, particularly students, travel the city by foot or by bicycle. This is made possible by the relatively small size of the city, particularly on the west side. On the east side the special quality of Cambridge as a city of human scale, easily crossed by foot and by bicycle, has already been eroded by the presence of large areas of peripheral development.

It is important that Cambridge is not allowed to spread much further east, creating large new urban areas that can only be reached via motorised transport means, by the majority of the people. There is a danger that development of East Cambridge beyond certain limits would erode the human scale of the city, creating longer distances between the eastern peripheral suburbs and the historic core that are not easily crossed by foot or by bicycle.

#### **7.4.6 Key Views of Cambridge from the Landscape**

Key views of Cambridge from the landscape on the east side of the city are illustrated on drawing number 1641LP/14 and have been discussed in sections 7.2.7 and 7.3.6. It can be seen that there are a number of key elevated panoramic viewpoints on the east side of the city from where it is often possible to see large areas of the city set within its rural landscape (see Photograph 1, Appendix A for an example). There are also key low level viewpoints close to the city near the inner necklace villages of Teversham (Photograph 3, Appendix A) and Fen Ditton.

Many of the qualities that are special to Cambridge and its setting can be seen from these key viewpoints. These views and their qualities are finite and important to the setting and special character of Cambridge and they should, therefore, be safeguarded.

All other views of the city and its landscape setting should also be given consideration when considering any changes as they all contribute to people's perception of the city.

#### **7.4.7 Significant Areas of Distinctive and Supportive Townscape and Landscape**

Section 5.6 demonstrates how areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape contribute most strongly to the distinctiveness of the whole of Cambridge and its Green Belt setting. They are, therefore, important areas to protect. However, as discussed in that section, these areas are not in every respect of greater importance than the remaining areas of influence (with the exception of

Visually Detracting Townscape/Landscape), as all areas play a crucial role in the setting and perception of the city. The importance of *Connective Townscape/Landscape* and *Outer Rural Areas* lies in linking between and forming a foil to areas of Historic Core and Distinctive and Supportive townscape and landscape.

We have identified, on drawing number 1641LP/14, distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape as the most essential areas to be safeguarded, and to be preserved in their current form.

#### **7.4.8 Topography Providing a Framework to Cambridge**

The topography on the east side of Cambridge is described in section 7.3.2. Topography is particularly important to the setting and special character of the east side of the city as this is where the two areas of greatest contrast lie closest to the urban area. It is important that these contrasts in landform are not masked by development. Development should not, in particular, be allowed on the chalk hills or on the fens where it is uncharacteristic and would adversely affect the historical relationship between built development and landform.

#### **7.4.9 A Soft Green Edge to the City**

A distinctive feature of Cambridge is its appearance as a densely treed city with a soft, green edge merging into an agricultural landscape (see historic and contemporary prospects of the edge of Cambridge on the report cover). This is not the general pattern on the east side of Cambridge where the edge is mixed, and generally unremarkable. It varies from abrupt, hard edges with modern housing or industry abutting arable fields, the open Airport land (see Photograph 5, Appendix A), or reclaimed land, to suburban garden hedges and rural field hedges adjoining modern housing, and a disused railway line partially vegetated with trees and scrub.

There are some local areas bounded by native hedges, trees or scrub that could be safeguarded by positive management or by resisting development. However, there is potential for some of the hedges (such as those on the north side of Cherry Hinton) to be incorporated as features and wildlife habitats within new development, and for a new green edge to be created as part of the development, should this not cause significant detriment to Green Belt purposes.

The majority of urban edges on this side of the city are, however, fairly poor and uncharacteristic of historic Cambridge, and have potential to be improved by management, landscape enhancements or development.

#### **7.4.10 Green Fingers into the City**

The only green finger linking the city with the open countryside on the east side of the city follows the River Cam Corridor from Fen Ditton. This is mentioned in section 7.3.3 and is an important feature that should be safeguarded.

