

## STATEMENT by JOHN PRESTON MA(Cantab) DipTP IHBC

### Matter 2: overall spatial vision and general issues

#### (representation 27303)

#### Introduction

I have been a Cambridge resident for 33 years, having previously spent 3 years here as a student. I am a freelance artist, historic environment consultant and lecturer. I worked for the City Council for 23 years, from 1989 as a conservation officer, and then as Historic Environment Manager from 1994 until retirement in 2012. From 1981 to 1989 I was a conservation officer first with South Cambs District Council, and then for the County Council advising South Cambs.

My representation 27303 quoted extracts from ODPM's "State of the English Cities" Report vol 1 (2006).<sup>i</sup> This statement provides supporting references from the Cambridge case study (Section 4.3) in "State of the English Cities: The Competitive Economic Performance of English Cities" (DCLG 2006)<sup>ii</sup>. It also draws on my paper "Historic Cambridge – managing change in a historic city", originally given in 2009 and published by ICOMOS Australia in *Historic Environment*, vol 23 no1, 2011.<sup>iii</sup> This paper forms the Appendix.

#### **a) Is the overarching development strategy, expressed as the preferred sequential approach for new development, soundly based and will it deliver sustainable development in accordance with the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework?**

a.1 Before the 2006 Cambridge Local Plan, planning policies (in force since Holford's 1948 report) sought to protect the special character of the historic university city by containing its expansion and promoting new development in settlements outside the Green Belt which had been specifically set up to protect that historic character. The 2006 Plan reversed this policy, allowing major new growth areas on the edge of the city and at CB1.

a.2 Also in 2006, "State of the Cities: The Competitive Economic Performance of English Cities"<sup>ii</sup> identified "**the key challenge**" (my emphasis) "facing the city, its business community, its strategic planning bodies, and its population." as "Managing and maintaining Cambridge's future high-tech, knowledge based growth, whilst protecting its historic character – a major attraction to 4 million tourist visitors each year" (para 4.3.3)

a.3 Major issues of environmental capacity (in terms of built form and the physical capacity of streets laid out for a market town not a city) in the historic core pre-date the 2006 Plan. However in providing for major new development areas on the edge of Cambridge and in the station area (CB1), the 2006 Plan did not consider the potential impacts of this growth on the City's historic environment, particularly the historic core.

a.4 There has been no strategic review of the success or failure of the 2006 Plan in achieving its objectives in relation to the historic environment. While the Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal (2006) introduced an award-winning conservation area management approach, this has not been delivered in practice, and the current review of this Appraisal is not due for publication until 2015.

a.6 This lack of strategic review is compounded by the new Local Plan (and the development strategy)'s underestimation and undervaluing of the quality, extent and contribution of the historic environment in and to Cambridge as a whole. Although para 1.2. of the Plan notes that Cambridge has a “world class reputation for ..its historic environment”; and its outstanding historic environment is noted as a “key constraint” in para 2.19, thereafter this world significance is barely noted, although sometimes acknowledged in passing, e.g. in para 2.68.

a.7 There is little mention of the role of the historic environment in making Cambridge an attractive place in which to live and work. This contrasts with the 2006 State of the Cities report which noted Cambridge as the most “attractive city in which to work and live” (4.3.50): “this attractiveness derives unquestionably from the city’s historic character, as found in the University buildings and Colleges, and its narrow historic streets, a legacy of its market town role and the lack of any extensive urban redevelopment” (4.3.51). The Historic Environment of the new Plan chapter notes only (para 7.20) that the “historic environment.. contributes significantly to Cambridge residents’ quality of life.”

a.8 There is no mention whatsoever of the contributions Cambridge’s historic environment makes, nationally and internationally, in framing perceptions of the city and the UK for students and visitors.<sup>iv</sup> This omission contrasts sharply with visitcambridge’s “*Cambridge is the country’s most beautiful historic city.....Cambridge lives and breathes its past in its present; wander through the winding streets and follow in the steps of the city’s luminaries including Charles Darwin, Alfred Tennyson and Sylvia Plath to name but a few. Poets, philosophers, scientists, medics, engineers, prime ministers and Nobel Peace Prize winners have all left their mark here.*

*Follow the River Cam upstream as it meanders through grassy fields to the Orchard Tea Gardens at Grantchester, the picture-perfect English village which poet Rupert Brooke famously celebrated in his 1912 poem The Old Vicarage, Grantchester. Relax in a chair under the canopy of blossoming fruit trees where Wittgenstein, Forster and Woolf have all taken tea.”*

