

SOHAM BARWAY

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

REFERENDUM VERSION SEPTEMBER 2024

Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan

Referendum Version

2021 to 2031

Soham Town Council

Referendum Version

September 2024

Chairman's Foreword

Soham is a unique and ancient market town, incorporating the hamlet of Barway, situated on the edge of the fens in East Cambridgeshire with Ely 5 miles to the north and Newmarket 7 miles South. It is home to over 12,000 people, some residents are new, some have been here for generations. They all come together to populate a vibrant and diverse town which is unmatched in the region for its green spaces and wealth of history.

Soham and Barway have already seen and will see, a significant amount of new housing and employment development coming forward, that was set out in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023). The point of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is to ensure that the proposals set out in the ECDC Local Plan meet the needs of Soham and Barway; provides the infrastructure and services that are needed; ensures that it is high quality; responds to climate change emergency; and safeguards those important green spaces, commons and environmental habitats, that are important and valued by Soham and Barway residents.

The Neighbourhood Plan must fit with the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan and will impact on future planning decisions. The Soham and Barway NP is seeking to address key priorities identified by the community.

This is the Neighbourhood plan for Soham and Barway. It is a document that, if adopted by the people of Soham and Barway, will help to guide and influence what future development happens in our communities, where it happens and when. It seeks to enhance the Local Plan by putting in place additional criteria very specific to our area regarding housing needs, protection of green spaces and better employment opportunities, among other things.

Following an independent examination, residents have the opportunity to show their support for the plan in a local referendum. If the plan is supported by the local community, the plan must then be adopted by the Local Authority.

Once adopted by East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC), all developers will need to take notice of the proposals agreed in our NP. It will also mean Soham and Barway, will receive a larger amount of the money paid by developers through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to be used for community projects.

Even by modern standards Soham has changed a great deal in recent years. We must protect the historical sites and natural beauty of Soham, such as the commons, rivers and our heritage as well as continuing to evolve for the future with our new Rail Station, more cycle paths, modern amenities, and sustainable development.

I would encourage you to vote in the referendum and ensure that the communities views are considered when reaching decisions on new developments in Soham and Barway.

David Woricker
Mayor of Soham

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1 Introduction

1.1 Soham and Barway has seen significant change with over 1,400 new people coming to the town and to Barway, as well as our surrounding countryside since 2011. This has put pressure on our public services and increased the need for facilities. The Soham rail station has reopened whilst the bus services have come under threat. Soham High Street has changed. We have lost some shops while other types of town centre services have grown. There is also a need to protect our important green spaces, Commons, droves and local walks.

1.2 Further development is planned in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan¹. The Town Council, through the Neighbourhood Plan, wants to ensure that proposed development meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors; provides the infrastructure and services that are needed; ensures that development is high quality; and safeguards those important green spaces valued by Soham and Barway's community. The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan sets out how increased housing development will be built in Soham and Barway up to 2031. The Neighbourhood Plan is not seeking to promote any additional growth beyond this.

1.3 So, how are we going to ensure that the Town Council's and communities' aspirations are met? The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans. A Neighbourhood Plan sets out policies for development and land use which are distinctive and relevant to Soham and Barway. The Plan, when "made", becomes part of the legal planning framework for the Soham and Barway Parish area and sits alongside the policies in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. This means that when planning applications are submitted to develop or change the use of land, East

Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) should make decisions in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.4 The Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan contains a vision statement, objectives, and planning policies for improving the area, allocating affordable housing to local people, ensuring high quality design, safeguarding and providing new facilities; minimising the impact of climate change and protecting our important wildlife habitats.

1.5 In the Parish, the Town Council is responsible for the preparation of the Plan. It is important to note that a Neighbourhood Plan cannot contradict the main government planning policies or the strategic policies in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. For example, they cannot propose less development than is planned for in the adopted East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

1.6 Soham Town Council's application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area was approved by ECDC on 12th June 2019. The Neighbourhood Plan boundary is shown at Map 1.

1.7 The Town Council are the lead organisation for the Neighbourhood Plan supported by the Soham Neighbourhood Plan Group (NPG). There is no other Neighbourhood Plan for the neighbourhood area and the Plan only relates to the administrative boundaries of Soham and Barway and no other area. The Neighbourhood Plan period is to 2031, mirroring the adopted East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

1.8 Soham NP Group has completed a significant amount of community consultation which has informed the Draft Neighbourhood Plan even during the Covid-19 pandemic. The full details of the consultation are included within the Consultation Statement which accompanied the submission to ECDC. In brief we:

¹ East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023)

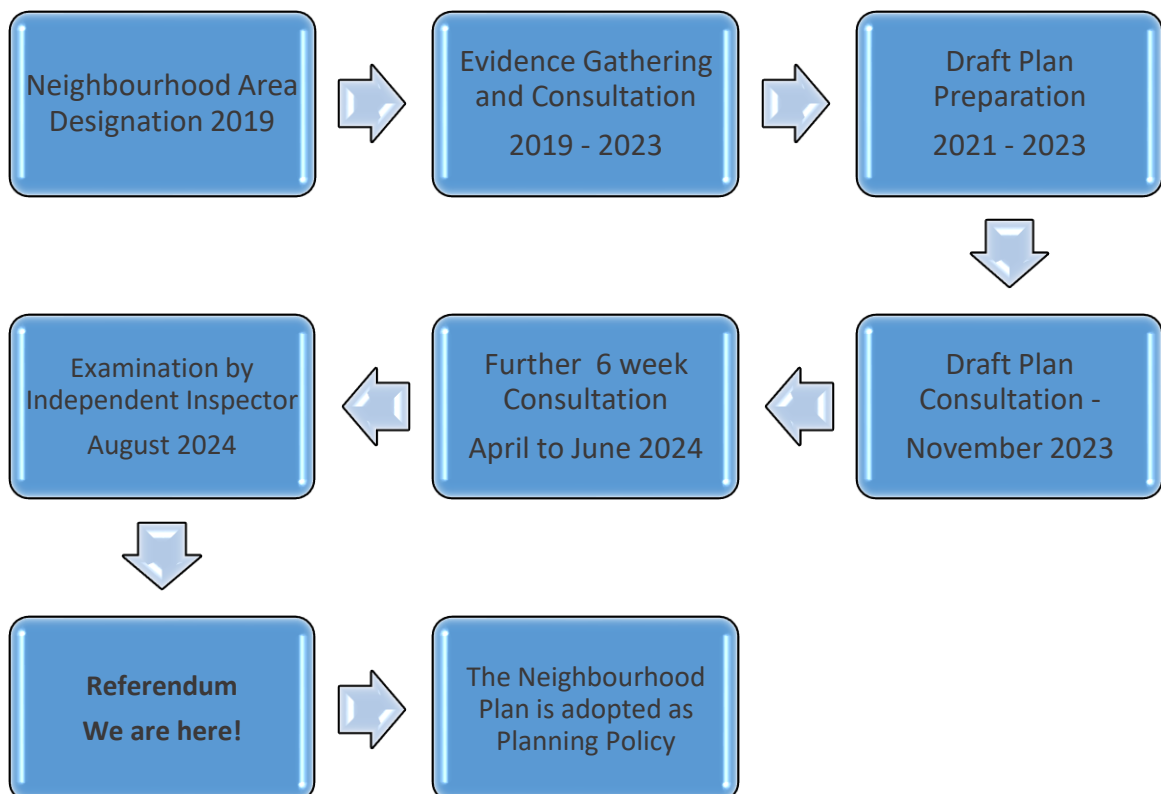
- held public consultation events
- carried out resident and business surveys
- held conversations and promoted young ambassadors who undertook their own survey at Soham Village College
- had a stall at the Pumpkin Fair, Soham Carnival and Jubilee Celebrations
- created a Facebook group and used the Town Council website www.soham-tc@gov.uk and
- distributed door-to-door fliers
- completed a 6 week consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan and its evidence base

1.9 Additionally, ECDC completed a 6 week consultation on the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan between 23rd April and 3rd June 2024.

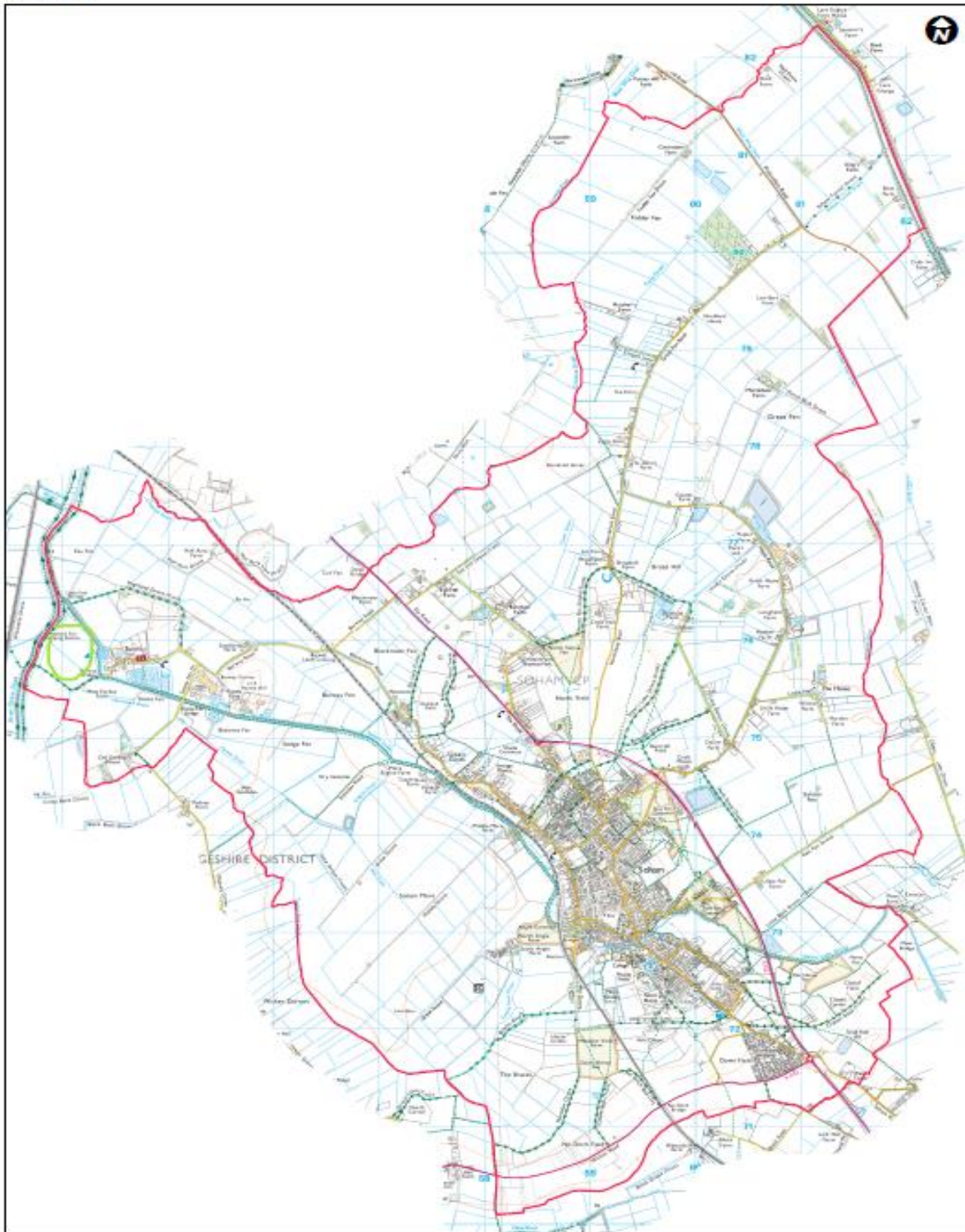
1.10 This version of the plan is called the 'Referendum Version Neighbourhood Plan'. This version includes the modifications recommended by an Independent Examiner in August 2024. **Residents will be invited by East Cambridgeshire District Council to vote on approving the Referendum Version of the Neighbourhood Plan.**

1.11 The Neighbourhood Plan also includes Community Actions. These are not planning policies but are issues that have been identified through the Neighbourhood Plan by the community that need to be addressed through wider partnership working.

1.12 The key milestones of our Neighbourhood Plan process to date and those still to be completed are summarised below:



Soham



Scale (at A3): 1:10,000

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Map 1 – Soham and Barway Designated Plan area

2 Soham Past and Present

Location

- 2.1 Soham is a town of around 12,300 people and civil parish in East Cambridgeshire, England. It is the second largest settlement in East Cambridgeshire after Ely, and the eighth largest in Cambridgeshire outside of Cambridge City. Soham is located south of the Cathedral City of Ely and north of Newmarket which are connected by the A142 that runs north to south. Soham has a railway station that was reopened in 2021 after being closed since 1965 which provides services to Ipswich, Peterborough, and Cambridge.
- 2.2 To the west of the town lies Barway a small rural village which forms part of the Neighbourhood Plan area. It is set around the village green and is compact with no significant services, therefore residents travel to Ely or Soham for daily needs.

Settlement Form and Character

- 2.3 Soham has an attractive historic town and acts as a local service centre to the nearby villages of Burwell, Fordham, Isleham and Wicken. The town centre has a historic core which forms part of the Soham Conservation Area. The rest of the town, which has been built over time, is predominantly residential and has a largely suburban feel. Although many of the houses are Georgian or Victorian in design, the organic evolution of the town has resulted in complex mix of styles and characters of their time. It is this 'mishmash' of styles cheek by jowl which adds significantly to its sense of place; and which contrasts significantly with the monotonous estate designs of more recent years.
- 2.4 Until the mid-1800s the population grew at a steady pace, peaking at 4,706 in 1851. The pressure on population was relieved with the mass emigration of unemployed labourers and small farmers leaving for Australia and America. The development pattern of Soham then retained the same shape from 1900 to the middle of the 20th Century with the long central spine making

up the main route through and a series of side streets lined with less affluent housing. From the 1950s the council built extensively throughout the parish with over 500 council houses built by 1975. One of the earliest large developments was Downfields which is located south of the town centre on former farmland. There was rapid development between the late 1960s and early 1980s extending the town to the east and the west by creating new streets beyond the existing lanes off the main route. In 1983 Soham was designated as a town.

- 2.5 St. Andrews Church is of great architectural and historical significance and is a prominent local landmark in the centre of the town. It is situated next to the town's Recreation Ground which is a green space with mature trees, popular for relaxation, exercise and for families to enjoy the children's playground and skate park areas. Other key Listed Buildings are Downfield Windmill and Northfield Windmill, the Fountain Lane Steel Yard and a pair of dissimilar Chaples. The town also has an excellent network of public footpaths including 3 Millennium Walks and attractive green lanes, some of which follow the local small river, Soham Lode, which provide good links into the surrounding countryside.
- 2.6 The town includes two supermarkets, local independent shops and a range of cafes and takeaway shops. It also has a vibrant and active local community, including two local football clubs. Other facilities include a successful secondary school, three primary schools, a library, sports complex and a drama centre. However, many of the shops on the High Street have closed and been converted into homes or used as hot food takeaways or hairdressers. The facilities in the town have deteriorated hugely over recent years with the loss of 2 banks, furniture shop, clothing shop, 2 green grocers, 2 bakeries, 3 pubs and others. Soham also lacks a space for young people to meet and socialise in a safe place.

Landscape

- 2.7 Soham is a fen-edge town and has a unique landscape setting, being surrounded by several historic Commons. The landscape surrounding Soham was once marshland, known as the Fens, however they were drained for agricultural use in the late 18th and early 19th century.
- 2.8 The Fen areas have distinctively large-scale, flat, and open landscapes with extensive vistas and panoramic views. Its characteristics have defined the historic evolution of Soham and Barway. It includes many drainage ditches, such as Soham Lode which runs through the town as well as dykes and rivers that lead to The Wash. The landscape surrounding Soham comprises low-lying, level terrain with elevations only varying by one or two metres over long distances. This level, open topography creates the effect of huge skies, conveying a strong sense of place and tranquillity with only occasional landmarks. The open landscape and the way in which it penetrates the community area is important to maintain Soham and Barway as settlements located in a distinct Fen setting.
- 2.9 The Common Land areas that lie to the east and west of Soham are a distinctive landscape feature of the town and are of considerable nature conservation importance. This network of Commons includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) known as Soham Wet Horse Fen as well as a number of County Wildlife Sites, East Fen, Qua Fen and Broad Piece which have a principal nature conservation interest of neutral grassland (lowland meadow).
- 2.10 The Commons provide pleasant green open space within walking distance of the town centre. Beyond these are the wide-open areas of the fenland farms demonstrating the importance of agriculture in the area.

The Residents of Soham and Barway

- 2.11 The parish has been characterised by rapid population growth: its population doubled between the 1971 and 2011 Censuses. Since 2011, Soham has experienced the largest population increase of all parishes in East Cambridgeshire of 1,472 people, accounting for over one-third of population growth (38%) across the district (3,944 people) between 2011 and 2021.
- 2.12 Growth is expected to slow slightly over the period 2018-2036. Between 2018-2036, Soham’s population is forecast to increase by 3,890, or by 1.4% per year, slightly down from the historic growth rate of 1.7% per year, although this is still expected to exceed district-wide growth of 1.3% per year and account for 17% of all population growth across the district.

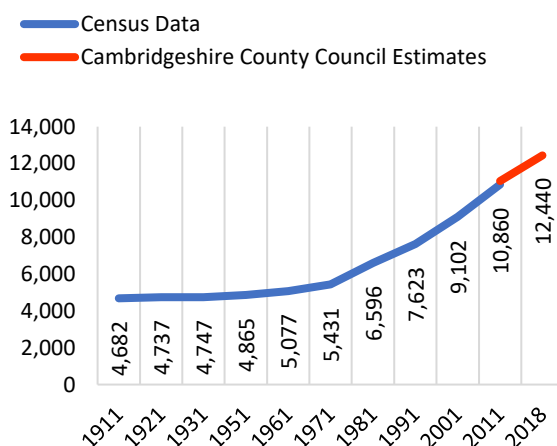


CHART 1 POPULATION OF SOHAM PARISH, 1911-2018

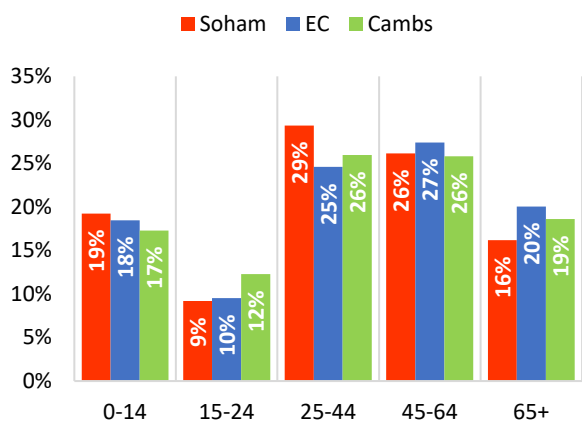
Source: ‘Cambridgeshire Historic Population 1801-2011’ and ‘Mid-2011 to Mid-2018 Population and Dwelling Stock Estimates’, *Cambridgeshire Insight*

- 2.13 Soham has a slightly younger age profile than district and county averages. At the time of the 2011 Census², the average age of Soham’s population was 38.0 years, compared to 40.0 years in East Cambridgeshire and 39.0 years across Cambridgeshire. The latest 2018 mid-year estimates show that Soham continues to have a slightly younger age profile than

² Census 2011 data and population estimates will be updated when 2021 Census parish level data is available.

district and county averages, with higher shares of people aged 0-14 years and 25-44 years, and a lower share of 65+ year olds. Please note that 2021 Census data is not yet available at parish level and therefore the most recent, available data is used.

CHART 2 POPULATION BY AGE 2018



Source: 2018-based mid-year population estimates, Cambridgeshire Insight

2.14 Population is expected to increase most in absolute terms among 25-44 year olds (+630) and 25-64 year olds (+770) but most in percentage terms among 65-74 year olds (+49%), 75-84 year olds (+81%) and 85+ year olds (+141%). The share of population aged 65 and above is therefore expected to increase from 16% to 21%, while the shares of people in younger age groups are forecast to fall.

Housing

2.15 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan identified a total provision of 2,890 new homes in the plan period 2011 to 2031 for the Neighbourhood Plan area. At April 2022, completions (763 homes) planning commitments and outstanding allocations (1,781 homes) totalled a housing supply of 2,336 homes This has and will place pressure on local infrastructure and facilities.

2.16 However, between 2020 to 2023, the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan was updated focussing on Policy Growth 1. The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan was adopted by ECDC on 19th October 2023. Policy Growth 1 states that in the period 2022 to 2031,

the District Council will make provision for the delivery of 5,400 dwellings in East Cambridgeshire. The latest projections (as at August 2022) state that over 7,000 additional dwellings could come forward through planning commitments and on existing allocated sites. The effect of the Local Plan Review is that the district’s housing requirements for the period 2022 to 2031 are met through existing completions, commitments and 2015 Local Plan housing allocations.

2.17 There were 5,336 dwellings in Soham in 2022. This was equivalent to 14% of all dwellings in East Cambridgeshire (the same as Soham’s share of the district’s total population).

2.18 Between 2002/03 and 2019/20, there was a net increase of 1,508 new dwellings in Soham (equivalent to an average increase of 84 dwellings per year).

2.19 At the time of the 2021 Census, the most common types of housing in Soham were semi-detached (36%) and detached properties (31%).

2.20 Reflecting the higher population density of the parish, semi-detached and terraced housing accounted for higher proportions of the overall housing stock than district and county averages, while detached housing accounted for a much smaller proportion.

2.21 Compared to other parishes in East Cambridgeshire, terraced housing was more common in Soham (21% of all properties) than any other parish other than Ely (26%), while flats, maisonettes and apartments made up a larger share of all housing (10%).

2.22 Soham has the smallest average housing size of any East Cambridgeshire district. In 2011, dwellings in Soham had an average of 2.7 bedrooms – the lowest average housing size of any East Cambridgeshire parish and below the East Cambridgeshire and Cambridgeshire averages (both 2.9). Three-bedroom

housing was most common (42% of all housing), followed by two-bedroom housing (31%).

2.23 Soham has a large, sheltered housing building and adjacent sheltered bungalows for elderly people. There are also several sites of bungalows which have been provided for elderly people. Recently a new residential home has also been opened which will provide for those more vulnerable people.

2.24 In the year to September 2020, the average (median) price of houses sold in Soham was £245,000. This was 18% below the East Cambridgeshire average (£300,000) and below all East Cambridgeshire wards other than Littleport (£242,000). However, the cheapest housing in Soham would require an annual household income of £28,500.

Employment

2.25 Levels of economic activity are high among Soham's residents – with a high rate of employment and low rates of economic inactivity. At the time of the 2011 Census, 74% of 16-74 year olds living in Soham were in employment. This was above rates for East Cambridgeshire (70%) and Cambridgeshire (66%). The unemployment rate, at 3%, was the same as district and county averages. Conversely, a low share of residents were economically inactive (neither in work nor looking for work). At 21%, Soham's economic inactivity rate was lower than across East Cambridgeshire (24%) and much lower than the Cambridgeshire average (28%). This was mainly due to low rates of economic inactivity due to retirement – reflecting Soham's younger age profile – and full-time students not in work nor seeking work.

2.26 In 2011, 23% of working-aged adults (aged 16-64 years) living in Soham were qualified to Level 4 (degree-level) and above. This was lower than the East Cambridgeshire (32%) and Cambridgeshire (36%) averages and the lowest of all East Cambridgeshire parishes after Littleport (20%) and Mepal (21%).

2.27 As housing increased, without an increase in local employers, people are travelling away to work and has resulted in a dormitory town. However, 28% of Soham's employed residents work in Soham – one of the highest rates of self-containment in East Cambridgeshire. There are a number of employment opportunities in the town, including several small industrial and trading estates but the town lacks a business hub.

2.28 Soham has higher concentrations of employment in construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and wholesale and retail trade than the district average. It has lower concentrations in a range of other sectors, particularly Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities, Transport and Storage, and Human Health and Social Work. Significant employment is in 'Agricultural Support activities' and 'packaging activities' are registered in the north of the plan area, which include Barway – the location of farming business, G's, which has a number of sites across the UK. The next largest sector was Wholesale, Retail and Motor Trades, with 700 employed in the area.

2.29 Soham also has high rates of 'education, skills and training' deprivation. Data shows that young people are not staying on in education post 16 and Soham performs poorly for adult skills (those with no or low qualifications).

2.30 However, there are not sufficient jobs for all residents, and most people commute out of the town to work in other parts of East Cambridgeshire, Forest Heath, Cambridge and elsewhere. However, accessibility is an issue with local public transport an ongoing problem for young

people who want to attend 16+ training, jobs and socialising and for older people.

