



Document Reference
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East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Policies for Isleham

November 2017

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1. Introduction and Policy Context

Introduction

- 1.1 East Cambridgeshire District Council is reviewing its Local Plan, which was last adopted in April 2015. The new Local Plan, which is hoped to be adopted in 2018, will provide a framework for development in the district until 2036 and beyond.
- 1.2 This Evidence Report (which is one of a collection) provides background information and justification for policies relating specifically to the village of Isleham, including:
- Isleham1: Isleham’s Local Character and Facilities
 - Isleham2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities
 - Isleham3: Preferred allocation sites
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide justification for the inclusion of specific policies relating to an individual settlement, and should be read alongside other Local Plan evidence documents. For example, a detailed reasoning of the settlement’s position in the Settlement Hierarchy is contained in the Settlement Hierarchy report. For the findings of the assessment of individual sites, please refer to the Site Assessment Evidence Report Update 2017.
- 1.4 Collectively, the policies attempt to provide a coherent strategy for the settlement, over the plan period, which meets the area’s needs and reflects the views of the community.

National policy

- 1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was introduced in 2014 which offers ‘live’ government guidance.
- 1.6 Through its Core Planning Principles, the NPPF indicates that planning should:
- “...take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it...”*
- 1.7 The emerging Local Plan recognises the differing roles and characters of different areas through providing a suite of bespoke policies, specific to each settlement in the district. These policies are set out in individual settlement chapters, in Section 7: Policies for Places.
- 1.8 In paragraph 157, the NPPF sets out a series of requirements which Local Plans should fulfil. The following requirements are considered relevant to the settlement chapters contained within Section 7:

“...Crucially, Local Plans should:

...be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area...

...not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives...

...plan positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area to meet the objectives, principles and policies of this Framework...

...be drawn up over an appropriate time scale, preferably a 15-year time horizon, take account of longer term requirements, and be kept up to date...

...allocate sites to promote development and flexible use of land, bringing forward new land where necessary, and provide detail on form, scale, access and quantum of development where appropriate...”

- 1.9 In response to these requirements, Section 7 proposes the inclusion of policies relating to each settlement’s local character, infrastructure and facilities. Site allocations for a range of land uses are proposed for many settlements.

2 Isleham in context

- 2.1 Isleham is located 9 miles south east of Ely. Due to its population size and good range of services, the Settlement Hierarchy identifies Isleham as a ‘Large’ village.
- 2.2 As a Large Village, it is considered that Isleham offers the potential to accommodate growth, thereby contributing to meeting the development needs of the area. The overall scale of growth is influenced by the village’s position in the Settlement Hierarchy, the availability of suitable sites, and the presence of environmental and/or infrastructure constraints.

3 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 3.1 A Call for Sites exercise was held as part of the Preliminary Draft Local Plan consultation, during which a number of site submissions were received for Isleham. The site submissions were assessed and sites considered suitable for development were proposed for allocation.
- 3.2 The Isleham chapter of the Further Draft Local Plan proposed four draft policies:
- 3.3 Policy *Isleham1: Isleham’s Local Character and Facilities* seeks to ensure development proposals maintain Isleham’s built character and maintain the village’s facilities expanding on them where possible.
- 3.4 Policy *Isleham2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities* sets out the settlement’s priorities in terms of infrastructure and facilities.

