



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

A MASTERPLAN FOR THE CITY OF ELY: Achieving smarter growth over the next two decades

Consultation Draft
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Sponsored by:



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Produced by:



A MASTERPLAN FOR THE CITY OF ELY:

Achieving smarter growth over the next two decades

Produced by

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FOREWORD

Ely has seen many changes in the last 40 years. In the 1960s there was an influx of manufacturing industries using the 'modern' materials of the day and this was followed in the 1970s by a dramatic increase in the number of homes but surprisingly little increase in the population. Despite continued housing growth in the 1980s the number of children barely increased. Retail activity changed dramatically with the advent of supermarkets and the decline of family run businesses as tastes changed and the children of owners saw better prospects elsewhere. Agriculture and associated industries ceased to need so many people and many of the "newer" manufacturers were overtaken in the last 10 years by competition from across the world. Fortunately, there has been some improvement in localised employment in recent years but not sufficient to meet the needs of what has been a very rapid growth in population.

Against this background the District Council has been expending considerable resources developing a Local Development Framework for the next dozen years. It is a process defined by government that feels as though it is more about producing houses than considering how people live. The weight of paper that has to be produced inevitably distracts everyone from developing a clear view of the future. Nevertheless, much of the background research tells us about how things have changed and in turn they point the way toward the need to do things differently in the future. Only 23% of the locally available spend on comparison goods

(clothes, consumer goods, home improvement products) is spent within the District. 74% of the residents of new housing developments are employed outside the District. The educational background and skill variety within our enlarged population has improved dramatically. Many of our social and voluntary support organisations find recruitment difficult as many work long hours when their commuting time is included.

Many local residents are of the opinion that the recent growth in Ely has only provided high-density housing and that the balance of the future provision of housing and services needs to be redressed. Recent planning applications for large retail units have brought to the fore the need to develop an overview of the needs of Ely's future development.

Our response has been to commission a Masterplan for Ely: a clear, comprehensive and coherent view of the future based upon our desire to produce a place that will be much more self-sufficient. A City that keeps its special nature and independence whilst recognising its task as a commercial and service centre for both itself and all those who live in the surrounding villages. A vision of a community that provides a higher proportion of local employment, increased and improved leisure and retail facilities, all encapsulated within an extensive network of green space supported by cycle ways and paths.

Research and discussions with hundreds of local people, experts and organisations have given a clear way forward. The concepts that lie behind the Masterplan require both more growth and more constraints on the nature of that growth. By stepping beyond the need for housing growth set by government we gain an opportunity to take a more proactive approach to issues about housing density, traffic congestion and road networks, building design, open space and the phasing of development. More population is the key to supporting an increased supply of local retail and employment opportunities with other services to match. The evidence is convincing that a population of 26-28,000 will enable our community to be much more self-sufficient, providing an improved opportunity for people to work and live locally. A term that has summarised this concept is “Smarter Growth”, a concept that is well worth the challenge.

With such a far-reaching and markedly wider view of the future there will be many aspects of the plan that will not accord with our own individual and varied views. Continued open discussion with interested individuals and groups is essential as the details of the delivery of the plan develop over the coming years. By working together we will improve the steps that we all take on our community’s journey into the future. I am confident that success is within our grasp and that the Masterplan will ensure that we all keep the “big picture” to the forefront as we build our future together.

*Councillor Brian Ashton, Leader of the
East Cambridgeshire District Council*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: ACHIEVING SMARTER GROWTH

This report sets out a masterplan for the growth of the City of Ely over the next couple of decades. It is based on consultations with a wide range of stakeholders from community groups to property owners and their advisors. It draws on a series of research studies, which cover in particular an audit of the infrastructure constraints and employment aspects. The Masterplan has also been influenced by case studies of leading examples of urban extensions and country parks in the UK and on the Continent.

Vision

The Masterplan is intended to supplement the Local Development Framework and the planning process by showing where and how further growth might best be accommodated. The vision in short is of Ely as a 21st Century Garden City, within a much richer natural setting, and with a better balance between living, working and recreation. An optimal size of some 26-28,000 residents is suggested, which will involve a planned urban extension to the North with three or four new neighbourhoods, each with their own identity and local facilities.

The Masterplan also envisages further employment growth with some 3-6,000 new jobs in order to cut down commuting levels. This will partially be achieved through current development plans for Angel Drove and Lancaster Way. It also depends on attracting new offices to high quality sites near the railway station, and on promoting tourism more effectively in conjunction with other parts of the sub-region.

Strategy

The sustainable growth of Ely depends very much on commitments to building the proposed Southern Link Road, which will free the centre of traffic and enable high quality developments around the Station Gateway. This will also increase

demand for new facilities at the southern end of the business park on Angel Drove. A further infrastructure constraint is the need to relocate the Waste Water Treatment Plant to improve links between the City Centre and the River Ouse, and also to enable the redevelopment of the wider area for high quality housing.

The strategic framework is based on seven themes, and was developed through a visioning event with over 70 stakeholders. The main ideas are:

- **Rescuing the heart of Ely from traffic** A top priority is to build the Southern Link Road and to use this to transform the Station Gateway and Angel Drove, along with measures to make the City Centre more pedestrian friendly. This should include a new high quality bus corridor along Lynn Road.
- **Strengthening Ely as a place to visit and shop** Retailer demand for extra and better quality space would be met by extending the shopping centre to the other side of Nutholt Lane, and upgrading the Market Place.
- **Broadening local employment** As well as plans for expanding Angel Drove and Lancaster Way Business Parks efforts should be made to attract more office employment and develop tourism, with higher quality business space, and some new hotels.



- **Securing better leisure facilities**

Extended leisure facilities, including the possibility of a new pool, the creation of a long talked about Country Park and extended waterfront would enable the whole District to benefit from growth.

- **Widening housing choice** As well as new City Centre and riverside apartments, higher quality housing should be developed near the City Centre, and on Lisle Lane, and in three or four new neighbourhoods in a Northern Growth Area.

- **Reinforcing the social infrastructure** Each new neighbourhood should have its own community hub. Complementary action will be taken to expand educational and health facilities.

Key opportunity sites

1. Ely Station Gateway

The site referred to as the Ely Station Gateway comprises land occupied by Standen's between the station and the river and various sites to the north of Angel Drove. Key constraints on the site are the high level of congestion, the railway crossing, poor access for pedestrians and floodplain. Appropriate uses for this area could include:

- Mixed residential and office development which does not add to congestion i.e. not retail
- A direct route through to the river and Country Park
- Moorings and boat related uses
- Hotel catering for meetings and events
- Business space, including offices.

Access to this key site can be enhanced by:

- Construction of Southern Link Road
- Downgrading of A142 and conversion into a tree-lined avenue
- Re-allocation of road space by the railway station to eliminate existing barriers to pedestrian movement
- Extension of the riverside walk towards the railway station
- Creation of a direct pedestrian link from the station
- Improved direct bus services.

2. Angel Drove

This large site is between the railway line and the A142, including Cambridgeshire Business Park and the Mantle site. Appropriate uses of this area could include:

- Major business quarter with B1 and office space for small and growing companies
- Headquarters uses
- Bulky goods retail and showrooms, adjacent to the new Southern Link Road
- Leisure uses.

Access to this key site can be enhanced by:

- Opening of a new entrance and exit at the western end to connect with the Southern Link Road.
- Upgrading the pedestrian links to the Station and the City Centre with a tree-lined avenue
- Provision of parking off the main carriageway
- Regular bus service.

3. City Centre

The City Centre is defined as the area containing continuous shops, and includes Forehill, St. Mary's Street as well as the main streets of Market and High Street. It also includes the Cloisters shopping centre, Paradise site and Nutholt Lane/Lynn Road/Newnham Street/ Prickwillow Road. Appropriate uses for this are include:

- More shopping floorspace including the possible expansion of Waitrose
- Leisure uses such as a small town park
- Restaurants and bars to enhance the 'evening economy'
- The Market Place as an 'events area' including increasing the regularity of Farmers' Markets
- Better utilisation of space over shops
- Shared access for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

4. Lisle Lane and Eastern Gateway

Lisle Lane comprises the largest area of potentially surplus brownfield land in Ely. The area also includes the Waste Treatment Works and the riverside area. The key constraints are the location of the Waste Treatment Plant, congestion and heavy traffic along Broad Street. Appropriate uses for the site could include:

- High quality housing
- Potential for some 'star' buildings including blocks of apartments looking over the railway to the river
- Studio/office space for smaller businesses

5. Northern Growth Area

The area is bordered by the A10 bypass to the West and by the railway line from Ely to Peterborough. There are virtually no infrastructure constraints in the Northern Growth Area.

The Northern Growth Area is well located for a planned urban extension taking some 2-3000 plus homes within a Country Park setting providing a range of active forms of recreation including walking/cycling, stables, sports fields, playing facilities, water uses, garden centres etc. Access to this area will eventually require a road from Thistle Corner crossing Lynn Road and linking to the A10.

The delivery of the strategic framework to tackle congestion and improve access is intrinsically linked to the development of these key sites.

Funding

The Council has secured external funding totalling £687,000 in 2008/09 from the Housing Growth Fund to pump prime the relocation of Ely Sewage Treatment Works and finance Area Action Plans for the key opportunity sites including the Southern Link Road. The East Cambridgeshire Strategic Partnership is promoting a further bid of £100,000 to part fund the Ely Country Park.

Development Opportunities



INTRODUCTION

'The measure of a City's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and squares'

John Ruskin

'Ely is thought by many, even by its residents, as just another small Fenland Market Town, it is not. It is a Cathedral City having a fine riverside area, and having at its centre one of the finest Cathedral buildings in the UK... We need to create an ambience which might be termed The Ely Experience.'

From The Ely Society's response to the Masterplan.

What kind of place should the City of Ely seek to be, how can pressures for growth be harnessed, where should different kinds of development take place, and how can they be integrated with what exists? These are the kinds of questions this masterplanning study seeks to address. It is a response to a commission from East Cambridgeshire District Council to prepare an Ely Masterplan that will *'help stitch new development seamlessly into an existing context and help ensure that developments deliver high quality, sustainable buildings and public spaces'*. It is intended to provide a spatial framework for the next 20 years, and to influence bids for funding. The study has also been sponsored by Cambridgeshire Horizons and Cambridgeshire County Council.

The study has been led by URBED, who also undertook the research and consultations for the main themes and projects. Support has come from a multi-disciplinary team comprising Gifford as engineers and traffic planners, SQW as economic consultants, Alan Stones as urban designer, and Han Lorzing, Sector Head at the Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research, as landscape architect. The work has benefited

hugely from close involvement of our Steering Group and consultations with officers. We are also grateful for the constructive inputs from many members of the community and other stakeholders.

There are many approaches to producing masterplans. They are often seen as an exercise in visualising the possibilities for brownfield sites as a prospectus that will entice private investors. Sometimes they are treated as rigid blueprints. Too often they end up on shelves or as door-stops. Neither approach is relevant or feasible in a historic city like Ely whose population has grown by 18% over the period 2001-6. Jobs are also increasing; Ely is no longer an economic backwater. The Masterplan therefore has to be about managing growth.

Ely is not a large city but it should be a superb place to live, work and visit. The challenge for the next two decades is to ensure that one of England's smallest and most precious cities grows in ways which are sustainable in every sense and that bring lasting benefits for the different communities. The Masterplan was commissioned to advise on what would be most sustainable,



and where different kinds of development should be accommodated. We therefore adopted an approach with five main elements:

1. Understanding the special

challenges: we have consulted close to 60 organisations, reviewed over 40 policy documents, and held a series of workshops and a visioning conference to prepare a strategic framework for managing the future development of Ely (see Appendix A for the summary of the conference report).

2. Analysing the constraints and

opportunities: we have undertaken a systematic audit of the infrastructure and development sites in terms of transport, geotechnics, flooding ecology, contaminated land, heritage and archaeology, noise and air quality. The study drew on local knowledge regarding potential development sites, which have been mapped to establish the scope for growth.

3. Generating appropriate options:

We have used previous URBED research into smaller historic towns and cities in England and Europe for inspiration and lessons, supplemented by some comparisons to establish gaps. We have consulted with property owners, and also researched into prospective demand for different uses for the key opportunity sites, with particular reference to generating a wider range of local jobs and hence achieving greater 'containment'.

4. Assessing how progress can be

made in stages: we have drawn on a series of case studies of relevant examples to illustrate how the key opportunity sites might be developed.

5. Recommending what should be

done: finally we have drawn up an initial list of projects that would enable the principles of the Masterplan to be put into effect, including resolving current disputes and tapping potential funds for infrastructure. We have suggested how to make better coordinated progress in future, and how the local authorities can play a more proactive role.

This report falls into three sections:

1. The case for smarter growth
2. Capacity for smarter growth
3. The development strategy

1. THE CASE FOR SMARTER GROWTH

This section examines the case for Ely growing beyond its current size, and what the optimal population would be. The reasons for considering further growth lie in providing better facilities for the communities of East Cambridgeshire, and accommodating new development while avoiding further sprawl. Smarter growth would tap the skills and spending power of a larger population with a higher proportion of young families and enable them to work closer to home. However, unless the process is intelligently managed, for example by making the most of existing infrastructure, it will not produce the benefits or objectives set out in the Local Development Framework currently under preparation, which embodies the results of considerable research and consultation.

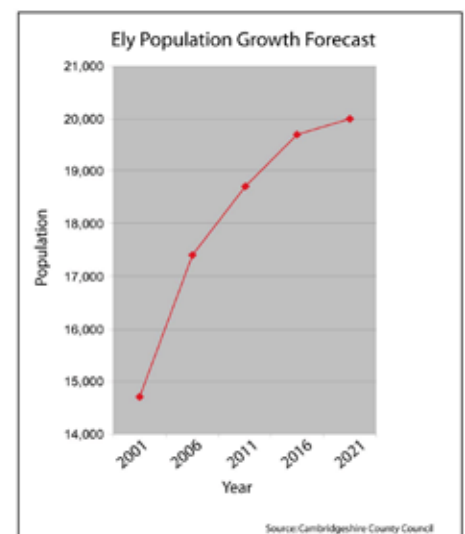
1.1 Pressures for growth

Ely is currently undergoing significant growth, which could result in it going up a league within the regional economy as well as enhancing its appeal as a historic city. However, securing the benefits of growth depends on both channelling growth into appropriate locations, and having a shared vision for what the City could become over the next couple of decades. Our consultations identified a number of different views on what make Ely special:

A. 'Ship of the Fens' Ely's traditional role as a small island on the edge of the Fens is changing fast, as it now lies within the strongest growth area on the sunny side of the country, or 'Silicon Fen' as it has sometimes been called. Ely has a rich history, as Gifford's report brings out with 'heroes' like Etheldreda, Hereward the Wake, the Dutch engineer Vermuyden who drained the Fens, and Oliver Cromwell, who opposed it. In future children may learn about names such as MegaHertz and Michel Instruments, as technological entrepreneurs are attracted to live or work in the City.