Barway

- 2.31 Barway is wholly within the parish of Soham, a discrete hamlet with its own history and character. It lies close to the Lode on the north west of Soham and is linked to the main A142, by a road which leads only to Barway. It serves not just the hamlet but also the substantial vegetable and salad greens packing plant just before it reaches the central dwelling area of the hamlet.
- 2.32 Originally Barway was simply a cluster of fisherman's cottages on some slightly higher ground close to the Soham Mere, a prime source of fish, eels and water fowl. Over the years a small community has developed there which at one time had not only a small school but also a village hall. The hall was in regular use for meetings, markets, social events and many other uses. Both the school and the village hall have long gone. In fact, Barway has no facilities at all – not even a weekly bus service.
- 2.33 The Mere was finally drained by 1750 and access to Ely was improved when the bridge over the Lode was built in 1760. This bridge does not support a modern road.
- 2.34 In late 1950s the vegetable packing plant was set up to wash and pack celery. By early 1960s the business started producing other perishable vegetables to supply supermarket's year-round. Now it is a huge development providing fresh vegetables throughout the country.
- 2.35 The people who live in Barway have more or less come to terms with this large and busy neighbour, but they are very proud of their quiet and peaceful existence. However, the ambition is not to repeat the style and size of more recent residential development at the edge of Barway and to ensure that any further housing is in keeping with the age and character of the village.

3 Soham and Barway Future

- 3.1 The key issues facing Soham and Barway have been identified from a series of public consultations with both communities, from the documentary evidence collated by the NPG including a Planning Policy Context Analysis and a Demographic, Social and Economic Report. It is these key issues which inform the themes and the basis of the policies in this NP.
- 3.2 From a SWOT analysis the NPG has identified a series of challenges that can be addressed through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.3 Soham's town centre is not performing as well as it should, given the growing population of the town. Turnover of units is too high, with some being converted to residential properties. The range of shops has become increasingly limited with many being used as hot food takeaways or as barbers/hairdressers. One of the key challenges facing Soham will be to expand the range of types of shops and facilities by providing places which encourage people to spend more time in the centre both during the day and in the evenings. This would increase the vitality and health of the town centre and encourage people to visit.
- 3.4 A second challenge will be to promote future commercial and employment growth in the town, to reduce the number of residents who out-commute. There are a number of employment opportunities including East Cambridgeshire Local Plan employment allocations although, there has been no development in these areas. This needs to be addressed by supporting employment development generally and those employment sectors identified in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's report - 'A Market Town Plan for Soham' which identifies Soham as having a competitive advantage in agritech and food processing.
- 3.5 A third challenge will be to ensure that necessary infrastructure and facilities are in place to support the continued growth of the town. It has long been accepted that the Staploe Medical Centre is under severe pressure. This is partly because of the additional people needing to access its services from the new homes in Soham and Barway. The Medical Centre also caters for residents of Isleham, Wicken and Fordham, all of which are increasing in size. It is essential that not only is land provided for the centre as part of the Eastern Gateway, but sufficient funding is also needed to secure the capital build programme.
- 3.6 Although the Sports Centre is a valued asset to the town, it is in need of refurbishment and upgrading as it will be popular with new residents moving to the area. There is a longer term ambition to provide sixth form facilities as part of the Village College campus although additional land may be required.
- 3.7 Although the new rail station will certainly improve the town's connections, the local transport does not provide enough scope for people to travel to work outside the town or for any excursions either in the evening or at weekends. It is essential that new development ensures permeability through their site for all non-motorised modes of transport and onwards to key transport nodes. Cycleways also need to be improved so that cyclists can travel safely within and beyond Soham without the need to use their cars.
- 3.8 In 2020, Soham Town Council (STC) declared a Climate Change emergency³. STC recognises that we must achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and ideally by 2030. The Neighbourhood Plan must set out policies which ensures new development makes its appropriate contribution to achieving these objectives. The Tables below set out the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

³ [Climate Change & CO2 FOOTPRINT - Soham Town Council \(soham-tc.gov.uk\)](https://www.soham-tc.gov.uk)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Prosperous Town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd Largest settlement in East Cambs • Overall deprivation levels are low • Younger age profile and relatively healthy • Acts as a Local Service Centre providing basic shops and facilities, primary and secondary education, medical centre, petrol filling stations with shops <p>Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Agricultural and manufacturing sectors with wholesale, retail, construction, manufacturing and education • High Rate of Employment • 28% Soham employed residents work in Soham <p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Rail Station <p>Historic and Rural Character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong historic core with Conservation Area • Rich in historical Commons and Green Lanes • Valued Green Spaces • Links to surrounding countryside and Fens for informal recreation including Wicken Fen • Town in a rural setting • Conservation Area Appraisal • Recreation Ground in central location 	<p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid population growth (1/3 growth in ECDC) not been engaged as a part of community • Smallest average housing size in ECDC and very low share of detached housing • Demand and need for affordable housing outstripping supply <p>Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net out commuting with access to Cambridge – although 1,500 people commute to Soham each day • Lack of local employment opportunities inc. lack of small business units / hub • Significant rise in unemployment during Covid Pandemic • High rates of post 16 education high / lack of easy access to 16+ education • Poorly qualified adult population – higher deprivation indicators for Education, Skills and Training • Lack of knowledge of new population’s skills, qualifications and needs <p>Town Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linear, constrained High Street with limited opportunities / funding limited • Lack of a central meeting space/town centre/focal point • Underperforming town centre, loss of services, banks and retail • Road traffic bottlenecks along High Street, linked to high level of on street parking • Lack of off-street parking <p>Transport / Services / Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor transport links i.e. limited bus timetabling, cycle ways • Lack of off-street parking on housing estates • Services not increased in line with growth • Lack of leisure, tourism or cultural offer • Limited facilities for younger people • Inadequate sports and medical facilities • Lack of a green burial site • Lack of access to essential services in Barway

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Housing and Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a range of types, tenure and size of home to meet local needs inc. local connection criteria for affordable housing • Design Code - meet modern needs - internal and external space standards • Secure distinctive elements to reflect Soham’s built character – ‘Beautiful Design code’ • Support further Community Land Trust (CLT) development <p>Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain and accelerate high concentrations of small local employment, start up and Espace • Capitalise on new railway station Quarter • Potential for agri-tech sector - NIAB • Opportunities from shift to home working • Encourage tourist businesses / Cultural Hub / e.g. Wicken Fen, Spencer Mill and Soham Lode / Wetlands / Biosphere • Redevelopment / relocation of underused business sites <p>Town Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community-shared vision for the town centre e.g. plaza or square, public realm improvements, town centre parking, key site Cooperative site (SOH14) and Fountain Lane Recreation Ground (SOH15). • Improvements via new development – reuse of vacant retail <p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S106 / CIL funding to secure supporting infrastructure and facilities • Identify improved footpaths / cycleways around the town, to countryside, Ely and Newmarket • Reinstate rail loop Soham to Cambridge • Advice on local transport impacts <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect, enhance and provide green areas, wildlife for recreation, sports and allotments • Encourage sustainable energy production / zero carbon developments • Local Green Infrastructure Strategy 	<p>Housing Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population forecast to increase by 1.4% per year 2018 – 2036 • Dwelling stock forecast to increase by 39% from 2018 to 2036 • The expressions of Broad Areas of Growth to the north and south of the town, identified in the Local Plan, are no longer needed but remain ambiguous and unclear • Some allocated sites have planning permission and therefore unable to influence design and mix of housing • Some assessment suggests that only 20% affordable housing can be achieved compared to a district target of 30% • Housing Associations not able to obtain sites due to high costs • Local people moving away from Soham due to house prices • If the District does not have 5 years’ worth of housing land it may lead to unplanned schemes coming forward <p>Services and Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further loss or downgrading of shops and local facilities where there is a lack of planning control • Loss of community facilities or not upgraded to meet demand <p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic/ parking issues exacerbated by further development including new railway station <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss or damage to Commons and other important green spaces and loss of wildlife – poor management of spaces • Too much/ poor development spoiling character of parish • Impact of Climate Change • Flood Risk and damage to the water environment and development in the flood plain • Increased air pollution <p>Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough jobs to prevent more homes being dormitories

4 Soham and Barway Vision

- 4.1 Using the SWOT analysis, the NPG went on to debate and produce the following visions for Soham and Barway. These visions are deliberately ‘conversational’ to capture the breadth of ambition not normally realised in short, generic Vision statements.

Vision for Soham

Soham will be a vibrant 21st century rural town, where everyone has access to a ‘green loop’ of open space, with a thriving town centre which encourages visitors and residents to spend time there. It will also have good employment opportunities for school leavers and more qualified workers in a range of disciplines. Attractive new housing, with well-designed and an appropriate level of off-street car and cycle parking, will help to increase footfall in the High Street, and support a revitalised town with a range of different shops, cafes, youth facilities, a heritage centre and other community facilities. New residents will be encouraged to become part of the community by getting involved with the many local clubs and societies available.

The town’s strategic location will be attractive to employers wishing to establish or expand on newly serviced employment sites, bringing forward new job opportunities at many levels. A new sixth form centre will provide more suitably trained employees for local businesses.

With its unique Commons setting, and enhanced green infrastructure, Soham will provide a place to live a healthy life with low pollution levels. Improved cycleways will enable travel within and beyond the town in a greener and safer way. The town will reduce its carbon footprint by generating more green electricity and reducing the use of petrol and diesel vehicles.

The new train station will allow more connections to the wider area and provide opportunities for work and leisure. It will encourage more tourists to visit its attractive town centre, with its history and green connections to the surrounding Fens.

Vision for Barway

Barway is essentially a very small peaceful and tranquil rural collection of homes and it will stay that way. There is no real appetite for any further development, either of more houses, small businesses or provision of facilities. However, there may be scope for tourism development, a community meeting point and perhaps agricultural needs.

The Lode through Barway should be protected because it is used by a multitude of wildlife species and is an important green corridor and a very pleasant place to take exercise either on foot or horseback. Views across the flat landscape surrounding Barway should also remain uninterrupted.

However, the road to Barway from A142 is used by a large number of HGVs and tractors going to and from the vegetable packing plant, as well as the residents. In order to make it safer for cyclists and pedestrians it needs widening. There is also a problem where the Barway Road joins the A142 where there have been a number of accidents and it is considered that interventions are needed to reduce these incidents.

Objectives

- 4.2 To underpin the vision, this Neighbourhood Plan identifies 16 strategy objectives addressing the key issues facing Soham and Barway and the SWOT analysis during the life of the NP.

Growth and the future
Secure growth in line with strategic requirements focused in Soham's development envelope and protecting the countryside status and the views outside of this.
Ensure that Soham is resilient against the future impacts of Climate Change with particular attention to flooding issues and the moves toward greener living.
Ensure any additional housing provision meets the needs of local people within the NP Area, now and in the future.
Green Spaces
Protect and enhance the unique green setting of Soham and Barway, including Soham's Commons and open green spaces together with its green lanes and blue spaces taking particular care to improve biodiversity wherever possible.
Promote the town, its history, its Lode and its green connections to the 'Green Loop' and make it a focus for sustainable tourism.
Promote and protect from further development, the peace and tranquillity which encourages the wonderful wildlife which makes Barway very special to its residents.
Transport and connections
Improve transport connections and accessibility around the town and parish for all users including those with disabilities. Encourage safe cycle routes both within and beyond the town.
Improve the provision and quality of off-street parking (and parking in residential developments) for motorised users (cars, buses etc) and non-motorised users (e.g. bikes) in the parish.
Housing and Heritage
Ensure new development delivers high quality design, meets modern living requirements, National Space Standards, appropriate to identified housing needs and is designed to be low carbon.
Protect and enhance heritage assets in the town centre (conservation area, listed buildings) and protect the historic environment in Barway and all areas of the parish.
Employment and Business
Support job retention and creation, maximising the community benefits of local employment by retention of existing employment sites and facilitating new developments on the edge of the town within the natural boundaries.
Address existing barriers faced by local young people in accessing Further Education, post 16 and beyond.
Local Facilities
Fulfil the potential of the town centre in providing a revitalised and vibrant hub with a greater variety of shops, leisure, cultural and community activities.
Provide enhanced infrastructure, including sport, health and cultural facilities to support growth and meet the needs of local people, on a scale appropriate to serve neighbourhoods.
Promote and protect from further development, the peace and tranquillity which encourages the wonderful wildlife which makes Barway very special to its residents.
Ensure that although Barway remains separate from Soham, its needs are not forgotten.

5 Spatial Strategy and Housing

Objectives

- Secure growth in line with strategic requirements focused in Soham’s development envelope and protecting the countryside status and the views outside of this.
- Ensure any additional housing provision meets the needs of local people within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, now and in the future.
- Ensure new development delivers high quality design, meets modern living requirements, National Space Standards, appropriate to identified housing needs and is designed to be low carbon.

- 5.2 Secondly, development reflects the Soham Design Guidance and Codes 2022 and comes forward with the necessary infrastructure to support the demands generated by the development.
- 5.3 Thirdly, ensures development in Barway reflects the character and appearance of the village.
- 5.4 Finally, the policy seeks to amplify and provide a local perspective on existing policy support for development outside the Development Envelopes which propose modest, small and medium scale visitor and tourism initiatives which take advantage of Soham’s close relationship to tourism destinations such as Ely, Newmarket, Wicken Fen, Fordham Abbey, Barcham’s and Ben’s Yard set out in Policy SBNP7.

Policy SBNP1 Spatial Strategy

Intent

5.1 Firstly, to support planned new housing development ensuring it meets the needs of the existing and future communities.

POLICY SBNP1 - SPATIAL STRATEGY

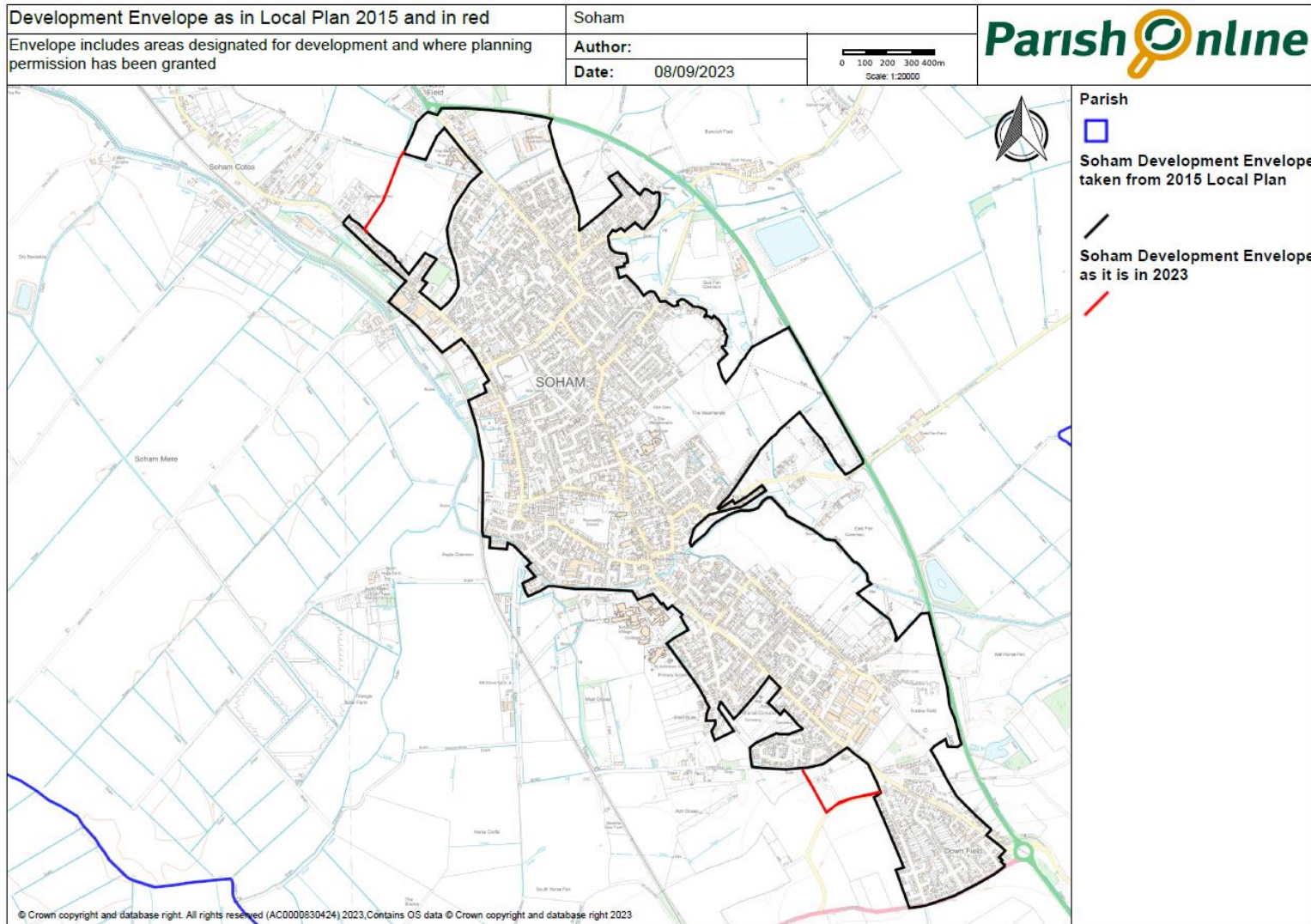
Soham will grow sustainably through the plan period in accordance with the housing and employment growth strategy identified in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan and subject to being in accordance with the Soham Design Guidance and Codes 2022.

Barway will grow in accordance with the housing allocations and employment policies identified in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan and subject to being in accordance with the Soham Design Guidance and Codes 2022. Within Barway’s Development Envelope, proposals for infill development must be appropriate to the scale and character of the village, and not have an unacceptable impact on the modest built scale and distinct Fenland farming character.

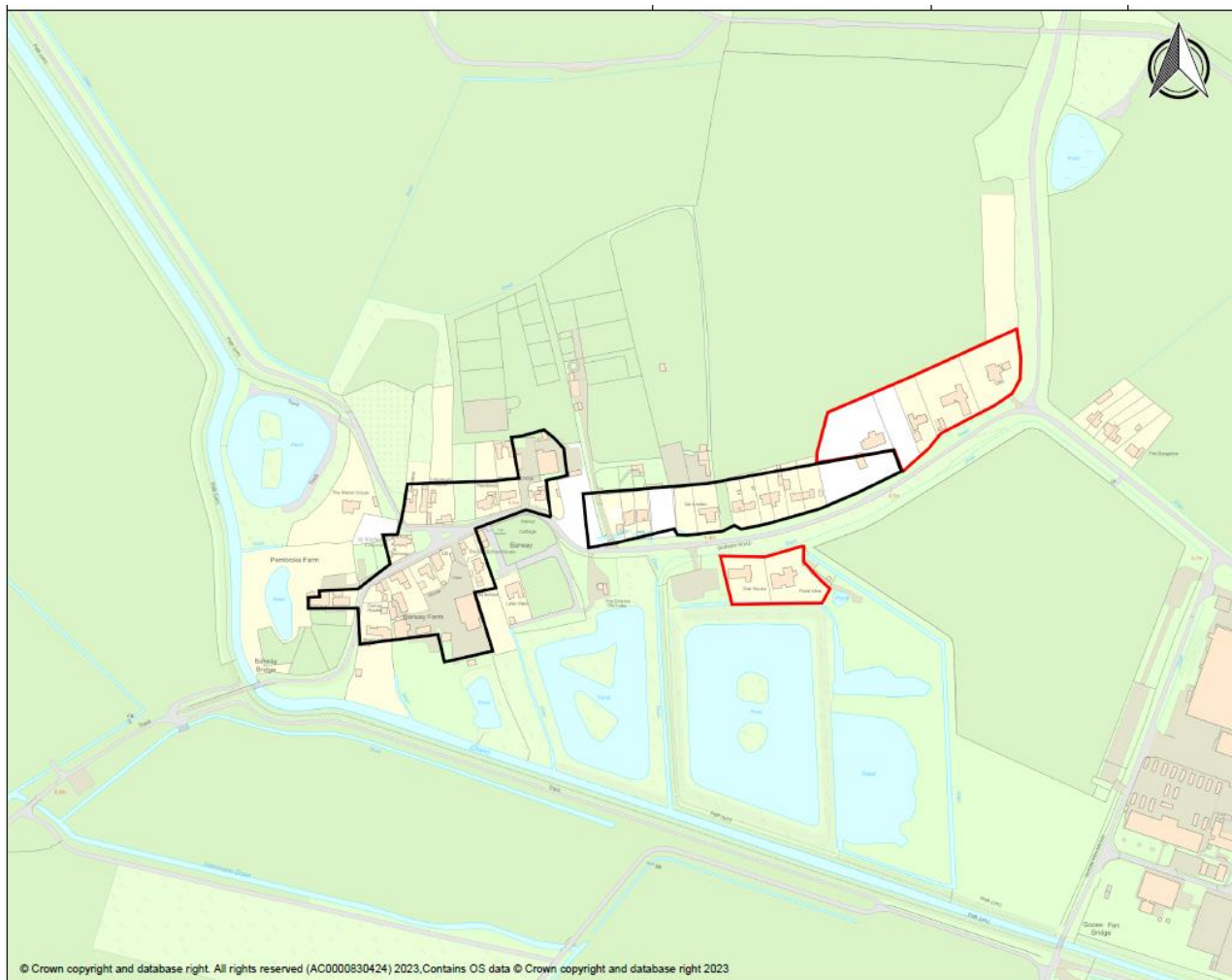
The Development Envelopes for Soham and Barway are defined on the Policy Maps 2 and 3 and replace the Development Envelopes identified in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. Land outside the Development Envelopes of Soham and Barway is defined as countryside where development will be strictly controlled. Development may be permitted as an exception in accordance with Local Plan Policy Growth 2 of the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 80 and the following will be particularly supported:

- i. Affordable housing provided through the Community Land Trust; and
- ii. Modest tourism and leisure proposals, including small scale holiday accommodation, which capitalises on Soham’s location close to tourism destinations provided such proposals accord with Policy SBNP7 and with Local Plan policies EMP 7 and EMP 8 Plan.

Development proposals will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that there is, or will be, sufficient infrastructure capacity to meet all the necessary requirements arising from a proposed development. Where appropriate, development may need to be phased spatially and chronologically to ensure the provision of infrastructure in a timely manner with conditions or planning obligations to be used in securing any phasing arrangements.



Map 2 – Proposed Extension to Development Envelope for Soham identified in red



Map 3 – Proposed Extension to Development Envelope for Barway identified in red

5.5 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan states that there will be sufficient overall supply of land to meet the district’s housing requirement of 5,400 dwellings, as set out in Policy GROWTH 1. The latest projections (as at August 2022) indicate that over 7,000 additional dwellings could come forward between 2022 and 2031, with a further identifiable supply of over 2,000 dwellings beyond the plan period (i.e. post 2031)⁴. (include footnote for reference to Table 3.2).

5.6 Between April 2011 and April 2022, a total of 763 dwelling units were completed in Soham. Soham and Barway will contribute to the total housing growth in the district to 2031 through unimplemented planning permissions and outstanding housing allocations which total 1,781 dwellings

units. The total supply for 2011 to 2031 totals 2,544 homes. Additionally, growth come will forward on windfall sites within the settlements and rural exception sites.

5.7 For the avoidance of doubt, further development on the broad areas for housing set out in the adopted 2015 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, beyond those sites with existing planning permissions, are not required to meet the district’s housing requirements between 2022 and 2031. Any further development of the ‘broad areas for housing’ beyond existing commitments would need to be considered and debated through the next Local Plan Review.

⁴ East Cambridgeshire Local Plan – Table 3

- 5.8 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan states that 'Development envelopes have been drawn around the main built-up areas of the market towns and villages, in order to prevent sprawl into the open countryside, and protect the character and setting of settlements. Development envelopes provide certainty to local people and developers. A more compact form of development is also more sustainable, as it promotes easier access to jobs and services.'
- 5.9 The development envelopes for Soham and Barway are shown on Maps 2 and 3. In accordance with paragraph 3.35 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, development envelopes have been re-drawn to include new major housing developments where these form part of the main built-up framework of the settlement. It should be noted that the development envelopes do not necessarily include all areas of built development. For example, there are numerous single dwellings or small groups of houses in the countryside, plus a number of small hamlets which do not have a development envelope. These are considered to be part of the open countryside, due to their small size and open structure/lack of compact built-form. There are also a number of employment areas and allocations which have been excluded as they are in the open countryside or are divided from the main built-up framework of a settlement by fields, roads or other clear boundaries.
- 5.10 Soham has made a significant contribution to the growing housing stock in the district. However, local affordable housing needs are not being met. Support will be given for proposals brought forward through the Community Land Trust (CLT) to address housing needs where these are closely related to the development envelope.
- 5.11 As set out in Policy SBNP 7, Soham and Barway are located adjacent to key tourism and visitor destinations. To maximise visitor spend in the parish, proposals that support the tourism and visitor economy will be supported where they are modest, small and medium scale and appropriately located as set out in Policy SBNP 7.
- 5.12 The consultation responses have raised concerns that new development in Barway, extending into the countryside, have not reflected the scale of existing housing within Barway. Further infill development in Barway must be appropriate to the scale and character of the historic village, and not have an unacceptable impact on the modest built scale and distinct Fenland farming character.

Policy SBNP2 - Affordable Housing

Intent

- 5.13 To ensure that a consistent approach is taken within the Plan Area to secure affordable housing to meet the needs of local people as identified in the Soham and Barway Housing Needs Assessment 2023, the Local Housing Register and Policy HOU3: Affordable Housing in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.
- 5.14 Within Soham, the amount of affordable housing secured on housing allocations has ranged significantly from 30% to as low as 12.5%. Sites at appeal have offered a higher affordable housing percentage. It is important to consider the community opinion expressed in the consultation surveys in March 2022. A key outcome of this was that 87% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that additional housing provision meets the needs of local people within the Neighbourhood Area.
- 5.15 It is clear from development proposals coming forward in Soham, that 30% is achievable and deliverable on major housing sites in Soham.

