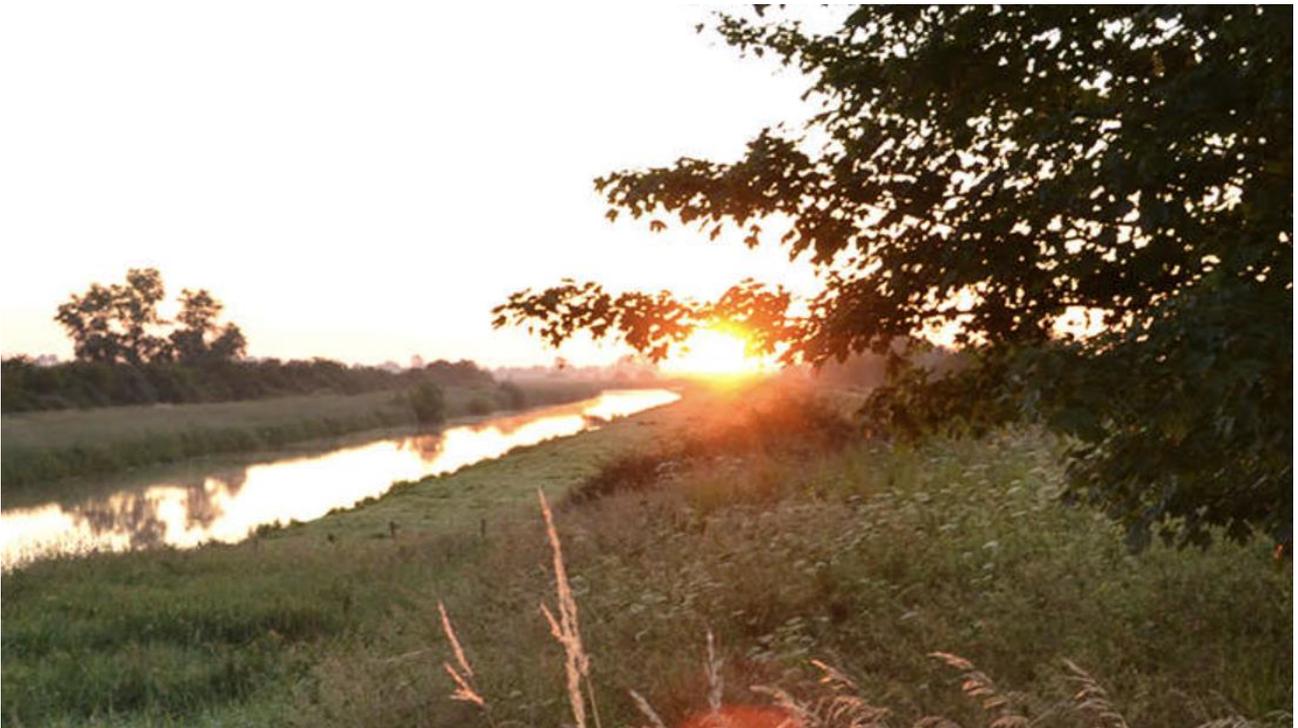


Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031



Draft Plan
February 2023



Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031

Draft Plan
February 2023

Pre-submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with Regulation 14 of Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012

(The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced based on an evidence base as at December 2022 and has a plan period from 2022 to 2031)



The Parish Council received professional planning support from NEIGHBOURHOOD-PLAN.CO.UK during the production of this Neighbourhood Plan.



NEIGHBOURHOOD-PLAN.CO.UK

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Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031



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Foreword

On behalf of Mepal Parish Council, welcome to the Neighbourhood Plan for our Parish area. The Neighbourhood Plan sets out the vision, objectives and policies to ensure that the Parish of Mepal maintains the character, appearance and uniqueness over the period up to 2031.

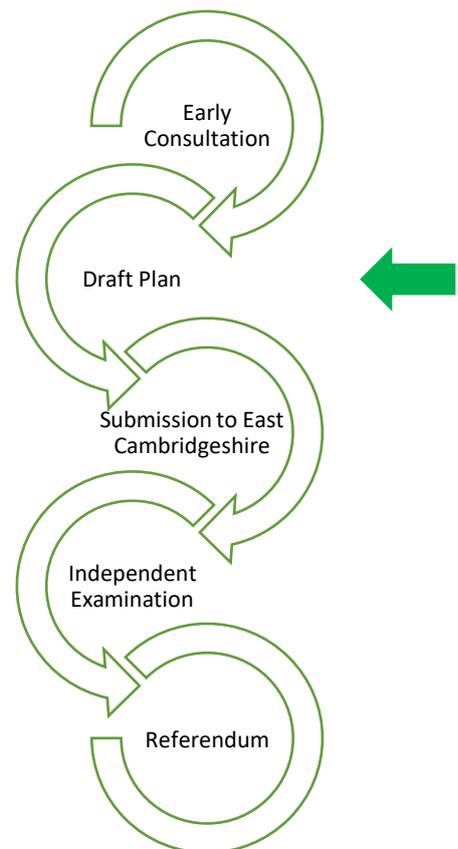
The Neighbourhood Plan will seek to protect and enhance the natural and built environment of Mepal and help protect and improve our lovely village.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been drawn up by Mepal Parish Council which is the designated body for the plan area and provided the funding and support to enable the plan to go ahead. The Neighbourhood Plan has to go through a number of stages including statutory public consultation and will also then have to go through an Independent Examination followed by a local referendum requiring a majority 'yes' vote of all those voting in the referendum for it to be accepted. In the event of a 'yes' vote, East Cambridgeshire District Council will proceed to 'make' the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Mepal.

The Neighbourhood Plan sets down a series of planning policies which will form part of East Cambridgeshire's wider statutory development plan. The Neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity with the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

It is intended that the policies will be reviewed periodically to monitor the cumulative effects of the policies and, if necessary, make changes to keep them up to date and relevant.

So, my personal thanks to all those who have driven the process so far and thank you for taking the time to consider the Neighbourhood Plan.



Councillor Lorna Williams
Mepal Parish Council (Vice-Chair & Lead Member for the Neighbourhood Plan)



Introduction

1. Background

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new type of Community Led Plan. Communities now have the right to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, setting out policies on the development and use of land. Developing a Neighbourhood Plan is a way for communities to play a greater role in determining the future of their area. A plan period of 2031 has been chosen to match the plan period of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.
- 1.2 The Mepal Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan. This means that East Cambridgeshire District Council will determine planning applications within the Parish in accordance with the development plan which includes this Neighbourhood Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise (see [section 38\(6\)](#)¹ of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- 1.3 This Neighbourhood Plan is a Community Led Plan. It has been prepared by the Parish Council with professional support. It has been informed by public participation and consultation on a Mepal Community Led Plan (CLP) that was undertaken between 2017 and 2020. The formal Neighbourhood Plan preparation process involves two statutory periods of public consultation as prescribed in [Regulations](#)².
- 1.4 A Neighbourhood Plan is a planning document and is about the use and development of land. Neighbourhood planning gives communities more control over the future of their area by giving local people the chance to have their say on what happens where they live.
- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan can establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a particular area. Plans can include local priorities, planning policies, proposals for improving an area or providing new facilities or infrastructure and allocation of key sites for development.
- 1.6 Neighbourhood planning is a tool to promote sustainable growth and will not be able to prevent development in an area. Neighbourhood plans can only include proposals for an equal (or greater) amount of growth than is set out in the local authority's development plan. They must also accord with national planning policy



2. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 2.1 Every Neighbourhood Plan needs to consider the need for a Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment) for the Neighbourhood Plan. SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key sustainability issues.
- 2.2 The Parish Council considers that there will be no significant environmental effects arising from the Neighbourhood Plan. They have produced a SEA and HRA Screening Assessment for

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/section/38>

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents/made>

the Neighbourhood Plan which has demonstrated that a SEA is not required. Consequently, no SA incorporating an SEA has been undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan.

3. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 3.1 Throughout this Neighbourhood Plan reference is made to the National Planning Policy Framework ([NPPF](#))³. The NPPF sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It was first published on 27 March 2012, with the current Revised NPPF version being published in July 2021. It is also supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance.
- 3.2 The NPPF provides a framework to produce locally distinctive Neighbourhood Plans which reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. The Neighbourhood Plan contributes towards the achievement of sustainable development. More detail on the ways in which this Plan addresses sustainable development is included within the Basic Conditions Statement that accompanies the Plan.

4. Planning Practice Guidance

- 4.1 [Planning Practice Guidance](#)⁴ sets out the government’s advice on how to undertake neighbourhood planning within England. This is set out in detail within Section 41 of Planning Practice Guidance.

5. Structure of Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.1 The Neighbourhood Plan includes two themed sections: Sustainable Development and Natural & Built Environment.



Sustainable
Development



Natural & Built
Environment

- 5.2 These are issues that are important to the community and within each section policies are included to guide the development and use of land. Each Policy contains an introduction and explanatory text followed by the Policy itself in coloured text. Following the themed sections, the Neighbourhood Plan contains an implementation and delivery section.

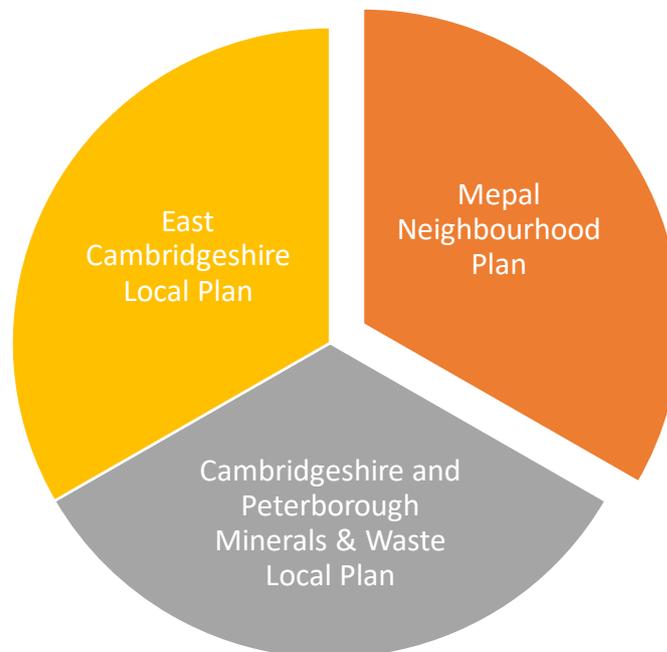
³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

The Development Plan

6. Background

6.1 The 'Development Plan' for Mepal is made up of 3 main components as follows:



6.2 All policies within the Neighbourhood Plan should be read in conjunction with the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. When determining proposals for development, no policy will be applied in isolation and account will be taken of all relevant policies.

7. Relationship to the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan

7.1 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan sets out the vision, objectives spatial strategy and policies for the future development of the district. It also identifies land and allocates sites for different types of development, such as housing and employment, to deliver the planned growth for the district to 2031.

7.2 The preparation of the Local Plan was informed through several stages of public consultation. The [Local Plan](#)⁵ was adopted by the Council on 21 April 2015, it covers the plan period up to 2031. In April 2020 the Council determined that it was necessary to review the Local Plan through what is known as a 'Single Issue Review' and addresses the housing requirement for the same plan period up to 2031.

7.3 Consultation on the Proposed Submission version of the 'Single Issue Review' of the Local Plan was carried out between 3 May and 13 June 2022. Two earlier consultations also took place on a draft document, during 2021. On 19 July 2022, the Council submitted its proposed [Single Issue Review Local Plan](#)⁶ to the Planning Inspectorate, so that an independent examination of the proposal can take place. The Examination of the Local Plan Review is

⁵ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/east-cambridgeshire-local-plan-2015>

⁶ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/local-plan-review>

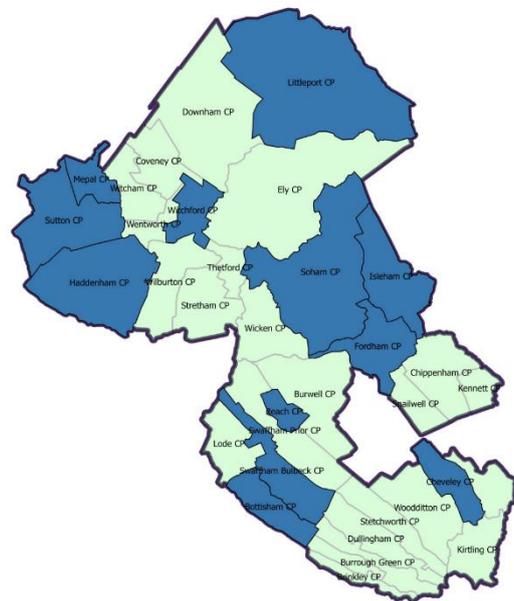
underway and the hearing sessions were held in November 2022. Neither the existing East Cambridgeshire Local Plan nor the Single-Issue Review Local Plan allocate sites for development in Mepal.

8. Strategic policies for the purposes of neighbourhood planning

- 8.1 The system of neighbourhood planning allows Parish and Town Councils to produce neighbourhood plans to guide development at a local level. One of the requirements of such plans is that they should be in line with the 'strategic policies' of the adopted development plan for the local area.
- 8.2 East Cambridgeshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority defines which policies are to be considered 'strategic' with regard to the production of a neighbourhood plan. However, the Local Plan does not explicitly state which policies within the Local Plan are to be considered 'strategic' for the purposes of neighbourhood planning.

9. Surrounding Neighbourhood Plans

- 9.1 The Mepal Neighbourhood Plan was developed with consideration of whether there are any other Neighbourhood Plans being developed who share a boundary with Mepal Parish. To the south and west of Mepal is the Parish of Sutton. There is a current Sutton Neighbourhood Plan that was 'made' in 2019. At the time work started on the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan (2019), three areas of what are now in Mepal Parish were actually in the Parish of Sutton so are actually legally still covered by the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan (2019). They will continue to be covered by the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan until the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan is 'made'.



