



Chapter 4

Sustainable Development



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- 4.1. National planning policy sets sustainable development at the heart of the planning system. The 2004 Planning Act and the recently published National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) continue to place the delivery of sustainable development as a key national objective. To address the three strands of sustainability, the NPPF requires the planning system to fulfil jointly and simultaneously:

Three Strands of Sustainability

- An economic role – contributing to building a strong responsive and competitive economy;
- A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations;
- An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, using natural resources prudently, minimising pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

- 4.2. For plan making, Councils are required to positively seek opportunities to meet the objectively assessed development needs of their area in a flexible way, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 4.3. Where Green Belts are defined, they should only be altered in exceptional circumstances when preparing a Local Plan. When reviewing Green Belt boundaries, Councils are required to take account of the need to promote sustainable development and consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas within Green Belts, to villages inset within the Green Belt and to locations beyond the Green Belt.
- 4.4. This sets a considerable challenge for the Cambridge area, in the context of:
- A strong and growing economy;
 - The need for new homes to support the jobs and the aim to provide as many of those new homes as close to the new jobs as possible to minimise commuting and the harmful effects for the environment, climate change and quality of life that it brings; and
 - A tightly drawn Green Belt to protect the special characteristics of historic Cambridge that help make it attractive to business and residents.

Achieving an appropriate balance between these competing arms of sustainable development is a key objective of the development strategy for the new Local Plans. These issues are explored over the following three chapters on development needs, how these affect the development strategy, and findings of a review of the Green Belt, before being drawn together in a chapter on the implications for the development strategy for the period to 2031, and then site options for consultation.