POLICY SBNP2 - AFFORDABLE HOUSING

All new open market housing developments which incorporate more than 10 or more dwellings will be required to make provision for 30% affordable housing unless otherwise demonstrated, by a site specific financial viability appraisal, that such provision would make the development unviable.

To meet the needs of the existing and future community, unless otherwise identified in an up to date Housing Needs Assessment or Housing Needs Survey, affordable housing provision should be delivered as follows:

- i. approximately 25% as First Homes at a discount of 40%
- ii. approximately 10% Shared Ownership; and
- iii. approximately 65% as social/affordable rent

5.16 Between 2012 and 2021 house prices rose relatively steadily, with some minor fluctuation year on year. The median house price rose by 60.5% with the lower quartile house price increasing at a similar rate (60.0%). The median price peaked in 2018 at £247,500, with the 2020 and 2021 prices slightly lower at £240,000. The lower quartile house price peaked in 2020 at £201,000, just £1,000 higher than the 2021 price. The East Cambridgeshire median house price in 2021 was significantly higher than the parish, at £312,750.

5.17 Local households on average incomes are unable to access even entry-level market homes unless they have the advantage of a very large deposit. Market housing, even with the benefit of a higher-than-average income, is likely to remain out of reach to most. Private renting is generally only affordable to average earners. Households made up of two lower quartile earners cannot afford the rental thresholds.

5.18 The Housing Needs Assessment 2023, prepared by AECOM, estimates that Soham and Barway requires approximately 252 units of affordable rented housing and 656 units of affordable home ownership to 2031. There is a current backlog of households on the Housing Register for Soham in need of social / affordable rented housing. The Soham Housing Needs Survey 2015 states that there were 185 households on the Housing Register with a local connection to Soham and an interest in living in the parish. The most recent report shows that by October 2022 there were 278 households on the housing register currently living in Soham and Barway. Considering households with a local connection to the Neighbourhood Area, this totals 556 households. The number of households on the housing register is increasing significantly despite the increase in open market housing in the parish. Soham CLT currently has 10 rental applications and 2 for Shared Ownership.

5.19 This is likely to be an underestimate of actual need in the community because some households in need will not have registered either because they are not aware of the system or because they see no benefit in them registering (for example if they don't consider they will succeed in being allocated a home).

5.20 Although the demand for affordable home ownership is demonstrated to be higher than the need for affordable /social rented housing, the former households are assumed to be already housed in the private rented sector. The policy seeks to secure a high proportion of affordable rented housing to ensure that affordable housing meaningfully addresses the affordable housing need of the local community. In this context, the NP has prioritised affordable rented tenures. This proposed affordable housing mix also complies with the various minimum requirements mandated by Government First Homes policy. This matter is addressed in the second part of Policy SBNP2. The precise breakdown of the type of affordable housing will reflect the

outcome of detailed discussions between the applicant and the District Council as part of the determination of the relevant planning application.

- 5.21 First Homes should be delivered at a 40% discount in Soham and Barway as this makes the product not only affordable to households on mean incomes, but also marginally affordable to households with two lower quartile earners. The proposals and approach in this policy are consistent with the both the findings of the Soham Housing Needs Assessment 2023 and 'Housing Needs of Specific Groups' October 2021 completed by GL Hearn for the Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk local authorities which states that the cost of first homes is likely to require a greater discount than 30% in order for them to be affordable to those households on a median income.

Policy SBNP3 Allocation of Affordable Housing

Intent

- 5.22 The policy seeks to ensure that a proportion of affordable homes in the parish are offered firstly to those with demonstrated affordable housing needs and have a strong connection to Soham and Barway. The Local Connections criteria is based upon the Soham Community Land Trust criteria and offers a consistent approach to addressing housing need in the parish.
- 5.23 The Neighbourhood Plan Spatial Strategy demonstrates that there are outstanding commitments and housing allocations totalling 1,781 dwellings in predominantly urban extensions to Soham. The preference would be for significant local affordable housing needs to be addressed through market led, urban expansions. Smaller contributions to affordable housing needs will be made through Rural Exception Sites and development through the Community Land Trust on sites outside the existing Development Envelopes in Soham and Barway.
- 5.24 It is considered that an element of the affordable housing should be allocated first to residents with a connection to the parish either through residence, employment or close family. It is accepted that such a policy approach is unusual and presents a conflict with district priorities to allocate S106 affordable housing on a district wide needs basis. However, securing an element of the affordable housing units for those with a connection to Soham and Barway is considered essential to facilitate a cohesive community and to achieve key principles of sustainable development.
- 5.25 Although unusual, this policy is not unique. This principle of local allocation of affordable housing, and the policy format has been adopted in the Waterbeach Neighbourhood Plan in South Cambridgeshire. The Plan is available at: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/media/19884/waterbeach-np-made-version-march-2022-reduced-1.pdf>.
- 5.26 If the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan target of 30% were achieved on every outstanding major site, up to 601 affordable homes might be expected in the Neighbourhood Plan area. This is based on full delivery of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan housing requirement minus completions, with no affordable homes on smaller windfall sites. However, the delivery of this number of affordable homes is in doubt given the Council's monitoring reports show that across the district, affordable housing has made up only 15.1% of all housing developments over the last decade. Within Soham, the amount of affordable housing secured on housing allocations has ranged significantly from 30% to as low as 12.5%.
- 5.27 It is also important to consider the community opinion expressed in the consultation surveys in March 2022. A key outcome of this was that 87% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that additional housing provision meets the needs of local people within the Neighbourhood area.

- 5.28 There is significant uncertainty around the actual number of affordable homes that will be delivered through planning obligations within the pipeline supply. If the council had achieved a 30% provision on each of the allocated housing sites it would still result in provision that is less than the total number of affordable homes that would be required based upon Soham's Housing Needs Assessment.
- 5.29 The Council's 5 year Housing Land Supply Report August 2022 identifies sites that are anticipated to come forward over a 5 year period. The Major Developments (those with over 10 units) and which should under planning policy provide affordable housing total 515 units. At a rate of 30% provision across all sites this would secure a total of 154 affordable homes or 31 per year. However, the council has not secured provision in line with policy. With a district average of 15% this would equate to 77 affordable homes or 15 per year.
- 5.30 Given the extent of the need for affordable housing in Soham and Barway and taking into account the likely sites to come forward, it is considered appropriate that local people should be given first preference on 50% of all affordable rental and 50% of Low Cost Affordable Housing. The Community Land Trust has developed criteria for a Local Connection and for consistency it is proposed that the same criteria are adopted through the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council with East Cambridgeshire District Council will undertake a review of the effectiveness of the policy and the extent to which it has satisfactorily addressed local affordable housing needs as part of a Neighbourhood Plan Review.

POLICY SBNP3 - ALLOCATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

To make a meaningful contribution towards meeting the affordable housing needs in Soham and Barway, those people with a strong local connection to Soham and Barway parish, as defined in the Neighbourhood Plan, with affordable housing needs, will be given priority allocation to affordable housing in the parish. Priority allocation means being offered the tenancy or shared ownership of the homes for a proportion of affordable homes being delivered in Soham and Barway as follows: 50% of the affordable homes for rent and 50% of Low Cost Home Ownership.

The above provisions will be subject to a cascade mechanism so that that a social landlord or developer of an affordable dwelling will give priority of allocation to any application received from a person whose needs are not met by the open market and where they meet the definition of a strong local connection during the first 3 months of the property being appropriately marketed to those with a local connection.

A proposal comprising a different percentage (to that set out in this policy) of affordable homes to be tied to a local connection criterion will be supported where this is justified through provision of up to date evidence on anticipated housing completion figures and affordable housing needs in the parish.

Definition of a Strong Local Connection

An Applicant(s):

- i. who has lived in the parish for the preceding for 2 years and is currently resident or
- ii. who has lived in the parish for 3 years in the preceding 15 years; or
- iii. who has a close family member who has resided in the town for a minimum of 5 years. Close family members include parents, guardians, adult children, grand parents or siblings; or
- iv. who has been in employment for at least 6 months in the parish or who has a verified offer of employment in the town for on average at least 16 hours a week; or
- v. who is a retiring member of the armed forces who enlisted from an address in Soham; or
- vi. who is the director or owner of a business based in the town which has been trading continuously for at least 6 months.

Source: Thrift Soham – The Soham Community Land Trust

Policy SBNP4 Housing Mix and Accessible Standards

Intent

- 5.31 The provision of housing choice will assist in ensuring a range of needs are met. Provision of a mix of house sizes will establish successful new neighbourhoods with broad based communities.
- 5.32 New housing developments coming forward in the parish should be specifically aimed at meeting parish needs and include a range of housing types. This will help enable local people to stay in the parish at different stages of their lifetime.
- 5.33 In 2021 the proportion of the smallest (1-bedroom) dwellings in Soham and Barway was below national levels but above the proportion in East Cambridgeshire as a whole. The proportion of 2-bedroom dwellings in the parish was well above both comparator areas, with the proportion of mid-sized homes relatively even across all comparator areas. The proportion of 4-bedroom dwellings in the parish was well below the levels across East Cambridgeshire as well as slightly below national levels.
- 5.34 To 2031, the greatest percentage of growth can be expected to be driven by the oldest households in the parish, with households with a household reference person aged 65 and over expected to increase by 58%. This would mean that households in this age category would account for 31.5% of the

population in 2031 compared to 22.5% of the population in 2011.

- 5.35 Looking at household composition, the proportion of single person households in Soham and Barway and East Cambridgeshire in 2021 was relatively similar, with these below the proportion nationally. Turning to family households, the parish and district had a higher proportion than nationally. The greatest proportion of households in Soham and Barway were families with dependent children, at 29.4% of households, slightly above the proportions in the comparator areas.
- 5.36 Under-occupancy is relatively common, with approximately 72.6% of households living in a dwelling with at least one extra bedroom compared to the size of the household. This was most common in family households aged 65+ and family households under 65 with no children.

POLICY SBNP4 - HOUSING MIX AND ACCESSIBLE STANDARDS

Housing development should contribute to meeting the existing and future needs of the parish. A mix in the size and tenure of housing will be required taking into account the needs of young people looking for smaller homes, growing families as well as the needs of older residents as set out in the Housing Needs Assessment 2023.

In order to meet the specific needs of the Neighbourhood Area, the housing mix of sites should be provided at the following rates unless otherwise identified in an up to date Housing Needs Assessment or Housing Needs Survey:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
Market	10%	25%	40%	25%
Affordable Housing	15%	40%	25%	20%

All homes should be built to the accessible and adaptable M4(2) standard and 10% to M4(3) standard other than where it can be demonstrated in a full financial appraisal that the application of the standard would make the development unviable.

5.37 New housing should not come forward in an unbalanced way. Those wishing to move within or relocate to the area will have a range of circumstances and preferences, and they should be offered a range of choices. As such, priority is given to mid-sized homes but that this is done to a degree that aligns with the wider objectives of the community and does not limit choice or threaten viability.

5.38 The Housing Register for Soham and Barway (from households that already live in Soham) suggests the need for a higher percentage of smaller dwellings as follows:
 15.8% studios or 1 bedroom
 38.5% 2 bedroom
 25.9% 3 bedroom
 17.3% 4 bedroom and
 2.5% 5 bedroom

5.39 The policy reflects the local need demonstrated through the Soham Housing Needs Assessment 2023 and the Local Authority Housing Register. The proposed mix for market housing broadly reflects the findings of the Housing Needs for Specific Groups for Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk (Table 84). However, the more local analysis suggests that, although predominantly affordable housing for rent should be provided in 1 and 2 bedroom units, there is a demonstrated need locally for larger 4+ bedroom affordable rented homes. The requirement for and provision of affordable housing and market housing within the Neighbourhood Area will continue to be monitored throughout the Plan period by the Town Council in order to ensure that the most up-to-date evidence is used to identify the current need.

5.40 There are currently 231 units of specialist accommodation for older persons in the parish, with approximately 84.8% affordable (social rent or shared ownership), and 15.2% available for leasehold purchase. In addition, there is a 30 bed care home, Fair Haven, Soham Lodge on the bypass near Qua Fen Common, and a new 70 bed care home at Townsend Manor, Townsend.

5.41 It is expected that to 2031, 508 individuals will join the 75+ age group in Soham & Barway. They are estimated to be formed into around 366 households. It is projected that by 2031 there will be 1,213 individuals in the 75+ age category in the parish.

5.42 Given that there is unlikely to be a large volume of additional specialist housing for older persons delivered during the Plan period, it is considered appropriate, given the demographic shift to a higher proportion of elderly people, to ensure that new housing comes forward in a way which provides standards of accessibility and adaptability. Government is considering mandating M4(2) on newly erected dwellings, although changes to Building Regulations have not yet been made.

6 Employment, Town Centre, Services and Facilities

Objectives

- Fulfil the potential of the town centre in providing a revitalised and vibrant hub with a greater variety of shops, leisure, cultural and community activities.
- Provide enhanced infrastructure, including sport, health and cultural facilities to support growth and meet the needs of local people, on a scale appropriate to serve neighbourhoods.
- Support job retention and creation, maximising the community benefits of local employment by retention of existing employment sites and facilitating new developments on the edge of the town within the natural boundaries.
- Ensure that although Barway remains separate from Soham, its needs are not forgotten.
- Address existing barriers faced by local young people in accessing Further Education, post 16 and beyond.

6.1 Soham is a key area of growth for both housing and employment in East Cambridgeshire. However, development has been primarily housing led. Employment sites and new facilities and services have been slow to come forward to support the new community.

6.2 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan recognises the significant loss of employment land to housing and seeks to increase the amount of employment space to promote self-containment and provide approximately 1,400 new jobs. A key part of the district wide strategy is to retain existing employment sites and allocates sites for employment to meet future need including:

- Policy SOH2 – Land off Station Road includes provision of 0.5 ha of small industrial or starter units
- Policy SO3 – Eastern Gateway Area includes provision of 0.5 ha for small

industrial or starter units and 0.4 ha for a medical centre

- Policy SOH9 – 1.45 ha extension to Northfield Business Park
- Policy SOH10 – 2 ha allocated at land west of The Shade
- Policy SOH – 11 ha allocated east of the bypass which will be accessed via a new roundabout to be delivered as part of the Eastern Gateway.

6.3 Given the significant amount of employment land currently identified in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan is not seeking to identify any further land but will work with the District Council to identify ways in which the existing allocated sites can be brought forward. Through the consultation with businesses and residents it is clear that there is a need for a business hub for starter units. Allocated sites at Station Road, Eastern Gateway and in the Town Centre will be considered positively for a business hub in line with the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan policies.

6.4 This chapter seeks to provide a new, broader approach to the Town Centre. It supports existing employment opportunities whilst promoting emerging sectors such as ‘Agri Tech’ and Tourism and Leisure. It also seeks to protect existing valued services and facilities whilst ensuring that new infrastructure is provided alongside new development to meet the needs of Soham and Barway.

Policy SBNP5 Vibrant Town Centre

Intent

- 6.5 To support a vibrant town centre which broadens its service, retail, tourism, leisure, cultural and employment offer to create opportunities for greater social and community interaction, with green space and infrastructure and improvements to the public realm.
- 6.6 To update the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan’s approach to the Town Centre which predates the acceleration of the trend in online shopping, changes in work

behaviours due to Covid, the reopening of the rail station and the anticipated adverse impact of Ben's Yard as an out of town retail and leisure destination on Soham. The Town Centre boundary and Town Centre Opportunity Areas are shown on the Local Plan Policy Inset Maps.

- 6.7 The current Local Plan focuses predominantly on retail policies in the Town Centre and appears to have had limited impact. The Local Plan seeks to strengthen the convenience retail (food) offer but does not promote a net increase in comparison (non-food) floorspace. ECDC monitoring reports a steady decline in town centre uses including the loss of retail and offices.
- 6.8 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has prepared - 'A Market Town Plan for Soham'. The Plan was approved by ECDC's Finance & Assets Committee in June 2020. The vision in the Combined Authority Report states:
- "Soham will be a highly desirable place to live and work, with an improved cultural and leisure offer and good employment opportunities to enable people to live and work locally. The repurposed town centre and reopened station will make our town much more attractive to live in and visit."
- 6.9 The report goes on to include four major themes:
1. A repurposed, resilient town centre
 2. Opening up our town through better connectivity
 3. The heart of Cambridgeshire's Agritech Industry
 4. A new leisure and culture offer
- 6.10 The priority for the Soham Design Guidance and Code is to create a high-quality public realm which complements the historic features of the high street and Conservation Area. The Design Code notes that within the town centre, particularly along the High Street, the pedestrian environment could be improved and made more pedestrian friendly to encourage people to spend time there.

POLICY SBNP5 - VIBRANT TOWN CENTRE

Within and adjacent to the Town Centre boundary, and within the Station Quarter (SOH2), (as defined on Local Plan Policies Map (Inset Map 8.35), new town centre uses which support Soham's vitality and diversity by enhancing opportunities for retail, leisure, tourism, flexible employment hubs, cultural and green spaces will be supported where the development:

- i. contributes to creating a vibrant centre with high-quality public realm which complements the historic features of the High Street and the Soham Conservation Area
- ii. aligns with principles set out in the Soham Design Guidance and Codes 2022
- iii. where appropriate, maintains or improves shop fronts so that they contribute positively to the character and appearance of the town
- iv. does not undermine the function of the town centre as a hub for shops, services and community facilities
- v. does not unacceptably affect the amenities of nearby occupiers by reason of noise, air quality, dust or odours
- vi. does not unacceptably impact customer parking provision (in terms of quality and quantity) for shops and
- vii. provide satisfactory access arrangements for deliveries and off-street parking without any significant negative impact on surrounding residential or town centre amenity.

Where relevant, development proposals should contribute to the implementation of initiatives which make the town centre greener and more pedestrian friendly with good access by cycle including contributions, where fairly and reasonably related to the development, to existing and proposed public realm improvements and public spaces.

6.11 The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to repurpose the town centre to secure its long term success including public realm improvements, town centre parking, and the successful implementation and development / redevelopment of key opportunity sites in line with the Combined Authority report. It states that the town centre should move from being overly reliant on shopping to a more holistic space, with social interaction and green space built in. It identifies the opportunities that a greater number of home workers will bring, growing the market for cafes, co working space etc.

6.12 The community consultation has highlighted the need for places for young people to meet, a business hub for starter units, tourist centre, public realm improvements and better use of our public spaces including pavements and tree planting which will benefit the town centre and reduce pollution. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that policies for the town centre and the rail quarter are fit for purpose in the light of structural changes to the economy and to ensure it has long term resilience.

Community Action 1 - Work with the ECDC Youth Strategy and Soham Village College to identify what young people need in the town centre.

Community Action 2 - Work with ECDC, Greater Cambridge Partnership, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and landowners to improve town centre management, public realm, litter disposal and signage in Soham.

Policy SBNP6 Economic Growth

Intent

6.13 To recognise and support the expansion of the cluster of industries in and around Soham which offer a broad range of businesses to encourage local people to work and live in and around Soham and Barway. The Community has identified that there is a particular need to support Start Up Businesses and grow on space in a broad range of industries and to support

the agritech sector in which Soham has recognised local strengths.

POLICY SBNP6 – ECONOMIC GROWTH

Proposals for employment development for business startup space, grow on space, or a business hub within the development envelope will be supported. Where the proposal is outside the development envelope the following criteria should be met:

- i. The proposal is not sited in a prominent or isolated location away from existing buildings.
- ii. Where new buildings are proposed, applicants have demonstrated that existing employment allocations in the Local Plan are not appropriate and structures cannot be adapted or re-used.
- iii. The siting, scale and design of the proposal is in keeping with the character of the area. Particular regard will be given to the cumulative effect of proposals.
- iv. Proposals will need to ensure appropriate parking provision set out in the Local Plan. Such proposals will require a Transport Statement to demonstrate that there are no unacceptable impacts on highway safety.
- v. The amenity of nearby residential properties is not adversely affected, for example, in relation to noise, pollution and disturbance including from vehicle movements.
- vi. The proposal would not (by itself or cumulatively) have a significant adverse on highway safety or cause significant congestion.

6.14 Whilst there has been significant housing growth in Soham, employment and economic growth has not occurred to keep pace with the growing population. There are a number of employment opportunities in the town, including several small industrial and trading estates but the town lacks a business hub. Soham

has higher concentrations of employment in construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and wholesale and retail trade than the district average. It has lower concentrations in a range of other sectors, particularly Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities, Transport and Storage, and Human Health and Social Work. Significant employment is in 'Agricultural Support activities' and 'packaging activities' which are registered in the north of the plan area, and include Barway – the location of farming business, G's, which has a number of sites across the UK. The next largest sector was Wholesale, Retail and Motor Trades, with 700 employed in the area.

- 6.15 It is important that business land and premises are available to support local economic growth. Policy EMP 1 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan puts in place measures to protect employment land and premises from being lost. The policy seeks to retain sites currently or last in employment use, whilst allowing some flexibility to take account of sites that may no longer be suitable or appropriate for employment use.
- 6.16 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan also includes a number of mixed use and employment sites which include areas of land for office / industrial use at land at Station Road, the Eastern Gateway, land east and west of The Shade and land east of the A142 Bypass. The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan estimates this could provide up to 1,426 jobs. It will be important the need for startup units and grow on space is secured on these sites to deliver jobs which meet the needs and aspirations of the new community.
- 6.17 Additionally, the market town plan for Soham⁵ prepared by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority identifies as one of its four key themes 'Soham as the centre of Agritech in the East of England' situated between the research centre in Cambridge and the food

processing factories of north Cambridgeshire. It considers the NIAB Eastern Agritech Innovation Hub at Hasse Fen to be the basis for an 'innovation ecosystem' with companies to be based in the towns grow on space. Established a few years ago, the facility has expanded rapidly, expanding premises to meet demand. The facility offers new start-ups lab and office space, and access to fields and farm machinery to allow pilot testing and the better commercialisation of ideas. It is hoped that business start-ups and a business hub will promote STEM skills together with all the necessary supply chain and supporting business opportunities.

- 6.18 The report also highlights the importance of Barcham Trees and G's Group as key employment sites. The report recognises that the sites are away from the town centre, but the goal is for companies to form a dense business network situated in and around the town. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to support those industries in which it has a competitive advantage subject to safeguarding conditions which ensure that it represents sustainable development.

Policy SBNP7 Tourism and Leisure

Intent

- 6.19 To support and expand tourism and leisure provision in and at the edge of Soham as part of a wider economic strategy to promote East Cambridgeshire as a tourism destination by capitalising upon Soham's close proximity to existing and new tourism and visitor assets.
- 6.20 East Cambridgeshire receives around 4 million visitors per year. There are 271,600 overnight trips and 3.76 million day trips to the district per year. The total visitor spend of both day visitors and overnight tourism is £172 million. The total value of tourism for the district is over £201 million. There are 4,350 tourism related jobs in East Cambridgeshire (this is 9.3% of all employment). Inbound visitors to the

⁵ [Soham-Masterplan-2020.pdf \(soham-tc.gov.uk\)](https://www.soham-tc.gov.uk/Soham-Masterplan-2020.pdf)

district have dramatically increased particularly the number of international visitors⁶.

- 6.21 Soham is at the southern edge of the Fens Landscape, adjacent to the nationally recognised Nature Reserve at Wicken Fen and south of the Cathedral City of Ely. Opportunities for access to Wicken Fen by public transport through Soham has increased significantly due to the opening of the new Railway Station and an East Cambridgeshire sponsored project to provide an off-road cycle route from Soham to Wicken Fen. Additionally, Soham is 8 miles north of Newmarket which is promoted as the Home of Horse Racing and 4 miles from the Dojima Sake Brewery at Fordham Abbey.
- 6.22 There are currently two sites being promoted for tourism uses at Barcham Trees (a new visitor centre, retail, café and restaurant) and Ben Yard’s (a luxury out of town retail experience) just north of the neighbourhood plan boundary on the A142 towards Ely. Spencer Mill has been transformed into a multi-use arts and community hub by Viva Arts.
- 6.23 There is an opportunity for Soham to capture both direct and indirect economic benefits by supporting and promoting additional leisure and tourism developments which are modest in scale. This may include small hotels, camping and caravan facilities.
- 6.24 Working with ECDC, tourism partnerships, the Town Council will explore opportunities to extend tourism, visitor, cultural and leisure facilities within or on the edge of Soham that support Wicken Fen, Newmarket and Ely as visitor destinations and which are modest and appropriate in scale and location.

POLICY SBNP7 –TOURISM AND LEISURE

Proposals for tourism, cultural and leisure facilities within or on the edge of Soham will be supported where the development:

- i. supports a tourism and leisure destination offer associated with Soham’s close proximity to Wicken Fen, Ely and Newmarket
- ii. is of a small and medium scale reflecting the facilities and services available in the parish
- iii. it would not (by itself or cumulatively) have a significant adverse impact in terms of the amount and nature of traffic generated
- iv. the character & appearance of the area and natural assets would be maintained and enhanced
- v. maximises opportunities for sustainable travel including walking, cycling and public transport; and
- vi. opportunities to reuse existing buildings have been explored or where relevant, the development relates to the expansion of existing tourism sites.

