



Document Reference  
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East Cambridgeshire  
District Council

**Policies for Littleport**  
**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 relating to policies relating specifically to the town of Littleport, including:
  - Littleport1: Littleport's Local Character and Facilities;
  - Littleport2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities;
  - Littleport3: Allocation Sites;
  - Littleport4: LIT.H5 – Land west of Highfields;
  - Littleport5: LIT.M1 – Land west of Woodfen Road;
  - Littleport6: LIT.M2 – Land south of Grange Lane;
  - Littleport7: LIT.E1 – Land at Wisbech Road Business Park.
- 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 November 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 draft policies relating to each settlement's local character, infrastructure and facilities. Draft site allocations for a range of land uses are proposed for many settlements.

## 2 Littleport in context

- 2.1 Littleport is a small town. Due to its population and good range of services and infrastructure, the Settlement Hierarchy identifies Littleport as a Main Settlement.
- 2.2 As a Main Settlement, Littleport provides a key location to accommodate growth, and is expected to play a significant role in meeting the development needs of the area. The overall scale of growth is influenced by the town'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 many site submissions were received for Littleport. The site submissions were assessed, and sites considered suitable for development were proposed for allocation.
- 3.2 The Littleport chapter of the Further Draft Local Plan proposed six draft policies:
- 3.3 Policy *Littleport1: Littleport's Local Character and Facilities* seeks to ensure development proposals maintain Littleport's character as a vibrant town with a strong sense of community; to deliver new facilities and improve access to the countryside.

- 3.4 Policy *Littleport2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities Priorities* 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 *Littleport3: Preferred Allocation Sites* proposed nine site allocations:
- LIT.H1 Old Station Goods Yard – 50 dwellings (1.1ha)
  - LIT.H2 Highfield Farm, Ely Road – 287 dwellings (32.7ha)
  - LIT.H3 Land north east of 5 Back Lane – 16 dwellings (0.6ha)
  - LIT.H4 Field west of 1B Upton Lane – 63 dwellings (2.1ha)
  - LIT.M1 West of Woodfen Road – 250 dwellings (17.3ha)
  - LIT.M2 Land west of Highfields – 600 dwellings (28.9ha)
  - LIT.M3 Land south of Grange Lane – 1,200 dwellings (65.9ha)
  - LIT.E1 Land north of Wisbech Road – 33ha
  - LIT.E2 Land west of 150 Wisbech Road – 1.5ha
- 3.7 Policies *Littleport4: LIT.M1 – Land west of Woodfen Road*, *Littleport5: LIT.M2 – Land west of Highfields*, and *Littleport 6: LIT.M3 – Land south of Grange Lane* provide bespoke policies to shape the development of their respective site allocations.
- 3.8 A number of other site submissions were assessed. A site at Eastfield Farm (Site18/11) was concluded to have "merit", and therefore could potentially be suitable for development, but was not selected for allocation. In paragraph 7.22.8, the Further Draft Local Plan notes the potential for future development at Eastfield Farm. All other sites were found to be not suitable for allocation. The results of the site assessment are presented in the *Site Assessment Report Update 2017*.
- 3.9 Littleport has a Development Envelope to define the boundary of the built up area and extent of the countryside. No changes were suggested, and therefore the Development Envelope has been amended to include draft site allocations, only.

### **Comments received during public consultation**

- 3.10 In summary, the following comments were received during the Further Draft Local Plan consultation (January – February 2017) in response to Littleport draft policies:

#### Overarching Issues/Concerns

- Strategy of allocating large areas of land at Littleport is questionable as viability of development considered to be relatively low.

#### Infrastructure and Other constraints

- Recognition of the need to provide high quality green infrastructure as part of major allocations, is supported.
- Policy Littleport1 requires that new development should improve opportunities to access to open space through investment in a network of attractive greenspaces, linking to the wider countryside. This is crucial for Littleport due to current deficit in green infrastructure provision, namely the 2ha Accessible Greenspace Standard.

- Essential that new development delivers Green Infrastructure, in accordance with the objectives of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy – to provide recreation opportunities for residents, and reduce pressure on sensitive sites.
- Scale of growth proposed will require expansion of library services - through provision of a new library site, located close to town centre.
- Cambs County Council indicates that planned growth in the Local Plan 2015 was reflected in the proposals for the education campus, now under construction.
- To meet additional needs, a new primary school could be provided on-site when required and secondary school expanded from 4FE to 5FE.
- Proposed growth will require further school provision. Will need to investigate whether Secondary School can expand beyond 5FE. If not, alternative mitigation may be necessary.
- Strategic plan needed to resolve shortage in early years places.
- Provide additional roundabout access at A10 to enable development at LIT.E1, LIT.M1 and Saxon Business Park (which is constrained by current access) (see additional site suggestion Site/18/23).
- Consider long distant view of Ely Cathedral from south of Littleport. Council should demonstrate that any historic environment impacts, arising from all/any draft site allocations would be acceptable.
- Drainage Board's water receiving system has no residual capacity, therefore new development proposals should put in place surface water accommodation prior to development phase.