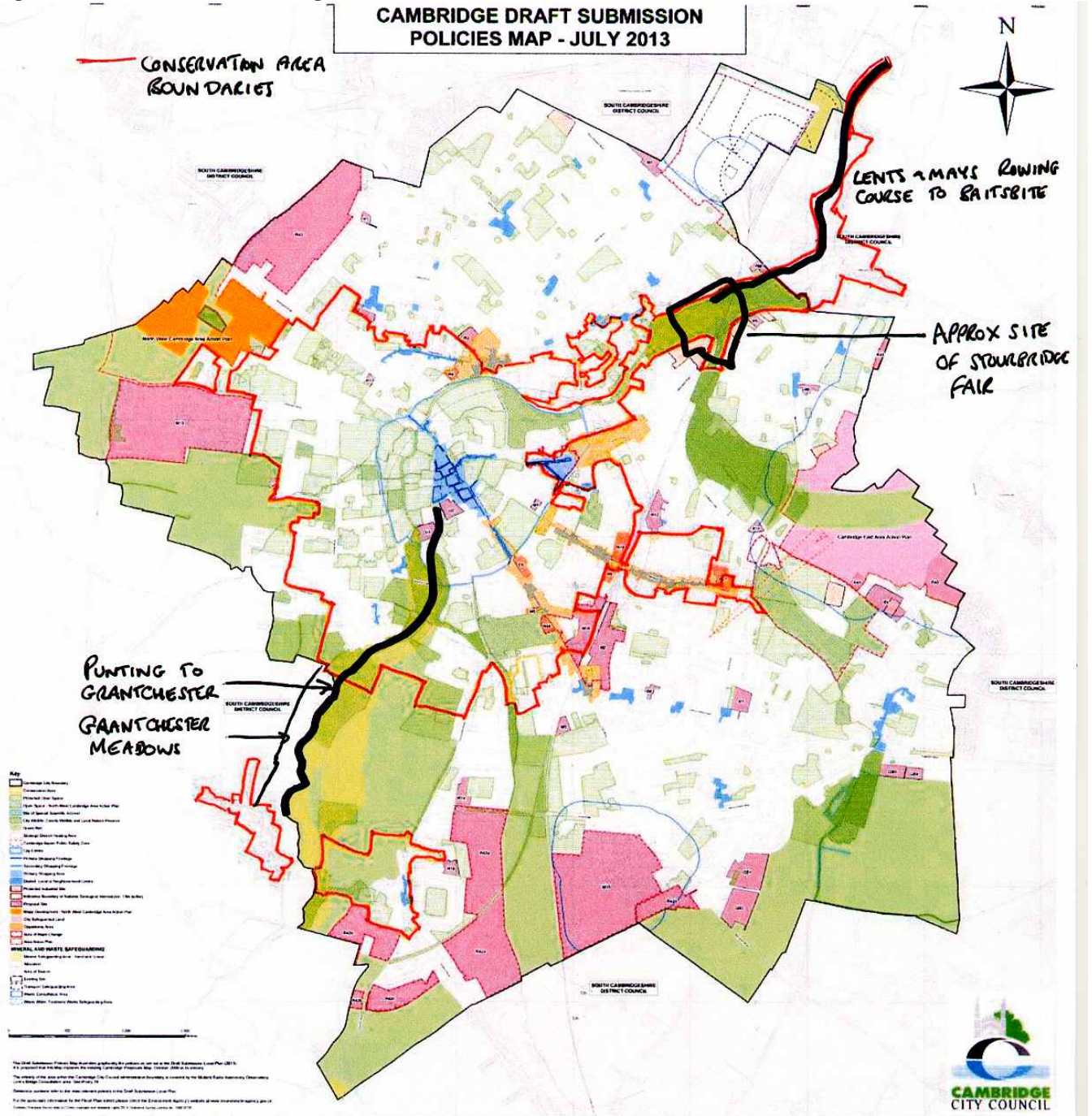
( <http://www.visitcambridge.org/things-to-do/architecture-and-heritage>)

a.9 Cambridge meets UNESCO’s criteria for World Heritage status, as noted by Dennis Rodwell in “Conservation and Sustainability of Historic Cities” (2007)<sup>v</sup> ; it arguably meets all of UNESCO’s criteria (i) to (vi) of Outstanding Universal Value. Such significance warrants extra-special care whether or not World Heritage status is sought or granted.

a.10 Para 2.3 notes “the high quality landscape setting of the Cambridge Green Belt” and the city’s “iconic historic core” without recognising that large parts of the city including the river corridor are of special architectural or historic interest. This is immediately evident when conservation area boundaries (barely visible on the proposals map) are highlighted as in fig.1.

a.11 Fig 1 also shows adjacent South Cambs conservation areas (Grantchester to the south-west, Fen Ditton and Baits Bite to the north-east). The east side of the downstream river corridor has conservation area status for the whole length of the historic University rowing race course, and also includes the location of Stourbridge fair, once the greatest medieval fair in Europe and the origin of “Vanity Fair”. While there is no statutory protection for the arguably even more historic and iconic Grantchester Meadows (the Grantchester conservation area boundary is tightly drawn), the meadows are protected from development by longstanding covenants.

Fig 1: the extent of Cambridge's historic environment



a.12 The Plan should include a positive strategy for the historic environment of Cambridge, as required by NPPF para 126. It does not meet this requirement:

- Strategic objectives 4, 5, and 6 are statements of general good intent, but they are neither a historic environment strategy nor targeted to the specific needs of Cambridge. These objectives do not meet the requirements of NPPF para 156.
- Objective 6 overlooks the historic environment aspects of Cambridge's setting.
- While para 2.5 offers "continued protection to the setting of the historic city", it is not specific.
- Para 2.13 "provides for the need to maintain important characteristics of the city,

- including...the setting of the city” but without mentioning its historic environment.
- It is only in para 2.19, Cambridge’s constraints, that “Cambridge’s outstanding historic environment, which is of international, national and local significance” is noted as a key constraint within the NPPF.