POLICY SBNP8– Local Services and Facilities

Intent

- 6.25 Where planning permission is required, seek to safeguard the vibrancy and vitality of the town by resisting the loss of local retail, offices, service and facilities which are key assets for the health and wellbeing of the community.
- 6.26 It seeks to secure a healthier food environment advocated in Planning Guidance on Healthy and Safe Communities and Public Health England’s ‘Using the planning system to promote healthy weight environments’.
- 6.27 The policy seeks to ensure that where hot food takeaways are proposed (sui generis uses) they do not prejudice the vitality of the retail centre nor contribute to the rising levels of adult and childhood obesity.

⁶ East Cambridgeshire Tourism Strategy

POLICY SBNP8 – PROTECTING LOCAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Where planning permission is required, the loss of retail and office uses will generally be resisted in accordance with Local Plan Policy COM2. Proposals that would lead to the loss of commercial or non-commercial community uses will only be permitted if they satisfy the criteria set out in Local Plan Policy COM3.

Development proposals that would result in the loss of valued facilities or services, defined as retail and office premises, public houses, community halls, education and other public services, (or premises last used for such purposes), unless otherwise the use concerned is promoted by the Town Centre Opportunity Sites Policies SOH 12, SOH 13 and SOH 14 in the Local Plan, will only be supported where:

- i. it can be demonstrated that the current use is not economically viable nor likely to become viable. Where appropriate, supporting evidence should be provided demonstrating a robust marketing campaign to illustrate that the continuing use has been fully tested. This will include efforts to advertise the premises at a reasonable market price for sale or rent for a minimum of 12 months; and
- ii. it can be demonstrated that there is no local demand for the use and that the building/site is not needed for any alternative social, community or leisure use; or
- iii. alternative facilities and services are available, or replacement provision is made, of at least equivalent standard, in a location that is accessible to the community it serves with good access by public transport or by cycling or walking.

Proposals for hot food takeaways will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances in accordance with Local Plan Policy COM3 and where the following criteria are satisfied:

- i. it would not result in more than a concentration of 15% hot food takeaways as a proportion of all non-residential units in the town centre- boundary identified in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan; and
- ii. it is not within 400m of a boundary of Soham Village College or Primary School.

This policy does not aim to, and cannot, remove the statutory provisions of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) and should be applied only to applications outside the scope of permitted development.

6.28 The continued presence of existing retail and community facilities is important in order to minimise the need to travel to other centres to secure the service, especially for those with limited access to a car. However, it is recognised that demands change over time, when planning permission is required to change the use of existing premises, it would be unreasonable to require the retention of facilities if there is no longer a proven need or demand for them. In such circumstances it might be appropriate for those uses to be lost where specific criteria can be met.

6.29 The current list of valued services and facilities is provided in the tables below.

6.30 Proposals for such change will be considered against the criteria in Policies COM2 and COM3 or succeeding policy, and this is confirmed in Policy SBNP8 above.

6.31 There are instances, under the Government's General Permitted Development Order (GDPO), where changes between uses are permitted without requiring planning consent. As such, Policy SBNP8 cannot apply to such circumstances.

6.32 The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) in 2020/21⁷ reports that 63.3% of adults were overweight or obese in East Cambridgeshire compared to 60.9% for Cambridgeshire.

6.33 In East Cambridgeshire, 34% of children in year 6 (10 and 11 year olds) were overweight, half of these being obese compared to 32% for Cambridgeshire. A 2023 survey of the High Street confirms that 15% of premises within the town centre are hot food takeaways and other cafes and restaurants offer a takeaway service. The Neighbourhood Plan has a role in supporting opportunities for a healthier place by limiting the proliferation of hot food takeaways particularly in proximity to locations where children and young people congregate. Such an approach is supported in national policy guidance: Healthy and Safe Communities.

6.34 It is acknowledged that hot food takeaways offer a popular service to local communities and have a role to play within town centres and other shopping areas. However, in areas that have become over concentrated by hot food takeaways, further ones can displace other retail shops, break up the continuity of the retail frontage and undermine the primary retailing function of these areas and/or result in a loss of shops to the detriment of local residents. Additional harmful cumulative impacts can include increased numbers of customers around hot food takeaways (including at less sociable hours), which can lead to problems in disturbance, increased noise, littering, crime and anti- social behaviour. For this reason, the concentration of hot food takeaways should not increase in the town centre.

6.35 Evidence on the links between the presence of hot food takeaways and Health and Wellbeing have been explored through case studies and academic evaluations⁸. Where a

hot food takeaway is on a route to a school or place of work, within 400m of school, evidence suggests that this impacts food choices and is linked to a series of health issues associated with poor diet. The parameters applied in Policy SBNP8 are compatible with the analysis detailed in a Study - How does local government use the planning system to regulate hot food takeaway outlets? A census of current practice in England.⁹

6.36 The Food environment assessment tool (FEAT) reports information on the average number of takeaways is 0.96 per 1,000 population in England. In 2016 there were 9 hot food takeaways in Soham ward equating to 0.9 takeaways per 1,000 population¹⁰. At that time the average in East Cambridgeshire was 0.52 takeaways per 1,000 population. The number of takeaways has increased significantly as elsewhere in the country. Soham today has 11 takeaways in the High Street and a further provision within the 2 petrol filling stations at the gateway to the town.

6.37 Health and relationship to placemaking is a complex area and will need to be complemented by other initiatives including those set out in the Community Actions below.

Community Action 3 - The Town Council, in liaison with Environmental Health, can signpost and encourage hot food takeaways to the production of healthier food on a budget so that the healthier options are the same price are available.

Community Action 4 – Liaison with Soham Village College to promote a ‘stay on site’ rule at lunchtimes and education on healthier food options chosen before and after school; and on healthy lifestyles.

⁷ [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

⁸ See Appendix A to Coventry’s [Hot-food-takeaway-spd \(Coventry.gov.uk\)](https://www.coventry.gov.uk)

⁹ [How does local government use the planning system to regulate hot food takeaway outlets? A census of current](#)

[practice in England using document review \(sciencedirectassets.com\)](https://sciencedirectassets.com)

¹⁰ Public health England – Obesity and the environment: density of fast food outlets published 31st December 2017. [Link here](#)

Valued Services and Facilities

Medical Centre	Post Office
Dentist	Supermarkets (Asda and Coop)
Ross Peers Sports Centre	Small convenience food stores
Village College	Launderette
3 Primary Schools	Pharmacy
Pre-school and nursery businesses	Pubs (Fountain, The Ship, Carpenters Arms, Cherry Tree, Red Lion)
Library	Garages (Brittens and Crown Garage)
St Andrews Church	Filling stations
Baptist Chapel	Household Convenience shop
Methodist Chapel	Funeral Directors/Undertakers
Opticians	Estate agent
Hospital car service	Laundrette
Taxi firms	Book shop
Bus Services	Hairdressers/beauty parlours and barbers
Gym	Eating places (restaurants /cafes/takeaways
Train Station (improved connection to main network and frequency of trains)	Care homes and sheltered housing establishments - Millbrook House, Robinson House, The Causeway, Foxwood etc.
Viva Performing Centre	Allotments
Soham Town Council Office	Recreation Grounds
Children's play areas	Public rooms Pavilion, Causeway, Methodist Hall
Fire station	Cemetery
Ross Hall Sports Hall	

Policy SBNP9 New and Upgraded Infrastructure and Community FacilitiesIntent

6.38 To support the provision of new and upgraded community facilities to meet health and wellbeing, recreational, cultural and leisure needs of a growing and changing population.

POLICY SBNP9 - NEW AND UPGRADED INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Proposals will be supported for new and upgraded community facilities within the development envelopes including:

- i. the provision of an accessible health care centre on the Eastern Gateway of a size which reflects the community's needs;
- ii. refurbished and extended Pavilion on the Recreation Ground;
- iii. the provision of a centrally located 'Drop In venue', or Youth Club specifically identified to meet the needs of children and younger adults;
- iv. upgrades to the Ross Peers Sports Hall;
- v. continuation of the Performing Arts Building at Spencer Mill; and
- vi. the provision of a sixth form facility at Soham Village College.

6.39 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy COM3 seeks to protect town and village services and facilities and sets out criteria on which those assessments will be based including marketing of the premises for at least 12 months. The East Cambridgeshire Local plan also supports new community facilities which should be located within the settlement (Policy COM4).

6.40 The facilities noted in the policy and below are considered to be important assets to the community and their enhancement and renovation is supported.

Outdoor Sports	Indoor Sports
Soham Town Rangers Football club and field	Ross Peers Sports Centre
STR Youth football field, Kingfisher Drive	Multi sports
Soham United Football Club and field, Qua Fen Common	Five a side football, Roller hockey
Junior football pitch – G’s Barway	Indoor bowls
Bowls Club	Squash
Tennis Courts SDSA	Badminton
Outdoor court – netball.	Table tennis
5 a side football, hockey - Soham and District Sports Association	Croquet
Basketball Recreation Ground	Snooker
Mobile goals, skate park – Recreation Ground	Multigym
Park run – Village College	Basketball
Fishing – various private pits – Greens, Hobbs, Randalls	

a person with mental health support training would be very helpful. They also suggested that the venue could have other attractions to encourage them to cross the threshold such as table tennis, pool, vending machines etc.

- 6.41 The need for an expanded health care centre is noted in East Cambridgeshire Local Plan policy Growth 4 as part of a Housing-led / mixed use allocation known as the Eastern Gateway. It is essential that an operational healthcare facility, rather than simply the provision of land for a healthcare facility, is brought forward at a scale which meets the needs of the growing population as soon as possible.
- 6.42 The Pavilion is an important central town facility serving a wide range of community uses. To functionally improve the operation of the building, it needs to be repurposed to create a multi – purpose hall with contemporary facilities.
- 6.43 Soham has a slightly younger age profile than the district and county averages with a higher share of 0 - 14-year-olds. Through the consultation, young adults and stakeholders, including the Village College have highlighted that ‘a centrally located venue in Soham where young people could ‘drop-in’ with friends and potentially spend some time with

- 6.44 The Ross Peers Sports Centre is situated on the site of Soham Village College and provides quality sports and leisure facilities for the residents of Soham and surrounding villages. Open since 1984, the building is now in need of repair.
- 6.45 Spencer Mill was a derelict Mill and has received over £2 million of funding for refurbishing and redeveloping The Mill to provide a long-term venue for Viva arts and community group for Soham and the surrounding villages.
- 6.46 It is a longer term ambition to provide sixth form facilities at Soham Village College to encourage a higher level of participation in education and avoid students having to take journeys outside the parish to Ely, Cambridge and elsewhere.

Policy SBNP10 Health, Wellbeing and Health Impact Assessments

Intent

- 6.47 To support Soham and Barway as healthy places, provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles, with good living standards that offer access to excellent healthcare, participation in sports and recreation, healthy travel choices and improvements to air quality.
- 6.48 If a proposal would constitute more than 50 homes or result in the provision of buildings or buildings with a floorspace in excess of 5,000 square metres, a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) will be required in accordance with Policy SBNP10. Where pre-application discussions are carried out, confirmation of the requirement should be provided. Where a HIA is required, we would strongly encourage developers and consultants to utilise a HIA toolkit in order to work through the HIA process.

- 6.49 We strongly encourage that the HIA is carried out as early as possible in the planning process as this will inform design considerations which could be challenging and expensive to address retrospectively. This is in accordance with Government Advice: Health Impact Assessment in Spatial Planning¹¹. We would also encourage East Cambridgeshire District Council to include the requirement within its Planning Application Validation Requirements.
- 6.50 The HIA should include as a minimum a description of the site and its surroundings, aims and objectives of the project and its policy context. The HIA should identify which groups of the existing population would be affected by the proposed development. This should include an understanding of the composition of the existing population, in order to identify those which could be vulnerable, to the impact which the proposed development may result in.
- 6.51 It is recognised that not all groups will be impacted in the same way and therefore this depth of understanding is necessary to be able to consider the specific circumstances of those who could be affected. Additionally, the HIA should set out the key issues and priorities of a specific area based upon evidence. The scope of the assessment should be underpinned by key health priorities identified for the particular area and the impact on other health and wellbeing indicators. This includes:
- 1) Housing
 - 2) Physical Activity
 - 3) Healthy food environments
 - 4) Air quality
 - 5) Noise
 - 6) Traffic and Transportation
 - 7) Crime and anti-social behaviour
 - 8) Economy and Employment
 - 9) Education and Skills
 - 10) Natural Environment
 - 11) Access to Service

Policy SBNP10 Health, Wellbeing and Health Impact Assessments

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to promote strong, vibrant and healthy communities and reduce health inequalities.

Proposals will be supported which help to deliver these aims through the development of environments which encourage healthier day-to-day behaviours and are supported by local services and community networks to sustain health, social and cultural wellbeing.

For major development proposals of over 50 homes or the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 5,000 square metres or more, the development's contribution to healthier communities and reducing health inequalities should be demonstrated through a Health Impact Assessment, which should include details of implementation and monitoring.

For other developments, measures that will help contribute to healthier communities and reduce health inequalities should be incorporated in a development as appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposal and where it is practicable to do so.

- 6.52 Stakeholder engagement is a valuable source of evidence for the HIA. The level of stakeholder engagement should be agreed with planning officers as early as possible in the process.
- 6.53 The recommendations from any assessment should be considered as part of the development design. The applicant should demonstrate, through the submission of the planning applications, how the recommendations have been accounted for and addressed.

¹¹ [Health Impact Assessment in spatial planning - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/362222/Health_Impact_Assessment_in_spatial_planning_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

7 Natural Environment

Objectives

- Protect and enhance the unique green setting of Soham and Barway, including Soham’s Commons and open green spaces together with its green lanes and blue spaces. taking particular care to improve biodiversity wherever possible.
- Promote the town, its history, its Lode and its green connections to the ‘Green Loop’ and make it a focus for sustainable tourism.
- Promote and protect from further development, the peace and tranquillity which encourages the wonderful wildlife which makes Barway very special to its residents.

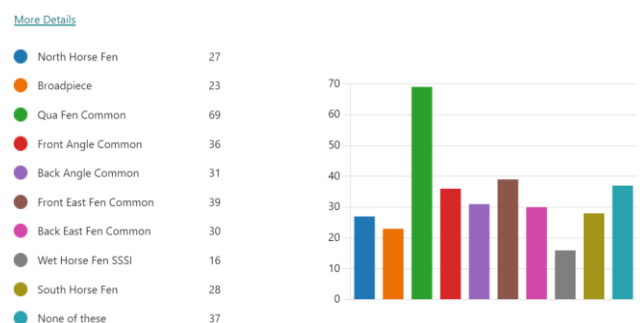
Policy SBNP11 Soham’s Commons

Intent

- 7.1 Soham has a unique landscape setting, being surrounded by Commons to the east and west. The Commons cover a significant area, and consists of grazing land and meadows, with a number of ponds and waterways. The Commons are a haven for wildlife – but also provide an excellent green network. As Common land, they are protected against loss or re-use although there are examples where the Commons have been encroached or inappropriate development has been completed. It should be emphasised that the Commons are not principally for recreational purposes.
- 7.2 The wildlife and landscape quality of the Soham Commons should be protected and where opportunities arise, enhanced including during the construction phase of development on adjoining land or close to the Commons.
- 7.3 Development proposals will also be expected to explore opportunities to enhance biodiversity and limit any impact on the Commons by unauthorised access.

- 7.4 The priority for the Commons is to ensure the open spaces are protected and enhanced allowing the wildlife to flourish whilst ensuring an improved and educated pedestrian experience via the established recognised footpaths, so that access is achieved sympathetically.
- 7.5 The use of the commons demonstrated through the results of a survey in June 2021 are detailed in the chart below and which asked, ‘Which of these areas have you actually visited in the last 12 months? is not currently especially high’. Notably the Soham Commons Recreational and Biodiversity Enhancement Study 2017¹² estimates that additional new housing could result in an increase in recreational use of between 57% and 69%.
- 7.6 Urban development is proposed to abut the commons and there will be a marked increase in local residents close to the Commons. This will bring a range of challenges and issues for their long-term management. The Soham Commons Recreational and Biodiversity Enhancement Study set out a series of measures that should be funded by development in order to ensure conformity with the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, providing the protection and enhancement necessary.

CHART 3 – COMMONS VISITED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Source – Results of Survey of use of Commons – June 2021.

¹² Soham Commons Recreational and Biodiversity Enhancement Study – Footprint Ecology 2017

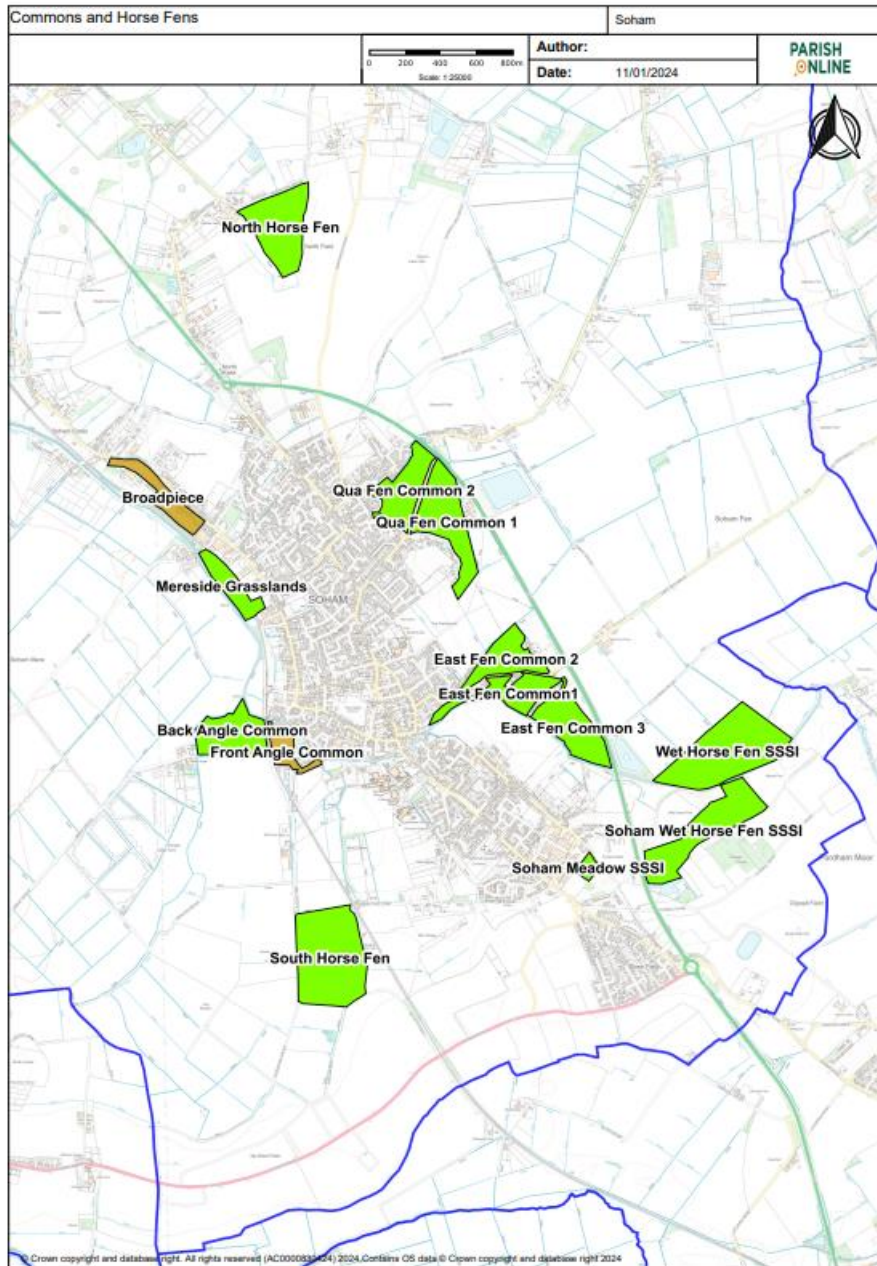
POLICY SBNP11 SOHAM'S COMMONS

The wildlife, landscape and recreational quality of the Soham Commons should be protected and where opportunities arise, enhanced. Development proposals in close proximity to the Commons, should be designed to take account of the development principles for the Commons Character Area, as set out in the Soham Design Guidance and Codes 2022 and the Soham Commons Recreational and Biodiversity Enhancement Study, as endorsed by Natural England and the Wildlife Trust and the East Cambridgeshire District Council's Natural Environment SPD.

Development proposals should have no significant adverse impact on the quality, character, accessibility, and biodiversity value of the Commons and should incorporate substantive transitional landscape buffers between built development, the Commons, and the surrounding landscape. In addition, development proposals should address opportunities to improve biodiversity, access, and landscape improvements on the Commons.

Development proposals which will increase the number of visitors to the Commons should contribute towards measures which will mitigate the adverse impacts on the biodiversity and wildlife habitats on the Commons, and, where practicable, address opportunities to enhance the Commons as a local asset for Soham residents. This should be through contribution towards or implementation of appropriate mitigation measures identified in the Soham Commons Recreational and Biodiversity Enhancement Study such as:

- i. New or replacement infrastructure for grazing;
- ii. New access infrastructure;
- iii. New interpretation, waymarking and signage;
- iv. Ecological enhancements to the commons including restoration of species-rich grasslands to increase wild flowers in key locations; and
- v. Restoration of Soham Lode to make the commons a more attractive place for commons users.



Map 4 – Soham's Commons

Policy SBNP12 Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitats

Intent

- 7.7 ECDC's Natural Environment Supplementary Planning Document sets out the Council's approach to the natural environment and provides advice on policy requirements relating to issues such as: 'net gain' in biodiversity through development proposals, protection of existing nature sites, protection and provision of trees, and supporting the Council's position in relation to the recently adopted Local Nature Partnership vision to 'double land for nature' by 2050 across Cambridgeshire. It builds upon Policy ENV7 – Biodiversity and Geology in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.
- 7.8 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy ENV7 – Biodiversity and Geology states that new development should protect the biodiversity and geological value of land and buildings and minimise harm to features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, wetland and ponds. However, the Environment Act 2021 makes 10% biodiversity gain mandatory for most developments.
- 7.9 The intention of Policy SBNP12 is to highlight the importance of retaining or enhancing specific features, which are a priority for the biodiversity and green infrastructure within the Parish.
- 7.10 As well as the sites identified as Commons the parish includes additional Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) at Soham Wet Horse Fen and land east of Regal Lane and north of Fordham Road. The parish is also within the Impact Zones of a number of other SSSI's including Wicken Fen and Delph Bridge Drain. County Wildlife Sites are designated at East Fen Common and The Wash, Mere Side grasslands, Qua Fen Common, Soham Cemetery, Broadpiece and River Great Ouse, Soham Tunnel Drove, Black Wing Drains, River Lark and associated habitat.
- 7.11 Most fields successfully growing crops will have a network of tile drains or plastic pipes running under the field and draining water into the ditches and drains which line most of the field boundaries. These ditches and drains eventually empty into either small rivers (like the Soham Lode) or directly into the main river.
- 7.12 These ditches and drains provide important wildlife corridors between areas where wildlife can flourish. A good example is the water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) which has been recorded in many places along the Soham Lode and in many ditches and drains around the parish.
- 7.13 In most instances the ditches and drains also have rough vegetation along their banks which enables other animals and insects to move about safely and find food. This rough vegetation may also contain rare or unusual plants which have an opportunity to spread along the ditches and drains.
- 7.14 Some of these drainage channels used as boundaries also had hedges along their banks and these provide an even better wildlife corridor for many species. These enable populations of animals and plants to interact, interbreed and spread out possibly creating new populations in new locations.
- 7.15 In order to encourage more wildlife to stay or new species to move in we need to make as much land attractive to wildlife as possible, as well as managing to produce food.
- 7.16 Water is always important to wildlife and so wherever there is water - be it a river, Lode, a drain, a ditch, a reservoir, a fishing lake, a natural pond, an ephemeral pond or a garden pond - these need to be retained and their surrounding vegetation encouraged to provide as many different plant species as possible.

