

# Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031



**Made Version**  
**July 2024**



# Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031

Made - 25 July 2024

Following a Referendum on 13 June 2024

The Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Mepal produced in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012

*(The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced based on an evidence base as at December 2022 and has a plan period from 2022 to 2031)*



The Parish Council received professional planning support from NEIGHBOURHOOD-PLAN.CO.UK during the production of this Neighbourhood Plan.



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# Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031



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# Foreword

On behalf of Mepal Parish Council, welcome to the Neighbourhood Plan for our Parish area. The Neighbourhood Plan sets out the vision, objectives and policies to ensure that the Parish of Mepal maintains the character, appearance and uniqueness over the period up to 2031.

The Neighbourhood Plan will seek to protect and enhance the natural and built environment of Mepal and help protect and improve our lovely village.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been drawn up by Mepal Parish Council which is the designated body for the plan area and provided the funding and support to enable the plan to go ahead. The Neighbourhood Plan has gone through a number of stages including statutory public consultation.

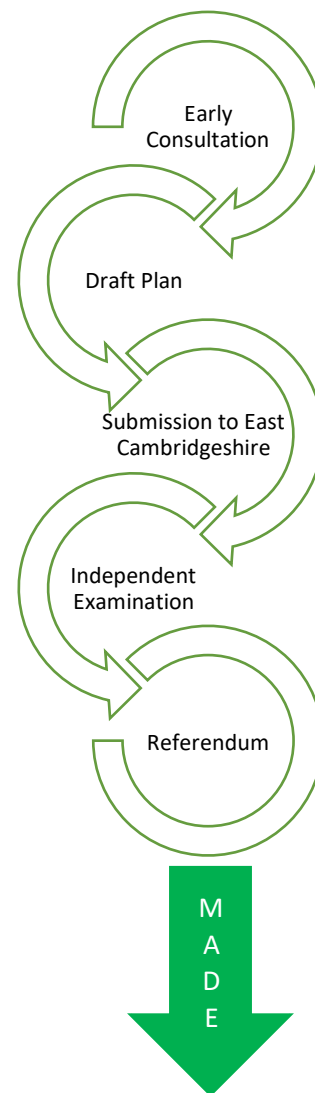
It has also gone through an Independent Examination in early 2024; this was followed by a local referendum held on 13 June 2024. At the referendum there was a majority 'yes' vote of all those voting in the referendum for it to be accepted. Following the 'yes' vote, East Cambridgeshire District Council have then proceeded to 'make' the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Mepal on the 25 July 2024.

The Neighbourhood Plan sets down a series of planning policies which will form part of East Cambridgeshire's wider statutory development plan. The Neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity with the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

It is intended that the policies will be reviewed periodically to monitor the cumulative effects of the policies and, if necessary, make changes to keep them up to date and relevant.

So, my personal thanks to all those who have been involved in the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Councillor Lorna Williams  
Mepal Parish Council  
(Chair & Lead Member for the Neighbourhood Plan)



# Introduction

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new type of Community Led Plan. Communities now have the right to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, setting out policies on the development and use of land. Developing a Neighbourhood Plan is a way for communities to play a greater role in determining the future of their area. A plan period of 2031 has been chosen to match the plan period of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.
- 1.2 The Mepal Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan. This means that East Cambridgeshire District Council will determine planning applications within the Parish in accordance with the development plan which includes this Neighbourhood Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise (see [section 38\(6\)<sup>1</sup>](#) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- 1.3 This Neighbourhood Plan is a Community Led Plan. It has been prepared by the Parish Council with professional support. It has been informed by public participation and consultation on a Mepal Community Led Plan (CLP) that was undertaken between 2017 and 2020. The formal Neighbourhood Plan preparation process involved two statutory periods of public consultation as prescribed in [Regulations<sup>2</sup>](#).
- 1.4 A Neighbourhood Plan is a planning document and is about the use and development of land. Neighbourhood planning gives communities more control over the future of their area by giving local people the chance to have their say on what happens where they live.
- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan can establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a particular area. Plans can include local priorities, planning policies, proposals for improving an area or providing new facilities or infrastructure and allocation of key sites for development.
- 1.6 Neighbourhood planning is a tool to promote sustainable growth and will not be able to prevent development in an area. Neighbourhood plans can only include proposals for an equal (or greater) amount of growth than is set out in the local authority's development plan. They must also accord with national planning policy



## 2. Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

- 2.1 Every Neighbourhood Plan needs to consider the need for a Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment) for the Neighbourhood Plan. SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key sustainability issues.
- 2.2 The Parish Council considers that there will be no significant environmental effects arising from the Neighbourhood Plan. They have produced a SEA and HRA Screening Assessment for

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/section/38>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents/made>

the Neighbourhood Plan which has demonstrated that a SEA is not required. Consequently, no SA incorporating an SEA has been undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan. It also concluded that no Appropriate Assessment under HRA was required. In October 2023, East Cambridgeshire District Council as the responsible authority adopted a determination statement that SEA and HRA was not required.

### 3. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 3.1 Throughout this Neighbourhood Plan reference is made to the National Planning Policy Framework ([NPPF](#))<sup>3</sup>. The NPPF sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It was first published on 27 March 2012, with the current Revised NPPF version being published in December 2023<sup>4</sup>. It is also supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance.
- 3.2 The NPPF provides a framework to produce locally distinctive Neighbourhood Plans which reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. The Neighbourhood Plan contributes towards the achievement of sustainable development. More detail on the ways in which this Plan addresses sustainable development is included within the Basic Conditions Statement that accompanies the Plan.

### 4. Planning Practice Guidance

- 4.1 [Planning Practice Guidance](#)<sup>5</sup> sets out the government’s advice on how to undertake neighbourhood planning within England. This is set out in detail within Section 41 of Planning Practice Guidance.

### 5. Structure of Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.1 The Neighbourhood Plan includes two themed sections: Sustainable Development and Natural & Built Environment.



Sustainable  
Development



Natural & Built  
Environment

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework>

<sup>4</sup> The NPPF was first published on 27 March 2012 and updated on 24 July 2018, 19 February 2019, 20 July 2021, 5 September 2023 and 19 December 2023.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

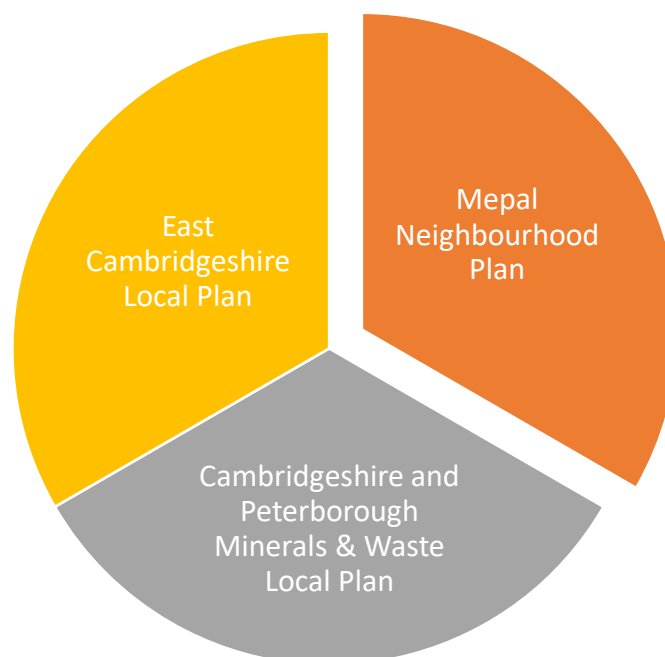


5.2 These are issues that are important to the community and within each section policies are included to guide the development and use of land. Each Policy contains an introduction and explanatory text followed by the Policy itself in coloured text. Following the themed sections, the Neighbourhood Plan contains an implementation and delivery section.

# The Development Plan

## 6. Background

6.1 The 'Development Plan' for Mepal is made up of 3 main components as follows:



6.2 All policies within the Neighbourhood Plan should be read in conjunction with the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. When determining proposals for development, no policy will be applied in isolation and account will be taken of all relevant policies.

## 7. Relationship to the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan

7.1 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) sets out the vision, objectives spatial strategy and policies for the future development of the district. It also identifies land and allocates sites for different types of development, such as housing and employment, to deliver the planned growth for the district to 2031.

7.2 The preparation of the Local Plan was informed through several stages of public consultation. The [Local Plan](#)<sup>6</sup> was adopted by the Council on 21 April 2015 with a small update adopted in October 2023. It covers the plan period up to 2031.

7.3 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan does not allocate sites for development in Mepal.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/east-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2015-amended-2023>

7.4 This Mepal Neighbourhood Plan attains the same legal status as the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan once it has been approved at a referendum. At that point, it comes into force as part of the statutory development plan. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

## 8. Strategic policies for the purposes of neighbourhood planning

8.1 The system of neighbourhood planning allows Parish and Town Councils to produce neighbourhood plans to guide development at a local level. One of the requirements of such plans is that they should be in line with the 'strategic policies' of the adopted development plan for the local area.

8.2 East Cambridgeshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority defines which policies are to be considered 'strategic' with regard to the production of a neighbourhood plan. However, the Local Plan does not explicitly state which policies within the Local Plan are to be considered 'strategic' for the purposes of neighbourhood planning.

## 9. Surrounding Neighbourhood Plans

9.1 The Mepal Neighbourhood Plan was developed with consideration of whether there are any other Neighbourhood Plans being developed who share a boundary with Mepal Parish. To the south and west of Mepal is the Parish of Sutton. There is a current Sutton Neighbourhood Plan that was 'made' in 2019. At the time work started on the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan (2019), three areas of what are now in Mepal Parish were actually in the Parish of Sutton so are actually legally still covered by the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan (2019). They will continue to be covered by the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan until the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan is 'made'.



9.2 Whilst to all intents and purposes, this Neighbourhood Plan is the first Neighbourhood Plan for the parish of Mepal, technically it will replace the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan (2019) for the three areas moved from Sutton Parish to Mepal Parish in 2018. For the vast majority of readers, this technicality is an irrelevance, and this Plan can simply be read as the first Neighbourhood Plan for Mepal. However, for those who wish to understand the full explanation of the technical issues, please see the separately published 'Designated Area Plan and Explanatory Statement'.

9.3 In terms of background the three relevant areas moved from Sutton Parish to Mepal Parish by The East Cambridgeshire District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2018 on the 13 July 2018 are:

- 1 - land south of Mepal Road (including White Gate Cottage; Orchard House. The Oaks; Broadmead; Chestnut Farm; Mulberry House; Bellaview; The Granary; White Gate Farm; White Gate Cottage & White Gate Bungalow);
- 2 - land between Brick Lane and Sutton Road along with land south of Sutton Road (including unnamed farm buildings); and
- 3 - Lilibet Woods.

9.4 Sutton Parish Council are doing a review of their 2019 Neighbourhood Plan, following consultation on the draft document they submitted their Neighbourhood Plan Review to East Cambridgeshire District Council in December 2023. The consultation under Regulation 16 ended in February 2024 and it has proceeded through its examination over the spring of 2024. Its referendum was held in July 2024. As the Sutton Neighbourhood Area has been amended the review of the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan is progressing on the basis of the current Sutton Parish boundary. There are no cross boundary implication arising from the emerging Sutton Neighbourhood Plan review. The parish of Witcham lies to the east, the parish of Witcham was successfully designated as a 'Neighbourhood Area' on 9 January 2023. They have not yet progressed proposals for a Neighbourhood Plan. The land to the north of Mepal is the Parish of Manea in the Fenland District. They are not currently working on a Neighbourhood Plan.

### 10. Designation of Mepal Parish as a Neighbourhood Planning Area

10.1 A formal [application](#)<sup>7</sup> was made by Mepal Parish Council as a 'relevant body' under Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) for the designation of a neighbourhood area in order to develop a neighbourhood plan. The area of the Neighbourhood Plan is based upon the parish boundary, which was seen as appropriate as this area is recognised as the distinct community of Mepal. The request was that the Parish be recognised as a Neighbourhood Area for the purpose of producing a neighbourhood plan, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

10.2 The Parish was [designated](#)<sup>8</sup> a Neighbourhood Area on the 28 February 2022.

### 11. Consultation with the Local Community

11.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by public participation and consultation on a Mepal Community Led Plan (CLP) that was undertaken between 2017 and 2020. Since the designation of Mepal as a neighbourhood area, various elements of consultation have been undertaken regarding the future planning of the Parish. Details of the consultation undertaken to date are set out in the Consultation Statement that accompanies this Plan. Early informal public participation and consultation was undertaken in September 2022. The preparation process for a Neighbourhood Plan is prescribed in [Regulations](#)<sup>9</sup> and this involved two statutory periods of public consultation during 2023.

## Other Planning Documents

12.1 In addition to the Development Plan there are also a number of other planning documents known as [Supplementary Planning Documents](#)<sup>10</sup> which cover the whole of East Cambridgeshire. These include:

- Contaminated Land SPD (2015)
- County Wildlife Sites SPD (2010)
- Developer Contributions (2013)
- Design Guide SPD (2012)
- Renewable Energy (Commercial Scale) SPD (2014)
- Community-Led Development SPD (2016)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/neighbourhood-planning>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Mepal%20NA%20Map%20A4%20prtr.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/637/contents/made>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/supplementary-planning-documents>

- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2016)
- Custom and Self- Build Housing SPD (2020)
- Natural Environment SPD (2020)
- Climate Change SPD (2021)

12.2 The Parish of Mepal lies on the edge of East Cambridgeshire District so the boundary abuts the neighbouring Fenland District. There is no obligation for the Neighbourhood Plan to be in general conformity to the Fenland Local Plan, it is however appropriate to consider whether there are any cross-boundary issues that need to be taken into account. The Fenland Local Plan was adopted on 8 May 2014 and covers the period to 2031. Fenland have started a Local Plan Review and the draft version of the emerging Local Plan underwent consultation ending in October 2022. The Fenland Local Plan does not raise any cross-boundary issues.