- 9.2 The East Cambridgeshire District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2018 moved these three areas from Sutton Parish to Mepal Parish on the 13 July 2018. The three relevant areas are: Lilibet Woods; land between Brick Lane and Sutton Road along with land south of Sutton Road; and land south of Witcham Road/Mepal Road (including Chestnut Farm & White Gate Farm).
- 9.3 Sutton Parish Council are in the early stages of doing a review of their 2019 Neighbourhood Plan. The parish of Witcham lies to the east, they are not currently working on a Neighbourhood Plan. The land to the north of Mepal is the Parish of Manea in the Fenland District. Again, they are not currently working on a Neighbourhood Plan.

10. Designation of Mepal Parish as a Neighbourhood Planning Area

- 10.1 A formal [application](https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/neighbourhood-planning)⁷ was made by Mepal Parish Council as a 'relevant body' under Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) for the designation of a neighbourhood area in order to develop a neighbourhood plan. The area of the Neighbourhood Plan is based upon the parish boundary, which was seen as appropriate as this area is recognised as the distinct community of Mepal. The request was that the Parish

⁷ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/neighbourhood-planning>

be recognised as a Neighbourhood Area for the purpose of producing a neighbourhood plan, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

10.2 The Parish was [designated](#)⁸ a Neighbourhood Area on the 28 February 2022.

11. Consultation with the Local Community

11.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by public participation and consultation on a Mepal Community Led Plan (CLP) that was undertaken between 2017 and 2020. Since the designation of Mepal as a neighbourhood area, various elements of consultation have been undertaken regarding the future planning of the Parish. Details of the consultation undertaken to date are set out in the Consultation Statement that accompanies this Plan. Early informal public participation and consultation was undertaken in September 2022. The preparation process for a Neighbourhood Plan is prescribed in [Regulations](#)⁹ and this involves two statutory periods of public consultation.

Other Planning Documents

12.1 In addition to the Development Plan there are also a number of other planning documents known as [Supplementary Planning Documents](#)¹⁰ which cover the whole of East Cambridgeshire. These include:

- Contaminated Land SPD (2015)
- County Wildlife Sites SPD (2010)
- Developer Contributions (2013)
- Design Guide SPD (2012)
- Renewable Energy (Commercial Scale) SPD (2014)
- Community-Led Development SPD (2016)
- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2016)
- Custom and Self- Build Housing SPD (2020)
- Natural Environment SPD (2020)
- Climate Change SPD (2021)

12.2 The Parish of Mepal lies on the edge of East Cambridgeshire District so the boundary abuts the neighbouring Fenland District. There is no obligation for the Neighbourhood Plan to be in general conformity to the Fenland Local Plan, it is however appropriate to consider whether there are any cross-boundary issues that need to be taken into account. The Fenland Local Plan was adopted on 8 May 2014 and covers the period to 2031. Fenland have started a Local Plan Review and the draft version of the emerging Local Plan underwent consultation ending in October 2022. The Fenland Local Plan does not raise any cross-boundary issues.

12.3 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals & Waste Local Plan includes some notations within the Parish of Mepal, including Mineral Safeguarding Area for Sand and Gravel and Mineral Development Areas. These are to the north of the village itself. Minerals and Waste planning matters are known as ‘excluded matters’ and cannot be dealt with in a Neighbourhood Plan, however, regard has been had to the Minerals & Waste Local Plan in developing the Neighbourhood Plan.

⁸ <https://www.eastcamb.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Mepal%20NA%20Map%20A4%20prt.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents/made>

¹⁰ <https://www.eastcamb.gov.uk/local-development-framework/supplementary-planning-documents>