- 7.17 Additionally, it is important that the water environment is not polluted and opportunities to improve the broader water quality is supported.
- 7.18 Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) have prepared a full list of all the flora and fauna recorded in the parish of Soham over the past 15 years or so.
- 7.19 We also have a habitat map which clearly shows the huge areas of arable land, which surrounds the town and is not conducive to encouraging wildlife. This map also shows those areas of vegetation (grassland, trees, hedges and water) which may be suitable habitat for some of these threatened species. These maps are available in the Topic Paper – Habitats and Biodiversity.
- 7.20 It is clear from these records that there are or have been very recently, quite a large number of threatened or vulnerable species and species on the National Red List which occur or have occurred recently in our area. We, therefore, need to take particular care that any new development does **not**:-
- take place in areas important for wildlife
 - place additional pressure on wildlife on land adjacent to a development (opening up access to important sites which will cause extra disturbance)
 - destroy or damage boundaries to important sites which may be important habitat in themselves.
- 7.21 In the parish of Soham, we have several ‘hotspots’ for rare or vulnerable species where we would like to encourage the populations to expand by protecting the site in which they are found and hopefully providing additional areas they could colonise.
- 7.22 There are two areas which are important for various bat species. They are around the railway station and St Andrews Church. Unfortunately, during the construction of the new railway station many of the surrounding trees were felled. It is to be hoped that the bats have managed to find other suitable places. There are some trees close to the Village College (Lodeside entrance) where bats have been seen recently.
- 7.23 There are several places along the Soham Lode between Barway and eastward in the direction of Fordham, where otters have been seen. European water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) have been recorded all along the Lode and in several ditches and drains around the parish.
- 7.24 There are several areas where Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) have been recorded (Qua Fen Common and Mereside Grasslands) and occasionally smooth newts too.
- 7.25 There are records for many varieties of bird many of whom are rare or threatened. E.g. Kingfisher, turtle dove, house sparrow, tree sparrow, lapwing, yellow hammer, barn owl, swift and Bewick’s swan.
- 7.26 Small heath and wall butterflies are among the priority species of insects recorded in Soham and also the white spotted pinion moth.
- 7.27 There is a large number of different species recorded in the parish many of which are priority species, threatened or vulnerable. The flora is influenced by the presence of water and how the land has been treated over the decades. Places which have never been farmed such as areas on the commons have the greatest number of rare and threatened species. These include *Sium latifolium* (Greater Water Parsnip), *Oenanthe fistulosa* (Tubular water dropwort), *Coeloglossum viride* (Frog orchid), *Taraxacum palustre* (Fen dandelion) (*Anacamptis mori*) Green-winged orchid, *Trifolium fragiferum* (Strawberry clover) and *Ranunculus flammula* (Lesser spearwort).
- 7.28 The county of Cambridgeshire and Soham in particular, is noted for its lack of trees. Developers are encouraged to plant trees

of native species in the right habitat – trees that will benefit not only the people living in their houses and soften the built

environment but also will create habitat for birds, animals, insects and the supporting flora.

POLICY SBNP12 - BIODIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment and shall demonstrate in an ecological assessment that a hierarchy of mitigation has been embedded into the design of the proposal with the following steps implemented in order:

- ai. Firstly avoid impacts: this means retaining habitats of value (including Lodeside Walks, hedgerows, trees, ponds and any wildlife corridors and habitats) for enhancement and management and retaining species in situ;
- aii. Secondly, mitigate impacts where these have been found to be unavoidable and include measures to replace lost, protected and priority habitats and their ecological connectivity and accommodating displaced species in the site boundary;
- aiii. Thirdly, compensate if mitigation measures are insufficient. Include suitable measures to compensate for harmful effects.

In addition to the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements as established by the Environment Act 2021, the following additional requirements should be met:

- bi. The minimum biodiversity net gain for all qualifying developments shall be 20%, rather than the national mandatory minimum of 10%, unless demonstrated through an independent assessment that it would make the development unviable; and
- bii. For householder proposals which are otherwise exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements, an element of biodiversity gain should nevertheless be incorporated into the proposal of a degree proportionate to the scale of the proposal. Measures could include bird boxes, swift bricks, insect 'hotels', bee blocks, bat boxes and/or hibernation holes, the creation of new ponds for amphibians and invertebrates, making changes to garden fencing to allow access for small mammals, or other nature-friendly landscaping feature within the householder's garden; and
- biii. Minimise the light pollution on sites of wildlife interest.

Proposals should protect and use available opportunities to enhance the existing network of habitats currently present in the parish. Specific opportunities include:

- ci. Improve habitats and their networks;
- cii. Improve the naturalness of greenspaces and access to them;
- ciii. Improve connectivity with and between green spaces.
- civ. Creating new wildlife corridors especially where these will help protect or enhance existing corridors in the parish
- cv. The restoration or creation of new natural habitats especially where these will help protect or enhance existing habitats
- cvi. The planting of additional trees and hedgerows
- cvii. Improve water quality in our waterways

Development proposals shall identify and assess any potential impact of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, by taking into account of Natural England's Impact Risk Zones.

7.29 An ecological assessment, where required, should be submitted with the planning application to assess effects on habitat, species, connections, flora and fauna, commensurate with the scale of the impact and the importance of the species or habitat. Ecological surveys must be carried out to the required standards by suitably qualified and experienced people. The Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) will provide lists of recognised professional ecologists. The ecological assessment must be up to date, surveys must be undertaken at an appropriate time of year for the habitats and species concerned, using appropriate survey methods. BS42020:2013 'Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development', or any updated code, is seen as an indication of the assessment's validity and relevance to the determination of the development proposal.

7.30 Where there is harm, the ecological assessment should demonstrate that mitigation hierarchy has been applied (avoid, mitigate and compensate). Where there is insufficient survey data, or data is gathered at an inappropriate time of year, planning permission should be refused on the basis of the extant government circular on planning and biodiversity (Circular 06/2005). This makes it explicit: *"the presence or absence of protected species, and the extent to which they could be affected by a proposed development, should be established before planning permission is granted, since otherwise all material considerations might not have been considered in making the decision"*.

7.31 In January 2020, the government published the Environment Bill. The Environment Act received Royal Assent in November 2021, and its various provisions being enacted in phases since then. The Act includes a requirement for biodiversity net gain of 10% for developers through the planning system. The government has committed to apply a requirement for biodiversity net gain of 10% for developers through the planning system for almost all

development from November 2023. This is the legal minimum. Given the threat to our environment from significant development proposals in Soham and Barway, the need to secure improved habitats for our more threatened and vulnerable species is critical. Therefore, a biodiversity net gain of 20% is required unless demonstrated to make the development unviable. We set out further details on the justification for 20% in our separate Topic Paper entitled Wildlife Habitats and Biodiversity.

7.32 As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals, unless an exempt development, in addition to the statutory requirements must provide clear and robust evidence setting out the ongoing 30 year management strategy for significant on site gains and all off site gains which will be secured by a legal agreement.

Policy SBNP13 Landscape Character

Intent

7.33 As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals shall maintain and where possible, enhance and contribute positively to the distinctive landscape and settlement character of Soham and Barway, as described in the Soham Design Guidance and Codes and Soham's Assessment of Views 2022.

7.34 Nearly all of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, apart from a small corner to the south, is made up of The Fens National Character Area as described by Natural England. The Fen areas have distinctively large-scale, flat, and open landscapes with extensive vistas and panoramic views. The landscape includes many drainage ditches, such as Soham Lode which runs through the town as well as dykes and rivers that lead to The Wash. The landscape surrounding Soham comprises low-lying, level terrain with elevations only varying by one or two metres over long distances. This level, open topography creates the effect of huge skies, conveying a strong sense of place and tranquillity. Due to the flat landscape any tall buildings or structures create a strong vertical, visual influence

often dominating the surrounding land and creating a landmark within the landscape. Tall buildings become very prominent in these flat landscapes as does the parish church St Andrews in the centre of the town.

- 7.35 The Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines 1991 comment that many Fenland villages have suffered from unsightly fringe development. Planting thick hedgerows with trees or shelterbelts on the margins would soften harsh boundaries between rear gardens and farmland. The landscaping features should be incorporated on edge of settlement developments.
- 7.36 The Soham Design Guidance and Codes notes the town gateways are located along the northern and southern strips of the main street. Generally, these two gateways are a continuation of linear ribbon development from the town centre to the north and the south with larger plots and buildings more spread out along the street creating gaps and filtered views to the surrounding landscape. These areas act as a transition from the open countryside to the town centre by gradually building up the density towards the centre of the town. These areas could become vulnerable to infill development which would create a hard edge with the countryside.
- 7.37 As Soham is located on a flat topography, the built environment can help to create views by framing distinctive features within the built environment, such as landmarks or the scenic open countryside.
- 7.38 Generous gaps between buildings should be created to provide glimpses and filtered views to the countryside and beyond. This will connect people and the built form with nature and contribute to maintaining the rural character in the built environment. Specific design principles are set out in the Soham Design Guidance and Codes 2022.
- 7.39 Maps 5 and 6 below identify key views from the edge of Soham and Barway out into the countryside and the views from the countryside into the Soham and Barway where development should not adversely impact upon these views.

POLICY SBNP13 - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

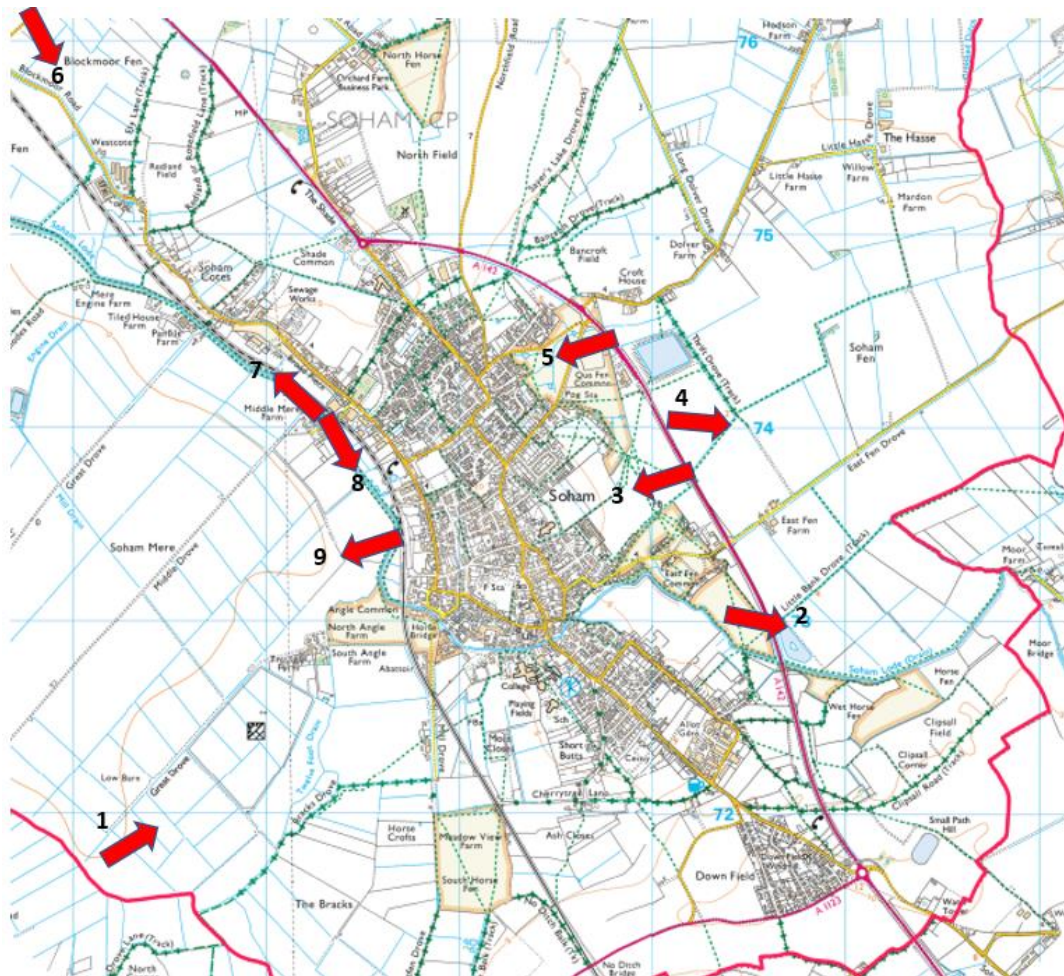
As appropriate to their scale, nature, and location, development proposals should respond positively to the distinctive landscape and settlement character of the area, as described in the Soham Design Guidance and Codes and Soham Assessment of Views and to the following criteria:

Specifically:

- i. Have particular regard to the layout, scale, height, design and massing of buildings, and landscaping to maintain and enhance views of the key landmark building, St. Andrews Church;
- ii. Locations where the landscape extends into the town shall be protected from development where this would result in undermining a strong connection between settlement and countryside;
- iii. Development proposals shall respect and not adversely impact upon the key views from the edge of Soham and Barway out into the countryside and the views from the countryside into the Soham and Barway identified on Maps 5 and 6;
- iv. Development proposals shall maintain and enhance the sense of open character and transitional nature of the gateways to Soham by maintaining low density development;
- v. where appropriate, development proposals should retain or enhance existing features of landscape value (including Lodeside Walks, trees, hedgerows, water features) within the site and respect existing features of landscape value in its wider surroundings; and
- vi. Promote and safeguard the 'Green Loop' of open, green space surrounding Soham, maintaining and enhancing the amenity value of the walks and connections between them for both people and wildlife. Proposals should take reasonable opportunities to enhance the Green Loop shown on Maps 7,8 and 9. This could be through delivering green infrastructure that enhances the existing habitats and the wildlife corridors that depends on them or creates new or improved wildlife corridors to connect them.

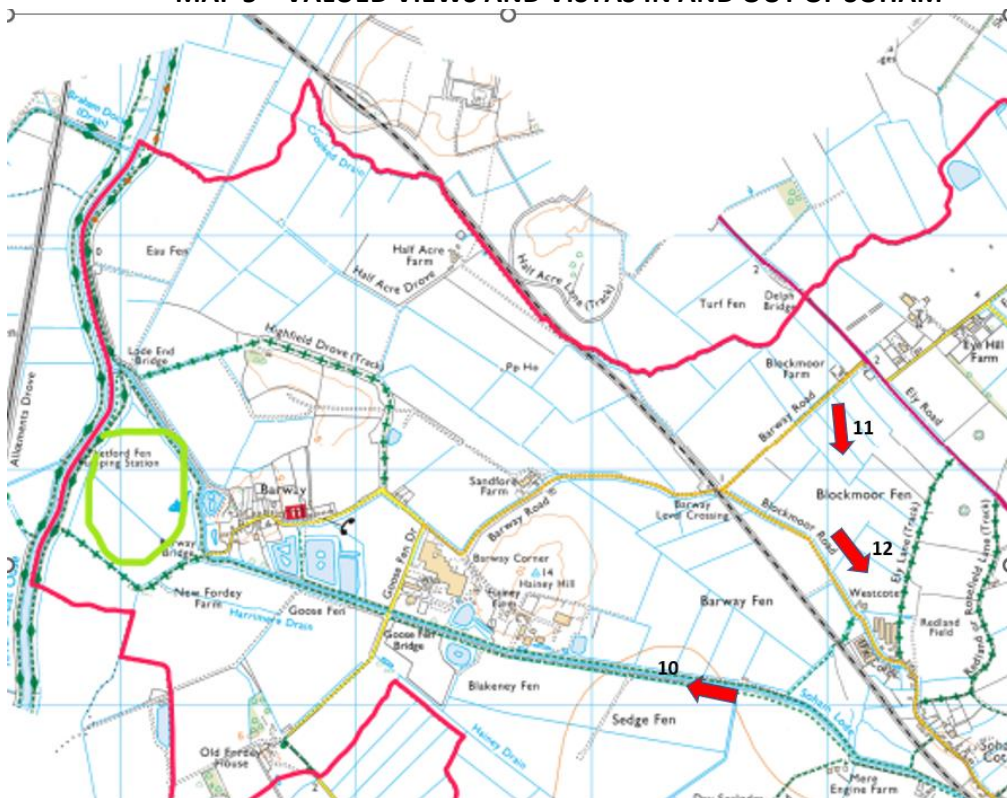
Development proposals which would have potential impacts on Soham and Barway's distinctive landscape character should demonstrate their accord with the principles in the preceding element of the policy through the submission of an assessment of landscape and visual impacts (proportionate to the scheme proposed) and which draws on the contents of the Soham Design Guidance and Codes.

Development proposals on the edge of settlements should ensure that they are sensitively screened and assimilated into their surroundings. Where appropriate, the creation of landscaped buffers (comprising native planting of hedges, trees, and copses to frame and soften the village edges) should be incorporated into proposals.







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MAP 5 – VALUED VIEWS AND VISTAS IN AND OUT OF SOHAM



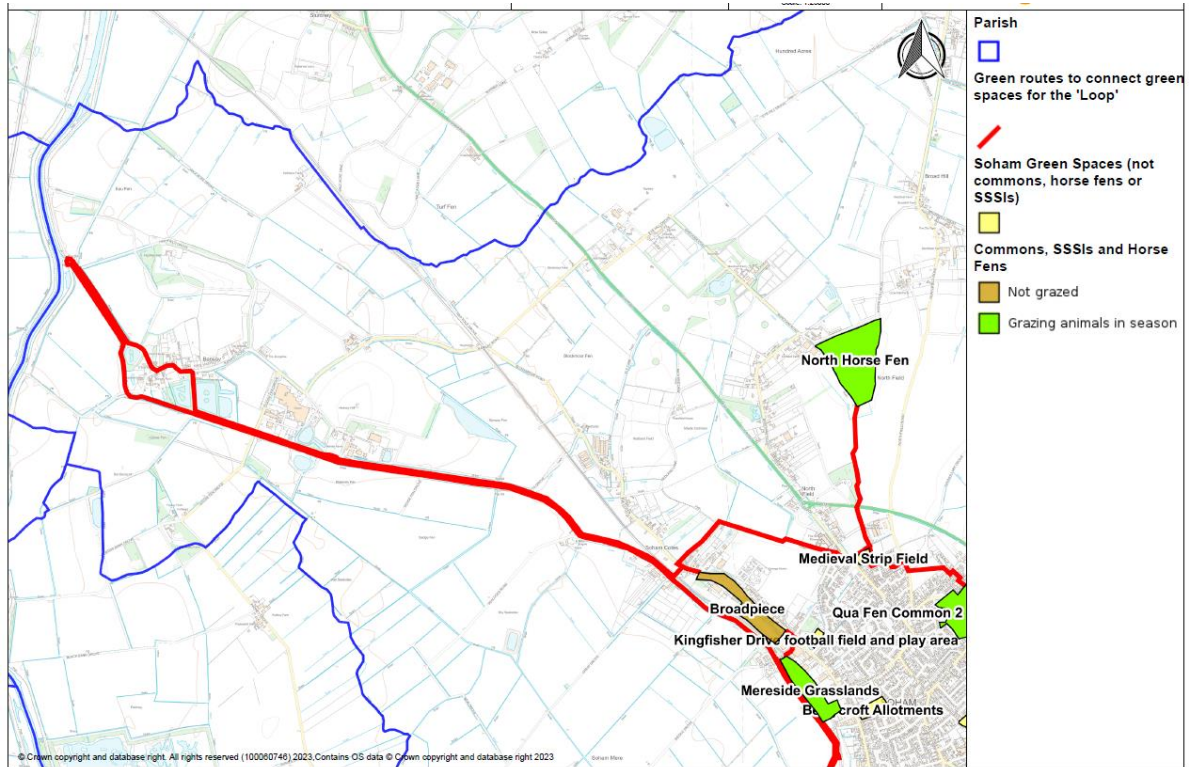
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MAP 6 – VALUED VIEWS AND VISTAS IN AND OUT OF BARWAY

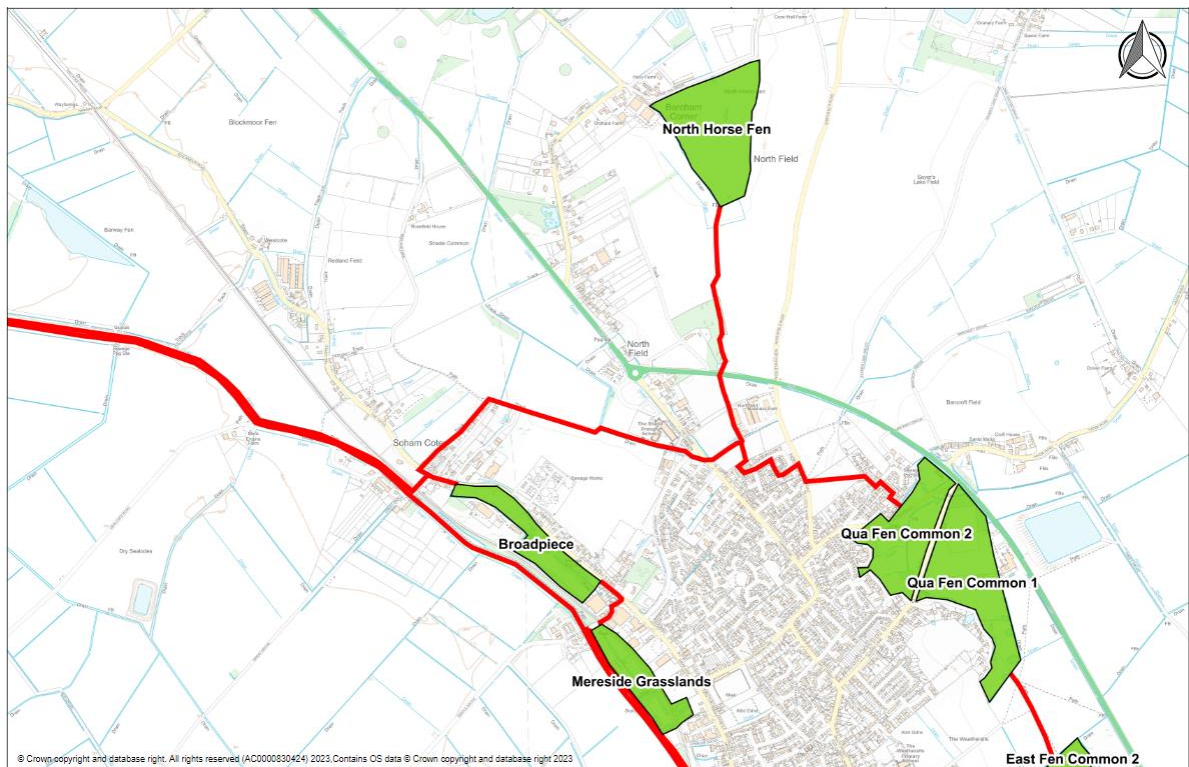
Valued views to and from Soham and Barway	
<p>View 1: Looking northwards from the A1123 this view of Soham clearly illustrates the distinctive flat landscape of the area. The town can only just be made out from the centre of this photo and the arable land is typical of all that surrounds Soham.</p>	
<p>View 2 Looking east across the A142 towards Isleham, the flat landscape continues. Whilst seemingly unremarkable it does characterise the open and spacious nature of all the countryside around the town on all four sides. Note how buildings are completely absent despite the far-reaching views here.</p>	
<p>View 3: A closer view of St Andrew’s Church, seen from the A142 bypass above the line of trees that flank East Fen Common, reveals the 15th century bell tower rising majestically in the centre of the town’s Conservation Area. Horses grazing in the foreground are a regular feature of the geography here and has been so for many generations.</p>	
<p>View 4: The uninterrupted view from the east side midpoint of the A142 Soham by-pass, across the unspoilt surrounding countryside, stretches out for many miles. Rich arable farmland surrounds Soham for miles in all directions and this vital resource has been used to feed the UK for centuries.</p>	

Valued views to and from Soham and Barway	
<p>View 5: The views across the unspoilt Qua Fen Common offers walker and tourist alike unique access to historic grasslands untouched since Anglo Saxon times. It houses species-rich hedges, and several seasonal pools east of Bushel Lane. In the distance the eastern side of Soham is only just visible.</p>	
<p>View 6 : Taken from Blockmoor Road, this view of Blockmoor Fen shows the walking, running and cycling routes on offer here. Leading to Soham Cotes and onwards to Broad Piece, this alternative entry to Soham is used by residents of Barway and is dissected by multiple irrigation waterways as the land is barely one metre above sea level.</p>	
<p>View 7: This view, from the north facing side of the road bridge in view 14, shows Soham Lode and the associated public footpath heading off towards Barway. Flanked by trees and hedges this route is navigable for the ardent walker who wants to take in the rural aspects of the local countryside. Trees thrive on the banks close to the water and provide much needed habitat for animals, birds and insects.</p>	
<p>View 8: This view of the bridge crossing the Soham Lode at Clark’s Drove looks southward and is used mainly to allow farm vehicles to access Middle Drove and the surrounding farmland. A public footpath runs alongside Soham Lode which offers a quiet, but pleasant, walk towards Soham. To the left (out of shot) is the railway level crossing.</p>	

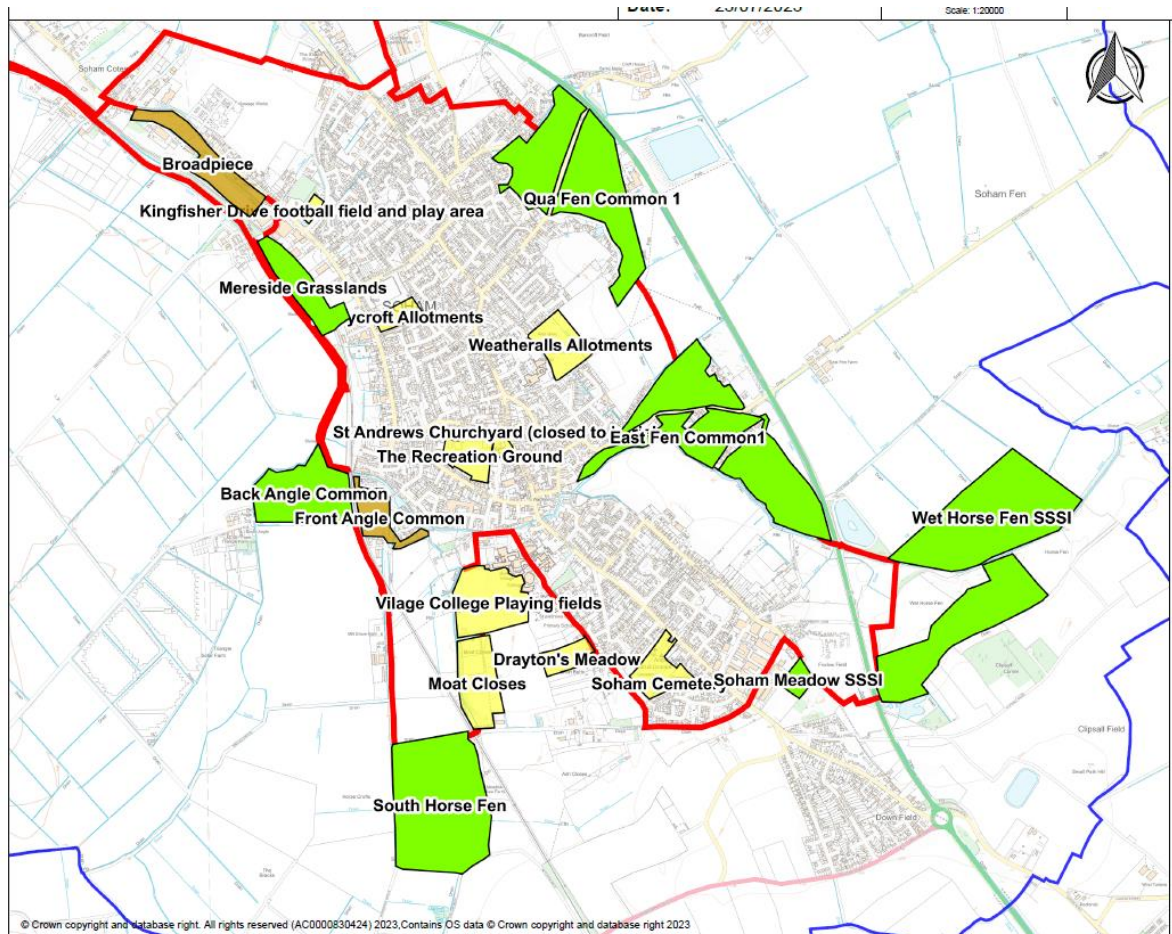
Valued views to and from Soham and Barway	
<p>View 9 : This view from the footbridge above the track at Soham Railway Station faces south-westerly across the tracks towards Wicken. The station was reopened in December 2021 after being closed in 1965. This view towards Wicken clearly shows the fen-like and the wide open views from Soham landscape character of the agricultural land surrounding Soham.</p>	
<p>View 10: This view of Soham Lode, a man-made drainage channel that runs approximately 7 miles from the River Great Ouse, through Barway and Soham and onto the River Snail, was thought to be constructed around 1790 when it was built to reduce flooding in Soham and Fordham. The sloping banks and riverside grasses provide an unkempt frame to the river.</p>	
<p>View 11: This view is an excellent example of the flatness of the Grade 1 agricultural land and its lack of trees. This picture is taken looking back across Blockmoor Fen from Barway Road, towards Soham.</p>	
<p>View12: From the 'back' road from Barway looking back towards the north east. Another example of the flat fen land, deep ditches to keep the land dry enough to farm and a few trees in the distance.</p>	



MAP 7 – SOHAM’S GREEN LOOP – BARWAY LINK



MAP 8 – SOHAM’S GREEN LOOP - NORTH



MAP 9 – SOHAM’S GREEN LOOP – SOUTH

Community Action 5 - Soham Town Council hopes to find a suitable green space for dedicated dog walking area.

