



**Document Reference**  
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East Cambridgeshire  
District Council

## **Policies for Wilburton**

**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 Wilburton, including:
  - Wilburton1: Wilburton’s Local Character and Facilities;
  - Wilburton2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities;
  - Wilburton3: Allocation Sites; and
  - Wilburton4: Site WIL.H2 - Land to west of Clarke's Lane and south of Hinton Way
- 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 Wilburton in context

- 2.1 Wilburton is located 6 miles south-west of Ely. Due to its population and limited range of services, the Settlement Hierarchy identifies Little Thetford as a ‘Medium Village’.
- 2.2 As a Medium Village, it is considered that Wilburton offers some potential to contribute to meeting the development needs of the area. Through the designation of site allocations in the Local Plan, Medium Villages such as Mepal are likely to be able to accommodate modest levels of 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 Wilburton. The site submissions were assessed and sites considered suitable for development were proposed for allocation.
- 3.2 The Wilburton chapter of the Further Draft Local Plan proposed three draft policies:
- 3.3 Policy *Wilburton1: Wilburton’s Local Character and Facilities* - the policy seeks to ensure development proposals maintain Wilburton’s character and its facilities. Policy *Wilburton2: Infrastructure and Community Facilities* – the policy sets out the settlement’s priorities in terms of 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 *Wilburton3: Preferred Allocation Sites* identifies one preferred site, WIL.H1 – Land off Station Road. The 2.2Ha site could provide approximately dwellings.
- 3.5 A number of other site submissions were assessed, but were considered not suitable for allocation. Site/32/01 Land west of Clarke's Lane and south of Hinton Way was identified as having 'merit' but was not selected for allocation. The results of the site assessment are presented in the *Site Assessment Evidence Report November 2017*.
- 3.6 Wilburton 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 Wilburton draft policies:

##### Overarching Issues/Concerns

- Stretham & Wilburton Community Land Trust (SWCLT) is active and has support of Parish Council.
- SWCLT should be primary means for delivering housing, as it will ensure the needs of the local community are met and deliver development sustainably.
- Only one site identified, this is insufficient to meet village's needs over plan period – further development would enable SWCLT to meet its aims.
- Wilburton is a sustainable location for growth, and is a thriving, vibrant rural community with local services and facilities, in close proximity of Ely.
- Additional allocations should be made to enable the community to shape future growth, which is important for community cohesion.
- Parish has a disproportionately high number of traveller sites, and cannot accommodate more sustainably.

##### Infrastructure and Other constraints

- Wilburton Parish Council rejects statement that the village has infrastructure constraints - Wilburton has many community facilities, including three schools, preschool, nursery, pub, social club, shop and post office, garden centre and two churches. Also has a wide range of clubs and societies, and holds civic events.
- School being at capacity indicates its success, as children travel in from neighbouring parishes.
- Opportunity to relocate pre-school using benefits of SWCLT.
- Cambs County Council confirms that primary school is operating close to capacity on a constrained site preventing further expansion. It may be necessary to seek mitigation at a neighbouring village school.
- Surface water receiving system has no residual capacity. Necessary surface water accommodation should be put in place prior to development of land.

## Site Specific Comments

### **WIL.H1 Land off Station Road**

- Due to constraints, including listed buildings and features, drainage issues, protected trees means the site would be unlikely to accommodate 30 dwellings (NB: site identified for 35 dwellings). Site area should be extended to include adjacent Site/32/06.
- Site is within Conservation Area and there are several listed buildings to the south of the site. Policy should be strengthened to ensure proposals conserve, and where opportunities arise, enhance the conservation area and setting of listed buildings.
- TPO site scoring (A-C) is incorrect.
- Site promoter fully supports proposed allocation.

### **Site/32/01 Land west of Clarke's Lane and south of Hinton Way (rejected site)**

- Site is in a central village location, and not a greenfield site.
- Landowner keen to work with SWCLT.
- Site should be allocated in plan.
  
