



Document Reference  
**PS.EVR.WFD**

East Cambridgeshire  
District Council

**Policies for Witchford**  
**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 Witchford, including:
  - Witchford1: Proposals in Witchford
  - Witchford2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities
  - Witchford3: Allocation Sites
  - Witchford4: Site WFD.H1 – Land North of Field End
  - Witchford5: Site WFD.H2 – Land at Common Road
  - Witchford6: Green Wedges
- 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 Witchford in context

- 2.1 Witchford is located 1 mile west of Ely. Due to its good range of services including a post office, churches, village hall, public house and primary and secondary schools, Witchford is identified as a Large Village.
- 2.2 As a Large Village, with significant areas of open space in close proximity to infrastructure, services and employment at Ely and Lancaster Way Business Park, Witchford has the potential to accommodate growth. The overall scale of growth will be further influenced by 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 Witchford. The site submissions were assessed and sites considered suitable for development were proposed for allocation.
- 3.2 The Witchford chapter of the Further Draft Local Plan proposed three draft policies:
- 3.3 *Policy Witchford1: Proposals in Witchford* - the policy seeks to ensure development proposals maintain Witchford's character and facilities. *Policy Witchford2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities* sets out the settlement's priorities in terms of improvement to infrastructure and facilities. The content of these policies was informed by the Local Plan

2015, engagement with the Parish Council, and responses to the Preliminary Draft Local Plan consultation.

3.4 Policy *Witchford3: Preferred Allocation Sites* identifies four draft allocations for development and six Local Green Spaces:

- WFD.H1 – Land north of Field End: A 5.2ha site to provide 128 dwellings;
- WFD.H2 – Land east of Marroway Lane: A 2.2ha site to provide 50 dwellings;
- WFD.H3 – Land off Meadow Close: A 6.1 ha site to provide 170 dwellings;
- WFD.E1 – Sedgeway Business Park: A 5.4ha site covering an existing area of employment;
- WFD.LGS1 – Victoria Green: 1.5ha local green space;
- WFD.LGS2 – Millennium Wood: 0.4ha local green space;
- WFD.LGS3 – Manor Road: 0.5ha local green space;
- WFD.LGS4 – Between Field End and Wheats Close: 0.4ha local green space;
- WFD.LGS5 – Broadway: 0.4 ha local green space;
- WFD.LGS6 – Common Road: 0.7ha local green space.

3.5 A number of other site submissions were assessed, but were considered not suitable for allocation. The results of the site assessment are presented in the *Site Assessment Report November 2017*.

3.6 Witchford has a Development Envelope to define the boundary of the built up area and extent of the countryside, which will likely provide opportunities for infill development.

#### [Comments received during public consultation](#)

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

#### Overarching Issues/Concerns

- Objection to classification as a ‘Large Village’ – does not meet the criteria.
- Witchford does not have a good range of services - Settlement Hierarchy should therefore be reassessed and housing allocations redistributed.
- Witchford only a Large Village due to recent housing growth, without infrastructure to support it. Does not have the services and facilities which might be expected in a large village.
- Plan should have full acceptance of local people.
- Draft site allocations do not reflect the preferences of the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan committee – requests explanation. Unwillingness of Council to listen to views of local people.
- Sites on north side of village not sustainable – better options have been supported by residents elsewhere.
- No justification for amount of housing suggested for allocation.
- No residual capacity for surface water receiving system – surface water accommodation should be addressed prior to development of site.
- Further clarity needed about role of planning applications permitted throughout plan preparation process.
- Current proposed allocations do not provide sufficient critical mass to deliver necessary infrastructure.

- Perception that Witchford is already doing its ‘fair-share’, through development of housing at site north of Field End.
- Support for proposed designation of the various Local Green Spaces.