a.13 This failure to provide a historic environment strategy is symptomatic of the undervaluing of Cambridge’s historic environment. For a historic city of such national and international importance, under such great pressures, the lack of a historic environment strategy, and of the strategic overview and review entailed in its preparation, render the Plan in its present form unsound. It is notable that the Council’s Local Development Scheme does not propose, let alone prioritise, the preparation of a historic environment strategy.

a.14 The urgent practical need for a historic environment strategy (and why the Plan in its present form does not meet the requirements of NPPF paras 14 and 152) is vividly shown by the current uncoordinated strategic growth-related transport proposals affecting conservation areas within the City and South Cambs, Stourbridge Common, Ditton Meadows, and the setting of the Grade I listed Leper Chapel. New transport routes (the Guided Bus from Chesterton station to Newmarket Rd, and the Chisholm cycle trail river) will both involve bridges to the east of the railway bridge. Also, the guided bus route (as first shown in the 2006 Transport strategy) was proposed and approved on an alignment crossing Newmarket Road in the exact location of the Grade I listed building, without any consideration of the implications. The Chisholm trail (see my representation 28054 to Policy 80) involves 2 possible new bridge locations to the east of the railway bridge, in the same area as the guided bus crossing and uncoordinated with it. The recent consultation on options for the Chisholm trail bridge did not even mention the historic environment or possible issues. The major historic environment impacts of such proposals can only be assessed and mitigated within the context of a strategic approach to the historic environment.

The site of the 2006 Transport strategy guided bus route, and the Leper Chapel (Grade I)



### c) Are the Plans founded on a robust and credible evidence base?

c.1 Not in relation to the historic environment. The Plan does not reference the Council’s Conservation Area Appraisals and evidence therein. This oversight is particularly regrettable given that all of the Council’s Conservation Areas are now covered by Appraisals: Historic Core (2006); Storeys Way (2007); De Freville Avenue (2009); Chesterton and Ferry Lane (2009); Conduit Head Road (2009); Trumpington (2010); Mill

Road (2011); West Cambridge (2011); Castle and Victoria (2012); Riverside and Stourbridge (2012); New Town and Glisson Road (2012); Brooklands Avenue (2013); Newnham Croft (2013); Southacre (2013); The Kite (2014). These Appraisals provide a ready-made evidence base for identifying strategic historic environment issues and developing a historic environment strategy.

## **Conclusions**

The development strategy is not soundly based, and will not deliver sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF, because

- 1) The Plan's Vision for Cambridge grossly underestimates and undervalues the quality, extent and contribution of the historic environment to Cambridge.
- 2) The strategy gives insufficient recognition to the special quality and international significance of Cambridge's historic environment (NPPF paras 7 and 9)
- 3) The strategy does not consider or mitigate adverse impacts on the historic environment of strategic challenges or proposals, both within the proposed strategy and arising from the 2006 Local Plan. (NPPF paras 14 and 152).
- 4) The Plan does not include a positive strategy for the conservation of the historic environment as required by NPPF para 126.
- 5) The Plan sets no strategic priorities for the conservation of the historic environment as required by NPPF para 156.

Given this fundamental lack of soundness, it would not be appropriate nor have I been able to suggest individual changes to the text.

APPENDIX 2 “Historic Cambridge – managing change in a historic city”

# Historic Cambridge: Managing change in a Historic City

*John Preston*

## Abstract

Cambridge is a complex mixture of world famous historic university, centre for 21st century growth and high technology, multicultural city, market town and international tourist attraction. This complex character has been formed by change, both dramatic and incremental, and by association. Cambridge's historic environment is the built and natural product of that history. The city's built character owes much to complex juxtapositions of the grand and the vernacular, the formal and the informal, the new and the old; these juxtapositions themselves often derive from grand ideas never fully carried through.

One constant challenge is how to maintain the legacy from the past, in use, serving the present and the future. This historic fabric is under great pressure from within and without, with changes in regulations and user requirements, and the ever-increasing demands of growth. The city centre is already "bursting at the seams", and its traffic problems are themselves historic. This in turn depends on both formal designation ("public value"), and understanding and stewardship on the part of owners and users. This paper considers these pressures, and values, designations, and potential strategies in and for managing them.

## Introduction

Cambridge, UK, is a city of multiple identities and significances, under tremendous pressure for change. It is a city of contrasts, with historic buildings and spaces of outstanding international importance, juxtaposed with the built form and street scale of a market town. That "market town" historic core has to cope with a year-round influx of visitors, and the ever-increasing pressures of growth in a city now forecast to grow up to 40 per cent by 2021. The dynamism of ideas and change is a key part of the city's character.

This paper considers current challenges and approaches to managing historic cities in the context of evolving national and local policies. A key part of this consideration relates to how the special character of Cambridge is (or is not) valued and designated. The draft of a key Government policy document (Planning Policy Statement 15) was published for consultation, and this paper notes some of its implications. The paper is a personal view. It draws on the author's professional involvement as Historic Environment Manager for Cambridge, including work in progress for Cambridge City Council, but should not be taken as representing the views of the Council.

