



TOWARDS A QUALITY CHARTER

FOR GROWTH IN THE CAMBRIDGE AREA

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TOWARDS A QUALITY CHARTER FOR GROWTH IN THE CAMBRIDGE AREA

The aim of the Quality Charter is to develop the management and leadership skills needed to create sustainable new communities in the Cambridge area. This six month experimental programme will share experience with other schemes that can provide inspiration and relevant lessons. It will build the capacity for partnership working, including better trust and collaboration between agencies, a capacity to take risks and innovate, and faster implementation. It will develop learning materials that can be used elsewhere. This briefing paper provides some background information to bring all the participants up to speed, and suggests how a quality charter might help.

Sustainable communities and better neighbourhoods

The Academy for Sustainable Communities and Inspire East the regional centre of excellence for sustainable communities have taken the lead in sponsoring this programme because Cambridge is in the forefront of change, and because the skills to manage growth are still in short supply in the UK:

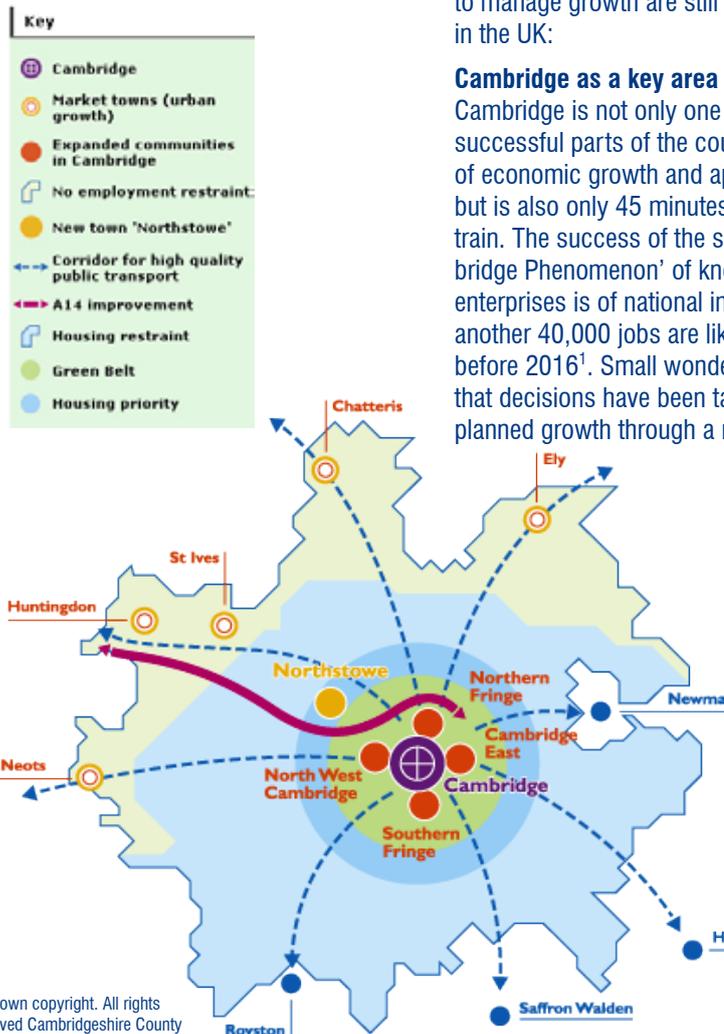
Cambridge as a key area for growth

Cambridge is not only one of the most successful parts of the country in terms of economic growth and appeal to visitors, but is also only 45 minutes from London by train. The success of the so-called 'Cambridge Phenomenon' of knowledge-based enterprises is of national importance, and another 40,000 jobs are likely to be created before 2016¹. Small wonder therefore that decisions have been taken to achieve planned growth through a number of new

settlements, which are intended to be models for what a sustainable community should offer, and that Cambridge has led the way in modelling and assessing growth options². Continuing prosperity of the area depends on meeting the housing growth targets³.

Characteristics of sustainable communities

Government policy calls for communities that are not only well-designed and well-connected but also fair for everyone and well run. Research for Cambridgeshire Horizons has shown that new communities tend to end up with a disproportionate number of young families and those who cannot afford anything else⁴. Developing both attractive places and social capital is therefore key. However communities often lack the skills and management capacity needed to ensure that the social infrastructure, such as places to meet, keeps pace with physical development.



Eight Characteristics of a Sustainable Community

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¹ Cambridge Phenomenon QW
² Forecasting the Sustainability of Alternative Plans: the Cambridge Futures Experience, Marcel Echenique
³ Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and draft East of England Plan
⁴ Balanced and Mixed Communities: a Good Practice Guide. Three Dragons with Halcrow for Cambridgeshire Horizons



Caterham Barracks Urban Village



Ingress Park, Kent

Key factors in making higher densities work The new settlements will be built at much higher densities than in the past, which calls for much better planning and design. Research for the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment has criticised new housing for the layout and poor quality of the open spaces⁵. Their good practice guide calls for the use of *'charters to fast track development that complies with basic agreed principles. A charter goes beyond a vision in enabling stakeholders to sign up to a set of rules of engagement'*⁶.