12.3 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals & Waste [Local Plan](#)<sup>11</sup> includes some notations within the Parish of Mepal, including Mineral Safeguarding Area for Sand and Gravel and Mineral Development Areas. In particular the Parish contains the Block Fen Minerals Allocation Area; the Block Fen Minerals Development Area; and the Mepal Water Recycling Centre. These mineral notations are to the north of the village itself, the Water Recycling Centre is closer to the village. Minerals and Waste planning matters are known as ‘excluded matters’ and cannot be dealt with in a Neighbourhood Plan, however, regard has been had to the Minerals & Waste Local Plan in developing the Neighbourhood Plan.

## Mepal

13.1 Mepal is a small, rural village on the west border of the district of East Cambridgeshire. It is just six miles from the beautiful Cathedral city of Ely. The 2011 population in the Census was 982, the mid-2020 population projection by the ONS was 953. The 2021 Census identified the population to be 980 (rounded) with the number of households being 420 (rounded). Mepal has an older population than East Cambridgeshire, with the 60+ population being 34.1% compared to 27.0% in East Cambridgeshire.

13.2 Mepal lies on the western edge of the Isle of Ely on what was once the shoreline between the fen and higher ground. The landscape we see today is largely the creation of rivers cut in the 17th century to drain the fen, but the village was here long before this. The name suggests a Saxon settlement, but the first known mention of the name Mepal dates from c.1133.



13.3 The busy A142 speeds traffic towards Ely, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Peterborough. At Mepal it may have been a 17th century military road and is marked on some maps as Ireton’s Way. Today it bypasses the village, sweeping through the site of a war time airfield and carried over the rivers and washes by a modern viaduct (1984). Ferry Cottage reminds us of how this crossing was made at times of flood before the first viaduct was built in 1930. The

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/planning-policy/adopted-minerals-and-waste-plan>

washes have been famous for skating and wildfowling but are now best known as a site of international importance for bird life.

13.4 The tiny 13th century Church of St. Mary is separated from the village by the Manor House, Manor Farm and a field where earthworks indicate former buildings. Behind the Church a copse of elm trees has survived when other elms along Sutton Road and on the Widdens were lost in the 1970s. Near the cemetery the 'ridge and furrow' pattern of medieval fields can still be seen.

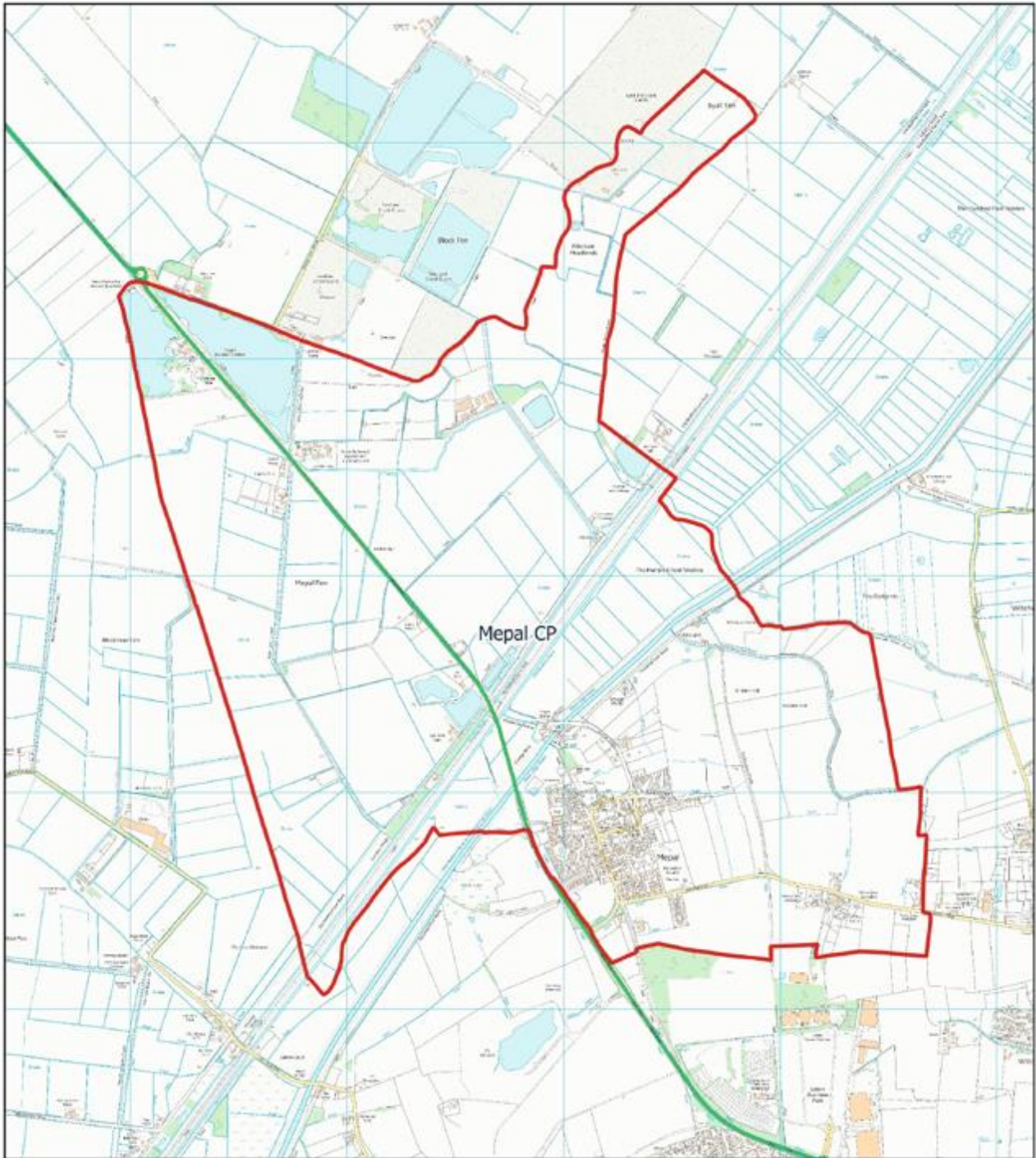
13.5 Many of the larger houses in the village were farmhouses and have a plain, honest character. The picturesque Round House was never a toll but there was one, and a Toll Farm, on the Chatteris side of the rivers. Ash Cottage (School Lane) and Pond Farm (High Street) are both timber framed late 17th/early 18th century buildings but most of the old houses are of dark gault or cream Cambridgeshire brick. A barn behind 17 Bridge Road has the date '1756' picked out in coloured brickwork and a door that once linked the yard to trade on the river. Sir Clement Freud lived in the Cross Keys (High Street) when he was MP for the Isle of Ely (1973-1987). Fortrey Hall out on the fen has links with the great 17th century drainage scheme and its history is recorded on a memorial in the Church. Sadly, only part of the original house remains. The peat land here is some of the richest in the country. It has been drained in turn by windmills, steam, diesel and electric power. Glynn's engine house (1840) still stands on Engine Bank. Further out on the fen is a band of gravel and evidence of prehistoric barrows has been found.



13.6 It is perhaps this setting between the fen, rivers and the higher land of the old island that has had as much influence on the character of the village as have historic events and social change. Mepal remains a unique example of a small fenland community.

## The Neighbourhood Plan Area

14.1 The plan below identifies the designated Neighbourhood Area:



**Mepal Neighbourhood Area**

Key

 Mepal Neighbourhood Area



East Cambridgeshire  
District Council



Date: 25 February 2022  
Scale: 1:25,000

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Map 1 - The Mepal Designated Neighbourhood Plan Area

# Vision

15.1 The following vision has been developed for the Neighbourhood Plan:

**To provide a planning framework and policies that will facilitate sustainable growth whilst protecting the distinctive character and identity of Mepal as a small, rural village on the fen.**

# Objectives

15.2 The following objectives have been set out for the Neighbourhood Plan:

## (A) Promote sustainable development

- Ensure that new development is of high-quality design, is built to a high environmentally sustainability standard and contributes positively to the existing built form of Mepal
- Contribute towards climate change mitigation

## (B) Conserve and enhance the natural environment of Mepal

- Conserve and enhance the environment of the village and the wider parish countryside including protecting the Old and New Bedford River corridor; local green spaces; improved landscaping; access to open spaces; green corridors; biodiversity enhancement; and the encouragement of green or blue infrastructure and initiatives

## (C) Protect and develop the community of Mepal

- Protect and preserve important community assets including its local services and facilities by encouraging the retention and growth of community facilities
- Continue to improve the facilities on offer to support the local community
- Ensure that highway and pedestrian safety is maintained and improved

## (D) Protect and enhance the built environment of Mepal

- Enhance the character and appearance of the village including enhancing the historic character arising from the heritage assets present and their settings
- Ensure that new development respects or enhances the distinctive character and appearance of the area in which it is sited
- Work with East Cambridgeshire to promote the comprehensive regeneration of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre site to enhance the northern gateway into Mepal and East Cambridgeshire

# Policy Delivery of Objectives

15.3 The following table demonstrates how the policies set out in the Neighbourhood Plan meet the objectives contained within the previous chapter. The policies that have been developed seek to address at least one of the objectives:

	Objective A	Objective B	Objective C	Objective D
<b>Sustainable Development</b>				
Policy 1 - Settlement Boundary (Update to Development Envelope)	✓	✓		✓
Policy 2 - Community Assets		✓	✓	✓
Policy 3 - Allotments	✓	✓	✓	
Policy 4 - Highway Impact	✓		✓	✓
Policy 5 - Climate Change Mitigation	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Natural and Built Environment</b>				
Policy 6 - Non-Designated Heritage Assets	✓		✓	✓
Policy 7 - Views and Vistas	✓	✓		✓
Policy 8 - Local Character	✓	✓	✓	✓
Policy 9 - Boundary Treatment, Hedgerows, Trees and Public Realm	✓	✓	✓	✓
Policy 10 - Local Green Space	✓	✓	✓	✓





# Sustainable Development



# Sustainable Development

## 16. Profile of Mepal

16.1 Mepal is a small, rural village on the west border of the district of East Cambridgeshire. It is just six miles from the beautiful Cathedral city of Ely to the south-east. Mepal also lies around 4 miles from the town of Chatteris in the neighbouring district of Fenland to the north. Mepal lies on the western edge of the Isle of Ely on what was once the shoreline between the fen and higher ground. The landscape present today is largely the creation of rivers cut in the 17th century to drain the fen, but the village was here long before this.

16.2 Mepal has a population in the 2021 Census of 980 (rounded). The village benefits from a number of local services and facilities including the Mepal & Witcham Primary School; Post Office & Shop; Village Hall; Recreation Ground including Community Pavilion & Play Area; and Three Pickerels Pub. Much of Mepal Parish is agricultural in character, the river corridors of the New Bedford River, Old Bedford River and River Delph bisect the Parish. Mepal has a number of Listed Buildings including the 13th century church, notable as the only church in the Isle of Ely without either tower or spire.



16.3 The northern half of the Parish contains a number of water bodies that are in restored mineral workings; it also includes some active mineral workings. Adjacent to one of these is the derelict site of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre. This is the site for the construction of a crematorium and associated service and administration building, function building, memorial garden, natural burial areas, pet cemetery, car parking, new vehicular access from the A142 north of the site and landscaping; that was approved in October 2022. Outside of the Parish but immediately adjacent is the Pretoria Energy biomass plant.

16.4 The larger village of Sutton lies approximately 1m to the south, it includes the Elean Business Park on part of the former RAF Mepal airfield that lies between Sutton and Mepal. In this area is also the EPR Ely biomass power station. Sutton provides additional local convenience shopping facilities and a local pharmacy. Sutton is also home to the closest Doctor's Surgery which was threatened with closure in 2023 but has been saved by the NHS through an interim contract. The nearest dentist, The Hollies Dental Practice is in Chatteris. The nearest secondary school provision is at Witchford Village College or slightly further afield in Chatteris and Ely.

## 17. Statutory Designations

17.1 Mepal Parish contains a number of statutory designations. The river corridors of the New Bedford River and Old Bedford River/River Delph (Including the Hundred Foot Washes) that bisect the Parish is part of the extensive Ouse Washes. The Ouse Washes is a Special Protection Area, a Special Area of Conservation, a Ramsar Site and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

- 17.2 The Ouse Washes are part of the system for controlling the flow of the Great Ouse when water levels in the river are high. In normal conditions, the waters of the Great Ouse run through the New Bedford River (or Hundred Foot Drain) to join the tidal stretch of the river at Welmore Lake Sluice, where another automatic system controls outflow. High water levels open the automatic sluice at Earith, thereby releasing water to the Old Bedford River, which eventually overflows onto the washland between the Bedford rivers, with the Welmore automatic sluice controlling outflow. When levels drop, the washes drain back into the Old Bedford River. The Ouse Washes are an internationally important wetland designation due to its importance for wildfowl.
- 17.3 Mepal Parish contains a Scheduled Monument (Bowl barrow 250m ESE of Common Farm: part of a dispersed round barrow cemetery in Block Fen). Mepal also contains a Grade II\* Listed Building (Church of St Mary) and eight Grade II Listed Buildings.

