

# Cottenham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017-2031

A report to South Cambridgeshire  
District Council on the Cottenham  
Neighbourhood Development Plan

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## Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by South Cambridgeshire District Council in April 2019 to carry out the independent examination of the Cottenham Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by written representations. I visited the neighbourhood plan area on 9 May 2019.
- 3 The Plan includes a range of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. There is a very clear focus on safeguarding local character and providing a context within which the development framework identified in the adopted Local Plan can be extended to take account of recent planning permissions. It seeks to refine the local green spaces in the village as included in the Local Plan. It also identifies potential development sites within the village itself. In the round the Plan has successfully identified a range of issues where it can add value to the strategic context already provided by the wider development plan.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. It is clear that all sections of the community have been actively engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report I have concluded that the Cottenham Neighbourhood Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum should be held within the neighbourhood area.

**Andrew Ashcroft**  
**Independent Examiner**  
**10 December 2019**



# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Cottenham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017-2031 (the 'Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan has been submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council by Cottenham Parish Council in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They aim to allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and its updates in 2018 and 2019. The National Planning Policy Framework continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.
- 1.4 The role of an independent examiner is clearly defined in the legislation. I have been appointed to examine whether or not the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions and Convention Rights and other statutory requirements. It is not within my remit to examine or to propose an alternative plan, or a potentially more sustainable plan except where this arises as a result of my recommended modifications to ensure that the plan meets the basic conditions and the other relevant requirements.
- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan can be narrow or broad in scope. Any plan can include whatever range of policies it sees as appropriate to its designated neighbourhood area. The submitted plan has been designed to be distinctive in general terms, and to be complementary to the development plan in particular. It has a clear focus on accommodating new development in the village in a distinctive and a sensitive fashion.
- 1.6 Within the context set out above this report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the basic conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.
- 1.7 This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome the Plan would then be used to determine planning applications within the Plan area and will sit as part of the wider development plan.

## 2 The Role of the Independent Examiner

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by South Cambridgeshire District Council, with the consent of the Parish Council, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Parish Council. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. In previous roles, I have over 35 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level. I am a chartered town planner and have significant experience of undertaking other neighbourhood plan examinations and health checks. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service.

### Examination Outcomes

- 2.4 In my role as the independent examiner of the Plan I am required to recommend one of the following outcomes of the examination:
- (a) that the Plan is submitted to a referendum; or
  - (b) that the Plan should proceed to referendum as modified (based on my recommendations); or
  - (c) that the Plan does not proceed to referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 2.5 The outcome of the examination is set out in Sections 7 and 8 of this report.

### Other examination matters

- 2.6 In examining the Plan I am required to check whether:
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area; and
  - the Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one neighbourhood area); and
  - the Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.
- 2.7 I have addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.6 of this report. I am satisfied that the submitted Plan complies with the three requirements.

## 3 Procedural Matters

- 3.1 In undertaking this examination I have considered the following documents:
- the submitted Plan;
  - the Basic Conditions Statement;
  - the Consultation Statement;
  - the Strategic Environmental Assessment / Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Determination Statement (September 2018)
  - the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report (October 2018)
  - the sixteen Evidence Papers;
  - the responses to my Clarification Note;
  - the representations made to the Plan;
  - the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan;
  - the National Planning Policy Framework (2012);
  - Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014 and subsequent updates); and
  - relevant Ministerial Statements.
- 3.2 I carried out an unaccompanied visit to the neighbourhood area on 9 May 2019. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular. My visit is covered in more detail in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.16 of this report.
- 3.3 It is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held by written representations only. Having considered all the information before me, including the representations made to the submitted plan, I was satisfied that the Plan could be examined without the need for a public hearing. I advised South Cambridgeshire District Council of this decision early in the examination process.
- 3.4 The Plan was submitted for examination in January 2019. Given the transitional arrangements included in the 2018 version of the National Planning Framework the Plan is assessed against national planning policy that was included in the 2012 version of the National Planning Policy Framework. The examination has been through several distinct phases. This has inevitably resulted in the Plan being assessed against a dated version of national policy when development management decisions are being taken against the principles contained within the 2018/2019 versions of the National Planning Policy Framework. Where it is appropriate for me to do so through my broader recommended modifications I have sought to future-proof the Plan where its policies are also in accordance with the approaches in the 2018/19 versions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

## 4 Consultation

### Consultation Process

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 the Parish Council has prepared a Consultation Statement. This Statement sets out the mechanisms that were used to engage the community and statutory bodies in the plan-making process. It also provides specific details about the consultation process that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (June to August 2018). It captures the key issues in a proportionate way and is then underpinned by more detailed appendices.
- 4.3 The Statement is particularly helpful in the way in which it reproduces elements of the consultation documents used throughout the plan-making process. Their inclusion adds life and depth to the Statement.
- 4.4 The Statement sets out details of the comprehensive range of consultation events that were carried out in relation to the initial stages of the Plan. They include:
- the neighbourhood area survey;
  - developing the Vision and Objectives;
  - the use of leaflets and other publicity material;
  - the organisation of workshops; and
  - the extensive use of neighbourhood plan ambassadors both generally and to attend a series of local events and meetings in particular
- 4.5 I am satisfied that the engagement process has been both proportionate and robust. In many instances the ways in which the Parish Council engaged the community and statutory bodies was extremely thorough and detailed.
- 4.6 Section 8 of the Statement provides very specific details on the comments received on the pre-submission version of the Plan. It does so on a policy by policy basis. It identifies the principal changes that worked their way through into the submission version. This process helps to describe the evolution of the Plan. It does so in an exemplary way.
- 4.7 It is clear that consultation has been an important element of the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation.
- 4.8 From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I can see that the Plan has promoted an inclusive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned

throughout the process. South Cambridgeshire District Council has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

## Representations Received

4.9 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by South Cambridgeshire District Council for a six-week period that ended on 5 April 2019. This exercise generated comments from a range of organisations as follows:

- Mrs C Ward
- National Grid
- Cambridgeshire Constabulary
- Essex County Council
- Council for the Protection of Rural England
- Hertfordshire County Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Historic England
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Southern and Regional Developments
- Gladman Development Limited
- This Land
- Peter Hewitt
- Anglian Water Services
- Environment Agency
- Sport England

4.10 I have taken account of all the representations received. Where it is appropriate to do so, I refer to particular representations in my assessment of the policies in Section 7 of this report.

## 5 The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

### The Neighbourhood Area

- 5.1 The neighbourhood area consists of the parish of Cottenham. Its population in 2011 was 6095 persons living in 2534 houses. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 17 November 2015. It is an irregularly-shaped area located approximately 10kms to the north of Cambridge. The A10 runs to the east of the neighbourhood area and forms part of its north-eastern boundary. The neighbourhood area is predominantly rural in character and much of its area is in agricultural use.
- 5.2 The principal settlement is Cottenham itself. It is located on the B1049. It has an attractive and vibrant High Street which provides a convenient and central location for its various retail and commercial services. The Primary School, and the Playing Fields sit to the immediate north west of the village off Lambs Lane. There is an attractive triangular village green in the western part of the village centre bounded by the different parts of High Street.
- 5.3 The remainder of the neighbourhood area consists of a very attractive agricultural hinterland. It displays a characteristic flat fen-edge landscape

### Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The development plan covering the neighbourhood area is the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. It was adopted in 2018 and covers the period up to 2031. Policy S/6 (The Development Strategy) focuses new development on the edge of Cambridge, at new settlements and, in the rural areas at Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres. Policy S/8 identifies five Rural Centres, one of which is Cottenham. That policy supports development within the development framework of Rural Centres where adequate services, facilities and infrastructure accompanies the proposed level of development.
- 5.5 In addition to those set out above the following policies in the Local Plan have been particularly important in influencing and underpinning the various policies in the submitted Plan:

Policy HQ/1	Design Principles
Policy NH/14	Heritage Assets
Policy H/10	Affordable Housing
Policy H/18	Working at Home
Policy E/12	New Employment Development in Villages
Policy E/13	New Employment Development on the Edges of Villages
Policy E/16	Expansion of Existing Businesses in the Countryside
Policy E/19	Tourist Facilities and Visitor Attractions
Policy SC/3	Protection of Village Services and Facilities
Policy SC/4	Meeting Community Needs

Policy SC/7 Outdoor Play Space, Informal Open Space and New Developments  
 Policy SC/8 Protection of Existing Recreation Areas

- 5.6 The Plan has taken a pragmatic approach to the way in which it has sought to accommodate recent planning permissions within a proposed extended development framework for the village beyond that proposed in the adopted Local Plan. This is captured in Policy COH/2-1. Elsewhere policies in the submitted Plan seek to provide a neighbourhood area dimension to policies in the Local Plan.
- 5.7 The submitted Plan has been prepared within its wider adopted development plan context. In doing so it has relied on up-to-date information and research that has underpinned existing planning policy documents in the District. This is good practice and reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on this matter.
- 5.8 It is also clear that the submitted Plan seeks to add value to the different components of the development plan and to give a local dimension to the delivery of its policies. This is captured in the Basic Conditions Statement.