## Overview of Cambridge

According to The Cambridgeshire Development Study:

Cambridge is an internationally renowned historic university city, acknowledged internationally as a leader and centre of higher education, research, high technology industry, science clusters and related service sector industries. It attracts over 4.1 million visitors a year. The city has a strong and dynamic economy; it is recognised as a key economic driver in the East of England with the largest retail and service sector in the sub-region, and, in 2006, was rated the ninth most prosperous city in the UK. 114,000 jobs are based within the City boundary and only 45% are taken up by its residents. (The Cambridgeshire Development Study, 2009, para 2.1.12)

This incredibly dynamic activity is concentrated in a small city, whose growth was, tightly constrained by restrictive planning policies until very recently (the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 2003). The 1948 Holford report had restricted the growth of Cambridge in order to keep its historic character. The issues, opportunities and challenges were highlighted in the case study "Cambridge; continuity change and threats" (State of the English Cities report 2006 for the Department for Communities and Local Government). This study, although focused on economic activity, provides an excellent summary of the issues and players; it also highlighted the contribution of Cambridge's special character to the quality of life:

This attractiveness derives unquestionably from the city's historic character, as found in the University buildings and Colleges, and its narrow historic streets, a legacy of its market town role and the lack of any extensive urban redevelopment. The city also enjoys numerous green spaces, its so-called Pieces, Greens and Commons, that give it a very leafy, semi-rural atmosphere. All this makes for an environment that is attractive to students, workers and businesses alike. The city also receives some 4 million tourist visitors each year. (The Cambridgeshire Development Study, 2009, para 4.3.51)

Cambridge is now responding to both Government targets for growth and its own needs, notably for more affordable housing. The East of England Plan proposed 19,000 new homes in Cambridge by 2021, of which around 3,500 had been built between 2001 and April 2008. The Council's 2008 Annual Monitoring Report mentioned a target of 24,500 new homes by 2026. Public views have been sought on 4 new options for development, ranging from 13,000 to 26,000 new homes to be built in Cambridge from 2011-2031. The major housing growth proposals are focused on 5 main areas, shown on Figure 1: the

Southern Fringe, North-West Cambridge, and Cambridge East on the edge of the city, the new town of Northstowe some miles to the north-west, and within the city, the CB1 Station area redevelopment.

The existing and proposed growth proposals will exacerbate pressures on the environmental capacity of the city (The Cambridgeshire Development Study, 9.2.2 and 9.2.3). Its traffic problems are already historic. Coping with the additional traffic generated by growth will be a very severe challenge (ibid, 5.2.9). The City Council's Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal seeks to engage key stakeholders (including the County Council, the University, and the Colleges) in managing challenges affecting the historic core of the city. However there are two major difficulties: firstly, responsibility for transport and streets lies with the County Council, not the City, and secondly, resources directed to managing growth have been focused on the new growth areas, not on managing the impacts of growth on the historic centre.

### A City of Contrasts

Cambridge has magnificent university and college buildings; the 'Backs' have the grandeur and space of major country house parks. However, the town buildings and streets are on a much smaller scale – that of a market town. This is one of many contrasts, between: "Town" and "Gown"; history and change; the solidity of buildings and the fluidity of a knowledge-based economy; wealth and deprivation; local people and students; residents and short-term visitors; and the very different perspectives of a market town, an internationally-renowned university, and a multicultural city.

Sometimes the contrasts are between perceptions and realities. The City Council's view of Cambridge is of a "compact historic city... surrounded by attractive green spaces...." (Cambridge Local Plan 2006, para 2.1). This view of the historic city as "compact" overlooks the historic significance of the whole river corridor running right through the city and its landscape setting, from Grantchester in the south (associations with punting, Byron, and Rupert Brooke among many) through Stourbridge Common (site of Stourbridge Fair, at its peak the largest fair in Europe) and north east (along the course of the University and Town rowing races) to Baits Bite Lock well beyond the city boundary. This landscape setting is a vital part of Cambridge's character. The seeming lack of consideration by the Council for the river landscape, so significant for students and visitors, is a vivid illustration of how different



**Figure 1** King's College Chapel and the Gibbs Building, with temporary crane beyond

perceptions of Cambridge can be. However the matter is not as clear-cut as it may appear: the river landscape is highly valued in official policies and documents as green infrastructure and for its biodiversity. The issue is that these are not coupled with recognition of its historic and cultural significance.

### The Character of Cambridge

Cambridge's character is both historic and dynamic. Its historic character is itself a complex blend of dramatic change and evolution. When it was built, King's College Chapel was almost a medieval parallel to London's Canary Wharf in terms of dramatic docklands redevelopment: it towered over the town, and cut right across the former Milne Street (whose line survives to the north and south in King's Lane and Trinity Lane respectively). This street used to link the riverside hythes and wharves, through which much of the medieval town's trade passed. The river's trading character now survives only in 2 places: at Quayside by Magdalene Bridge, and at Mill Lane, which used to link the hythes and wharves of the town, much of whose trade had focused on the river.



**Figure 2** Extract from Hamond's 1592 plan

King's College Chapel was also, like many of Cambridge's College and University buildings, part of a grand but uncompleted vision. For centuries the Chapel stood with relatively modest College buildings to the north. When it became possible to build again on a large scale, the Palladian Gibbs Building to the south provided a dramatic contrast; this building was to have been one of three matching buildings forming an enclosed court. Again, the vision was uncompleted. When the College, like others in Cambridge, expanded in the early 19th century, Wilkins built the Screen and Hall range in a Gothic style to harmonise with the Chapel. A subsequent proposal to Gothicise the Gibbs building was not carried out.