#### **7.4.11 Designated Sites and Areas Enriching the Setting of Cambridge**

The importance of designated sites and areas to the setting and special character of East Cambridge is described in section 7.3.2. This highlights the role that of SSSIs and other wildlife sites, and Conservation Areas and other designated sites and areas, in enriching to people's experience of the landscape. Those considered

to be of greatest importance to the setting and special character of East Cambridge are shown on drawing number 1641LP/14 and should be safeguarded by protection and management.

**7.4.12 Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycleways Providing Links Between Cambridge and the Open Countryside**

The important role that footpaths, bridleways and cycleways play in providing access to the rural setting of East Cambridge is described in section 7.3.2. These are shown on drawing number 1641LP/14. The good network of public rights of way in the countryside east of Cambridge are an important part of the setting and special character of the city and they should be safeguarded and, where appropriate, improved.

Links between urban areas where people live and the open countryside are, however, poor. As discussed in section 7.2.3, Cambridge Airport effectively blocks all access (except for along roads) from Coldham's Common and adjacent housing areas, and the open countryside. There is potential for links between the city and its landscape setting to be improved. This is discussed as part of the vision of East Cambridge in section 7.5.

**7.4.13 Elements and Features Contributing Positively to the Character of the Landscape Setting**

There is a pattern of elements and features, including an interesting distribution of water and trees described in section 7.2.5, within the landscape east of Cambridge. Other elements important to East Cambridge include natural and man made features such as hedgerows, willow trees, reed beds, villages, buildings, church towers and windmills. They are fundamental to the character of different local landscape character areas discussed in sections 7.3.2 and 7.3.4, and also to the setting and special character of East Cambridge. Some elements and features will be more important to the setting and special character of East Cambridge than others.

Due to the wide spread and often small scale nature of many of these elements there might be scope for carefully planned local change. As a broad policy, however, they should be safeguarded and managed to ensure that they play an increasingly positive role and, where possible, be protected from adverse effects of development.

**7.4.14 The Distribution, Physical Separation, Setting, Scale and Character of Necklace Villages**

The role and importance of the inner necklace villages within local landscape character areas on the east side of Cambridge and the setting and special character of the city is described in section 7.3.4. This also describes the role and character of the rural landscape separating and providing settings to these villages. It is essential to preserve the pattern, scale and character, the rural landscape settings, and the physical separation of villages from other settlements.

Although all areas of open countryside in the Green Belt play a role to a greater or lesser extent in separating settlements, those areas of land that are considered to be most critical in separating settlements within the immediate setting of East Cambridge, and which should be afforded the greatest protection, are shown on drawing number 1641LP/14. It is particularly important to safeguard key areas of



rural land between the villages closest to Cambridge.

The historic situation of the small villages lying on slightly raised ground, close to water and where the land was easily cultivated, within the three Eastern Fen Edge landscape character areas is an important part of the setting and special character of East Cambridge and should be preserved. The strong rural character of Fen Ditton, Teversham, Great Wilbraham and Little Wilbraham is a particular quality of the setting and special character of East Cambridge which should be preserved. Their small scale, their permeability to the rural landscape, and their clear separation from Cambridge should be protected by resisting significant development within or adjoining these settlements.

Fen Ditton and Teversham should be afforded particular protection as two of only three villages to retain these qualities within very close proximity to Cambridge, the other being Grantchester to the south west of the city.

Although Fulbourn has lost some of the qualities possessed by the smaller villages east of Cambridge it is also important to the setting and special character of Cambridge, and it should be protected from further damage by resisting significant development that would cause it to grow even larger or to join the urban area of Cambridge.

#### **7.4.15 A City Set in a Landscape which Retains a Strongly Rural Character**

The character of the landscape east of Cambridge is described in section 7.2.6 and local landscape character areas are shown on drawing number 1641LP/12. The role that each local character area plays in providing a rural setting to Cambridge is described in section 7.3.4. The four local landscape character areas with a strong rural character (Fen Ditton Eastern Fen Edge, Teversham Eastern Fen Edge, Fulbourn Eastern Fen Edge and Little Wilbraham Fen) play the greatest role in contributing to the special quality of Cambridge as a city set in a rural landscape. It is important that this character is conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced through management and landscape initiatives. However, specific areas of rural land should not necessarily be protected just because they are rural in character, and there might be sites within these local character areas that could be developed without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes. These areas in East Cambridge are discussed in section 7.5.