B. 'More a village than a city'

Commentators before the Second World War were surprised by how small and sleepy Ely seemed. The town's population only rose from 6,825 in 1841 to 7,917 in 1911. Ely's lack of growth was due to its isolation in the unhealthy Fens, the dominance of the ecclesiastical precinct which occupies much of the land between the river and the City Centre, and the lack of industrial development in East Anglia in the 19th century. Even today Ely is still relatively small. Ely is one of nearly 1,300 rural settlements in England between 10,000 and 30,000 in population, of which over 200 (or about 15%) are between 20,000 and 30,000 in size, and it is these that attract the bulk of retail and other



18th century engravings by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck

investment¹. Ely is much smaller than other comparable historic cities in the South East like Canterbury or Chichester, which also have cathedrals. In fact it is the third smallest city in England.

C. 'Growth in the wrong place'

Memory Lane: Ely and the Fens reveals how much has changed in the last 40 years, sometimes for the good (such as the marina and Jubilee Gardens), but often without regard to environmental quality or future needs². The heart of Ely effectively stretches from Babylon to Paradise, not to mention Angel Drove! The re-development of war-time airfields as the industrial estate of Lancaster Way, and the development of the old goods yard off Angel Drove as a superstore and business park, have met short-term economic needs. Lack of affordable housing in Cambridge and easy access by train to London have fuelled demand for new estates along the western bypass of the A10 without creating neighbourhoods with real character. The A142 still runs into the City and blights the main southern gateway. A lack of allocated space for development has led to unwelcome proposals for new settlements and out of town shopping.

D. 'Store wars' As towns grow so do the demands for retail floor space. A headline in the Ely Standard summed up the battles over where much needed food shopping should go, with retailers vying to occupy space next to Tesco outside the City Centre. At the same time other proposals are

being made for retail sheds in inappropriate locations. Developers are well aware of the spending power waiting to be tapped. So too are many owners of industrial sites. The City Centre in Ely is still very small, as comparisons of floor space and employment reveal, and much of the spending on comparison goods, such as clothing, 'leaks' away to other centres, as Roger Tym's³ research has revealed.

E. 'A liveable city: but could it be better?'

A study of *Steeple Row: Opportunities for Enhancement* for the Ely Perspective highlighted concerns for improving links between the different parts of the City⁴. Most people rely on their cars to get into town, and there a number of eyesores in the town that make it less than pleasurable to walk through, including 'red square' (Market Place) just outside the ecclesiastical precinct. A national survey has rated Ely as one of the best towns in the country in which to live⁵. But as a member of the English Historic Towns Forum, Ely should offer much better gateways and a much higher standard of contemporary architecture⁶.

F. 'A dormitory for over-stressed commuters' Ely has been taking overspill demand from Cambridge, and one result is increasing congestion on the roads as well as complaints about poor facilities. Yet it has one of the best connected stations in the country, with four different routes converging. However at present less than 15% of residents get to work by rail. Housebuilders have recognised the attractions of living in a historic city that is

¹ *Market towns: roles, challenges and prospects*, Neil Powe, Trevor Hart, Tim Shaw, 2007

² *Memory Lane: Ely and the Fens*, Mike Petty, 2001

³ *East Cambridgeshire Retail Study*, Roger Tym & Partners, for East Cambridgeshire District Council, 2005

⁴ *Steeple Row: Opportunities for Enhancement*, Liveable Cities Research & Consultancy for the Ely Perspective Community Partnership, 2007

⁵ *Affordable Affluence Index*, Royal Bank of Scotland, 2007

⁶ *Focus on Housing Growth, Case Study of Ely*, English Historic Towns Forum, 2006

just over an hour from London Kings Cross by train. There is a danger that without an agreed plan for growth, Ely will not achieve a balanced housing stock, but simply end up with house-builders' standard products.

1.2 Issues for the Masterplan

Initial work raised a series of issues that the Masterplan needs to address. As a result of being squeezed between the river and the historic ecclesiastical precinct (the largest in the country) the railway lines and the natural boundary of the old island, Ely has very tight limits to growth. The Council therefore needs to provide a clear lead if growth is to provide the desired benefits, and if investment is to go where it is most needed. The consequences of simply relying on development control, while developers are motivated by short-term profit, could be planning blight, as key sites are held back, or development fails to achieve the quality the community expects. The results of our various consultations revealed a number of weaknesses in the City that the masterplan needs to address:

A. Improving the gateways Currently Ely fails to provide either residents or visitors with the full quality of experience they should expect from a riverside cathedral city. The Civic Society draws attention to the *'Standen's industrial site between the river and the station, which will offer a wonderful opportunity to create a superb gateway development at the entrance to Ely by road, rail and water'*. What they call the Ely



Experience should lead all the way from the station to the Cathedral and through to the heart of the City. The *Environmental Capacity Study* identified the importance of retaining key views from afar, and also stressed the need to transform the gateways⁷.

B. Tackling congestion Not only is the journey into Cambridge by road getting worse, but the A142/A10 is also used by heavy lorries from Felixstowe, and forms part of a vital national artery. The A142 effectively severs the town from its station, which is already short of parking for commuters, and makes public transport less competitive than it should be. A new Southern Link Road, is seen as a priority by almost everyone as it would remove most of the heavy through traffic from the centre. What is more, it is essential in enabling Ely to match the standards required of a historic city, and one that could well secure World Heritage Status for the extent of its medieval ecclesiastical precinct.

C. Connecting up with the waterfront Ely is a popular spot for river cruising, and there have been some excellent developments along the river. However the river is seen as 'disjointed' from the City Centre, and both walking and cycling links are weak. Though there are 250 moorings, more are needed, along with better facilities for visiting and moored boats⁸. The Maltings, which should be a lively community hub, does not yet fulfil this role. There is virtually no housing with views over the water. Though great work has

been done to develop sculpture trails, using the theme of the eel, it is hard for the visitor to know which way to walk. Worst of all, walking from the station to the river involves negotiating a busy road, is depressing, and misses the opportunity to connect through the Standen's site.

D. Integrating the new and existing communities Ely sought to lead the way in developing good housing, but the principles of the Design Guide have yet to be applied on a large enough scale⁹. New residents say they have moved to Ely because it is pleasant and reasonably cheap¹⁰. However they complain about development being cramped, and a shortage of leisure facilities and good shops. The new housing has largely been slotted into the space between the City Centre and the A10 western bypass. Because it is largely built around cul de sacs it lacks character and identity, and is not very permeable or legible. The new residents find it easy to jump in their cars and drive out of town. As they are not drawn into town, their spending power is lost to the community. Furthermore apart from some excellent new housing near the river built by small builders, there is relatively little available that is at all special. Nor has the opportunity yet been taken to develop the kinds of new homes that successful business people (or academics) hanker after.

E. Upgrading the shopping offer There has been a huge controversy over the need for more shops in Ely, and a need to find suitable locations for both convenience and compari-



⁷ *Ely Environmental Capacity Study*, LDA, 2001

⁸ *Tourist Accommodation Assessment*, Humberts Leisure, 2005

⁹ *Focus on Housing Growth, Case Study of Ely*, English Historic Towns Forum, 2006

¹⁰ *Ely New Estates Survey 2007*, East Cambridge District Council, 2007

son retailing, plus bulky goods such as stores that cater for DIY. Traders complain of the lack of footfall, in part, they say, due to the lack of high street names. There are a few shops that have a wider reputation, such as Toppings the bookshop, but little in the way of clusters of specialist shops. What should be the key attraction in the Market Place is largely occupied by estate agents, a bank and a bookmaker. It also faces very strong competition in an increasingly mobile world. Ely has to match consumer expectations, which are said to be for a 'wow factor'¹¹. The City is inevitably compared with other historic towns, such as Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds, Peterborough and even Newmarket, all of which have expanded their retail centres and attracted major investment in quality buildings and retailers.

F. Extending the leisure facilities

There is a strong demand for better leisure facilities, particularly from families with young children. The town benefits from a leisure centre with a pool which is within walking and cycling distance of local residents, but both are considered inadequate and need to be replaced. There is not a proper cinema, and the Maltings is under-used, though there are a growing number of galleries and restaurants. Young people inevitably hang around where they can, in turn causing some older people to complain. Some argue there is not enough to interest visitors in staying in the City, which is made worse by the lack of good hotel accommodation. The East Cambridgeshire Tour-

ism Accommodation Assessment Study (2005) identified a quantitative need for additional bed spaces in the District. However, local perception is that there is also a qualitative need for both business and boutique style hotels and somewhere to hold events. Ely lags significantly behind other historic cities in what it can offer.

G. Greening the City One of the benefits of Ely being relatively compact is its proximity to the countryside. However the most startling contrast between Ely today and how it looked in the 18th century is the lack of trees. Because the Fens were 'man-made' and are often inaccessible, what feels natural is all the more valuable. Trees have been progressively cut down and not sufficiently replaced. While there is superb open space at Roswell Pits, and several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), they are effectively cut-off, and hence little visited except by dog walkers. Proposed ideas for a Country Park depend not only on negotiating access, but also on raising the funds to improve and maintain facilities for active recreation, and not just bird watching.

1.3 A vision for 'smarter growth'

At the turn of the last century, visionaries like Ebenezer Howard put forward the concept of the Garden City as a way of reconciling the different appeals of town and country, and avoiding their faults. A new vision for the 'smarter growth' of the City of Ely emerged from the Roundtable Visioning Conference held at the



¹¹ *Future of Retail Property Report 9 - Future Shopping Places*, BDP for BCSC, 2007

Maltings on January 21st 2008 (see Appendix A for a summary report). 77 delegates from the different stakeholders discussed the seven themes of the development strategy, and identified major priorities and early wins on the assumption that Ely continued to grow.

The theme for the 21st century Ely should be 'smarter growth'. This means not only matching development to infrastructure but also creating places that stand the test of time. They should look more attractive than most recent developments because they are '*where City and Countryside meet*'¹². The basic idea is to go up a league, and cross the threshold which makes it easier to attract both private and public investment. The vision was further refined at a well-attended Members Seminar on February 4th 2008, and has since been expressed as '*turning Ely into a 21st century garden city, which offers a great quality of life for all by balancing living, working and playing in a natural as well as historic setting*'.

The general consensus is that Ely is not yet fulfilling its true regional potential. The new vision is of a historic cathedral city where pedestrians and cyclists have primacy, with a great riverside and Country Park, modern offices benefiting from the growth of the Cambridge economy, plus carefully designed new residential neighbourhoods with good social facilities. Together these will support

expanded leisure facilities and a better quality shopping centre. To attract the investment needed to achieve the vision the City needs to expand its residential and working population. This needs to be linked to building a new Southern Link Road to improve both the quality of life and access for residents of East Cambridgeshire as a whole.

1.4 'Smarter growth' and public policy

Any major development has to accord with public policy, and with a changing regulatory environment that is 'plan led' and secures more sustainable forms of development. The aims of the Sustainable Communities Plan are best achieved in areas that already have social and physical infrastructure. However a different approach to development is called for, particularly in historic cities where brownfield land is scarce¹³. The idea of 'smart growth' is the intensification of the most accessible locations, such as around railway stations¹⁴. This depends on applying a number of basic urban design and planning principles that have been advocated through national and regional policies:

A. Regional Spatial Strategy The report of the Examination in Public of the East of England Plan reinforced the idea of growth taking place '*within or on the peripheries of the Cambridgeshire market towns*', but also the importance of avoiding them becoming dormitories¹⁵. It stresses

¹² This is the theme of the new settlement of Vathorst near Amersfoort in the Netherlands www.vathorst.com

¹³ *Focus on Housing Growth, Case Study of Ely*, English Historic Towns Forum, 2006 (Outcome from the seminar Focus on... managing rapid growth in historic towns December 2004)

¹⁴ This concept is developed in the Charter of the Congress for New Urbanism in the USA (www.cnu.org) and has also been applied in new Dutch settlements.

¹⁵ *East of England Plan, December 2004, Examination in Public, Report of the Panel*, Regional Assembly for the East of England, June 2006

the importance of the Cambridge sub-region and the *'further expansion of the knowledge based economy spreading outwards from Cambridge'*. At the time East Cambridgeshire was only allocated a third of the housing growth that went to South Cambridgeshire, which includes the new town of Northstowe.

The Regional Spatial Strategy is being revised, but is likely to reinforce the importance of the Cambridge Growth Area, with funding being provided through the Growth Area Fund to help move housing development forward. Ely may in future have increased importance as a regional growth point. It is a key link in the national transport system. There is also the potential for an 'eco neighbourhood' applying the latest thinking.

B. Local Development Framework

The *Core Strategy* for East Cambridgeshire which is currently being developed sets a number of priorities which should be achievable through planned growth such as to promote affordable housing and related infrastructure; support local business development/wealth creation; minimise sprawl; and favour sustainable principles. The Local Development Framework (LDF) when approved will be the over-riding set of planning policies, which can be supported by supplementary planning documents (SPDs) and other background documents. The links are summarised in the box below.

C. Mixed communities The government's planning guidance on housing Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3,

Housing Panel Allocation (2001-2021)

East Cambridgeshire 8,600

Cambridge 19,000

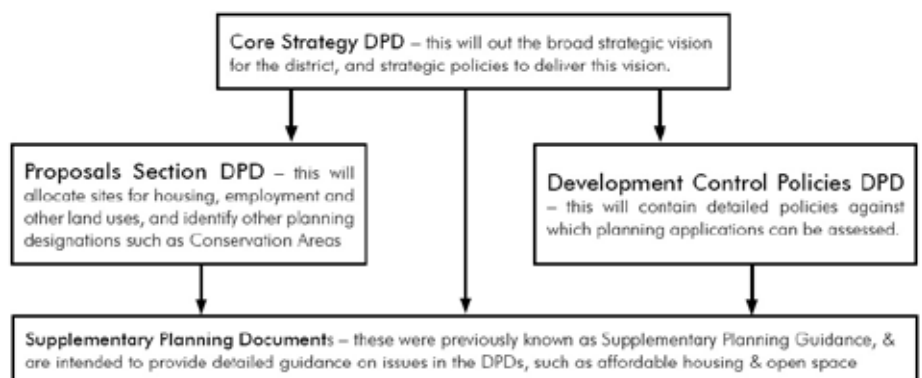
Fenland 11,000

Huntingdonshire 11,200

South Cambridgeshire 23,500

Peterborough UA 25,000

Source: RES EIP Panel report, 2006



Taken from the *Core Strategy Development Plan Document*, East Cambridgeshire District Council, 2005

2006) requires new developments to provide for a mix of tenures, including a significant proportion of affordable housing, which currently includes various forms of 'equity sharing' and key worker housing.