## 18. Strategic Planning Framework

18.1 The adopted strategic policies for Mepal are contained in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. This forms the strategic planning framework; one of the requirements of a Neighbourhood Plan is that they should be in line with the 'strategic policies' of the adopted development plan for the local area. Paragraph 29 of the NPPF states: *“Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.”*

18.2 In the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, in relation to Mepal it states<sup>12</sup> the following ‘Village Vision’:

### *Housing*

*Mepal is likely to continue to grow at a slow rate, with new housing being built on suitable ‘infill’ sites within the village. No new housing allocation sites are proposed on the edge of Mepal. A ‘development envelope’ has been drawn around Mepal to define the built-up part of the village where infill development may be permitted. The purpose is to prevent sprawl into the open countryside. Development on infill sites will need to be in line with Policy GROWTH 2.*

*Outside the development envelope, housing will not normally be permitted - unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as essential dwellings for rural workers, or affordable housing. Housing schemes outside the development envelope will be assessed against Policy GROWTH 2 and other Local Plan policies as appropriate.*

### *Employment*

*There are a few current businesses in the village, including Greens of Mepal, and Lillypot Dressmaking and Alterations, but little employment land or premises (e.g. office and industrial). The District Council is keen to retain any land and premises in order to support local economic growth. Proposals to re-use employment sites for other purposes will only be permitted in certain circumstances (see Policy EMP 1).*



<sup>12</sup> The Local Plan dates from 2015 so what it states reflects the position at that date and changes may have taken subsequently, for example Greens of Mepal have relocated to Witcham

*No new employment allocation sites are proposed on the edge of Mepal. However, suitable new employment proposals within or on the edge of the village will be supported in principle, subject to Policies EMP 2, EMP 3 and EMP 4.*

### *Infrastructure and community facilities*

*Residents in Mepal have indicated a desire for the need for improvements to infrastructure and facilities in the village.”*

18.3 Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Local Plan on the issue of Neighbourhood Planning states: *“The District Council recognises the importance of community-led initiatives, and has also included a policy in this Local Plan which supports ‘community-led development’ on the edge of villages. This provides an alternative to the production of a Neighbourhood Plan, and means the Plan is flexible enough to help meet community needs as they arise without the need to carry out a review. Further details are set out in Policy GROWTH 6”.*

18.4 Policy GROWTH 2: Locational strategy of the Local Plan indicates that: *“More limited development will take place in villages which have a defined development envelope, thereby helping to support local services, shops and community needs.”* Policy GROWTH 4: Delivery of growth in the Local Plan does not allocate any land in Mepal for any housing, employment or other use.



18.5 In April 2020 the Council determined that its Local Plan 2015 required revision, but only partially and only in respect of its strategic housing policy, GROWTH 1, and some of its supporting text. The rest of the Local Plan was considered to not, at that time, to be in need of updating. Over the period 2020 to 2023, a process of updating the Local Plan therefore took place, focussed on the issue of updating policy GROWTH 1, that process concluded in October 2023. The East Cambridgeshire Local 2015 (as amended 2023) does not allocate any sites for development in Mepal, neither does it set out any housing target or requirement for Mepal.

## 19. Settlement Boundary

19.1 East Cambridgeshire has planned strategic growth across the towns and larger villages, however, there could be pressure for planning applications to come forward for residential development on greenfield sites which are not allocated in other locations such as Mepal. Such speculative development has the potential to undermine the strategic policies of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

19.2 The Local Plan does not specify any specific housing requirement for Mepal. There is an overall allowance for windfall development to come forward across all the settlements in East Cambridgeshire as set out in Table 3.2 - Summary of estimated housing supply 2022-31 in the Local Plan.

19.3 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan does identify a ‘development envelope’ for Mepal. Policy GROWTH 2: Locational Strategy of the Local Plan indicates that within the defined development envelopes housing, employment and other development to meet local needs will normally be permitted. That Policy goes on to indicate that outside defined development envelopes, development will be strictly controlled, having regard to the need to protect the countryside and the setting of towns and villages. Policy GROWTH 2 then lists 19 main

categories of proposals that may be permitted as an exception in the countryside outside development envelopes.

19.4 Development in Mepal is therefore envisaged to be what is known as windfall development, which is housing (or other development) coming forward on sites not specifically allocated for housing (or other development).

19.5 The ‘development envelope’ for Mepal<sup>13</sup> in the Local Plan is now dated and notably planning permissions<sup>14</sup> for 16 additional dwellings have been granted along Bridge Road and 2 dwellings at Brangehill Lane outside of the development envelope since it was drawn in the 2015 Local Plan. Many of those approved dwellings have been constructed or are under construction. As such an updated development envelope would reflect the current position. The 2023 update of the Local Plan did not update the development envelope for any settlement; therefore, it was appropriate for the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan to look to update the development envelope. For clarity the Neighbourhood Plan will call this the ‘Settlement Boundary’, whilst making it clear that this updates the development envelope from the Local Plan.



19.6 The settlement boundary of Mepal serves a specific purpose in that it is intended to direct the growth of the village and enable development to take place in a coherent manner, maintaining the structure and form of the existing settlement geography as the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan envisages. In addition, the boundary will protect the landscape setting of the villages.

19.7 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan explains how the development envelopes were drawn up. Regard has been had to this approach in drawing the settlement boundary in this Neighbourhood Plan in order to define the settlement and the countryside for planning purposes. Details of the criteria used to define the settlement boundary in this Neighbourhood Plan is set out in the Settlement Boundary Methodology document.

### Policy 1 - Settlement Boundary (Update to Development Envelope)

The settlement boundary (update to development envelope) of Mepal is defined on Map 2. It serves the purpose of directing the growth of the settlement and protecting the countryside from encroachment.

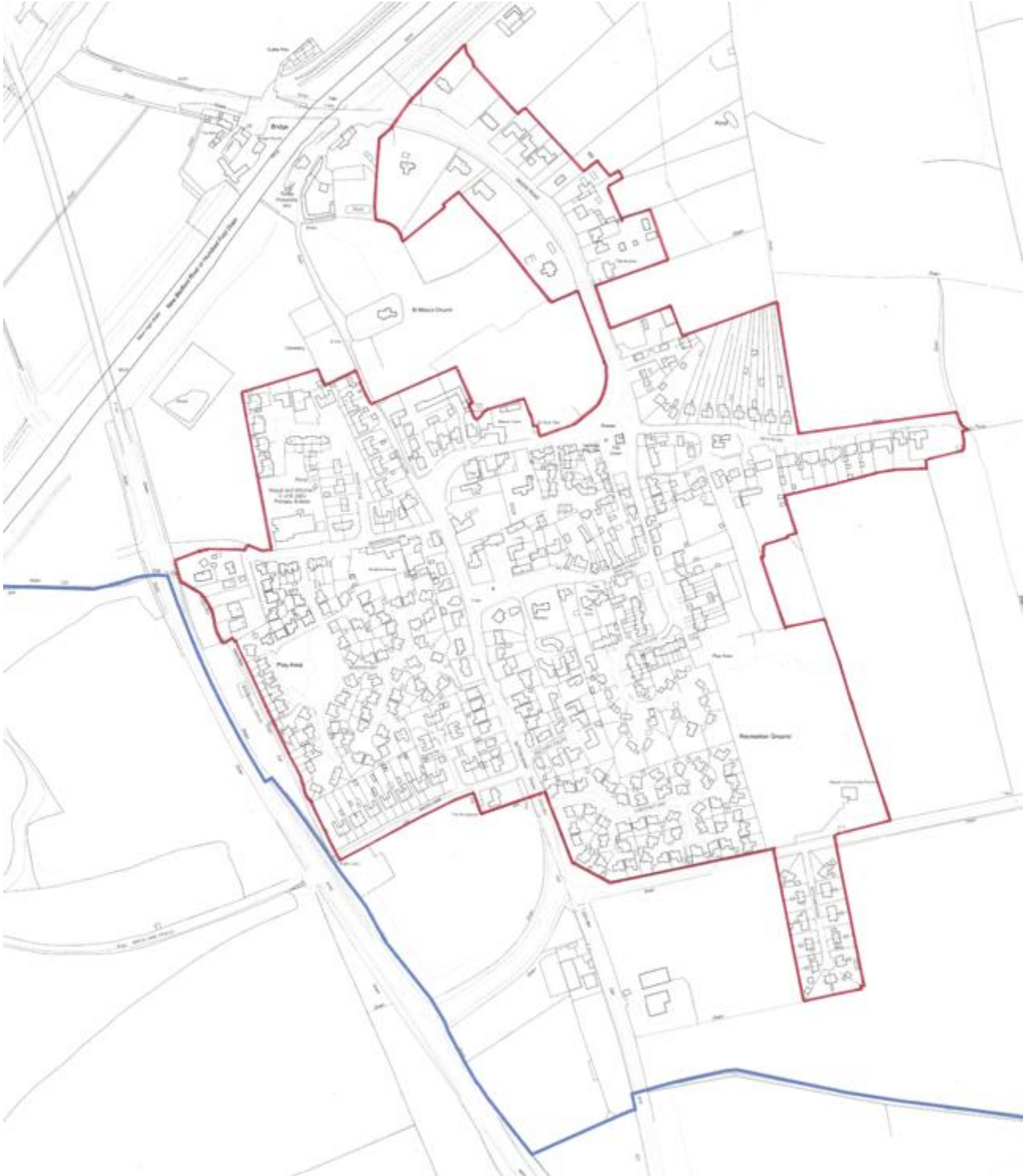
Within the settlement boundary proposals will be supported where development would not adversely affect the established character and appearance of the existing settlement; would not harm the undeveloped nature of the surrounding rural areas; and would respect the landscape setting of the village. Factors to be considered will include how the proposal reflects the existing built form, layout and structure of the surrounding area; the contribution of spaces between buildings; and the design and visual appearance of buildings in the surrounding area.

<sup>13</sup> Paragraphs 3.3.5 and 3.3.6 of the Local Plan sets out how the ‘development envelopes’ were devised

<sup>14</sup> The figures on planning permissions are as at September 2023

## Mepal Neighbourhood Plan

The land outside of the settlement boundary is considered as countryside. Proposals outside the settlement boundary will only be supported for development where it meets the requirements of other policies in the Development Plan, and in particular Policy GROWTH 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan or National Planning Policy. In particular community, leisure or recreation proposals designed to meet the needs of local residents will be supported where they meet the requirements of other policies in the Development Plan.



Map 2 - Settlement Boundary © Crown Copyright

 Settlement Boundary

 Plan Area Boundary

## 20. Community Assets

20.1 Community Assets is a generic term used for community infrastructure, services and facilities. This includes village halls, church halls, community centres and multi-use facilities. These facilities typically provide opportunities for community uses such as events, sports and activities. Community facilities can also provide space for arts or cultural activities and serve wider purposes such as providing affordable space for events or small businesses to hire. In Mepal the provision of community and meeting space available for use includes both the Village Hall and the Community Pavilion. Early consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan demonstrated a mixed picture relating to whether the existing leisure and community facilities were 'good'. Responses did want to see the existing community assets safeguarded.

20.2 The Village Hall is operated by a Charity and is conveniently located close to the heart of the village. The Hall combines attractive period architectural features with smart modern amenities and is ideal for private and public events, meetings and parties of all kinds. During the Covid-19 lockdown a new floor was laid which now permits a greater range of activities. The Village Hall has a main hall and an annex, together with a well-equipped kitchen, foyer with male, female and disabled toilets and baby-change. The premises are licensed for public entertainment with a capacity of 80-100.



20.3 The Community Pavilion opened in July 2007 and provides a picturesque setting on Mepal's beautiful Recreation Ground to meet a multitude of needs. It has a well-stocked kitchen and function room that opens out onto the Recreation Ground.

20.4 Mepal has a large Recreation Ground that is located on the land backing onto Laurel Close, Chestnut way and Witcham Road. With pedestrian access from Laurel Close and vehicular and pedestrian access via Witcham Road, the Mepal Recreation Ground is the ideal space for events and sports, or just a gentle walk around the perimeter. A permanent basketball net is located on a tarmac area near to the Play Park and dog walkers are currently permitted to use the perimeter of the area for dog walking on lead only.



20.5 There are 12 Allotment plots located at the back of the Play Park and bordered by gardens in Laurel Close. Currently all plots are rented out, but the Parish Council do not currently have a waiting list, although until recently there was a waiting list. Due to the ongoing level of demand the Parish Council had been actively exploring options to provide additional land for allotments. The draft Neighbourhood Plan suggested an allocation for additional allotments.

20.6 Since that time there has been turnover of allotment plots and the current demand for allotments has now been met through the existing allotments. There is now no waiting list and the proposed allocation for additional allotments in the draft Neighbourhood Plan attracted a number of objections.

20.7 The existing allotment site is subject to surface water flooding from surface water run-off which impacts on its usability. Ideally the Parish Council would like to expand the allotment provision on a site which could facilitate the relocation of the existing allotments as well as allowing the expansion of additional allotment plots to meet future demand. Moving forward the Parish Council has reflected on the material change of circumstances relating to the current demand and has duly considered the representations made. The Neighbourhood Plan now in Policy 3 supports the provision of additional allotments over the plan period does not now suggest any actual allocation for additional allotments. This is because whilst future demand for additional allotments is considered realistic, it has not been possible at this time to identify a preferred site that could meet operational requirements.