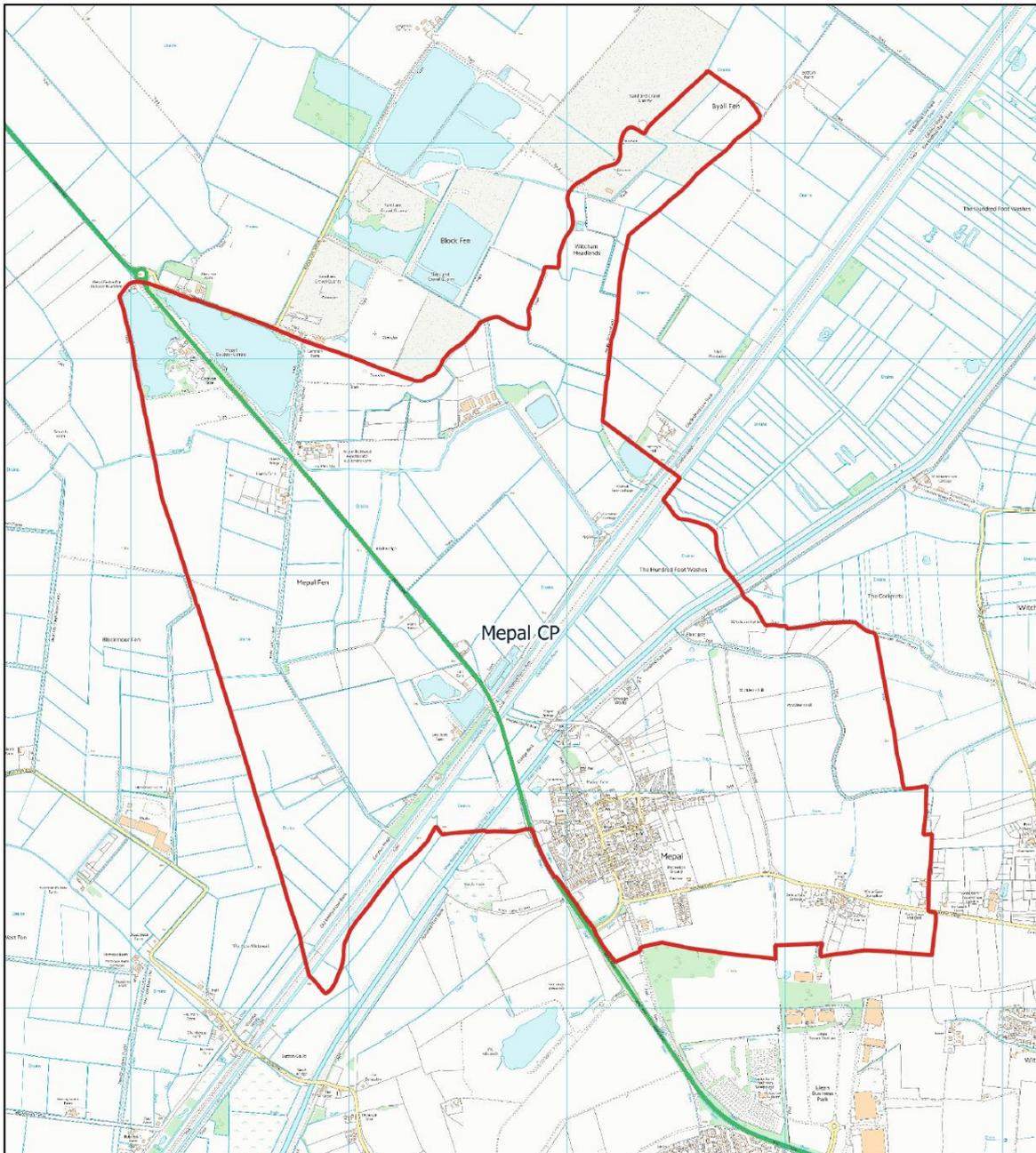
Mepal

- 13.1 Mepal is a small, rural village on the west border of the district of East Cambridgeshire. It is just six miles from the beautiful Cathedral city of Ely. The 2011 population in the Census was 982, the mid-2020 population projection by the ONS was 953.
- 13.2 Mepal lies on the western edge of the Isle of Ely on what was once the shoreline between the fen and higher ground. The landscape we see today is largely the creation of rivers cut in the 17th century to drain the fen, but the village was here long before this. The name suggests a Saxon settlement, but the Manor is not mentioned until the reign of King John (1199-1216).
- 13.3 The busy A142 speeds traffic towards Ely, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Peterborough. At Mepal it may have been a 17th century military road and is marked on some maps as Ireton's Way. Today it bypasses the village, sweeping through the site of a war time airfield and carried over the rivers and washes by a modern viaduct (1984). Ferry Cottage reminds us of how this crossing was made at times of flood before the first viaduct was built in 1930. The washes have been famous for skating and wildfowling but are now best known as a site of international importance for bird life.
- 13.4 The tiny 13th century Church of St. Mary is separated from the village by the Manor House, Manor Farm and a field where earthworks indicate former buildings. Behind the Church a copse of elm trees has survived when other elms along Sutton Road and on the Widdens were lost in the 1970s. Near the cemetery the 'ridge and furrow' pattern of medieval fields can still be seen.
- 13.5 Many of the larger houses in the village were farmhouses and have a plain, honest character. The picturesque Round House was never a toll but there was one, and a Toll Farm, on the Chatteris side of the rivers. Ash Cottage (School Lane) and Pond Farm (High Street) are both timber framed late 17th/early 18th century buildings but most of the old houses are of dark gault or cream Cambridgeshire brick. A barn behind 17 Bridge Road has the date '1756' picked out in coloured brickwork and a door that once linked the yard to trade on the river. Sir Clement Freud lived in the Cross Keys (High Street) when he was MP for the Isle of Ely (1973-1987). Fortrey Hall out on the fen has links with the great 17th century drainage scheme and its history is recorded on a memorial in the Church. Sadly, only part of the original house remains. The peat land here is some of the richest in the country. It has been drained in turn by windmills, steam, diesel and electric power. Glynn's engine house (1840) still stands on Engine Bank. Further out on the fen is a band of gravel and evidence of prehistoric barrows have been found.
- 13.6 It is perhaps this setting between the fen, rivers and the higher land of the old island that has had as much influence on the character of the village as have historic events and social change. Mepal remains a unique example of a small fenland community.



The Neighbourhood Plan Area

14.1 The plan below identifies the designated Neighbourhood Area:



Mepal Neighbourhood Area

Key

 Mepal Neighbourhood Area

Date: 25 February 2022
Scale: 1:25,000



East Cambridgeshire
District Council



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Map 1 - The Mepal Designated Neighbourhood Plan Area

Vision

15.1 The following vision has been developed for the Neighbourhood Plan:

To provide a planning framework and policies that will facilitate sustainable growth whilst protecting the distinctive character and identity of Mepal as a small, rural village on the fen.

Objectives

15.2 The following objectives have been set out for the Neighbourhood Plan:

(A) Promote sustainable development

- Ensure that new development is of high-quality design, is built to a high sustainability standard and contributes positively to the existing built form of Mepal
- Contribute towards climate change mitigation

(B) Conserve and enhance the natural environment of Mepal

- Conserve and enhance the environment of the village and the wider parish countryside including protecting the Old and New Bedford River corridor; local green spaces; improved landscaping; access to open spaces; green corridors; biodiversity enhancement; and the encouragement of green infrastructure and initiatives

(C) Protect and develop the community of Mepal

- Protect and preserve important community assets including its local services and facilities by encouraging the retention and growth of community facilities
- Continue to improve the facilities on offer to support the local community
- Ensure that highway and pedestrian safety is maintained and improved

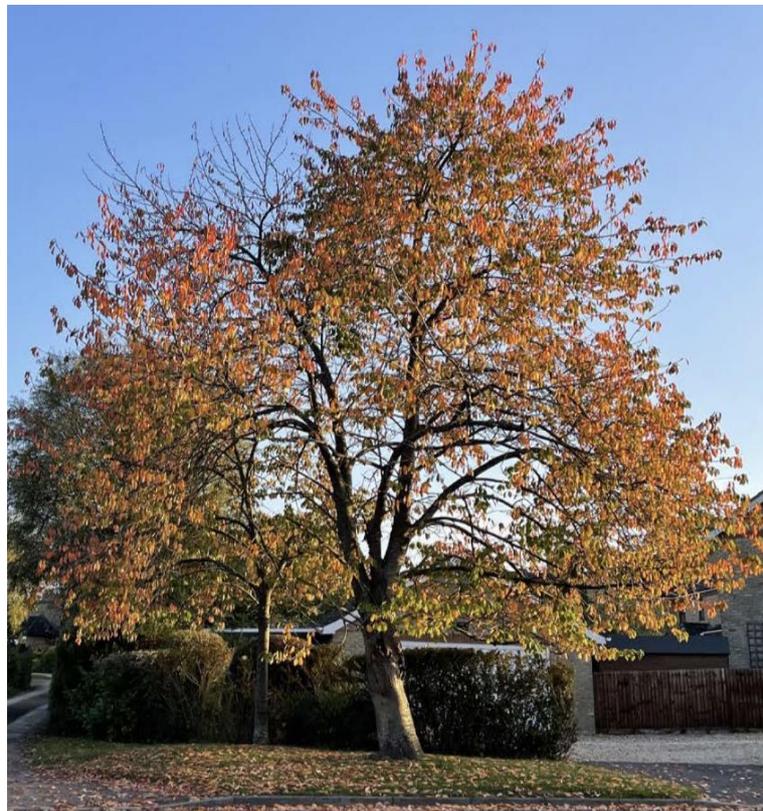
(D) Protect and enhance the built environment of Mepal

- Enhance the character and appearance of the village including enhancing the historic character arising from the heritage assets present and their settings
- Ensure that new development respects or enhances the distinctive character and appearance of the area in which it is sited
- Work with East Cambridgeshire to promote the comprehensive regeneration of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre site to enhance the northern gateway into Mepal and East Cambridgeshire

Policy Delivery of Objectives

15.3 The following table demonstrates how the policies set out in the Neighbourhood Plan meet the objectives contained within the previous chapter. The policies that have been developed seek to address at least one of the objectives:

	Objective A	Objective B	Objective C	Objective D
Sustainable Development				
Policy 1 - Settlement Boundary (Update to Development Envelope)	✓	✓		✓
Policy 2 - Community Assets		✓	✓	✓
Policy 3 - Allotments	✓	✓	✓	
Policy 4 - Highway Impact	✓		✓	✓
Policy 5 - Climate Change Mitigation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Natural and Built Environment				
Policy 6 - Non-Designated Heritage Assets	✓		✓	✓
Policy 7 - Views and Vistas	✓	✓		✓
Policy 8 - Boundary Treatment, Hedgerows, Trees and Public Realm	✓	✓	✓	✓
Policy 9 - Local Green Space	✓	✓	✓	✓



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Sustainable Development



Sustainable Development

16. Profile of Mepal

16.1 Mepal is a small, rural village on the west border of the district of East Cambridgeshire. It is just six miles from the beautiful Cathedral city of Ely to the south-east. Mepal also lies around 4 miles from the town of Chatteris in the neighbouring district of Fenland to the north. Mepal lies on the western edge of the Isle of Ely on what was once the shoreline between the fen and higher ground. The landscape present today is largely the creation of rivers cut in the 17th century to drain the fen, but the village was here long before this.