The target is at least 25% on sites where over 14 homes are provided. Housing is also expected to be built at densities of over 30 to the hectare (equivalent to 12 to the acre, as for example in Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb). This is easier to do when a development is being planned from scratch, and when there is a significant amount of three storey terraced development with some blocks of apartments. In particular those on limited incomes need to live closer to good public transport and facilities they can share with others.

D. Knowledge economy The *Regional Economic Strategy*¹⁶, and the work of the Greater Cambridge Partnership emphasise the importance to the UK of making the most of the 'Cambridge Phenomenon', and the exceptional growth of knowledge based organisations all around Cambridge.

Whilst the Cambridge hi-tech sector is showing signs of stalling, it is still anticipated that many of the jobs of the future will be knowledge or information based. The excellent quality of life in Ely means there is unique scope for attracting international organisations which would benefit from proximity to the cluster of new firms around Cambridge, and the superb rail links. Peterborough is already showing the way by

promoting its large number of environmentally related businesses. Ely is well-connected with both.

E. Eco towns and sustainable development The government is committed to the idea that by 2016 new homes should not contribute to global warming, and should be highly energy efficient. It has published an *Eco-towns Prospectus*¹⁷ which sets out ideas for experimental new communities to '*increase housing and protect the environment as well*'. They will almost inevitably include the use of Combined Heat and Power, the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and new approaches to sewage and waste. With the prospect of a new waste treatment plant, and with the largest biofuel power station in the country nearby, Ely is in a good position to be one of the leaders, ahead of places like Northstowe. Indeed an 'eco neighbourhood' would be a good neighbour to a Country Park, and could provide an additional visitor attraction.

F. Modal shift An important theme for the East of England is reducing car dependence. Saving energy without reducing unnecessary car use would be of little value, and new neighbourhoods will be expected to lead the way. The key to modal shift in market towns like Ely is increasing the number of trips made on foot or on bicycle as most car trips are relatively short and bus patronage is relatively low. Of course Ely provides services to scattered rural areas, where residents have to depend on their car. But within Ely there is scope



Cotswold Water Park



Upton, Northampton

¹⁶ *The Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2016: A Framework for Sustainable Prosperity*, SEEDA, 2006

¹⁷ *Eco-towns Prospectus*, Communities and Local Government, 2007

for securing a major modal shift, with people parking on the edge and transferring to other modes. Cycling accounts for 25% of journeys in Cambridge compared with 9% in Ely. However in the historic German city of Freiburg, car use has been progressively reduced, and cycle use rose from 18% in 1976 to 29% in 1999 by making it safer and easier, by putting car parking on the edge, and by having a reliable and high quality public transport along the main spine. Because Ely is relatively flat and dry, like Dutch cities, it has the opportunity to develop walking and cycling as the major means of getting around town on a 'green web', backed up by better public transport spine. Some have suggested that Ely should make a name for itself as a 'Cycle City'. There therefore needs to be concerted efforts to improve Ely's cycling infrastructure with new cycle parking, cycle paths and improved on-road cycle infrastructure.

1.5 Optimal size

There is no agreed science for deciding how much growth a place can take, other than to consider potential demand, site constraints, and what is known about thresholds. Ely is currently one of the most attractive cities in Britain. The high level of house prices and popularity of new housing show continuing demand for growth, which was confirmed at the Property Demand Workshop. The Roundtable Visioning Conference also showed support for the City continuing to grow, if it can help achieve wider aims. This will require building

significantly more homes than are allocated in the current Regional Spatial Strategy and hence in the emerging Local Development Framework but in a planned way that matches an improving infrastructure. In 2001, the year of the last Census, Ely had a population of only a little over 15,000, which made it hard to support some of the facilities that people like to see. Expert analyses of market towns use cut off points of 15,000 and 40,000. In the South East of England, Romsey in Hampshire and Tenterdon in Kent were the only historic towns in the smaller size category, both of which have historic houses with large estates on the edge which acts as a constraint to growth.

The closest comparisons with Ely can be made with Chichester, a Roman town in West Sussex near Portsmouth, and Witney, a historic market and blanket making town just outside Oxford. Both of these have continued to grow and suggest a possible target for Ely of around 26-28,000. In the process of expanding both Chichester and Witney have attracted a better choice of shops and leisure facilities.

| Town centre | Population (2001 census) | Retail floorspace sqm (DCLG 2002) |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Ely | 15,130 | 30,570 |
| Witney | 22,765 | 40,910 |
| Chichester | 23,731 | 76,940 |
| Bury St Edmunds | 35,015 | 81,760 |

In the case of Chichester Gate Leisure Park, there is a leisure village with a bowling alley, night club, a ten screen cinema, swimming pool, health club and chain restaurants, which has been developed within the bounds of the bypass. In Witney, the new leisure centre is next to a large convenience store in the heart of the town which formed part of a planned expansion in the 1990s. Greater choice has been achieved through attracting another convenience store into the expanded centre. New housing on the edge at Madely Park includes a neighbourhood centre, two schools (a secondary and primary school), in a countryside setting.

One benefit of growth is in attracting retail investment in an expanded City Centre. Once Ely reaches a population of 20,000 it is more likely to appeal to national chain and specialist stores. The Property Demand Workshop confirmed that a number were lined up who would like to be in Ely if suitable spaces (1-3,000 sq ft units in the City Centre, larger units on the edge) were available. Received wisdom, for example work by Michael Breheny¹⁸, suggests that growth beyond this point is beneficial (and interestingly Ebenezer Howard considered the optimal size for Letchworth to be 32,000 on an area of 6,000 acres). A town of 25-30,000 meets most of its service needs locally, for example with at least two secondary schools, while at the same time being small enough to walk across. As far as new housing is concerned, research by SQW has established

thresholds for different services, which are relevant to planning what size new neighbourhoods should be.

While much depends on the wider catchment area, it is clear from these figures that there are real advantages from developing Planned Urban Extensions or new neighbourhoods of more than 2,000 homes as they can support not only a primary school, but also some shops and services that help create a sense of identity and community. The experience of the growth of Milton Keynes, where a major benefit has been the Country Park, indicates that schools serve as community hubs, and that 1,500 homes support a new primary school, and 6,000 a new secondary school. Coupled with the existing population, a Planned Urban Extension would make frequent bus services viable along the central spine of Lynn Road.

| Thresholds for facilities | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Facility | Number of households |
| Primary school | 1,000-5,000 |
| Doctors' surgery | 1,000-1200 |
| Corner shop | 800-2,000 |
| Shops/post office | 2,000-4,000 |
| Local park | 2,000-5,000 |
| Community centre | 2,800-6,000 |
| Frequent bus services | 4,000-6,000 |
| Health centre | 3,600-4,800 |
| Library | 4,800-12,000 |
| Public sports facilities | 15,000-25,000 |

Source: SQW for DEFRA 2007 on Parish Plans

¹⁸ *The People: Where will they go?* Edited by Michael Breheny, TCPA, 1996

This works when there are homes at densities of over 50 to the hectare within 400 yards, and major trip generators along the route.

A development of that size can also support superior infrastructure, including open spaces for a range of activities, and better energy and waste systems (for example Combined Heat and Power). As the TCPA's report on Planned Urban Extensions points out, extensions allow places to grow without sprawl, and in ways that apply the principles of the original Garden Cities like Letchworth¹⁹. Experience from recent developments such as Caterham Barracks, Upton and also the new community of South Woodham Ferrers that Essex County Council promoted, show how to resource a higher quality of design as well as better facilities than would be possible in an entirely new location or in much smaller infill schemes.

In the light of the research and consultations we suggest that the target for eventual growth is set at 26-28,000, which would mean expanding the population from a current level of about 18,000 by 8-10,000 or around 50% in total. This would require building 3,200 new homes assuming 2.5 persons per new house. (This figure is being used in forecasts for Northstowe, which is largely expected to attract families, and is similar to the 2.4 persons which is the average for East Cambridgeshire.) However, if much more of the population were to be made up of single person and childless households, as is likely in

a historic city which attracts people when they are thinking about retiring, then it could be as much as 5,000 homes. This will require developing some of the farm land on the northern edge, as there is not enough brown-field land available. There is consent for 715 dwellings, and windfall estimates should provide another 365 units (note, the latter would probably be at a significantly higher net density of 80-140 homes to the hectare, in line with experience in other historic cities²⁰).

Such an expansion will require at least 100-150 hectares of land for the housing alone at a net density on average of 30 to the hectare. An indication of the amount of land required is that each square on the audit maps comprises 25 hectares, and 100 hectares is equivalent to a square kilometre, or approximately 250 acres. Dividing the new neighbourhoods into three distinct places, each with their own character, and with some community facilities close to the main transport spine, will maximise views over the country. From experience in Hertfordshire it seems that a good rule is to allocate a third of the area to be developed as public open space, but with a variety of different uses.

1.6 Alternative scenarios

Developments (and developers) come in for criticism because the results so often fail to live up to their promise, and because the owners of land get locked into conflicts with local



Caterham Barracks community centre, health centre and new bus

¹⁹ *Best Practice in Urban Extensions and New Settlements*, TCPA, 2007

²⁰ For illustrations of different densities, see *Better Neighbourhoods: Making higher densities work*, URBED for CABE 2005

authorities over the benefits to be provided, who pays for what, and how benefits can be secured. Development pressures are not going to go away, and there are three broadly different responses: resisting development; going along with current proposals; and adopting the different approach, of 'smarter growth'. We have briefly summarised the arguments below:

A. Status quo If all the current proposals were to be resisted, and so resolved at public inquiries, the likely results would not achieve the objectives of balanced growth, but would lead instead to:

- Further building of 'developers' boxes'
- More out of town retail, and 'edge city' strips
- A weak City Centre
- Insufficient arguments for the new link road
- Further escalation in house prices
- Impossibility of financing community benefits.

B. Controlled expansion Policy in the current Regional Spatial Strategy is to focus most growth in and around Cambridge, with provision for some limited growth in the surrounding market towns. The proposals in the emerging Local Development Framework would mean building a further 1,700 new homes and around 30 hectares of employment by 2025, of which some 1,250 will be on sites within the current settlement boundary and some 450 would need to be on sites outside these boundaries. This might bring the population

up to 20,000 or 21,000. The *Local Development Framework's Preferred Options* paper favours land east of Princess of Wales Hospital for housing and south side of Lancaster Way for employment. This will be better than the status quo, but would still mean:

- Insufficient better quality homes with substantial gardens
- The retail offer stays much the same (but with some discount retail and DIY stores)
- Hence Ely does not go 'up a league' as a place
- Increasing traffic congestion due to difficulties in justifying and funding the Southern Link Road
- Some affordable housing, but no way of funding a Country Park.

C. Smarter growth The strategy we are proposing is aimed at achieving a number of additional benefits. It would mean building 3-5,000 new homes in the period up to 2027 (depending on home and household sizes), and comprising a number of edge of centre sites plus a major expansion to the North of Ely. Assuming average occupancies in the new housing of 2.4 to a home (the average for East Cambridgeshire or 2.0 to a home (based on predictions of smaller households) the Northern Growth Area would support a population in Ely ultimately of 26-28,000 with the benefits being:

- Higher paid jobs accessible without long commutes, as a better housing stock will attract new employers
- Better shopping (and leisure) facilities in the heart of the City
- Expanded leisure facilities



- A wider choice of housing aimed at a number of niche markets
- Quality infrastructure that minimises environmental impact
- Increased use of public transport, walking and cycling
- Financial partnerships that enable efficient implementation and that secure community benefits e.g. linking new housing with the provision of the Country Park.

1.7 Acceptable rates of growth

While there is no clear view on what rate of growth a town can support, there is evidence that places can expand too fast, and overload the capacity of the social as well as the physical infrastructure. SQW in their report conclude:

'The impact of rapid growth on social structures and community cohesion can all too readily be neglected in new developments. If growth in housing and population is over-rapid, it risks creating social tension and damaging levels of community cohesion, which for many people is a positive attribute of a market town. High levels of commuting can also exacerbate the effect by reducing levels of 'community participation' as well as creating the feelings of a dormant town. These issues are bound up in the discourse of social capital, which can be described as the networks, norms and trusts which enable groups to act together more effectively'²¹.

Discussions with the Primary Care Trust and Kings School suggest that

capacity is tight at present. There are also issues over the role of the Princess of Wales Hospital. It will be important to avoid the mistakes made in Cambourne when too many people moved into social housing at one time without the facilities to help build a community. Housing numbers therefore need to be linked to an absorbable rate of growth long-term (perhaps 2% a year compound, which is equivalent to the numbers doubling over a period of 35 years.

As a comparison, Arup's report for Northstowe suggests a completion rate of between 600 and 850 a year between 2011 and 2021 (or three times the rate we are proposing) and weighted towards younger adults initially, based on research by Cambridge Econometrics²². We would expect a historic city like Ely to attract a much higher proportion of couples past child-bearing age, which should result in lower car usage and demands on social services. With the right approach, people would be attracted to settle who will act as pioneers in creating healthier and more active neighbourhoods than in the recent past.

Planned growth will also require (and support) additional social infrastructure, including:

- New schools, possibly with an expanded or new secondary school as well as another primary school. The City of Ely Community College has a cramped site, and Kings School is relatively small (Kings School does not solely serve the local area).

- Additional youth and adult training facilities, perhaps extending Ely's specialised role in vocational education, and applying some of the latest thinking on Extended Schools and '21st Century Learning'.
- Places where young people in different age groups can meet each other and develop social skills and relationships, including informal open spaces.
- Another primary health care centre with group practices and additional services to enable people to be treated closer to home without having to go to General Hospitals. It could also encourage healthier living, for example in terms of exercise and diet. There is a great opportunity to make full use of the space around the Princess of Wales Hospital in supplementing the current facilities, for example through different forms of nursing home that support independent living.

²¹Bowling Alone: The Collapse and revival of American Community, Robert D. Putnam, 2000

²² 10 Northstowe housing report, ARUP for English Partnerships and Gallagher, 2007

2. CAPACITY FOR SMARTER GROWTH

Having established the potential benefits from intelligently planned expansion, we consider what the best approach towards growth in Ely is, what is physically and environmentally feasible, and whether there is sufficient demand to support growth in each of the main sectors, and hence achieve the goal of balanced growth. It has to generate enough value to fund the related local infrastructure, such as roads and sewers, and to contribute towards funding strategic infrastructure such as new roads and better leisure facilities for the wider community. Such an approach also needs to be robust to cope with inevitable ups and downs, including changes in national and local economies, and unpredictable crises in the property market.

Masterplans always need to allow for changes in consumer behaviour, 20 years ago who would have anticipated the impact of the home computer and mobile phone on how we live and work? Looking forward 20 years for the East of England, we are likely to go from a period of rising housing values to one that is much more uncertain, with the likelihood of:

- rising travel and energy costs
- reduced national funding for infrastructure
- an uncertain property market particularly for high density apartments
- many competing development opportunities
- a reluctance on the part of financial institutions to invest in new commercial development, or in housing developments that involve significant risks.

