

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031



Basic Conditions Statement September 2023



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Submission of the Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with Regulation 15 of Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012



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



NEIGHBOURHOOD-PLAN.CO.UK

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Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031



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Introduction

1. This Statement has been prepared to accompany the Mepal Neighbourhood Development Plan (“the Neighbourhood Plan”) under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (“the Regulations”). The relevant local planning authority is East Cambridgeshire District Council.
2. The policies described in the Neighbourhood Plan relate to the development and use of land in the designated Neighbourhood Area only. The document sets out the period of the Neighbourhood Plan which is from 2022 to 2031. The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced based on an evidence base as at December 2022.
3. The Neighbourhood Plan does not deal with county matters (mineral extraction and waste development), nationally significant infrastructure or any other matters set out in Section 61K of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
4. The Statement addresses each of the ‘basic conditions’ required of the Regulations and explains how the Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirements of paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act.
5. The Regulations state that a neighbourhood plan will be considered to have met the basic conditions if:
 - Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood development plan;
 - The making of the neighbourhood development plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - The making of the neighbourhood development plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
 - The making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, retained EU obligations.

Basic Conditions

6. The Regulations state that a neighbourhood plan will be considered to have met the basic conditions if:
 - [Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood development plan;](#)

This means that the Neighbourhood Plan must be in accordance with national policy objectives in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which advises that neighbourhood plans must support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans and spatial development strategies and for example cannot plan for less development.

- [The making of the neighbourhood development plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;](#)

This means that the Neighbourhood Plan must demonstrate how it will contribute to improvements in environmental, economic and social conditions or that consideration has been given to how any potential adverse effects arising from the proposals may be prevented, reduced or mitigated. To demonstrate that a Neighbourhood Plan

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contributes to sustainable development, sufficient and proportionate evidence should be presented on how the plan guides development to sustainable solutions. This can be set out within the Neighbourhood Plan itself, or in the Basic Conditions Statement that accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan.

- The making of the neighbourhood development plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);

This means that the Neighbourhood Plan must not create a conflict with the strategic policies of the development plan, which in this case is the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. There is no obligation to be in general conformity with an emerging development plan document, however, it is sensible to have regard to the emerging Single Issue Review of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan in order to prevent a position where the Neighbourhood Plan could become out of date soon after being finalised because of the subsequent adoption of the Local Plan Review.

- The making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach and is otherwise compatible with retained EU obligations;

A neighbourhood plan must be compatible with the retained European Union obligations, as incorporated into UK law, in order to be legally compliant.

- Prescribed conditions are met in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the Neighbourhood Plan. (Namely: The making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017)

Regulations 32 and 33 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) set out two additional basic conditions to those set out in primary legislation and referred to in the paragraph above. Only one is applicable to Neighbourhood Plans and was brought into effect on 28 December 2018. It requires that the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This is addressed in the HRA Screening document.

Other Requirements

7. In addition, the appointed Independent Examiner must also consider:
 - Whether the draft neighbourhood plan is compatible with human rights legislation as detailed in the Town and Country Planning Act Schedule 4B para 8(6) and paragraph 10 (3)(b) and the Human Rights Act 1998.
8. The Independent Examiner is further required to check as detailed in sections 38A and 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act whether the Neighbourhood Plan:
 - Has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body;
 - Has been prepared for an area that has been properly designated for such plan preparation;

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- Meets the requirements to i) specify the period to which it has effect; ii) not include provision about excluded development; and iii) not relate to more than one neighbourhood area; and
- Its policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

