

MEPAL



1. Settlement characteristics

Mepal is a small, rural village on the East Cambridgeshire/Fenland border, 6 miles west of Ely.

The village, situated off the A142, is less than ten metres above sea level. The Old Bedford River and the New Bedford River (also known as the Hundred Foot Drain) run very close on the north-west side of the village. Mepal has a number of Listed Buildings including the 13th century Church, notable as the only church in the Isle of Ely without either tower or spire. The main features of the village are shown on Map xxx.

Facilities in the village include a shop and post office, church, public hall, public house and a sports field, Primary school, Mepal Community Pavilion and Mepal Outdoor centre on the edge of the village. The village has a regular bus service which runs to Ely and Cambridge.

2. Key statistics

<i>Mepal</i>	
<i>Population¹</i>	900
<i>Dwellings²</i>	420
<i>New dwellings built 2001-2011 (net)</i>	114
<i>Estimated new dwellings 2012-2031</i>	
<i>Employment³</i>	14% work from home, 50% travel up to 20km to work, 45% travel over 20km to work
<i>Existing public transport services</i>	Regular services to Ely and Cambridge (Monday-Saturday) (as at June 2012)

3. Housing

¹ Population for Mepal parish (mid-2010), Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group

² Dwellings in Mepal parish (mid-2010), Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group

³ Distance travelled to work, East Cambridgeshire 005B Lower Layer Super Output Area (covering Mepal and Witcham), Census 2001

Mepal is likely to continue to grow at a slow rate, with new housing being built on suitable ‘infill’ sites within the village. No new housing allocation sites are proposed on the edge of Mepal.

A ‘development envelope’ has been drawn around Mepal to define the built-up part of the village where infill development may be permitted. The purpose is to prevent sprawl into the open countryside. Development on infill sites will need to be in line with Policy xx.

Outside the development envelope, housing will not normally be permitted – unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as essential dwellings for rural workers, or affordable housing. Housing schemes outside the development envelope will be assessed against Policy xx and other Local Plan policies as appropriate.

4. Employment

There are a few current businesses in the village, including Greens of Mepal, and Lillypot Dressmaking and Alterations, but little employment land or premises (e.g. office and industrial). The District Council is keen to retain any land and premises in order to support local economic growth. Proposals to re-use employment sites for other purposes will only be permitted in certain circumstances (see Policy xx).

No new employment allocation sites are proposed on the edge of Mepal. However, suitable new employment proposals within or on the edge of the village will be supported in principle, subject to Policies xx, xx and xx.