Local character areas Cambridge Airport, Cherry Hinton Works and Fulbourn Hospital, close to the city, have less of their rural character remaining. They offer potential opportunities to enhance the rural setting of East Cambridge through management and landscape initiatives and development. These potentials are presented in the vision for East Cambridge in section 7.5. The gap between Fulbourn and Cambridge should not be allowed to become more 'urban' in character as this would damage the setting and special character of the city by destroying the separate identity of Fulbourn, and extending the distance between the urban edge of the city and the historic core by 3.5 kilometres.

Cambridge Airport is grassed (and therefore green) and open, providing a foreground to views of Cambridge, but it is not rural in character and therefore does not contribute strongly to the rural setting of Cambridge. It does, however, have an attribute as an open setting.

Insert drawing 14

## 7.5 A Vision of East Cambridge

South Cambridgeshire District Council have accepted the principal of development west of Airport Way in order to contribute to development targets set by RPG6. This detailed study of East Cambridge has found that land west of Airport Way could be developed without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes, and there is potential to enhance the setting and special character of the city through such development, if it is planned, designed and implemented in a sensitive manner.

Drawing number 1641LP/15 sets out our vision for East Cambridge. It conceptually illustrates how development could be accommodated and how the setting and special character of East Cambridge, and thus of the whole city, could be enhanced. Much of this vision can only be achieved by working closely with landowners and developers.

The components of the vision of the future of East Cambridge in 2002 are described out below. This vision safeguards the key qualities of the setting and special character of Cambridge described in section 7.2 as a primary objective:

- Ensure that peripheral development does not spread east of Airport Way where it would compound the threat, caused by existing extensive development on the east side of the city, to the dominance of the historic core and areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape.
- Only limited peripheral development is possible in areas indicated on drawing number 1641LP/15 if the setting and special character of the east side of the city is to be protected. This development also presents opportunities to improve some aspects of the setting and special character of East Cambridge.
- There is potential for land west of Airport Way and north of Newmarket Road to be sensitively developed without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes, creating a new soft green edge to Cambridge.
- If development were to occur through Green Belt releases, a new Green Belt boundary should be tightly drawn around the edge of the new development, and maintained indefinitely to protect Cambridge as one of England's most special historic cities.
- The green finger and distinctive approach to Cambridge from Fen Ditton is a particular feature of the special character of the City and should be protected and carefully managed.
- A new green finger and an approach from the countryside, across new Public Open Space on the Airport site, through Coldham's Common and into the River Cam Corridor green finger, are proposed.
- All other main routes into Cambridge from the east (Milton Road, Newmarket Road, Cambridge Road, Hills Road and the rail approach from the north east) should be enhanced through management initiatives, and highway, landscape, building and environmental improvements. They should be protected from further degradation.

- Ease of travel within the city by foot and by bicycle, particularly between the suburbs and the historic core, is poor within East Cambridge, due to the distance and, in certain situations, poor cycleway routes. New development on the east edge of Cambridge should not be so far from the historic core so as to further degrade this special quality of Cambridge.
- The quality of views from key viewpoints should be given particular significance when considering any development proposals or changes within the surrounding rural landscape. This particularly applies to key elevated panoramic viewpoints from the chalk hills to the south and east identified on drawing number 1641LP/14.
- Conservation measures, and especially high standards of development control, design and management, need to be a feature of areas of supportive landscape at Coldham's Common, around Teversham, and between Fulbourn and Cherry Hinton. Conservation, management, enhancement and development control measures need to be employed to protect and improve all other areas.
- Landscape management and enhancement measures should be employed to maintain and enhance the character the landscape around the east of Cambridge. Within the detailed study area, this applies to local Eastern Fen Edge landscape character areas (Fen Ditton, Teversham and Fulbourn Eastern Fen Edge) and their villages, and Little Wilbraham Fen landscape character area.
- The significance of topography in providing a framework to East Cambridge should be appreciated and measures should be taken to ensure that the contrasts in landform are not masked by inappropriate development or management. Development should respect the historic pattern in relation to topography and, in particular, not encroach onto the higher chalk hills, or onto the low, flat fens.
- It is important to preserve and enhance soft green edges to the city and villages, and take opportunities to enhance non-distinctive hard edges.
- The variety of designated sites and areas, including Nature Reserves, SSSIs and Conservation Areas, which enrich the landscape setting of East Cambridge should be protected and, where appropriate, promoted for public education and access.
- A variety of footpaths, bridleways, byways and cycleways provide access to the open countryside; they are an important means by which people can appreciate the setting of special character of East Cambridge. There is scope for considerable improvement in links between the city and countryside on the east side of Cambridge. New access routes, and a new Fen Edge Country Park, are proposed.
- Maintaining the separate identity of the necklace villages, and particularly the inner necklace villages of Fen Ditton, Teversham and Fulbourn, is an important feature of the vision for East Cambridge. The separate identity of Fulbourn should be safeguarded by ensuring that treatment of the former hospital sites between Fulbourn and Cherry Hinton is predominantly rural and undeveloped in character.

