

10 Landscape

Policy Context

International

- 10.1 **European Landscape Convention** (2002): Promotes landscape protection, management and planning. The Convention is aimed at the protection, management and planning of all landscapes and raising awareness of the value of a living landscape.

National

- 10.2 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**²⁷⁸: Planning principles include:

- Recognising the intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside.
- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. Development should be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.
- Conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, The Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

- 10.3 **A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment**²⁷⁹: Sets out goals for improving the environment within the next 25 years. It details how the Government will work with communities and businesses to leave the environment in a better state than it is presently. Identifies six key areas around which action will be focused. Those of relevance to this chapter are: recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes. Actions that will be taken as part of this key area are as follows:

- Working with AONB authorities to deliver environmental enhancements.
- Identifying opportunities for environmental enhancement of all England's Natural Character Areas, and monitoring indicators of landscape character and quality.

Sub-national

- 10.4 **East of England Landscape Typology**²⁸⁰: The East of England Landscape Character Typology draws on a range of data, including Landscape Character

²⁷⁸ Department for Communities and Local Government (2019) National Planning Policy Framework [online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779764/NPPF_Feb_2019_web.pdf

²⁷⁹ HM Government (2018) A Green Future: Our 23 Year Plan to Improve the Environment [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673203/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

²⁸⁰ <http://www.landscape-east.org.uk/>

Assessment, Historic Landscape Characterisation, biodiversity and rural settlement data sets, as well as data generated through consultation. It provides a finer grain of detail on landscape character than the national-level Character Areas.

- 10.5 **Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (2003)**²⁸¹: Carried out to create a 'baseline' statement of qualities and character in the city in order to ensure the character of the city is maintained. It sought to indicate areas or features which are important to the setting of Cambridge and should remain undeveloped, and to describe the essential character of the townscape and its rural hinterland, to guide judgements on new development.
- 10.6 **Ouse Washes Landscape Character Assessment (2013)**²⁸²: Commissioned by Cambridgeshire ACRE as part of a Landscape Partnership Lottery Fund bid as a standalone report describing the distinctive character of this part of the Fen Basin, to help to support building a 'sense of place'. The area covered by the study area overlaps with South Cambridgeshire District in the north.
- 10.7 **Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)**²⁸³: The Strategy was designed to assist in shaping and co-ordinating the delivery of Green Infrastructure across the county of Cambridgeshire, in order to provide the social, environmental and economic benefits associated with GI. It covers the period up to 2031. The Project Group consisted of the County Council, the individual District Councils, as well as a number of external bodies including Natural England and the local Wildlife Trust. The Strategy notes that enhancing landscape is one of the key functions of Green Infrastructure and the diversity of the landscape, giving an overview of the existing range of landscapes and habitats, including prominent ones such as the Ouse and Nene Washes.
- 10.8 **South Cambridgeshire Landscape in New Developments SPD (2007)**²⁸⁴: expands on district-wide policies to provide additional guidance for planning applicants on how landscape should be integrated into new developments.

Current Baseline

- 10.9 Cambridgeshire as a whole is largely rural and is predominantly a farmed landscape, with three-quarters of the county devoted to the production of food, fuel

²⁸¹ Cambridge City Council (2003) Landscape Character Assessment [Online] Available at: <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/5751/cambridge-landscape-character-assessment-2003.pdf>

²⁸² Cambridgeshire ACRE (2013) Ouse Washes: Landscape Character Assessment [Online] Available at: http://ousewashes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Landscape_Character_Assessment-low-res.pdf

²⁸³ Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and other neighbouring authorities (2011) Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy [Online] Available at: <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/2557/green-infrastructure-strategy.pdf>

²⁸⁴ South Cambridgeshire District Council (2010) Landscape in New Developments SPD [Online] Available at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/planning/local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/landscape-in-new-developments-spd/>

and fibre.²⁸⁵ The landscape is characterised by smooth, rolling chalkland hills and is predominantly open, allowing for long views.