Community Action 6 - Explore opportunities for a wetland area which could be brought forward as a satellite habitat for wildlife from Wicken Fen which would benefit educational facilities within the town.

Community Action 7 - Town Council to work with local environmental organisations to promote knowledge of indigenous biodiversity and wildlife.

Policy SBNP14 Local Green Spaces

Intent

7.40 The intention of Policy SBNP 14 is to designate 14 new Local Green Spaces in the Parish.

POLICY SBNP14 - LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The following sites, as shown on Policy Maps 10 and 11 are designated as Local Green Spaces:

1. Berrycroft Allotments
2. Weatherall Allotments
3. The Cemetery
4. St Andrews Church closed churchyard
5. Recreation Ground
6. Drayton Meadows
7. Moat Closes
8. Qua Fen Common Parts 1 and 2
9. East Fen Common Parts 1, 2 and 3
10. Angle Common
11. South Horse Fen Common
12. North Horse Fen Common
13. Mereside
14. Broadpiece

Development on these sites will not be supported unless they are consistent with national policy for Green Belts.

7.41 There are a number of important open areas within the Neighbourhood Area that are important to the local community and should be acknowledged as such. The NPPF enables the designation and protection of land of particular importance to local communities as Local Green Spaces ('LGS') in neighbourhood plans. Paragraph 102 of the NPPF states that the designation should only be used where the green space is:

- In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves
- 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

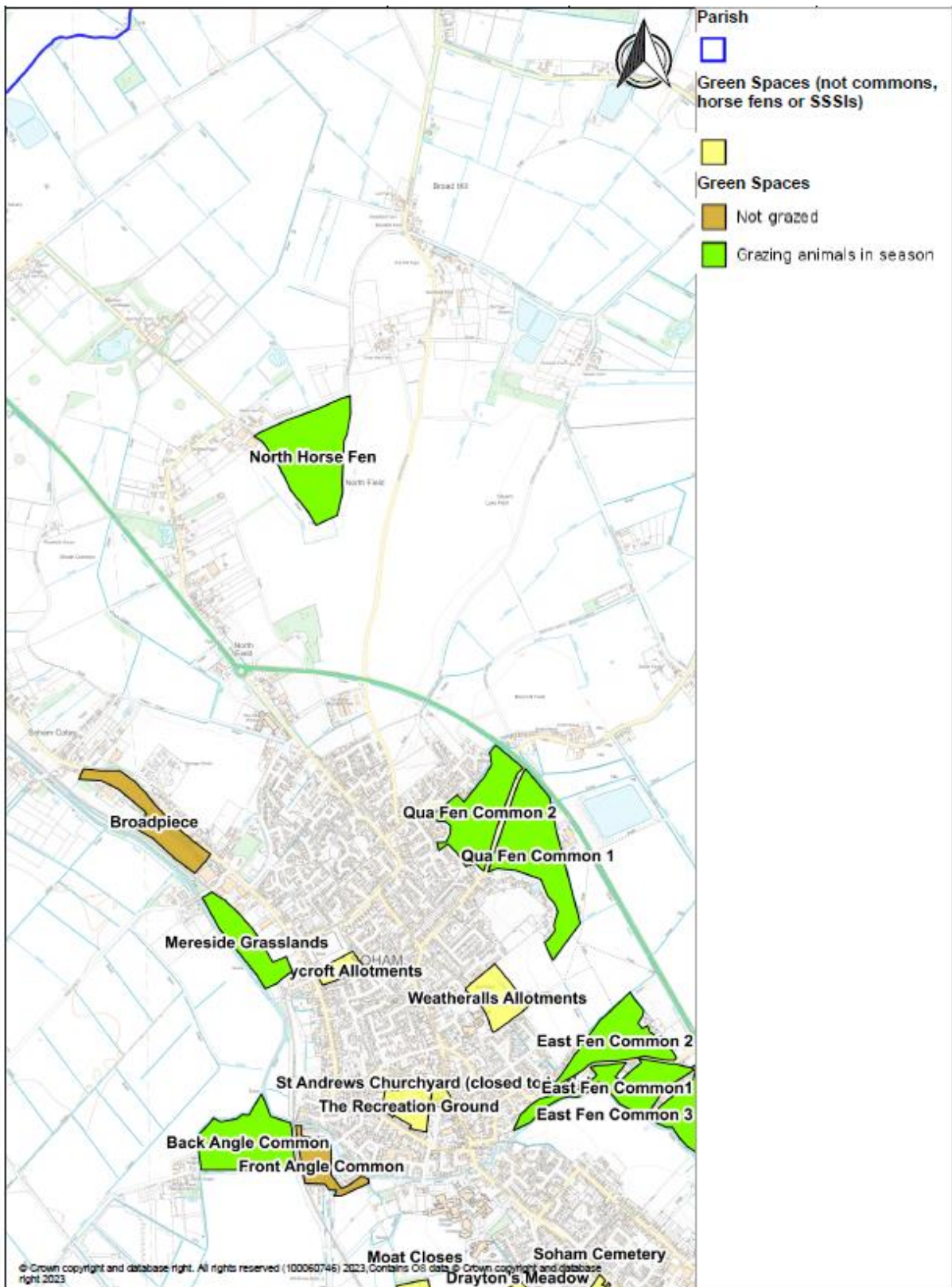
- Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land

7.42 A separate Local Green Space Assessment, available as part of this consultation, and has been undertaken as part of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, which demonstrates how certain local spaces meet the criteria in paragraph 106 of the NPPF. The spaces that meet the criteria are identified in Policy SBNP14 and are illustrated on Maps 10 and 11. A summary of the Local Green Space Assessment, for those identified in Maps 10 and 11, is set out in the table below.

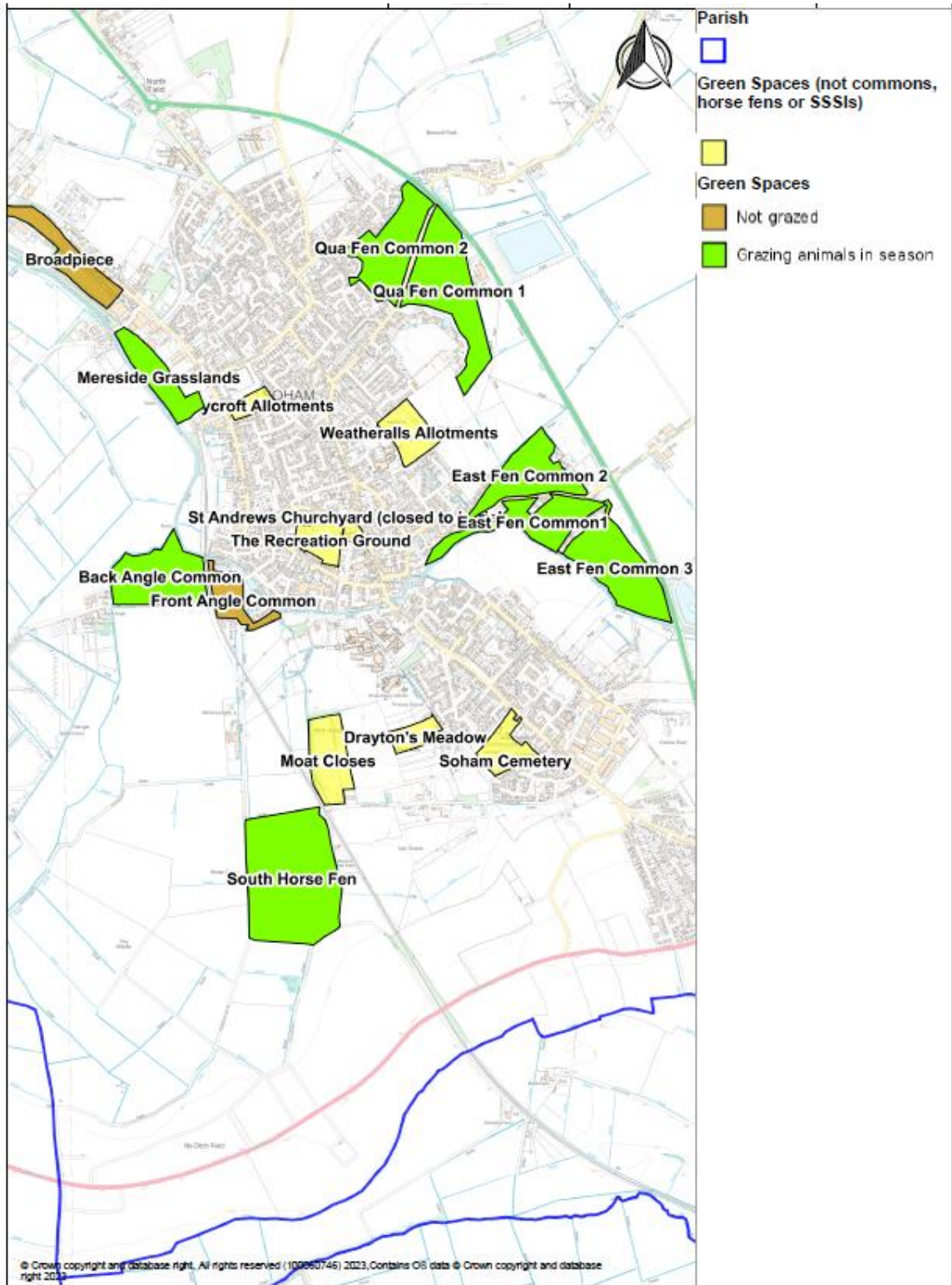
7.43 The identification of these spaces as Local Green Space means that development is restricted to that which has to be demonstrated as being essential for the site, and be consistent with the Green Belt policies defined by the NPPF. Permitted development rights, including the operational requirements of infrastructure providers, are not affected by this designation.

7.44 The Commons are identified as Local Green Spaces. There are additional benefits of securing protection on such spaces including the Commons given the changes that have occurred to the boundaries of the Common, the impacts of development and development proposals on the Commons and the need to ensure their longer term management. This is consistent with National Guidance which makes it clear that different types of designations are intended to achieve different purposes.

Site Number	Site Address	Proposed for Inclusion	Proximity to community	Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational Value	Tranquillity	Wildlife	Not and Extensive Tract of land
1	Berrycroft Allotments	Yes	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Weatherall Allotments	Yes	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
3	The Cemetery	Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
3	St Andrews Church closed churchyard	Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
5	Recreation Ground	Yes	✓			✓			✓
6	Drayton Meadows	Yes	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Moat Closes	Yes	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Qua Fen Common Parts 1 and 2	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	East Fen Common Parts 1, 2 and 3	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Angle Common	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	South Horse Fen Common	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	North Horse Fen Common	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Mereside	Yes	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
14	Broadpiece	Yes	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



MAP 10 – LOCAL GREEN SPACES (NORTH)



MAP 11 – LOCAL GREEN SPACES (SOUTH)

8 Historic Environment

Objectives

- Protect and enhance heritage assets in the town centre (Conservation Area, Listed Buildings) and protect the historic environment in Barway and all areas of the parish.

Policy SBNP15 Soham Conservation Area

Intent

- 8.1 Both the Conservation Area and St. Andrew’s church are currently on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk register. The policy seeks to reinforce the Adopted Soham Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Document and the Soham Design Guidance and Codes to specifically identify opportunities for improvement of the Conservation Area and its future enhancement.
- 8.2 Soham’s town centre was designated as a Conservation Area in 1975 to preserve the historic interest and special architecture seen in the historic core of the town. It is made up of the main commercial street as well as some of the surrounding residential streets that make up the oldest part of the town. The main space within the Conservation Area is the churchyard and adjacent Recreation Ground that are a pleasant green respite from the busy commercial streets; the churchyard is a quiet secluded area whilst the Recreation Ground is an open grassed area of activity.
- 8.3 The odd commercial property is found along Hall Street and Pratt Street. Nonconformist Chapels and their associated Sunday Schools and Manses tend to be located just off the central spine, the exception being the former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, which is on Churchgate Street.
- 8.4 The majority of the listed buildings are Grade II and lie within the Conservation Area and date from the 19th Century and later with not many earlier examples surviving. Most of the listed buildings are either along the main commercial street or in one of the nearby surrounding streets which is consistent with the historic pattern of development.

POLICY SBNP15 - SOHAM CONSERVATION AREA

Development Proposals within, or which has potential to affect the setting of, the Conservation Area should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Development Proposals should demonstrate how it has considered the Soham Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Document 2008 and the Soham Design Guidance and Codes 2022.

Proposals for development within the Conservation Area should:

- i. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the Conservation Area alongside an assessment of the potential impact of the proposal on that significance;
- ii. Be of an appropriate design, scale, form, height, massing and position taking into consideration the ‘Key Characteristics’ identified in the Soham Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Document;
- iii. Retain a high level of enclosure by maintaining the strong boundary lines and the building height to width ratio;
- iv. Buildings located on corners should have primary facades on both street facing elevations;
- v. Use high quality materials and methods of construction which complement the character of the area;
- vi. Where appropriate, reduce the car dominated streetscape and create pedestrian friendly streets, improve the setting of the Memorial, and create open spaces with tree planting; and
- vii. Retain and enhance traditional shops front with materials and design appropriate to the Conservation Area.

Proposals for development which affect the setting of the Conservation Area will be assessed against criteria (i), (ii) and (v) above.

St Andrew's Church

The streets surrounding St Andrew's Church are wider than other streets as they reputedly follow the enclosure of a Saxon Cathedral, however the Grade I listed church that is now situated here originated in the 12th Century and was extended in the 15th Century. The church is made of rubble and pebble stone with flint and clunch.

Much of the building has been restored over time to ensure the original features are retained. However, it remains on the Risk Register.

Downfield Windmill

Built in 1726 the Grade II* listed windmill was originally a timber framed smock. After falling into disrepair, it was restored in 1975 and is a working mill. At four storeys in height, it is visible from the surrounding streets and open space making it a landmark within the residential Downfield area.

Northfield Windmill

Another Grade II* listed windmill, to the north of the A142, was an early 18th Century smock windmill used for drainage and was moved to its current site in the 19th Century. The windmills present in Soham are important as they help characterise the region and make it special. Progress on restoration of the Windmill is on-going.

- 8.5 ECDC completed a Conservation Area Appraisal for the Conservation Area in 2008 and it was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, although it was not accompanied by the management plans encouraged by Historic England. The policy seeks to ensure that the key characteristics identified in the Supplementary Planning Guidance and the Soham Design Guidance and Codes as far as they relate to the Conservation Area are given the appropriate weight in planning decision by including their advice in policy.
- 8.6 Soham and Barway has a very rich and varied archaeological heritage. This includes the extensive past utilisation of the fen edge which shows archaeological evidence such as ring ditches, complexes, enclosures and

earlier round barrows, medieval field systems, Iron Age and Roman enclosures.

- 8.7 The Neighbourhood Plan supports East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy – ENV14 which states that development proposals at or affecting all sites of potential archaeological interest will seek account for the impact of the proposal upon designated and undesignated archaeological remains. Where these are affected by development, an appropriate evaluation should be undertaken following requirements set of by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team, to establish impact and enable preservation or mitigation strategies.
- 8.8 Development that harms the significance of any heritage asset of known or identified of national importance will not be supported. Where assets are impacted, the development is required to record and advance the understanding of those heritage assets and to make this evidence public.

Policy SBNP 16 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Intent

- 8.9 ECDC maintains a Register of Buildings of Local Interest. The Register was adopted in February 2017 and identifies 2 buildings in the Parish of local significance that meet the criteria for inclusion because of their age and condition, historical association, architectural interest, local characteristics and/or townscape significance.
- 8.10 The buildings and sites identified in Soham Parish are: The Grange, Pratt Street and Croft House, Hall Street.
- 8.11 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy ENV13: Local Register of Buildings and Structures states that proposals that affect a building or structure on the Local Register will not be permitted where it would have a detrimental impact on the visual, architectural or historic significance of the asset.

- 8.12 The intent of Policy SBNP16 is to ensure that the spirit of East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy ENV 13 is brought up to date to align with current national planning policy; and to provide added context by providing clarity on locally important non designated heritage assets in the Parish.
- 8.14 CCC are collaborating with local communities to develop a local list of heritage assets that are important to the people living in those communities. Any properties identified in this list and adopted by the Council’s will be considered to be non-designated heritage assets.
- 8.13 The non-designated heritage assets included in Policy SBNP 16, as listed in the Neighbourhood Plan, are justified on the basis of assessment using the criteria defined in Table 1 of the Historic England’s Advice Note no.7 ‘Local Heritage Listing’ as set out in the Topic Paper – ‘Soham and Barway Non-Designated Heritage Assets’. Assets that are within a Conservation Area are not additionally identified as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset as it is considered that they are appropriately safeguarded by the need to conserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area.
- 8.15 While local listing provides no additional planning controls, the fact that a building or site is on a local list means that its conservation as a heritage asset is recognised as an objective of the NPPF and a material consideration when determining the outcome of a planning application. Proposals for any works that would lead to the loss of, or substantial harm to, a building of local significance should be supported by an appropriate analysis of the significance of the asset together with an explanation of the wider public benefits of the proposal.

POLICY SBNP16 NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

Wherever practicable, development proposals should retain and protect buildings of local interest, as identified in the East Cambridgeshire Register of Buildings of Local Interest (February 2017) and any adopted subsequent Register.

Development proposals that would affect non-designated heritage assets, as identified in Figure 1 below, or identified by Cambridgeshire County Council’s local heritage list, will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF, Local Plan Policy ENV13, and as described in a Design and Access Statement or Heritage Statement.

List of Non – Designated Heritage Assets	
1	3 and 3A Townsend, Soham
2	Pembroke House, 3 Fountain Lane, Soham
3	Old Ambulance Station, Fountain Lane, Soham
4	60 West Drive Gardens, Soham
5	76 Brook Street, Soham
6	Netherhall Manor, Tanners Lane, Soham
7	Former School House, Barway
8	The Grange, Pratt Street, Soham (existing listing)
9	Croft House, Hall Street, Soham (existing listing)

Figure 1 – List of Non-Designated Heritage Assets in Barway and Soham

9 Development Design and Climate Change

Objectives

- Ensure new development delivers high quality design, meets modern living requirements, National Space Standards, appropriate to identified housing needs and is designed to be low carbon.
- Ensure that Soham is resilient against the future impacts of Climate Change with particular attention to flooding issues and the moves toward greener living.

Policy SBNP17 High Quality Design

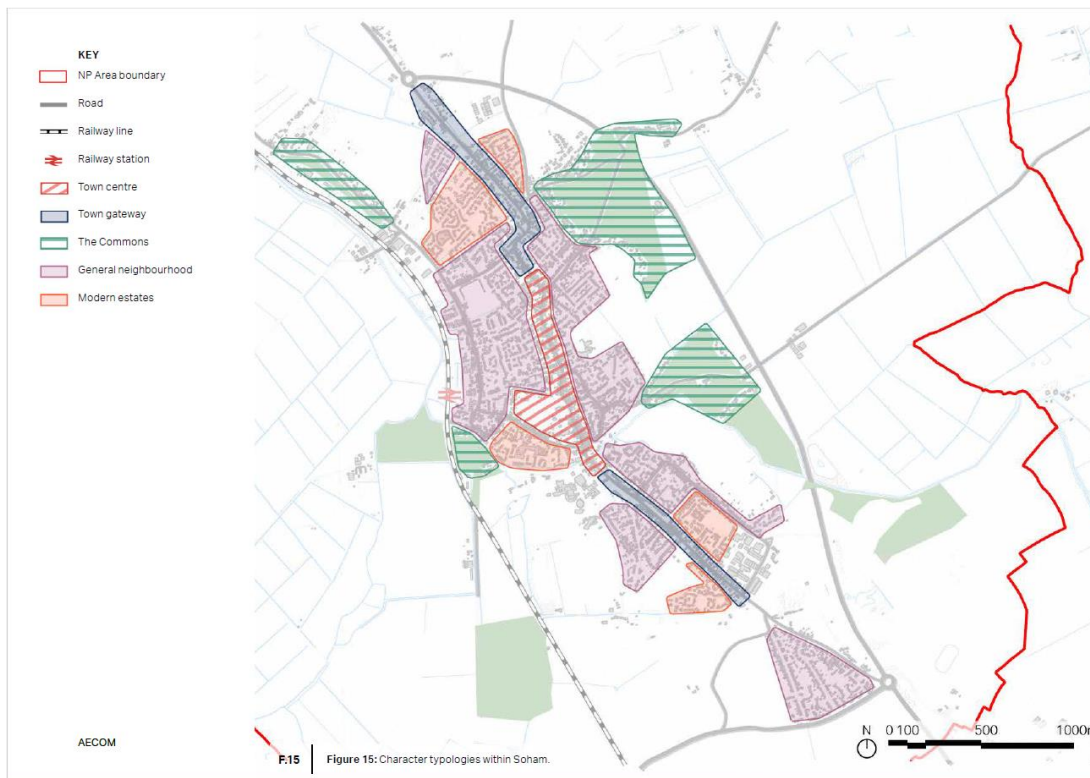
Intent

9.1 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy ENV 2 Design states, amongst other things, proposals will 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. The intent of Policy SBNP17 is to provide specific local context to this strategic policy by requiring applicants to be guided by the Soham Design Guidance and Codes which sets out the Design Principles and Design Code for the Neighbourhood Plan area.

9.2 The Soham Design Guidance and Codes document provides guidance to ensure the design of any future developments should retain and protect the character and distinctiveness of Soham and Barway. The Design Codes document should be used alongside the National Model Design Codes published by the Government in July 2021 or any subsequent design codes.

9.3 A series of character areas have been identified, which split the main settlements into 5 distinct character typologies. The Character Areas can be viewed in the Soham Design Codes and Guidance and Map 12 below.



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MAP 12 – SOHAM’S CHARACTER AREAS AS DEFINED IN THE SOHAM DESIGN GUIDANCE AND CODES

POLICY SBNP17 - HIGH QUALITY DESIGN

A design-led approach should be taken for all proposals. Development Proposals should be guided by the local characteristics and context (including the built form, building heights, existing densities and building materials) and create and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment.