Development on areas suggested will inevitably lead to the loss of some positive attributes of the setting of East Cambridge. There would be a loss of rural land, the open gap between the city and Teversham would be narrowed, views of the city would be changed and the approaches along Newmarket Road and Coldham's Lane (into Cambridge) and High Ditch Road (into Fen Ditton) would be altered. However, this loss is not considered to be substantial in the context of development need as set out in RPG6 (see section 2.7). It is considered that, with more detailed analysis, and sensitive planning and design, the loss of these attributes could be more than compensated for by the enhancements to the setting and special character of the city set out in this vision. Many of these enhancements could only be achieved by releasing the Airport site.

Insert drawing 15

## 7.6 The Potential Effects of Development East of Airport Way

Development east of Airport way around Teversham, Fulbourn and east of Cherry Hinton, as proposed in DEGW's *Cambridge Urban Expansion* report (DEGW 2001), or any other similar large scale development east of Airport Way, would have adverse effects on the setting and special character of Cambridge. Any significant development, even if planned differently to the DEGW study, would have similar effects. Such development would:

- significantly alter the scale of the east side of the city, further eroding its compact quality and the scale of the city relative to the historic core;
- increase peripheral development on the east side of the city, threatening areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape;
- erode the human scale of the city, creating longer distances between the eastern peripheral suburbs and the historic core that are not easily crossed by foot or by bicycle;
- potential to create a new urban centre that would compete for dominance with the historic centre, irretrievably altering the historic form and balance of Cambridge;
- adversely affect key panoramic views of Cambridge from the higher chalk hills to the south and east, and Newmarket Road to the north;
- subsume Teversham within urban development and destroy its special quality as a small village in a rural landscape within close proximity to Cambridge (there are only three small, rural villages within very close proximity to Cambridge – Fen Ditton and Grantchester are the others);
- destroy the village character of Fulbourn by doubling its size and eroding its separation from Cambridge (DEGW proposal);
- development on high ground above the 10 and 15 metre contours north of Fulbourn (as proposed by DEGW), would be visually exposed and cause considerable negative changes to views and landscape character, adversely affecting a much wider area of countryside than the developed area;
- significantly reduce the extent of rural landscape separating Cambridge, Teversham and Fulbourn, and thus their separate identities, and;
- urbanise the rural landscape east of Airport Way, adversely affecting the character of the Fen Edge and Fen landscape types.

There is a danger that, if the east side of Cambridge expands much beyond its current size, the existing historic core will not be accessible to the people of Cambridge due to the distance, and inconvenience of travelling, between residential areas and the centre. The east side of Cambridge at Cherry Hinton is already the furthest part of the city from the historic core (4 kilometres). Substantial development on this side of Cambridge, beyond certain limits, might lead to the development of alternative urban cores that provide the focus for large areas of the east of the city, competing with the historic centre.

The LDA Cambridge Green Belt study therefore concludes that any development east of Airport Way around Teversham, Fulbourn and east of Cherry Hinton should be resisted in order to preserve the setting and special character of Cambridge.