#### Infrastructure and Other constraints

- Witchford1 should not only maintain community facilities but plan for significant expansion and also respect green areas prioritised for protection.
- Note should be made of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.
- New developments should make provision for community use to support the rapidly growing needs of the village.
- Provision of medical facilities a key priority amongst residents (‘critical’) – currently no doctors’ surgery in village.
- Improvements to pedestrian/cycle routes required – including cycleway improvements at Lancaster Way Business Park roundabout / cycle lane on north side of LWBP; improvements to Witchford–Wentworth cycle path; increased footpath widths with provision for cyclists; priority for cyclists at road junctions; encourage cycling as a means of transport from the villages (in west of district) through Witchford to Ely.
- Traffic management including traffic controls on Main Street and calming near Rackham Primary School, to reduce congestion and village being used as a ‘rat-run’.
- Cambs County Council indicates that the cumulative impact of growth would require expansion of existing primary school. However, this may be difficult to achieve on current site and discussion with planning authority and developers may be required. There is emerging pressure on Witchford Village College (secondary school) – this can be expanded on current site.
- Witchford Parish Council believes proposed housing allocations will have a significant detrimental effect on educational, medical, public transport and highways services.
- Existing open spaces should be retained, especially those along southern side of Main Street which give views into the landscape.
- No shops providing day to day items, Post Office offers limited range only.
- Public transport is poor, 2-hourly service during peak and no Sunday service. No direct bus to Ely station. Car dependent.
- Concerns for primary school and pre-school capacity – currently oversubscribed – lack of plan for how this will be remedied.
- Witchford has large equine population and busy horse riding centre, livery yards, professional trainers’ yards and domestic yards – Local Plan does not make provisions to support these businesses and recreational pastimes. Improvements to bridleways and improved connections from village to countryside required.
- Developer contributions should be aggregated to ensure sufficient funding for major schemes including doctors surgery and roundabout on A142 at the Common Road junction.
- Scale of developer contributions should be proportionate to the scale of the impact of the development on amenities and facilities.
- Policy Witchford1 which requires development to contribute to maintaining community facilities is not compliant with CIL r122 and the requirement should be removed.
- Contributions over and above CIL should be fairly and reasonably related to the development proposed and cannot be sought to address an identified shortfall – policy Witchford2 (which provides a list of infrastructure requirements) does not comply with national policy and should be removed.
- Reference to the BP garage should be clarified – A10/A142/Witchford Road junction.

- Policy Witchford2's requirement for a bridge over A10 should be removed as it prevents alternative and potentially better or deliverable alternatives from being considered – need more flexibility.
- Support for a green wedge policy, with several suggestions for its location/extent, focussing on an area north and south of Ely/Witchford Road, between Lancaster Way Business Park and Witchford village.
- Green wedge should be designated as Local Green Space to ensure a high level of protection.
- Green Wedge essential to protect character and identity of village.
- Green Wedge should ensure views of Ely and Cathedral from Witchford village are maintained.
- Green Wedge should seek to ensure Lancaster Way Business Park does not extend toward Witchford village.
- One objection to proposed green wedge policy on the basis that land between Witchford, Ely and Lancaster Way Business Park is classed as open countryside and is therefore protected from development.

### Site Specific Comments

#### **WFD.H1 Land north of Field End**

- Noisy and polluted, therefore risk to health.
- Will lead to increase in traffic levels.
- Site has longer distant view of Ely Cathedral. Not clear whether site would impact on view, but this should be considered. Council should demonstrate historic environment impacts would be acceptable.
- Site promoter supports draft allocation of the site.
- Site has outline planning permission for up to 128 residential dwellings, including 30% affordable housing.
- Site will be developed in accordance with principles of planning permission within five years (subject to approval of Reserved Matters).

#### **WFD.H2 Land east of Marroway Lane**

- Noisy and polluted, therefore risk to health. Proposed green buffer not sufficient to overcome health concerns.
- Will lead to increase in traffic levels.
- Site has longer distant view of Ely Cathedral. Not clear whether site would impact on view, but this should be considered. Council should demonstrate historic environment impacts would be acceptable.
- Site promoter supports draft allocation, and indicates that the site will deliver: approximately 55 dwellings; 0.36ha of public open space; network of footways and cycle paths; and 6m woodland planting landscape along northern boundary.
- Site is deliverable within five years.

#### **WFD.H3 Land off Meadow Close**

- Site was ranked low preference by residents and Parish Council - feel they haven't been listened to.
- More suitable sites available elsewhere in village. Considerable support for removal of site from plan and replacement with site north of Common Road (see Site/34/14) – which, it is

suggested, is more suitable for development, could deliver more dwellings, less impact on neighbouring dwellings, and could address a number of key issues – for example, provide a new access to Village College, provide site for new primary school, etc. Other suggestions include replacing site WFD.H3 with land south of Sutton Road (see Site/34/01).

- Village envelope should be redrawn to exclude site.
- Site access main reason for objection - site not appropriate for development due to lack of safe, suitable vehicular access. Meadow Close is narrow and congested due to on-street parking and volume of traffic accessing the Village College (mornings, afternoons, evenings and weekends); often gridlocked and a danger to children crossing; already at crisis point for existing residents.
- Lack of availability of parking it results in parking on-street, reducing the Meadow Close to a single lane.
- Access cannot be achieved via Broadway, as road is narrow and adjacent land is Common Land and cannot be developed.
- Development will also exacerbate traffic problems on Common Road.
- Vehicle access to Main Street difficult at busy times of day due to poor junction visibility.
- Additional traffic a safety risk for road users and pedestrians, namely children accessing primary school and Village College.
- Lack of suitable access a reason for rejecting sites elsewhere – should apply to this site.
- Sloping site down toward Broadway.
- Development could increase flood risk for housing at Broadway which frequently floods and sewerage system becomes blocked, most recently in Dec 16. Risks to structural integrity of existing dwellings (subsidence, etc.).
- Grunty Fen Main Drain passes through the site – this drains Grunty Fen area and is a vital asset that cannot be impacted by any proposed development.
- Site is elevated above housing at Broadway and would therefore result in loss of privacy for housing at Broadway.
- Existing dwellings on Meadow Close with frontage facing the field, loss of open field through development would result in loss of character and appeal, and would lead to properties being overlooked, lose privacy, be disturbed by noise and spoil visual amenity.
- Sandpit Drove, located at end of Broadway, is a conservation area managed by the Village Open Space Group – development would harm the recreational value of this amenity.
- Quiet area with views toward Ely over fields.
- Development would cause noise pollution.
- Development of site does not support local development needs and priorities – such as infrastructure improvement, community led development, open space, etc.
- Northern section of site should be reserved for expansion of Village College / development of Sixth Form College.

