

## **Cambridgeshire Horizons Joint Strategic Growth Implementation Committee Meeting**

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### **The Environment Agency's Position**

The Environment Agency influences legislation, policy and development 'on the ground' in order to achieve Sustainable Development - that delivers economic and social benefits *as well as* meeting environmental goals – 'triple-win' solutions. In particular, the protection *and enhancement* of the environment and the prudent use of natural resources

The Environment Agency's Sustainable Development Delivery Team (SDDT) was established to provide effective and consistent advocacy for sustainable development in the MKSM and LSCP Growth Areas. With regard to the Cambridge Growth Area, the SDD Team provides:

- The main point of contact with Cambridgeshire Horizons and to enable early and consistent input of the Environment Agency's position on all its concerns. This includes promoting sustainability practices and timely environmental infrastructure proposals (early identification of solutions);
- Input to and help steer (co-ordinate local knowledge) major infrastructure related projects/strategies e.g. Water Cycle Strategies (WCS).

By working closely with Cambridgeshire Horizons and other key organisations, the SDD Team aims to promote sustainable development by encouraging and supporting all those engaged in the planning process to:

- Promote climate change mitigation and adaptation measures;
- Increase the resource efficiency of development which will maximise the use of existing resources;
- Avoid inappropriate development in flood risk areas, promote the re-establishment of natural floodplains and river processes and managed realignment of coastal defences;
- Protect and improve water quality including aquifers, rivers, streams, lakes and seawater, to help implement the Water Framework Directive;
- Recognise that the availability of water resources should influence the location, quantity and phasing of development. Encourage (and, when it is regionally or locally justified, require) new developments to incorporate water-efficient fittings and appliances as standard and fund the 'retro-fitting' of existing development to make the most of existing infrastructure;
- Encourage the efficient use of building materials, waste minimisation, careful location of waste treatment facilities and provision of space for separated waste in new developments;
- Protect important habitats and conserve and enhance biodiversity by ensuring no significant harm is caused to conservation sites, protecting biological networks, including targets for priority habitats and species and contributing to Biodiversity Action Plans.

The SDD Team is seeking to ensure these outcomes are best achieved by:

- Using scientific knowledge, up-to-date information and a sound evidence-based approach to help decision-making. Where there is good reason to believe that harmful environmental effects may occur but there is scientific uncertainty about the effects, then cost-effective action to prevent environmental degradation should be taken;
- Seeking to maximise the positive and minimise the negative environmental impacts of development - including cumulative impacts - and recognising the limits of the environment to accept further development without irreversible damage;
- Reducing environmental risks through location and design;
- Using the highest practical environmental standards;
- Ensuring that adequate water services and green infrastructure is funded and in place before or at the same time as development occurs, and;
- Setting and monitoring environmental targets.

### **The Cambridge Growth Area**

Policy WAT2 in the Proposed Changes to the Draft East of England Plan states:

*“The Environment Agency and water companies should work with ... local authorities and delivery agencies to identify the appropriate additional infrastructure for both water supply and wastewater treatment to cater for levels of development provided through this plan [East of England Plan]...A co-ordinated approach to plan making should be developed through a programme of water cycle and river cycle studies to address water supply and wastewater treatment issues relating to development in this plan.”*

In accordance with this policy, in early 2007, the SDD Team commissioned an initial scoping report to facilitate the undertaking of a WCS to investigate further any potential issues relating to development within the Cambridge Growth Area. The report's preliminary findings were:

#### *Water Resources and Water Supply*

The existing water supply in the Cambridgeshire growth location does not have any current capacity/supply issues. However, there are potential supply issues should growth continue past the projected figures. A 'twin-track' approach is therefore required in order to achieve sustainable water management.