All development proposals should be designed to a high quality and should demonstrate how the proposal has taken account of the development principles and codes and guidance for both the Neighbourhood Plan area and the Characters Areas set out in the Soham Design Guidance and Codes 2022.

For all development proposals this includes:

- i. Maintaining the historic character of streets and views of the surrounding countryside between properties and along roads;
- ii. Maintaining and enhancing landscape features including open spaces, trees, hedges, front gardens and verges;
- iii. Reflecting the important characteristics of the surrounding area including buildings and their materials and design features, building heights and spaces between buildings;
- iv. Incorporating public rights of way and green lanes, where appropriate, that provide footpath, cycleway or bridleway connections and wildlife corridors. Larger developments should incorporate green lanes that form landscape connections between the existing town and surrounding countryside; and
- v. The use of the primary material palette of the town.

For residential development this includes:

- i. Ensuring a mix of dwelling styles and sizes;
- ii. Ensuring the height of new development reflects the area's characteristic roofscape and be no more than two and half storeys in height;
- iii. Introducing visual interest, including front gardens, and natural landscaped boundary treatments, so that the street scene is not dominated by parking areas, garages, and car ports;
- iv. Creating a highly connected layout that creates opportunities to improve the permeability of the development and access to the public rights of way networks;
- v. Providing adequate amenity space for future occupiers;
- vi. As a minimum reach at least the minimum National Space Standards for room sizes and storage space required for modern living; and
- vii. Development proposals should use materials which are in keeping with the area's character and setting.

9.4 For each of the 5 character typologies, the Design Guidance and Codes identifies the important characteristics of the area. Proposals for development will be expected to have regard to the Design Guidance and Codes and reflect the characteristics of the particular area and not result in the damage to or the loss of identified important features.

9.5 The Design Guidance and Codes provide a development management checklist against which development proposals

should seek to respond where applicable. Criterion ii in the part of Policy SBNP17 which relates to residential development advises about the height of new buildings. Proposals for residential development higher than two and a half storeys may be appropriate where they are located at key locations and where their height, scale and massing would respect the character of the immediate location and not dominate the wider streetscape.

- 9.6 The NPPF says that local planning authorities should identify the size of housing that is required, in particular locations, reflecting local demand.
- 9.7 Soham has the smallest average housing size of any East Cambridgeshire district. Dwellings in Soham have an average of 2.7 bedrooms, below the East Cambridgeshire and Cambridgeshire averages (both 2.9). Three-bedroom housing was most common (42% of all housing), followed by two-bedroom housing (31%). Compared to the district average, Soham had higher shares of 0-3 bedroom properties, particularly two-bedroom properties, and lower shares of four and five-or-more bedroom properties.
- 9.8 Overcrowding was not prevalent, with just 3% of households (138) being over-occupied (i.e. with at least one fewer bedroom than required).
- 9.9 Analysis completed for Greater Cambridge ‘New Housing Developments and the Built Environment’¹³ using quantitative analysis noted the importance of adequate space in providing personal privacy, reducing depression, anxiety and stress, giving children room to play and a good night’s sleep. It concludes that cramming different activities (studying, socialising, and relaxing) into limited space may adversely affect family life, creating a difficult dynamic which may play a part in the breakdown of relationships. Given the high prevalence of smaller homes it is essential that new properties are constructed to the National Space Standards.

Policy SBNP18 - SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS FIT FOR A NET ZERO CARBON FUTURE

Intent

- 9.10 The policy seeks to ensure that development proposals incorporate current best practice in energy conservation, including maximising the benefits of solar gain in site layouts and orientation of buildings, and measures which are designed to be integral to the building design and minimise any detrimental impact on the building or its surroundings.

POLICY SBNP18 - SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS FIT FOR A NET ZERO CARBON FUTURE

Development proposals should contribute towards the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals should contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and improve resilience, the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings, and supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

All development should be designed to be compatible with a net zero carbon future. This means applying the following steps in the energy hierarchy:

- i. Firstly, minimising the energy demand of buildings through passive design measures (optimising the orientation and mass of buildings, and appropriate window placement to maximise opportunities for solar gain and minimise winter cold wind heat loss)
- ii. Secondly, maximising energy efficiency through design measures (high levels of insulation, airtightness and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery to create buildings that are more efficient to heat and stay warm in colder conditions and stay cool in warmer conditions)
- iii. Thirdly, maximise the use of materials and building techniques that reduce heat and energy needs. Ideally, this could also consider using materials with a lower embodied carbon content and/or high practical recyclable content
- iii. Fourthly, ensure buildings use a low carbon heat source

Cont’d

¹³ (cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk)

- iv. And finally, once energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions have been minimised through the above measures, incorporate, wherever possible, and if applicable, renewable energy sources (preferably on plot) such as solar panels to meet reasonable estimates of total annual energy demand across the year.

Proposals that incorporate latest best practice in energy conservation will be supported where such measures are an integral element of the design of the buildings and minimise any impacts on the buildings or their surroundings.

As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals should be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement that demonstrates:

- i. How the energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions have been minimised through following the energy hierarchy and the extent to which the design expectations above have been considered and incorporated into the design
- ii. How the choice of building materials is appropriate. In this respect, restoration and renovation of existing buildings is preferred over new build. Where new build is involved, materials should be prioritised which are reused, reclaimed or natural from the local area or from sustainable sources and that are durable; and
- iii. The adaptability of the proposed buildings and associated spaces as climate continues to change e.g., using water more efficiently, reducing overheating and controlling high levels of rainwater run-off).

9.11 UK Government is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels by 2050 and contribute to global emission reductions aimed at limiting global temperature rise to well below 2°C and to pursue effort to limit temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The UK's strategy for achieving net zero is set out in its report Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, published in October 2021¹⁴.

9.12 In 2020, STC declared a Climate Change emergency. STC recognises that we must achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and ideally by 2030. The policy seeks to support this and East Cambridgeshire's Environment Action Plan 2022 which requires a 20-33% reduction in the district's net CO₂e emissions by year 2025/26 (compared with a 2018/19 baseline) and a 66-80% reduction in our net CO₂e emissions by year 2030/31¹⁵.

9.13 Energy use in the construction and operation of development is currently a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Minimising energy demands from development and increasing the generation of energy from renewable sources can make a significant contribution to reducing carbon emissions. The starting point for minimising energy use is to maximise energy efficiency, both in new developments and through the retrofitting of existing buildings. This can have a direct economic benefit in terms of significantly lowering the running costs of new and existing buildings, helping to address fuel poverty, as well as tackling the Climate Crisis. The Building Regulations set minimum energy efficiency requirements of for new development but exceeding the minimum requirements will be necessary if emission reduction targets are to be met. The Future Homes Standard is likely to require new homes to be equipped with low carbon heating and be zero carbon ready by 2025. This policy seeks to implement these government initiatives.

¹⁴ [Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/net-zero-strategy-build-back-greener)

¹⁵ [ECDC EnvPlan 2022 - Approved 13 June 2022.pdf \(eastcambs.gov.uk\)](https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/ECDC-EnvPlan-2022-Approved-13-June-2022.pdf)

- 9.14 Where energy use is necessary, then priority should be given to utilising the most sustainable sources. Many energy saving initiatives can be installed on homes within permitted development rights (when full planning permission is not required) and residents are encouraged to implement such measures. There may be occasions where schemes that do require planning permission could have a potential adverse impact on the character of the area and the amenity of nearby residents. The Neighbourhood Plan has limited powers to require developments to meet energy saving standards, especially in the construction of new homes. However, that does not stop the encouragement of the incorporation of measures in development that meet the energy hierarchy (in order of preference) of:
1. Minimising energy demand
 2. Maximising energy efficiency
 3. Utilising renewable energy
 4. Utilising low carbon energy; and
 5. Utilising other energy sources
- 9.15 In principle, proposal which include the following initiatives will be supported:
- i. Siting and orientation to optimise passive solar gain.
 - ii. The use of high quality, thermally efficient building materials.
 - iii. Installation of energy efficiency measures such as loft and wall insulation and double glazing.
 - iv. Incorporation of renewable / low carbon energy generation provision onsite including Combined Heat and Power, or connection into an existing nearby renewable, low or zero carbon energy generation network where they exist.
 - v. Designed to minimise overheating and incorporate a green roof to aid cooling, add insulation and enhance biodiversity.
 - vi. The retrofit of heritage properties/assets is encouraged to reduce energy demand and to generate renewable energy where appropriate, providing it safeguards historic characteristics.
- vii. Alterations to existing buildings should be designed with energy reduction in mind and comply with sustainable design and construction standards detailed in this policy.
- 9.16 With respect to residential development proposals, applicants are strongly encouraged to achieve operational targets for new homes set out in best practice guidance such as the 'Net Zero Carbon Toolkit', prepared by Levitt Bernstein, Elemanta, Passivhaus Trust and Etude or subsequent updated best practice.
- 9.17 The Net Zero Carbon Toolkit was commissioned by West Oxfordshire District Council, in collaboration with Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council. It is aimed at small and medium sized house builders, architects, self-builders and consultants.
- 9.18 It explains that a net zero carbon home in operation is very energy efficient and has an ultra-low level of space heating demand. It does not use any fossil fuels on site and therefore improves air quality. It also generates renewable energy on site and is cheap to run.
- 9.19 The approach taken in the toolkit is that net zero carbon buildings are supported by three core principles:
1. Energy efficiency. Applicable to energy used for heating, hot water, ventilation, lighting, cooking and appliances.
 2. Low carbon heating. Low carbon sources of heat are an essential feature. The toolkit states that new buildings should be built with a low carbon heating system and must not connect to the gas network.
 3. Renewable energy generation. The toolkit states that renewable energy generation (e.g. through solar photovoltaic (PV) panels) should be at least equal to the energy use of the building).

- 9.20 In addition, the toolkit looks at the embodied carbon in materials used in each development.
- 9.21 People considering new development proposals in the parish are encouraged to use the toolkit. The toolkit also provides guidance and advice to homeowners looking to retrofit or extend their existing property. It includes information on how they can implement energy efficiency measures and begin the process of decarbonising their homes in a more affordable, phased approach.
- 9.22 The toolkit includes a set of energy targets and key performance indicators for both new residential and retrofit schemes. Unless otherwise updated by more recent government guidance or other [Net Zero Carbon Toolkit](#).
- 9.23 The information required as part of a sustainability statement will be proportionate to the size of a proposed development. Policy SBNP18 advises about the Plan’s expectations for the details to be submitted with planning applications. Where a robust Sustainability Statement is not provided or demonstrates that reasonable opportunities to achieve the expectations set out in this policy have not been taken, the proposal concerned will not be supported.
- 9.24 The Sustainability Statement should include the following to get a full picture of the sustainability credentials of the development, which in turn will help demonstrate whether the development proposal is meeting the design expectations of the policy:
 - i. How the energy hierarchy, explained in the policy has been applied in the approach to minimising the overall energy demand of a proposed building
 - ii. The calculated space heating demand expressed through kWh/m²/yr
 - iii. The calculated energy use intensity expressed through kWh/m²/yr
 - iv. Where renewables are being installed, the electricity generation intensity in terms of 120 kWh/m²fp/year

v. In the case of residential development not achieving the operational targets set out above, an explanation as to the reasons for this.

- 9.25 For major development proposals, the sustainability statement should also include information on the embodied carbon emissions of the proposed development. This means the carbon emissions associated with the extraction and processing of materials, energy use in the factories and transport as well as the construction of the building and repair, replacement and maintenance.

Policy SBNP19 Renewable Energy

Intent

- 9.26 To update Policy ENV6 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan which is currently out of step with government policy which seeks to ensure that proposals for renewable energy consider the key challenge of safeguarding the best and most versatile agricultural land for food production, supporting food security and limiting food miles (Footnote 56 NPPF).
- 9.27 It is particularly important for Soham and Barway given the significant contribution The Fens makes to food security to the rest of the UK and the recent loss of significant areas of land to solar farms.

POLICY SBNP19 - RENEWABLE ENERGY

Proposals for renewable energy, including solar and wind generated energy will be supported in accordance with Policy Local Plan Policy ENV 6, unless their wider environmental, social and economic benefits would be outweighed by significant adverse effects that cannot be remediated and made acceptable in relation to the criteria set out in Local Plan Policy ENV 6 and the following criteria:

- i. safeguarding the best and most versatile agricultural land; and
- ii. safeguarding agricultural land used for food production.

- 9.28 The Fens are nationally important, the breadbasket of Britain and the silt and peat soils are a major and essential resource of national importance for agriculture, with wheat, vegetables and sugar beet of major value here. For example, a quarter of England's potatoes are grown here and over one-third of English vegetables. Barway is the home of a major producer of vegetables and salad crops which are packed and exported all over the country from the Barway site.
- 9.29 Soham has already embraced the production of green energy in that there is already a solar farm of around 72 Ha. A further 56 Ha is now under construction adjacent to the first.
- 9.30 The Department for Levelling Up and Regeneration consultation in 2022 / 2023 on Planning Reforms highlighted the need to ensure food security considerations are factored into planning decisions that affect renewable energy schemes and productive farmland used for food production. This is now reflected in NPPF. This consideration is currently missing from East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy ENV6 on which planning applications for Renewable Energy proposal are assessed.

Policy SBNP20 Water Efficiency

Intent

- 9.31 Population growth, climate change and environmental protection measures all put pressure on water resources and contribute to water scarcity and water stress in the area identified in the East Cambridgeshire Water Cycle Study 2017¹⁶ and the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2019¹⁷. Planning policy is a vital tool to help ensure long term sustainable management of water supplies, as well as helping protect our local rivers and wildlife.

POLICY SBNP20 WATER EFFICIENCY

Development proposals should be designed to maximise water efficiency, such as water efficient fittings and appliances, water harvesting, water recycling, and storage features, and other than where it can be demonstrated in a full financial appraisal that such initiatives would make the development unviable.

All new residential developments should achieve, as a minimum, water efficiency equivalent to 110 litres per person per day.

Proposals for non-residential development must be accompanied by a water conservation strategy, which demonstrates a minimum water efficiency standard equivalent to the BREEAM very good standard for water use levels unless demonstrated not practicable.

Major development proposals should demonstrate that there is sufficient capacity at the Soham Waste Water Treatment Works, or that the necessary upgrades are secured through an appropriate planning obligation, to meet the demand of the development. Such development proposals should also demonstrate that they will not cause an unacceptable deterioration of water quality in the neighbourhood area.

- 9.32 Anglian Water, which covers the entirety of East Cambridgeshire as a region of "serious" water stress. Ely Water Resource Zone (in which the plan area sits) is forecast to enter water deficit in 2024/25, reaching an average deficit in 2039/40 of 3.9Ml/d under dry year annual average conditions. "Planning Practice Guidance: Housing - Optional Technical Standards" supports the lower per-capita consumption figure of 110litres/person/day in new housing. where there is a "clear local need" The designation of the area as being at "serious" water stress provides the evidence base for this local need.

¹⁶ [JBA Consulting Report Template 2015 \(eastcambsgov.uk\)](http://www.eastcambsgov.uk/jba-consulting-report-template-2015)

¹⁷ [Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD \(eastcambsgov.uk\)](http://www.eastcambsgov.uk/cambridgeshire-flood-and-water-spd)

9.33 Therefore, it is considered essential that water efficiency, incorporating a range of water saving devices, is included in the design of residential and non-residential development including where there are opportunities for retrofitting as part of a renovation or extension scheme.

9.34 A 2014 study into the cost of implementing sustainability measures in housing found that meeting a standard of 110 litres per person per day would cost only £9 for a four-bedroom house. Given the advances in technology and economies of scale, it is anticipated that this figure has reduced so that the impact upon viability is negligible.

9.35 BREEAM credits 2 would result in a 40% improvement over baseline water consumption. This is consistent with Policy ENV 4 – Energy and Water Efficiency and renewable energy in construction which requires all non-domestic developments of 1,000m² or more to meet BREEAM Very Good standard or equivalent.

9.36 The District Council updated its Water Cycle Study 2017 to assess the constraints and requirements that will arise from growth on water infrastructure. The overall objective of the Water Cycle Study is to understand the environmental and physical demands of the development and identify opportunities for more sustainable planning and improvements that may be required so that proposals don't exceed the existing water cycle capacity.

9.37 The Water Cycle Study notes that Soham Water Treatment Works requires infrastructure and / or treatment upgrades to accommodate all the proposed growth in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. The study also states that proposed growth is predicted to lead to deterioration in water quality greater than 10% and/or class deterioration at Soham. In Soham this impact can be accommodated through an upgrade to the Treatment Works with the application of Best Available Technology and a tightening of permits. It is therefore critical that upgrades to the Soham Water Treatment Works are secured alongside

development to meet the needs of the new community and to safeguard the water quality of our waterways to safeguard biodiversity and wildlife habitats.

Policy SBNP21 Flood Risk

Intent

9.38 This policy complements East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy ENV 8, and elevates the relevant recommendations in the adopted Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document to planning policy.

9.39 Areas of the parish have acknowledged and specific surface water flooding issues and proposals for development are being permitted in the flood plain. It is clear that current policy, advice and guidance is not effective in ensuring new development is taking on board flood risk issues including surface water flooding. This has been expressed through community engagement events and in response to recent planning applications.

9.40 More recent Planning Practice Guidance published in August 2022 helps to clarify that flood risks means all sources. However, the Neighbourhood Plan must make it clearer that new development coming forward in the parish should not lead to additional surface water flooding on site, into the highway or neighbouring sites and reduced overall flood risk in the parish should be realised. Any assessment should consider the impacts of Climate Change including sea level rise and any additional risks associated with a rise in temperature and waterborne diseases concentrated in water bodies.

9.41 New development will be required, where appropriate, to make provision for the attenuation and recycling of surface water and rainwater through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) that might include on-site rainwater and stormwater harvesting and greywater recycling, and the management of run-off and water management in order to reduce the

potential for making the situation worse.

9.42 In addition to the documents detailed in the policy, consideration should also be given to the Cambridgeshire County Council Surface Water Planning Document

and consultation with Anglian Water, Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards.

POLICY SBNP21 - FLOOD RISK

In addition to meeting the policy requirements set out in East Cambridgeshire Local Plan's Policies ENV 8 Flood Risk; and having regard to the Secretary of State's policy set out in paragraphs 165 to 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); using the advice in Planning Practice Guidance, the Adopted Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document, proposals for major development should demonstrate, through a site-specific Surface Water Drainage Strategy, that the development is not at risk of flooding and will importantly not increase flood risk off site.

For smaller proposals, applicants will be expected to provide, through proportionate information, details of its surface water drainage proposals.

All schemes shall justify the appropriateness of the proposals which shall include an allowance for climate change, in accordance with the most up to date Environment Agency advice. Opportunities to reduce overall flood risk in the parish are encouraged.

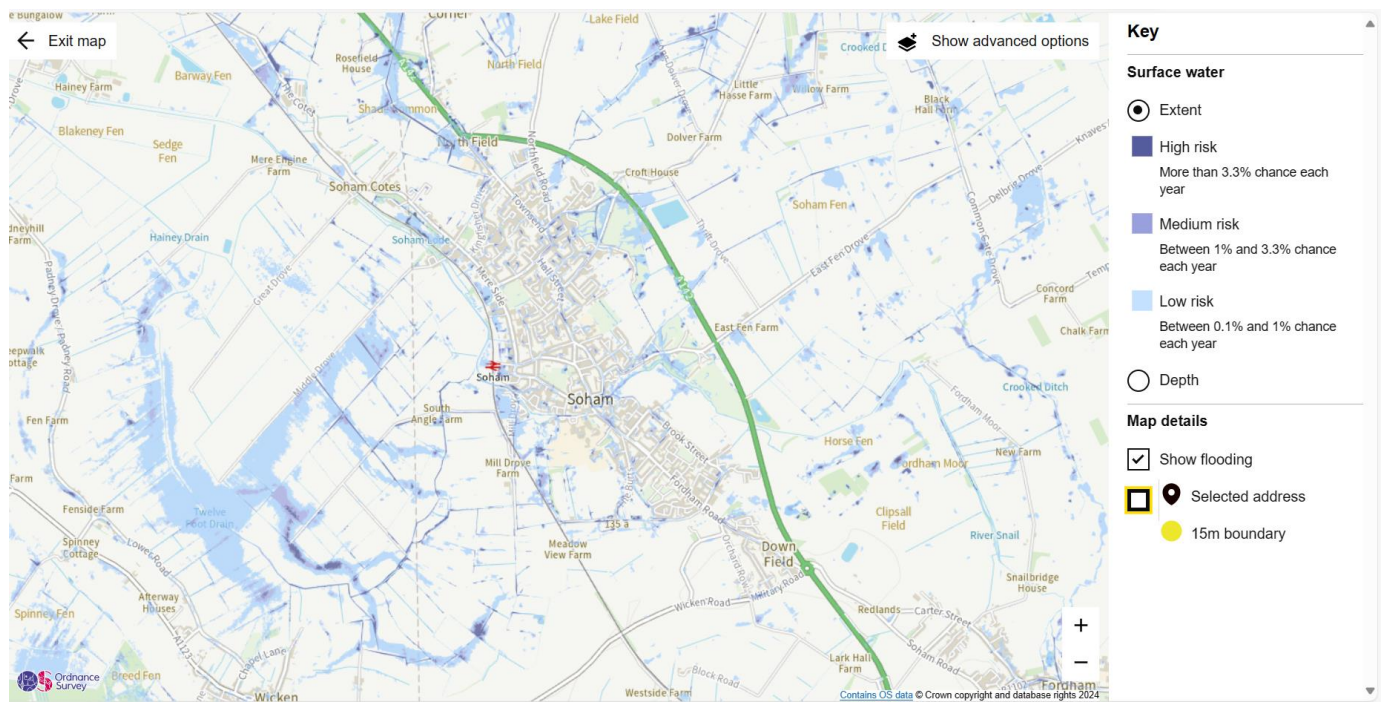
Proposals for appropriate on-site storage and run off rates will be expected to meet the standards set in technical guidance set out in the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document, DEFRA's Non-Statutory Standards for Sustainable Drainage, the CIRIA SuDS Manual and other relevant codes of practice or successor documents.

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should incorporate a Surface Water Drainage Strategy, which should:

- i. Ensure each development is designed to manage the full range of flood risk, including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), within the development's own site;
- ii. Not result in an unacceptable burden on an existing drainage systems;
- iii. Where appropriate include property flood resilience measures such as flood proof doors, automatic self-closing air bricks, non-permeable ground floor surfaces, and resilient electronic circuitry;
- iv. Ensure raised ground levels do not lead to flood water being discharged onto adjacent sites which are not raised on embankments;
- iv. Ensure flood alleviation measures designed as visually attractive green infrastructure, including landscaped areas and green roofs, contribute positively to the landscape character, biodiversity, and Soham's network of green spaces;
- v. Where multi-functional SuDS are designed as an integral part of the green infrastructure and include open space provision, be managed and be able to function as an accessible and useable open space for most of the time; and
- vi. include a suitable maintenance plan which should be submitted and agreed by East Cambridgeshire District Council including arrangements for adoption by any public authority or statutory undertaker and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.



MAP 13– FLOOD RISKS FROM FLUVIAL FLOODING



MAP 14– FLOOD RISKS FROM SURFACE WATER FLOODING

10 Transport and Accessibility

Policy SBNP22 Road Safety and Parking

Objectives

- Improve transport connections and accessibility around the town and parish for all users including those with disabilities. Encourage safe cycle routes both within and beyond the town.
- Improve the provision and quality of off-street parking (and parking in residential developments) for motorised users (cars, buses etc) and non-motorised users (e.g. bikes) in the parish.