However we can also confidently predict there will always be a premium on living (and working) in historic places that are on the national rail network, in easy reach of airports, and that offer a good quality of life and educational opportunities. This means that Ely should be a relatively safe bet for further expansion, providing there is an agreed plan in which trust can be based. The immediate question therefore is where and how that expansion should take place.

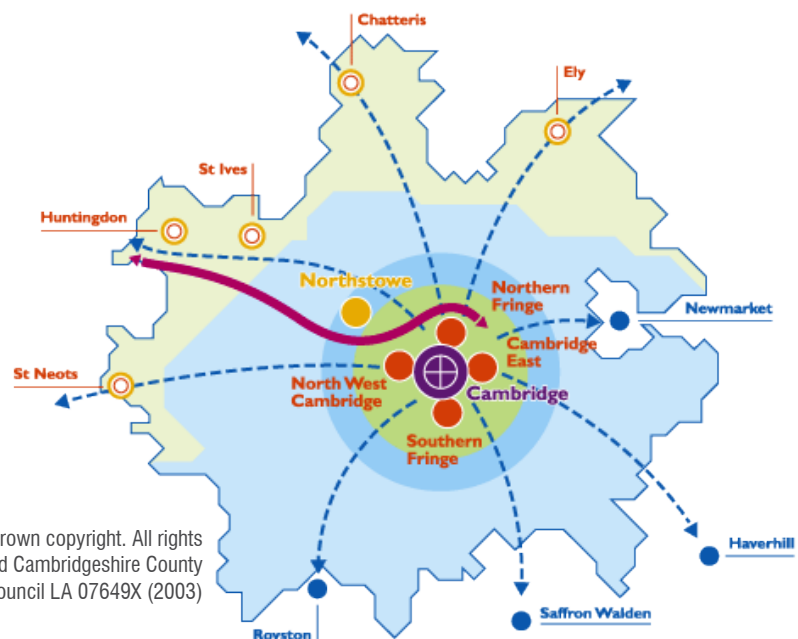
2.1 Regional context

Part of the vision is for Ely to go up a league and play a fuller part in regional growth. Ely lies on the edge of Cambridge Growth Area, which is one of the most successful parts of the country in terms of economic growth and appeal to visitors. It is only just over an hour from London and other cities by train, which gives it an edge over other market towns. The continuing success of Cambridge in the knowledge and technology sectors depends on competing for talent in a global market, which is where Ely through its quality of life can offer something special.

Traffic outside the City grew by 30% over the last ten years compared with a national average of 19%, as most people get to work by car. So many will want to live nearer to their work.

The population of the region is growing fast, and is expected to continue to grow at 1.1% a year up to 2021, largely through in-migration. However in Ely this depends crucially on building many more first rate homes, and on filling the gaps identified earlier.

Ely will be in competition with a number of other major sites which will be coming on stream over the next few years, and for example market towns like St Neots and March are growing faster. Ely also lies on one of the routes from Felixstowe to the Midlands, and is a centre for distribution, with a unique resource in terms of the rail/road interchange at the Potters Distribution Centre. Such a site is likely to become increasingly important with the need to process energy, waste and water locally.



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2.2 Site potential

At the start of the study, potential sites for development were identified, using local knowledge. Several major Opportunity Sites were considered, including land at Lisle Lane and near the railway station. The suggestion was also made that the shopping centre might expand across Nutholt Lane on to land owned by the local authority. Discussions with the owners of land to the north of Ely had also indicated interest in making sites available for implementing a master-plan that would provide an important part of the Country Park that had long been discussed.

An assessment was then made of the capacity of the different sites under different assumptions regarding density. This crude analysis showed that even with high density development of a number of brownfield sites, such as in Lisle Lane, going beyond the LDF allocation (which is based on a population of 21,000), will depend on taking in a number of greenfield sites to the north of the City, which we have termed the Northern Growth Area. Discussions with property owners indicated a real interest in wanting to work together, and with the Council, to secure the best development of this unique opportunity. At the same time representations from owners and developers of brownfield sites, including land in Lisle Lane and also Angel Drove, made it clear that there are very strong pressures to give in to planning applications for out of town retail, on the grounds that the City Centre simply did not have the capacity to accommodate these types of uses.

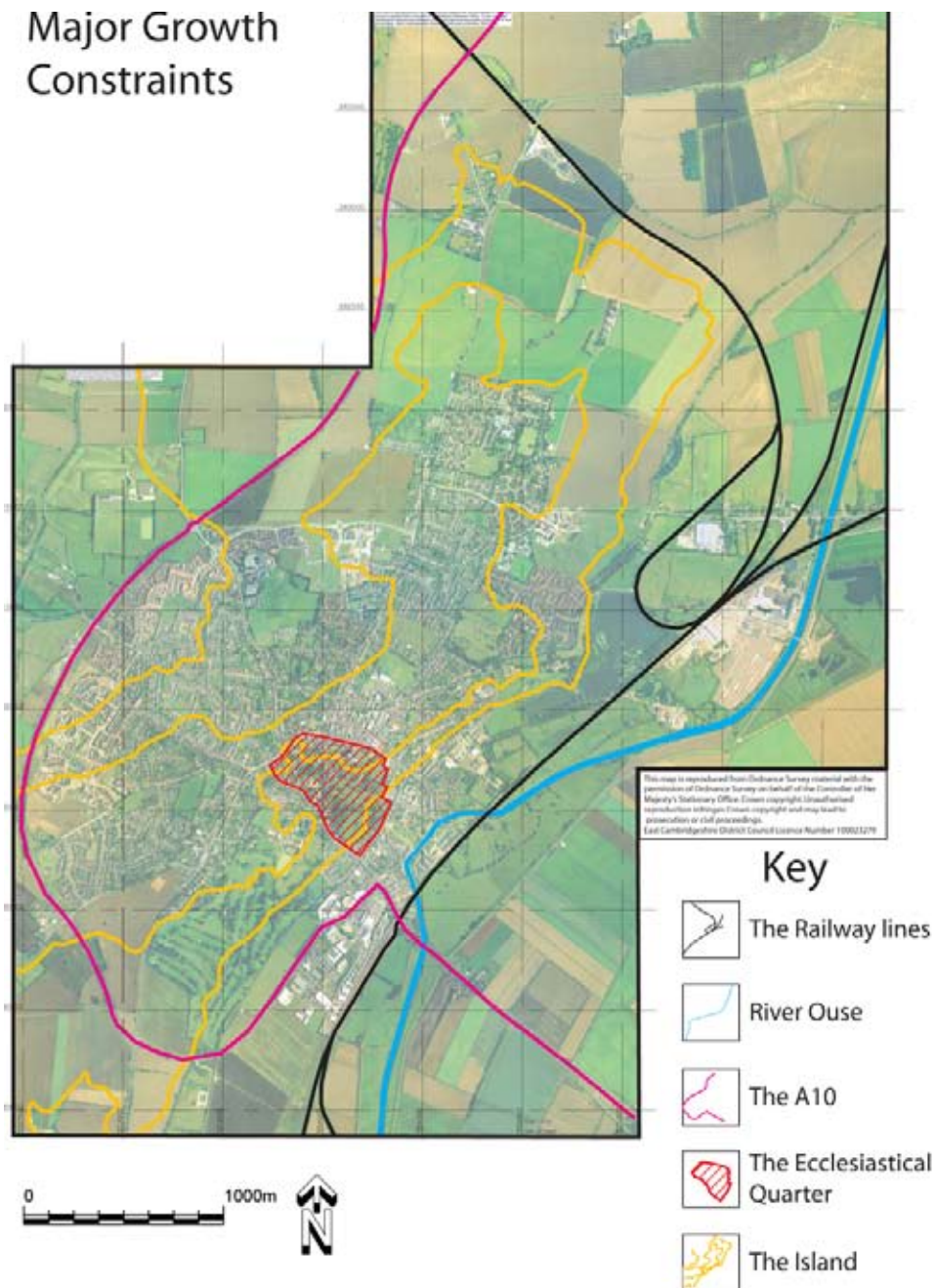
Gifford undertook a series of audits to establish the physical constraints on developments, which determine what might be possible. Their work led to four conclusions:

1. Housing is best accommodated near the river in Lisle Lane and to the north of the City, where it is outside the flood plain.
2. Business space is best accommodated near the railway station, where it can benefit from high accessibility by all modes, for example on the Standen site as well as on Angel Drove.
3. Both the Southern Link Road, and the relocation of the Waste Treatment Works further down river are technically feasible, and transform the prospects for major brownfield sites in Angel Drove and Lisle Lane.
4. Retail growth could be accommodated by the extension of the City Centre to Paradise, across Nutholt Lane.

2.3 Physical infrastructure and constraints

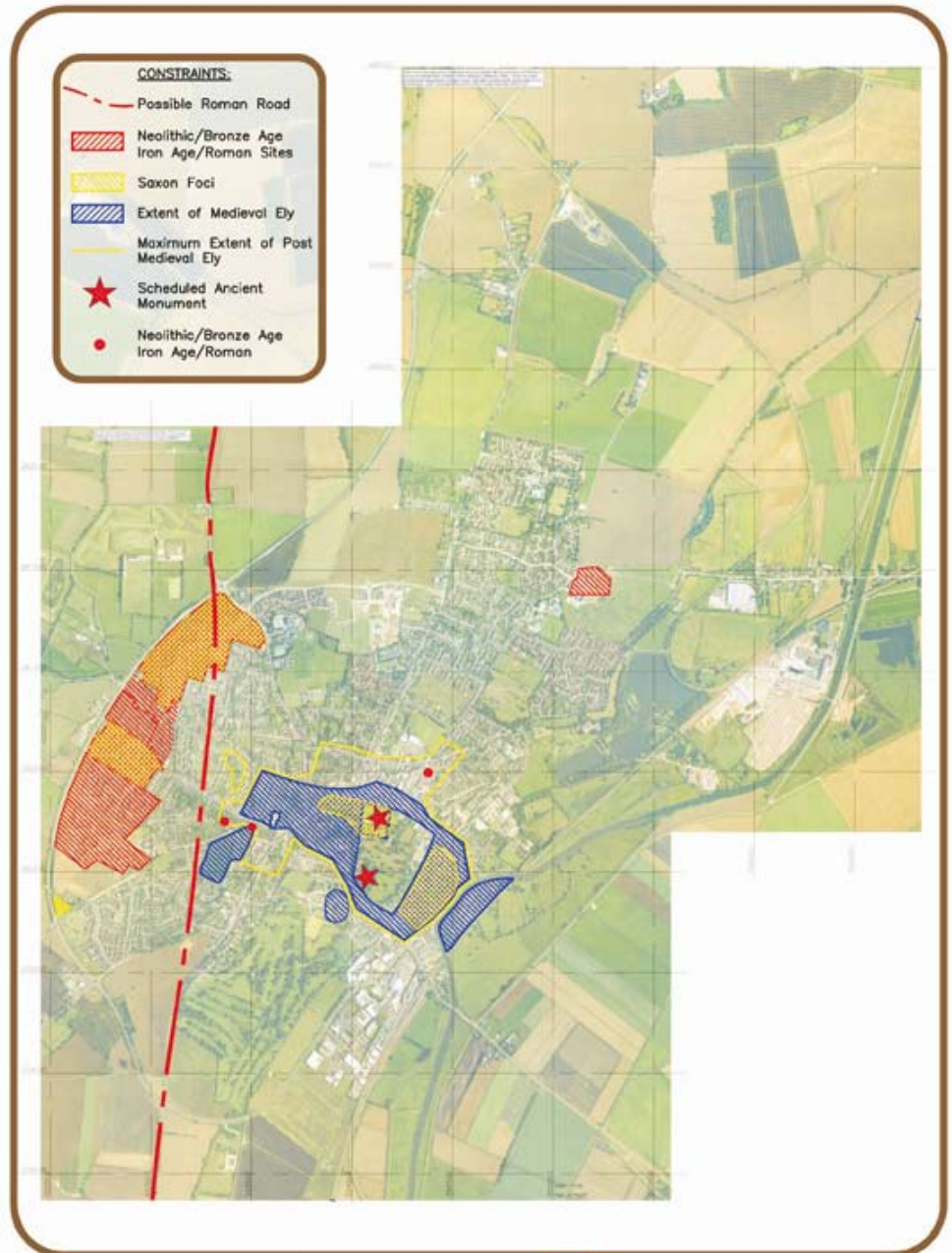
Ely is highly constrained in physical terms, and is also highly sensitive due to its unique history, geology, and Fenland location. Hence any proposals for further growth must not only accord with the policies of government bodies like the Environment Agency and English Heritage, but also win public support which means ensuring further growth brings real benefits to the existing communities. Proposals must match national Planning Guidance, with its priority of building more houses to higher environmental standards, but also gain acceptance within the next version of the Regional Spatial Strategy, which allocates growth around the Cambridge sub region. Hence the current work on the Masterplan can only suggest the general direction and principles for growth, and not try to lay down a blueprint. The *Infrastructure and Constraints Assessment* (see Appendix B), assesses the infrastructure and constraints, to show where growth will be most feasible. The *Transport and Access Statement* considers what uses should go where, and considers the potential of each of the main sites. The main conclusions are:

Major Growth Constraints



A. Heritage The starting point for the Masterplan is Ely's history, which has formed its special character with its huge ecclesiastical precinct and adjoining medieval core. There are also areas of suburban character such as the High Barns estate to the north, and Lynn Road to the east, some of which are under threat from redevelopment of gardens. The Conservation Area boundaries have been extended to include more recent areas. The general character is of individually small-scale buildings, with a strong local vernacular that is often hidden by later alterations, and with the predominant use of brick and tile. Ely is also characterised by the number of small 'greens' that are overlooked by rows of housing. The boundaries of the A10, the river, and the railway lines set clear limits to sustainable growth.

Heritage and Archaeology



Taken from Gifford's
Infrastructure Audit



B. Environmental capacity and geology

The essence of Ely is its history as an island standing out from the Fens, which have dropped as a result of drainage and compaction. The need to conserve long views has been clearly set out in the Ely Environmental Capacity Study prepared by Landscape Design Associates in 2001, and is respected in this Masterplan. But in the Netherlands, where they have built some 90 new settlements in a ten year period, growth is used to create new landscape, open up new vistas, and to improve access to better quality countryside, as Han Lorzing pointed out in his presentation to the Visioning Conference. Environmental capacity can actually be increased. For example, the clay subsoil in much of Ely can be used to advantage in developing new lakes and waterways to retain rainwater, and avoid it overloading waterways.