### Unaccompanied Visit

- 5.9 I carried out an unaccompanied visit to the neighbourhood area on 9 May 2019. I approached Cottenham from the A14 and Impington to the south. This allowed me to understand its setting in the wider landscape and its proximity to the main road network and to Cambridge
- 5.10 I looked initially at the Green and the western part of the High Street. I saw the way in which several traditional buildings faced onto this impressive element of public realm design.
- 5.11 I then looked at the Recreation Ground and the various community buildings off Lambs Lane. This helped me to understand better the various policies that would have an impact on this part of the village. I walked up to Les King Wood.
- 5.12 Thereafter I walked to the east along Lambs Lane and into the eastern part of High Street. I walked up to All Saints Church. In doing so I saw the variety of commercial, community and religious buildings in this part of the village. I looked in particular at the Watson's Yard site.
- 5.13 I then looked at the southern part of the High Street. I saw the interesting mix of residential and commercial buildings. I looked in particular at the Co-op building and the Durman Stearn yard.
- 5.14 Thereafter I took the opportunity to look at the residential areas to the south of High Street including Denmark Road and Beach Road.
- 5.15 I then looked at Hay Lane to the south of the village which is proposed as a new site for the Durman Stearn facility (Policy COH/7-3).

- 5.16 I finished my visit by driving around the northern and eastern part of the neighbourhood area. I saw the characteristic fen lands environment. I also saw the significance of the River Great Ouse in the landscape generally and as it formed the northern boundary of the neighbourhood area in particular.

## 6 The Neighbourhood Plan and the Basic Conditions

6.1 This section of the report deals with the submitted neighbourhood plan as a whole and the extent to which it meets the basic conditions. The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has helped considerably in the preparation of this section of the report. It is a well-presented and informative document. It is also proportionate to the Plan itself.

6.2 As part of this process I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the Basic Conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. To comply with the basic conditions, the Plan must:

- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area;
- be compatible with European Union and European Convention on Human Rights obligations; and
- not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (7).

6.3 I assess the Plan against the basic conditions under the following headings.

### National Planning Policies and Guidance

6.4 For the purposes of this examination the key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework issued in 2012. This approach is reflected in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

6.5 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out a range of core land-use planning issues to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are of particular relevance to the Cottenham Neighbourhood Plan:

- a plan led system– in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan;
- delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
- building a strong, competitive economy;
- recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving local communities;
- taking account of the different roles and characters of different areas;
- highlighting the importance of high-quality design and good standards of amenity for all future occupants of land and buildings; and
- conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

6.6 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is identified as a golden thread running through the planning system. Paragraph 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans

that support the strategic needs set out in local plans and plan positively to support local development that is outside the strategic elements of the development plan.

- 6.7 In addition to the National Planning Policy Framework I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy including Planning Practice Guidance and ministerial statements.
- 6.8 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance in general terms. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the neighbourhood area within the context of its status within the development strategy in the Local Plan. In particular it seeks to respond positively to changing circumstances with regard to recent planning permissions for residential development. The Basic Conditions Statement maps the policies in the Plan against the appropriate sections of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.9 At a more practical level the National Planning Policy Framework indicates that plans should provide a clear framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made and that they should give a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal (paragraphs 17 and 154). This was reinforced with the publication of Planning Practice Guidance in March 2014. Its paragraph 41 (41-041-20140306) indicates that policies in neighbourhood plans should be drafted with sufficient clarity so that a decision-maker can apply them consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. Policies should also be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.
- 6.10 As submitted the Plan does not fully accord with this range of practical issues. The majority of my recommended modifications in Section 7 relate to matters of clarity and precision. They are designed to ensure that the Plan fully accords with national policy.

### Contributing to sustainable development

- 6.11 There are clear overlaps between national policy and the contribution that the submitted Plan makes to achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions – economic, social and environmental. It is clear that the submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In the economic dimension the Plan includes policies for housing and employment development (Policies COH/2-1 to 2-4 and COH/7-1 to 7-3 respectively). In the social role, it includes a policy on a village hall (Policy COH/4-2), a Nursery (COH/4-3) and sports facilities. In the environmental dimension the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built and historic environment. It has a specific batch of policies in the village character part of the Plan (Policies COH/1-1 to 1-8). The Parish Council has undertaken its own assessment of this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

### General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

- 6.12 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in South Cambridgeshire in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.

- 6.13 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context. The Basic Conditions Statement helpfully relates the Plan's policies to policies in the development plan. Subject to the incorporation of the recommended modifications in this report I am satisfied that the submitted Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

### European Legislation and Habitat Regulations

- 6.14 The Neighbourhood Plan General Regulations 2015 require a qualifying body either to submit an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required. The screening report identified a need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment to be prepared
- 6.15 In order to comply with this requirement the Parish Council commissioned a Strategic Environmental Assessment. The report is thorough and well-constructed. The report appraises the policies (and reasonable alternatives) against the sustainability framework developed through the Scoping Report. It helps to assess the extent to which the Plan contributes towards sustainable development.
- 6.16 Based on the work undertaken on the Strategic Environmental Assessment and earlier consultation the Plan decided to focus the proposed development of 1-2-bedroom apartments on brownfield, mixed use sites located in walking distance to Cottenham village centre. This was to support accessibility to services and facilities and promote the vitality of the village centre.
- 6.17 In light of this decision three sites are allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan for these purposes: Durman Stearn, Watson's Yard / Fire Station and Co-op site. Whilst the three sites will enable the delivery of homes to meet local housing needs, the Neighbourhood Working Party acknowledged that there may need to be an additional element of housing delivery over the plan period to meet affordable needs in the village. As such, the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan proposes a context for the delivery of predominantly locally affordable homes on greenfield rural exception sites near the village centre over the 15-year plan period.
- 6.18 This additional affordable housing provision has not been taken forward as site allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan; instead the Neighbourhood Plan supports the principle of such development if the conditions set out in the Neighbourhood Plan policies are met.
- 6.19 The South Cambridgeshire District Council Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Plan concludes that the Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects on a European nature conservation site or undermine their conservation objectives alone or in combination taking account of the precautionary principle. As such Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- 6.20 The Habitats Regulations Assessment report is very thorough and comprehensive. It takes appropriate account of the significance of the following European sites:
- Ouse Washes Special Protection Area;

- Ouse Washes Special Area of Conservation;
- Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation;
- Fenland Special Area of Conservation;
- Devil's Dyke Special Area of Conservation;
- Portholme Special Area of Conservation;
- Ouse Washes Ramsar; and
- Wicken Fen Ramsar.

This approach provides assurance to all concerned that the submitted Plan takes appropriate account of important ecological and biodiversity matters.

6.21 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination, I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of European obligations.

6.22 In a similar fashion I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and that it complies with the Human Rights Act. There is no evidence that has been submitted to me to suggest otherwise. In addition, there has been full and adequate opportunity for all interested parties to take part in the preparation of the Plan and to make their comments known. On the basis of all the evidence available to me, I conclude that the submitted Plan does not breach, nor is in any way incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

### Summary

6.23 On the basis of my assessment of the Plan in this section of my report I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions subject to the incorporation of the recommended modifications contained in this report.

## 7 The Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 7.1 This section of the report comments on the policies in the Plan. In particular, it makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that they have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 My recommendations focus on the policies themselves given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. In some cases, I have also recommended changes to the associated supporting text.
- 7.3 I am satisfied that the content and the form of the Plan is fit for purpose. It is distinctive and proportionate to the Plan area. The wider community and the Parish Council have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in their Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (41-004-20170728) which indicates that neighbourhood plans must address the development and use of land.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted plan. Where necessary I have identified the inter-relationships between the policies.
- 7.6 For clarity this section of the report comments on all policies whether or not I have recommended modifications in order to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.7 Where modifications are recommended to policies they are shown under the following headings:
- Changes to Policy – Any changes to policy wording will be under this heading
  - Changes to Text – Any associated or free-standing changes to text will be under this heading.