- 3.5 The content of the policies was informed by the Local Plan 2015, engagement with the Parish Council (in 2016), and responses to the Preliminary Draft Local Plan consultation (where applicable).
- 3.6 Policy *Isleham3: Preferred Allocation Sites* identified five site allocations:
- ISL.H1 – Land S&W of Lady Frances Court;
 - ISL.H2 – Land at 5a Fordham Rd
 - ISL.H3 – Land West of Hall Barn Rd
 - ISL.H4 – Land off Fordham Rd
 - ISL.E1 – Land Adj to Hall Barn Rd Ind Est
- 3.7 A number of other site submissions were assessed, but each was found to be not suitable for allocation. The results of the site assessment are presented in the *Site Assessment Report Update 2017*.
- 3.8 Isleham has a Development Envelope to define the boundary of the built up area and extent of the countryside.
- 3.9 In summary, the following comments were received during the Further Draft Local Plan consultation (January – February 2017) in response to Isleham draft policies:

Overarching Issues/Concerns

- Village needs starter homes / homes for young people
- Affordable housing is needed.
- Large homes are not needed
- Isleham should stay as a village - Isleham is not a 'Large Village'
- Lack of services and facilities
- Over-development which will seriously change character of the village.
- New school is needed
- Stop building on farmland – needed for food.
- Growth welcome – will boost infrastructure and services
- Isleham 1 policy, para 2, needs to rule out tall buildings; and require materials which are typical of the village
- Very little employment in Isleham, therefore not suitable for housing growth.
- Small sites ok for development...but not large sites like ISL.H4
- Anticipated effects of US Base at Mildenhall have not been considered – this will free up lots of housing in Isleham.
- Some plots for self-build, for local residents, should be created

Infrastructure and Other constraints

- Only one shop – and this has insufficient parking
- School at capacity / not big enough already / cannot be expanded. Isleham 2 should refer to education (including more early years provision)
- Could the early years provision be moved off school site, to free up land for primary school expansion.
- Doctors are too busy / not local (Soham).
- Roads to/from/in Isleham not suitable / not safe / need slowing down.
- Bridge over former railway is not safe.

- No public transport – everyone will have to travel by car. Isleham 2 should refer to the need for improvements.
- Impact on Fordham and Soham roads/junctions, which are already a problem.
- Scale of development could put pressure on existing green infrastructure, including Chippenham Fen NNR (part of Fenland SAC) and Soham Wet Horse Fen SSSI.
- The Priory should be celebrated and improved.
- Sewerage infrastructure needs resolving
- Internet access very slow
- Frequent power cuts / low gas pressure
- Expansion of recreation ground needed
- Need a gym / swim
- Insufficient facilities for young people / teenagers.
- Local Nature Reserve needs management, funds contributed by developers.

Site Specific Comments

ISL.H1 Land south and west of Lady Frances Court

- Policy should refer to conservation area and its setting

ISL.H3 Land west of Hall Barn Rd

- Policy should require single storey only.
- Policy should refer to Listed Buildings to north-east of site

ISL.H4 Land off Fordham Rd

- Large volume of representations objecting to the site (summary of main issues below). Parish Council 'strongly object'.
- Policy should refer to conservation area and its setting
- Policy needs additional wording requiring a detailed ecological assessment sufficient to enable the LPA to undertake an HRA to mitigate against effects of increased recreational pressure
- Policy needs wording to require a net increase in biodiversity.
- Lack of accessible green space in Isleham, which is likely impacting on recreational pressure on Local Nature Reserve 1km away, which is being degraded by visitors / dog fouling.
- Won't help deliver objectives in Isleham2
- Not suitable because: insufficient space for 150 dwellings; access not appropriate; impact on neighbours.
- Should be safeguarded for a new school, not new houses – as was previously planned
- 2 storey limit, plus bungalows only, especially near Hall Barn Rd and West Street
- Loss of wildlife (owls / foxes / deer / bats / etc)
- 'Significantly exceeded' is too vague – should be a hard cap.
- If built, needs landscape buffer around entire site
- Site supported (landowner): various details in support given.
- (Landowner) Policy should be amended in various ways. Summary headlines: Happy to gift land to PC, but only 'up to 1ha' not 1-1.5ha; remove reference to a roundabout – better/safer solution being discussed with highways authority; endorses reference to need for bungalows and landscape buffers; reference to

clusters of 25 dwellings on site is overly restrictive – should simply refer to a ‘series of character areas’; number of dwellings should be increased to 180 (not 150).