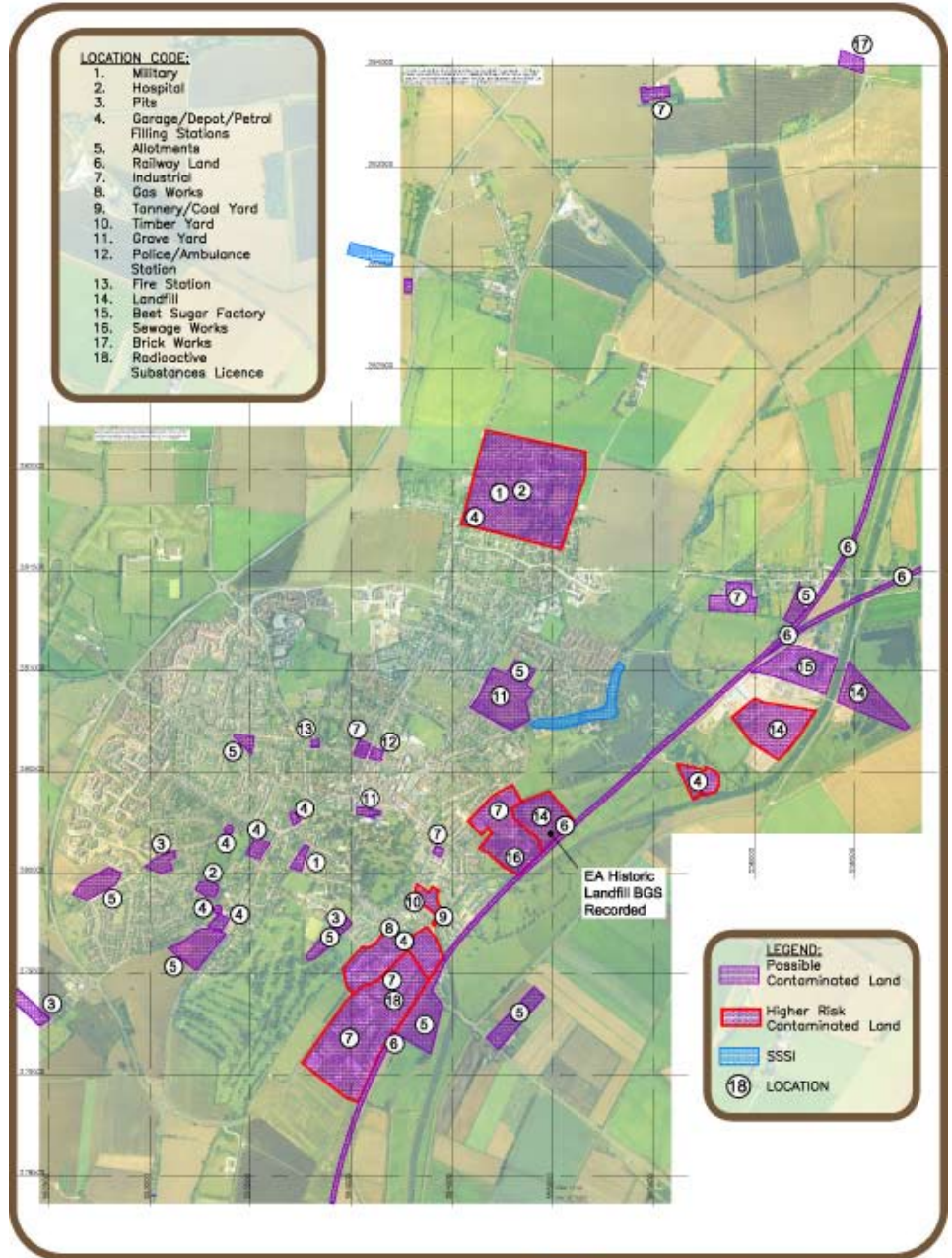


Slides taken from
Han Lorzing's
PowerPoint
presentation
*Planning with
Water and Land*



C. Contaminated land Ely attracted relatively little industry in the 19th century, and so does not contain large brownfield sites. The main areas of possible risk of contamination relate to the Lisle Lane site and sites off Angel Drove. The most recent waste water treatment plant is located nearby and this would need to be investigated fully before any redevelopment takes place. There is a national target to build over 60% of housing on brownfield land before building on greenfields, which is why quality developments around the station and at Angel Drove and Lisle Lane are so important.

Contaminated Land

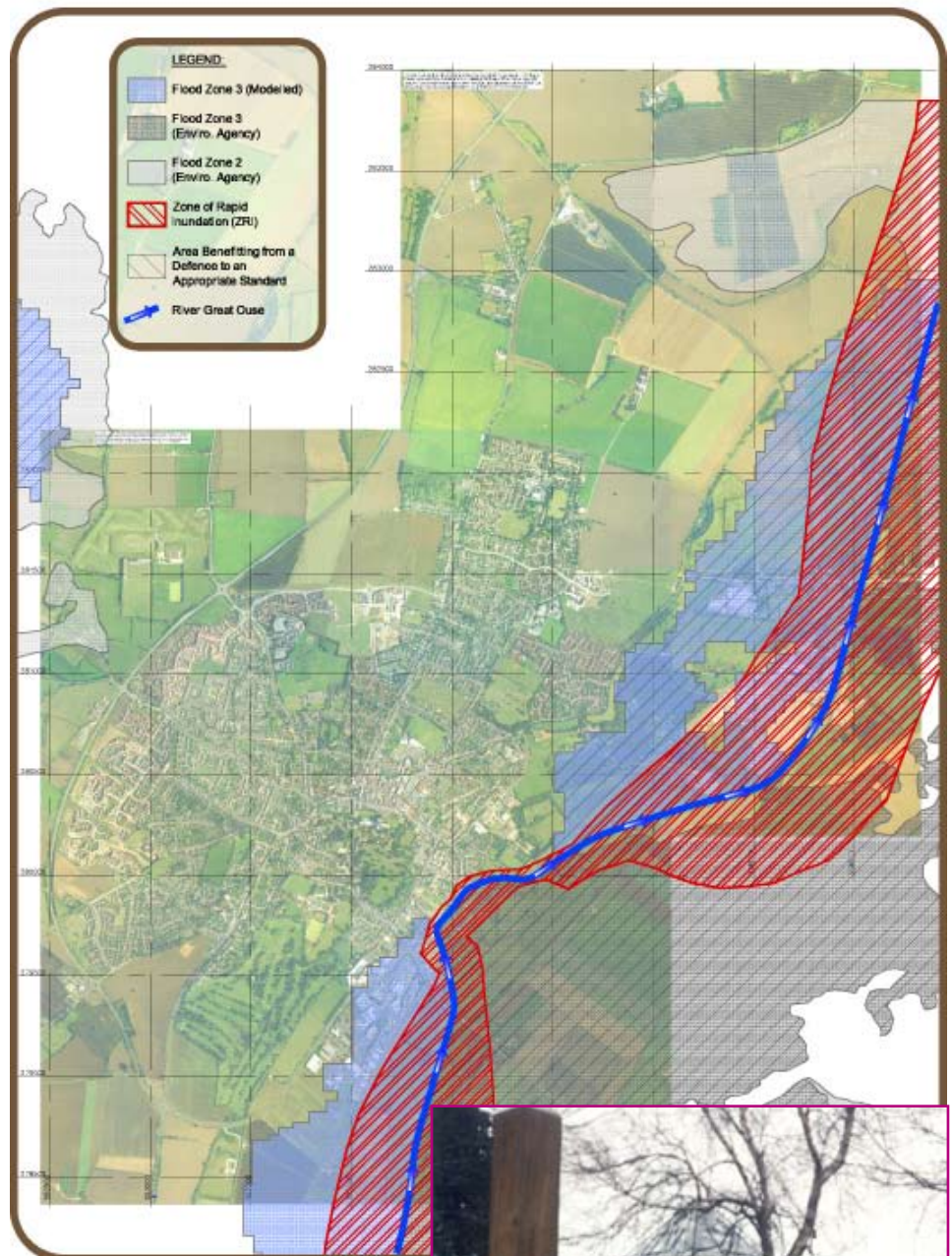


D. Drainage and flooding Ely is bordered to the East by a flood plain which creates a natural boundary (and explains the fine views from afar). The flood plain of the River Ouse, and associated wildlife, has been shaped by Dutch engineers in the past. Future housing may not intrude into flood plains, though in some cases it may be possible to copy modern Dutch practice of opening up new water areas to hold water and add value to the new housing (and there is a legal requirement in the Netherlands to give 15% of development over to water). New offices can also benefit from sites with views over water, with parking on the ground floor in case of occasional inundations.

E. Waste Water Treatment Works

The redevelopment of the sites around Lisle Lane are affected by the sewage works, which occupies a key site between the City Centre and the river. Capacity is currently adequate and so the relocation needs to be justified by the demands of growth, the development potential of the site and also the availability of another suitable location. The Lisle Lane site is close to the river and should attract good values for housing. Other suitable sites are available further down river which should enable the works to be relocated. Hence this is a constraint that can be resolved. Indeed a new waste treatment plant could be an attraction for the Country Park, developed on sustainable principles as they are in Denmark and Germany.

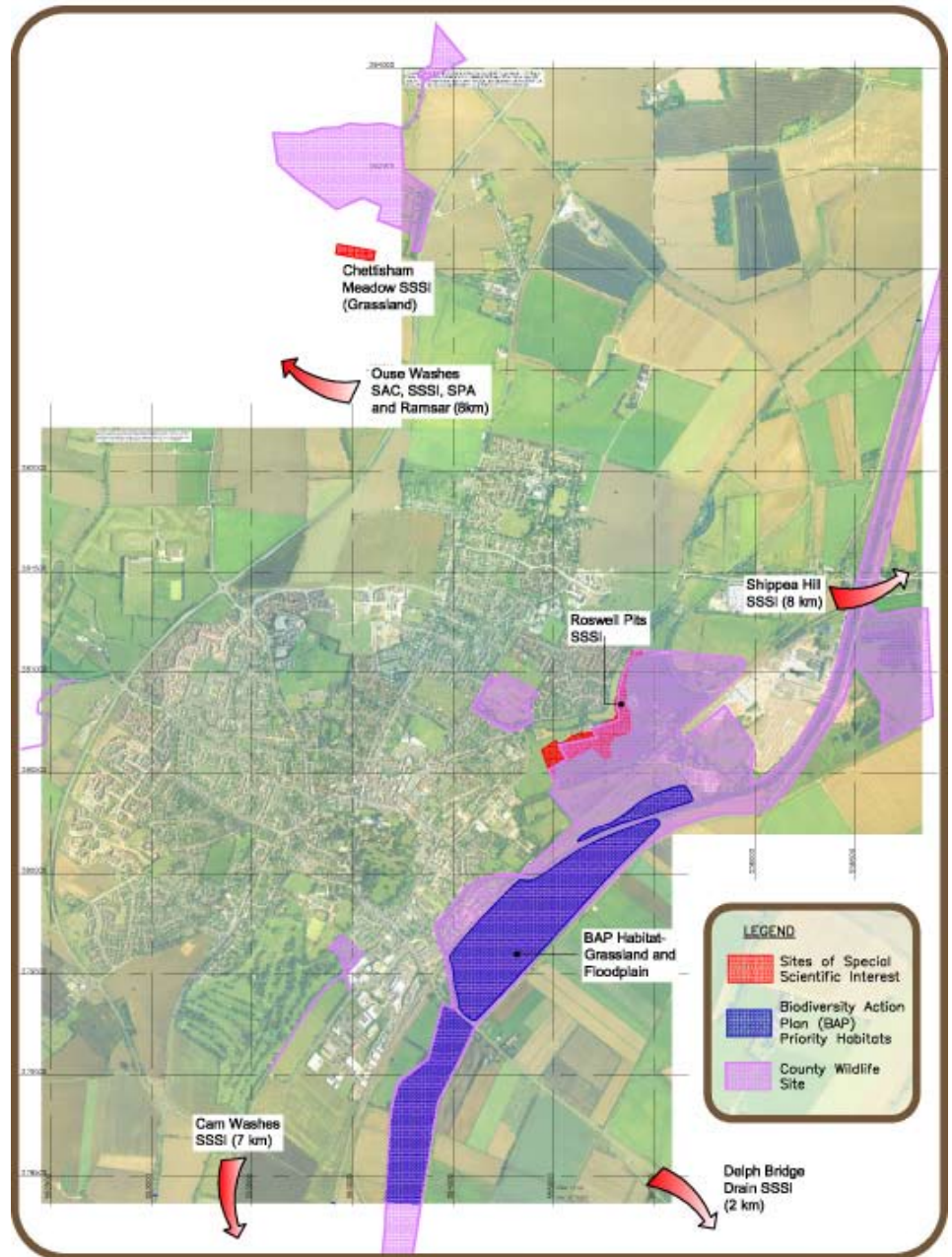
Flood Zones



Sewage Treatment Works,
Kolding, Denmark

F. Ecology There is considerable concern about protecting the special qualities of places like Roswell Pits and the Ouse Washes, and their roles in providing habitats for wildlife. But there is also a case for opening up access to the countryside. Plans have been devised for a number of sites and work is ongoing to extend the natural habitat and reinstate the Fens and land owned by Potters south of the railway. A number of important wildlife areas are linked together in the *Green Infrastructure Strategy* produced for Cambridgeshire Horizons, which includes a new Country Park for Ely, which could link through along the ultimately to places like Wicken Fen, as the Green Grid now does in Kent Thameside²³. The Masterplan needs to enhance biodiversity, not only by respecting Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) of which there are several new possibilities, but also by encouraging wildlife, for example through gardens and allotments.