### The initial section of the Plan

- 7.8 These initial parts of the Plan set the scene for the range of policies. They do so in a proportionate way. The Plan includes a series of maps and figures which highlight specific elements of the Plan and its policies. A very clear distinction is made between its policies and the supporting text. It also highlights the links between the Plan's policies and the relevant Evidence Papers.
- 7.9 The Context comments about the neighbourhood area, and the development of the Plan. It also provides background information on the wider agenda of neighbourhood plans within which it has been prepared.
- 7.10 Section 2 provides a context to the format of the Plan.
- 7.11 Section 3 comments about the relationship between the Plan's objectives and the various policies. Figure 3 is very effective in identifying the golden thread between the

vision, the objectives and the policies. It also makes appropriate references to the various Evidence Papers.

- 7.12 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.7 of this report. During the examination the Parish Council updated a series of maps in the Plan. Where appropriate I recommend that these maps replace those in the submitted Plan. To avoid repetition in this report I list the various maps and figures concerned in a separate section after the policies.

### Policy COH/1-1 Landscape Character

- 7.13 This policy seeks to ensure that new development takes account of the setting of the village within its wider landscape setting. The supporting text in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.3 identifies the significance of the fen edge landscape character and the community's concerns about the way in which previous development has responded to this character.
- 7.14 The policy identifies a series of views and vistas which contribute towards the character and attractiveness of the village and requires new development to protect the vistas concerned. They are identified in three principal groups:
- Views towards All Saints Church;
  - the village edge when viewed from outside the village; and
  - outward views from the north west of the village across the fen-edge landscape.
- 7.15 I looked at a selection of the views when I visited the neighbourhood area. I am satisfied that the vistas are distinctive to the neighbourhood area. I am also satisfied that they are genuine public views and vistas in the public domain rather than private views.
- 7.16 The final part of the policy identifies the way in which development should come forward with regards to its incorporation within the wider context of the village and its landscape setting.
- 7.17 In general terms I am satisfied that the policy addresses an important matter in the neighbourhood area. In addition, it recognises, albeit indirectly, that certain developments may have a degree of impact on the vistas. I recommend that this matter is captured more explicitly in the policy. In addition, I recommend that the policy makes reference to the scale and the location of the development proposed. As submitted, it applies to all development and by definition, some proposals will have a far greater potential to impact on the identified vistas. Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions.

### Change to Policy

Replace the opening part of the policy with:

‘As appropriate to their scale and location, development proposals should take account of the following vistas (as shown on Figure 6) that contribute to the character and attractiveness of Cottenham:’

Replace the opening section of the second part of the policy with:

‘In particular development proposals which may have an impact on the landscape character of the village should incorporate the following design features where they are necessary in relation to the scale and location of the proposal concerned and would be practicable given the particular nature of the proposed development:’

Replace letters d) and e) with bullet points

In the first bullet point (d as submitted) replace ‘deployed’ with ‘incorporated within the site’

In the second bullet point (e as submitted) replace ‘due to’ with ‘in order to reduce potentially’

### **Policy COH/1-2 Heritage Assets**

- 7.18 This policy seeks to safeguard heritage assets in the neighbourhood area. The Policy justification refers to the conservation area, and to a series of characteristic listed buildings.
- 7.19 The policy has two parts. The first indicates that proposals which would result in harm to designated heritage assets will not normally be approved. The second part seeks to apply protection over and above that which already exists in national and local policies to pre-1945 buildings in the conservation area.
- 7.20 The opening part of the policy comments about the unusually high significance of heritage assets to the character and appearance of the village. This was self-evident on my visit. However, the Plan offers no evidence about the unusually high significance of heritage assets in the neighbourhood area and I saw nothing when I visited to suggest that Cottenham is different to any rural village which has a conservation area and a range of vernacular and/or listed buildings.
- 7.21 In this context the submitted policy does not have regard to national policy as included in the National Planning Policy Framework. In the first instance the opening part of the policy does not take account of the national approach towards balancing the harm that might arise from any proposed development with the significance of the heritage asset. In the second instance the part of the policy that relates to pre-1945 buildings offers no evidence about the approach taken and the extent to which local circumstances might warrant a different and more onerous approach to that included in national and local policies.
- 7.22 In all the circumstances I recommend that the policy is recast so that it sets out a positive context within which development proposals can respond positively to heritage

assets. I also recommend that the supporting text provides the context and connection to national policy.

### Change to Policy

Replace the policy with:

‘Development proposals which conserve or, where practicable enhance, designated heritage assets in the neighbourhood area (including the conservation area, listed buildings or Scheduled Monuments) will be supported’

### Change to Text

Combine 1-2c with 1-2b

Replace 1-2c with:

‘Policy COH/1-2 sets a positive context for development proposals to come forward which would conserve or enhance designated heritage assets. The policy recognises the significant role played by heritage assets in defining the character and appearance of the village of Cottenham. Where proposals would generate a degree of harm to a designated heritage asset their determination will be made in accordance with national planning policy (National Planning Policy Framework 189-202) and Local Plan Policy NH/14 Heritage Assets’

## Policy COH/1-3 Non designated heritage assets

- 7.23 This policy identifies a series of non-designated heritage assets. They are shown on Figure 9.
- 7.24 The policy takes an appropriate approach to the future of any such asset by assessing the impact of any proposal against the significance of the asset. I recommend a modification to the final element of the policy so that it more closely relates to the development management process. The recommended modification also has regard to national policy on this matter (National Planning Policy Framework 193-202). I also recommend that the opening part of the policy is deleted. It is supporting text and which is adequately covered in paragraphs 1.3a-1.3c.

### Change to Policy

Delete the opening paragraph of the policy.

Replace the final part of the policy with: ‘Development proposals which would directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets will be determined taking a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset’

## Policy COH/1-4 Village character – alterations and extensions

- 7.25 This policy provides guidance on proposals for alterations and extensions of buildings. It addresses important matters including plot proportions, building lines, the use of materials and vistas.

- 7.26 I recommend three modifications to ensure the policy has the clarity required by the National Planning Policy Framework. The first relates to the language used in the opening part of the policy. The second is on the policy's focus on proposals being supported which 'enrich' the character of the neighbourhood area. In some cases, this will be practicable and other cases this will not be practicable. In any event, several of the criteria refer to the need to 'retain' or 'maintain' rather than to 'enhance'. The third is to ensure that the policy is sufficiently flexible to respond to the different scale and location of proposals within the wider neighbourhood area.

#### Change to Policy

Replace 'planning applications' with 'Development proposals' and 'approved' with 'supported'.

Replace 'provided they.... practicable' with 'where they would retain or where practicable enrich the character of the neighbourhood area by, as appropriate to their location and scale.'

#### Policy COH/1-5 Village character – new build

- 7.27 This policy sets out the context for the development of new buildings in the neighbourhood area. It builds on the District-wide approach in Policy HQ/1 of the adopted Local Plan.
- 7.28 The policy has a clear focus on design principles that have a direct bearing on the character of the village. In general terms it is well-constructed. However, within its wider context I recommend that the reference to the Local Plan policy is addressed in the Policy Justification rather than in the policy itself.
- 7.29 I recommend three modifications to ensure the policy has the clarity required by the National Planning Policy Framework. The first relates to the language used in the opening part of the policy. The second is on the policy's focus on proposals being supported which 'enrich' the character of the neighbourhood area. In some cases, this will be practicable and other cases this will not be practicable. In any event several of the criteria refer to the need to 'retain' or 'maintain' rather than to 'enhance'. The third is to ensure that the policy is sufficiently flexible to respond to the different scale and location of proposals within the wider neighbourhood area.
- 7.30 I also recommend the deletion of the rather prescriptive reference to three houses in criterion b) which seeks to avoid near identical houses. It is too specific for a policy which would apply across the wider neighbourhood area. In addition, it would preclude the development of otherwise well-designed terraced or town houses.
- 7.31 Finally I recommend that the reference to car parking areas in criterion f) becomes more generic. The submitted policy's reference to car parking areas being preferred to the sides of buildings is however recommended to be repositioned into the Policy Justification

### Change to Policy

Replace the opening part of the policy with: 'Proposals for new buildings will be supported where they would retain, or where practicable enrich, the character of the neighbourhood area as appropriate to their location and scale. In particular development proposals should address the following matters in a locally-distinctive fashion appropriate to their location and scale:

In a) replace 'including' with 'incorporate'

In b) delete 'more than 3 near'

In c) replace 'being' with 'be'

Replace d) with 'the use of traditional vernacular materials, and'

In e) replace 'using' with 'the use of'

Replace f) with 'the sensitive relationship between the buildings themselves and the associated car parking provision, and'

In g) replace 'maintaining or creating' with 'the maintenance or the creation of'

In h) replace 'incorporating' with 'the incorporation of'

In i) replace 'providing' with 'the provision of'

In j) replace 'being' with 'be'

### Change to Text

At the end of paragraph 1-5a add: 'The policy has been designed to be complementary to Policy HQ/1 of the Local Plan'

At the end of paragraph 1-5c add: 'Criterion f) of the policy requires designs to address a sensitive relationship between new buildings and their associated car parking areas. The provision of car parking spaces to the sides of new buildings will accord with the Village Design Statement and avoid the cluttering of property frontages with parked cars.'

