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Date: 5th June 2025

Heydon Neighbourhood Plan Consultation

Response from Public Health

RE: Neighbourhood Plan Consultation

Public Health welcome the Heydon Neighbourhood plan as it presents many policies in alignment with our guidance listed below. We also support the listed Community Actions as they will encourage broader health benefits for the local population.

Please see general comments on effective Neighbourhood plans with Health in mind.

The following themes are distilled from the New Housing Developments and the Built Environment Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for Cambridgeshire^[1].

The JSNA contains an evidence review of the built environment's impact on health with regard to:

- Green space.
- Developing sustainable communities.
- Community design (to prevent injuries, crime, and to accommodate people with disabilities).
- Connectivity and land use mix.
- Communities that support healthy ageing.
- House design and space.
- Access to unhealthy “Fast Food”.
- Health inequality and the built environment.

Spatial Strategies

We welcome policies that support measures that protect the amenity of residents and the built and natural environment.

Policies that actively seek to support sustainable growth and minimise health inequalities.

As well as protect green space, enhance a sense of local of community and improve health outcomes in all sizes of settlement and communities.

Housing

HOUSING MIX

From a Public Health perspective ensuring an appropriate mix of housing to suit needs of a settlement is essential. Considerations re size and space minimums are important for any future development as reasonably sized properties are more affordable to heat and or cool therefore associated with better health outcomes.

Any conversion of existing dwellings to alternate configurations of housing maybe appropriate to provide better life-time housing options for occupants. Changes must be of good quality; ensuring minimal noise transfer between dwellings and with adequate space provisions being adhered to. Having sufficient storage space, access to privacy, space for working from home needs, improved day light and ventilation are all essential to positive health outcomes.

Qualitative studies have found that homes with improved thermal comfort reported: increase in usable indoor space; improvements in diet, privacy and household/family relationships. Although no clear evidence on health improvement, respondents made links to improvement in physical and mental health. [\[2\]](#)

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A Housing Needs Survey is often undertaken to identify households' needs such as affordable or accessible accommodation. Affordable and/ or accessible housing options are essential for those on lower incomes as well as for older and disabled residents. Policies should be included if the Neighbourhood has this type of need in the community.

Going forward neighbourhoods in Cambridgeshire will typically see an increase in the aging population. It is worth noting that accessible street furniture and dementia friendly streetscapes in villages and towns; as well as sufficient resting places between housing and greens spaces becomes more relevant and important for aging populations.

Accessibility to green space for older people is beneficial as *walkable green spaces near residences of older people aged 75+ significantly and positively influences five-year survival.* [\[3\]](#)

Natural Environment

GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE/ SPACE

We know that where *There is a clear association between the built environment and physical activity (1)* [\[4\]](#), where the physical characteristics of neighbourhoods are identified as having a positive impact on health, wellbeing, physical activity and walkability, these characteristics are: choice and diversity; well-kept environments; affordable and efficient public transport; safe and sociable play areas; the presence of

greenspace; well-lit and pedestrian-friendly footpaths; and street patterns that provide opportunities for informal contact among residents^[5]

Therefore the management, protection and enhancement of existing green and blue infrastructure is of significant value to human health.

Provision of green space and infrastructure supports health through bringing with it co-benefits that occur when accessing it such as activity and social interaction.

Providing adequate green space can promote physical activity with the subsequent benefits of reducing overweight and promoting mental health^[6]

Also accessibility to green space for older people is beneficial as *walkable green spaces near residences of older people aged 75+ significantly and positively influences five-year survival.* ^[7]

DARK SKIES

In rural and semi-rural neighbourhoods there is an impetus to ensure appropriate low levels of light. Public Health supports policies that seek to ensure environmental impacts of light pollution are mitigated, such as encouraging the use of sustainable / renewable lighting technologies. Implementation of such policies must always be in the context of supporting human safety / health and minimising environmental impacts. Dark Skies policies also lean into Active Travel strategies ensuring sufficient lighting year-round for those using active travel routes in green space and current or future travel routes/ parking areas after dark. Also ensuring that public spaces are safe especially for more vulnerable persons.

BIODIVERSITY

As previously mentioned provision of green space and infrastructure supports health through allowing biodiversity to flourish. Public Health welcomes the protection and enhancement of biodiversity for example through developing/ planting lane verges, hedgerows and trees. As well as improvements to the visual landscape through planting to screen street furniture or residential/ industrial / agricultural development.

Historic Environment

HERITAGE ASSETS

Local heritage assets make up an important element of the architectural and historical make up of Cambridgeshire. The includes a number of buildings that are on Local Interest Registers of Local District Councils. These assets serve to support and enhance the public realm and visual landscape, all of which, brings positive mental health benefits. More shared assets at community level may help to encourage increased social cohesion and foster an even greater sense of community, as well as provide economic and tourism development opportunities for the community at large. Physical health is also improved as an attractive local amenity typically encourages activity.