Ecology

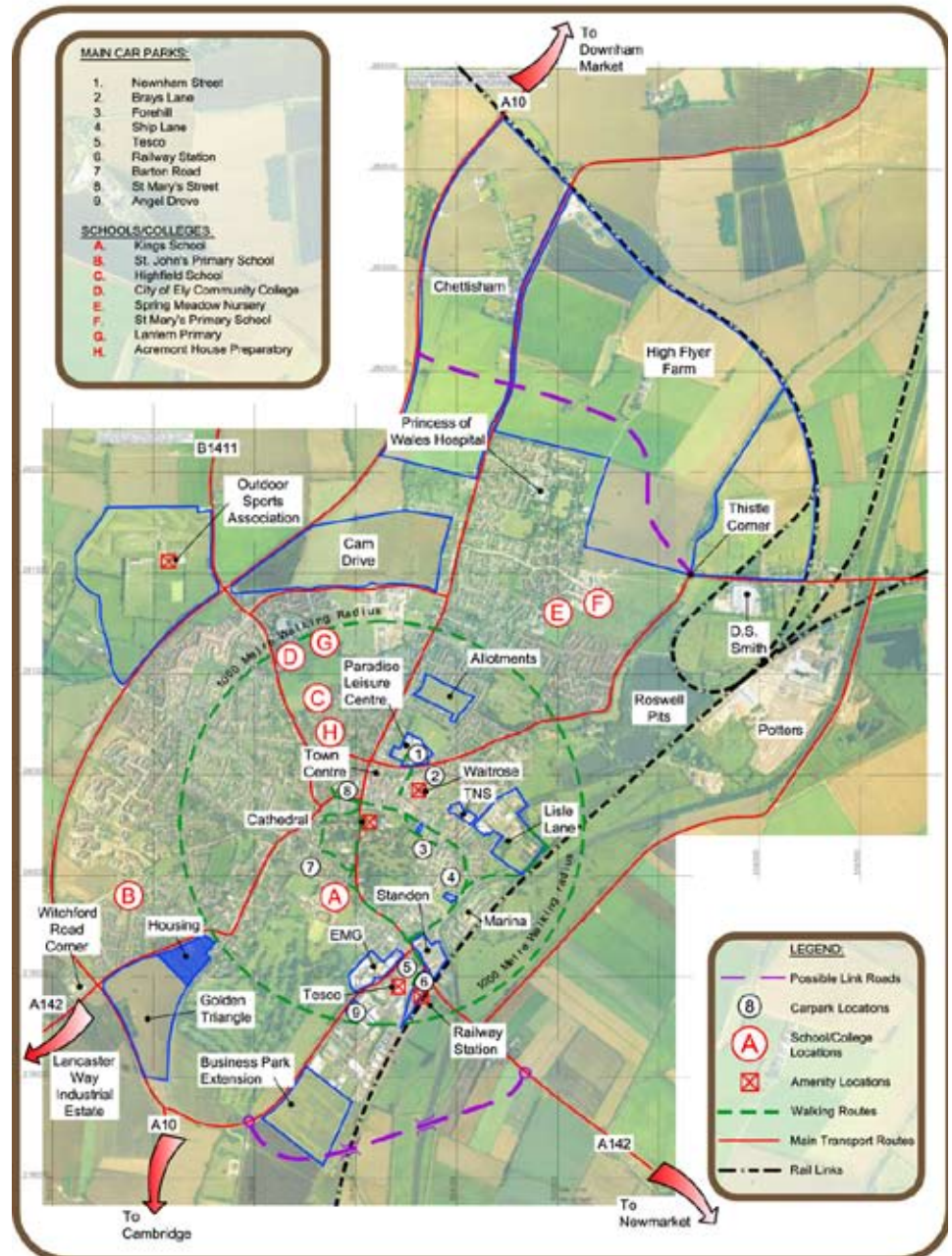


²³ *Green Infrastructure Strategy*, The Landscape Partnership for Cambridgeshire Horizons, 2005

G. Transport and development sites

The *Transport and Access Statement* highlights the importance of directing development and land uses to areas where they can most easily be accommodated in terms of walking, cycling and public transport. The first step is to intensify the use of sites within walking distance of the centre, such as Lisle Lane. The masterplan study looked at a number of options for removing through traffic from the centre, including the so-called Eastern Bypass, Southern Link Road and a road to the north of Ely. The analysis reinforces the priority of building the Southern Link Road, which will bring a range of new benefits, including freeing up the Station Gateway and making local bus services more viable. It will then be possible to turn Angel Drive into a boulevard or tree-lined avenue instead of a main road. A new link through to the A10 will eventually be needed to support all the new housing on the Northern side, which can be built in stages. Such a link would avoid traffic clogging up the area around Lynn Road, St Mary's Street, and Egremont Street.

Transport



H. Road hierarchy and parking

Improved management of off-street parking is essential, as congestion is often caused by people driving around in search of a parking space. This can easily be achieved with variable messaging, which directs visitors to the car parks with available spaces, and which is needed in a city that seeks to attract visitors who will have little local knowledge of where to park for the facilities they seek. Linking this to improved enforcement of parking regulations and locating long stay parking, for example for those working in the centre, on the edges, thus freeing up space nearer the centre for visiting shoppers, can have a marked effect on traffic in the City Centre. This is evidenced by the success of the recently opened commuter car park at Angel Drove and the impact of the improved regulations implemented in January 2008. Further re-routing of traffic out of the City Centre will enable the designation of a traffic restraint area, with increased pedestrian priority providing high quality street environments. Park and ride can be made to work in historic towns, but the key to improving the quality of life with an increased population is encouraging walking and cycling. This could form part of a proposed green web that reconnects the whole of Ely with its river, and adds some important new strands.

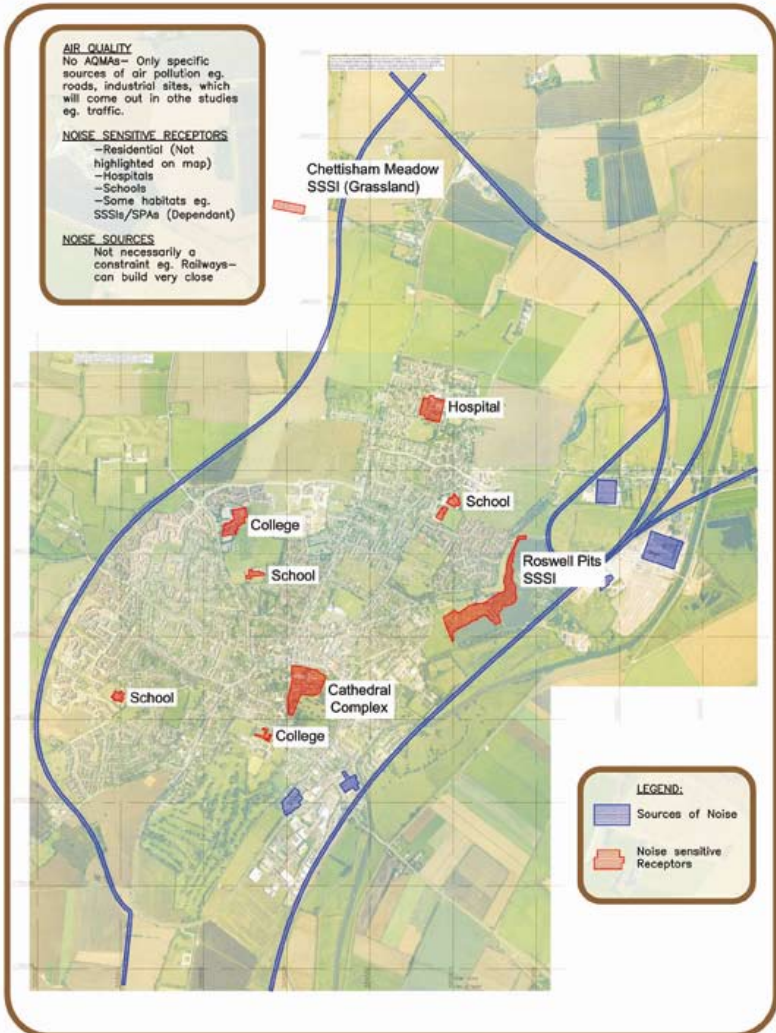
I. Power and energy

Discussions with EDF Energy, the main local electricity supplier, suggest that there is only limited spare capacity within Ely's power distribution networks. Whilst EDF are prepared and required to provide for growth, a three to five year lag in being able to provide a substantial increase in supply, such as would be required for the Northern Growth Area, is expected. This may strengthen the case for providing a further local source of energy generation, such as a Combined Heat and Power plant, taking full advantage of the facilities on the Potters site.

J. Access and noise On the whole the town feels quiet and calm, except for the turbulence around the station and Angel Drove which is in complete conflict with the image the City should present. It includes a concrete batching plant, close to the golf course. A number of other sites could be affected by noise from the railway, and the Potters Distribution Depot works 24 hours a day. However the latter provides Ely with a perfect site for 'non-conforming uses', particularly as access from Queen Adelaide Road can be improved when the Southern Link Road is built.

Each of the different sites is affected by a number of constraints, and progress will be easiest on those that have no 'red lights' against them, while the yellow lights show where particular care will be needed.

Noise and Air Quality



Key:

| Colour | Meaning |
|--------|---|
| Green | Minimal constraint, or good development opportunity |
| Yellow | Possible constraint, or constraint on certain uses |
| Orange | Significant constraint to development, or likely to impose considerable costs |

| | Heritage | Geology | Flooding | Contaminated Land | Noise | Air Quality | Ecology | Landscape/Townscape | Transport and Access |
|----------------------|----------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|-------------|---------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Lisle Lane | | | | | | | | | |
| Cam Drive | | | | | | | | | |
| EOSA | | | | | | | | | |
| Angel Drove | | | | | | | | | |
| Standen's | | | | | | | | | |
| Paradise | | | | | | | | | |
| TNS | | | | | | | | | |
| Rail Station Gateway | | | | | | | | | |
| City Centre | | | | | | | | | |
| High Flyer Farm | | | | | | | | | |
| Roswell Pits | | | | | | | | | |

2.4 Social infrastructure and constraints

While Ely has many strengths in terms of being a well-established community, there are also some gaps in provision that need to be borne in mind:

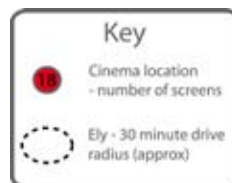
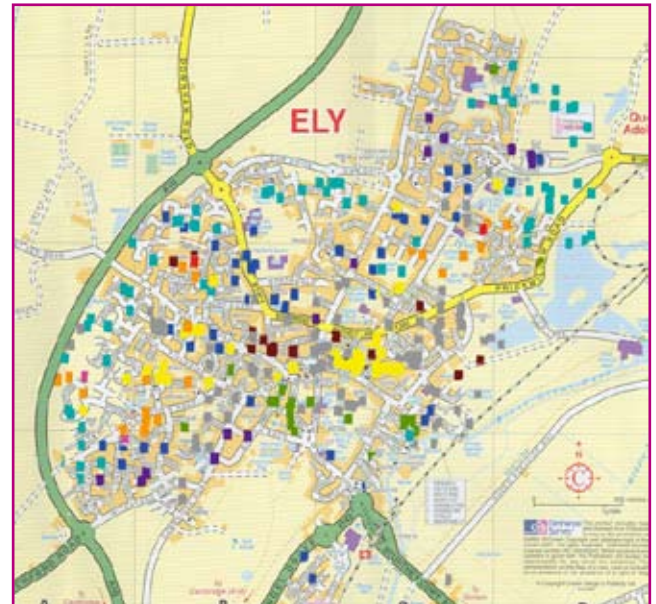
A. Demographic profile A successful community depends on having a balance in terms of class, age and lifestyle. Analysis of the Experian Mosaic map reveals that Ely is relatively mixed compared with larger cities such as Peterborough. However there is a relatively homogenous set of residents around the edge. The breakdown of dwellings by rate band shows that the bulk of the housing has been in the mid price categories that volume house-builders tend to build. Significantly outside the main towns, the population is very sparse, and Ely also serves as a traditional source of services for many surrounding small villages and hamlets.

B. Cinema distribution One of the benefits of growth could be having the spending power to support better shopping and leisure facilities. The Strategic Leisure report²⁴ suggests a catchment area of 200,000 is required to support a new cinema. Yet our analysis of cinemas in East Anglia suggests that towns of 25,000 plus can support a small five screen cinema. Though of course there will always be strong competition from Cambridge as the County Town, it is possible, as travel becomes more expensive, that a small multiplex or arts cinema would be viable, provided that a low cost site is available.

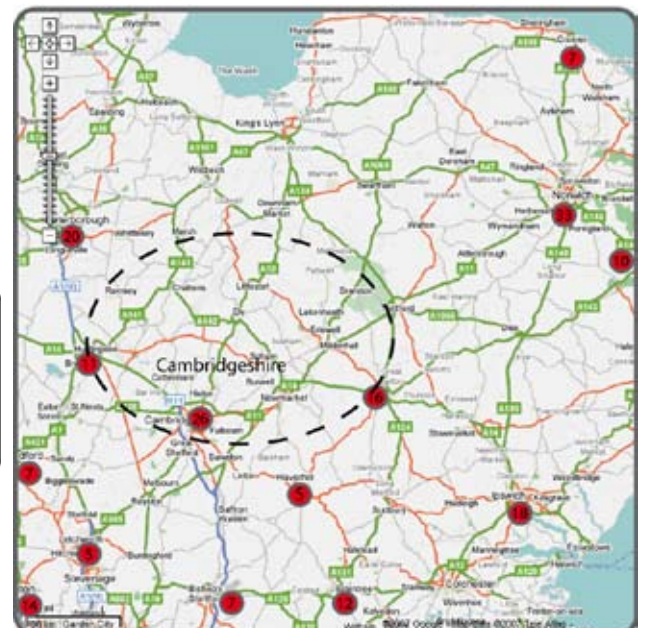
C. City Centre attractions Because of the way the City Centre was originally planned, with two parallel shopping streets linked by lanes, and with the huge ecclesiastical precinct to the south, it lacks the range of attractions or special places so often found in market towns that grew up on crossroads or river crossings. Though it is said to have the best tea house in Britain, the better restaurants are often fully booked, and it could do with places to eat and drink



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²⁴ *Leisure Needs Analysis – District Wide and Ely, and Management Options Assessment*, a draft report by Strategic Leisure Ltd for East Cambridgeshire District Council, 2007

outside. Only one shop (the book-store) was highlighted in the Guardian's *Guide to Special Shops, 2007*. The main building overlooking the Market Place is an eyesore, though the three regular markets themselves are popular. Overall, despite the attractions of the High Street, neither the accessibility nor the amenity is sufficient at present to overcome the deficiencies of the attractions, and streets which are dominated by traffic and parking.

D. Education and health Concerns have been expressed over whether a growing population would require extra secondary schools, and whether these need to be provided in Ely. The projected population growth may support another secondary school. Experience in other new communities, such as Cambourne, has emphasised the importance of providing the social infrastructure of health centres and places to meet early on in new developments. The Princess of Wales hospital could potentially provide a valuable community hub to one of the new neighbourhoods, and the site needs to be integrated into the Masterplan for the Northern Growth Area.

2.5 Demand and feasibility

The Masterplan has to take account of potential demand, and a major part of the study has been to identify gaps in current provision under each of the main sectors and types of land use.

A. Business Employment in Ely is growing fast, mainly on the industrial estates. Development of business parks on an old airbase into

Lancaster Way, which provides some 2,000 jobs, and the old goods yard in Angel Drove, have attracted firms to set up and grow. There is a small business incubator called E-Space South, which is not large enough to cope with potential demand. The ABI data, which needs to be treated with caution, shows that there has been a growth in manufacturing and service employment but a decline in transport and communications. The Property Demand Workshop confirmed continuing demand from overspill from Cambridge and from inward investment, attracted by Ely's quality of life. Organisations could be attracted by links to Cambridge and London who might otherwise not come to the UK. SQW suggest that a feasible level of containment for a town of this size would be 50% compared with the current level of 45% and support forecasts that would provide between 3,000 and 6,000 additional jobs. Some of the new jobs would follow on from residential expansion (and 'endogenous' jobs are estimated for Ely at 25%). However the key to a better balance will be attracting major new employers into the town, to supplement organisations like the Council, Tesco and Kings School, who are among Ely's largest employers.