## Policy COH/1-6 Village character – the village core or centre

- 7.32 This policy identifies four focal points in the village. It also provides guidance for non-residential developments elsewhere within the central part of the High Street.
- 7.33 In summary the policy seeks to ensure that new development should be sustainable, well-designed for pedestrians and should contribute towards the improvement of the public realm. Several of the elements of the policy refer both to public realm and parking issues. In some cases, such development may be beyond the scope of the

development concerned. Nevertheless, as worded the policy anticipates this matter in its use of 'wherever practicable'.

- 7.34 I recommend the deletion of the reference to 'discrete electric charging points' in the first part of the policy. Whilst they may be desirable there is no direct way in which development adjacent to the focal points may be able to provide such facilities either due to the costs of doing so and the broader capacity of the local network.

### Change to Policy

In the first part of the policy delete c)

## Policy COH/1-7 Local Green Spaces

- 7.35 This policy is an important part of the Plan. It proposes alterations to the boundary of the local green space at the Recreation Ground as identified in the Local Plan. It also proposes the designation of an additional Local Green Space. The proposed package is closely connected with the broader proposals to extend the development framework (Policy COH/2-1), to develop a multi-purpose village hall (Policy COH/4-2) and a nursery (Policy COH/4-3).
- 7.36 Paragraphs 1-7b and 1-7c together with Evidence Paper E16 describe the circumstances for the proposed updates to the position in the Local Plan. The changes to the Local Green Space at the Recreation Area stem from the planning applications granted in 2017 and 2018 in and around the Recreation Area. The proposed designation of the Les King Wood Local Green Space reflects its increasing importance to the local community as the village expands to the north and west.
- 7.37 This policy is a positive response to changing circumstances. In general terms it has the support of the affected landowners including the County Council and This Land. The latter suggests that a further degree of flexibility may be required to achieve the intended outcomes. I recommend that this approach is incorporated into the policy justification. Plainly the determination of any subsequent planning applications will be a matter for South Cambridgeshire District Council's judgement in general terms, and the extent to which any detailed fine tunings to the Local Green Space in this part of the village can be ultimately determined by decisions on planning applications.
- 7.38 I am satisfied that in both cases the resulting Local Green Spaces would meet the three criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework. In relation to the reconfiguration of the Recreation Ground Local Green Space the resulting changes to its size are inconsequential. In the case of the proposed new Local Green Space (Les King Wood) I am satisfied that the analysis undertaken in paragraph 1-7c of the Plan is fit for purpose. In particular at 3.76 hectares the land is local in character. It is also in close proximity to the community it serves now, and will become even closer to the community as new development takes place on the adjacent parcels of land.
- 7.39 In a broader sense, I am satisfied that the designation of the proposed package of Local Green Spaces accords with the more general elements of paragraph 99 of the Cottenham Neighbourhood Plan – Examiner's Report

National Planning Policy Framework. Firstly, the package of Local Green Spaces is consistent with the local planning of sustainable development. In this context the submitted Plan proposes the expansion of the development boundary to take account of recent planning permissions in the neighbourhood area. The modified and the proposed new Local Green Spaces do not conflict with or challenge these sites. Secondly, I am satisfied that the Local Green Spaces are capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period. Indeed, the modifications to the extent of the existing Local Green Space takes account of the way in which development will proceed in this part of the village. In addition, the Les King Wood is an established element of the local environment and is sensitively managed as a green space in a fashion appropriate to its particular use.

- 7.40 The policy itself is however rather clumsy. It includes significant elements of description and supporting text in relation to the Recreation Ground Local Green Space and largely repeats the Local Plan policy for its designation as Local Green Space. In these circumstances I recommend that the policy is modified so that it identifies the nature of the revised extent of the Recreation Ground Local Green Space and the proposed new Les King Wood Local Green Space and then applies policy NH/12 of the Local Plan to the two Local Green Spaces.
- 7.41 Figure 12 of the submitted Plan was designed to show the scale and the precise location of these changes from the position in the adopted Local Plan. In responses to questions in my clarification note the Parish Council has helpfully provided a clearer map on this matter. I recommend that it replaces figure 12 as included in the submitted Plan.

#### Change to Policy

Replace the policy with:

‘The neighbourhood plan refines the approach to local green spaces as included in the adopted Local Plan (as shown on figure 12) as follows:

- alters the boundary of the recreation ground local green space; and
- designates an additional local green space at Les King Wood

Proposals for development within these areas will be considered against the contents of Policy NH/12 (Local Green Space) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan’

#### Change to Text

Replace figure 12 with the revised figure 12 as shown in Appendix 1.

At the end of paragraph 1-7b add: ‘Further detailed refinements to the precise boundary of the Recreation Ground local green space may be required within the Plan period. Based on its scale and nature this could be achieved through planning applications or through a focused review of the Plan itself’

## Policy COH/1-8 Protected Village Amenity Areas

- 7.42 This policy proposes the designation of two additional Protected Village Amenity Areas in the neighbourhood area over and above those already identified in the Local Plan. The sites concerned are Tenison Manor and The Dunnocks.
- 7.43 I am satisfied that the designations are appropriate and well-considered. I recommend that the policy is simplified and that the Policy Justification makes proper reference to the relevant Local Plan Policy.

### Change to Policy

Replace the initial two paragraphs of the policy with:

'The neighbourhood plan designates the following two Protected Village Amenity Areas:

[at this point insert a) and b)]

'Development proposals that would affect the two sites will be determined against Policy NH/11 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan'

### Change to Text

At the end of paragraph 1-8a add: 'It designates two additional Protected Village Amenity Areas in addition to those in Cottenham in the adopted Local Plan'.

## Policy COH/2-1 Development Framework

- 7.44 This policy is a key component of the submitted Plan. At its heart is an acknowledgement that the development framework for Cottenham as included in the adopted Local Plan is now out-of-date. In particular several significant planning permissions have been granted recently to the north and west of the village. In this context the submitted Plan sets out to bring the planning policy context for the village up-to-date both in its own right and to provide a basis for the consideration of any further planning applications and the submission of reserved matters applications. This and other policies seek also to take account of recently planning permissions for a new village hall (Policy COH/4-2) and an Early Years Nursery (Policy COH/4-3). The broader package also relates to proposals for local green spaces as addressed in Policy COH/1-7.
- 7.45 The policy has two separate and related components. The first defines an extended development framework. The second then applies countryside policies to that part of the neighbourhood area outside the development framework.
- 7.46 On the first matter I am satisfied that the Parish Council has taken a balanced and pragmatic approach to this important matter. The proposed revised development framework takes account of extant planning permissions. The parcels of land concerned are well-defined and do not infringe on the Green Belt. In the round the extended development framework is consistent with Policy S/8 of the Local Plan which

supports unspecified levels of development within Rural Centres where associated with adequate services, facilities and infrastructure. In addition, it takes account of national policy that a neighbourhood plan can identify greater opportunities for new residential development beyond that identified in the associated local plan.