Structure of Neighbourhood Plan

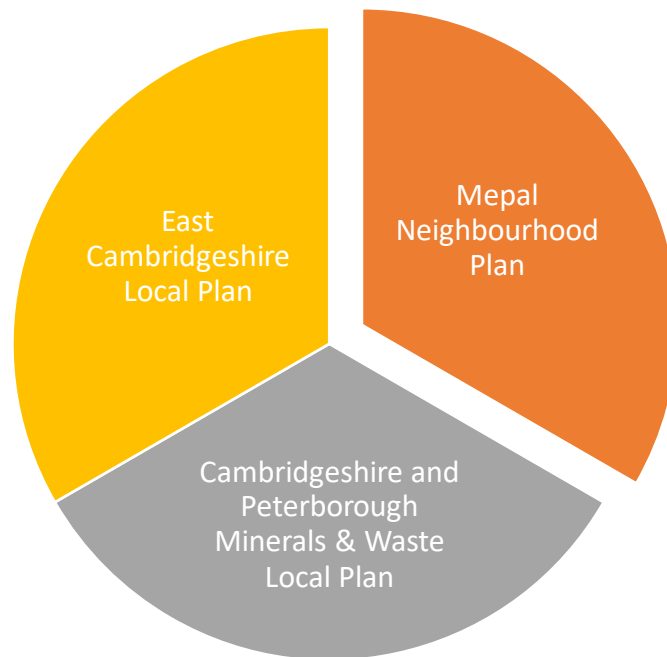
9. The Neighbourhood Plan includes two themed sections: Sustainable Development and Natural & Built Environment.
10. These are all issues that are important to the community and within each section policies are included to guide the development and use of land. Each Policy contains an introduction and explanatory text followed by the Policy itself in coloured text.
11. Following the themed sections, the Neighbourhood Plan contains an implementation and delivery section. It is important that Neighbourhood Plans are deliverable and this section includes the key projects arising from the Neighbourhood Plan and details of how they will be delivered.

Associated Documents

12. The Neighbourhood Plan has a number of associated supporting documents as follows:
 - Designated Area Plan and Explanatory Statement
 - Consultation Statement
 - Basic Conditions Statement
 - Settlement Boundary Methodology
 - Local Green Space Evidence Document
 - Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Request
 - Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Screening Request

The Development Plan

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



14. 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.
15. The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 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.
16. The preparation of the [Local Plan](https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/east-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2015)¹ was informed through several stages of public consultation. The Local Plan was adopted by the Council on 21 April 2015, it covers the plan period up to 2031. In April 2020 the Council determined that it was necessary to review the Local Plan through what is known as a ‘Single Issue Review’ and addresses the housing requirement for the same plan period up to 2031.
17. Consultation on the Proposed Submission version of the ‘Single Issue Review’ of the Local Plan was carried out between 3 May and 13 June 2022. Two earlier consultations also took place on a draft document, during 2021. On 19 July 2022, the Council submitted its proposed [Single Issue Review Local Plan](https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/local-plan-review)² to the Planning Inspectorate, so that an independent examination of the proposal can take place.
18. The Examination of the Local Plan Review is underway, and the hearing sessions were held in November 2022 and March 2023. As part of that Examination process the Local Plan Review has recently undertaken consultation on modifications during July and August 2023. Neither the existing East Cambridgeshire Local Plan nor the Single-Issue Review Local Plan allocate sites for development in Mepal.

¹ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/east-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2015>

² <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/local-plan-review>

Strategic policies for the purposes of neighbourhood planning

19. 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.
20. 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.

Surrounding Neighbourhood Plans

21. 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'.
22. 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'.
23. 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.
24. Sutton Parish Council are in the early stages of doing a review of their 2019 Neighbourhood Plan with consultation on the Regulation 14 version of that review ending in July 2023. 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.

Previous Neighbourhood Plan

25. In terms of procedural compliance there can only be one Neighbourhood Plan for any locality and a Neighbourhood Plan cannot relate to land outside the designated area. 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. Consequently, three small parts of the designated Mepal Neighbourhood Area 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’.
26. This procedural issue is explained in detail in the document titled ‘Designated Area Plan and Explanatory Statement’.

Retained EU Obligations

27. 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. The aim of SA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative impacts. Through this approach, the SA where it is undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maximise the Neighbourhood Plan’s contribution to sustainable development.
28. Mepal Parish contains a number of statutory designations. The river corridors of the New Bedford River, Old Bedford River and River Delph 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.
29. The Parish Council considers that there will be no significant environmental effects arising from the Neighbourhood Plan. A Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Request Report has been produced which demonstrates that the Neighbourhood Plan will not have any significant environmental impact. A Habitat Regulations Assessment has not been undertaken.
30. The SEA and HRA Screening Request Reports demonstrate that the Neighbourhood Plan will not have any significant environmental impact on any international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity. The SEA Screening Request and a HRA Screening Request for the Neighbourhood Plan has demonstrated that a SEA and Appropriate Assessment respectively is not required. Consequently, no SA incorporating an SEA has been undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan.
31. Copies of the SEA Screening Request and a HRA Screening Request for the Neighbourhood Plan were published for consultation alongside the draft Neighbourhood Plan at the Regulation 14 consultation stage. Consultation included the Local Planning Authority (East Cambridgeshire District Council) and the three designated environmental bodies (Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England). Neither the LPA nor any of the environmental bodies raised any concerns relating to the conclusions in relation to SEA and HRA screening. None of the three statutory environmental bodies made any specific comments on the Neighbourhood Plan or supporting documents. The statutory environmental bodies tend to rely upon providing general advice on Neighbourhood Plans rather than providing bespoke responses.

