



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Policies for Sutton

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 draft policies relating specifically to the village of Sutton, including:
 - Sutton1: Sutton’s Local Character and Facilities
 - Sutton2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities
 - Sutton3: Allocation sites
 - Sutton4: SUT.H1 – Land north of The Brook and west of Mepal Road
 - Sutton5: SUT.H2 – Land east of Garden Close
- 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 Sutton in context

- 2.1 Sutton is located six miles west of Ely. Due to its population size and good range of services, the Settlement Hierarchy identifies Sutton as a ‘Large Village’.
- 2.2 As a Large Village, it is considered that Sutton 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 Sutton. The site submissions were assessed and sites considered suitable for development were proposed for allocation.
- 3.2 The Sutton chapter of the Further Draft Local Plan proposed five draft policies:
- 3.3 Policy *Sutton1: Sutton’s Local Character and Facilities* seeks to ensure development proposals maintain Sutton’s built character, ‘isle’ setting, and maintain the village’s facilities expanding on them where possible.
- 3.4 Policy *Sutton2: 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 *Sutton3: Preferred Allocation Sites* identified four site allocations:
- SUT.H1 Land north of The Brook and west of Mepal Road (250 dwellings);
 - SUT.H2 Land east of Garden Close (25 dwellings)
 - SUT.E1 Elean Business Park (34.7ha)
- 3.7 Policies Sutton4 and Sutton5 set out requirements for the development of sites SUT.H1 and SUT.H2, respectively.
- 3.8 In addition, the Further Draft Local Plan sets a Development Envelope around the built area of Sutton village and the draft site allocations.

Comments received during public consultation

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

Overarching Issues/Concerns

- Description of Sutton (in paras. 7.35.1-2) is over optimistic in identifying local services and facilities. This contradicts data in the Settlement Hierarchy report which suggests Sutton has low level of facilities despite its large size.
- Sutton has grown substantially in recent times - suggestions that the village has grown by in the region of 25% or 30% over the last 15+ years – a greater proportion of growth than other settlements, with development ‘crammed’ in, too few open spaces and lack of investment in infrastructure and services.
- Development has been piece-meal without a coordinated plan.
- Concerns development will make Sutton a small town, rather than a village.
- Whilst Sutton1 addresses the protection of views from the village, a major concern is the protection of external views of the village particularly from the fen south and west of the village.
- Isle character and imposing church tower most obvious when viewed from outside village. Views of the church from the surrounding fen to the south should be protected.
- At the same time the plan was out to consultation, a developer was promoting larger schemes which incorporate two of the draft site allocations. This led to fears that the plan was unreliable, not robust or misleading.

Infrastructure and Other constraints

- Sutton2 includes a requirement for a new burial ground north of The Brook. This need not be located north of The Brook, provided it is funded by development on that site (north of The Brook).
- Parish Council proposes a series of changes to Sutton2, including requirements for additional play equipment at Stirling Way play area for toddlers and juniors; creation of a new equipped youth play area; additional multi-functional sports fields; new burial ground at suitable location in parish boundary; and include references to LP21 and LP29.

- Village infrastructure is under strain and does not meet the needs of the current population – shortage of play space and facilities; school above capacity; pre-schools near full; traffic congestion; GP surgery expanding, belatedly, and has long waiting times.
- Concerns GP surgery won't be able to meet needs of village in future due to increase in population.
- Requirement for traffic management (Sutton2) is too vague as village is suffering enormous traffic volumes. High Street is restricted and dangerous due to parked vehicles and bus stops.
- Effect of development at Sutton and Mepal will impact on safety and capacity of A142 between Mepal and Ely, especially at Sutton roundabout, Witcham Toll, Lancaster Way roundabout, BP garage roundabout, and also on A10 from Ely to Cambridge.
- Cambridgeshire County Council (the LEA) indicates that the primary school will need to expand by 0.5FE or 105 places, in response to the proposed level of development. There is also emerging pressure on places at Witchford Village College (secondary school) and appropriate mitigation needs to be considered. The College can be expanded on its present site.
- Questions whether list of infrastructure requirements (Sutton2) have been evaluated, and if value is reasonable or unaffordable.
- Concerns whether policy Sutton2, which sets out infrastructure priorities is deliverable and compliant with CIL regulations.
- Lack of a practical plan to deliver infrastructure outlined in Sutton 2.
- Plans to control traffic should be agreed in advance of new development.
- Infrastructure gap should be met ahead of new development proceeding.