What we see today, both at King's and elsewhere in Cambridge, is a complex mixture of the grand and small, the visionary and accidents of history. These complex juxtapositions give the city its richness and complexity of character; particularly well analysed by Thomas Sharp in "Dreaming Spires and Teeming Towers. The Character of Cambridge" (1963). The relationship between the Gibbs Building and King's College Chapel is frequently cited as a precedent for proposed juxtapositions of new and old, but rarely with understanding of how and why their particular juxtaposition is successful.



## Protected heritage

Cambridge is one of the most outstanding historic cities in the UK, but cities as a whole have no formal heritage status or protection. The UK legislation protects buildings (listed buildings), areas (Conservation Areas), ancient monuments, and historic parks and gardens. Cultural landscapes have neither recognition nor protection. The Colleges and University give Cambridge an exceptionally high proportion of Grade I listed buildings. Among nearly 800 entries in the (national) Statutory List, 61 are Grade I, but these entries can include a whole College court as a single entry, even if not designed and built as one. Considered as individual buildings, 173 (over 10%) of the nearly 1600 listed buildings are grade I. Cambridge also has 5 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, and 11 Designated Historic Parks and Gardens.

Among local designations, Cambridge has 11 Conservation Areas, covering over 700 ha. Conservation Areas are designated for their "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The Council has statutory duties to from time to time review the boundaries of Conservation Areas, to formulate proposals for enhancing them, and to have regard, in planning decisions, to their preservation and enhancement.

## Unprotected heritage

The Council has also designated over 1000 buildings of local architectural or historic interest. These "buildings of local interest" have no formal protection from demolition (unless within a conservation area) or alteration, although their status is noted when making planning decisions. The demolition of buildings of local interest causes great concern; the 2003 Lichfield report to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister suggested that planning permission should be required to demolish a building of local interest, but this proposal has not been implemented. Since then, Cambridge has lost two good late 19th / early 20th century locally listed School buildings, both earmarked for retention in development briefs and with potential new uses; however the Council did not have the power to require them to be kept, and both have been replaced by mediocre residential development.

Another of the weaknesses of current UK heritage protection is that there is no recognition of such cultural landscapes as Grantchester Meadows upstream from Cambridge, or Stourbridge Common down the river. Grantchester Meadows provide the setting for punting to Grantchester (a key part of Cambridge life for both students and visitors), as well as having associations with Rupert Brooke and, more recently, Pink Floyd. Stourbridge Common was the site of the largest medieval fair in Europe (the model for "Vanity Fair" in the novel "Pilgrim's Progress"), as well as being part of the setting for the University and Town rowing races.

## Conservation Area Policies and Appraisals

The historic core of Cambridge is covered by Conservation Area no 1, originally designated by the County Council in 1969 and since repeatedly extended.<sup>1</sup> The City Council followed up the designation with a major study "Cambridge Townscape" (1971), and the parallel publication "River Cam: Environment and Conservation". "Cambridge Townscape" assessed the

townscape, and how buildings contributed to it, but without considering the uses of buildings and the dynamics of change. In subsequent years, further Conservation Areas were designated, but no resources were made available for detailed studies until the 1996 Kite Area Conservation Area Appraisal, which was instrumental in securing a 3-year grant scheme in partnership with English Heritage.

The 1999 Mill Road and St Matthews Area Appraisal sought to regenerate an economically marginal, multi-ethnic area (described by the Daily Telegraph as "perhaps Britain's most internationally eclectic street") to the south-east of the city centre. We were unable to convince English Heritage to join in a Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme, but the Appraisal led to the Council giving £45,000 over three years towards improvements to shopfronts and repairs to houses, environmental improvements were achieved, and a free trees scheme helped to secure appropriate new planting. The Mill Road Appraisal is being reviewed, following requests to include Romsey Town, an area of late 19th century former railway workers' housing. We left half the length of Mill Road out of the original 1992 designation because it was not felt to be of sufficient architectural or historic interest; now, the combination of a broader national approach to significance of the heritage, and a very strong local sense of community (most evident in the Mill Road Winter Fair <http://www.mill-road.com>) may lead to the whole length of Mill Road being within the conservation area.

The Council has tried to balance pressure from residents for new Conservation Areas, with efforts to appraise its existing Conservation Areas. Local residents did much of the survey work for four new appraisals in West Cambridge. This approach was not possible for the biggest challenge, the Historic Core of over 70 streets. For this exceptionally large and complex area, my predecessor Jon Burgess adopted the "Conservation Plan" approach: assessing significance, vulnerability to change, capacity for change, and management policies. The Historic Core Appraisal (runner-up in the Royal Town Planning Institute's Regional Planning Achievement Award for 2006) includes much the same area as Cambridge Townscape 35 years earlier, but takes a dynamic approach. It looks at the way Cambridge has changed and is changing, and at how the uses of buildings and spaces, as well as the townscape, contribute to the character of the City.

Each street is separately analysed in colour-coded according to its significance (red for "very high", orange for "green for 'significant'", and blue for "low significance"). Each analysis includes positive and negative features, enhancement opportunities, potential redevelopment sites, a brief summary of archaeological interest, and a gazetteer of buildings. The street analyses are followed by an assessment of Key Management Issues.