- 7.47 I recommend that the wording of this part of the policy is modified so that it is clear that its principal role is to redefine the development framework.
- 7.48 The second matter has generated a degree of comment from the development industry. In particular it is seen as being overly-restrictive. I recommend that its approach is refined so that it clarifies that development will be supported outside the development framework where it accords with national and local policies for the countryside. This approach will ensure that it meets the basic conditions. In addition, it takes account of the positive approach that the Parish Council has already proposed in expanding the development framework.
- 7.49 During the examination I sought clarification from the Parish Council about the way in which the proposed revised development framework would be shown on a map in the Plan. Several of the figures in the submitted plan showed different elements of the wider package in a potentially-confusing way. In addition, their focus was on the changes from the designations shown in the Local Plan rather than the resulting outcome. South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Parish Council have provided a revised version of Figure 15 on the Development Framework. It is included at Appendix 2 of this report, I recommend that it replaces the figure in the submitted plan

### Change to Policy

Replace the policy with:

'The neighbourhood plan identifies a development framework as shown on Figure 15

New development will be concentrated within the identified development framework. Development proposals within the development framework which reflect the character and appearance of the village through their location, design, density and scale will be supported.

Development proposals outside the development framework will be supported where they are designed to provide appropriate facilities for rural enterprise, agriculture, forestry, or leisure, or where they otherwise accord with national or local planning policies'

### Change to Text

Replace figure 15 in the submitted Plan with the new figure 15 as shown in Appendix 2

At the end of paragraph 2-1a add: 'The policy incorporates a spatial plan for the neighbourhood area. The concentration of new development within the development framework will assist in the delivery of sustainable development by concentrating new development close to essential community and retail/commercial services in the

village. In addition, it takes account of recent planning permissions for new residential development.’

In paragraph 2-1b insert ‘beyond that identified in the adopted Local Plan’ between ‘extended’ and ‘to include’

### Policy COH/2-2 Large Site Design

- 7.50 This policy provides specific guidance for the development of larger housing sites (more than 50 homes). It sets out a series of principles which aim to secure high quality design outcomes.
- 7.51 The policy has attracted a series of representations from both South Cambridgeshire District Council, the development industry and Anglian Water Services. In general terms, the approach in the policy is supported provided that the application of the policy does not hinder the development of sites with extant planning permissions or otherwise prevents further sites from coming forward. The policy sets out to be flexible and responsive the circumstances of individual sites by the use of ‘where practicable’.
- 7.52 Anglian Water comments about the 50 homes threshold used in the policy. It argues that sustainable drainage systems should also be applied to sites which would yield a smaller number of houses in accordance with Local Plan policies. This is indeed the case. Nevertheless, as the Parish Council has chosen to apply this policy only to the larger sites no modification is necessary to the submitted policy on this specific matter.
- 7.53 I recommend modifications to both criterion c) on open space and criterion d) on the distribution of affordable housing in a wider site so that they relate more closely to the relevant guidance in the adopted Local Plan. This will ensure that South Cambridgeshire District Council will be able to apply policies in a clear and consistent fashion.
- 7.54 I also recommend that criterion b) is modified so that it takes on a more general format rather than requiring the application of ‘landscape design criteria’.
- 7.55 In general terms I recommend a series of modifications to the wording used so that the policy will have the clarity required by the National Planning Policy Framework and that it more closely relates to the location of the scheme within the neighbourhood area and its size. Otherwise it meets the basic conditions.

### Change to Policy

Replace the opening part of the policy with ‘Development proposals for housing developments of more than 50 homes should, as appropriate to their scale and location, incorporate designs which sensitively address the following matters:

Replace b) with: ‘ensuring that the layout, form and urban design of the site takes account of the surrounding urban and natural landscapes, and’

Replace c) with: ‘incorporating play and open spaces in accordance with Local Plan standards, and’

In d) replace ‘pepper-potted throughout the site’ with ‘provided in small groups or clusters distributed through the site concerned’

In e) replace ‘requiring as a... development’ with ‘ensuring’

### **Policy COH/2-3 Use of Brownfield sites for housing**

- 7.56 This policy identifies a series of brownfield sites in the village centre where the development of apartments will be supported. They are the Durman Stearn site, Watson’s Yard and the Co-op site. This policy highlights the residential component of potentially broader developments on the three sites concerned, and which are addressed in separate, site-specific policies elsewhere in the Plan. The policy addresses a general need to retain a degree of business and retail space on the sites concerned.
- 7.57 In general terms I am satisfied that the three sites selected for this purpose are appropriate for residential use. They are centrally-located within the village and will generate positive opportunities for the development of smaller and potentially specialist housing.
- 7.58 I recommend detailed modifications to the wording used in the policy so that they have the clarity required by the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition, I recommend that the figure of 15 apartments between the three sites is deleted. It is too specific and may hinder the practical development of the sites concerned. A cap on the combined development yield may also affect the viability of some or all of the sites concerned. However, within this context the table in the Policy justification can remain as its primary purpose is to identify how the three sites were selected against other sites considered and to show their indicative residential yields.
- 7.59 I recommend that the part of the policy which refers to the need to retain ‘sufficient business and retail space is replaced with one which makes reference to the detailed policies elsewhere in the Plan on the three identified sites. As submitted this part of the policy is unspecific about the retention of business and retail space either collectively or on any of the three sites.

#### **Change to Policy**

Replace the policy with:

‘Development proposals for one- or two-bedroom apartments will be supported on the following sites as shown on figures 14 and 17

- Durman Stearn
- Watson’s Yard
- Co-op

In each case proposals for apartments should be incorporated within broader developments proposals identified for the three sites in Policies COH/3-1.1, 3/1.2 and 3-2.1 of this Plan.

#### Change to Text

At the end of paragraph 2-3e add: 'They are policies COH/3-1.1(Durman Stearn), COH/3-1.2 (Co-op site) and COH/3-2.1 (Watson's Yard)'

### Policy CON/2-4 Locally affordable housing and CLT

- 7.60 This policy seeks to address the recognised need for locally affordable housing in the neighbourhood area. It recognises the potential offered by a community land trust to deliver such ambitions. The policy is very specific to the extent that it would support the development of around 90 affordable homes in the Plan period
- 7.61 Plainly the policy is well-intentioned. Nevertheless, as submitted it is more ambitious in its approach rather than one which is capable of practical delivery. In particular:
- the policy attempts to provide a policy to address exception sites which, by definition are exceptions to policy;
  - the policy does not take account of the potential need for supporting private residential development which may be necessary to support the anticipated levels of affordable housing; and
  - the identified criteria, either individually or collectively, may prevent the development of a series of sites which might otherwise deliver the much-needed affordable housing.
- 7.62 On this basis I recommend that the policy is deleted. I also recommend that the supporting text is deleted. The Community Land Trust will be able to promote its own delivery schemes.

#### Change to Policy

Delete the policy.

#### Change to Text

Delete the Policy Justification and 'Greenfield sites' commentary.

### Policy COH/3-1 Medical and Drop in and chat centre

- 7.63 This policy provides support in a general sense for the development of a medical centre and a drop-in centre in the central area of the village for elderly and less mobile persons. The policy comments that any such development proposals should be both imaginative and provide for their own car parking and servicing requirements.

- 7.64 Policies COH/3-1.1 and COH/3-1.2 comment specifically about the potential for such a facility on the Durman Stearn site and the Co-op site respectively. I address those policies separately.
- 7.65 In general terms I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It offers support for what would be a valuable facility in the community.
- 7.66 I recommend detailed modifications to the wording used in the policy in general, and to incorporate the proposed uses into a single form of development rather than two separate components as included in the Plan.

### Change to Policy

Replace the initial part of the policy with:

‘Development proposals for a medical centre, which could include a drop-in centre for elderly and less mobile residents will be supported within the central area of the village (as identified in figure 11)’

In the second part of the policy replace ‘must’ with ‘should’

### Policy COH/3-1.1 Durman Stearn site

- 7.67 This policy provides a specific context for the potential development of a medical and drop in centre on a specific site. In this case it is a garage and haulage yard and associated buildings in a prominent and central location in the High Street.
- 7.68 As submitted the policy takes a broad approach to development on the site. The medical development is one potential option. The second is small retail or office units. In both cases the policy requires the development of small apartments on upper floors.
- 7.69 I sought the Parish Council’s comments on two potential scenarios. The first was the potential for a medical centre to be developed elsewhere in the village centre and its impact on the remainder of the policy. The second was for the medical centre proposal either not to come forward or not to proceed for viability reasons. The Parish Council agreed to a revised approach which would support a range of uses on this site (and the Co-op site) in a more general context. This would provide the greatest flexibility for a development package to come forward. I recommend accordingly.
- 7.70 I also recommend detailed modification to the element of the policy which applies to the incorporation of apartments on the upper floors of any new development. In particular I recommend the deletion of any reference to a minimum number of apartments. This will be a matter for viability assessments and for the market to determine.