Intent

- 10.1 The intent of this policy is to ensure road safety improvements measures made necessary by development proposals are delivered as part of the development. Knowledge of existing concerns and issues regarding road parking is key to understanding how a new proposal may impact on Soham and Barway, and these are identified in Map 15. This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

POLICY SBNP22 – ROAD SAFETY AND PARKING

All development proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan area will be assessed for their impact on road safety and satisfactory provision of off-street parking to meet the Council's adopted parking standards set out in the Local Plan. To qualify as a contribution to the car parking standards:

- A garage must be at least 3m wide by 7m deep
- A parallel parking space must be at least 2.5m wide by 6m deep
- An off-street parking space must be at least 2.5m wide by 5m deep

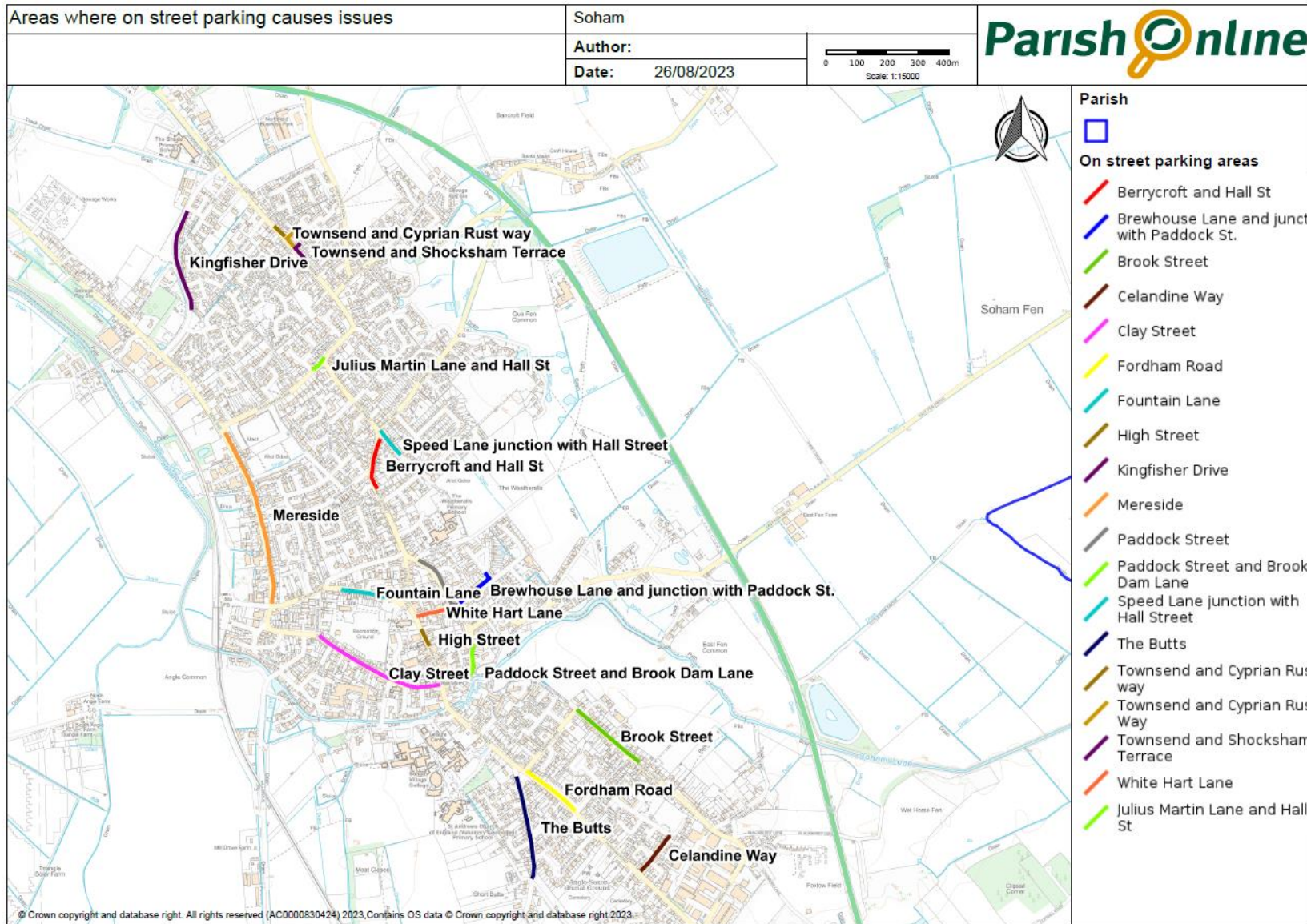
Development proposals which would impact adversely on the local highway network, either individually or cumulatively, should mitigate their impact by providing or contributing towards road safety measures or improved parking provision, particularly where the proposal would have an impact on highway safety.

Proposals which lead to an overall improvement in road safety or increased off street parking, will be supported in accordance with the Soham Design Guidance and Codes.

Proposals for the delivery of new public car parking facilities in the town centre, will be supported where they would preserve or enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area. All highways works in or in the vicinity of the Soham Conservation Area should be sensitively designed and seek to conserve or enhance the significance of individual heritage assets as well as the Conservation Area itself.

- 10.2 It is important that where parking is provided to adoptable standards, each parking space can be used as such. There are many examples in Soham and Barway where garages and spaces are provided which cannot be used as spaces due to their limited size. Proposals which will have an unacceptable impact on road safety or cause an increase in on street parking having regard to the locations on Map 15 after considering mitigation, will be refused.

- 10.3 The Design Guidance and Codes sets out the minimum appropriate size for parking spaces together with appropriate parking space typology and design. The provision of electric vehicle charging points is now addressed nationally in the Building Regulations.



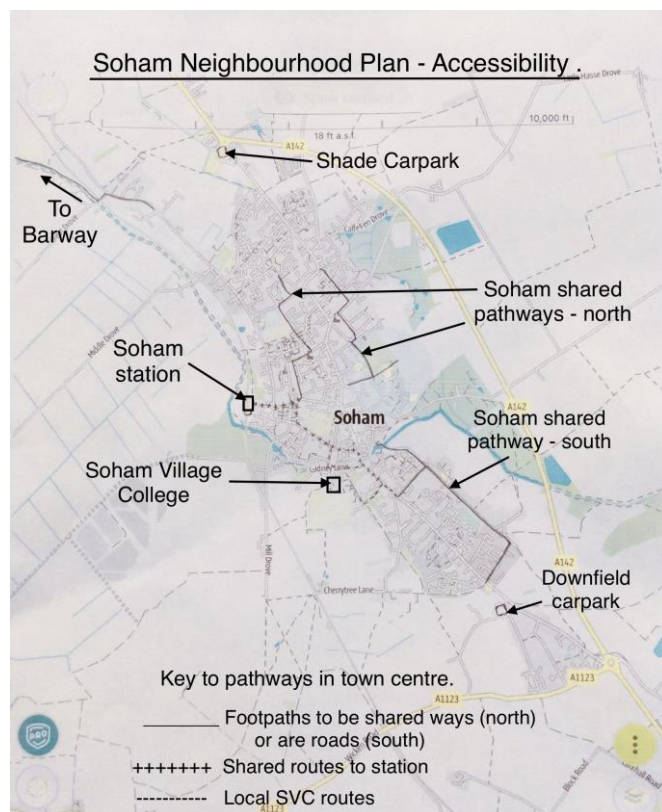
MAP 15– LOCATION OF ON STREET PARKING WHICH CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS

Policy SBNP23 Pedestrian, Cycle and Bridleway Priority Routes

Intent

- 10.4 Whilst it is very challenging to address conflict between pedestrians and vehicles, it is essential that any new facilities including the new healthcare facility, proposed as part of the Eastern Gateway, is designed with a layout and facilities which secure ease of safe movement for pedestrians and cyclists travelling to and from residential areas.
- 10.5 To enable cyclists using the railway station to stay off the main through routes of Pratt Street and Hall Street, alternative priority routes have been identified. Clay Street will be the main access route to the station from the estates off Fordham Road and Sand Street.
- 10.6 Kent’s Lane footpath is expected to be part of the Eastern Gateway access scheme and should be upgraded to ensure that is well marked, well lit, all weather metalled and a shared cycle/foot way. This will provide the major pedestrian access to the town centre from The Eastern Gateway development. Kent’s Lane will also provide an access to the Medical Centre, whether it remains in its current position, or is relocated within the Eastern Gateway development.
- 10.7 To continue to safeguard land for the provision of a cycle, pedestrian and bridleway link between Soham and Wicken Fen. It is essential that proposals do not come forward which undermine the successful delivery of this route.

- 10.8 Wicken Fen, part of the National Trust, is one of Europe's most important wetlands, a rich eco-system supporting abundant and diverse plant and animal life. It currently has 65,000 visitors a year of which 90% arrive by car. The cycle way will plug into the National Cycle Network between Soham station, its town centre, and Wicken Fen joining up active travel and protecting our environment by cutting the need for car journeys to the wetland site. The completion of the route is due in 2024.
- 10.9 The NPG is also exploring opportunities for a direct cycleway between Soham and Ely particularly given development under construction and other proposals for key anchor points along the A142 route. The design of routes will be dependent upon the land and sites available and reflect the function of the route.



POLICY SBNP23 – PEDESTRIAN, CYCLE AND BRIDLEWAY PRIORITY ROUTES

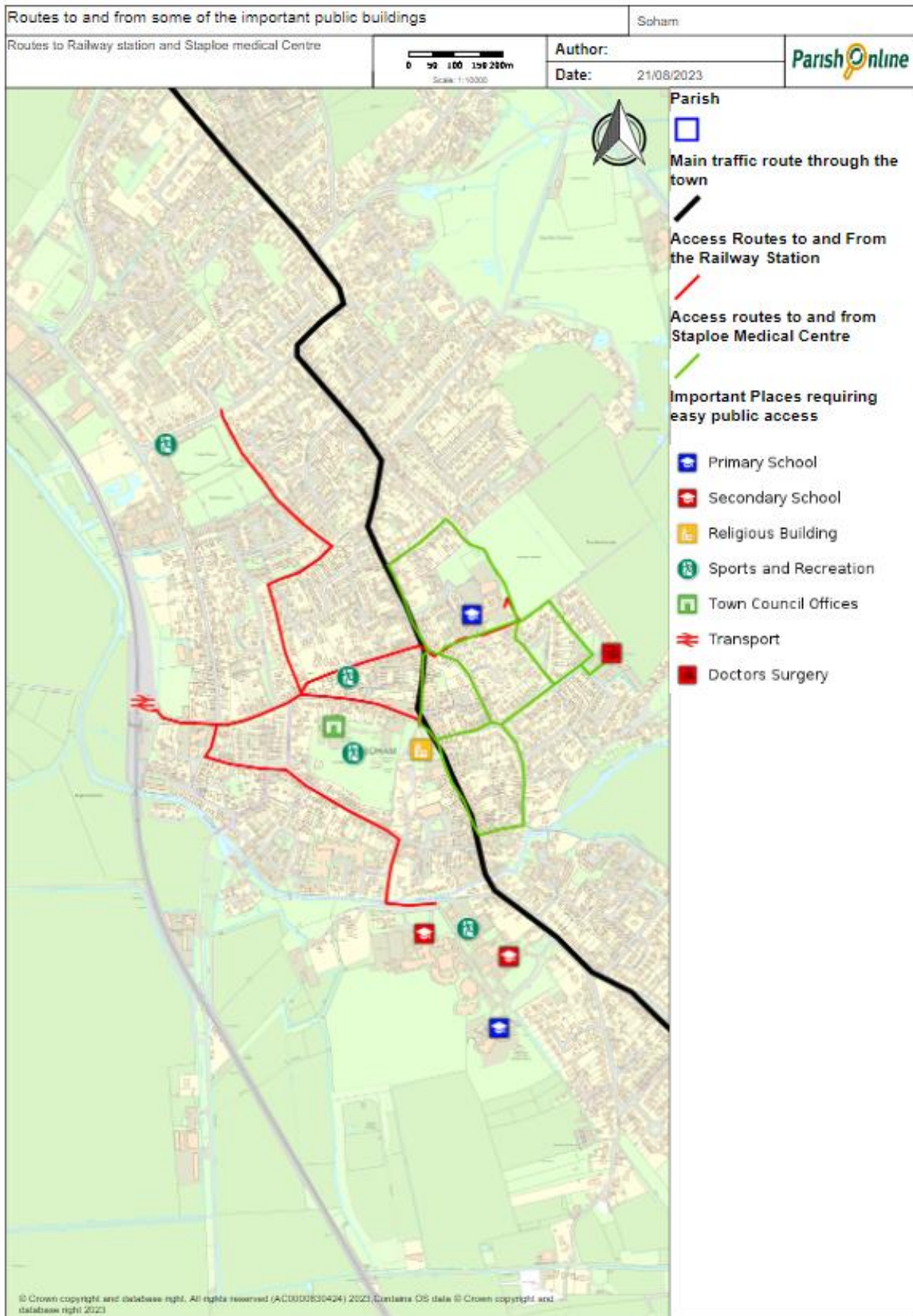
The Plan designates the following routes (as shown on maps 16, 17, and 18) as priority walking, cycling and bridleway routes:

- Route 1: West of the town, Thorn Lane, footpath numbers 205/38,45 and 40, from Station Road to Teal Avenue Play area
- Route 2: East of the town, footpath number 205/58 (known locally as Stinky Ditch Lane), via Queensway cut-through path number 205/54, to Bushell Lane and thence to Townsend via footpath number 205/47
- Route 3: Cycle access to Soham Village College (SVC) from the south will be via Sand Street/Gedney Lane entrance
- Route 4: Cycle access to Soham Village College (SVC) from north of the town, access will be from Thorn Lane, via Gardeners Lane and Clay Street
- Route 5: Fordham Road cycle route
- Route 6: Kent's Lane footpath 205/60 and 205/59 to the Eastern Gateway access scheme
- Route 7: Soham to Barway cycle route
- Route 8: Segregated Cycle Route between Soham and Ely cycle

Wherever practicable, development proposals should be designed to:

- i. help to create and maintain pedestrian, cycle, and bridleway priority routes to and from key destinations including between new housing developments, employment sites, education, health centre facilities, community spaces and open spaces;
- ii. implement pedestrian and cycle priority measures and result in sustainable access between the key destinations;
- iii. help to create and maintain bridleways or the connections between them; and
- iv. ensure that any potential conflict between children on their way to school and vehicles is minimised.

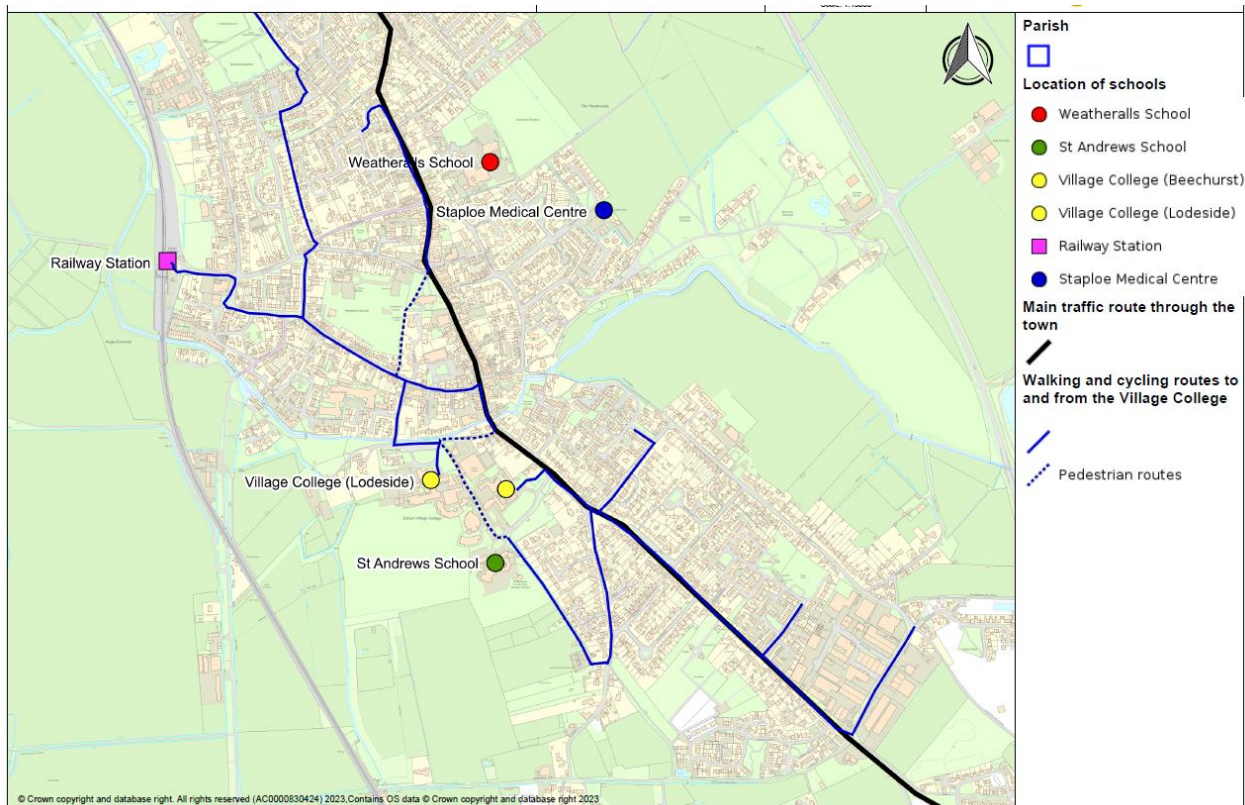
Development proposals which would conflict with the delivery of the Wicken Fen to Soham Cycleway will not be supported.



MAP 16 – ROUTES TO AND FROM KEY LOCATIONS REQUIRING CONVENIENT ACCESS



MAP 17 – ACCESS ROUTES TO AND FROM PRIMARY SCHOOLS, RAILWAY STATION AND MEDICAL CENTRE (NORTH)



MAP 18 – ACCESS ROUTES TO AND FROM PRIMARY SCHOOLS, RAILWAY STATION AND MEDICAL CENTRE (SOUTH)

Policy SBNP24 Millennium Walks, Green Lanes and Public Rights of Way

Intent

10.10 To ensure all new development coming forward in the plan area prioritises the ease of movement for all non-motorised users and the continued enjoyment of rural walks, green lanes and other public rights of way. This has the benefit of encouraging active travel but also increases opportunities for people to pass one another; thereby helping to facilitate the creation of successful neighbourhoods and communities.

10.11 Soham has an excellent network of public footpaths, including a large number of historic ‘green lanes’ which used to provide key routes from the town out into the surrounding countryside, and to the Commons and Mere. Many of these footpaths are along tree-lined routes or bounded by hedgerows, providing very attractive walking routes.

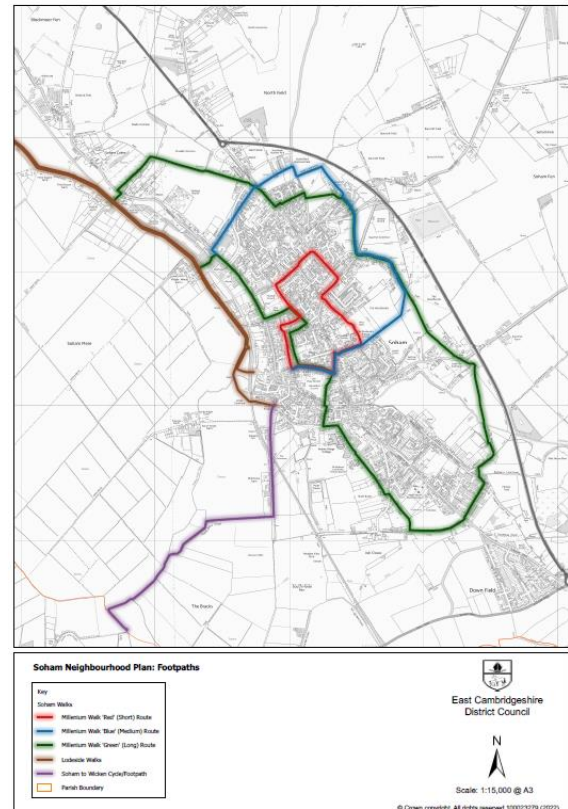
POLICY SBNP24 MILLENNIUM WALKS, GREEN LANES AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The existing network of footpaths and bridleways shown on map 19 will be protected. In order to maintain Soham and Barway’s close links to the countryside, development proposals should utilise opportunities to link into the wider footpath and bridleway network where applicable.

Development proposals which adversely impact on the amenity value of the Millennium Walks, Green Lanes and other Public Rights of Way, either through interruption to the network or through proposals, which impact adversely on the enjoyment of the network (e.g. impacting on the visual amenity, wildlife value or open setting of a public right of way) will not be supported.

10.12 Soham has 3 Millennium Walks, Lode Walks and the Soham to Wicken Fen cycle path (which has funding to be improved). This unique heritage should be protected

and enhanced, for the benefit of the local community. Development proposals will not be supported that do not respect the integrity, appearance and character of any green lanes/public rights of way within or adjoining development sites; and should demonstrate how they will be improved and enhanced.



MAP 19 – SOHAM’S GREEN LANES, MILLENNIUM AND LODE WALKS.

Policy SBNP25– CONNECTIVITY AND PERMEABILITY

Intent

10.13 To ensure that proposals come forward that provide for good permeability within a development, good connectivity to the wider town and to other phases of development.

POLICY SBNP25 - CONNECTIVITY AND PERMEABILITY

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals which generate movement of residents, workers, and shoppers should take every available opportunity to meet the following criteria:

- i. Provide improved or new safe, convenient, and high-quality internal footpaths;
- ii. Provide direct footpath connections into neighbouring areas; and
- iii. Improve connectivity across the wider neighbourhood through the provision of new footpath links.

Development proposals will not be supported which:

- iv. Result in decreased pedestrian connectivity between residential areas, or shops and services (including schools), or
- vi. Does not provide the pedestrian and cycle links which are directly, fairly, and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development as set out in the Soham allocations policies in the Local Plan; or
- vii. Which fail to utilise opportunities to provide new connections.

Where proposals on the allocated housing sites are brought forward as phased development, it should be demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority, that the development supports and enables the full implementation of the new and enhanced pedestrian and cycle routes required by the relevant Local Plan Allocation Policy.

10.14 Appropriate integration should be secured by the provision of suitable links to enable residents of the new edge of town sites to have convenient access to the services and facilities in the town centre, schools and the employment sites with an emphasis on connections by public transport, cycle and on foot.

10.15 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan allocations policies set out detailed transport requirements for each of the sites.

Community Action 8 - Lobby the bus companies to serve the town to provide a regular bus service (including at the evenings and weekends) which will also link into the train times in Soham and Ely rail stations. An additional feature would be a bus to Ely station for the scores of Sixth Formers.

Community Action 9- Liaise with Police and local authority to ensure on-street parking is properly enforced and monitored to prevent abuses to local residents’ amenity.

Community Action 10 – Promote the availability of electric vehicles both for personal use and for public transport including taxis.

Community Action 11 – Work with partners to promote the benefits of the re-instatement of the Cambridge-bound arm of the railway triangle between Newmarket and Snailwell

11 Glossary

Term	Definition
Affordable Housing	<p>Affordable housing is defined in the NPPF 2023 as follows:</p> <p>Affordable housing</p> <p>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 definitions:</p> <p>Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government’s rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).</p> <p>Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household’s eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.</p> <p>Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.</p> <p>Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes 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). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.</p>

Agritech	The Leadership Council's definition of the sector include the Farming Industry; Plan subsectors (including cereals, oilseeds, pulses, forage, potato, sugar beet, vegetables, salads, mushrooms and fruit), Animal subsectors (livestock: dairy, beef, sheep, pigs, poultry (egg and meat) and aquaculture for fish: salmon, trout, shellfish); ICT systems and decision support; Environmental and Physical Subsectors; Engineering and precision farming and Advisory Services.
Community Infrastructure Levy	<p>The Community Infrastructure Levy is a planning charge, introduced by the Government through the Planning Act 2008 to provide a fair and transparent means for ensuring that development contributes to the cost of the infrastructure it will rely upon, such as schools and roads. The Levy applies to most new buildings and charges are based on the size and type of new floorspace.</p> <p>The Council's Charging Schedule came into force on 1 February 2013 (updated January 2023).</p> <p>The Council have produced detailed guidance for applicants</p>
Community Land Trust	Community Land Trusts (or CLTs) are when people from a village, street, neighbourhood or town get together to create a charitable organisation for the good of their community. Run completely by volunteers, the management trustees are voted for by its members. A CLT strives to meet the long-term needs of its community, for example building permanently affordable housing, workspaces or acquiring pubs, gardens and shops; these then stay owned by the community forever.
First Homes	<p>Government guidance published by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 24th May 2021, states that a minimum of 25% of all affordable housing units secured through developer contributions should be First Homes. First Homes are a specific kind of discounted market sale housing and should be considered to meet the definition of 'affordable housing' for planning purposes. Specifically, First Homes are discounted market sale units which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value b) Are sold to a person or persons meeting the First Homes eligibility criteria c) On their first sale, will have a restriction registered on the title at HM Land Registry to ensure this discount (as a percentage of current market value) and certain other restrictions are passed on at each subsequent title transfer d) After the discount has been applied, the first sale must be at a price no higher than £250,000 (or £420,000 in Greater London).
M4 (2) adaptable and accessibility standards M4(3) Wheelchair User Dwellings	The building regulations set out legal requirements for specific aspects of building design and construction. Approved documents provide general guidance on how different aspects can be met. Approved document M provides guidance for satisfying part M of the building regulations. The requirements set out in M4 (2) applies to accessible and adaptable dwellings. It is an optional requirement which is met when a new dwelling provides reasonable provision for most people to

	<p>access the dwelling and includes features that make it suitable for a range of occupants, including older people, individuals with reduced mobility and some wheelchair users.</p> <p>M4(3) – Wheelchair User Dwellings Under Part M, this optional requirement will be met when the dwelling makes reasonable provision for wheelchair users to live in the dwelling and make use of any parking facilities, private outdoor space or communal spaces.</p>
S106	<p>Planning obligations (or S106 agreements) are legal obligations entered into to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.</p> <p>This can be via a planning agreement entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 by a person with an interest in the land and the local planning authority; or via a unilateral undertaking entered into by a person with an interest in the land without the local planning authority.</p> <p>Planning obligations run with the land, are legally binding and enforceable. A unilateral undertaking cannot bind the local planning authority because they are not party to it.</p>
Rural exceptions site	<p>As set out in the NPPF 2021, these are 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.</p>
Water Cycle Study	<p>A water cycle study is a voluntary study that helps organisations work together to plan for sustainable growth. It uses water and planning evidence to understand environmental and infrastructure capacity. It can identify joined-up and cost-effective solutions that are resilient to climate change for the lifetime of the development.</p>