20.8 The Mepal Play Park, situated next to the Recreation Ground and accessed via Laurel Close, has a variety of play equipment for children aged 2-12. The Play Park and Allotments are provided and maintained by Mepal Parish Council.

20.9 Other important community assets in Mepal include St Mary's Church; Cemetery; Three Pickerels Pub; Mepal & Witcham Primary School (including the car park opposite); Play Area on Meadow Way; and the Post Office & Shop. The Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire identified the Post Office & Shop as the most important local service and facility followed by the Pub and the Recreation Ground. Proposals to extend the Shop & Post Office are being pursued.



20.10 Important areas of open space and green infrastructure include the Allotments; the Recreation Ground; Lilibet Woods & Branghill Drove; and various verges and greens around the village. Important blue infrastructure includes the river corridors of the New Bedford River, Old Bedford River and River Delph bisect the Parish; together with a number of lakes from restored mineral workings that now provide opportunities for nature conservation and increased biodiversity through habitat creation and recreational fishing. Elsewhere in the Parish is the derelict site of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre that was once a community asset. This is the site for the proposed construction of a crematorium which has been granted planning permission. This will result in this site returning to a community use. Open space can take many forms including parks, village greens, play areas, sports pitches, allotments, semi-natural areas and substantial private gardens. Many provide important recreational and sporting facilities or are important for biodiversity. The Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire identified the Recreation Ground and the footpaths as being the most used green spaces.

20.11 Local groups in the village include Mepal Makers which is a community project for people wanting to make things, recycle, upcycle or repair things, or just borrow a tool they don't have. There is also a Friendship Club and Youth Club operating in the village.

20.12 Policy COM 3: Retaining community facilities and Policy COM 4: New community facilities of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan looks to support new community facilities and to safeguard against their loss. The supporting text to Policy COM 3 in paragraphs 7.4.3 and 7.4.4 on page 98 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan details the type of evidence necessary to demonstrate how it can be shown that community facilities might be considered to be poorly used or not viable<sup>15</sup>. This is equally relevant to the application of this Neighbourhood

<sup>15</sup> In particular paragraph 7.4.3 states: "In the case of commercial community facilities such as shops and pubs, permission may be granted for change of use to residential or other non-community use if the applicant can demonstrate



Plan policy. Policy 2 of this Plan has been designed to be complementary to the provisions of Policy COM 3 of the Local Plan. In addition, it identifies specific facilities to which the policy will apply.

20.13 Policy COM 3 also looks to protect against the loss of open space, outdoor recreation facilities and allotments that provide amenity value. Mepal has a number of highly valuable community assets which are vital to be retained in order to help protect the distinct identity of the village.

20.14 Another mechanism to protect and keep valued buildings or land in use for the community is the Community Right to Bid Scheme. It gives local community groups the opportunity to nominate buildings or other land to be included on the East Cambridgeshire Council's [list](#)<sup>16</sup> of Assets of Community Value. An asset should contribute to the community's social well-being or social interests. Once on the register, if an asset comes up for sale or lease, a community group has a period of time in which they can register their interest as a potential bidder, delaying a sale on the open market. Currently Mepal has no recorded Assets of Community Value.



20.15 The former Mepal Outdoor Centre has planning permission<sup>17</sup> for a crematorium and associated facilities which is still to be delivered. The Parish Council will work with East Cambridgeshire to promote the comprehensive regeneration of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre site to enhance the northern gateway into Mepal and East Cambridgeshire and continue the contribution the site makes to the community.

## Policy 2 - Community Assets

Development proposals that result in the improvement/enhancement of existing community assets including the village hall; community pavilion; play areas; recreation/sports facilities; allotments; primary school; church or cemetery; the pub; or Post Office & store will be supported subject to their compliance with other development plan policies.

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*the facility is neither viable nor likely to become viable for that use or an alternative community use. Applicants will need to provide evidence that premises have been marketed locally and nationally for 12 months for the current use or an alternative local commercial or community facility, free of ties and restrictive covenants, at a price agreed with the Council following an independent professional valuation - and that there has been no interest in continued use as a community facility. Applicants should also provide evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to preserve the facility including all diversification options.” Then paragraph 7.4.4 states: “In the case of non-commercial community facilities such as community halls, open spaces and healthcare facilities, where market testing may not be applicable, permission involving loss may be granted if the applicant can demonstrate there is no community need for the facility, and that the site is not needed for an alternative community facility. The local community should also be consulted regarding the relative importance of the facility in terms of its social role, and the need for other community facilities. This should take the form of proper documented evidence and should be agreed with the Council prior to the submission of a formal application for alternative development. In the case of open space and recreational facilities (including parks, village greens, other amenity areas, allotments, play areas, playing fields), the Council will also require applicants to demonstrate that the land affected does not make an important contribution to biodiversity, the landscape and visual qualities of the area. Where proposals result in the loss of open space provision, the relevant community and statutory stakeholders (including Sport England) will need to be consulted.”*

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/community/list-assets>

<sup>17</sup> 21/01216/F3M

Proposals that diversify the use of the Recreation Ground and Community Pavilion for the benefit of the community will be particularly supported.

Development proposals that result in the provision of new community assets both within and outside of but adjacent to the settlement boundary will be supported subject to their compliance with other development plan policies and where the scale is commensurate with size of facility to meet the needs of the village.

Proposals that would result in the loss of the following community assets (as shown on Map 3) will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated<sup>18</sup> that:

- a) they are poorly used; or
- b) they are no longer viable; or
- c) a replacement facility is provided elsewhere in Mepal which delivers an equivalent service or community facility to the one which would be lost and is located where it is equally or more accessible to the existing and planned new community it is intended to serve:

- Village Hall (1)
- Community Pavilion (2)
- Allotments (3)
- Recreation Ground (4)
- Mepal Play Park (5)
- Play Area on Meadow Way (6)
- Three Pickerels Public House (7)
- Mepal & Witcham Primary School (including Car Park) (8 & 9)
- Post Office & Shop (10)
- Church of St Mary & Cemetery (11 & 12)

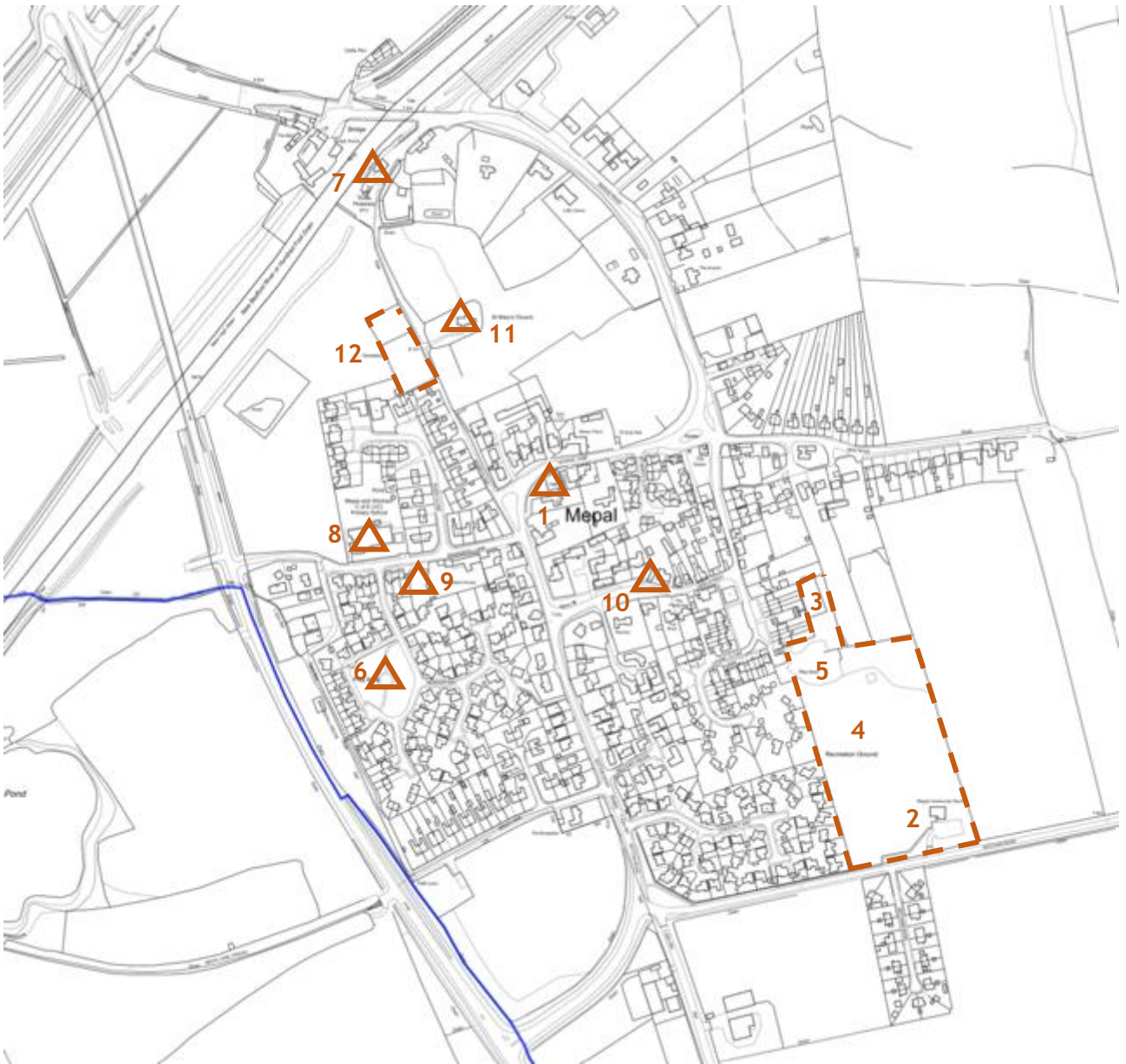
*(Note the numbers in the bullets in the policy are reference numbers on map 3 below)*

### Policy 3 - Allotments

Land East of Laurel Close which provides the existing allotments shown on Map 4 will be retained for ongoing community use. Proposals to improve or expand the existing allotments will be supported subject to other policies. Proposals to relocate the existing allotments or to create new allotment provision will be supported subject to other policies.



<sup>18</sup> See paragraph 20.12 and footnote 15



Map 3 - Community Assets © Crown Copyright

  Main Community Facilities       Plan Area Boundary





Map 4 - Existing Allotments © Crown Copyright

Existing Allotments       Plan Area Boundary

## 21. Highway Impact

21.1 Policy COM 8: Parking provision of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan sets out parking standards to ensure that appropriate car parking and cycle parking provision is secured in new developments. In Mepal a number of the community assets such as the Post Office & Shop and the Three Pickerels Public House have limited, or no off-street car parking provision and they already rely upon on-street car parking provision. Where those important community assets want to expand their provision or diversify their offering a flexible approach towards parking provision should be taken dependent upon the particular circumstances. Policy COM 8 does not require the provision of electric vehicle charging points. As part of a move to low-carbon vehicle use the provision of electric vehicle charging points is important, this is addressed in the Building Regulations<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Approved Document S 'Infrastructure for the charging of electric vehicles' under the Building Regulations requires electric vehicle charging point provision in some new developments.

21.2 Policy COM 7: Transport impact of the Local Plan addresses issues relating to overall transport impact, including the provision of safe access.

21.3 The Community Pavilion and Recreation Ground share a vehicular access which has limited visibility, the highway verge here is not deep enough to provide the standard visibility splay set-back distance of 2.4m. The boundary to the Recreation Ground encompasses mature trees and hedging and to improve visibility a significant amount of vegetation would need to be removed. This would have a significantly harmful impact on the streetscene and would harm biodiversity. Therefore, other options to improve visibility of the access within the highway corridor itself, perhaps involving traffic calming measures need to be explored to improve highway safety on the Witcham Road gateway into the village. The Parish Council will work proactively with Cambridgeshire County Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council to explore and develop options.



## Policy 4 - Highway Impact

Development proposals should incorporate adequate on-site provision for the storage of refuse collection bins. Wherever practicable, the storage facilities provided should be screened from the highway and any other public vantage points and be easily accessible to the collection point.

In considering development proposals for the expansion, alteration or diversification of community assets in Mepal that rely upon existing on-street parking provision a flexible approach towards parking provision should be taken dependent upon the particular circumstances. A balanced approach considering any adverse impacts arising from additional on-street parking demand and the economic and social benefits arising from the proposal shall be taken.

Proposals to improve visibility and safety of the access to the Mepal Community Pavilion and Recreation Ground will be supported.

## 22. Climate Change Mitigation

22.1 National policy aims to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels for heating and transport applications. In the local area, only limited progress has been achieved employing practical steps such as setting aside areas for electric vehicle charging points and solar panel systems. For the immediate future, every encouragement should be given to speed the adoption of low-carbon and energy efficient processes.

22.2 Mitigating and adapting to the effect of climate change will contribute to sustainable development in terms of meeting environmental objectives. Paragraph 157 of the NPPF calls for progression towards a low carbon economy by the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which is achievable, for example, through the use of renewable energy for transport (NPPF Section 9) and home heating. In practical terms these measures can also be achieved by progression towards zero carbon green hydrogen technologies.