### Change to Policy

Replace the initial part of the policy (up to and including B) with:

'Proposals for the redevelopment of the Durman Stearn site (as identified in figures 20/21) for the following uses will be supported:

- a medical centre which could include a drop-in centre for elderly and less mobile residents; or
- retail and office use with refurbished buildings fronting onto High Street.

Replace Section C of the policy with: 'In both cases proposals for one- or two-bedroom apartments on the upper floors of new or refurbished development will be supported where their design:

[at this point add a) and b) from part C of the submitted policy]'

### **Policy COH/3-1.2 Co-op Site**

7.71 This policy applies a largely identical approach to the Co-op site as that for the Durman Stearn site in the previous policy

7.72 The same principles apply to this policy and I recommend identical modifications.

#### **Change to Policy**

Replace the policy with:

'Development proposals for the redevelopment of the Co-op site (as identified in figures 22/23) for the following uses will be supported:

- a medical centre which could include a drop-in centre for elderly and less mobile residents; or
- retail and office use where their design incorporates an imaginative response to the character and appearance of the village centre.

Replace Section C of the policy with: 'In both cases proposals for one- or two-bedroom apartments on the upper floors of new or refurbished development will be supported where their design: [at this point add a) and b) from part C of Policy COH/3-1.1 Durman Stearn site'

[At this point include the final paragraph of the submitted policy]

### **Policy COH/3-2 Supermarket**

7.73 This policy provides support in a general sense for the development of a supermarket in the village core. It comments that any such development proposals should incorporate affordable apartments on the upper floors and provide for their own parking and servicing requirements. Policies COH/3-2.1 comments specifically about the potential for such a facility on the Watson's Yard/Fire Station Site. I address that policy separately.

- 7.74 In general terms I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It offers support for what would be a valuable facility in the community. I recommend detailed modifications to the wording used in the policy, including reference to the development of affordable apartments on the upper floors of any development where it is practicable to do so. In some cases, the design of a supermarket may preclude this element of the proposal in the policy.

#### Change to Policy

In part a) of the policy delete 'several' and add 'where this is practicable for the design of the building concerned' after 'upper floors'

### Policy COH/3-2.1 Watson's Yard/Fire Station site

- 7.75 This policy provides a specific context for the potential development of a supermarket on a specific site. The Watson's Yard and the Fire Station site is a series of commercial buildings and the site of the existing Fire Station. It is in a prominent and central location at the eastern end of the High Street.
- 7.76 As submitted the policy takes a broad approach to development on the site. A potential supermarket is part of a wider development package which includes the potential for a new Fire Station, workshop units and office/retail units. The policy also comments about design, parking and servicing requirements.
- 7.77 I recommend detailed modifications to the wording used in the policy. In particular I recommend that the structure of the policy is modified so that it allows any appropriate package of the various uses to come forward. I also recommend that the scale and nature of the proposed elements of the development are presented in a general rather than a very specific way. As submitted the policy may have unintended and restrictive implications.
- 7.78 I also recommend that the requirement for any new fire station to have its own dedicated access is repositioned into the supporting text.

#### Change to Policy

Replace the initial part of the policy (up to D) with:

'Proposals for the redevelopment of the Watson's Yard/Fire Station site (as identified in figures 24/25) for the following uses will be supported:

- a supermarket with apartments on the upper floors where this is practicable for the design of the building concerned;
- a modernised or new Fire Station;
- workshop units; and
- offices and retail units with frontages onto High Street.'

Replace the opening part of the final paragraph of the policy with:

'All proposed new development should'

### Change to Text

At the end of paragraph 3.2d add:

‘Policy COH/3-2.1 provides detailed guidance for the development of this site for a supermarket and other uses’

At the end of paragraph 3-2e add:

‘In the event that the Fire Station remains on the site appropriate access to and from the building will be a key component of the wider development. It should have a dedicated access to High Street’

## Policy COH/4-1.1 Recreation Ground

- 7.79 This policy sets the scene for the Plan’s proposals for recreational and social uses in the north-western part of the village. It has a strong relationship with Policy COH/2.1 which proposes the enlargement of the development framework to accommodate the new homes which benefit from planning permission.
- 7.80 It sets the context for more detailed proposals for a multipurpose village hall (Policy COH/4-2), a nursey (Policy COH/4-3) and additional sports facilities (Policy COH/4-4).
- 7.81 The proposed package of improvements is well-considered. I recommend a series of modifications to the wording used so that the policy will have the clarity required by the NPPF. Otherwise it meets the basic conditions.

### Change to Policy

Replace the opening part of the policy with:

‘Development proposals for the comprehensive provision of community, recreation and sports facilities at the Recreation Ground and near Cottenham Primary School (as shown in figure 26) will be supported where the overall design:’

In a) replace ‘does not reduce’ with ‘maintains or increases’

### Change to Text

At the end of paragraph 4-1a add: ‘It sets the context for more detailed proposals for a multi-purpose village hall (Policy COH/4-2), a nursery (Policy COH/4-3) and additional sports facilities (Policy COH/4-4)’.

## Policy COH/4.2 Multi-purpose Village Hall

- 7.82 This policy follows on from the previous policy. In this case it offers support for the development of a multi-purpose village hall. As paragraph 4-2b comments the village hall is intended to provide a range of facilities including meeting places, out of school child care and an informal day centre.

- 7.83 Planning permission was granted for a new village hall in September 2018 (S/2702/18/FL). In these circumstances I sought clarification from the Parish Council on the need or otherwise for the policy. I was advised that it was needed in the event that the development could not be started whilst the planning permission was extant. On balance I am satisfied that this approach would be appropriate. It will also allow a degree of flexibility in the event that the design scheme for the village hall and/or the wider package arising from Policy COH/4-1 change within the Plan period.
- 7.84 I recommend a series of modifications to the wording used so that the policy will have the clarity required by the National Planning Policy Framework. I also recommend that the policy justification provides greater clarity on the extant planning permission. Otherwise it meets the basic conditions.

#### Change to Policy

Replace the opening part of the policy with:

‘Proposals for the development of a multipurpose Village Hall adjacent to the Primary School within the development framework (as shown in figure 27) will be supported where the overall design:

In a) replace ‘does not lead to loss of any’ with ‘maintains or increases the availability of’

#### Change to Text

In paragraph 4-2b replace ‘The now permitted proposal provides’ with ‘Planning permission was granted for such a facility in September 2018 ((S/2702/18/FL). It would provide:’

### Policy COH/4.3 Nursery

- 7.85 This policy follows on from Policy COH/4.1. In this case it offers support for the development of a children’s nursery. As the Policy justification comments existing facilities are struggling to cope with demand, and the forthcoming new homes will simply compound the matter.
- 7.86 Planning permission was granted for a new nursery in December 2018 (S/2705/18/FL). In these circumstances I sought clarification from the Parish Council on the need or otherwise for the policy. I was advised that it was needed in the event that the development could not be started whilst the planning permission was extant. On balance I am satisfied that this approach would be appropriate. It will also allow a degree of flexibility in the event that the village hall design scheme and/or the wider package arising from Policy COH/4-1 change within the Plan period.
- 7.87 I recommend a series of modifications to the wording used so that the policy will have the clarity required by the National Planning Policy Framework. I also recommend that the policy justification provides greater clarity on the extant planning permission. Otherwise it meets the basic conditions.

### Change to Policy

Replace the opening part of the policy with:

Proposals for the development of a nursery within the development framework (as shown in figure 15) will be supported where the overall design:

In a) replace 'does not lead to loss of any' with 'maintains or increases the availability of'

### Change to Text

At the end of paragraph 4.3b add: 'Planning permission was granted for such a facility in December 2018 ((S/2705/18/FL))'.