While both Lancaster Way and the Ely Business Park need to expand, the strategy for moving Ely up a league in economic terms is developing the land around the station more intensively for offices to make the most of both its accessibility by public transport and high levels of

amenity. While current plans provide for a range of office and light industrial units and a hotel, there are gaps still to be filled including:

- Space for expanding businesses, including space that will attract customers and senior employees.
- Star sites for inward investment to provide premises that are tailored to the needs of specific occupiers, and that provide a prestige location, for example overlooking water or next to the station taking advantage of the City's accessibility and quality of life.
- Tourism facilities, including both budget hotels capable of accommodating meetings, and boutique hotels or 'special places to stay', providing an extra reason for wanting to visit Ely.

B. Retail Ely appears a relatively successful small market town, in terms of vacancies. However, according to the Roger Tym study, there is a relatively high leakage of spending from the town, which attracts only 23% of the trade in the area surveyed. This is in part because the centre is small and because of competition from much larger places such as Cambridge, which has greatly upgraded its offer. Ely also is falling behind because there is not the space to accommodate the national chains who would like to set up in the centre, or to accommodate larger formats. The Roger Tym report identified the need for 3,785 sq m net of additional comparison floor space district wide in the period 2011-2021, and with a larger population more will be required. The comparison between the City Centre convenience

stores in Newmarket and Ely clearly brings out the deficiencies, as has the vocal opposition to the effective monopoly that Tesco enjoys.

Consultations have shown parking is a further issue, and the preference of traders for continuing free parking, means there is literally a 'free for all' in searching for space, thus adding to congestion and reducing the quality of the experience. Applicants to build new food store space can point to the fact that existing stores are over-trading (that is selling far more than they should from the space they have available). Applicants for retail sheds, like DIY, point out the lack of suitable locations in the vicinity of the town.

The markets do provide a distinctive attraction, and are over-subscribed. However the Farmers' Market, which should appeal to those wanting higher quality, is not held every week, while the Thursday market is open when those at work (and with most money to spend) will be elsewhere. At present Ely is neither succeeding as a traditional market town, nor as a destination for tourists. Some traders are concerned that it is even falling behind smaller towns such as St Ives. Everyone agrees Ely needs to reposition itself, and with the trends in population growth, more and better retail space is called for.

The proposed level of future growth suggests that there would be a strong case for:

- Upgrading the Market Place using the value created by new residential units, and by expanding the floor area



over an arcade to reinstate some of the character of the old Corn Exchange and Butter Market.

- A mixed use scheme on the Newnham Street car park, particularly if the existing leisure centre were to move, which would enable the centre to grow significantly and provide space for a larger food store.
- A new food store in due course in the Northern Growth Area off the A10 providing a good neighbourhood centre in a location that is within walking and cycling distance of the new homes, and which would also be accessible for Littleport residents. It would also help fund the new roundabout and road serving the Northern Growth Area.
- A retail park on the edge of Angel Drove causing less congestion than in Lisle Lane or the Station Road area, and benefiting from a visible location close to the proposed new Southern Link Road, and benefiting customers coming from a wide area.

C. Leisure One of the main benefits from a larger population should be the demand (and hence feasibility) of providing better recreation facilities for residents. A separate study by Strategic Leisure has assessed the demand for better leisure facilities, which crucially affects what happens to key sites in the City Centre. The study arises from the need for a better swimming pool and sports hall, and the scope for economies from joint management, plus the possibility of relocating the bowls club. The Strategic Leisure study recommended a new six court sports hall and 25m eight lane competition pool plus

possibly a tennis facility. Strategic Leisure conclude this would be best served by a new integrated facility in a site off Downham Road. Surveys quoted in the Strategic Leisure report suggest that 4/5th of users of leisure centres in East Cambridgeshire currently come by car a distance of 3.5 miles on average, and Ely serves all the surrounding villages.

Looking ahead, leisure centres also need to be accessible to young people, the elderly and mothers of children who do not always have cars at their disposal. There is also a need to make leisure opportunities accessible to those on limited incomes. The same study identifies the need for more 'fitness stations' though some of the demand will be met by improved facilities at Newmarket. Government guidance in PPS6 seeks to ensure leisure facilities which are major attractions, such as swimming pools, sports halls and cinemas are located wherever possible in the most central and accessible locations.

In a historic town there should also be substantial extra demand for leisure facilities from visitors, as well as from those working in or near the town. The *Greater Cambridge and Peterborough Tourism Strategy* highlights the underdeveloped visitor potential of East Cambridgeshire²⁵. The main obstacle is promotion. It proposes that the ecclesiastical heritage of Ely, along with that of Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds and Peterborough should form a major attraction. Ely has the best ecclesiastical remains in the country, and the Cathedral was used in making



1847 Corn Exchange
Source: *Then and Now Ely*, compiled by Pamela Blakeman, 2002



²⁵ *Greater Cambridge and Peterborough Tourism Strategy and Action Plan*, The Tourism Company and SQW, May 2007

the latest film of Elizabeth 1st. The facilities could be used much more for events than they are, with the possibility of people making Ely their base for exploring Cambridge rather than the other way round.

Based on experience elsewhere, the main demand should therefore be for:

- A livelier waterfront as an integral part of the Country Park, accommodating various forms of boating, and potentially new ponds (which are easily formed in the clay subsoil). The Cotswolds Water Park provides a possible model. A living waterfront should include not only different routes, as people prefer to make round trips, but also more attractions. The owner of the marina is interested in expanding the facilities there, which could include a clubhouse or small hotel. The Inland Waterways Association is keen to see more moorings provided, and would prefer a site near the station.
- A cinema will be a popular with younger people and families. The Maltings could be much more intensively run, and is well-placed to generate life on the waterfront, as in cities like Norwich.
- A better leisure centre, possibly forming the heart of a leisure village on land off the Downham Road, or as part of the Northern Growth Area and Country Park. Strategic Leisure estimate that the built area required is 5.7 hectares, plus the same again for parking, it could be like the leisure village, as in Chichester, which lies within the ring road. Any propos-

als should undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment of options.

- New hotels are crucial, as local people perceive a real deficiency even now and much more if Ely really took off (for example as a place to hold events such as weddings or conferences). Ely could provide Cambridge with an extra draw to persuade visitors to stay over and spend more.
- By packaging the attractions of the sub region, as Oxford does with the Cotswolds, it will be possible to use tourism to create more wealth. The river with its spectacular walk through to the Cathedral should be an important part of the Ely Experience but it would also help if there were more historic buildings to visit, and the Bishop's Palace could be a great opportunity if Sue Ryder Care Home were to move out.

D. Housing Earlier work done on housing capacity and the residents' experience of new housing suggests the need for better and different products than the volume house-builders tend to supply. The Housing Capacity study showed that builders have been completing 300 units a year. Though house prices in East Cambridgeshire average £203,000 compared with £248,000 in South Cambridgeshire²⁶ it is very difficult for residents to get on the housing ladder, and requires an increase in the provision of affordable housing. A much wider choice is going to be crucial in what is going to be a much more competitive housing market as new housing comes on stream all around Cambridge.



²⁶ *Housing Land Availability Assessment*, East Cambridgeshire District Council, 2007

Family housing is always going to be very popular. Recent research found that 71% of new homes built between 1991 and 2001 in the Cambridge Sub-region had three or more bedrooms, whereas 45% of units built in the last 3 years have been one or two room units²⁷. The housing mix proposed for the new town of Northstowe would provide 30-35% of the units with four or more bedrooms (it is likely that the eventual proportion of affordable housing would be below 30% with densities of 46 dwellings per hectare with a range of 30 to 100, with the higher densities along the edges and green corridors). Ely needs to complement new developments like Northstowe by offering something better, not cheaper. It also needs to appeal to all the niches or market segments that make up the housing market by 'branding' individual neighbourhoods, as they do in the Dutch new settlements^{28 29}. This would be in line with the vision of the Ely Perspective as '*Ely: A City for all Reasons*'.

There is evidence that there is a demand for different kinds of home that appeal, for example, to empty nesters trying to control their housing costs without losing the space to put up a relative, or to young people setting up on their own for the first time. New homes do not have to be poky with forecourts dominated by cars. The Callcutt Review on Housing Delivery calls for more sites to be made available to smaller builders, and refers to the practice of UK builders to sell less than 40-50 units

a year from any one site³⁰. There is also a need for new forms of sheltered housing to enable an ageing population to maintain their mobility and quality of life. There may also be scope for homes that meet much higher environmental standards as will be mandatory after 2016. Places like St Neots are already starting to embrace the 'eco-towns' model. Ely should also be showing the way.

Higher standards will be key to overcoming local opposition, particularly as far as the public realm is concerned. A report of a seminar run by the English Historic Towns Forum in Ely in 2004 on managing rapid growth in historic towns showed how the creation of Jubilee Gardens had turned a former commercial site into a new 'green lung' with high quality housing alongside³¹. The report recommended reinforcing the setting of historic towns like Ely through definite 'gateways', clear edges, and the maintenance of long views. Such an approach has been taken in classic schemes like Hampstead Garden Suburb, Upton in Northants, and European models like Vauban in Freiburg. PPS3 encourages 'innovative approaches to help deliver higher quality outcomes'

From market analysis and discussions with those involved in the property market, we have identified a number of gaps, including:

- A planned urban extension in the Northern Growth Area should learn from models that have worked in the past, and that have influenced



²⁷ 10 Northstowe housing report, ARUP for English Partnerships and Gallagher, 2007

²⁸ A Quality Charter for Growth in Cambridgeshire, consultation draft, Cambridgeshire Horizons www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk

²⁹ University of Cambridge Study Tour of New Urban Extensions in Amersfoort, URBED, 2007

³⁰ The Callcutt Review of Housebuilding Delivery, John Callcutt, 2007

³¹ Focus on Housing Growth, Case Study of Ely, English Historic Towns Forum, 2006

the Cambridgeshire Quality Growth Charter. For example one neighbourhood could be an 'urban village' (as in the Duchy of Cornwall's scheme at Poundbury, Dorchester, with a mix of uses) one could be 'garden suburb' as in Letchworth or Hampstead, and one might be a Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood or 'eco neighbourhood' as in new settlements in the historic cities of Amersfoort in the Netherlands, and Freiburg, in Southern Germany.

- Homes that enable new households to get on the housing ladder need to be easy and inexpensive to run, with relatively small external areas in patios or balconies, and good access to amenities such as shops, the country and water.
- Homes for people whose children have left home can free up homes with gardens before people get too old to move, and modern apartments with balconies could overlook the Market Place, and the waterfront off Lisle Lane.
- Applying Dutch ideas of opening up new waterways and providing homes with access to boats would give Ely a competitive edge.
- Apartments should also be feasible in a new neighbourhood centre, and could be located both over the shops and community facilities.
- There is a marked shortage of larger quality 'executive homes' with gardens and access to large open spaces.
- New development should significantly expand the supply of affordable housing.



Vathorst, Amersfoort, The Netherlands



Vauban, Freiburg, South Germany

3. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR SMARTER GROWTH

3.1 Strategic framework

The vision of a 21st Century Garden City in a superb natural setting involves balancing housing, employment and leisure. Targets are proposed for growing Ely to an eventual population of 26-28,000, which means building about 3-5,000 more homes (depending on the house sizes that are in demand), and attracting some 3-6,000 new jobs over the next 10-20 years. This equates to about 200 new homes a year, which is in line with Ely's longer term growth rate. By focussing growth in a well-connected urban extension linked to infrastructure capacity, and intensifying activity in the heart of the City, extra activity would contribute to achieving the objectives of the Core Strategy in the Local Development Framework. It could also help finance a much better physical and social infrastructure and ensure Ely takes advantage of being in the Cambridge Growth Area. There are seven main strategic themes to the Masterplan:

A. Rescuing the heart of Ely from traffic

The first priority for almost everyone who was consulted is to build the Southern Link Road. This will free up Angel Drove for improvement and regeneration, and help reconnect the City with its railway station. It will have wider benefits for communities such as Soham and Newmarket, through better links to the A14 and A11. The regional benefits will come from enabling Ely to accommodate higher levels of housing and employment growth than are currently planned, and to secure contributions from developers towards its cost, which should swing the balance in making it a regional priority. A new link road will make it possible for industrial traffic to access key areas such as Queen Adelaide and the Potters site without affecting the historic core of Ely. Traffic in the town centre as a result of new housing would be minimised through controlled parking, additional park and ride on the edges, and greatly improved walking and cycling routes. The extra population will make it possible to introduce a quality bus corridor between Chetisham or Littleport and Lancaster Way via the station and City Centre,

and along Lynn Road, linking the City Centre, railway station and key employment areas with a frequent service.

B. Strengthening Ely as a place to visit and shop

The main negative comments from new residents was *'need better shops/restaurants/pubs'*³². Traders in a workshop attended by over 30 independent businesses thought the new residents had different life-styles which required new kinds of shop, offering a better quality of product. Many would welcome more household names as they would draw shoppers in. The Market Place or 'Red Square' was considered wasted. The City Centre offer needs to grow, and there is demand for larger units, which could support the extension and updating of the Cloisters shopping centre, which has a number of deficiencies. Growing the population will increase the investment by national multiples, and will also improve the trade for independent businesses.

C. Broadening local employment

Town centres do best when they not only appeal to local residents,

³²Ely New Estates Survey 2007, East Cambridgeshire District Council, 2007

but also benefit from people working in the town. Some 45% of Ely's employed population work locally. Raising income levels is also an issue. Currently some 60% of those commuting out of Ely by train have a degree, and 74% of the residents in the new estates work outside Ely. Increasing the population and improving the quality of the housing stock will make the town more attractive as a place to locate an office, as there will be a better choice of staff for the growing knowledge sector.

D. Securing better leisure facilities

Leisure facilities work best when they are both accessible to the town and to people from the surrounding area, as in the case of the new leisure centre and linked office development on the edge of Cirencester or the Leisure Village in Chichester. A properly planned urban extension will also help fund the development of the Country Park along the river that has long been talked about. Indeed the waterfront represents one of the main opportunities for sustainable growth.

E. Connecting the City with its waterfront

Ely is rediscovering its waterfront, but there is still a long way to go. Ely suffers from being disconnected at Lisle Lane, where the relocation of the sewage works could open up new routes through into a Country Park, and at Standen's site next to the station. There are good examples of what is possible in cities like Norwich and Lincoln, and also in towns like Chelmsford and Newark. The redevelopment of the key sites of Lisle Lane and Standens will make the whole City much more attractive as a place to live, work and visit.