- Site promoter objects to site not being selected as a draft site allocation.
- Disused farmyard and orchard, no longer suitable for modern farming.
- Site is available for development in short term.
- Site assessment flawed / inconsistent, as site scores similarly to draft site allocation WIL.H1.
- Local road impact / access requirements less severe than implied by site assessment evidence report. Site can be accessed via a PROW through The Limes, 1 Church Lane and a gated field access off Hinton Way, and via 13 Clarkes Way.
- Site borders settlement boundary, and is therefore considered a logical extension and well related to built form.
- Site can be designed to ensure no detrimental impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

### **Site/32/02 Land off Townsend Mews (rejected site)**

- Recent planning approvals have set a precedent for ribbon development along Stretham Road.
- Landowner is keen to work with SWCLT to promote a phased housing development.
- Site is sufficiently large to enable development of a mix of house types and tenures.
- If developed, infrastructure improvements would be required, including new footpath on south side of Stretham Road, new zebra crossing and traffic management such as extension of 30mph speed limit.
- Site should be allocated in plan.
  
- Site promoter objects to rejection of site.
- Site is within walking distance of shops and services.
- Site available for development now.
- Supports CLT development.
- Suitable vehicular access can be achieved.
- Visual impacts on countryside can be mitigated through establishment of landscape buffer at boundaries.
- Careful design and landscaping would ensure development is not detrimental to conservation area.

Should be allocated for approx. 50 dwellings, supporting retention of facilities and increasing supply of housing.

## 4 Local Plan: Proposed Submission

- 4.1 Cambridgeshire County Council confirms that primary school is operating close to capacity on a constrained site preventing further expansion. Where sufficient places are unavailable, mitigation will inevitably have to be met at a neighbouring village school. However, such a solution is generally undesirable and unsustainable.
- 4.2 It is acknowledged that primary education facilities are constrained, and consequently the plan makes provision for a relatively modest level of growth. Policy Wilburton 2 includes an aspiration to provide additional education facilities, and therefore no policy changes are required.
- 4.3 It was raised that the surface water receiving system has no residual capacity. Necessary surface water accommodation should be put in place prior to development of land. Policy LP25 sets out a range of measures to manage water resources and flood risk, therefore no change to policy is required.

### Policy Wilburton3: Allocation Sites- Site WIL.H1 Land off Station Road

- 4.4 A number of concerns were raised regarding the suitability and capacity of the site. These issues are addressed in the Site Assessment Evidence Report. No changes to the policy are required.
- 4.5 Stretham & Wilburton Community Land Trust (SWCLT) is active and has support of Parish Council. SWCLT suggests it should be primary means for delivering housing, as it will ensure the needs of the local community are met and deliver development sustainably. The communities' willingness to deliver housing growth is noted and an additional site has been identified to the Proposed Submission Local Plan to enable this aspiration to be achieved. Policy Wilburton3: Allocation Sites is amended to include site WIL.H2 - Land to west of Clarke's Lane and south of Hinton Way.
- 4.6 The Proposed Submission Local Plan includes an additional bespoke policy, Wilburton4: Site WIL.H2 - Land to west of Clarke's Lane and south of Hinton Way, to inform the development of the site and ensure it is reserved for community-led development.
- 4.7 It was raised that the parish has a disproportionately high number of Gypsy & Traveller pitches, and cannot accommodate more sustainably. The emerging Local Plan does not seek to allocate any additional Gypsy & Traveller Pitches; therefore no change to policy is required.
- 4.8 A number of comments were received relating to the suitability of rejected sites. These issues are addressed in the Site Assessment Evidence Report.

## 5 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 5.1 Option 1 is the preferred policy approach for Wilburton, comprising the four policies as set out.

- 5.2 Option 2 would be to not include either Policies Wilburton 1 or 2, but these 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 Evidence 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.