Key factors in making neighbourhoods sustainable Traffic congestion around Cambridge is already considered by some to be intolerable, and the bulk of the planned infrastructure investment is to increase transport capacity, but it will not be enough unless travel patterns change. Traffic outside the city grew by 30% over the last ten years compared with a national average of 19%. New developments are therefore to be located on good public transport corridors. Sustainable development also needs to be environmentally sensitive. Cambridge is one of the driest places in the country. It is also very flat and windy. It may therefore be one of the best places to apply sustainable energy principles. *'In Cambridge, the way environmental issues are managed discursively and politically... is the key to 'unlocking the city'⁷.*

The importance of quality Research has shown the need for better coordination, regulation and investment, and the need for much more joined-up management of public space⁸. However as it is hard to measure and value environmental quality, it tends to be a poor relation of other services like education and health. Yet Quality of Life is a key determinant of housing choice, and economic growth for companies in a global market place, and is consequently a priority for Cambridgeshire Horizons.

⁵ Housing Audit: assessing the design and quality of new homes, CABE

⁶ Better Neighbourhoods: making higher densities work, CABE

⁷ Environmental sustainability and the Cambridge phenomenon

⁸ Living Places; Caring for Quality, ODPM



The Fishing Village, Chatham Maritime



New Hall, Harlow
Countryside Properties

Need for balanced housing growth

New housing not only has to match demand in terms of numbers but also respond to the requirements of very different groups of people, from young families, often with limited budgets, to older people whose children have 'left the nest':

House price inflation and affordability

Cambridge has some of the highest house prices in the country, and most people can no longer get on the housing ladder. Less than 2% of sales in South Cambridgeshire involve dwellings costing under £80,000, and there are long waiting lists for social housing, which can only be allocated to those in real hardship. New housing provides opportunities for innovating in terms of both construction and occupancy costs, and also forms of tenure.

Changing demographic profiles The proportion of people over 65 in the County is forecast to rise from 14.8% in 2001 to 17.7% in 2016 as people live longer (but still below the EU average of 21%). Most of the growth will be people living on their own. People are renting longer, and buying later in life. The average household

size has fallen, but the housing stock is slow to change. New housing can help established residents to downsize and free up under-occupied family houses, as well as providing missing rungs on the housing ladder.

Rising population Between 1981 and 1997 the County's population rose by 17%, largely through in-migration, and is projected to grow by 1.1% a year up to 2021. The population of South Cambridgeshire is forecast to grow massively from 130,000 in 2001 to 162,000 in 2016, while Cambridge City is expected to expand from 109,000 to 132,000, the highest rates of growth within the East of England, largely as a result of newcomers⁹. The number of new homes in East Anglia has been forecast to grow faster than anywhere else (by 33% from 1989 compared with 15-18% in the South East.¹⁰) Hence there will be opportunities to design for new lifestyles in keeping with Cambridge's global position, and to differentiate the various new settlements. However as it takes time for communities to grow up, care will be needed to avoid conflicts arising in the early days

Changing lifestyles Experts are forecasting a shift to 'post-modern values', with communities based on choice, greater individualism, less deference, crowded leisure time, and more home working. There will also be more concern for Quality of Life issues, including community responses to caring for children and the elderly, minimising waste, and improving well-being¹¹.

Importance of innovation With so many new homes being built in different parts of Cambridgeshire, it is going to be vital to strike a balance between what is easy to build, and what will meet the demands of the 21st century. In general people in Britain prefer buying detached houses, preferably in mature small towns and villages. Providing attractive forms of affordable housing is a particular challenge, especially as such a high proportion of people in Cambridgeshire outside the historic city live in detached houses at present (43% in South Cambs). Each new settlement will have to offer a better quality of life, not just a cheap house.

⁹ Northstowe Housing Strategy, Arups for Gallagher

¹⁰ Key UK Trends, Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit

¹¹ The future and how to think about it, www.number-10.gov.uk/su/future

Current proposals for new settlements¹²

As well as smaller infill sites, like Brooklands Avenue near Cambridge Station, there are five major opportunities for creating new communities in the Cambridge area, as well as, of course, some significant sites in the market towns in the rest of the County:

Cambridge East This is the largest opportunity, and is made up of Cambridge Airport, North of Newmarket Road, and North of Cherry Hinton. The site will form an urban extension, which could include new strategic uses, such as a new events venue. The majority of the development will take place after 2016, but the Cambridge East Area Action Plan will establish a vision, and the broad policy content, and provide detailed guidance for the first phase North of Newmarket Road, following the results of consultations. A key issue is where and when Marshall Aerospace is to move.