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32. In order to be absolutely certain as to whether the three statutory environmental bodies had any specific views on the SEA Screening, East Cambridgeshire District Council suggested that we specifically re-ask the statutory environmental bodies to confirm if they have any comments or not on the SEA Screening which was done in June and July 2023.
33. Historic England confirmed that they considered that SEA was not required. The Environment Agency did not explicitly answer the question but did indicate that they did not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects arising from the Neighbourhood Plan. Natural England indicated that: *“It is Natural England’s advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:*
 - *significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,*
 - *significant effects on Habitats sites, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.”*
34. Natural England also explicitly confirmed that: *“The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs (‘candidate SACs’, ‘possible SACs’, ‘potential SPAs’) or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.”*
35. Copies of the consultation and the responses received are in the respective SEA Screening and HRA Screening documents.
36. Following consultation relating to the conclusions in relation to SEA and HRA screening, the Parish Council remains satisfied that there would be no significant environmental effects arising from the NDP. As such, it remains the view of the Parish Council that the NDP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken. The Parish Council also remains satisfied that the conclusion that the Neighbourhood Plan will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any internationally designated sites either on its own or in combination with any other plans; thereby meaning that an Appropriate Assessment is not required remains valid.
37. The Neighbourhood Plan is required to meet Retained EU obligations, under Paragraph 8(2)(f) Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990³.
38. The Neighbourhood Plan has regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Conformity with National Planning Policy

39. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared with regard to national policies as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is also mindful of Planning Practice Guidance published by the Government in April 2014 (as amended) in respect of formulating neighbourhood plans. The table set out in Appendix 1 shows how each policy conforms with the NPPF.

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/schedule/4B>

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

40. Throughout this Neighbourhood Plan reference is made to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁴. 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 September 2023⁵. It is also supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance. Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan policies against the NPPF and the strategic policies of the Development Plan is contained in Appendix 1.
41. The NPPF provides a framework to produce locally distinctive Neighbourhood Plans which reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. The NPPF in paragraph 29 states: *“Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.”* The development plan is explained later in this Neighbourhood Plan.
42. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. One of the most widely used definitions of sustainable development comes from the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission), ‘Our Common Future’ (1987), which defines it as *“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”*.
43. The NPPF in paragraph 8 states: *“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*
- a) an economic objective - to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
 - b) a social objective - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and*
 - c) an environmental objective - to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”*

Planning Practice Guidance

44. Planning Practice [Guidance](#)⁶ 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.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework>

⁵ The September 2023 version of the NPPF only amended the previous July 2021 version of the NPPF with regard to wind energy proposals

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

45. Planning Practice Guidance highlights that: *“Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.”*

General Conformity with the Strategic Policies of the Development Plan

46. The table set out in Appendix 1 shows how each policy conforms with the relevant strategic policies of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

Contribution to Achieving Sustainable Development

47. 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 Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.
48. The Neighbourhood Plan achieves positive planning for sustainable development as defined under the NPPF that requires the following aspects to be considered when preparing and neighbourhood plan, ‘an economic role’, ‘a social role’ and ‘an environmental role’. These factors cannot be considered in isolation as well-designed houses and improved environmental aspects can lead to improving the lives and health of residents. Considering the economic, social and environmental roles throughout the neighbourhood plan process can help achieve sustainable development.

Consultation and Conclusion

49. As a result of the assessment the Parish Council consider that the Neighbourhood Plan meets the relevant ‘Basic Conditions’. The Basic Conditions Statement was published for consultation alongside the draft Neighbourhood Plan and no representation received identified that any concerns that the Neighbourhood Plan did not meet any of the Basic Conditions.