## Policy COH/4.4 Sports Facility

- 7.88 This policy follows on from Policy 4.1. In this case it offers support for the development of new sports facilities. As the Policy justification comments existing facilities are struggling to cope with demand, and the forthcoming new homes will simply compound the matter.
- 7.89 The submitted policy is site-specific, and as shown on figure 26. Representations from both This Land and Cambridgeshire County Council (in its capacity as a landowner) respectively suggest that the policy should not be site-specific, or that the proposed site conflicts with the extant permission for residential development.
- 7.90 Within the wider context of the recreational and community development proposed in Policy COH/4.1 this policy will play an important role in the future of the social well-being of the community. Nevertheless, to provide appropriate flexibility for the Parish Council and the various landowners I recommend that the policy is modified so that it does not identify a specific location for the development to take place within the current Recreation Ground (as envisaged by the notations on figure 26 in the submitted Plan).
- 7.91 The policy is based around the Parish Council's assessment of sport and recreation provision in the neighbourhood area against published standards. Whilst this approach is commendable it has resulted in a rather mechanical approach in general, and which is directly translated into the policy as an anticipation for catch-up provision (criterion b) and further expansion space (criterion c). I recommend that the need for and the potential size of the new facilities are captured simply in the Policy Justification rather than in the policy itself.
- 7.92 I also recommend that the requirement for floodlit outdoor sports facilities is excluded from the policy. This is not to suggest that such development would not be acceptable. Rather it provides flexibility for development to come forward without floodlighting in the event that such facilities may either not be financially viable or where they may not be acceptable on amenity grounds. I recommended consequential changes to paragraph 4-4d to address this matter.

- 7.93 I also recommend a series of modifications to the wording used so that the policy will have the clarity required by the National Planning Policy Framework. Otherwise it meets the basic conditions.

#### Change to Policy

Replace the opening part of the policy with:

‘Proposals for the development of additional sports facilities adjacent to the existing Recreation Ground within the development framework (as shown in figure 26) will be supported where the overall design:

In criterion a) replace ‘be’ with ‘is’

Delete criteria b), c) and d)

In e) replace ‘provide’ with ‘provides’

Insert additional criterion to read:

‘insert letter) provides for appropriate levels of on-site car parking’

#### Change to Text

In paragraph 4-4d replace: ‘Development of.... facilities allows’ with ‘In the event that the new facilities incorporate all-weather floodlit facilities this provision would allow’

At the end of the paragraph add: ‘Any proposals which incorporate floodlighting will need to demonstrate that they are acceptable on amenity grounds’

### Policy COH/5.1 New Recreation Ground

- 7.94 This policy follows on from the previous policy. In effect it seeks to provide a policy context for the development of a new recreation ground in the event that the proposals in the previous policy are not achieved. Whilst no specific site is identified the Policy justification comments that it should preferably be sited in the south-east part of the village near recent housing developments.
- 7.95 I sought clarity from the Parish Council on its wider intentions for the policy. I was advised that:
- Policy COH/5-1 is a back-up plan;
  - no specific site has been identified; and
  - land for its purpose could be potentially purchased through the use of Section 106 monies.
- 7.96 Having considered all the evidence on this matter I recommend that the policy and the Policy Justification are deleted from the Plan. This takes account of the following matters:

- there is no clarity around the location of the proposed site;
- certain elements of the policy justification make a connection between potential sites and rural exception sites;
- there are no delivery or funding arrangements in place; and
- in any event the failure for the recreation ground as envisaged in Policy COH/4-4 to come forward could be addressed in a review of the Plan.

#### Change to Policy

Delete policy

#### Change to Text

Delete the Policy justification and the 'Why' section

### Policy COH/6.1 Extension of burial grounds

- 7.97 This policy offers support for proposals to extend the village's burial grounds. It is a criteria-based policy. In its response to the clarification note the Parish Council clarified that the policy is intended to be general in nature. The Evidence Base identifies potential ways in which this could take place.
- 7.98 I recommend modifications to the wording used in the opening part of the policy. Otherwise it meets the basic conditions.

#### Change to Policy

Replace 'Planning permissions will be approved' with 'Development proposals will be supported'

### Policy COH/7.1 Village Employment

- 7.99 This policy offers support for retail and commercial development in the village centre. Where practicable it requires the provision of on-site car parking and secure cycle stands.
- 7.100 South Cambridgeshire District Council raises queries about the delivery of the policy given the tight-knit nature of the village centre, and the feasibility of providing car parking facilities. These are important matters. Nevertheless, the policy is sufficiently flexible to anticipate circumstances where the provision of car parking may not be practicable.
- 7.102 I am satisfied that with modifications that the policy is capable of meeting the basic conditions. In particular it will establish a positive context within which new business investment can take place. I recommend modifications to the policy language used and to give a better definition to the Plan's commentary about 'small scale development.'

### Change to Policy

Replace 'Planning permission will be approved for development of' with 'Development proposals will be supported for'

Delete 'a wide range of small scale'

After facilities add 'of an appropriate scale to their locations'

## Policy COH/7.2 Rural Employment

- 7.103 This policy provides an approach to rural employment development. In its response to the clarification note the Parish Council advised that the policy was intended to apply to locations outside the development framework.
- 7.104 It has a particular focus on supporting fenland-related eco-tourism, outdoor pursuits and tourism. It is a criteria-based policy. In general terms I am satisfied that the policy is appropriate for the neighbourhood area. In particular it takes account of the close relationship between the village and its agricultural hinterland.
- 7.105 I recommend modifications to ensure that the policy will have the clarity required by the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore meet the basic conditions. Firstly, I recommend that the policy identifies its spatial application. Secondly, I recommend that the first criterion on HGV traffic is modified so that it relates more generally to traffic movements and the capacity of the highway network. As submitted this criterion suggests that any new development would have the ability to affect the movements of HGV traffic through the village. Thirdly I recommend the inclusion of additional criteria relating to car parking and residential amenity.
- 7.106 I also recommend that the policy element relating to the 'potential to increase rural employment' is deleted. It adds no direct value to the policy. In any event, some proposals may be for the expansion of existing rural premises without any increased employment levels. In other cases, investment proposals may safeguard existing jobs.

### Change to Policy

Replace the initial part of the policy with:

'Development proposals for rural employment based on participation in fenland-related eco-tourism or outdoor pursuits or tourism opportunities outside the development framework will be supported where those proposals:

Replace a) with 'can be safely accommodated within the capacity of the local highways network, and'

Insert additional criteria as follows:

e) provide an appropriate level of off-road car parking; and

f) do not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of any residential properties in the immediate locality.

## Policy COH/7.3 Proposed Durman Stearn site

- 7.107 This policy proposes the allocation of a site in Hay Lane to accommodate the relocation of the Durman Stearn business from its current site in the High Street. The current Durman Stearn site is allocated for alternative uses elsewhere in this Plan. The proposed site is approximately a mile to the south east of the village centre. It is within the Green Belt.
- 7.108 A planning application has been submitted by the company for the use of the site (S/4747/O). The District Council resolved to approve the proposal in 2018. In doing so it concluded that very special circumstances that warranted this approach in the Green Belt.
- 7.109 In many respects this policy has now been overtaken by events. In any event, proper processes have been followed to secure the development of the site for the company's use of the site. The planning application process allows South Cambridgeshire District Council to assess all policy and material planning considerations, including a consideration of the very special circumstances that exist.
- 7.110 In all the circumstances I recommend the deletion of the policy and the policy justification. Given the timing of the submission of the Plan it falls to be assessed against the 2012 version of the National Planning Policy Framework. At that time only local planning authorities (here South Cambridgeshire District Council) had the ability to alter Green Belt boundaries. Whilst the policy allocates the site for development rather than propose its deletion from the Green Belt its effect would largely be the same. In addition, the very special circumstances as identified by South Cambridgeshire District Council in its determination of the planning application cannot necessarily be applied into a planning policy which is, by definition, associated with the land rather than the specific circumstances of any one organisation.

### Change to Policy

Delete the policy

### Change to Text

Delete the policy justification and the 'Why' heading.

### Other matters - General

- 7.111 This report has recommended a series of modifications both to the policies and to the supporting text and figures in the submitted Plan. Where consequential changes to the text are required directly as a result of my recommended modification to the policy concerned, I have highlighted them in this report. However other changes to the general text may be required elsewhere in the Plan as a result of the recommended modifications to the policies. It will be appropriate for South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Parish Council to have the flexibility to make any necessary consequential changes to the general text. There will also in some circumstances need

to be changes made to figures to reflect these changes made to the Plan I recommend accordingly.

### Changes to Text

Modification of general text (where necessary) to achieve consistency with the modified policies.

### Other matters – specific

- 7.112 There are elements of the Plan which do not have the clarity required by the National Planning Policy Framework. Within the context of paragraph 1.4 of this report I only recommend modifications where they are necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.

### Changes to Text

Paragraphs 1.34 and 1.35 – the Parish Council may wish to update these paragraphs in the event that the referendum achieves a positive outcome.