### **WFD.E1 Sedgeway Business Park**

- Site has longer distant view of Ely Cathedral. Not clear whether site would impact on view, but this should be considered. Council should demonstrate historic environment impacts would be acceptable.

### **Site/34/02 Land west of Mills Lane (rejected site)**

- Parish Council objects to rejection of site. Considers site suitable due to its location away from busy, noisy roads; large areas of green space linking to pathways would enhance village's vitality; good access roads; non-intrusive impact and close proximity to centre of the village; offers 30% community-led development.

### **Site/34/06 Land at Main Street (rejected site)**

- Site promoter objects to rejection of site.
- Site rejected reflecting views of Parish Council – not a sound rationale for excluding the site.
- Open aspect and countryside views offered by site could be retained through retention of footpaths/PROW on site.
- Development could facilitate expansion/improvements to Rackham primary School by offering land for a staff car park.
- Excellent access to local services and facilities.
- Better suited for allocation than any other draft site allocation.
- Could provide up to 55 dwellings.
- Would not have severe impacts on highway network.
- Available for development within 3 years.

### **Site/34/07 Land south of Main Street (rejected site)**

- Site promoter objects to rejection of site, as site scores similarly to other sites which were selected as draft allocations.
- Originally assessed on the basis of 60 dwellings, now promoted for 46 dwellings.
- Suitable and available for development within five years.
- Outline planning application submitted.

### **LGS/34/11 Field west of West End (rejected LGS submission)**

- Objects to rejection of sites as Local Green Spaces – important to maintain the rural character of the village by preventing ribbon development. At threat of development and should be protected.

### **LGS/34/13 Open space south of Ward Way (rejected LGS submission)**

- Objects to rejection of sites as Local Green Spaces – important to maintain the rural character of the village by preventing ribbon development. At threat of development and should be protected.

### **LGS/34/15 Field east of Millennium Wood (rejected LGS submission)**

- Objects to rejection of sites as Local Green Spaces – important to maintain the rural character of the village by preventing ribbon development. At threat of development and should be protected.
- Concern that the site (and adjoining land) may be subject to a speculative planning application. Site should be allocated in the plan to enable expansion of the primary school.

### New Site(s) suggested

- Site/34/11 Land south of Sutton Road
- Site/34/12 223 Main Street
- Site/34/13 Land rear of 223 Main Street
- Site/34/14 Land at Common Road
- Site/34/15 Land rear of Needham's Farm Barn
- Site/34/16 Land south of Main Street
- Also note, the following sites which adjoin Witchford village but are located wholly or mainly in adjacent parishes:

- Site/10/29 Site to the north east of Witchford
- Site/29/05 Land at Marroway Lane

## 4 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

### [Policy Witchford2: Infrastructure & Community Facilities](#)

- 4.1 Witchford Parish Council believes proposed housing allocations will have a significant detrimental effect on infrastructure and services. Policy LP16 sets out the Council's approach to infrastructure provision, stating that development will only be permitted where there is, or will be, sufficient infrastructure capacity to meet needs of the proposed development.
- 4.2 Traffic management to reduce congestion and rat-running, was requested. Public transport was described as poor, 2-hourly service during peak, no Sunday service, and no direct bus to Ely station
- 4.3 A number of improvements to pedestrian/cycle routes were requested, including cycleway improvements at Lancaster Way Business Park roundabout / cycle lane on north side of LWBP; improvements to Witchford–Wentworth cycle path; increased footpath widths with provision for cyclists; priority for cyclists at road junctions; encourage cycling as a means of transport from the villages (in west of district) through Witchford to Ely.
- 4.4 It was requested that policy Witchford2's requirement for a bridge over A10 should be removed as it prevents alternative and potentially better or deliverable alternatives from being considered, and that more flexibility is needed.
- 4.5 A roundabout at the A142/Common Road junction was requested. However, the feasibility of this is uncertain. It is a known issue that the A142/A10 roundabout junction is operating near capacity and investment should likely be focussed there.
- 4.6 The reference to the 'BP garage' was considered ambiguous and should be clarified – A10/A142/Witchford Road junction. The requirement should be removed and replaced with broader requirements for improved cycle and pedestrian facilities at A10/A142 roundabout junction.
- 4.7 Concerns were raised regarding the lack of retail facilities offering day-to-day items. An additional infrastructure priority should be offered to Witchford2:
- 4.8 Provision of medical facilities a key priority amongst residents as there is currently no doctors' surgery in the village.
- 4.9 Respondents raised concerns regarding the capacity of the schools within the village, and their ability to accommodate further growth. Cambridgeshire County Council indicates that the cumulative impact of growth would require expansion to the provision of primary education in the village. However, this may be difficult to achieve on the current primary school site. The provision of primary education in Witchford is a major constraint to growth. Development must address this issue and should therefore deliver new primary education provision, or will be limited to levels of growth which the existing primary school can support.