10.10 Greater Cambridge is generally relatively sparsely populated, with settlements generally located along river valleys and more recently along road and rail corridors. However, the city of Cambridge is an historic, urban hub within the wider landscape. Major transport corridors (notably the M11, A14 and rail corridors) run through the plan area. Along with historical and ongoing pressure for development, landscape assessments highlight that this is likely to further reduce the tranquillity of the area as a whole.²⁸⁶

10.11 There are no designated landscape areas (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) within or immediately adjacent to the plan area. The Chilterns AONB lies around 15 km from the area's westernmost point, and as such it is unlikely that development in this area will have an effect on the landscape of the AONB. The 2011 Green Infrastructure Strategy noted that key challenges for the county include the need for long-term investment and the erosion of landscape quality from changing land use and development.

10.12 No dedicated landscape character assessment has been carried out for South Cambridgeshire, nor at the county level, however the Councils plan to commission a Green Belt and Landscape Character Assessment as part of an updated evidence base. Nevertheless, parts of five different National Character Areas (NCAs) lie within the plan area, as illustrated in **Figure 10.1**:

- The majority of the western half (washing over the city of Cambridge) is characterised by NCA 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, a broad and gently undulating landscape dominated by large-scale arable farmland and rich in historical features. It is dissected by shallow river valleys, including the Great Ouse on the northern boundary of Greater Cambridge, which gradually widen as they approach the Fens NCA in the east.²⁸⁷
- Most of the eastern and southern parts of the area are identified as NCA 87 East Anglian Chalk. While historically this area was grazed by sheep, today large-scale cereal production (mainly wheat) now dominates the agricultural landscape. The porous chalk that underlies the landscape results in limited surface water.
- Three further NCAs cover smaller areas of the plan area. These include NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands in the far east of the area (an

²⁸⁵ Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and other neighbouring authorities (2011) Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy [Online] Available at:

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/2557/green-infrastructure-strategy.pdf>

²⁸⁶ Natural England (2014) National Character Area Profile: 87 East Anglian Chalk [Online]. Available at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6417815967891456?category=587130>

²⁸⁷ Natural England (2014) National Character Area Profile: 88 Bedfordshire Claylands [Online]. Available at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5091147672190976?category=587130>

undulating ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with numerous river valleys);²⁸⁸ NCA 46 The Fens on the north eastern border (a distinctive wetland with a large, flat and open landscape, resulting in a strong sense of place, tranquillity and inspiration);²⁸⁹ and NCA 90 Bedfordshire and Greensand Ridge on the western boundary around Gamlingay (a narrow ridge surrounded by NCA 88, characterised by historic landscapes and a patchwork of semi-natural habitats).²⁹⁰

- 10.13 The East of England Landscape Typology provides further, more granular assessment of the landscape types in the region, both urban and rural.²⁹¹
- 10.14 In the south of Greater Cambridge, near the border with Uttlesford, the major prehistoric routeway of the Icknield Way (which is now a long-distance footpath) traverses the south west corner of South Cambridgeshire and is a distinctive landscape feature as well as having value for the historic environment.
- 10.15 Skylines of cities evolve and change over time in response to increasing urban expansion and renewal. The Cambridge skyline has also undergone this process incrementally. Within the historic core, there is a great variety of rooflines, articulated by spires, cupolas, chimneys and towers.²⁹² Trees also form an important element in the modern Cambridge skyline, within both the historic core and the suburbs. Many of the elevated views of the city from the rural hinterland and from Castle Mound show a city of trees with scattered spires and towers emerging above an established tree line. The character of the more urbanised environment within Cambridge City is described in the 2003 Cambridge Landscape Assessment, which identifies 7 landscape character types within the city.²⁹³ It describes the uniqueness of the city landscape, as a mosaic of built areas interspersed with a network of open spaces. It is a compact city with a strong sense of identity, while the setting is largely 'unexceptional arable lowland' but with some attractive aspects. 'Green fingers' such as The Backs are identified as an important feature, linking the hinterland with the historic core. Water is also identified as a key landscape feature in the city. In general the character areas describe a historic city centre and 'borrowed landscapes' of college gardens and cemeteries, surrounded by a mixed residential landscape and some ancient villages, followed by a 'rural lowland mosaic', all dissected by the corridor of the River Cam and rail and road corridors.