Site/13/05 Land fronting Hall Barn Rd (rejected site)

- Reason for rejection inconsistent with reason for selecting ISL.H3.

Site/13/06 Land north of 55 Sun St (rejected site)

- Site should have been included – small site, will provide some affordable homes, access is acceptable. Site suitable for 25 dwellings (revised down from 36 previously assessed), with open space at rear.

New Site(s) suggested

- Site/13/12 Land at Floral Farm
- Site/13/13 Land to the east of Wayside Farm
- Site/13/14 Land at Sun Street
- Site/13/15 Land at Station Rd
- Site/13/16 Land off Beck Rd
- Site/13/17 Land to the rear of 20 Waterside

4 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

4.1 Policies Isleham1-2 have not been substantially amended.

4.2 Policy Isleham3 has been amended as follows:

- ISL.H1 has increased by 25 to 40 dwellings, and site area increased on the Policies Map, for reasons set out in the site assessment evidence report. Reference to groundwater also added.
- ISL.H2 and H3 have had their consent reference numbers added.
- ISL.H4 had its housing number reduced by 25 to 125
- ISL.E1 also had reference to groundwater added.

4.3 All comments relating to new and previously rejected sites were carefully considered, with full details as to the assessment of such sites available in the Site Assessment Report. It can be noted that the net result of above is the quantum of growth remains the same at Isleham as at the Further Draft stage. This was a conscious decision, because further growth at Isleham was not deemed appropriate.

4.4 Isleham is an attractive settlement, has a good ‘community’ feel, and a range of basic (though far from extensive) services and amenities which compare favourably (in terms of scale and quality) with some other similar sized settlements. It has a present dwelling stock (2013 CCC data) of 1,000 units. Overall, it is not surprising that a large number of suggested sites were put to the Council.

4.5 However, Isleham is relatively isolated, with poor highway and other transport links (including next to nothing in terms of public transport). It has a very limited employment base, with workers likely to commute out of the village. These car based commuters also have knock-on effects on the highway network, especially (for East Cambs) at Fordham, a

village itself which has high growth levels to deal with. The primary school is 'full' and, according to Cambridgeshire CC representations, has no room for capacity (though, the promoters of site ISL.H4 have stated that CCC is looking at the option of relocating the early years provision from the school site, thereby freeing up land to possibly expand the school). Wider infrastructure (sewerage, broadband, electricity, gas, etc) is highlighted as being poor by a wide range of representors.

- 4.6 The question became to what degree of growth should Isleham take, as a matter of principle, when acknowledging the strategic constraints highlighted above.
- 4.7 Whilst it would be impossible to determine a 'factual' based decision as to what was the appropriate level of growth, in principle, for Isleham, the Council considered that the 188 homes as set out in the Further Draft (plus any other windfall) appeared an appropriate level of provision for the village. Anything more would not be suitable or sustainable, when taking account of the strategic issues described.
- 4.8 However, and taking account of concerns raised, site H4 has been reduced in scale to 125, reflecting the need to provide open space, low density development and consideration of groundwater issues. This enabled site H1 to be expanded slightly, without increasing the overall numbers for Isleham.
- 4.9 Policy Isleham4 has, therefore, also been duly amended to reflect the issues raised in the above commentary.

5 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 5.1 Option 1 is the preferred policy approach for Isleham, comprising the five policies as set out.
- 5.2 Option 2 would be to not include either Policies Isleham1 or 2, but these are rejected on the basis that they both give locally specific policy matters for the settlement, which would be lacking without such a policy.
- 5.3 Option 3 would be to include alternative site allocations. Such alternatives are assessed in both the Sustainability Appraisal report and the Site Assessment Report.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the proposed Isleham related policies as contained in the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan (November 2017). It is hoped that this report helps demonstrate how we have responded to comments received during the previous Draft consultations, as well as how the latest evidence and national guidance has been taken into account.