16.2 Mepal has a mid-2020 population projection by the ONS of 953. The village benefits from a number of local services and facilities including the Mepal & Witcham Primary School; Post Office & Shop; Village Hall; Recreation Ground including Community Pavilion & Play Area; and Three Pickerels Pub. Much of Mepal Parish is agricultural in character, the river corridors of the New Bedford River, Old Bedford River and River Delph bisect the Parish. 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.

16.3 The northern half of the Parish contains a number of water bodies that are in restored mineral workings; it also includes some active mineral workings. Adjacent to one of these is the derelict site of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre. This is the site for the construction of a crematorium and associated service and administration building, function building, memorial garden, natural burial areas, pet cemetery, car parking, new vehicular access from the A142 north of the site and landscaping; that was approved in October 2022. Outside of the Parish but immediately adjacent is the Pretoria Energy biomass plant.

16.4 The larger village of Sutton lies approximately 1m to the south, it includes the Elean Business Park on part of the former RAF Mepal airfield that lies between Sutton and Mepal. In this area is also the EPR Ely biomass power station. Sutton provides additional local convenience shopping facilities and a local pharmacy. Sutton is also home to Priors Field GP Surgery which is part of the Fenland Group Practice. The nearest dentist, The Hollies Dental Practice is in Chatteris. The nearest secondary school provision is in Chatteris and Ely.



17. Statutory Designations

17.1 Mepal Parish contains a number of statutory designations. The river corridors of the New Bedford River, Old Bedford River and River Delph that bisect the Parish is part of the extensive Ouse Washes. The Ouse Washes is a Special Protection Area, a Special Area of Conservation, a Ramsar Site and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

17.2 The Ouse Washes are part of the system for controlling the flow of the Great Ouse when water levels in the river are high. In normal conditions, the waters of the Great Ouse run

through the New Bedford River (or Hundred Foot Drain) to join the tidal stretch of the river at Welmore Lake Sluice, where another automatic system controls outflow. High water levels open the automatic sluice at Earith, thereby releasing water to the Old Bedford River, which eventually overflows onto the washland between the Bedford rivers, with the Welmore automatic sluice controlling outflow. When levels drop, the washes drain back into the Old Bedford River. The Ouse Washes are an internationally important wetland designation due to its importance for wildfowl.

- 17.3 Mepal Parish contains a Scheduled Monument (Bowl barrow 250m ESE of Common Farm: part of a dispersed round barrow cemetery in Block Fen). Mepal also contains a Grade II* Listed Building (Church of St Mary) and eight Grade II Listed Buildings.

18. Strategic Planning Framework

- 18.1 The adopted strategic policies for Mepal are contained in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. This forms the strategic planning framework; one of the requirements of a Neighbourhood Plan is that they should be in line with the 'strategic policies' of the adopted development plan for the local area. Paragraph 29 of the NPPF states: *“Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.”*
- 18.2 In the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, in relation to Mepal it states the following ‘Village Vision’:

Housing

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 GROWTH 2.

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 GROWTH 2 and other Local Plan policies as appropriate.

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 EMP 1).

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 EMP 2, EMP 3 and EMP 4.



Infrastructure and community facilities

Residents in Mepal have indicated a desire for the need for improvements to infrastructure and facilities in the village.”

18.3 Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Local Plan on the issue of Neighbourhood Planning states: “*The District Council recognises the importance of community-led initiatives, and has also included a policy in this Local Plan which supports ‘community-led development’ on the edge of villages. This provides an alternative to the production of a Neighbourhood Plan, and means the Plan is flexible enough to help meet community needs as they arise without the need to carry out a review. Further details are set out in Policy GROWTH 6*”.

18.4 Policy GROWTH 2: Locational strategy of the Local Plan indicates that: “More limited development will take place in villages which have a defined development envelope, thereby helping to support local services, shops and community needs.” Policy GROWTH 4: Delivery of growth in the Local Plan does not allocate any land in Mepal for any housing, employment or other use.



18.5 The Submission version of the Single-Issue Review Local Plan (SIR) does not alter the plan period but does revise the overall housing requirement for East Cambridgeshire. The SIR does not propose to provide any further allocations in the Local Plan. This is because the volume of existing housing site ‘commitments’ (such as sites with planning permissions and other sites which are allocated for development via the 2015 Local Plan or more recent Neighbourhood Plans) exceed the quantum of the new housing requirement figure arising from the SIR. Accordingly, the approach towards Mepal in the SIR does not differ to the current Local Plan.

19. Definition of ‘Settlement Boundary’ (Update to Development Envelope)

19.1 East Cambridgeshire has planned strategic growth across the towns and larger villages, however, there could be pressure for planning applications to come forward for residential development on greenfield sites which are not allocated in other locations such as Mepal. Such speculative development has the potential to undermine the strategic policies of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

19.2 The Local Plan does not specify any specific housing requirement for Mepal. There is an overall allowance for rural windfall development to come forward across all the settlements in East Cambridgeshire that are not specified in Table 3.2 - Summary of estimated housing supply 2011-31 in the Local Plan.

19.3 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan does identify a ‘development envelope’ for Mepal. Policy GROWTH 2: Locational strategy of the Local Plan indicates that within the defined development envelopes housing, employment and other development to meet local needs will normally be permitted. The Policy goes on to indicate that outside defined development envelopes, development will be strictly controlled, having regard to the need to protect the countryside and the setting of towns and villages. The Policy then lists 19 main categories of proposals that may be permitted as an exception in the countryside outside development envelopes.

19.4 Development in Mepal is therefore envisaged to be what is known as windfall development, which is housing (or other development) coming forward on sites not specifically allocated for housing (or other development).

19.5 The ‘development envelope’ for Mepal¹¹ in the Local Plan is now dated and notably planning permissions have been granted along Bridge Road outside of the development envelope. As such an updated development envelope would reflect the current position. The Single-Issue Review Local Plan does not propose to update the development envelope; therefore, it is appropriate for the Mepal Neighbourhood Plan to look to update the development envelope. For clarity the Neighbourhood Plan will call this the ‘Settlement Boundary’.



19.6 The settlement boundary of Mepal serves a specific purpose in that it is intended to direct the growth of the village and enable development to take place in a coherent manner, maintaining the structure and form of the existing settlement geography as the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan envisages. In addition, the boundary will protect the landscape setting of the villages.

19.7 The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan explains how the development envelopes were drawn up. Regard has been had to this approach in drawing the settlement boundary in this Neighbourhood Plan in order to define the settlement and the countryside for planning purposes. Details of the criteria used to define the settlement boundary in this Neighbourhood Plan is set out in the Settlement Boundary Methodology document.