The final section of the Historic Core Appraisal covers Implementation Policies. These are cross-referenced to the Cambridge Local Plan, but go well beyond purely planning policies and decisions. The appraisal seeks to involve a range of stakeholders (including the other departments of the City Council, the County Council (who deal with highways and street lighting), the University and Colleges, the traders, and the public utilities (water, electricity, gas etc) in taking decisions which respect and reflect the special character of Cambridge.

## The Pro-active Conservation Programme

One of the challenges for local authority conservation is how to fit in policy drafting with day-to-day casework. Across the country, authorities have had difficulty in resourcing policy work, and getting their Conservation Areas covered by Appraisals which should be the basic building blocks of policy. Even when the Core Appraisal was completed, less than half (by area) of Cambridge's Conservation Areas had an appraisal.

In April 2008, the Council agreed £30,000 per year for three years, for pro-active conservation work. This welcome boost was a councillors' initiative, prompted by public concern at the replacement of large houses in the suburbs with flats. A programme of innovative "Suburbs and Approaches Studies" has been agreed, and the first three have been completed. These studies are assessments of local distinctiveness; they do not provide any additional controls. The tests of their effectiveness will be in the extent to which a) planning decisions take note, and b) the landscape character of Cambridge as a city of tree-lined main roads and approaches survives growth-related transport improvements. In a balancing act between immediate demands and strategic priorities, work on the Suburbs and Approaches studies is being combined with progress on Conservation Area Appraisals, and an attempt to take a strategic look at the historic environment of Cambridge as a whole.

## Towards a Strategy

There are many strategies for Cambridge, but few mentions of the Historic Environment in them. The County Council's "Cambridgeshire's Vision 2007-2021" and the City Council's Sustainable Community Strategy, which guides spatial planning under the Local Development Framework (LDF), barely mention the historic environment. The same is true of the City Council's Climate Change and draft Parks and Open Spaces strategies, and of Cambridgeshire Horizons' Green Infrastructure and Arts and Culture Strategies. To an outside observer, it may seem incredible that the Arts and Culture Strategy for the growth of Cambridge virtually ignores, and does not consider the need to safeguard, the city's internationally important historic environment. This omission is symptomatic of what seems almost a blind spot in strategic thinking for Cambridge.

These local challenges have been coupled with a major national problem for conservation policy-making. Within the new English planning system, LDFs are replacing Local Plans. Both the Historic Core Appraisal and the Council's Guidance for Buildings of Local Interest were drafted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), with formal status under the Cambridge Local Plan, but (due to what may have been a legislative oversight) they, and all other local conservation policies now have no status under the LDF.<sup>2</sup>

## The Historic Environment Strategy Supplementary Planning Document

To tackle these challenges, a new City Council Historic Environment Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is being drafted. This will solve the legislative problem, by giving status under the LDF for appraisals and other conservation policies. More importantly, it provides the opportunity to look strategically at difficult issues and choices for Cambridge's historic environment, and to raise its profile in other strategies.

Draft key issues for the SPD have been identified through consultation with stakeholders and the Council's Area Committees.

They are:

- Significance
- Climate Change
- Growth
- Access and equalities
- Managing Change
- Quality of Change

### Significance

Significance has been added to the draft Key Issues, in response to concerns (among councillors in the Area Committees) that the importance of, for instance, some 1950s developments has not been recognised. These local concerns have helped provide the opportunity to raise considerations of significance at all levels up to international, and in so doing, to promote local recognition of the city's international historic significance. Some residents have expressed interest in possible "World Heritage Site" status. Although Cambridge meets several of the "outstanding universal value" criteria for World Heritage Site designation, the city falls outside the post-1994 global strategy (Rodwell 2007: 76 fig.4.31). The SPD also provides the opportunity to review the significance of the landscape setting of Cambridge, and its cultural associations.

### Climate Change

Climate Change is one of the Council's key priorities. The Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2008 and Sustainable Design and Construction SPD focus on environmental performance, rather than wider aspects of sustainability. The historic environment has not been recognised as a sustainability indicator, either locally or nationally. One of my greatest ongoing challenges has been to get recognition of the contributions the historic environment makes to sustainability, in terms of both the environmental performance of traditional buildings, and the quality of life.

These challenges are being tackled. At an individual building scale, the conservation team provided a section on Historic Environment for the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (3.4, pp 49-52). Since the SPD was published, the focus has turned even more on to improving the existing building stock, around 25% of which are pre-1919 buildings of traditional construction. Cambridge has a number of buildings in which possible adaptation measures have been explored; some of these date back to the 1970s. These show that some of the key conflicts will be between street character and improved insulation, particularly to external walls.

The Council has been willing to consider quite radical approaches in exceptional situations, provided that they are thoroughly justified as the best available option. A grade II\* listed 1930s Modern Movement house by George Checkley had solid walls and single glazed metal windows. Listed building consent was granted for replacement of all the original windows (apart from one under the balcony) with new double-glazed windows closely matching the original sections. More controversially, and in the face of objections from the 20th Century Society,<sup>3</sup> the Council agreed to external lining of the walls, with all the windows (except the one under the balcony)

moved outwards to sit in the original relationship to the new outer face of the wall.

The special consideration for "historic buildings" (widely defined) under Part L of the Building Regulations has helped in finding balances between historic character and energy efficiency. The aim has been to improve performance as far as is possible without damaging the character of the historic building.