²⁸⁸ Natural England (2014) National Character Area Profile: 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland [Online]. Available at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5095677797335040?category=587130>

²⁸⁹ Natural England (2014) National Character Area Profile: 46 The Fens [Online]. Available at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6229624?category=587130>

²⁹⁰ Natural England (2014) National Character Area Profile: 90 Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge [Online]. Available at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6667269664931840?category=587130>

²⁹¹ <http://www.landscape-east.org.uk/east-england-landscape-typology>

²⁹² Cambridge City Council (2018) Cambridge Local Plan [online] Available at: <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/6890/local-plan-2018.pdf>

²⁹³ River Corridor; Green Corridor; Rural Lowland Mosaic; City Centre; Residential Areas; Industrial and Commercial Areas; and Borrowed Landscapes.

Some of the outer parts of the city are characterised by poorer quality suburban housing developments, and former industrial and utilities land²⁹⁴

- 10.16 The Ouse Washes Landscape Character Assessment helps to describe in more detail the character of the distinctive landscape on the northern boundary of South Cambridgeshire. The area overlapping with Greater Cambridge is identified as the 'Ouse Valley Wetlands' – a broad flat floodplain of the River Great Ouse and its surrounding clay margins. The Great Ouse is now channelled between embankments and gravel extraction on its floodplain has transformed the former waterlogged fen into a cluster of lakes. Higher land on the margins of the fen hosts a string of villages with a hinterland of paddocks, orchards and farmsteads. The study finds that this part of the Ouse Washes landscape can accommodate change provided new development is not extensive and that protects sensitive features including historic tracks, other historic features, and land uses on the fringe of villages
- 10.17 Cambridge city is surrounded by Green Belt, most of which lies within South Cambridgeshire district. Green Belt is a policy designation, rather than a sustainability designation, which has its own defined purposes and is considered separately to the SA.

Table 10.1: Key sustainability issues for Greater Cambridge and likely evolution without the Local Plan

Key sustainability issues for Greater Cambridge	Likely evolution without the new Local Plan	Relevant SA objective
While the plan area is not in close proximity to nationally designated or highly sensitive landscape areas, it contains a diverse range of nationally recognised landscape character areas that could be harmed by inappropriate development. For example, the fenlands on the northern boundary of Greater Cambridge are particularly sensitive to development. If development was to be allocated there it could threaten losses to a distinctive wetland landscape.	Policy NH/2 of the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) requires developers to enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and NCA where it is located. Similarly, Policy 55 of the Cambridge Local Plan requires development to respond to the natural context. While both documents are relatively recent, the new Local Plan offers the opportunity to update the current policy position in response to the ongoing evolution of development pressures and their impact on the landscape in Greater Cambridge as a whole.	SA objective 6

²⁹⁴ Cambridge City Council (2003) Landscape Character Assessment [Online] Available at: <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/5751/cambridge-landscape-character-assessment-2003.pdf>

Key sustainability issues for Greater Cambridge	Likely evolution without the new Local Plan	Relevant SA objective
<p>The distinct historic character of the South Cambridgeshire villages, and in particular the sensitive historic landscape setting of Cambridge requires protection as development comes forward, particularly in maintaining key views into Cambridge.</p>	<p>Policy NH/13 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan requires definition along important countryside frontages where land has a strong landscape character, while Policy 59 of the Cambridge City Plan requires that landscape and boundary treatment are designed as an integral part of new development proposals. Further, Policy 60 sets out criteria for assessing buildings breaking with the existing skyline, which should fit within the existing landscape and townscape. The new Local Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that, in the context of ongoing development pressures, development coming forward does not adversely affect the setting of sensitive heritage assets and lies sympathetically within the existing landscape and townscape.</p>	<p>SA objective 6</p>