Site Specific Comments

SUT.H1 Land north of The Brook and west of Mepal Road

- Development of site should fund provision of new burial ground.
- Fears that allocation of the site will lead to a much larger-scale development than is set out by the draft policy, as a developer is currently engaging in pre-application consultation in the area.
- Concerns that development of the site will split Sutton into two halves, resulting in village losing its centre.
- Concerns that site will not be delivered sustainably due to shortfall of school places, and limited bus service. Suggestion that development is phased in a manner which reflects school capacity.
- Concerns that transport issues have not been addressed, and development will generate extra traffic volume, pollution, noise, vibration, and speeding.
- Parish Council has proposed amended wording to policy Sutton4, including development should provide: a maximum of 250 dwellings, new multi-functional sports fields, provision towards a multi-use game area along with public open space and areas of play for infant, junior and youths, burial ground at suitable location in village, landscape buffer providing a wildlife corridor joining to green space within the development at northern boundary to frame development.
- Developer requests that indicative dwelling figure is increased from 250 dwellings to 427, as lower figure would be an inefficient use of land.
- Developer confirms site would deliver the policy requirements set out in Sutton4, and that the site is controlled by a housebuilder and is deliverable.
- Technical assessment of site demonstrates that contamination is not a constraint to development.
- Whilst site is located greater than walking distance from some services, public transport provides realistic alternatives, with bus stops located at The Brook.

- Previous/other community consultation exercises suggest site is most favoured by local residents.

SUT.H2 Land east of Garden Close

- Development of the site will have a great visual impact on the village; and will change character of this part of the village, turning it into a noisy estate.
- Site is a 'green lung' for village, is a valuable habitat for local wildlife, and is close to the historic village core with its unique isle character.
- Green area that makes Sutton a pleasant place for families to live and to get outdoors. Pleasant and tranquil; one of the last green areas in the village. Provides rural village edge.
- Abundance of biodiversity and wildlife including Sparrow Hawks, Owls, Deer, Great Crested Newts, Woodpeckers, Frogs, Pheasants and more. Presence of newts could be a constraint to development.
- Hedgerows and trees should be retained.
- New habitats and green spaces should be created. Habitat buffer should be provided to protect existing species.
- A scheme of 25 low-density single-storey dwellings preferred, to reflect neighbouring development.
- High-density, 2-3 storey town/urban style development would harm rural feel and character, and block light and views.
- Concerns development of site will lead to increase in traffic, congestion, noise and air pollution, parking issues and that highway access is not suitable to serve development. Safety concerns for Lawn Lane junction with High Street.
- Effect on water management, flood control and water infrastructure. Site susceptible to flooding. Concerns run-off from site will flood the recreation ground, and that water table will rise in Garden Close, affecting neighbouring dwellings. Fear that drainage solution won't be as good as leaving site undeveloped.
- Fears that allocation of the site will in fact lead to a much larger-scale development than set out by the draft policy, as a developer is currently engaging in pre-application consultation in the area.
- Development would harm residential amenity of neighbouring development, and result in loss of views of open countryside.
- Development would affect views of church and village. Has potential to impact on setting of conservation area.
- Site was rejected from Local Plan 2015 due to high landscape value, lack of local support, and availability of more suitable sites.
- Some suggestions that site could provide accommodation for the elderly. However, some concerns around accessibility for elderly/disabled people due to steep incline of Lawn Lane.
- Suggestion that an agreement is already in place that land east of Garden Close would not be built on for 99 years.
- Perception that SUT.H1 is better placed to accommodate development and will deliver more community benefits, and therefore SUT.H2 isn't necessary.
- In previous consultation exercises, not popular with community. Many responses of local opposition.
- Far from village amenities.
- Site promoter supports allocation but considers extent of the allocation and policy wording should be changed, to enable development of up to 60 houses – planning application currently being worked up.
- Site boundary should be extended to include land to the south – see additional site suggestion Site/26/14.

- Higher level of development would support area's five year land supply.
- Development would deliver public benefits, such as public open space.
- Site should not be restricted to low density development.
- Hedgerows and trees are of no particular value.

SUT.E1 Elean Business Park

- Site boundary should be amended to include Sutton Sale Ground to west (see additional site suggestion Site/26/12).
- Site should have its own bespoke policy. One such requirement should be to prepare a development brief or masterplan for the site.
- There are a number of existing developed areas within the site. The plan implies 35ha of land is available, but is much less and should be clarified.