- 4.10 Cambridgeshire County Council indicates that there is emerging pressure on Witchford Village College (secondary school), which can be expanded on its current site. New development will be expected to contribute to this expansion.
- 4.11 A respondent indicated that Witchford has large equine population and busy horse riding centre, livery yards, professional trainers' yards and domestic yards, and was concerned that the Local Plan does not make provisions to support these businesses and recreational pastimes. Policy LP9 supports proposals for equine development. It was raised that improvements to bridleways and improved connections from village to countryside required.
- 4.12 In response to the comments discussed above (and other matters), the Proposed Submission Local Plan includes a large number of amendments to policy Witchford2.

#### [Policy Witchford3: \(WFD.H1\) & Policy Witchford4: Site WFD.H1 - Land north of Field End](#)

- 4.13 The site has outline planning permission for up to 128 residential dwellings. Concerns were raised regarding noise and pollution (air quality) and the potential impacts on health, due to the site's proximity to the A142 road. These are known concerns about the site, as is evident through recent planning decisions for a Reserved Matters application.
- 4.14 To address noise and air quality issues, the site boundary has been reviewed, and extended to include adjacent site (formerly identified by the Further Draft Local Plan as WFD.H2).
- 4.15 The Proposed Submission Local Plan combines the two sites into a single site allocation, with a maximum dwelling capacity of 128 dwellings. Policy Witchford 4 informs the development of the site, setting out a number of policy requirements, including the establishment of a significant landscape and noise buffer.

#### [Policy Witchford3: Site WFD.E1 - Sedgeway Business Park](#)

- 4.16 It was noted that the site has longer distant view of Ely Cathedral; this is addressed by policy LP28.

#### [Policy Witchford3: Allocation Sites \(Local Green Spaces\)](#)

- 4.17 A number of comments were received objecting to the non-inclusion of certain suggested Local Green Space submissions. These comments are addressed by the Local Green Spaces Report November 2017. Notably, Policy Witchford3 has added a new site, at Horse Meadow, Main Street (WFD.LGS7).

#### [Policy Witchford6: Green Wedges](#)

- 4.18 The Further Draft Local Plan invited views on the designation of a 'Green Wedge' to retain the village's identity and prevent coalescence with other settlements. Respondents were invited to identify the location of the Green Wedge.
- 4.19 There was general support for a green wedge policy, with several suggestions for its location/extent. The Council also undertook site visits and prepared technical evidence, presented in the Green Wedge Report (November 2017), in order to determine where a Green Wedge would be suitable.

- 4.20 The Proposed Submission Local Plan identifies two Green Wedges at Witchford, as indicated on the Policies Map.

#### Additional site suggestions & Rejected Sites

- 4.21 During the Further Draft Local Plan consultation, a number of comments were received relating to the suitability of rejected sites. In addition, several additional site suggestions were received. These are addressed in the Site Assessment Evidence Report November 2017.
- 4.22 Site WFD.H3 Land at Meadow Close was initially identified as a draft Site allocation by the Further Draft Local Plan. Following consultation, the site was reviewed and has subsequently been rejected by the Council.
- 4.23 Site WFD.H2 Land at Common Rd was a new suggested site, and has been included in the Local Plan (replacing the former WFD.H2, which has been merged with WFD.H1 as described above).
- 4.24 Site WFD.H3 Land South of Main Rd has recent consent and has been added (replacing the former WFD.H3 site)
- 4.25 Site WFD.H4 Land rear of 1-7 Sutton Rd has recent consent and has been added.
- 4.26 Overall, the total housing growth allocated at Witchford (excluding Windfall) has only reduced slightly from 348 to 307.

## 5 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 5.1 Option 1 is the preferred policy approach for Witchford, comprising the six policies as set out.
- 5.2 Option 2 would be to not include either policies Witchford1 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, and, for the Green Wedge and LGS allocations, in their respective evidence reports.

## 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.