F. Widening housing choice Most of the new housing built in recent years in Ely has been in the mid price range, and looks relatively standard. Examples of award winning housing in other towns show the range of styles that are possible, from the modern, as in Newhall near Harlow, to the traditional, as in the mixed use scheme of housing and retail in Broadway in Worcestershire. There is also scope, given how dry and sunny Ely is, to tap solar power, as in Vauban in Freiburg in South West Germany, or to build new waterside housing, as in many new settlements in the Netherlands. The high quality of the new housing built alongside Jubilee Gardens illustrates what is possible if enough care is taken.

G. Reinforcing the social infrastructure

Experience elsewhere, such as the new village of Cambourne, shows the importance of providing social infrastructure in advance of the population expanding. People need places to meet, and education, health and shopping facilities need to be co-located if the new population is to be integrated with those who live there already, to avoid a sense of 'them and us'. It is important to meet people's expectations, and so ways have to be found of engaging the community in the whole process, from what is to be provided, to how places are managed and maintained. By providing community hubs in each of the new neighbourhoods, starting with the greater use of Princess of Wales Hospital, smarter growth should lead to stronger and more active communities than in the recent past.



3.2 Planning and design principles

A set of ten principles have been developed to guide the use and development of different sites:

1. The overriding concern is to make Ely a model for sustainable growth, and this means balancing housing and employment growth, cutting down time spent in cars, and minimising the environmental impact of any new development.
2. The growth plan will boost the quality of life of those living in East Cambridgeshire by providing a better choice of jobs in places that can be accessed without long commutes.
3. Housing growth beyond current allocations will be linked to what the infrastructure can support, and will also be used to justify new investment that has already been prioritised e.g. new Southern Link Road, new sewage works.
4. A major aim is to improve the shopping and leisure facilities using the value and spending power generated by a growing working population.
5. All new facilities serving the public should be located where they can be accessed by public transport and on foot or cycle by the majority of people living in the City of Ely.
6. In general the plot ratios should be low enough to avoid dominating the historic core (which may suggest two/three storey buildings on the edge of the centre).
7. Offices should be located by good public transport links and where they can have sufficient parking for their needs, with priority being given to

larger employers in sites nearest public transport.

8. New housing should be located where it is within range of community facilities such as schools, health centres and community hubs.
9. Housing should make the most of locations with high amenity, such as views over water or open space through higher densities.
10. Development should seek to reinforce a high accessibility spine where regular bus services would then be viable, for example linking the station with the City Centre.



Reiselfeld, Freiburg, South Germany



Nieuwland, Amersfoort, The Netherlands

3.3 Key opportunity sites

1. Ely Station Gateway

A top priority for Ely is to transform the first impression for visitors, and to make it much easier for the residential and working communities to get around. By comprehensively developing the different and diverse sites of this key area rather than leaving them piecemeal to retail, the quality of life in the whole City will be upgraded. The site referred to as the Ely Station Gateway comprises land occupied by Standen's between the station and the river and various sites to the north of Angel Drove. Key constraints on the site are the high level of congestion, the railway crossing, poor access for pedestrians and floodplain. Appropriate uses for this area could include:

- Mixed residential and office development which does not add to congestion i.e. not retail
- A direct route through to the river and Country Park
- Moorings and boat related uses
- Hotel catering for meetings and events
- Business space, including offices.

Access to this key site can be enhanced by:

- Construction of Southern Link Road
- Downgrading of A142 and conversion into a tree-lined avenue
- Re-allocation of road space by the railway station to eliminate existing barriers to pedestrian movement
- Extension of the riverside walk towards the railway station

Development Opportunities



- Creation of a direct pedestrian link from the station
- Improved direct bus services.

2. Angel Drove

This large site is between the railway line and the A142, including Cambridgeshire Business Park and the Mantle site. Appropriate uses of this area could include:

- Major business quarter with B1 and office space for small and growing companies
- Headquarters uses
- Bulky goods retail and showrooms, adjacent to the new Southern Link Road
- Leisure uses.

SQW estimate that development in this area could generate around 1,500 jobs.

Access to this key site can be enhanced by:

- Opening of a new entrance and exit at the western end to connect with the Southern Link Road.
- Upgrading the pedestrian links to the Station and the City Centre with a tree-lined avenue
- Provision of parking off the main carriageway
- Regular bus service.

3. City Centre

The City Centre is defined as the area containing continuous shops, and includes Forehill, St. Mary's Street as well as the main streets of Market and High Street. It also includes the Cloisters shopping centre, Paradise site and Nutholt Lane/Lynn Road/Newnham Street/ Prickwillow Road. Appropriate uses for this area

include:

- More shopping floorspace including the possible expansion of Waitrose
- Leisure uses such as a small town park or playground
- Restaurants and bars to enhance the 'evening economy'
- The Market Place as an 'events area' including increasing the regularity of Farmers' Markets
- Better utilisation of space over shops
- Shared access for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

In summary, enabling the shopping centre to extend across Nutholt Lane, and the relocation of the leisure centres to better facilities provides an opportunity for a new mixed use scheme as outlined above.

4. Lisle Lane and Eastern Gateway

Lisle Lane comprises the largest area of potentially surplus brownfield land in Ely. The area also includes the Waste Treatment Works and the riverside area. The key constraints are the location of the Waste Treatment Plant, congestion and heavy traffic along Broad Street. Relocating the Waste Treatment Works to a more sustainable location and other companies to modern premises will enable a comprehensive development that will connect the City with the river. Appropriate uses for the site could include:

- High quality housing
- Potential for some 'star' buildings including blocks of apartments looking over the railway to the river
- Studio/office space for smaller businesses

5. Northern Growth Area

The area is bordered by the A10 bypass to the West and by the railway line from Ely to Peterborough. There are virtually no infrastructure constraints in the Northern Growth Area.

The Northern Growth Area is well located for a planned urban extension taking some 2-3,000 plus homes within a Country Park setting providing a range of active forms of recreation including walking/ cycling, stables, sports fields, playing facilities, water uses, garden centres etc. Access to this area will require a spine road from Thistle Corner crossing Lynn Road and linking to the A10.

The delivery of the strategic framework to tackle congestion and improve access is intrinsically linked to the development of these key sites.

3.4 Risk assessment

The successful implementation of the masterplan depends on resolving a number of quandaries, and so a number of elements are inter-linked. Our risk assessment suggests that the main issues are likely to be the timing of the new Southern Link Road, the extent to which the City Centre can be strengthened to resist competition from other places, and the rate of growth the property market will support.

The table on page 47 summaries some of the more important risks related to the Masterplan. These risks relate to both financial risks and programme risks. Many of the potential risks are mitigated by the way in which the Masterplan has been developed. However, there are a number of risks that are largely outside the control of East Cambridgeshire District Council and the Council will therefore need to work closely with other agencies to promote the interests of Ely.

3.5 Funding

The delivery of this ambitious plan will require significant resources from the public and private sector. The Council has recently secured £687,000 from the Housing Growth Fund in 2008/09 to pump prime key development sites and infrastructure requirements. The table below outlines the indicative breakdown of funding secured.

The East Cambridgeshire Strategic Partnership is also seeking £100,000 to contribute to the Ely Country Park.

| Project Objectives | Funding Secured |
|--|-----------------|
| Relocation of Ely Sewage Treatment Works and redevelopment of Lisle Lane | £385,000 |
| Development Brief - Key Development Opportunities | £250,000 |
| Southern Link Road - Reinvigorated Study | £50,000 |

| Number | Risk | Possible Impact on Strategy | Magnitude | Likelihood | Possible Mitigation |
|--------|---|---|-----------|------------|---|
| 1 | Non-delivery of Southern Link Road | Limit to development potential on south side of City Restricted opportunity for environmental improvement around Station Gateway | Medium | High | ECDC to seek match funding from developers or other non-LTP sources ECDC to implement development levy Station Gateway to be designed with clear phases Ongoing work should reduce objections on environmental grounds |
| 2 | Delayed delivery of Southern Link Road | Programme for development of Station Gateway and Angel Drove will be delayed | Medium | High | Master Plan should not rely upon Southern Link Road in early phases Station Gateway should be designed incorporating phases |
| 3 | Alternative site for sewage works cannot be secured | 'Best' site in Ely is not available for proposed uses | High | Low | ECDC to work with Anglian Water to identify suitable sites and funding Master plan to include options if site is not available |
| 4 | Development levy principal not politically acceptable | Limited funding for social infrastructure | Medium | Medium | A masterplan programme should be developed as a series of easily deliverable schemes that can be used as a menu, depending upon funding availability ECDC should adopt strict section 106 contributions policy |
| 5 | Plan delivered in piecemeal fashion | Available funding leaks away Social infrastructure not deliverable | High | Medium | Key development sites should only be released once replacement sites are secured ECDC should adopt strong developer contribution policy |
| 6 | Economic downturn leads to reduced land values and demand for housing and employment land | Reduced land values lead to limited funding availability Slow down in demand for sites | Medium | Medium | Master plan should be structured as a series of self-supporting elements with flexible timing to accommodate short economic downturns Developments should be designed to offer something different to reduce chances of downturn in demand |
| 7 | ECDC forced to accept unwelcome or non-compliant planning applications | Master plan will fall into disrepute due to inappropriate development Main benefits of the plan will be lost | High | High | LDF should be amended quickly to incorporate master plan Master plan should be explained to land owners and developers at earliest opportunity to seek support for principals |
| 8 | Main landowners refuse to support master plan | Landowners submit contrary proposals which eliminate the value of the plan Key sites cannot be secured | High | Low | Landowners and developers should be involved in master plan development |
| 9 | Competition from other areas reduces housing demand | Reduced demand and therefore prices leads to slower pace of development and reduced funding availability | Medium | Medium | Ely should offer types and mixes of housing that are not on offer elsewhere Master plan should incorporate different types of housing Marketing of Ely needs to emphasise environmental quality |

Gifford's Risk Assessment

VISION FOR ELY: Summary Report of Visioning Conference 21st January 2008

A new vision for the 'smarter growth' of the City of Ely emerged from the round table conference held at the Maltings on January 21st. 77 delegates drawn from the different stakeholders discussed the seven themes of the development strategy, and identified major priorities and also early wins on the assumption that Ely continued to grow, with a target population of around 25,000 instead of the current 18,000, and that a new Southern ring road was built.

The general consensus was that Ely was not fulfilling its true potential. The new vision was of a historic cathedral city where pedestrians and cyclists had primacy, with a great riverside and country park, modern offices benefiting from the growth of the Cambridge economy, plus carefully designed new residential neighbourhoods with good social facilities which together would support expanded leisure facilities and a better quality shopping centre. Each of these points is developed below, and follows the order in which groups fed back, with each theme reinforcing the others:

Movement: rescuing the heart of Ely from traffic The overall vision is of a traffic free core with car parks around the periphery. The general priority for all the groups that have been consulted is to build the Southern bypass that will take the main A142 out of Ely. This will free up the area around the station and Angel Drove, and enable pedestrians to have primacy in the centre. Parking needs to be managed better and concentrated on the fringes. New housing should be linked with the centre and station by a high quality public transport corridor. A proper cycle network with dedicated space and parking should be an early win, and turn Ely into 'cycle city'.

Economy: broadening local employment The general priority is to ensure that the current momentum in employment growth is sustained through sites to meet demands from office-based services, manufacturing and distribution. Plans are coming forward that will do so, though there need to be more units for small businesses to start and grow – such as provided by e space. But to achieve a reduction in out-commuting there should be renewed effort to attract skill rich/well paid jobs benefiting from the dynamic in the Cambridge economy. A high amenity site should be identified that will encourage developers to expand the choice of premises, ideally through an iconic building for a major organisation, taking advantage of the excellent rail links. Tourism is also going to be important but depends on both having 'special places to stay' in the centre, for example a 'boutique hotel' and also a larger mid range hotel outside the city centre.

Waterfront: connecting the city with its river and countryside The river and the various lakes should form part of a green network that connects with a new country park and nature reserves. The vision for the wildspace and riverside needs to be developed with maximum public participation, and should cover management and funding as well as what activities should go where. The country park can be developed incrementally, with early wins through improving footpaths around Roswell Pits and to the lakes on the Southern side of the railway. Another early win is to provide more moorings along the river.

Housing: improving choice and quality A wider range of housing needs to be provided, with the design depending on the location. In the city centre 1-2 bed flats without parking are appropriate; along Lisle Lane medium density housing around courtyards; and near the station commuter housing over niche retail would fit well. The potential new neighbourhoods towards the North could include a mix of housing and shopping, and could also offer the chance of a wide mix of densities with the best homes looking out to the country park. One part should demonstrate a 'Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood' e.g. solar power, water recycling, and a timber housing development would be an attraction. A long term project should be to reopen Chettisham Station on the line to Peterborough, as the core of a new 'urban village'.

Community: reinforcing the social infrastructure Ely should seek to be a special place, not just another historic city, and this means ensuring that growth is balanced so that Ely offers places for everyone, young as well as old. Improving access is a general priority so that people can get into the centre more easily and also between the centre and the river. The Market Square should be the social hub, and care taken to tie the old and the new parts together and integrate the newcomers. New neighbourhoods will need proper facilities, including expanding education and health services. Quick wins are to improve lighting along key routes and cycle ways, and provide better signing, including community notice boards with information on events.

Leisure: Securing better facilities Leisure and cultural facilities should meet the need of different segments in terms of age and income. Ideally leisure and cultural facilities should be located in the centre of Ely but it was understood by the group that this might not be financially viable. A new 'wet and dry' facility forming part of a leisure village would be welcomed so long as it could be reached easily and safely by pedestrians and cyclists as well as motorists. There must also be cost free informal leisure spaces for young people to hangout and play. An arts centre should ideally be in the centre of the city. The Maltings needs to expand its appeal. However in the longer-run a small multiplex cinema outside the centre would be valued. There is also scope for a larger cluster of activities on the riverside, including a new hotel. Quick wins would be lighting to link the river and the centre, and the extension of river moorings.

City centre: strengthening Ely as a place to visit and shop The vision is of a centre where pedestrians and cyclists have primacy. With a greater population comes the demand to support better shops, and already Ely cannot satisfy interest from national retailers. The immediate priority is to safeguard the centre from further loss of trade to out of town by upgrading the experience. A key project is to transform the market place through a quality building, with housing over cafes and shops in place of the current eyesore. A longer term project is to develop larger shop units at the back of the Cloisters, which may be linked to Waitrose expanding. A quick win is to regulate parking so that cars do not dominate the centre and promote a programme of activities all along the Eel Trail, starting with the Market Square. It may also be possible to make more of Kings School as an attraction, for example by opening up part of the Bishops Palace to visitors.