#### Site Specific Comments

##### **LIT.M1 Land west of Woodfen Road**

- Policy Littleport4 should include a requirement for proposals to contribute to the preparation and implementation of an integrated green infrastructure and biodiversity strategy. The strategy should be agreed by relevant parties.
- Suggested that site has access constraints, requiring a revised policy approach.
- Site promoter indicates that the policy fails to recognise the public objection to an unfettered vehicular access onto Woodfen Road – these objections can only be addressed through provision of a new roundabout onto the A10.
- As a consequence of a need for a roundabout and affordable housing, the scheme is not viable.
- To ensure scheme is viable, scale of housing development should be increased from 250 to 420 dwellings; and employment development should be reduced from 7 hectares to 2 hectares with an emphasis on starter and incubator units.
- Supports employment allocation to west of A10 to assist delivery of roundabout.
- Littleport4 policy should include requirement for 5% self-build units (as required by current Local Plan 2015 policy). Self-build units, utilising a temporary access, could provide upfront capital to assist in delivery of essential infrastructure.
- Policy wording should be amended to produce a residential-led mixed-use scheme, akin to policies for sites LIT.M2 and LIT.M3.

##### **LIT.M2 Land west of Highfields**

- Outline planning application currently being prepared for residential use with neighbourhood centre, including convenience store.
- Address should be changed from 'The Grange' to 'Grange Lane'.

- Site can provide approximately 660 dwellings (of which 300 already allocated).
- Proposed scheme to provide residential development including assisted living/sheltered accommodation, self-build, bungalows/single storey dwellings and live work/dwelling with annex units, and also public open space, landscaping, community facilities inc. meeting spaces, retail and small business units, etc.
- Request removal of requirement to work jointly with promoter of LIT.M3 – aspiration unlikely to be realised as LIT.M2 already working up planning application.
- Request removal of requirement for employment development, in light of pre-application advice received.

#### **LIT.M3 Land south of Grange Lane**

- Policy Littleport6 should include a requirement for proposals to contribute to the preparation and implementation of an integrated green infrastructure and biodiversity. The strategy should be agreed by relevant parties.
- Support for inclusion of Country Park (where incorporated into GI and Biodiversity strategy). However 20-25% of the development site is insufficient for delivery of a multi-functional high quality area of informal open space. Area should be increased to 40%, in line with ANGSt standards.
- Small part of site lies within Waste Consultation Area. Policy Littleport6 / supporting text should make it clear that that development should not prejudice the waste depot – albeit unlikely in this instance.
- Site should provide high quality natural green space, in addition to formal open space.
- Policy Littleport 6 requirement for primary school welcomed by Cambs County Council, as additional provision needed to meet growth needs.
- Site promoter indicates landowners support allocation, who are proactively collaborating. Site promoter requests clarity on a number of matters relating to policy Littleport6, namely: scale and nature of employment development and retail provision; how community facilities and social infrastructure should be provided on site and other land allocations in locality; Highways Authority's views on connectivity and vehicular access; open space requirements and how 20-25% proportion has been defined.

#### **LIT.E1 Land at Wisbech Road**

- Site lies partly in Waste Consultation Area. The waste management facility has ceased to operate; however the principle of the use is established and any development proposed should be compatible. Situation should be made clear in policy.
- Site is described as 33ha – implies this amount of land is available, but the site includes a number of existing developed sites and operational businesses. Figure should be revised / explanatory note provided.
- Site name is unhelpful / inaccurate as much of the site is located south of Wisbech Road.
- Site includes one large detached dwelling. Not clear if it is intended to change the use from residential to employment.
- Not clear how extended site will be accessed. Black Bank Road will require improvements to serve HGVs.
- Shape of southern part of site is of limited width – new access roads may make parts of this land undevelopable.

#### **Site/18/11 Eastfield Farm [not a draft site allocation, but identified for further development potential]**

- Co-owner of site requests site is included for residential development, with possibility of providing site for further primary school.

- Site would focus development in proximity of town centre.
- Site has multiple access points.

New Site(s) suggested

- Site/18/23 Land west of A10
- Site/18/24 Land at Black Horse Drove
- Site/18/25 Land north of Wisbech Road

## 4 Local Plan: Proposed Submission

### Policy Littleport2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities

- 4.1 It was identified by Cambridgeshire County Council, who holds responsibility for library provision, that the scale of growth proposed will require expansion of library services, namely through provision of a new library site located close to the town centre.
- 4.2 Cambridgeshire County Council confirmed that in planning for education infrastructure, it made provision for growth at Littleport. Additional education infrastructure is currently being delivered through a new education campus. However, the County Council highlights the need for a strategy to resolve the shortage of early years places. The County Council also notes the importance of primary education provision to meet the needs of site LIT.M2 – land south of Grange Lane.
- 4.3 In the Proposed Submission Local Plan, policy Littleport2 has been amended to include the following infrastructure requirements:
- f. Provision of library services;
  - g. Additional primary education provision, to be located at the education campus and at site LIT.M2 Land south of Grange Lane; and
  - h. Provision of early years places.
- 4.4 A number of responses highlighted a deficit in Green Infrastructure, and stressed the importance of delivering additional green infrastructure and access to the wider countryside. This is the first infrastructure priority identified in Littleport2, and no change is required.
- 4.5 It was noted that parts of Littleport enjoy distant views of Ely Cathedral. Policy LP28 seeks to protect views of Ely Cathedral, and consequently no amendment is proposed to policies Littleport1 or Littleport2.
- 4.6 It was indicated (by the relevant internal drainage board) that the surface water receiving system is at capacity. The issue is addressed by policy LP25, and therefore no policy changes are required.