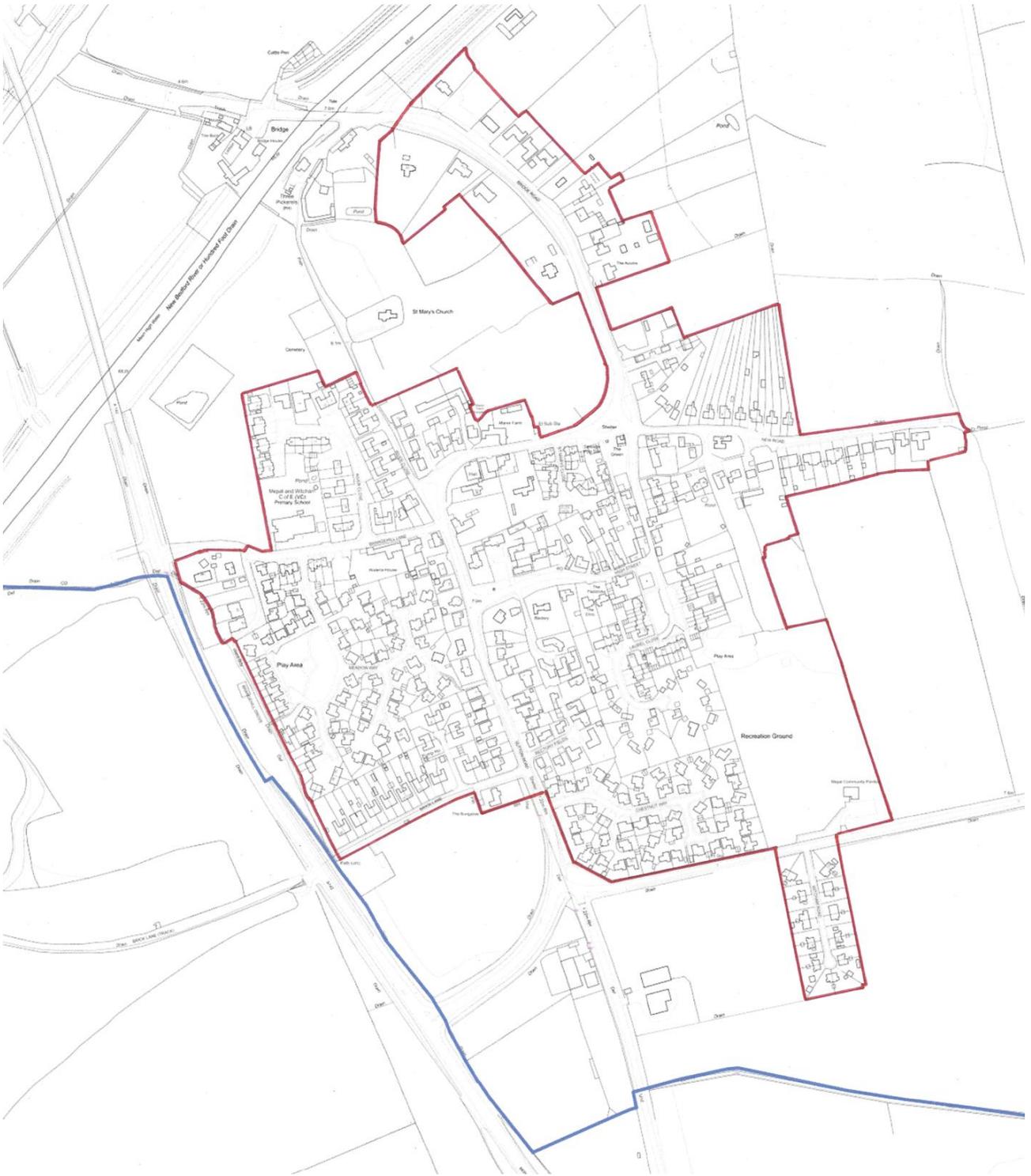
Policy 1 - Settlement Boundary (Update to Development Envelope)

The settlement boundary (update to development envelope) of Mepal is defined on Map 2. It serves the purpose of directing the growth of the settlement and protecting the countryside from encroachment.

Within the settlement boundary proposals will be supported where development would not adversely affect the established character and appearance of the existing settlement; would not harm the undeveloped nature of the surrounding rural areas; and would respect the landscape setting of the village. Factors to be considered will include how the proposal reflects the existing built form, layout and structure of the surrounding area; the contribution of spaces between buildings; and the design and visual appearance of buildings in the surrounding area.

The land outside of the settlement boundary is considered as countryside. Proposals outside the settlement boundary will only be supported for development where it meets the requirements of other policies in the Development Plan or National Planning Policy; such as that which requires a countryside location, agriculture, horticulture or forestry; rural exceptions housing; or are related to community, leisure or recreation. In particular community, leisure or recreation proposals designed to meet the needs of local residents will be supported.

¹¹ Paragraphs 3.3.5 and 3.3.6 of the Local Plan sets out how the ‘development envelopes’ were devised



Map 2 - Settlement Boundary © Crown Copyright

 Settlement Boundary

 Plan Area Boundary

20. Community Assets

20.1 Community Assets is a generic term used for community infrastructure, services and facilities. This includes village halls, church halls, community centres and multi-use facilities. These facilities typically provide opportunities for community uses such as events, sports and activities. Community facilities can also provide space for arts or cultural activities and serve wider purposes such as providing affordable space for events or small businesses to hire. In Mepal the provision of community and meeting space available for use includes both the Village Hall and the Community Pavilion. Early consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan demonstrated a mixed picture relating to whether the existing leisure and community facilities were 'good'. Responses did want to see the existing community assets safeguarded.

20.2 The Village Hall is operated by a Charity and is conveniently located close to the heart of the village. The Hall combines attractive period architectural features with smart modern amenities and is ideal for private and public events, meetings and parties of all kinds. During the Covid-19 lockdown a new floor was laid which now permits a greater range of activities. The Village Hall has a main hall and an annex, together with a well-equipped kitchen, foyer with male, female and disabled toilets and baby-change. The premises are licensed for public entertainment with a capacity of 80-100.



20.3 The Community Pavilion opened in July 2007 and provides a picturesque setting on Mepal's beautiful Recreation Ground to meet a multitude of needs. It has a well-stocked kitchen and function room that opens out onto the Recreation Ground.

20.4 Mepal has a large Recreation Ground that is located on the land backing onto Laurel Close, Chestnut way and Witcham Road. With pedestrian access from Laurel Close and vehicular and pedestrian access via Witcham Road, the Mepal Recreation Ground is the ideal space for events and sports, or just a gentle walk around the perimeter. A permanent basketball net is located on a tarmac area near to the Play Park and dog walkers are currently permitted to use the perimeter of the area for dog walking on lead only.