LGS/26/04 The Paddock & Old Recreation Ground (rejected LGS submission)

- Objects to rejection of site and assessment process applied. Assessment concluded site is an 'extensive tract of land' - respondent argues that this criterion should be determined relative to size of settlement and development sites, and is therefore not extensive in context of Sutton. Allocation of the site would contribute to achieving the Fields in Trust standard for accessibility to informal open space.

Site/26/02 Land off Station Road (rejected site)

- Site promoter objects to reasons for rejection of site.
- Indicates site has safe, convenient access to village services, and cycling and public transport opportunities.
- Site is available now and deliverable within five years.
- Additional traffic movements arising from development and impact on school capacity likely to be negligible.
- Careful design will ensure setting of Conservation Area is not unduly affected.

Site/26/03 Land off The Row/The America (rejected site)

- Objects to the rejection of the site and to findings of the site assessment process.
- Site is enclosed and can be readily assimilated into landscape and will not have significant impacts on village character.
- Positive market conditions.
- Hedgerow and specimen trees will be retained/replanted.
- Site is within walking distance of village services and facilities.
- Surface water run-off from site will be managed.
- Vehicular access will be taken from The Row.
- Site is in a sustainable location and will come forward rapidly, contributing to five year housing land supply.

Site/26/08 East of Bury Lane (rejected site)

- Site promoter objects to the reasons for rejection of the site, and suggests that development of the site, along with Site/26/09, would complement the existing development and form a natural extension of Sutton.
- No formal landscape designations covering site, and visual impact will affect only as small number of dwellings.

- Improvements to highway network can be readily achieved through planning application process. Option of vehicular access from York Road has not been considered by the Council.
- Site is a sustainable location, with access to local services and facilities, and would make a valuable contribution to the housing land requirement.

Site/26/09 West of Bury Lane (rejected site)

- Site promoter objects to the rejection of the site, and suggests that development of the site, along with Site/26/08, would complement the existing development and form a natural extension of Sutton.
- Development would not have significant impacts on landscape character or visual amenity, limited to those properties which overlook it. The site has no landscape designations.
- Development would create new areas of open space which are accessible and better managed.
- Development would seek to retain mature trees and vegetation pattern, where possible, and would enable improved management of Great Spinney.
- Site is a sustainable location, with access to local services and facilities, and would make a valuable contribution to the housing land requirement.

New Site(s) suggested

- Site/26/11 Land at former Mepal Airfield
- Site/26/12 Sutton Sale Ground
- Site/26/13 Land at Mill Field
- Site/26/14 Land east of Garden Close
- Site/26/15 Land north of Bellairs

4 Local Plan: Proposed Submission

Introductory text

- 4.1 The description of Sutton (in paras. 7.35.1-2) was stated to be optimistic in identifying local services and facilities, and contradictory to the data in the Settlement Hierarchy report. Paragraph 7.35.2 refers to Sutton's good *range* of local services, namely "a shop, takeaways, post office, doctor's surgery, pharmacy, primary school, pre-school, children's centre and a number of sports facilities" and is considered factually correct. No change is required.

Policy Sutton1

- 4.2 Concerns were raised regarding the amount of growth which has taken place in Sutton in recent times, with fears that additional development will make Sutton a small town, rather than a village. The purpose of policy Sutton1 is to retain Sutton's character; therefore no change to the policy is required.
- 4.3 There were concerns that the policy does not offer sufficient protection of external views of the village. However, it is considered that policy Sutton1, in combination with other policies (such as LP27 & LP28) offer sufficient protection.

Policy Sutton2

- 4.4 It was suggested that the new burial ground need not be located north of The Brook (whilst delivery through development of the site was supported), and could be delivered at a suitable location within the parish boundary.
- 4.5 Sutton Parish Council proposed a series of changes to Sutton2 relating to provision of play, sports and recreation facilities.
- 4.6 Concerns were raised regarding the capacity of existing infrastructure. In particular, access to and availability of GP surgeries, and pre-school, primary and secondary education capacity were key concerns.
- 4.7 Cambridgeshire County Council confirms that to meet the identified levels of growth, the primary school would require a 0.5FE / 105 place expansion. It should be noted that the extent to which the primary school can be expanded is finite, and provision of primary education could potentially be a constraint to overall amount of growth which Sutton can accommodate sustainably.
- 4.8 To address these matters, the Proposed Submission Local Plan includes the following amended policy requirements to Policy Sutton2:
- a. Provision of community facilities, including:
- Expansion of Sutton C of E Primary School and provision of additional pre-school facilities;
 - Additional or expanded medical facilities;
 - Additional play equipment at Stirling Way play area, particularly catering for toddlers and

- juniors;
 - The creation of a new equipped youth play area;
- b. A new burial ground at land north of The Brook or other suitable location elsewhere in the village.
- c. Traffic management at The Brook, High Street and The America;
- d. Improvements to pedestrian/cycle infrastructure, such as:
- Additional footpaths at Bury Lane and The America;
 - Installation of pedestrian crossing at The Brook.