Marshall Aerospace is to be relocated to enable a completely new urban quarter to be planned on the east side of Cambridge. This is a major opportunity to build a large number of the homes that Cambridge needs close to the city without harming its historic setting, and to build at an urban density that takes full advantage of the scale and location of the site. At least 10,000 new homes are planned, built around a new mixed use centre, and fronting a major new open space running through the development linking Coldham's Common to a new Country Park around Teversham village. New footpaths, cycleways and an extended network of high quality public transport will link the new quarter to the city centre and to the other centres of employment around the edge of the city.

Cambridge Southern Fringe The site involves extensions to an existing village. Work is underway to improve access to Addenbrooke's Hospital and cycle routes between Trumpington and the city centre. Developers are expected to submit outline planning applications in early summer 2006. A key issue is how to provide appropriate community facilities in the right locations.

The village of Trumpington will be expanded by adding new neighbourhoods to the east and south of the village, adding around 3,800 homes. These new neighbourhoods will bring new schools, shops and enhanced community facilities to the village, and will be fringed by new landscaped open spaces stretching towards the Gog Magog Hills to the south and to the River Cam to the west, giving easy access to the open countryside by foot and by bicycle. A new road will be built to the south of Trumpington village to give access to the new neighbourhoods and to serve a major expansion of Addenbrooke's Hospital to the east of the railway line. The new Guided Busway from Huntingdon will serve both Addenbrooke's Hospital and the Trumpington Park and Ride site. Addenbrooke's Hospital will be expanded as a regional and national centre of clinical excellence and biomedical research, with a range of new clinical facilities and a biomedical research park.

North West Cambridge Two adjacent developments are proposed: one by Cambridge University and the other by David Wilson Homes. Land will be removed from the Green Belt by the Cambridge City Local Plan (due to be adopted in June 2006), and work has commenced on preparing a Joint Area Action Plan between the two Authorities which will define the new Green Belt boundary to the University's site in South Cambridgeshire. The scheme should make an early contribution to housing targets. Key issues to be addressed include landscape strategy, transport and the scale and location of community facilities.

Two new residential areas are planned in North West Cambridge, providing around 3,800 new homes in a landscaped environment. Land between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road will be developed by Cambridge University to meet its longer term needs for key worker housing, as well as providing some additional faculty and research space to supplement land already being developed in West Cambridge. Land between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road will be developed to provide a new high quality residential suburb with a range of local facilities and well landscaped open spaces reaching out to the countryside to the north.



Arbury Park, Masterplan
Image courtesy of Gallagher Estates

¹² Taken from Driving forward sustainable communities, Cambridgeshire Horizons, and related websites

Cambridge Northern Fringe The Western end of this site will be one of the first to be occupied. A key issue is the economic feasibility of relocating the adjacent sewage works.

Work began in late 2005 to build Arbury Park, a new mixed-use community of 900 homes with a school, shops and employment facilities at the western end of the Northern Fringe. The development will be completed by 2008 and will provide affordable and market homes. At the eastern end of the Northern Fringe, a new station is planned at Chesterton on the Cambridge to Kings Lynn main line which will interchange with the Guided Busway. This station will serve the Science Park and the growing employment areas around Milton Road. A feasibility study is being carried out on the relocation of the adjacent Cambridge Sewage Treatment Works, which, if successful, would open the way for a high density mixed use community of 2,900 homes to be planned around the transport interchange.

Northstowe This is a large freestanding new town built around Oakington Barracks and will be developed as a joint venture between Gallagher Estates and English Partnerships. Key issues include how to separate the new town from the adjoining villages while producing mutual benefits and giving the new town a distinctive identity, how to make the scheme a *'benchmark for sustainable development'* across the subregion, and how to achieve the right population size and tenure mix.

Northstowe is a New Town for the 21st century and will be built to high standards of design and environmental performance. Built to accommodate 8 - 10,000 new homes, its town centre will contain a lively mix of shops, restaurants, offices and civic uses, and its neighbourhoods will be well supported by local schools and community facilities. A network of high-quality open spaces will run through the area, linking it to the surrounding countryside. Northstowe will be served by the new Cambridgeshire Guided Busway linking Huntingdon to Cambridge, giving easy access to a wide range of sub-regional employment and leisure facilities. Within the town, there will be a network of local roads with walking, cycling and public transport routes. Affordable housing will be a key feature of the development.



Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge
Image courtesy of Design for Homes

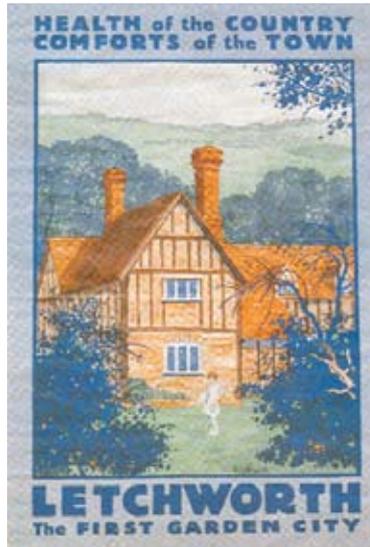


Above: Cambridge Southern Fringe Development Sites
Image courtesy of Cambridge City Council
Right: Northstowe Town Centre Square
Image courtesy of Gallagher Estates





Energy efficient housing, Cambourne, Cambridgeshire



Kingsmead North, Milton Keynes

Good practice elsewhere

Cambourne Much has been learned from Cambourne, particularly regarding the importance of providing community facilities early on, and integrating the maintenance of the public realm. Like many new settlements, it is hard to get tenants for shops and services early on, and a lot of the residents are simply passing through.

Harlow North A masterplan for the sustainable extension of one of the pioneering New Towns will apply innovative approaches to energy, water and waste in a development backed by a major pension fund. Harlow already features some of the most exciting new housing to have been developed recently.

Milton Keynes What was once criticised for New Town Blues, is now highly popular with its residents. However facilities are spread out, and so people are very car dependent. The new phases are being built to much higher densities, and include an innovative Millennium Village. Milton Keynes has pioneered the idea of a roof tax, where a proportion of the cost of new infrastructure is to be collected from house builders.

Ashford Collaboration with developers early on, and high levels of community participation are being used to reach a covenant on what developments should provide. Kent pioneered the use of County Design Guides, which have led to some designs that look modern, while applying traditional building techniques.

Hertfordshire With a host of new towns, including the pioneering Garden City in Letchworth, development trusts have been used in several schemes to redevelop hospitals, and to secure ongoing community and environmental benefits.

Freiburg Germany is leading the way in applying sustainable development principles to new housing, including the use of solar panels on a commercial scale (www.solarvillage.com). Families have been attracted to live in apartments around courtyards that help children socialise and play without fear of traffic.

What a charter might cover

To be really useful, a charter needs to cover not just the broad aspirations of who the development is for, but also set out principles and parameters that will guide design and implementation as the communities grow and mature, and thus guarantee quality. While each settlement will need to have its own agreement, a charter might include sections on:

Profile who is expected to occupy the neighbourhoods at different stages, and how many of each group? e.g. age, income, dependency, type of housing

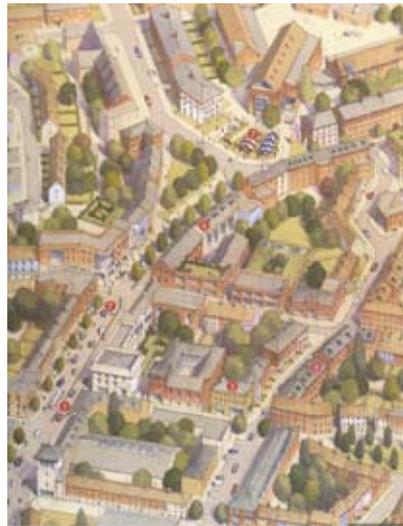
Uses what kinds of activity will be provided on the site apart from housing, what amount of space will they occupy, and how will they relate to each other? e.g. shops and services, open space

Design what principles underlie the masterplan or development framework and guide what buildings and the public realm will look like? e.g. densities, materials, parking and open space standards

Community how will the concerns of the existing and new communities be met in terms of facilities and infrastructure? e.g. arts, culture and entertainment, places for children to play, health and education, meeting spaces.



Freiburg, Germany



Indicative neighbourhood design for Harlow North



Vauban, Freiburg, Germany

In answering these and other questions, a balance needs to be struck between what is desirable and what is viable at each stage, and also between the economic, physical and social infrastructure, as not everything can be provided at once or needs to apply everywhere. In achieving a step change from what we have now, it may help to think in terms of seven parameters, which are used in the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol, and which might be described as ‘the seven C’s of quality places.’

Further information

The programme has been devised and is being run by URBED on behalf of a consortium of sponsors, made up of the Academy of Sustainable Communities, Cambridgeshire Horizons, English Partnerships and Inspire East. For more details contact Anne Wyatt at URBED, 0207 436 8050, or email a.wyatt@urbed.com, or consult URBED’s website, www.urbed.com.

Advisory Group

Aspect of urban design

- Context
- Character
- Choice
- Connections
- Creativity
- Custodianship
- Collaboration

Source: New Zealand Urban Design Protocol

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