The Historic Environment SPD will deal with overarching climate change issues, considering both impacts and strategic approaches to mitigation. Major impacts include increased flood risk, increasingly frequent storms, and potential changes to the character of the planted landscape arising from increased temperatures and changed climatic conditions. To explore the issues prior to drafting the SPD, the Historic Environment team organised an open seminar in Environment Week (June 2009) on "Historic Environment and Climate Change".

### Growth

Growth (both Government-decreed and internally-generated) is arguably the greatest threat, apart from climate change, to Cambridge's historic character (East of England Plan to 2031, Cambridgeshire sub-area profile). As noted above, Cambridge Architecture Gazette 57 discusses the growth areas in detail. Four major growth areas have been allocated on the edges of Cambridge: the Northern Fringe (new residential), the Southern Fringe (new residential, with a new Biomedical Park linked to Addenbrookes Hospital), North-West Cambridge (University-related development), and Cambridge East (an entire new community, the full scope of which is dependent on relocation of Cambridge Airport and the associated Marshalls works, the one major traditional industrial employer in Cambridge). Further out to the north-west will be the new town of Northstowe linked to Cambridge by the new Guided Bus. Within the city is one major area of redevelopment, the CB1 area adjoining the station. A new joint Urban Design team (with South Cambridgeshire District Council) has been formed to guide the development of the growth areas; there has been no corresponding provision of extra conservation resources to manage the historic environment impacts of growth.

The major proposed developments on the edge of Cambridge will even further increase the current pressures on the environmental capacity of the historic centre. The issues and balances are vividly illustrated by the city's major department store (Robert Sayle): some years ago it threatened to move to an out-of-town site, but was persuaded to stay (in the new

Grand Arcade development). The store (now John Lewis) is extremely successful, but its height and bulk dominate views along Emmanuel Street.

Similar issues are evident at CB1, where the Council has sought to achieve major transport improvements through redevelopment of former railway land. After long negotiations, outline approval for the largest ever scheme ([http://195.167.181.237/work/masterplans/cb1\\_cambridge\\_station\\_redevelopment](http://195.167.181.237/work/masterplans/cb1_cambridge_station_redevelopment)) in Cambridge was finally granted in October 2008. CB1 will involve the loss of a number of buildings of local interest, and will drastically change the conservation area setting of the grade II listed station. The extent of change is such that the only justification under conservation legislation was in terms of the wider public benefits of an improved transport interchange. Issues of height, mass, and design quality have yet to be resolved, in a balance between volume, quality, and financial feasibility which threatens to become ever more difficult given the economic situation. The approved building heights are greater than those specified in the Council's Area Development Framework, and in wider views will rise above both retained landmarks (the Mill and Silo), and the tree line which is a very important feature of Cambridge's character. I was shocked to find that in what is arguably the most sustainable location in Cambridge in terms of transport, the developers insisted on underground car parking for the offices: this will surely add to the traffic problems, not help to solve them.

The approved CB1 scheme also misses two great opportunities. First, it has no provision for a visitor information centre: this for a city which attracts over 4 million visitors a year, and for whom train travel should be encouraged as the most sustainable means of transport. This is hard to understand, particularly with the Olympics now just a few years away.

The second missed opportunity, and a very significant loss for the historic environment, is that proposals to convert the former Fosters Silo (a building of local interest) to the County Council's Historical Resource and Cultural Centre have been dropped. This would have been an ideal use of the building, housing archive collections in a very sustainable location. The proposal also had potential (if an arrangement could have been reached with Shape East) for creating a combined archive and architecture centre, on the lines of the Exploratory in Hackney (<http://www.buildingexploratory.org.uk/>). Cambridge has lacked a permanent architecture centre since the RIBA closed its Eastern Region Centre at King's Parade in 1997. This site next to the station, with its potential for generating income through visitor facilities, could have been Cambridge's best hope of a self-sustaining architecture centre, to the benefit of the city, local people, and visitors.

### Tall Buildings issues

From some viewpoints to the west and south, it is still possible to see Cambridge's historic landmarks rising above trees and fields at the edge of the city, in views which hark back to Logan's prints of the 1690s. Now, the historic character of this low-lying city is threatened by both the way in which new developments define the edge of the city, and their impacts on the skyline. Many years ago, University proposals for three towers in the centre of the city were dropped, largely as a result of montages based on balloons flown to mark the proposed heights. Now, in the age of digital presentations, it is proving



Figure 3



**Figure 4** St John's Chapel, the University Library, and Kings College Chapel seen from the west, rising above the tree-line with the M11 in the foreground

extremely difficult (not least with CB1) to get new proposals presented so as to give a full idea of their wider impacts. The Council is going to produce a Tall Buildings policy. Much will depend on the extent to which this gives priority to Cambridge's historic character.

### Access and Transport

Access for the mobility and sight-impaired is an ongoing issue in a historic city. The City Council has a Disability Consultative Panel, which for many years has assessed the access implications of planning proposals. Reconciling access requirements with the historic environment has always been challenging, particularly so since the Disability Discrimination Act's requirements for service providers to make "reasonable physical improvements" came into force in October 2004. Only two listed buildings in commercial use (one a building society and the other a bank) in Cambridge's city centre have internal access ramps.