#### *Water Quality*

A relocation of the existing sewage treatment works at Cambridge is being considered. This relocation and any identified network improvements should enable utilities to meet the needs of the planned population increase. However, the anticipated WCS will need to determine whether there are absolute environmental constraints to growth. The study indicated there is likely to be a significant lead in time for delivery of infrastructure most particularly for the Southern Fringe where there has been a recent change of approach. The current proposal is not to take the sewerage round the city but to go west towards Haslingfield STW and South to Sawston STW. There is also a potential constraint regarding the capacity of the receiving watercourse for Uttons Drove STW which is currently being investigated by WSP on behalf of Cambridgeshire Horizons. The Environment Agency is involved in discussions concerning both proposals, however, it will need to review any final details and recommendations prior to providing a formal response.

### *Flood Risk Management*

Cambridge lies within the Great Ouse catchment. As part of their LDF, SCDC have conducted a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. A Catchment Flood Management Plan for the Great Ouse is currently in production. Site-specific flood risk mitigation measures are anticipated, however, there is a risk such measures could exacerbate flood risk in other parts of the catchment, even if accepted guidance for individual sites is followed. These will need to be addressed as part of the detailed WCS.

Having assumed formal ownership of the initial scoping report, Cambridgeshire Horizons has agreed to lead the WCS in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, SCDC, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water Services, Cambridge Water, the Swavesey Internal Drainage Board and EEDA. The Environment Agency welcomes the study's inclusion of:

1. Integrated Urban Drainage, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and emerging policy such as climate change and the Water Framework Directive;
2. Measures to inform developers of the work on the WCS and engage developers in the strategy development.

The Environment Agency supports Cambridgeshire Horizon's GAFIII bid to secure funding for phase 2 of the WCS study and its request for funding support from developers regarding site-specific work.

### *SUDS*

The Environment Agency's Water Quality Team has raised concerns regarding the developer proposals to apply for an extended consent for the existing MoD works at Northstowe and discharge treated effluent into a large balancing pond on-site which will also receive surface water run-off. The team considers such proposals do not provide a long-term sustainable solution. Furthermore, the treated effluent is likely to contain pathogen bacteria and result in a build of nutrients both of which may pose a risk in terms of public health and safety. It is understood the proposals are being subject to more detailed modelling and the Environment Agency will need to be kept closely advised.

The Environment Agency are helping to fund the Lambs Drove SUDS Monitoring Project at Cambourne. The project, which is being led by Cambridgeshire County Council, will be assessing ongoing maintenance, performance, adoption and liability issues. This information will be used to identify best practice principles and propose solutions for ensuring SUDS are introduced into other new developments in the Cambridge Growth Area.

### *Ecological Constraints & Opportunities*

The SDD Team has a place on the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure (GI) Forum, which launched its Strategic GI Plan Jun 07. The Plan takes account of proposed growth and is well into the implementation stage of the plan. The Forum is developing a communication plan to promote and advertise the GI principles embedded in the Strategy to not only Local Authorities but also Developers. Cambridge City Council, SCDC and Huntingdonshire District Council have all accepted the Strategy as a technical document in support of plans.

As part of the communication plan for the Strategic GI Plan developed by the Cambridgeshire GI Forum, a "Growth and Green Infrastructure" event is taking place in Cambridge on 12 December 2007. The event is a half-day seminar aimed specifically at developers in the Cambridge Growth Area. Cambridgeshire Horizons, Natural England and the EA will jointly host the event. The SDD Team is offering financial support and Anglian Central's Account Manager is giving a presentation to rollout the Environment Agency's 'The Guide for Developers'. The event aims to:

- Raise awareness of the strategic context of GI in the Cambridge Growth Area
- Provide information on what the Eco Homes policy and the Code for Sustainable Homes means for developers
- Share current knowledge, experience and practical steps to achieving GI

Other organisations presenting at the event are Natural England, CLG, Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and the developers Countryside Properties.

The SDD Team has also been involved with successfully influencing the GI bids that will be submitted as part of the Growth Area Fund 3 process.