### Policy Littleport3: Allocation Sites (LIT.M1) & Policy Littleport5:- Land west of Woodfen Rd

- 4.7 The site promoter suggests the provision of a new roundabout to enable access to the site from the A10, and requests a reduction in the extent of the employment provision required on-site.

4.8 Policy Littleport5 has been prepared to inform the development of site LIT.M1. In the proposed submission Local Plan, the policy is amended to take a more flexible approach to employment provision on the site; and, to provide clarity on the location of the vehicular access. In the first instance, development proposals should explore the feasibility of vehicular access to Wisbech Road. Where safe and suitable vehicular access cannot be achieved from Wisbech Road, access should be provided via a new roundabout at the A10 and should enable access to site LIT.M1, LIT.E1 and Saxon Business Park and will therefore require cooperation between multiple landowners and developers. The existing access to Saxon Business Park (direct from A10) should be closed.

### Policy Littleport3: Allocation Sites (LIT.H5) & Policy Littleport4: - Land west of Highfields

- 4.9 The site promoter has engaged in pre-application engagement with the planning authority. To ensure consistency with pre-application advice issued, the Proposed Submission Local Plan is amended to remove the requirement for “an element of employment development”. Consequently, the site will principally deliver housing development (rather than ‘mixed-use’ development), requiring a change to the policy reference, from LIT.M2 to LIT.H5.
- 4.10 In addition, the requirement to work jointly with promoter of the site South of Grange Lane (was LIT.M3 now LIT.M2) is removed. This aspiration is unlikely to be realised, as a planning application is currently being worked up for the site Land West of Highfields (LIT.H5).

### Policy Littleport3: Allocation Sites (LIT.M2) & Policy Littleport6:- Land south of Grange Lane

- 4.11 This site was reference LIT.M3 at the Further Draft stage, but is now LIT.M2.
- 4.12 Concerns were raised regarding the strategy to deliver high levels of growth in Littleport, suggesting that development viability may be low (relative to other locations within the district). The Council has produced a Viability Assessment to inform the preparation of the Local Plan, thereby ensuring that the policies are viable. In the Proposed Submission Local Plan, policies Littleport3 and Littleport6 are amended to reduce the plan’s estimate of the total number of dwellings likely to be delivered in the current plan period (600), with the remainder to be delivered in the next plan period (600).
- 4.13 The site promoter requested clarity on a number of matters relating to the scale and nature of the development. Policy Littleport6 is intentionally high level; the applicant should explore such issues through the preparation of the Concept Plan. No policy change is required.
- 4.14 There was some debate about the percentage of the site to be used as a Country Park. In the Proposed Submission Local Plan, policy Littleport6 is amended to remove the exact percentage required. The open space requirement should be calculated in accordance with policy LP21 and any wider concept- or master-planning.
- 4.15 It was noted that a small part of the site lies within a Waste Consultation Area. Development should not prejudice the operation of the waste depot, although it is noted

that this is unlikely in this instance. The Waste Consultation Area is indicated on the Policies Map. No change to policy is required.

### Policy Littleport3: Allocation Sites & Policy Littleport7:– Land at Wisbech Road Business Park

- 4.16 A number of concerns were raised regarding the way site LIT.E1 is described by policy Littleport3. Policy Littleport7 has been introduced to the Proposed Submission Local Plan, in which the site is renamed to be more geographically accurate. In addition, the policy indicates the approximate area of the site which remains undeveloped. An additional policy requirement is included to ensure the residential amenity of existing dwellings at Black Bank Road and Wisbech Road is maintained.
- 4.17 Concerns were raised regarding site access, including the suitability of Black Bank Road for HGVs. Policy Littleport7 includes a requirement to deliver highway improvements, where necessary.
- 4.18 Site lies partly in Waste Consultation Area. The waste management facility has ceased to operate; however the principle of the use is established and any development proposed should be compatible. The Waste Consultation Area is indicated on the Policies Map.

### New site suggestions & Rejected Sites

- 4.19 A number of additional site suggestions were received. In addition a number of comments were received regarding the suitability of previously rejected sites. These matters are addressed in the Site Assessment Evidence Report November 2017.

## 5 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 5.1 Option 1 is the preferred policy approach for Littleport comprising the seven policies as set out.
- 5.2 Option 2 would be to not include either Policies Littleport1 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 policy 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.