Now, the demands of growth are forcing a strategic approach to access for all people, as efforts are made both to resolve Cambridge's historic traffic problems, and provide access to the new development areas. Public transport has to be improved if car usage is to be reduced. The aim is to have many more buses coming into the centre; however, there are real difficulties with road capacity in streets suited to a market town rather than a city, and which already have exceptionally high volumes of cycle traffic.

A major problem is that there are no formal requirements for highway authorities to have regard to the historic environment. The strategy for access to the Cambridge East growth area involves a major new bus route crossing Stourbridge Common and damaging the setting of the grade I listed mid 12th century Leper Chapel, the last surviving building associated with the great medieval Stourbridge Fair, and which has provided the



**Figure 5** Stourbridge Fair re-enactment at the Leper Chapel

setting for a recent (much smaller) revival of the Fair. Fig 1.1 of the Cambridge East Transport Study (Cambridgeshire County Council 2006: 2) shows a new north-south public transport corridor crossing Newmarket Road almost exactly where the Chapel stands, but does not mention the listed building.

### Delivery

The Historic Environment Strategy SPD will raise the profile and the issues, but its effectiveness will depend on how much it influences planning decisions, other Council strategies, and decisions by other stakeholders. Much of planning remains responsive, and dependent on the aspirations of people proposing development. Cambridge's future character will depend on the extent to which private owners, notably the University and the Colleges (who are ground landlords of large areas of the city) think in terms of the long-term quality of life of Cambridge, rather than immediate gain.

The role of the private owner could be crucial. To take two illustrations, the first at a small scale: Trinity College recently announced that it would close the post office immediately opposite the College, so depriving its students and the public of a valued service, in the hope of getting a greater commercial return. Loss of the post office will significantly affect the character of the street. The proposal has attracted much adverse comment. Might it not be better for the College to accept that this is an instance where long-term quality of life might justify a less demanding economic approach?

At a larger scale, the University is going to be vacating, over a number of years, a significant area of land around Mill Lane. It sought a partnership with the City Council in preparing a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the area. This co-operative effort is a very welcome bridging of the historic town-gown divide. However the SPD area is restricted to the University's ownership, and the approach has not as yet fully considered relationships with adjoining land.

These examples are of a College and the University, but just as crucial are the property- and place-management decisions of private property developers, and also the County and City Councils, the utilities, and other agencies whose works affect the character and quality of the public realm.

The scope to which the public agencies take account of the historic environment in making their decisions depends a great deal on the Government. The recent consultation on the Government's draft Planning Policy Statement 15 [the long-awaited replacement for Planning Policy Guidance Notes 15 (Historic Environment, 1994) and 16 (Archaeology and

Planning, 1990) was supposed to have been accompanied by a Government Statement setting out cross-departmental priorities for the Historic Environment. No Statement has yet been made, and it was very worrying that the draft PPS 15 did not consider either access or transport issues. The Government promised to revise the draft in response to criticisms received; by the time you read this, we will know the outcome.

## Conclusions

This paper has considered climate change, growth, and access and transport issues; it has also shown some of the challenges in terms of the other key issues, such as , Managing Change and Quality of Change. Cambridge is under ever-greater pressure. Decisions being taken now, and in the next few years, will decide the extent to which its historic character survives for the future. The most vital need is for all the key stakeholders to work together, bridging town-gown, private-public, and city-county divides, in prioritising what is special about Cambridge.

I end with one concern, and one very positive sign. To take the concern first, one of the challenges for decision-making is to have a clear basis for balancing different significances and "goods" – both environmental and cultural. An ideal basis for such decisions is provided by a (too little-known) British Standard: BS 7913:1998 *a guide to the principles of the conservation of historic buildings*. This defines conservation as "cultural, economic, environmental action to secure the survival or preservation of

- buildings,
- cultural artefacts
- natural resources,
- energy or
- any other thing of acknowledged value for the future",

and provides a very sound basis for reaching difficult decisions.

Unfortunately, BS 7913 is not available on the web, and its 28 pages cost £92. I long ago suggested to English Heritage that it should be republished at a much lower price, and made available to all decision-makers. Now, a review of European standards may lead to its withdrawal, rather than dissemination of the very important principles it sets out. The positive sign is work which has followed up the growth issue of Cambridge Architecture Gazette. A "charrette" organised by the Cambridge Association of Architects and the City Council involved groups of architects working on ideas to link the growth areas back to the centre. A very positive principle which came out of this exercise (published in Cambridge Architecture Gazette 58) , and which needs broader application, is that of keeping what is special, and making necessary improvements by changing areas of the city which are not special. That is an approach which can work equally well for improving buildings, and it is my hope that this catches on.

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/EIUA/EIUA\\_Docs/StateoftheEnglishCities - Volume 1.pdf](http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/EIUA/EIUA_Docs/StateoftheEnglishCities_Volume_1.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> State of the Cities : The Competitive Economic Performance of English Cities  
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<sup>iii</sup> <http://australia.icomos.org/publications/historic-environment/he-vol-23-no-1-2011-historic-cities/>

<sup>iv</sup> e.g. the current (to 31 October 2014) exhibition about the Chinese poet Xu Zhimo, who was a research student at Cambridge, which has attracted great Chinese interest

<http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/events/exhibitions.html>

<sup>v</sup> Rodwell, D "Conservation and Sustainability in Historic Cities" Wiley Blackwell 2007 p76  
caption to fig 4.11