Sustainable Development and Design

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

We welcome the use of design codes to facilitate balanced and sustainable development which meets the evolving needs of the neighbourhood in question. Protecting and enhancing the local character of a development courtesy of design led development aims to ensure an agreeable public realm suitable for residents, while also ensuring the interface of open space and settlement. This type of positive visual landscape helps to support and maintain mental wellbeing.

FLOODING, MITIGATION & DRAINAGE

The risk of flooding is variable across the county depending on location. No matter the level of risk it must be planned for through flood plans and development policies. We welcome development proposals designed to incorporate measures that will not add to or create surface water flowing.

Public Health support water harvesting, recycling and other natural drainage options wherever possible. We welcome the use of mitigation approaches in new development to protect human health from flood risk. However certain methods like SuDs need to be used with care as potentially creating stagnant water bodies near dwellings could cause problems as mosquito breeding grounds in the future due to climate change.

We welcome flood risk management initiatives that can be incorporated into existing and future development. Residents who may be affected in flood prone areas, particularly vulnerable ones, could be encouraged to create/ join a flood group. These are typically lead by the Parish Council or by a nominated flood warden(s). Community action of this type supports community resilience and well-being thereby reducing physical and mental health impacts from severe weather. Completing personal flood plans and community flood plans also form part of this resiliency.

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING

Energy efficiency is a key factor in developing sustainable communities. Public Health support opportunities taken to improve the environmental performance in development. Where feasible making use of design principles such as passive cooling, rainwater harvesting, solar collectors, maximising natural daylight etc. Also housing that is a reasonable size and affordable to heat is associated with positive health outcomes. With increasing summer temperatures another consideration is how to manage overheating in summer. Possible solutions include external shading, louvres/ shutters and solar control glass to alleviate excess solar gain. These varying design approaches to mitigate excess heat are more readily considered with new development but ought to be reviewed in retro fitting and conversions too.

COMMUNITY ENERGY SCHEMES

Community energy schemes can help to make renewable energy more economically accessible to all and reduce risks of fuel poverty. As well as support idea of possible

small scale community renewable energy generation and the stated criteria. However, as community heat networks need to be available to all, i.e. if there is a joining cost it can lead to health inequalities. The potential is those that cannot afford to join will not receive the benefit and will spend more on fuel. These individuals are likely already financially disadvantaged compared to others who can access the scheme. Therefore any neighbourhood plan is focused on sustainable development and should keep this potential concern at the forefront of any scheme development.

Infrastructure, Services & Facilities

SERVICES & FACILITIES

Access to and use of local community assets and leisure facilities is beneficial for health from the perspective of physical activity, mental health, social cohesion and social capital. Therefore we welcome policies that protect and maintain existing services and facilities, as well as those that encourage appropriate new provision. An important consideration with regard to equitable access: can all residents access and make use of the identified assets? Are suitable toilet facilities available close by?

TRAVEL

Active travel is a key priority for Public Health. Well-connected and attractive public places and streets encourage more people to move, exercise, make active travel choices and connect socially.

Plan policies that help to keep traffic density low are beneficial. An important consideration for active travel routes includes ensuring the surfacing is appropriate to the active users group e.g. hard surfacing for pedestrian/ cyclist, soft for equestrian etc.

Neighbourhood plan should sensitively support the connectivity network whilst respecting biodiversity, any green corridors, as well as making sure potential risks from flooding remain mitigated.

There is a clear association between the built environment and physical activity (1)¹⁸¹, where the physical characteristics of neighbourhoods are identified as having a positive impact on health, wellbeing, physical activity and walkability, these characteristics are: choice and diversity; well-kept environments; affordable and efficient public transport; safe and sociable play areas; the presence of greenspace; well-lit and pedestrian-friendly footpaths; and street patterns that provide opportunities for informal contact among residents¹⁹¹

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

- Have you considered the needs of local Gypsy and Traveller communities as part of your neighbourhood plan?
- Does your neighbourhood have fast food / hot food outlets?

Have you considered whether there are current or future concerns regarding (over) supply of these types of development in your area and what the potential health impacts on residents might be?

An example of hot food/ fast food outlet density and location potentially affecting community health and wellbeing – data such as the following supports the observation that typically secondary school children walk to school (unsupervised) therefore there is greater opportunity to have access to fast food/ hot food options. The premise being that behaviours instilled in childhood will continue on into adulthood, such as poor eating habits

[Predicting adult obesity from childhood obesity: a systematic review and meta-analysis - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

[Noncommunicable diseases: Childhood overweight and obesity \(who.int\)](#)

Yours sincerely,

The Health in all Policies Team
Public Health
Cambridgeshire County Council

- [\[1\] Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)
- [\[2\] Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)
- [\[3\] Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)
- [\[4\] Board, Cambridge Sub-Region Housing. Housing Market Bulletin 27. 2015. 27](#)
- [\[5\] Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)
- [\[6\] Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)
- [\[7\] Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)
- [\[8\] Board, Cambridge Sub-Region Housing. Housing Market Bulletin 27. 2015. 27](#)
- [\[9\] Cambridgeshire Insight New Housing Development and the Built Environment JSNA 2015](#)