22.3 Home heating is a significant source of carbon emissions. For domestic scenarios the permitted development rights for renewable energy and low-carbon energy generation are

quite generous and subject to criteria it may be possible to install air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps or photovoltaic panels without planning permission<sup>20</sup>.

22.4 The demand for electric vehicle charging points is predicted to increase rapidly in the years ahead. To prevent hazards to pedestrians, charging points and their associated cables need to be sited away from roads and footways or public footpaths whenever possible. NPPF Section 9 refers to parking design requirements as part of sustainable transport. These include convenience, safety, security, compliance with national design codes, and the provision of charging points for plug-in and ultra-low emission vehicles.



### Policy 5 - Climate Change Mitigation

Proposals for new development which encourage and include the use of renewable energy generation and low-carbon modes of transport will be supported.

Where planning permission is required, proposals for installing renewable or low-carbon energy generation on existing premises will be supported. Proposals to support the operation of essential infrastructure through the use of renewable or low-carbon energy generation will be supported.

Proposals for small-scale or community-scale renewable energy generation that are community led will be supported where the following criteria are met:

- They provide energy to one or more local community facilities;
- They respect the rural and/or settlement character of the locality;
- They will not adversely affect biodiversity;
- Residential amenity is protected.

Proposals to install electric vehicle charging points, where they need planning permission, in off-street areas used for parking will be supported.

Proposals of parties, including charging point providers, Mepal Parish Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to develop on-street electric vehicle charging infrastructure including through use of existing street furniture will be supported.



<sup>20</sup> The Planning Portal (<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission/common-projects>) provides a useful series of advice on common projects that people may want to do to their home and helps to explain whether planning permission may be required or not

# Natural and Built Environment



## 23. Heritage Assets

23.1 Heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, landscapes and townscapes which have historic or architectural significance; collectively they help make the historic environment. The protection of individual heritage assets is important not only to safeguard the significance of the asset itself but also to protect the wider historic environment.

23.2 In terms of designated heritage assets, Mepal Parish contains a Scheduled Monument, the Parish also contains a Grade II\* Listed Building and eight Grade II Listed Buildings as follows:



Map 5 - Listed Buildings © Historic England

### Scheduled Monument

- Bowl barrow 250m ESE of Common Farm

### Grade II\*

- Church of St Mary

### Grade II

- Mepal House, 1 High Street
- 3 High Street
- 8 High Street



- 15 High Street
- The Round House, 1 School Lane
- Ash Cottage, 2 School Lane
- Grove House, Bridge Road
- Wisteria House, Brangehill Lane

23.3 In terms of other items of heritage interest, Mepal has two entries on the East Cambridgeshire War Memorials [List](#)<sup>21</sup>:

- Small rose garden containing low circular memorial in the centre. Etched squadron badge of 75 (New Zealand) Squadron RAF on top of memorial
- Mepal Cross on four stepped base<sup>22</sup>

23.4 In terms of non-designated heritage assets, the East Cambridgeshire [Buildings of Local Interest Register](#)<sup>23</sup> 2017 has been produced under Policy ENV 13 of the Local Plan. It doesn't include any buildings in Mepal, the criteria it uses to define non-designated heritage assets as 'Buildings of Local Interest' is set out below.

**CRITERIA FOR LOCAL LIST**

**Age & Condition**

The older a building or structure the more likely it is to be of historical significance;

- b) Does it survive in anything like its original form or condition? This would exclude buildings that have been subject to unsympathetic extensions and alterations, including the installation of UPVC windows and doors.

<b>A5</b>	<b>Post 1945</b>	Buildings or structures of exceptional quality and of significant landmark value
<b>A4</b>	<b>1939-1945</b>	Rare example of surviving war time building or structure
<b>A3</b>	<b>1914-1939</b>	Buildings or structures that are substantially complete and unaltered and a good example of the style
<b>A2</b>	<b>1840-1914</b>	Buildings or structures affected by only minor alterations that could be easily reversed
<b>A1</b>	<b>Pre 1840</b>	Buildings or structures where form is clearly identifiable and there is the potential to restore

**Historical Association**

Buildings or structures with well documented associations with locally important people or events that also retain some quality in their physical fabric.

- B1** Is it associated with any important historical figure or family?  
**B2** Is it a rare or fine example of a building or structure that illustrates the local social, economic or industrial history?  
**B3** Is it associated with an important local historic event?

**Architectural Interest**

Consideration will be given to a building or structure that is of local architectural value and includes design qualities typical of the local area.

- C1** Is it a good example of a local vernacular?  
**C2** Is it related by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings and contributes positively to their setting?  
**C3** Is it a rare or pioneering example of a building type or structure?  
**C4** Was it built by a famous local or national architect?  
**C5** Is it a particularly good example of an architectural style?

**Local Characteristics**

Consideration will be given to buildings or structures that contribute to local identity and distinctiveness.

- D1** Is it a structure that exhibits distinctive characteristics relative to the area (i.e. post box, milestones, street furniture, etc)?  
**D2** Is it a structure that is a landmark feature that makes a particularly positive contribution to the distinctive character of the place?  
**D3** Is it a locally important building type, such as a Church, Chapel, School or water feature?

Extract from the East Cambridgeshire Buildings of Local Interest Register

23.5 The historic environment contributes to:

- a sense of place, by providing local distinctiveness in terms of building styles and materials and providing landmark features;
- the local economy, by attracting visitors to specific heritage assets;
- quality of life, by creating attractive places to live and work including the provision of accessible recreation space and opportunities for community involvement in restoration work; and

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/conservation/war-memorials-0>

<sup>22</sup> In July 2023 Historic England indicated that it had received an application to add the War Memorial to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, that request is under consideration

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/conservation/buildings-local-interest>

- an understanding of the history of the United Kingdom, by offering physical links to the past

23.6 Mepal has a number of architecturally valuable and important old buildings or buildings which are important historically which are not statutorily listed. The Neighbourhood Plan has considered the criteria in the East Cambridgeshire Buildings of Local Interest Register and as a consequence considers that there are a small number of buildings and structures worthy of being identified as non-designated heritage assets. Quite a few buildings identified in the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record have been demolished over the years. The Great Dyke and Sluice is an interesting piece of industrial history<sup>24</sup>. Policy 6 does not set out an overall policy approach towards heritage assets because the Local Plan and the NPPF are considered to address this sufficiently already. In terms of non-designated heritage assets, the East Cambridgeshire Buildings of Local Interest Register that had been produced under Policy ENV 13 of the Local Plan does not include any buildings in Mepal. The Neighbourhood Plan has used the same criteria as used by the District Council to define non-designated heritage assets as 'Buildings of Local Interest' and uses the same terminology.



23.7 The village is located within an area of archaeological potential with archaeological remains associated with the former extent of the medieval village of Mepal. The medieval Church of St Mary lies in this area and between the Church and Bridge Road lie earthwork remains of the shrunken village. Limited archaeological work has been carried out in the village, notably to the south of the church and south-west of the earthworks, where medieval features have been investigated which may be part of a moated site.

### Policy 6 - Non-Designated Heritage Assets

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the buildings below as 'Locally Important Buildings' as non-designated heritage assets (shown on Maps 6a and 6b):

- Mepal Union Free Chapel<sup>25</sup>, School Lane \* + (A)
- Manor Farm, School Lane \* (B)
- Village Hall (Old School), School Lane \* # + (C)
- Mepal Cross War Memorial, High Street \* # + (D)
- Rose Garden War Memorial, Laurel Close \* # + (E)
- Mepal Bridge (dated 1930) + (F)
- The Old Chapel, New Road (dated 1846) \* + (G)
- Mepal Great Dyke and Sluice # + (H)
- Mepal (Fortrey's Hall) Pumping Station, Engine Bank # + (J)

(Key - \* Architectural Interest      # Historical Association      + Local Characteristics)

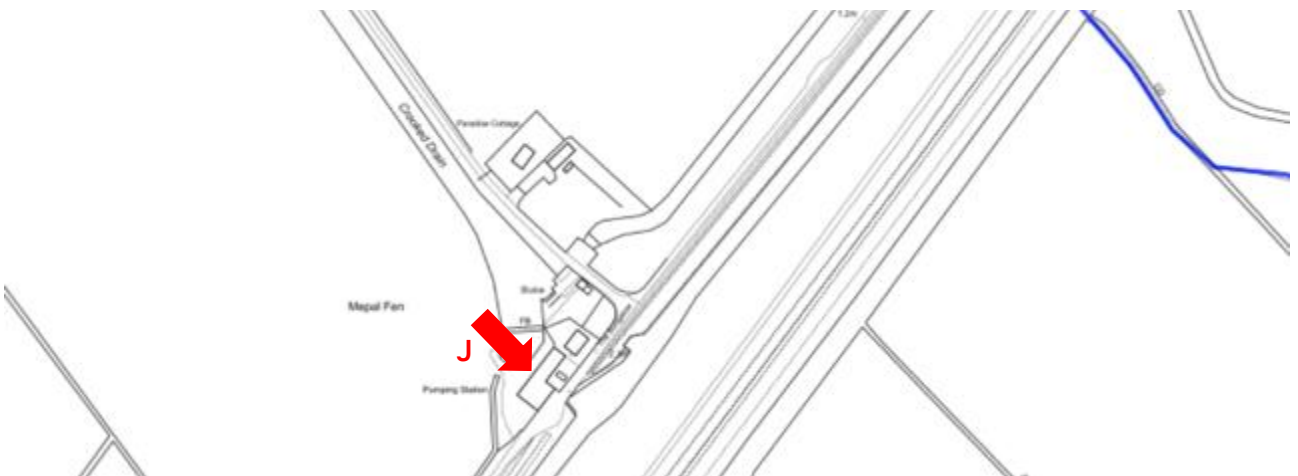
(Note the letters in the bullets in the policy are reference letters on the maps below, there is no letter I used to avoid misinterpretation)

<sup>24</sup> More information on the role and history is available on display boards in the village hall or on the website <http://www.ousewashes.info/sluices/mepal-lock.htm>

<sup>25</sup> The attached Hiam Memorial schoolroom dates from 1992 and it has no particular heritage interest



Map 6a - Non-Designated Heritage Assets © Crown Copyright



Map 6b - Non-Designated Heritage Assets © Crown Copyright

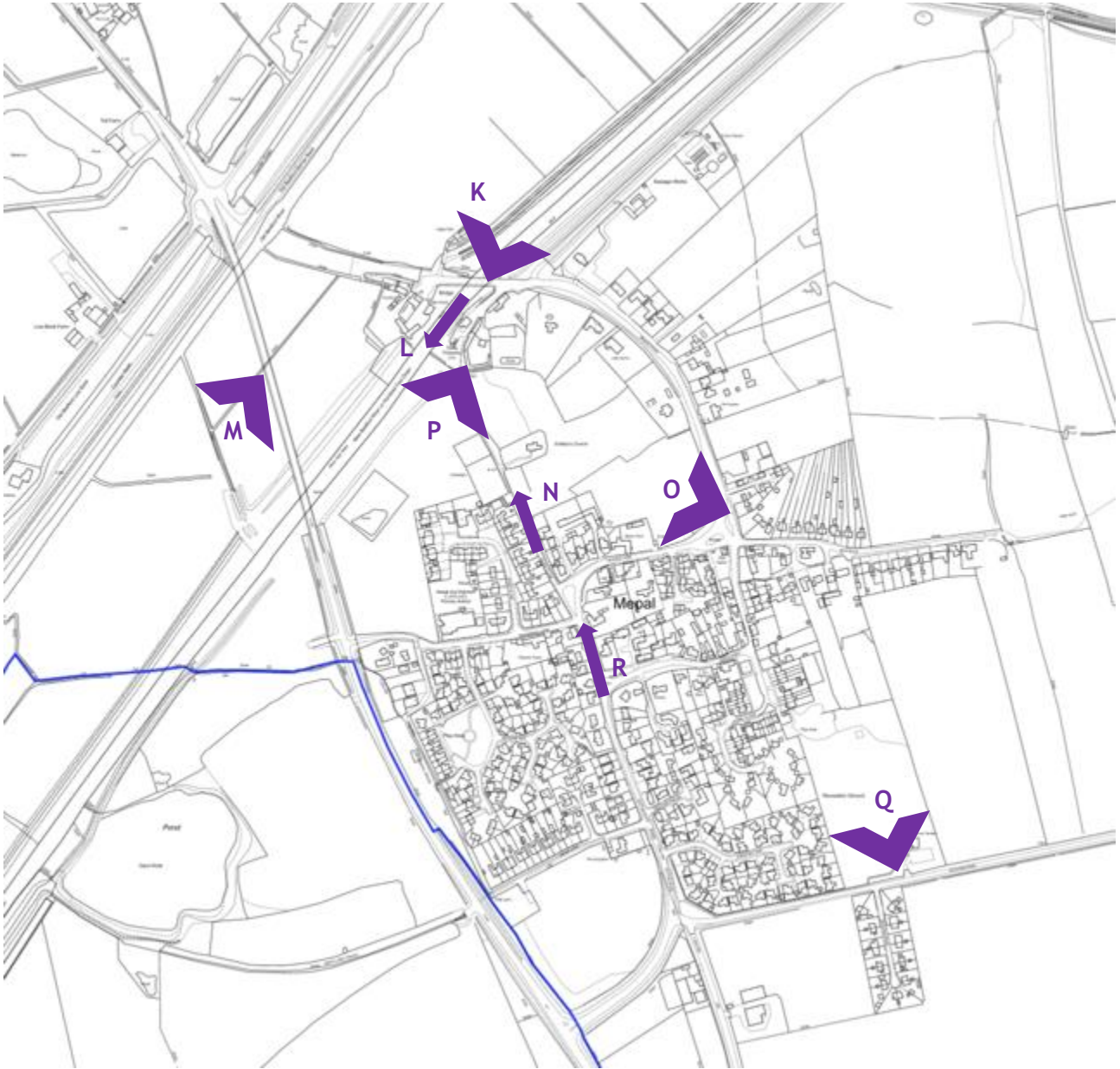
 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

 Plan Area Boundary

## 24. Local Distinctiveness, Public Realm and Views & Vistas

24.1 Local distinctiveness includes many facets which make Mepal what it is. That includes how buildings look, how the open spaces operate, important views and vistas, how the public realm looks and the relationship between the village and the Ouse Washes.