Appendix One: Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Development Plan and National Policy

Strategic Policies of the Development Plan

50. The Tables below have assessed the Neighbourhood Plan’s policies in terms of general conformity with the Strategic (and Non-Strategic) Policies of the adopted Development Plan. Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan policies against the NPPF is also undertaken alongside the strategic policies of the Development Plan.
51. 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 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan does not explicitly state which policies within the Local Plan are to be considered 'strategic' for the purposes of neighbourhood planning. As such it only possible to undertake an assessment against all of the policies in the Local Plan.

Table 1 - Relevant Development Plan Policies

	East Cambridgeshire Local Plan
Sustainable Development	
Policy 1 - Settlement Boundary (Update to Development Envelope)	GROWTH 1; GROWTH 2; GROWTH 5; GROWTH 6; HOU 4; HOU 8; EMP 2; EMP 3; EMP 4; ENV 1
Policy 2 - Community Assets	GROWTH 6; COM 3; COM 4
Policy 3 - Allotments	GROWTH 6; COM 3; COM 4
Policy 4 - Highway Impact	COM 7; COM 8
Policy 5 - Climate Change Mitigation	ENV 4; ENV 5; ENV 6
Natural and Built Environment	
Policy 6 - Non-Designated Heritage Assets	GROWTH 6; ENV 1; ENV 13
Policy 7 - Views and Vistas	GROWTH 6; ENV 1; ENV 2
Policy 8 - Local Character	ENV 1; ENV 2; ENV 7; ENV 12
Policy 9 - Boundary Treatment, Hedgerows, Trees and Public Realm	GROWTH 6; ENV 1; ENV 2; ENV 7
Policy 10 - Local Green Space	GROWTH 6; ENV 1; ENV 7

National Planning Policy

52. The Table below shows how the Parish Council have assessed the conformity of each policy against the strategic policies of the Development Plan and National Policy.

53. The NPPF in paragraph 16 requires that: “Plans should:

- a) be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development¹⁰;
- b) be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable;
- c) be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees;
- d) contain policies that are clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals;
- e) be accessible through the use of digital tools to assist public involvement and policy presentation; and
- f) serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area (including policies in this Framework, where relevant).”

54. The Parish Council considers that all of the Neighbourhood Plan policies meets this requirement of the NPPF. The NPPF goes on in paragraph 29 to state: “Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies” All of the policies meet this obligation.

Table 2 - Conformity Against the Strategic Policies of the Development Plan and National Policy

Sustainable Development
<p>Policy 1 - Settlement Boundary (Update to Development Envelope)</p> <p><u>Need for the Policy</u></p> <p>The Local Plan does not specify any specific housing requirement for Mepal. There is an overall allowance for rural windfall development to come forward across all the settlements in East Cambridgeshire that are not specified in Table 3.2 - Summary of estimated housing supply 2011-31 in the Local Plan.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>The ‘development envelope’ for Mepal in the Local Plan is now dated and notably planning permissions have been granted along Bridge Road outside of the development envelope. As such an updated development envelope would reflect the current position.</p> <p>The Single-Issue Review Local Plan does not propose to update the development envelope; therefore, it is appropriate for the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan to look to update the development envelope. For clarity the Neighbourhood Plan will call this the ‘Settlement Boundary’.</p> <p>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.</p>

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

[Conformity with National Policy](#)

Paragraph 13 of the NPPF identifies that: “*Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies...*” this policy facilitates the non-strategic housing requirement for the Parish. Paragraph 29 of the NPPF requires Neighbourhood plans to not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.

Although this is a constraint related policy the settlement boundary contains sufficient land within it to deliver the non-strategic housing and employment requirement to 2031 as identified in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

The policy does not conflict with paragraph 80 of the NPPF in relation to dwellings in the countryside as the policy is clear that residential development will be permitted in the countryside where it meets the requirements of other policies in the Development Plan or National Planning Policy.

The policy allows for appropriate development outside the settlement boundary such as diversification of agricultural businesses and leisure developments as envisaged in paragraph 85 of the NPPF. It does not prevent rural exceptions schemes for affordable housing as in paragraph 78 of the NPPF.

It also recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside as set out in paragraph 174 of the NPPF.

[Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Adopted Development Plan](#)

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.

The 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. The Policy then lists 19 main categories of proposals that may be permitted as an exception in the countryside outside development envelopes.

