



Document Reference
PS.EVR.SOH

East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Policies for Soham
November 2017

Contents

1.	Introduction and Policy Context.....	1
2	Soham in context	2
3	Local Plan Policy: Further Draft.....	2
4	Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission.....	4
5	Alternative Reasonable Options	5
6	Conclusion	6

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 Soham, including:
 - Soham1: Soham's Local Character and Facilities
 - Soham2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities
 - Soham3: 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 Soham in context

- 2.1 Soham is one of the three main settlements in the district.
- 2.2 As a main settlement, it is considered that Soham 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 Soham's position in the Settlement Hierarchy, the availability of suitable sites, and the presence of environmental and/or infrastructure constraints.
- 2.3 It should be noted that the current (2015) adopted Local Plan provides a large number of allocations at Soham, some of which benefit from consent.

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 Soham. The site submissions were assessed and sites considered suitable for development were proposed for allocation.
- 3.2 The Soham chapter of the Further Draft Local Plan proposed thirteen draft policies:
- 3.3 Policy *Soham1: Soham's Local Character and Facilities* seeks to ensure development proposals maintain Soham's built character and maintain the village's facilities expanding on them where possible.
- 3.4 Policy *Soham2: 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 Town Council (in 2016), and responses to the Preliminary Draft Local Plan consultation (where applicable).
- 3.6 Policy *Soham3: Preferred Allocation Sites* identified nineteen site allocations.
- 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 Soham 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 Soham draft policies:

Overarching Issues/Concerns

- Support for Soham1, in relation to protecting Soham setting etc
- Support for Soham2, in relation to developer contributions
- Object to growth – how will Soham cope?
- Concerned about loss of community feel

Infrastructure and Other constraints

- Scale of development could put pressure on existing green infrastructure, including Soham Wet Horse Fen SSSI and County Wildlife Sites.
- An integrated landscape, ecology and access management strategy is needed for Soham's green infrastructure assets, esp the Commons
- Soham13 (Green Lanes and commons) – support, but revised wording suggested.
- Lack of facilities in Soham to take growth – shops, doctors,
- Surface water /sewerage is already a problem – more housing will make it worse.
- Support proposed growth, but only if infrastructure provided and the development envelope is used to strictly control further 'creep'.

Site Specific Comments

- Support for various site specific policies which stipulate the need for open space, protection of the Commons etc
- Various proposed allocations have the potential to have an adverse effect on European protected sites and SSSI, through increased recreational pressure. Policy for sites needs a requirement for HRA and a requirement for a net gain in biodiversity.

SOH.H1 Land off Brook St

- All / Part lies within Mineral Safeguard Area – if mineral is extracted, it should be put to sustainable use. Policy should refer to this.

SOH.H5 Land south of Blackberry Lane

- All / Part lies within Mineral Safeguard Area – if mineral is extracted, it should be put to sustainable use. Policy should refer to this.
- Object to improve crossing of A142 – this could increase dog walkers etc, and thereby impact on SSSI.

SOH.H6 Land north of Blackberry Lane

- Object to improve crossing of A142 – this could increase dog walkers etc, and thereby impact on SSSI.

SOH.H7 Land west of Cherry Tree Public House

- All / Part lies within Mineral Safeguard Area – if mineral is extracted, it should be put to sustainable use. Policy should refer to this.

SOH.H8 Land east of The Shade

- All / Part lies within Mineral Safeguard Area – if mineral is extracted, it should be put to sustainable use. Policy should refer to this.

SOH.H9 Land south of Cherry Tree Lane, west of Orchard Row

- All / Part lies within Mineral Safeguard Area – if mineral is extracted, it should be put to sustainable use. Policy should refer to this.

SOH.H10 Land off Kingfisher Drive

- Site should have its own policy
- Site is close to Soham Water Recycling Centre. Buffer will need agreeing. Detailed policy wording suggested (Anglian Water)

New Site(s) suggested

- Site/23/41 Land at Mereside
- Site/23/42 Land at 117 Mereside and paddock
- Site/23/43 Land east of The Shade
- Site/23/44 Land at Old Tiger Stables
- Site/23/45 Land at Northern Gateway

4 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

4.1 Policies Soham1-2 have largely been retained as per the Further Draft.

4.2 Policy Soham3 has been amended as follows:

- SOH.H2 (rear of 46-64 Station Rd) deleted, as site now built out. An alternative site now referred to as SOH.H2 (land at 117 Mereside), added for reasons set out in the site selection evidence report.
- SOH.H5 – site reduced from 160 to 130, to reflect concerns over public health due to nearby A142.
- SOH.H6 – site reduced from 100 to 85, to reflect concerns over public health due to nearby A142.

- SOH.H8 – increased site area and dwelling number, to reflect recent consent for the site.
- SOH.H10 – allocation area reduced, and dwelling number referred to as a ‘maximum’ not indicative.
- SOH.H11 - site reduced from 200 to 170, to reflect concerns over public health due to nearby A142.
- SOH.H15 – new site added, to reflect recent consent
- SOH.M1 - site reduced from 600 to 550, to reflect concerns over public health due to nearby A142.
- SOH.M2 – addition bullet added, referring to kerbed footway.
- SOH.E1 – deleted, for reasons set out in site selection evidence report (and partly reflecting increased site SOH.H8)
- SOH.E2 renumbered SOH.E1

- 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.
- 4.4 Policy Soham4 no substantive change
- 4.5 Both Policy Soham5 and Soham6 has removed the requirement to contribute towards crossing improvements over the A142, and instead replaced by the need to prevent increased recreational pressure on the nearby SSSI. This is in response to a representation.
- 4.6 Policies Soham7-8 no substantive changes.
- 4.7 Policy Soham9 expanded slightly, referring to a transport assessment and need for buffer along A142. These are sensible additional measures to mitigate issues arising from development of the site.
- 4.8 Soham10-12 no substantive changes
- 4.9 Soham13 has been strengthened to refer to a ‘Strategy’ which was known to be under preparation at the time of drafting (and which has been completed post the plan going to print – see evidence library for details)

5 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 5.1 Option 1 is the preferred policy approach for Soham, comprising the thirteen policies as set out.
- 5.2 Option 2 would be to not include either Policies Soham1 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.

- 5.4 Option 4 would be to not include the two policies at the end of the section, referring to the town centre and Green Lanes and Commons. This option is rejected on the basis that they both give locally specific policy matters for the settlement, which would be lacking without such a policy, and the latter policy in particular helping to ensure no adverse affect on designated sites.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the proposed Soham 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.