24.2 There are a number of public views and vistas around the village and the wider Parish that contribute to the sense of place and are worthy of protection.



Map 7 - Important Public Views and Vistas © Crown Copyright

 /  Important Public Views and Vistas  Plan Area Boundary

## Policy 7 - Views and Vistas

Proposals should not result in the loss of the following important public views and vistas shown on Map 7:

- Mepal Bridge - Looking North-East along Ouse Washes (K)
- Mepal Bridge - Looking South-West along Ouse Washes (L)
- Ireton's Way Bridge - Looking South-West along Ouse Washes (M)
- River Close (a.k.a Church Lane) - Looking North to the Church of St Mary (N)
- Opposite The Green - Looking North-West to the Church of St Mary (O)
- Three Pickerels Pub - Looking South-West towards Pond (P)
- Recreation Ground - Looking North towards Trees (Q)
- Sutton Road by the Round House - Looking North (R)

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should actively enhance or promote the identified important views and vistas.

*(Note the letters in the bullets in the policy are reference letters on the maps below)*

24.3 A high quality public realm made up of well-designed streets, pavements and other publicly accessible areas, together with the boundary treatments to local properties and front gardens, make a positive contribution to how Mepal looks. A high-quality public realm contributes to a high quality of life which can help to maintain healthy living, prevent anti-social behaviour and encourage high standards of property maintenance.

24.4 The potential for extensions to dwellings and other buildings could erode the quality of the built environment where they are not well-designed. The inter-relationship between the public realm and the traditional built form of the village has the potential to be eroded through inappropriate



siting of extensions and outbuildings. In most cases it is unlikely that extensions to front elevations or outbuildings set forward of the host property will be acceptable.

24.5 All new development should respect the local character of the area, ensuring that the building height, size and choice of external materials complement the existing fabric and do not obscure important views into and out of the settlements in the Parish. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure that any new development or change to buildings should respond to local character and the history and identity of local surroundings. Maintaining local distinctiveness includes ensuring that the form of a vernacular building is respected. This includes architectural detailing and the nature of the locally available construction materials.

24.6 The setting of the village and the relationship to the Ouse Washes are important characteristics that contribute positively to the local distinctiveness of the village. Church Field is identified as a Verdant Open Area. The Church enjoys a verdant open setting made up of the County Wildlife Site to the north, the Cemetery to the west and the open fields that lie between the Church and School Lane and Bridge Road. The Church of St Mary is a Grade II\* listed building and has particular significance. It is unusual for a parish church that

it is not located within the built extent of the village but is instead in the countryside. This appears in part to be due to the modern village not being in the same location as the medieval village. Its verdant and undeveloped setting forms an important part of the significance of the Church as a listed building. Retaining the current countryside setting of the Church is therefore considered fundamental to conserving this heritage asset in a manner appropriate to its significance, so that it can be enjoyed for its contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. Development to date in the village has involved land parcels that have been farmyards or gardens, whereas Church Field has been undeveloped since the medieval settlement disappeared. The Church Field Verdant Open Space also incorporates a footpath which runs from Bridge Road/School Lane to the south and east to St Mary's Church to the north and west.

- 24.7 The Fenced Acre (area of trees and water east of A142 bridge) is another important verdant open area which contributes to the character and setting of the village. This area is understood to be owned by the Environment Agency. The County Wildlife Site and The Ouse Washes are also protected by Policy ENV 7 (Biodiversity and geology) of the Local Plan.
- 24.8 The area along Bridge Road has had a dramatic increase in new development in recent years, with a total of 16 dwellings having been granted planning permission<sup>26</sup>. This has intensified the ribbon of development between the village and the Ouse Washes. This has led to increased development and activity within the impact zones for the Ouse Washes which is designated as a Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), a Special Protection Areas (SPA), a Ramsar site and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Further additional development has the potential to adversely affect the biodiversity of this important site.
- 24.9 Bridge Road has undergone a change in character from sporadic buildings along a country lane to a lane with a more developed character, although some semi-rural character subsists due to gaps in the built form together with the retention of verges, trees and hedgerows. Further development in this part of the village could affect the traditional separation between the main core of the village and the Ouse Washes. As such this area is sensitive to change and intensification and it is considered appropriate to seek to protect this area.

### Policy 8 - Local Character

Development proposals should respect the local character of the area, ensuring that the building height, size, and choice of external materials complement the host property where relevant and the surrounding area. As appropriate to their scale, nature, and location, proposals for new development or alterations to buildings should respond to local character and the history and identity of local surroundings including where appropriate ensuring that the form of a vernacular building is respected or architectural detailing is incorporated.

The following two areas as shown on Map 8 are identified as Important Verdant Open Areas Which Contribute to the Character and Setting of the Village:

- Church Field; and
- Fenced Acre (area of trees and water east of A142 bridge)

Proposals for built development within the Verdant Open Spaces will not be supported. Other development proposals should safeguard the openness of the Spaces and reflect their importance to the character and setting of the village. Other development proposals which would lessen the contribution that these two areas make to the character and setting of the village in terms of their undeveloped and verdant nature will not be supported.

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<sup>26</sup> As at September 2023

The Bridge Road area is identified as an Area Sensitive to Change and Intensification, this is shown on Map 8. Development proposals in the defined Area should demonstrate that they would not individually or cumulatively adversely affect the Ouse Washes and respects the semi-rural character of Bridge Road. Development proposals in the Area Sensitive to Change and Intensification will not be supported where they:

- would conflict with the semi-rural character of Bridge Road; or
- involves the loss of natural features such as trees, verges and hedgerows; or
- would lead to the urbanisation of the streetscene; or
- would involve the subdivision of plots and increase the density of development to not reflect the lower density character.



Map 8 - Areas Important to Village Character and Setting © Crown Copyright

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Important Verdant Open Areas |  Area Sensitive to Change & Intensification |
|  County Wildlife Site         |  Ouse Washes                                |
|  Plan Area Boundary           |  |

## 25. Natural Environment

25.1 Most of the Parish is rural and contains substantial areas of farmland which contributes significantly to the character of the Parish and the setting of the village.

25.2 There is a need to assess the likelihood of proposals or policies within a Neighbourhood Plan having a significant effect on the 'National Sites Network' consisting of areas designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA's). Consideration of the internationally designated Ramsar sites is also necessary; many Ramsar sites are also SACs or SPAs. In the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the 'National Sites Network' of interest are the river corridors of the New Bedford River, Old Bedford River and River Delph that is part of the extensive Ouse Washes. The Ouse Washes is a Special Protection Area, a Special Area of Conservation, a Ramsar Site and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.



Map 9 - National Sites Network © Natural England

25.3 Outside of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the closest other 'National Sites Network' are Fenland SAC/Wicken Fen Ramsar lying approximately 15km to the south-east; the Portholme SAC (Huntingdon/Godmanchester) lying approximately 22km to the south-west; the Fenland



SAC/Woodwalton Fen Ramsar lying approximately 21km to the west; Nene Washes SAC/SPA/Ramsar lying approximately 22km to the north.

25.4 SACs were previously classified in accordance with EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). Article 3 of this Directive requires the establishment of a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitat types and 788 species identified in Annexes I and II of the Directive. These sites are now designated under the Conservation of Habitats and Species [Regulations](#)<sup>27</sup> 2017 (as amended).

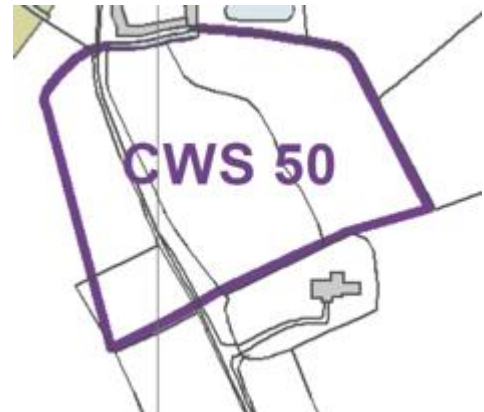


25.5 SPAs were sites first classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC), more commonly known as the Birds Directive. They were classified for rare and vulnerable birds, listed in Annex I to the Birds Directive, and for regularly occurring migratory species. These SPA sites are now designated under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

25.6 Ramsar Sites are designated under the International Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention, Iran 1971 and amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although Ramsar Sites are not protected in law by domestic UK legislation as a matter of policy government has decreed that unless otherwise specified procedures relating to SPAs and SACs will also apply to Ramsar Sites.

25.7 The Habitats Regulation Assessment screening identifies that the Neighbourhood Plan proposals would not individually or cumulatively result in any potential significant effects on any European designated site.

25.8 The Parish contains no National Nature Reserves. The Plan area contains a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the Ouse Washes. The part of the SSSI is recorded as being in unfavourable - no change condition. The woodland to the north of the Church of St Mary is identified in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan as a County Wildlife Site (CWS 50)<sup>28</sup>. The Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire demonstrated strong support for wildlife conservation.



25.9 Mepal lies within the Great Ouse Strategic Green Infrastructure Area identified in the Local Plan. Development therefore needs to look at providing opportunities for green corridors that provide biodiversity enhancement across the plan area. Areas of biodiversity enhancement offer the potential to complement the existing Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Domestic gardens can also play an important role as part of 'Green Corridors' around the village, including providing habitat for hedgehogs, birds and amphibians. Simple biodiversity enhancement measures such as bird and bot bricks/boxes and gaps in fences to provide hedgehog highways can make a contribution to biodiversity net gain.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents>

<sup>28</sup> Called River Close Parkland

## 26. Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

26.1 As much of the Parish contains substantial areas of farmland there are actually few areas of trees and no large woodlands. There are no ancient woodlands within Mepal. The local landscape does have a character derived from having some Elm within the tree stock present.

26.2 The village does benefit from a number of Tree Preservation Orders in the locations shown on the map below at 1 High Street (E/5/1986); Three Pickerels (E/6/1990); 3 Sutton Road (E/9/1992); North of St Mary's Church (E/11/1992); 34 New Road (E/12/1999); and 7 Bridge Road (E/16/1999). A TPO from 1987 did exist at Rectory Farm previously, but the trees were removed when Rectory Fields was built. Another TPO from 1971 did exist to the east of the former Mepal Road but no trees seem to remain.



Map 10 - General Location of TPOs in Mepal © Crown Copyright

○ General Location of TPOs    □ Plan Area Boundary

26.3 Field hedgerow and tree planting is therefore important as part of the character and provide biodiversity habitat. There are some trees and small woods on the entry to the village on

the A142 and Sutton Road; around the Recreation Ground, Play Park and Allotments; Laurel Close; north of the Church of St Mary; and around some of the lakes.

- 26.4 Lilibet Woods is the narrow piece of land than runs between Brangehill Drove (Footpath/Byway at the back of Meadow way) and the A142. Brangehill Grove and Lilibet Woods are owned by Mepal Parish Council. Lilibet Woods was planted by the Parish Council and local volunteers as a new woodland to increase tree cover and biodiversity. Additional tree and woodland planting across the Parish would help to improve ecological networks within the Parish and contribute to biodiversity net gain. The Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire demonstrated strong support for wildlife conservation.



## Policy 9 - Boundary Treatment, Hedgerows, Trees and Public Realm

As appropriate to their scale, nature, and location, the boundary treatments and any public realm works should respond positively to the setting and character of the site concerned and how it will contribute to the delivery of high quality streets, pavements, and other publicly accessible areas.

Development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on boundary treatments, landscaping, hedgerows, or trees which make a positive contribution to the street scene and/or public realm or make an important contribution to biodiversity habitat will not be supported.

## 27. Flood Risk and Drainage

- 27.1 Parts of the Parish is subject to fluvial (river) flood risk<sup>29</sup> as shown on the map below. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided, by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future).

- 27.2 Where development is necessary in such areas the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere<sup>30</sup>. Most of the northern part of the Parish lies within Flood Zone 3 and is therefore at a risk of flooding greater than 1 in 100 years.



- 27.3 Surface water flooding<sup>31</sup> potential affects parts of Mepal as shown on the map. Notably surface water flood risk (High or Medium risk) affects Bridge Road; Brick Lane; and Chestnut Way. Surface water flooding is a matter to be taken into account in the planning application process. The Neighbourhood Plan alongside the Local Plan and the NPPF strives to promote sustainable drainage techniques (SuDS).