20.5 There are 12 Allotment plots located at the back of the Play Park and bordered by gardens in Laurel Close. Currently all plots are rented out and the Parish Council are operating a waiting list. Due to an ongoing level of demand the Parish Council has been actively exploring options to provide additional land for allotments. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for additional allotments, how the site was chosen is explained in the Settlement Boundary Methodology document. The Mepal Play Park, situated next to the Recreation Ground and accessed via Laurel Close, has a variety of play equipment for children aged 2-12. The Play Park and Allotments are provided and maintained by Mepal Parish Council.

20.6 Other important community assets in Mepal include St Mary's Church; Cemetery; Three Pickerels Pub; Mepal & Witcham Primary School (including the car park opposite); Play Area

on Meadow Way; and the Post Office & Shop. The Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire identified the Post Office & Shop as the most important local service and facility followed by the Pub and the Recreation Ground. Proposals to extend the Shop & Post Office are being pursued.

20.7 Important areas of open space and green infrastructure include the Allotments; the Recreation Ground; Lilibet Woods & Brangehill Drove; and various verges and greens around the village. Important blue infrastructure includes the river corridors of the New Bedford River, Old Bedford River and River Delph bisect the Parish; together with a number of lakes from restored mineral workings that now provide opportunities for recreational fishing. Elsewhere in the Parish is the derelict site of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre that was once a community asset. This is the site for the proposed construction of a crematorium which has been granted planning permission. This will result in this site returning to a community use. Open space can take many forms including parks, village greens, play areas, sports pitches, allotments, semi-natural areas and substantial private gardens. Many provide important recreational and sporting facilities or are important for biodiversity. The Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire identified the Recreation Ground and the footpaths as being the most used green spaces.



20.8 Local groups in the village include Mepal Makers is a community project for people wanting to make things, recycle, upcycle or repair things, or just borrow a tool they don't have. There is also a Friendship Club; Youth Club; and Camera Club operating in the village.

20.9 Policy COM 3: Retaining community facilities and Policy COM 4: New community facilities of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan looks to support new community facilities and to safeguard against their loss. The supporting text to Policy COM3 in paragraphs 7.4.3 and 7.4.4 on page 98 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan details the type of evidence necessary to demonstrate how it can be shown that community facilities might be considered to be poorly used or not viable¹². This is equally relevant to the application of this Neighbourhood Plan policy.

¹² In particular paragraph 7.4.3 states: "In the case of commercial community facilities such as shops and pubs, permission may be granted for change of use to residential or other non-community use if the applicant can demonstrate the facility is neither viable nor likely to become viable for that use or an alternative community use. Applicants will need to provide evidence that premises have been marketed locally and nationally for 12 months for the current use or an alternative local commercial or community facility, free of ties and restrictive covenants, at a price agreed with the Council following an independent professional valuation - and that there has been no interest in continued use as a community facility. Applicants should also provide evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to preserve the facility including all diversification options." Then paragraph 7.4.4 states: "In the case of non-commercial community facilities such as community halls, open spaces and healthcare facilities, where market testing may not be applicable, permission involving loss may be granted if the applicant can demonstrate there is no community need for the facility, and that the site is not needed for an alternative community facility. The local community should also be consulted regarding the relative importance of the facility in terms of its social role, and the need for other community facilities. This should take the form of proper documented evidence and should be agreed with the Council prior to the submission of a formal application for alternative development. In the case of open space and recreational facilities (including parks, village greens, other amenity areas, allotments, play areas, playing fields), the Council will also require applicants to demonstrate that the land affected does not make an important contribution to biodiversity, the landscape and visual qualities of the area. Where proposals result in the loss of open space provision, the relevant community and statutory stakeholders (including Sport England) will need to be consulted."

20.10 Policy COM 3 also looks to protect against the loss of open space, outdoor recreation facilities and allotments that provide amenity value. Mepal has a number of highly valuable community assets which are vital to be retained in order to help protect the distinct identity of the village.

20.11 Another mechanism to protect and keep valued buildings or land in use for the community is the Community Right to Bid Scheme. It gives local community groups the opportunity to nominate buildings or other land to be included on the East Cambridgeshire Council's [list](#)¹³ of Assets of Community Value. An asset should contribute to the community's social well-being or social interests. Once on the register, if an asset comes up for sale or lease, a community group has a period of time in which they can register their interest as a potential bidder, delaying a sale on the open market. Currently Mepal has no recorded Assets of Community Value.



Policy 2 - Community Assets

Development proposals that result in the improvement/enhancement of existing community assets including the village hall; community pavilion; play areas; recreation/sports facilities; allotments; primary school; church or cemetery; the pub; or Post Office & store will be supported subject to their compliance with other development plan policies.

Proposals that diversify the use of the Recreation Ground and Community Pavilion for the benefit of the community including through income generation will be particularly supported

Development proposals that result in the provision of new community assets both within and outside of but adjacent to the settlement boundary will be supported subject to their compliance with other development plan policies; provided the scale is commensurate with size of facility to meet the needs of the village.

Proposals that would result in the loss of the following community assets shown on Map 3 will be resisted unless it can be shown¹⁴ that they are poorly used, not viable or adequate replacement provision is made elsewhere in Mepal which is an equivalent service or community facility located where it is equally or more accessible to the existing and planned new community it is intended to serve:

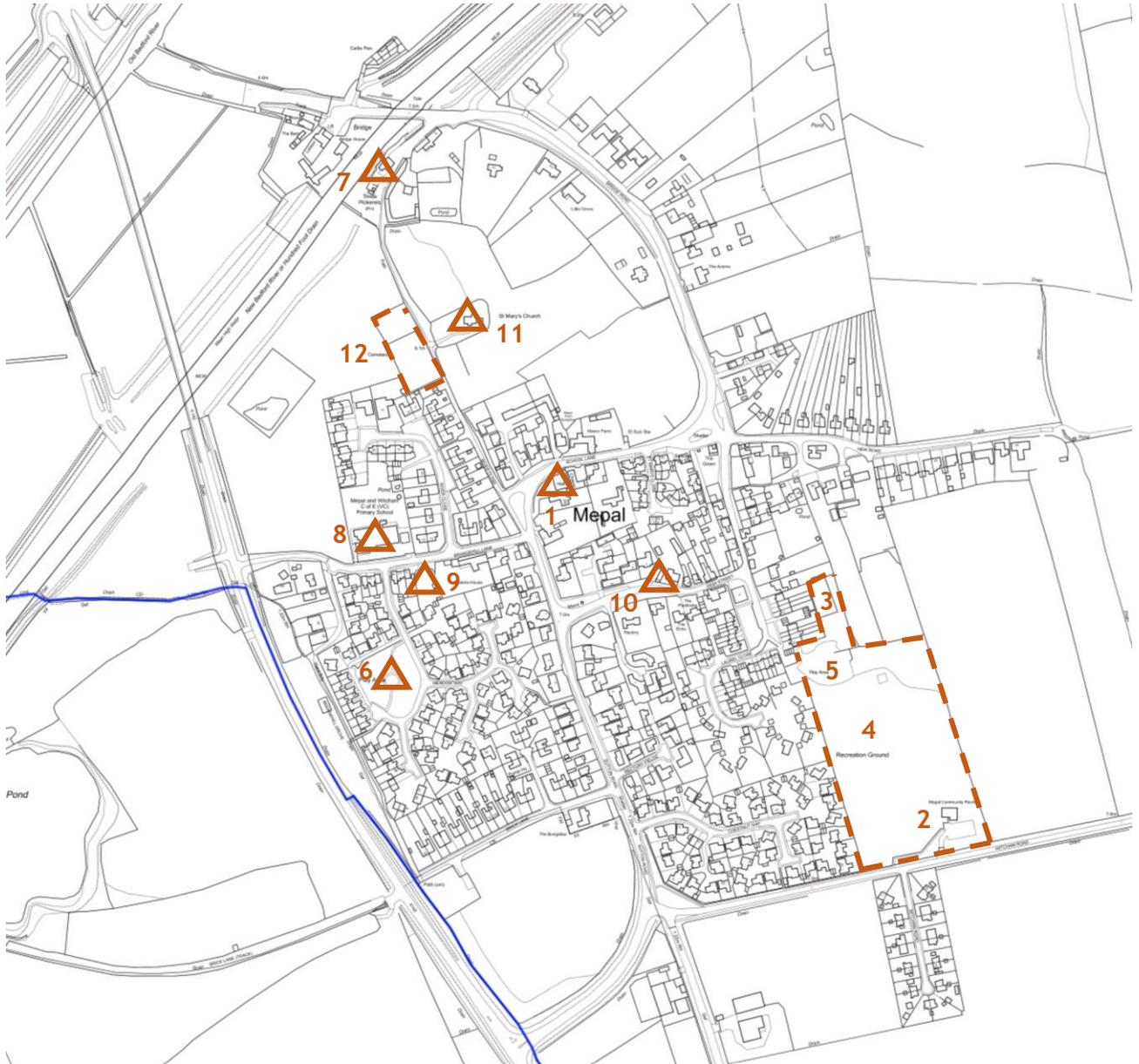
- Village Hall (1)
- Community Pavilion (2)
- Allotments (3)
- Recreation Ground (4)
- Mepal Play Park (5)
- Play Area on Meadow Way (6)
- Three Pickerels Public House (7)
- Mepal & Witcham Primary School (including Car Park) (8 & 9)
- Post Office & Shop (10)
- Church of St Mary & Cemetery (11 & 12)