## 8.0 CONCLUSIONS

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### 8.1 Introduction

Cambridge has changed considerably since Professor Sir William Holford and H. Miles Wright produced their Plan of Cambridge in 1950. Even though some of this change has been damaging to the setting and special character of the city, Cambridge remains one of England's finest historic cities and retains many of the qualities identified by Holford and Miles Wright.

This assessment has followed guidance for the review of Green Belts given principally in Regional Planning Guidance for the East of England (RPG6) and national Planning Policy Guidance for Green Belts (PPG2). The study has described and illustrated the factors that contribute to ***the setting and special character of Cambridge*** in 2002 (in accordance with the fourth purpose for including land in Green Belts within PPG2). It has then set out ***the qualities to be safeguarded*** to preserve this setting and special character, before presenting a ***vision of the city*** (as stipulated in RPG6).

A detailed assessment, following the same steps set out in the paragraph above, has been made of the east side of Cambridge and it has been concluded that there is scope for urban expansion, through Green Belt releases west of Airport Way and north of Newmarket Road, without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes.

### 8.2 The Special Qualities of the Green Belt in 2002

A number of qualities that contribute positively to the setting and special character of Cambridge, and which are essential to Green Belt purposes, have been identified. These are summarised as:

- A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole
- A city focussed on the historic core
- Short and/or characteristic approaches to Cambridge from the edge of the city
- A city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle
- Key views of Cambridge from the landscape
- Significant areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape
- Topography providing a framework to Cambridge
- A soft green edge to the city
- Green fingers into the city
- Designated sites and areas enriching the setting of Cambridge
- Long distance footpaths and bridleways providing links between Cambridge and the open countryside
- Elements and features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting
- The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of necklace villages
- A city set in a landscape which retains a strong rural character.

These qualities are finite and irreplaceable, and should be safeguarded.

### 8.3 The Vision of the Future for Cambridge

A strategic vision for the whole of Cambridge and its Green Belt is given in section 6, and a more detailed vision for East Cambridge in section 7. These visions are strategies and initiatives to safeguard and enhance the setting and special character of Cambridge, while recognising that there is a need for some urban expansion, through Green Belt releases, in order to contribute to the development targets of RPG6. The visions for the whole of Cambridge and its Green Belt and for East Cambridge safeguard the key qualities of the setting and special character of Cambridge as primary objectives.

### 8.4 Potential for Green Belt Releases

This study, which analyses Cambridge at a broad scale, is not intended to be used to support or argue against development on any specific sites, except in the area of more detailed study in East Cambridge. Thus, there may be individual peripheral development opportunities within an area identified as inappropriate for development at a strategic level; this is unlikely to apply, however, to 'strategic' scale peripheral developments. This study is intended to assist the local planning authorities to find land that can be released from the Cambridge Green Belt and enable the urban area of the city to make as great a contribution to the development needs of the Cambridge sub-region as possible, whilst ensuring that the setting and special character of Cambridge remains intact for future generations.

Policy P9/3c of the draft of the Structure Plan (Cambridgeshire County Council 2002) suggests a number of locations that Local Plans should consider for development. Our broad scale study of the whole Green Belt indicates that there might be some potential to develop parts of five of the areas suggested in the draft Structure Plan (north of Newmarket Road, North of Cherry Hinton, Cambridge Airport, at Clay Farm and areas east and south of Trumpington, and between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road), without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes. Our broad scale assessment has not identified opportunities for large scale development in the two other areas suggested in the draft Structure Plan (south of Addenbrooke's Hospital, or between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road). More detailed assessment might, however, identify some sites in these four areas, or in other parts of the Green Belt, that could be developed without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes.

The detailed assessment of East Cambridge has confirmed that there is potential to develop land west of Airport Way and north of Newmarket Road. This also presents opportunities to enhance the setting and special character of Cambridge as part of the vision for East Cambridge. Delivery of much of the vision is, therefore, likely to be in the hands of landowners and the development industry, as well as the planning authorities through their development plans and statutory powers.

The detailed assessment has also identified that land east of Cambridge Airport cannot be developed without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes. Large scale development east of Airport Way around Teversham, Fulbourn and east of Cherry Hinton, would have adverse effects on the setting and special character of Cambridge, and should be resisted.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**PHOTOGRAPH PANELS**