Replace paragraph 1.50 with: ‘Several policies are criteria-based. The intention is that development proposals meet every criterion insofar as they apply to its scale and location’

Replace paragraphs 1.52 and 1.53 with ‘In such cases the applicant will be expected to demonstrate the way in which other material planning considerations should allow the District Council to grant planning permission where certain elements of the policy cannot be met by the development concerned.’

### References to figures and maps

- 7.113 There are several parts of the Plan where the policy or the Policy Justification refers to an incorrect figure. They are set out below:

Policy COH/3-2.1: Watson’s Yard / Fire Station site (site X5 in Figure 14) – Policy states Figure 22 when it should be 24.

Policy COH/4-2: Multi-purpose Village Hall – Figure 24 referred to when should be 27 or 28.

Policy COH/4-3: Nursery – Figure 25 referred to in policy be should be 27 or 28.

Policy COH/7-3: new Durman Stearn site – Figure 27 is referred to in the policy but it should be Figure 31.

### Change to Text

Revise the reference to Figures in the Plan accordingly

### Details in figures and maps

- 7.114 Several figures in the submitted Plan do not have the clarity required for a development plan document. The Parish Council has helpfully provided replacement figures during the examination as follows:

Figure 5	National Character Areas & Green Belt
Figure 9	Non-designated Heritage Assets
Figure 11	Cottenham's Focal Points, Core Street, Central Area and Centre
Figure 12	Modified Local Green Space boundaries at the Recreation Ground
Figure 13	The Dunnocks & Tenison Manor PVAAs
Figure 15	Cottenham's Extended Development Framework
Figure 16	Locations of 2017 and 2018 Planning Permissions
Figure 17	Brownfield housing sites near village centre
Figure 26	Preferred expansion of the Recreation ground
Figure 27	Site locations for Village Hall and Nursery
Figure 28	Site locations for Village Hall and Nursery
Figure 29	Policies affecting the Recreation Ground
Figure 30	Indicative expansion of the Recreation Ground

### Changes to Text

I recommend that the relevant figures in the submitted Plan are replaced by those provided by the Parish Council during the examination except for Figure 12 and Figure 15 which are included in Appendices 1 and 2 of this report. These two figures show the changes to the boundary of the Local Green Space and Development Framework in Cottenham as recommended in this report and replace those provided by the Parish Council. Consequential amendments will need to be made to the figures provided by the Parish Council to reflect the boundaries shown in these two figures.

### The scale of figures and maps

7.115 In several cases the figures are of a scale which fails to show the required detail. They are as follows:

Figure 7	Listed buildings and scheduled monuments
Figure 11	Cottenham focal points, core street, central area and centre
Figure 14	Cottenham's possible development sites

### Change to Text

I recommend that the scales are adjusted accordingly

### Monitoring and Review of the Plan

7.116 The Plan does not comment about a potential future review of any made neighbourhood plan. Whilst it has been prepared within the helpful context of a recently-adopted Local Plan it addresses several challenging issuers. In particular the

Plan anticipates a scenario where an expanded recreation ground cannot be delivered in the preferred location.

- 7.117 In all the circumstances, and to comply with good practice I recommend that the Plan includes commentary on its monitoring and potential future review

#### Change to Text

At the end of Section 1 add a new heading and text to read:

##### 'Monitoring and Review

1.54 The Parish Council acknowledge that circumstances may change within the Plan period. In addition, some policies will work better than others. On this basis the Parish Council will review the effectiveness of the Plan's policies on an annual basis

1.55 Where appropriate the Parish Council will consider either a full or a partial review of the Plan. This will be based around the monitoring information gathered, any revisions which may arise with the Local Plan and any broader changed circumstances which may arise,

1.56 In particular the Parish Council will assess the effectiveness of Policy COH/4.1 and its associated delivery policies given their significance to the wider Plan.'

## 8 Summary and Conclusions

### Summary

- 8.1 The Plan sets out a range of policies to guide and direct development proposals in the period up to 2031. It is distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community.
- 8.2 Following my independent examination of the Plan I have concluded that the Cottenham Neighbourhood Development Plan meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.

### Conclusion

- 8.3 On the basis of the findings in this report I recommend to South Cambridgeshire District Council that, subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report, the Cottenham Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed to referendum.

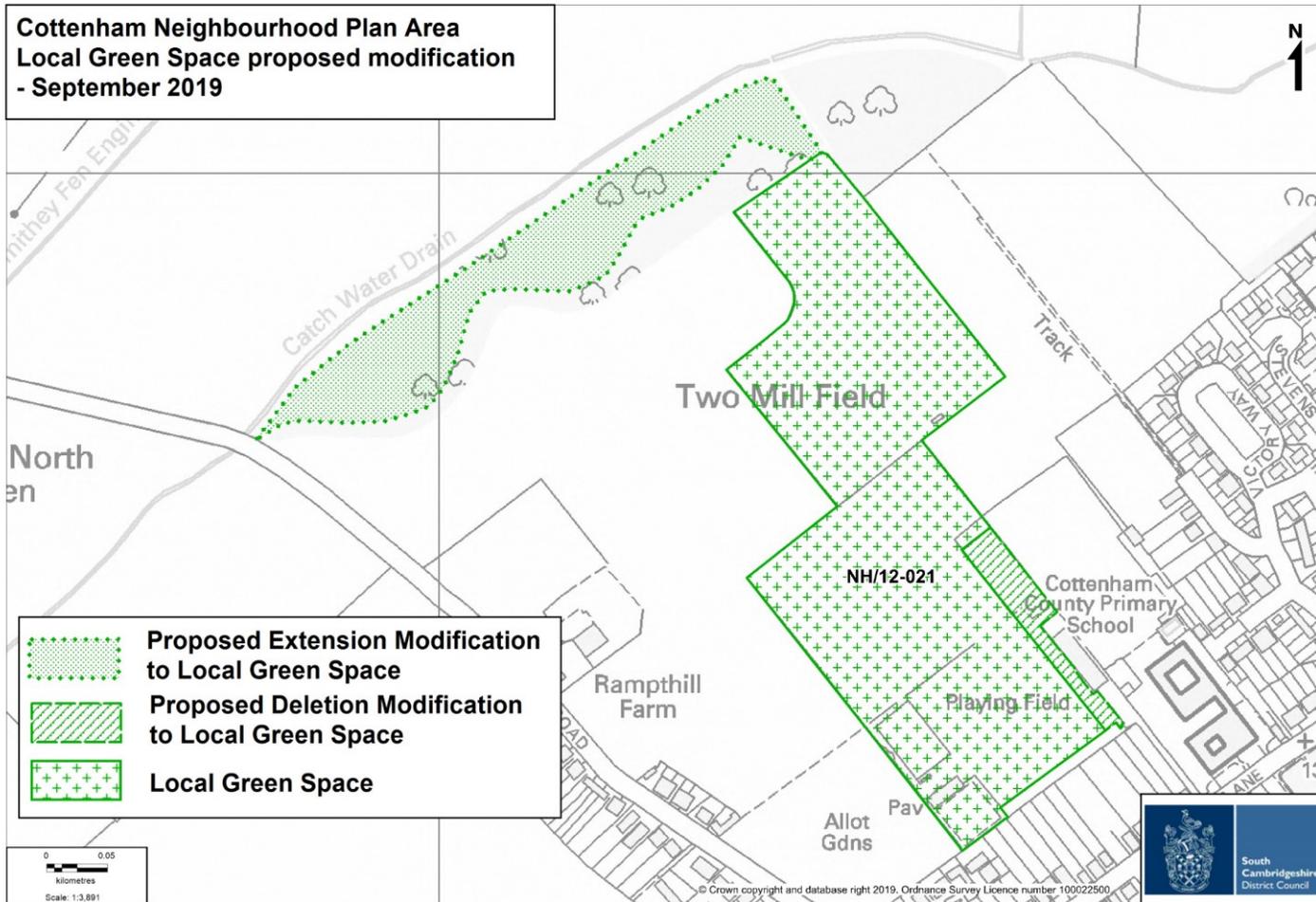
### Referendum Area

- 8.4 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the Plan area. In my view, the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as originally approved by South Cambridgeshire District Council on 17 November 2015.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in an efficient manner.

**Andrew Ashcroft**  
**Independent Examiner**  
**10 December 2019**

# Appendix 1

## Figure 12 Local Green Space proposed modification – September 2019



# Appendix 2

## Figure 15 Cottenham's Development Framework