5. Infrastructure and community facilities

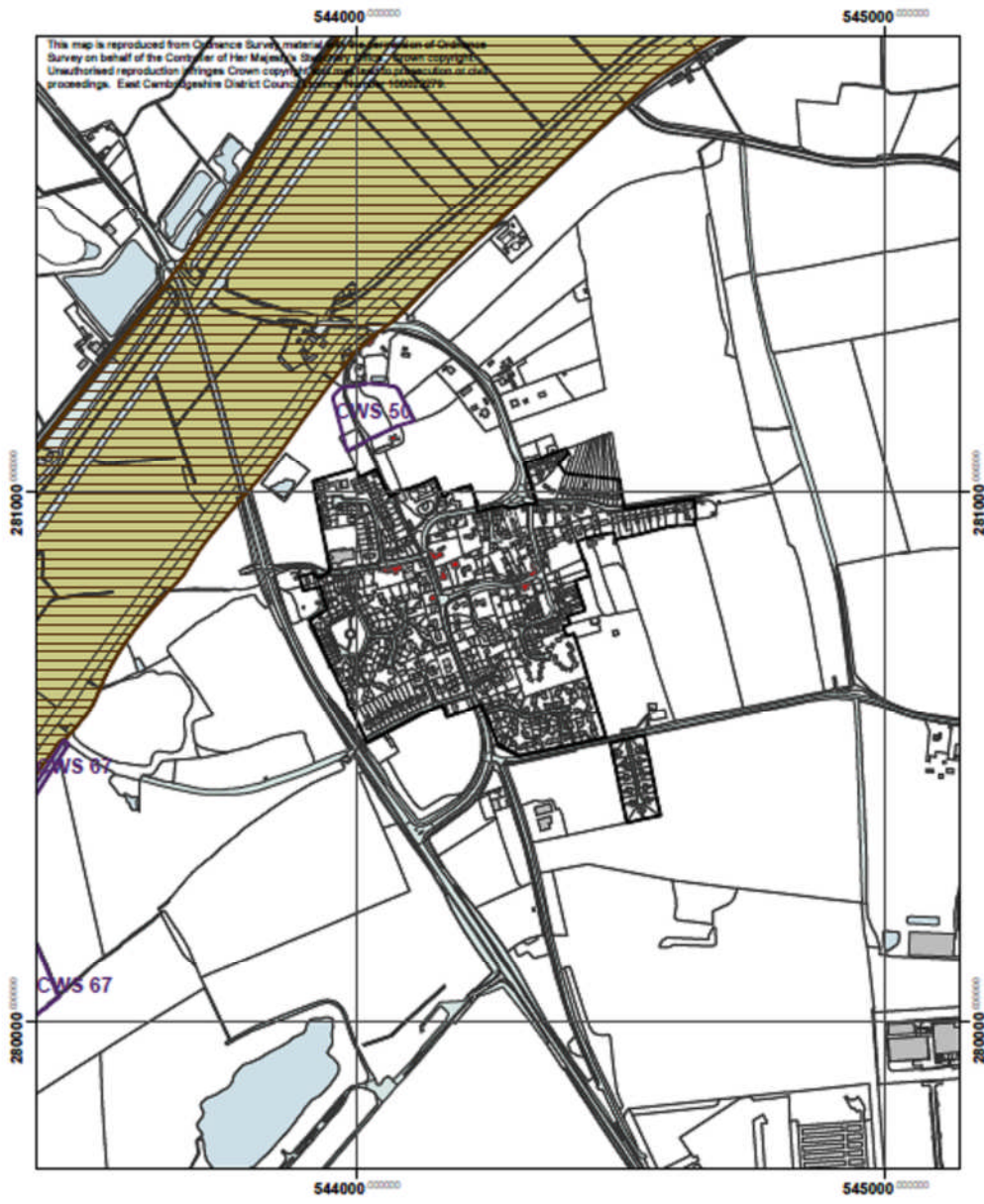
Residents in Mepal have indicated a desire for the need for improvements to infrastructure and facilities in the village. A list of priorities is set out in the table below.

	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Suggestions</i>
=1	Improvements to the Village Hall	Extension of Village Hall. Improvements to Village Hall kitchen and floor.
=1	Traffic calming	Improved signage. Provision of a new car park Traffic calming on Sutton Road and School Lane. Extend 30mph speed limit to pub.
3	Improvements to pedestrian/cycle routes	More footpaths and cycle paths. Cycle path along the river. Pedestrian/cycle routes to link village with Sutton and Witchford/Ely. Provide cycle link to Mepal Outdoor Centre
4	Improvements to sports ground/open space	Creation of a cricket pitch.

One of the top priorities is improvements to Mepal Village Hall, in particular an extension and improvements to the kitchen and flooring in the hall and provision of a new car park. The other top and third priorities are both transport-related – a traffic calming scheme and improvements to pedestrian/cycle links. The District Council will work with the Parish Council and County Council to explore options and secure funding for improvements to community facilities and road and transport schemes in Mepal. The District Council will also work in partnership to try to retain existing public transport levels, and encourage self-sufficient transport services, such as community transport.

The current community facilities in Mepal (including the shop and Post Office, pub, public hall, church and community pavilion) contribute to the quality of people’s lives. The loss of community facilities will also be resisted under Policy xx. Proposals for new community development that benefits the village will be supported in principle, subject to Policies xx and xx.

6. Spatial strategy for Mepal (Map xx)



Key			
	Development Envelope		Conservation Area
	Housing allocation		County Wildlife Site
	Employment allocation		Area of International Importance for Wildlife
	Scheduled Ancient Monument		Listed Building
	Historic Parks & Gardens		Site of Special Scientific Interest

**Map x
Mepal**

N

1:10,000