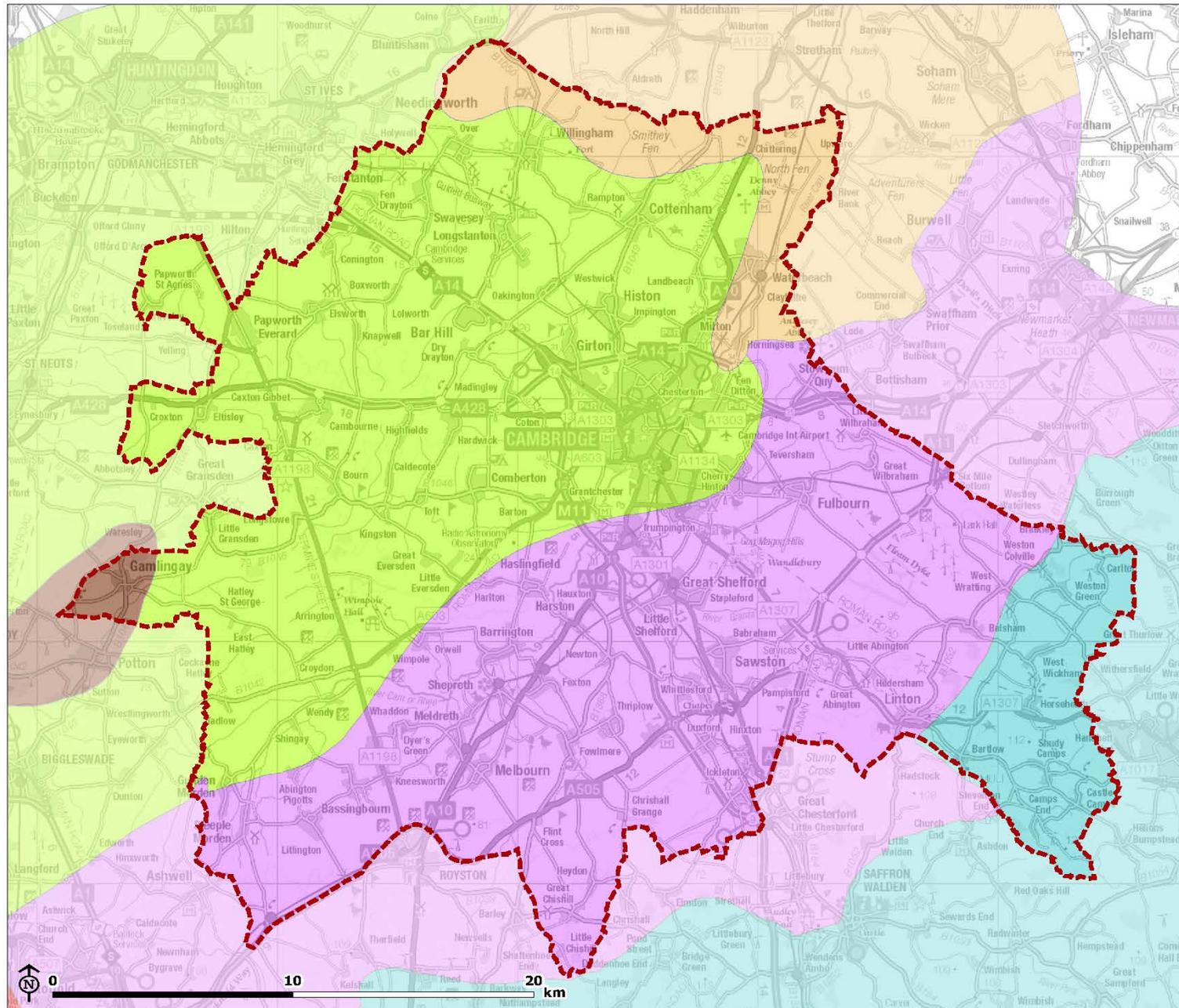
Greater Cambridge SA

Figure 10.1: National Character Areas in Greater Cambridge

-  Greater Cambridge
- National Character Area**
-  Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge
-  Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
-  East Anglian Chalk
-  South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland
-  The Fens
-  Chilterns

Source: NE

Map Scale @ A4: 1:225,000



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