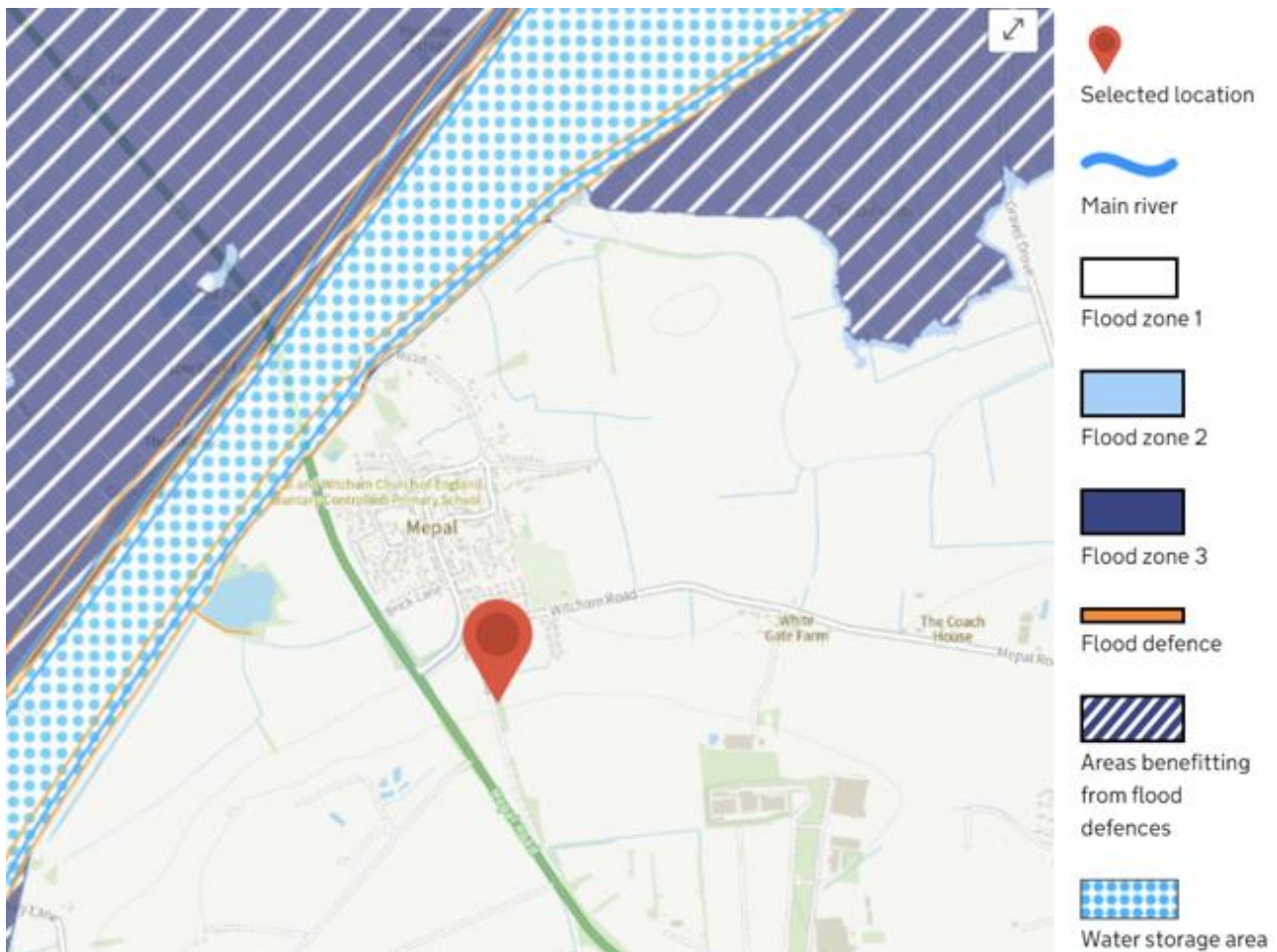
- 27.4 Policies ENV 2 and ENV 8 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan alongside the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD already provide a suitable policy framework to consider surface water

<sup>29</sup> Flood risk at individual property level can be obtained via <https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk>

<sup>30</sup> See NPPF paragraphs 165 onwards, paragraph 170(b) of the NPPF aims for development to be safe for the lifetime without increasing flood risk and where possible reducing flood risk overall

<sup>31</sup> Flood risk at individual property level can be obtained via <https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk>

drainage in new development proposals. In addition, it is the Government’s intention to implement the measures in the Flood and Water Act 2010 to make SuDS mandatory in new development in England in 2024.

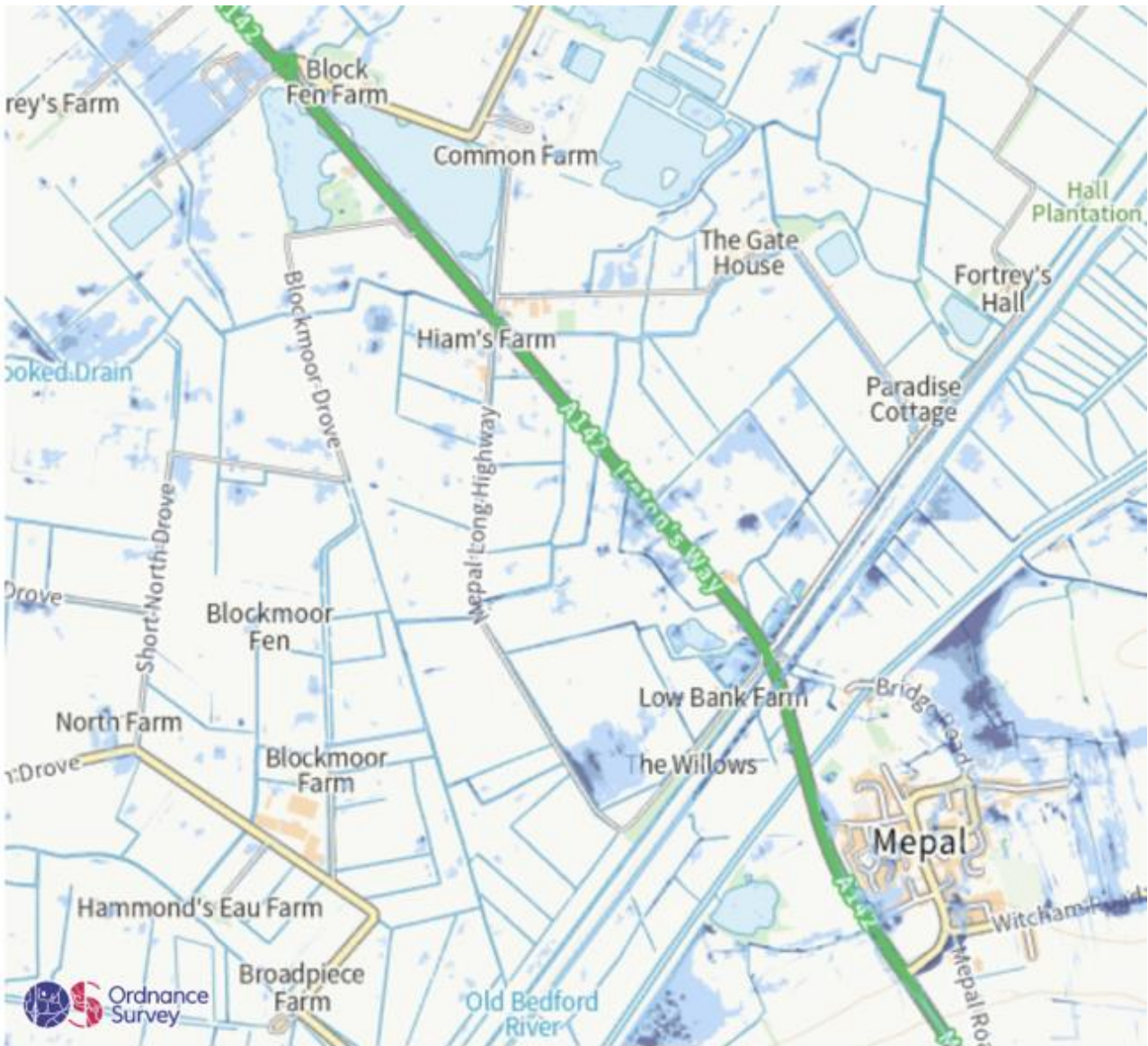


Map 11 - Flood Map for Planning © Environment Agency

27.5 SuDS are an approach to managing surface water run-off which seeks to mimic natural drainage systems and retain water on or near the site as opposed to traditional drainage approaches which involve piping water off site as quickly as possible. SuDS offer significant advantages over conventional piped drainage systems in reducing flood risk by attenuating the rate and quantity of surface water run-off from a site, promoting groundwater recharge, and improving water quality, biodiversity and amenity.

27.6 Opportunities for increasing biodiversity at opportunity sites and in the protected settlement breaks are discussed within the Neighbourhood Plan. There is a potential for increasing biodiversity through the use of SuDS features such as attenuation basins, ponds and swales in these circumstances.





Extent of flooding from surface water



Map 12 - Surface Water Flooding © Environment Agency

## 28. Local Green Space

28.1 In 2012, the Government introduced a new designation of Local Green Space through the NPPF allowing local communities to put forward green areas of particular importance to them for protection. Once designated, planning permission will only be granted for the development of the sites in very special circumstances or if the development clearly enhances the Local Green Space for the purposes it was designated. The Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire demonstrated that the majority of local residents thought that the green spaces in Mepal were good or excellent.



28.2 Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used where the green space meets the criteria set out in the NPPF. Namely that it is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. Green space used for recreation use can also be protected under the Policy dealing with community assets.

28.3 The village has a small number of areas of informal green space. The village has the churchyard, cemetery and the recreation ground which provide a more formal role. The churchyard is protected by virtue of it being the setting of the Church of St Mary as a Listed Building.

28.4 The sites listed in the policy have been assessed as according with the criteria for Local Green Space as set out in the NPPF. All of the designated Local Green Spaces are capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period for the Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF<sup>32</sup>.



28.5 A tabular assessment of each of the designated Local Green Spaces against these criteria is set out below the maps following the policy. A brief written summary describing what makes each of the Local Green Spaces demonstrably special to the local community is set out following the respective map. Additional information on the assessment process undertaken is also set out in the Local Green Spaces Evidence document.

## Policy 10 - Local Green Space

The following sites are designated as Local Green Spaces and are identified on Maps 13a and 13b:

- Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drove (LW)
- Meadow Way Green (MW)
- Land at School Lane (SL)
- Land at High Street (HS)
- Land at Laurel Close (LC)
- The Green (TG)
- Mepal Recreation Ground, Play Area and Allotments (RG)

The sites listed above and shown on the plan below are designated as areas of Local Green Space, which will be protected in a manner consistent with the protection of land within Green Belts.

<sup>32</sup> Paragraph 105

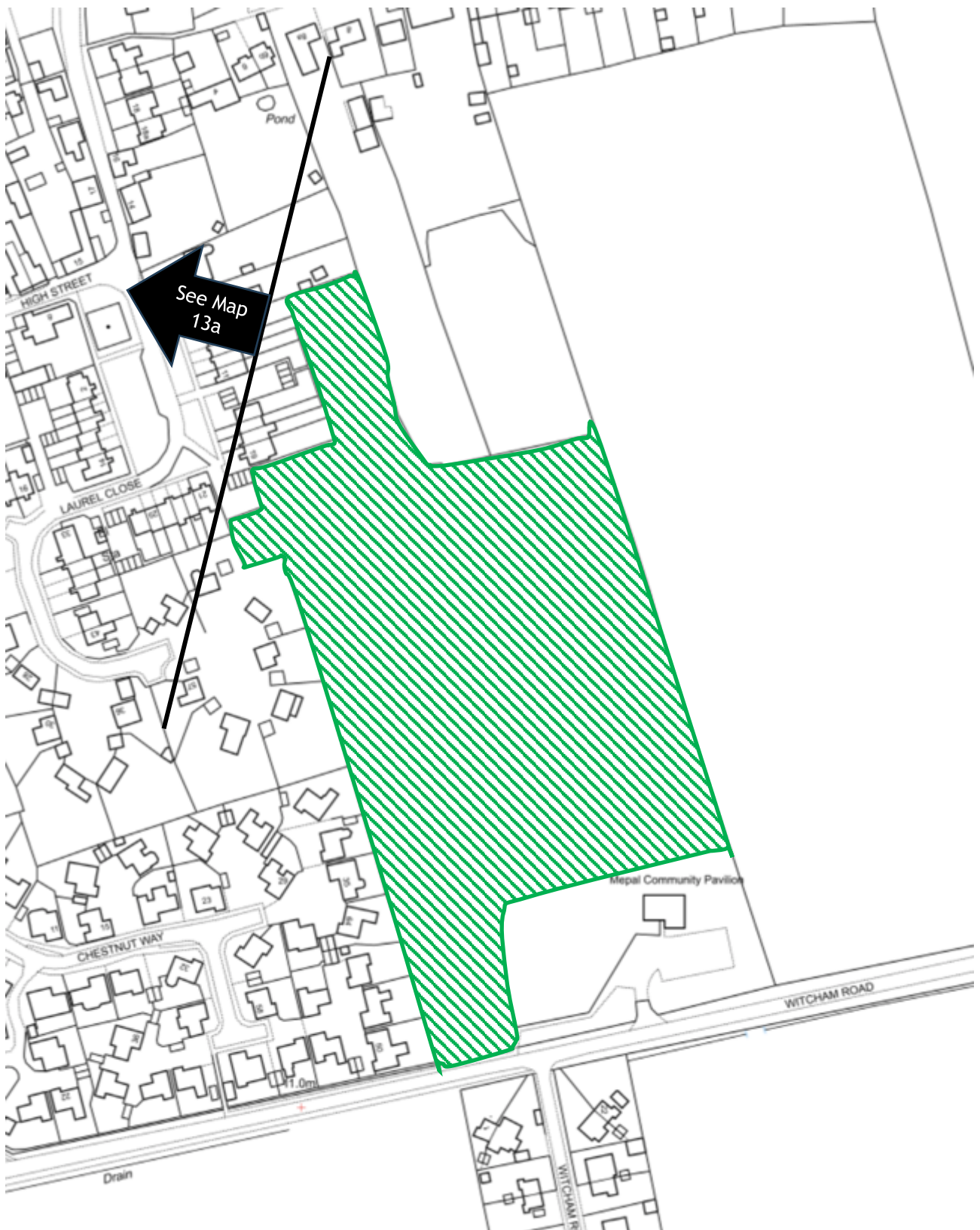


Map 13a - Local Green Spaces © Crown Copyright

 Local Green Spaces

 Plan Area Boundary





Map 13b - Local Green Spaces © Crown Copyright

 Local Green Spaces

 Plan Area Boundary



Description of Local Green Spaces

Site	Demonstrably Special Significance				
	Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational Value	Tranquillity	Wildlife Richness
Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drove	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Way Green	✓	x	✓	x	x
Land at School Lane	✓	x	x	✓	✓
Land at High Street	✓	✓	x	✓	x
Land at Laurel Close	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Green	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
Mepal Recreation Ground, Play Area and Allotments	✓	x	✓	✓	✓

Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drove

Lilibet Woods is the narrow piece of land that runs between Brangehill Drove (Footpath/Byway at the back of Meadow Way) and the A142. Brangehill Grove and Lilibet Woods are owned by Mepal Parish Council. The Footway/Byway give the opportunity for recreational value and tranquillity for local residents. The trees offer important ecological habitat. It provides the opportunity for informal recreation. It forms a green buffer between the village and the A142 and makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area.