4.9 Whilst development in Sutton will place greater pressure on secondary education infrastructure, this is generally provided by Witchford Village College. This strategic matter is addressed elsewhere in the plan. Similarly concerns around traffic impacts on the A142, A10 and junctions are considered strategic matters are addressed elsewhere in the plan.

Policy Sutton3: Allocation Sites (SUT.H1) & Policy Sutton4: Site SUT.H1 - Land north of The Brook and west of Mepal Road

- 4.10 Through the consultation responses, there was some debate regarding the scale of growth which should be accommodated at site SUT.H1. The most significant constraint to growth is likely to be capacity at Sutton's primary school. Consequently, in the Proposed Submission Local Plan, policy Sutton4: Site SUT.H1 - Land north of The Brook and west of Mepal Road has been amended to enable the delivery of up to 250 dwellings, where capacity at the primary school exists or where the impact on school places can be mitigated. To reflect this potential constraint, Policy Sutton3 indicates that site SUT.H1 has been revised to give an indicative dwelling capacity of 50-250 dwellings.
- 4.11 Sutton Parish Council sought amendment to the policy, to ensure new development provides a range of sports and play facilities, and a new burial ground (either on-site or elsewhere). Policy Sutton4 is amended to include the following policy requirement:
- c. On-site provision of open space should include new football pitches and areas of play for infants, juniors and youths. The development should provide land for a new burial ground on-site, or facilitate provision at a suitable location elsewhere in the village;
- 4.12 The Parish Council suggest that the requirement for a landscape buffer should be amended to provide a wildlife corridor. Policy LP30 requires all development to enhance the network of habitats and deliver a net gain in biodiversity and geodiversity where possible. Biodiversity should be considered across the site as a whole and not be limited to the landscape buffer. No change to policy is required.
- 4.13 Concerns were raised that transport issues have not been addressed, and development will generate extra traffic volume, pollution, noise, vibration, and speeding. Due to the scale of development, proposals will require a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan. No change to policy is required.
- 4.14 There were concerns that the development would split the village and result in it losing its centre. Policy Sutton1 requires development proposals to maintain the village as thriving and attractive, and respect its local character. No change to policy is required.

Policy Sutton3: Allocation Sites (SUT.H2) & Policy Sutton5: Site SUT.H2 – Land east of Garden Close

- 4.15 During the Further Draft Local Plan consultation, the developer was undertaking pre-application community engagement for a larger scheme. It is likely that some respondents to the Further Draft Local Plan consultation were in fact referring to the larger scheme. Some respondents expressed their concern that development of the draft site allocation would lead to a larger development coming forward.
- 4.16 Concerns principally related to the site's suitability and other assessment criteria addressed through the Site Assessment Evidence Report 2017.
- 4.17 The Proposed Submission Local Plan has added an additional policy requirement to policy Sutton5, to ensure that development conserves and enhances views of Sutton Church.

Policy Sutton3 Allocation Sites (Site SUT.E1 – Elean Business Park)

- 4.18 The site is an existing business park which is partly developed, and includes a number of consents covering most of the undeveloped area of the site. As the plan indicates the gross area of the site, a respondent was concerned this implies more land is available for development than is actually available. In the Proposed Submission Local Plan, policy Sutton 3 is amended to also indicate the approximate area of available, undeveloped land.
- 4.19 A respondent requested the site have its own bespoke policy, and that the policy require the preparation of a development brief or masterplan for the site. As the site is covered by a number of existing consents, such a brief/masterplan would likely have limited effect and is therefore not considered appropriate.

Policy Sutton3 Allocation Sites (LGS1 & LGS2)

- 4.20 The findings of the Local Green Space assessment were criticised. Local Green Space Submissions for Sutton were reviewed, and the Council sought to designate sites where they meet the criteria set out in national policy. As a result, Policy Sutton3 has been amended to include two Local Green Spaces – Recreation Ground off The Brook and the Old Recreation Ground at Lawn Lane.
- 4.21 A number of comments were received relating to the suitability of rejected sites. In addition several additional site suggestions were received. These representations were considered through the site assessment process, the findings of which are presented in the Site Assessment Evidence Report November 2017.

5 Alternative Reasonable Options

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