Policy 2 - Community Assets

[Need for the Policy](#)

The Parish Council is keen to retain the existing provision of community assets across the village. Community facilities are provided by both the public and private sectors. The protection of existing community assets is considered important to meet the needs of local residents and a sustainable community.

[Conformity with National Policy](#)

Paragraph 93 of the NPPF requires the retention of the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs. Paragraph 99 has similar aims regarding open space, sports and recreational facilities. It also supports paragraphs 84 and 98 of the NPPF.

[Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Adopted Development Plan](#)

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 COM3 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. This is equally relevant to the application of this Neighbourhood Plan policy.

Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Local Plan in relation to Neighbourhood Plans identifies that: *“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 below.”*

Policy 3 - Allotments

[Need for the Policy](#)

The Parish Council is keen to retain the existing provision of community assets across the village. Community facilities are provided by both the public and private sectors. The protection of existing community assets is considered important to meet the needs of local residents and a sustainable community.

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, until recently the Parish Council were operating a waiting list but recent turnover of plots means that there is no longer a waiting list. Due to an ongoing level of demand the Parish Council has been actively exploring options to provide additional land for allotments. The Neighbourhood Plan therefore sets out a positive policy framework towards the provision of land for additional allotments.

[Conformity with National Policy](#)

Paragraph 93 of the NPPF requires the retention of the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs. Paragraph 99 has similar aims regarding open space, sports and recreational facilities. It also supports paragraphs 84 and 98 of the NPPF.

[Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Adopted Development Plan](#)

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.

Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Local Plan in relation to Neighbourhood Plans identifies that: *“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 below.”*

Policy 4 - Highway Impact

[Need for the Policy](#)

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.

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.

Conformity with National Policy

NPPF Section 9 refers sustainable transport, paragraph 104 identifies that patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.

Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Adopted Development Plan

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

Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Local Plan in relation to Neighbourhood Plans identifies that: *“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 below.”*

Policy 5 - Climate Change Mitigation

Need for the Policy

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.

Mitigating and adapting to the effect of climate change will contribute to sustainable development in terms of meeting environmental objectives.

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.

Conformity with National Policy

Paragraph 152 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.

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.

Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Adopted Development Plan

Policy ENV 4: Energy and water efficiency and renewable energy in construction; Policy ENV 5: Carbon offsetting and Policy ENV 6: Renewable energy development in the Local Plan sets out the broad approach towards climate change as part of Chapter 6 on Environment and Climate Change. The Local Plan has no overall climate change mitigation policy approach.

Natural and Built Environment

Policy 6 - Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Need for the Policy

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 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. This is one of a suite of policies to protect the built and natural environment of Mepal.

Conformity with National Policy

Paragraph 190 of the NPPF identifies that plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.

Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Adopted Development Plan

In terms of non-designated heritage assets, the East Cambridgeshire Buildings of Local Interest Register 2017 has been produced under Policy ENV13 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' in that register has been taken into account.

Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Local Plan in relation to Neighbourhood Plans identifies that: *"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 below."*

Policy 7 - Views and Vistas

Need for the Policy

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. This is one of a suite of policies to protect the built and natural environment of Mepal.

Conformity with National Policy

The NPPF in paragraph 130 attaches importance to development which is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, establishes or maintains a strong sense of place, to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.

Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Adopted Development Plan

The supporting text to Policy ENV1 in paragraph 6.2.6 states: *“In protecting landscape and settlement character the Council will expect: important existing views into and out of settlements to be maintained and enhanced and new ones to be created.”* Policy ENV2 also looks to protect important views.

Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Local Plan in relation to Neighbourhood Plans identifies that: *“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 below.”*

Policy 8 - Local Character

Need for the Policy

All new development should respect the local character of the area. There are a number of areas which are integral to the locally distinctive character of Mepal and make the place feel and look the way it does, this policy looks to protect those defining characteristics. The village gateway along Mepal Road forms an important entrance vista into the village. The verdant and undeveloped character and appearance is of significance to the overall landscape setting of the village.

There are two areas identified as Important Verdant Open Areas Which Contribute to the Character and Setting of the Village, namely Church Field; and Fenced Acre (area of trees and water east of A142 bridge). These two areas contribute to the character and setting of the village in terms of their undeveloped and verdant nature. Church Field is considered to form an important part of the setting of the Grade II* Listed Church of St Mary.

