

CCLT Site Selection Criteria

The ecovillage planned by CCLT requires an exception site¹, as an ecovillage cannot generate comparable site values to open market housing development due to the high proportion of affordable housing other social and environmental externalities such as growing space and community facilities. This means that it is likely to be found in the 'open countryside' – a planning term for all sites beyond the 'development boundary' of existing settlements. It is also likely to be in Green Belt, though we already have indications that the proposed development could be acceptable for a Green Belt release.

In reality, such a site could be adjacent to an existing village or town, or at least reasonable walking / cycling distance. It is unlikely, though, that such a site will be found very close to Cambridge as much of the land around the city will be land banked and hold hope value for future development.

Finding site for such an innovative development is not easy and a degree of flexibility is needed in selecting a site.

This is the first draft of site selection criteria. We expect to refine it as the project progresses.

Location in Relation to Settlements & Infrastructure

The ecovillage will be more functionally self-contained than 'normal' housing development, however it is not intended to be entirely self-sufficient. The ability to access neighbouring settlements by bike and on foot, and Cambridge and other larger settlements by public transport is important.

This does not mean that the site has to be adjacent to an existing settlement, but too isolated a site would not be suitable.

Landscape & Environmental Impact

Ecovillages aim to enhance the landscape and natural environment in which they are sited, contrasting with the more usual assumption that new development necessarily degrades its site and wider location. This is mainly achieved by the lower overall density of development, and specific attention to a wide range of measures to improve landscape character and bolster biodiversity and biocapacity.

It follows, therefore, that the site should be capable of development for the ecovillage without landscape or environmental harm and have potential for ecovillage development to provide environmental benefits. This probably rules out sites of designated ecological importance and possibly sites with landscape designations. The countryside around Cambridge is not much designated and its predominantly agricultural character means that there are many location where an ecovillage could be successfully accommodated.

The ecovillage will be intended to meet most of its own energy needs – the obvious options here are by wind, solar, and biomass. Each can have significant landscape and ecological impacts. These need to be borne in mind.

Green Belt is not a landscape designation. The prerequisite of Green Belt is that land remains open in character. Clearly this would not be possible for the development of an ecovillage, which is why discussions have already taken place as to the acceptability of the proposals as an exceptional Green Belt release.

Flood Risk

As for all other new development the built development ecovillage needs to be sited to minimise flood risk, which is to say out of Zone 3 and most likely out of Zone 2 land too. See:

http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?x=357683.0&y=355134.0&scale=1&layerGroups=default&ep=map&textonly=off&lang=e&topic=floodmap&utm_source=Poster&utm_medium=FloodRisk&utm_campaign=FloodMonth13

Size

In addition to housing, the ecovillage will also require land for community facilities, workspace, growing space, breathing space, space for renewable energy, and space for nature. The density of most of the housing is likely to be similar to 'normal' development, but the overall density will be significantly lower.

The ability of different sites to meet the needs of the ecovillage will vary from site to site. There can be hard and fast requirements, but overall 2-3 ha will be required for housing and another 3-5ha for the rest of the proposals.

¹ A site where 'normal' housing would not be allowed – this is a recognised planning term.

Key Features

The key features needing to be accommodated for the ecovillage are:

- access/es – safe access and egress for all transport modes
- internal circulation – for motor vehicles and other transport modes
- parking – centralised parking for motor vehicles and bikes
- housing – 50 houses of mixed size and tenure
- community facilities – e.g. community building, workshop, storage
- workspace – offices / workshops / food processing
- renewable energy – combination of solar, wind, biomass
- growing space – commercial and personal
- recreation and relaxation space – shared & multipurpose – to include woodland
- space for nature – shared with recreation and relaxation but also dedicated - to include woodland, SUDS, natural play areas

Geo

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