Meadow Way Green

It provides the opportunity for informal recreation and has the visual appearance of a modern style village green. In this respect it makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area. It is crossed by a defined footway and links via a footpath to Brangehill Drove, it is part of a natural circular walk on public footpaths around the western side of the village. It has a formal play area at the centre which is protected as a community asset.

Land at School Lane

This area contains a bench for quiet reflection, it also contains the village sign and forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. A mature tree is located within the land which makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contributes to ecological habitat.

Land at High Street

This area contains a bench for quiet reflection, it also contains the war memorial cross which has historical significance. It also forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. A small tree is located within the land which offers the potential to make a future important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribution to ecological habitat when it is more mature.

### Land at Laurel Close

This is a multi-functional green space, the area contains a bench for quiet reflection, it also contains the rose garden war memorial which has historical significance. It also forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. It provides the opportunity for informal recreation and has the visual appearance of a modern style village green. In this respect it makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area. It contains a number of mature trees which make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribute positively to ecological habitat.



### The Green

The Green is marked on the 1885 OS Map and hasn't changed shape over time, it does unusually have a property within one corner. The area forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. It provides the opportunity for informal recreation and makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area. It contains a number of mature trees which also make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribute positively to ecological habitat.

### Mepal Recreation Ground, Play Area and Allotments

This overall area comprises the Recreation Ground, adjacent Play Area and Allotments, these collectively form a contiguous network of green space. It provides the opportunity for both informal recreation and formal recreation. It makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and the setting of the overall village. It contains a number of mature trees and hedgerows around the boundaries and at the northern end which also make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribute positively to ecological habitat. It provides an important community asset. The Community Pavilion, car park and the adjacent area surrounding are excluded from the Local Green Space in order to prevent LGS designation impacting on future expansion of built facilities or car parking if this becomes necessary. In this way the area of the LGS is capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period whilst providing flexibility for the Community Pavilion to develop to meet changing community needs if necessary in coming decades.



# Implementation and Delivery

- 29.1 The implementation and delivery section sets out what actions are required to turn this Neighbourhood Plan into reality on the ground.
- 29.2 The Parish Council needs the help of public and private partners to create a sustainable community and deliver the policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council will work with a number of partners, including the following, to implement the Plan:

## Delivery Partners

Mepal Parish Council (PC)  
 East Cambridgeshire District Council (DC)  
 Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC)  
 Private Developers (PD)  
 Local Schools (LS)  
 Infrastructure Providers (IP)  
 Community Groups (CG)  
 Local Residents (LR)  
 Local Businesses (B)

- 29.3 New development creates a need to provide new infrastructure, facilities and services to successfully incorporate new development into the surrounding area to benefit existing, new and future residents. As provided for within national planning policy, appropriate financial contributions will be obtained from developers to combine with public funding to deliver the necessary facilities in infrastructure. The determination of planning applications also allows matters to be secured through planning conditions. The table below sets out the relevant implementation partners for the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

- 29.4 The Neighbourhood Plan provides a positive framework to ensure that development in Mepal will bring positive benefits to the Parish.

Policy	Delivery Partners	Implementation Method
Sustainable Growth		
Policy 1 - Settlement Boundary (Update to Development Envelope)	PC, DC, PD & LR	Determination of Planning Applications
Policy 2 - Community Assets	PC, DC, PD, HP, LR, LS & CG	Determination of Planning Application s& Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy or Community Initiatives
Policy 3 - Allotments	PC, DC, CCC, PC, LR & CG	Determination of Planning Applications, Community Infrastructure Levy and Community Initiatives
Policy 4 - Highway Impact	PD, DC, CCC, PC & LR	Pre-Application Consultation and Determination of Planning Applications
Policy 5 - Climate Change Mitigation	PC, DC, CCC, PD, LR, LS, B, IP & CG	Determination of Planning Applications

Policy	Delivery Partners	Implementation Method
Natural and Built Environment		
Policy 6 - Non-Designated Heritage Assets	PC, DC, PD, LR & CG	Pre-Application Consultation and Determination of Planning Applications or Community Initiatives
Policy 7 - Views and Vistas	PD, DC, PC, LR & CG	Pre-Application Consultation and Determination of Planning Applications
Policy 8 - Local Character	PD, DC, PC, CCC, LR, CG & IP	Pre-Application Consultation and Determination of Planning Applications
Policy 9 - Boundary Treatment, Hedgerows, Trees and Public Realm	PD, DC, PC, LR & CG	Pre-Application Consultation and Determination of Planning Applications
Policy 10 - Local Green Space	PC, DC, PD, LR, B & CG	Determination of Planning Applications or Community Initiatives

29.5 Mepal Parish Council is committed to Localism and bringing greater locally informed influence over planning decisions and it will be the key organisation in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Council will build upon its excellent track record in engaging in planning decisions (reactively through being consulted and proactively through promoting the policies and proposals of this Plan), and by delivering projects and infrastructure for the local community. However, the Council recognises the need to involve a range of other organisations if the potential of this plan is to be realised.

29.6 In England, communities that draw up a Neighbourhood Plan and secure the consent of local people in a referendum, which is then legally ‘Made’, benefit from 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) revenues arising from development that takes place in their area. However, this only applies to development permitted after the making of the NP and is not applied retrospectively. Up until that time the provision of eligibility for 15% of the CIL generated in the area applies, subject to a cap per annum as specified in CIL Regulations.



29.7 Contributions through CIL will be obtained from any housing development taking place in the Parish. The money raised through CIL is used to fund district-wide and local infrastructure projects that benefit local communities as set out in Section 216 (2) of the Planning Act 2008. The element of CIL which is the district portion will be spent by East Cambridgeshire District Council on district-wide infrastructure in line with the priorities that they have set. The neighbourhood proportion of the CIL monies goes to the Parish Council and will be spent on local infrastructure as required by law.

29.8 The neighbourhood proportion of the CIL will be focused on assisting the delivery of community infrastructure projects located in Mepal Parish. In terms of priorities for spending the neighbourhood portion of CIL these will include consideration of the infrastructure projects in the Mepal Parish Council 5 Year Plan:

- Picnic Benches at Play Park
- Fit Trail Equipment
- Replacing Play Equipment
- Communal BBQ in Recreation Ground
- Provision of Allotments

29.9 In addition, the Parish Council will seek to influence annual and other budget decisions by East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council on housing, open space and recreation, economic development, community facilities and transport, through respective plans and strategies. The Parish Council will also work with the appropriate agencies and organisations to develop funding bids aimed at achieving Neighbourhood Plan policies and objectives. This might include the Lottery, UK Government programmes and any partnership programmes.

## Monitoring and Review

30.1 Continual plan review is a fundamental element of the planning system. It is important to check that the plan is being implemented correctly, ensure that outcomes match objectives and to change the plan if they are not. This Neighbourhood Plan will be carefully monitored by the Parish Council and reviewed if it becomes apparent that the vision, goals and objectives of the Plan are not being met.

30.2 Monitoring is a shared responsibility of the Parish Council as the qualifying body; East Cambridgeshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority; and users of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council will consider the effectiveness of the policies and proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan each time it makes representations on a planning application; alongside seeking views on the Neighbourhood Plan at each Annual Parish Meeting. The Parish Council will request East Cambridgeshire District Council to raise with it any issues arising out of the development management process in determining individual planning applications. Users of the Neighbourhood Plan are encouraged to make comments on monitoring of the Neighbourhood Plan to the Parish Council at any point.



30.3 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to guide development up to 2031. It is unlikely that the Neighbourhood Plan will remain current and entirely relevant for the entire plan period and may, in whole or in part, require some amendments before 2031.

30.4 There are a number of circumstances under which a partial review of the plan may be necessary, in accordance with best practice, Mepal Parish Council and its partners will consider undertaking a partial review of the Neighbourhood Plan no later than 5 years following its finalisation.

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# Glossary

31.1 The majority of the glossary is copied from the NPPF to ensure consistency<sup>33</sup>. The terms set out below are either included within the Neighbourhood Plan or are within parts of the NPPF or the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan that is referred to in the Neighbourhood Plan.

**Affordable housing \***: Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following categories: affordable housing for rent; starter homes; discounted market sales housing; and other affordable routes to home ownership including shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). *[Note a more detailed definition is included in the NPPF<sup>34</sup>]*

**Amenity \***: A positive element or elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area. For example, open land, trees, historic buildings and the inter-relationship between them, or less tangible factors such as tranquillity.



**Ancient Woodland**: An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

**Conservation (for heritage policy)**: The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) \***: A levy allowing local authorities to raise funds from owners or developers of land undertaking new building projects in their area.

**Development plan**: Is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made and published spatial development strategies, together with any regional strategy policies that remain in force. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.

**Economic development \***: Development, including those within the B Use Classes, public and community uses and main town centre uses (but excluding housing development).

**Green infrastructure**: A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.

**Heritage asset**: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

<sup>33</sup> Those items in the glossary which do not match the NPPF or are not defined in the NPPF glossary are marked with an Asterix \*

<sup>34</sup> See Annex 2 on page 67 of the NPPF

**Historic environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

**International, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity:** All international sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites), national sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and locally designated sites including Local Wildlife Sites.

**Living Conditions \*:** The circumstances affecting the way in which people live, especially with regard to their well-being. Relevant factors include: internal space; access to external space; outlook; privacy; daylight; sunlight; overbearing impact; impact from pollution including noise.

**Local planning authority:** The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority include the district council, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority, the Mayor of London and a development corporation, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities. *[The local planning authority for this area is East Cambridgeshire District Council]*

**Local Plan:** A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.

**Neighbourhood plans:** A plan prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

**NPPF \*:** National Planning Policy Framework, this forms the overall planning policy produced by the Government to inform the making of Development Plans including Neighbourhood Plans and decision making on planning applications.

**Open space:** All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

**Policies Map \*:** A document which illustrates on a base map all the policies and proposals contained in this Neighbourhood Plan or another document which forms part of the Development Plan.

**Planning condition:** A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.





**Planning obligation:** A legally enforceable obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

**Planning Practice Guidance \*:** this forms the overall national planning practice guidance and advice produced by the Government to inform the making of Development Plans including Neighbourhood Plans and decision making on planning applications.

**Ramsar sites:** Wetlands of international importance, designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention.

**Rural exception sites:** Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding. *[Also see Policies HOU 3 and HOU 4 of the Local Plan]*

**Scheduled Monument \*:** Those monuments that are given legal protection by being scheduled by Historic England.

**Self-build and custom-build housing:** Housing built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing. A legal definition, for the purpose of applying the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended), is contained in section 1(A1) and (A2) of that Act.

**Setting of a heritage asset:** The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

**Settlement Boundary \*:** The boundary drawn around various towns and villages to limit new development and define the 'built-up area' of the settlement. Outside of the settlement boundary is considered to be the countryside.



**Significance (for heritage policy):** The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.

**Special Areas of Conservation (SAC):** Areas defined by regulation 3 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been given special protection as important conservation sites.

**Special Protection Areas (SPA):** Areas classified under regulation 15 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds.

**Site of Special Scientific Interest:** Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment:** A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

**Supplementary planning documents:** Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

**Sustainable transport modes:** Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

**Verdant \*:** Countryside green with grass or other rich vegetation.

**Windfall sites:** Sites not specifically identified in the development plan.



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# Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031

Made Version  
July 2024

The Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Mepal produced in  
accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General)  
Regulations 2012



<https://www.mepalparish.org/mepal-neighbourhood-plan/>

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