



Chapter 2

Joint Working and the Duty to Co-operate



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- 2.1. The Councils have a long history of joint working and have worked closely together on a variety of planning matters over many years reflecting the close functional relationship between the tightly drawn city boundary and its rural surroundings. This includes working together on key strategic and joint issues at both officer and Member level through the preparation of Structure Plans, input to Regional Plans, the preparation of existing development plans, joint Area Action Plans for major developments, the preparation of joint evidence base documents on a wide variety of topics, and other planning matters including various transport strategy documents.
- 2.2. The Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) have introduced a requirement for Councils to work together on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries. This requirement is known as the ‘Duty to Cooperate’ and also involves a number of other public bodies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Highways Agency, Environment Agency, English Heritage, Natural England and Primary Care Trusts. The duty requires Councils to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis on ‘strategic matters’ regarding sustainable development or use of land that has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas. The NPPF says that Councils should work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans. It says that Councils should consider producing joint planning policies on strategic matters, but there is no requirement to do so.
- 2.3. The Councils have decided to prepare separate Local Plans for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, but are fully aware of the need to work effectively together and that they will need to demonstrate how they have cooperated effectively, both with each other and other key public bodies including the County Council, on the preparation of their respective new Local Plans. The Councils’ ongoing approach to joint working is therefore now a specific legal requirement and it will be necessary to provide formal evidence of the cooperation as part of the plan making process.
- 2.4. Some respondents to the Issues and Options (Summer 2012) consultations questioned why the Councils were not preparing a single joint strategic plan covering the Cambridge area as a whole and whether anything less than this satisfies the duty to co-operate.

- 2.5. The Councils believe that cooperation while preparing separate plans allows a comprehensive approach to the planning of the wider area to be developed and sound arrangements have been put in place in order to ensure this. Given the close functional relationship between Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, the Councils are working jointly to ensure that cross boundary issues and relevant wider matters are addressed in a consistent and joined up manner. It is not a requirement of the NPPF that a single plan is produced in these circumstances, rather that the Duty to Co-operate is effectively discharged.
- 2.6. Joint working arrangements have already been established. At a member level, previous joint working groups have been replaced by two new member groups: the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Strategic Planning and Transport Member Group which is a County wide group and the Joint Strategic Transport and Spatial Planning Group specifically to address issues affecting Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. Work is ongoing at an officer level, steered by regular meetings of senior officers: Chief Planning Officers group for county-wide issues and officers from the three Councils for more Cambridge-focused issues. The Cambridgeshire Councils have already established and then commissioned the Joint Strategic Planning Unit to prepare a strategic spatial framework for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, which will also help demonstrate the co-ordinated approach to planning for the long term needs of the wider area and the Unit has also assisted with the preparation of the evidence base for this consultation.
- 2.7. The Councils have been working together throughout the preparation of the Issues and Options consultations on the Cambridge Local Plan and the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, and also the parallel consultation on issues for a new Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. The Councils took the same approach to joint issues in the recent Issues and Options consultation. Each of the Issues and Options consultation documents took a common approach to the Green Belt on the edge of Cambridge, the future planning of Cambridge East and Northern Fringe East and sub-regional sporting, cultural and community facilities. Each document also highlighted the corresponding consultation by the other Council.
- 2.8. The Councils have agreed to continue to work jointly as plan preparation progresses. In terms of timetables, the Councils' Local Plan programmes have been very similar, although it did not prove possible to align them completely for the Issues and Options (Summer 2012) consultation. The consultations did however overlap in July 2012.
- 2.9. The Local Plan timetables have recently been reviewed and the aim has been to align the Councils' timetables as far as possible. An updated timetable is shown overleaf:

Key Stages in preparing the new Local Plan	Cambridge	South Cambridgeshire
Issues and Options public consultation	15 June to 27 July 2012	12 July to 28 September 2012
Issues and Options 2 (Current stage) Part 1 : Joint consultation on the site options for the fringe sites including development strategy context Part 2 : For the City Council, site options for the urban area of the City and other matters. For South Cambridgeshire, new issues arising from the 2012 Issues and Options consultation.	7 January to 18 February 2013	7 January to 18 February 2013
Public consultation on Draft Local Plan	Summer 2013	Summer 2013
Submit the Local Plans to the Secretary of State	Winter 2013/2014	Winter 2013/2014

- 2.10. The timetable after Submission of the Local Plans will be largely determined by the Planning Inspectorate and will be affected by availability of inspectors (having regard to the demand from the many authorities currently preparing new plans) and the way the Inspectorate wishes to run the two examinations, given the close functional relationship between Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.