The Bridge Road area is identified as an Area Sensitive to Change and Intensification, this area has seen significant ribbon development which has altered the rural lane character and separation between the main village and the Ouse Washes. The remaining semi-rural character needs to be protected. This is one of a suite of policies to protect the built and natural environment of Mepal.

Conformity with National Policy

The NPPF in paragraph 130 attaches importance to development which is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, establishes or maintains a strong sense of place, to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.

Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Adopted Development Plan

Policy ENV1 identifies that the pattern of distinctive historic and traditional landscape features, such as watercourses, characteristic vegetation, individual and woodland trees, field patterns, hedgerows and walls, and their function as ecological corridors for wildlife dispersal should be protected. It also identifies that development should respect the settlement edge, space between settlements, and their wider landscape setting.

Policy ENV 2 also identifies that development should be designed to a high quality, enhancing and complementing local distinctiveness. The Neighbourhood Plan draws out the features that creates the local character and distinctiveness of Mepal.

The policy also looks to protect the relationship to the Ouse Washes which is in general conformity with Policy ENV 7. One of the areas identified also forms the setting of the Grade II* Listed Church and protection is supported by Policy ENV 12.

Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Local Plan in relation to Neighbourhood Plans identifies that: *“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 below.”*

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

[Need for the Policy](#)

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. Field hedgerow and tree planting is therefore important as part of the landscape character.

Greenery within Mepal is of value to local residents, this is one of a suite of policies to protect the built and natural environment of Mepal. The Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire demonstrated strong support for wildlife conservation.

[Conformity with National Policy](#)

The NPPF in paragraph 130 attaches importance to development which is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, establishes or maintains a strong sense of place, to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.

[Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Adopted Development Plan](#)

Policy ENV2: Design looks for all development to be designed to a high quality, enhancing and complementing local distinctiveness and public amenity by relating well to existing features and introducing appropriate new designs.

Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Local Plan in relation to Neighbourhood Plans identifies that: *“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 below.”*

Policy 10 - Local Green Spaces

[Need for the Policy](#)

The NPPF sets out a positive framework for local communities to identify areas which are demonstrably special to them as Local Green Space. A number of areas were considered and assessed against the criteria for Local Green Space and the designation was found to be suitable.

Green spaces within Mepal are of value to local residents, this is one of a suite of policies to protect the built and natural environment of Mepal.

[Conformity with National Policy](#)

The policy complies with the requirements of paragraphs 101 to 103 of the NPPF. In particular paragraph 101 states: *“The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.”* The Neighbourhood

Plan delivers sufficient opportunities for sustainable growth whilst protecting the green areas of particular importance to the local community.

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF supports the retention of open space which this policy supports in its widest sense.

Conformity with Strategic Policies of the Adopted Development Plan

Policy ENV1 looks to protect landscape and settlement character, green spaces are a fundamental element of this. Policy ENV 7: Biodiversity looks to protect biodiversity which some Local Green Spaces contribute to.

Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Local Plan in relation to Neighbourhood Plans identifies that: *“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 below.”*

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan - Basic Conditions Statement

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Appendix Two: Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan Policies on Sustainable Development

55. The Table below has assessed the Neighbourhood Plan’s policies in terms of how it will deliver sustainable development in the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability. It shows how the plan’s policies are contributing to the achievement of sustainable development by using the following indicators against the economic, social and environmental factors on a scale - ** = very positive * = positive - = neutral x = negative and xx = very negative.

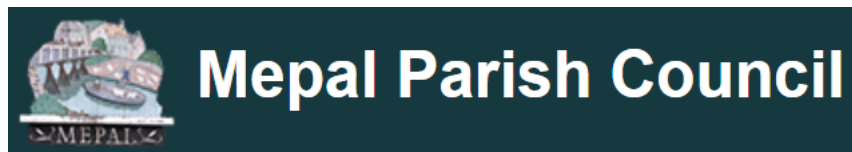
Table 4 - Assessment of Neighbourhood Plan Policies on Sustainable Development

	Economic Factors	Social Factors	Environmental Factors
Sustainable Development			
Policy 1 - Settlement Boundary (Update to Development Envelope)	**	**	**
Policy 2 - Community Assets	*	**	*
Policy 3 - Allotments	-	**	*
Policy 4 - Highway Impact	-	*	*
Policy 5 - Climate Change Mitigation	*	*	**
The Natural and Built Environment			
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	-	**	**

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031

Basic Conditions Statement September 2023

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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