¹³ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/community/list-assets>

¹⁴ See paragraph 20.9 and footnote 12

The Parish Council will work with East Cambridgeshire to promote the comprehensive regeneration of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre site to enhance the northern gateway into Mepal and East Cambridgeshire and continue the contribution the site makes to the community.

(Note the numbers in the bullets in the policy are reference numbers on the map below)



Map 3 - Community Assets © Crown Copyright

  Main Community Facilities  Plan Area Boundary

Policy 3 - Allotments

Land south of St Mary's Church shown on Map 4 is allocated for community provision in the form of new allotments and proposals to create new allotments will be supported. Proposals to use this land for any alternative use will not be permitted. Land East of Laurel Close which provides the existing allotments will be retained for ongoing community use.



Map 4 - Land Allocated for Allotments © Crown Copyright

- Proposed and Existing Allotments
- Plan Area Boundary

21. Highway Impact

21.1 Policy COM 8: Parking provision of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan sets out parking standards to ensure that appropriate car parking and cycle parking provision is secured in new developments. In Mepal a number of the community assets such as the Post Office & Shop and the Three Pickerels Public House have limited, or no off-street car parking provision and they already rely upon on-street car parking provision. Where those important community assets want to expand their provision or diversify their offering a flexible approach towards parking provision should be taken dependent upon the particular circumstances. Policy COM 8 does not require the provision of electric vehicle charging points, as part of a move to low-carbon vehicle use the provision of electric vehicle charging points is important.

21.2 Policy COM 7: Transport impact of the Local Plan addresses issues relating to overall transport impact, including the provision of safe access.

21.3 The Community Pavilion and Recreation Ground share a vehicular access which has limited visibility, the highway verge here is not deep enough to provide the standard visibility splay set-back distance of 2.4m. The boundary to the Recreation Ground encompasses mature trees and hedging and to improve visibility a significant amount of vegetation would need to be removed. This would have a significantly harmful impact on the streetscene and would harm biodiversity. Therefore, other options to improve visibility of the access within the highway corridor itself, perhaps involving traffic calming measures need to be explored to improve highway safety on the Witcham Road gateway into the village.



Policy 4 - Highway Impact

Development proposals shall provide safe and convenient access to the highway network. Proposals for residential development will only be supported for new development that incorporates adequate on-site provision for car parking and secure cycle parking in accordance with the parking standards in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan. In addition, all new residential development shall include at least one electric vehicle charging point. The charging point shall be sited to be accessible for use by vehicles parked within any garage and those parked on a driveway or defined parking area.

Proposals will only be supported for new development that incorporates adequate on-site provision for the storage of refuse collection bins. Refuse collection storage should be screened and easily accessible to the collection point.

In considering development proposals for the expansion, alteration or diversification of community assets in Mepal that rely upon existing on-street parking provision a flexible approach towards parking provision should be taken dependent upon the particular circumstances. A balanced approach considering any adverse impacts arising from additional on-street parking demand and the economic and social benefits arising from the proposal shall be taken.

The Parish Council will work proactively with Cambridgeshire County Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council to explore and develop options to improve visibility of the access to the Mepal Community Pavilion and Recreation Ground. These options are likely to involve works

within the highway corridor itself, perhaps involving traffic calming measures to improve highway safety on the Witcham Road gateway into the village.

22. Climate Change Mitigation

22.1 National policy aims to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels for heating and transport applications. In the local area, only limited progress has been achieved employing practical steps such as setting aside areas for electric vehicle charging points and solar panel systems. For the immediate future, every encouragement should be given to speed the adoption of low-carbon and energy efficient processes.



22.2 Mitigating and adapting to the effect of climate change will contribute to sustainable development in terms of meeting environmental objectives. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF calls for progression towards a low carbon economy by the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which is achievable, for example, through the use of renewable energy for transport (NPPF Section 9) and home heating. In practical terms these measures can also be achieved by progression towards zero carbon green hydrogen technologies.

22.3 The demand for electric vehicle charging points is predicted to increase rapidly in the years ahead. To prevent hazards to pedestrians, charging points and their associated cables need to be sited away from roads and footways or public footpaths whenever possible. NPPF Section 9 refers to parking design requirements as part of sustainable transport. These include convenience, safety, security, compliance with national design codes, and the provision of charging points for plug-in and ultra-low emission vehicles.

Policy 5 - Climate Change Mitigation

To support climate change mitigation proposals for new development which encourage and include the use of renewable energy generation and low-carbon modes of transport will be supported.

Where planning permission is required, proposals for installing renewable or low-carbon energy generation on existing premises will be supported.

Proposals for small scale community renewable energy generation will be supported where the following criteria are met:

- They provide energy to one or more local community facilities;
- They respect the rural and/or settlement character of the locality;
- They will not adversely affect biodiversity;
- Residential amenity is protected.

Proposals to install electric vehicle charging points, where they need planning permission, in off-street areas used for parking will be supported.

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan (Draft)

Proposals of parties, including charging point providers, Mepal Parish Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to develop on-street electric vehicle charging infrastructure including through use of existing street furniture will be supported.



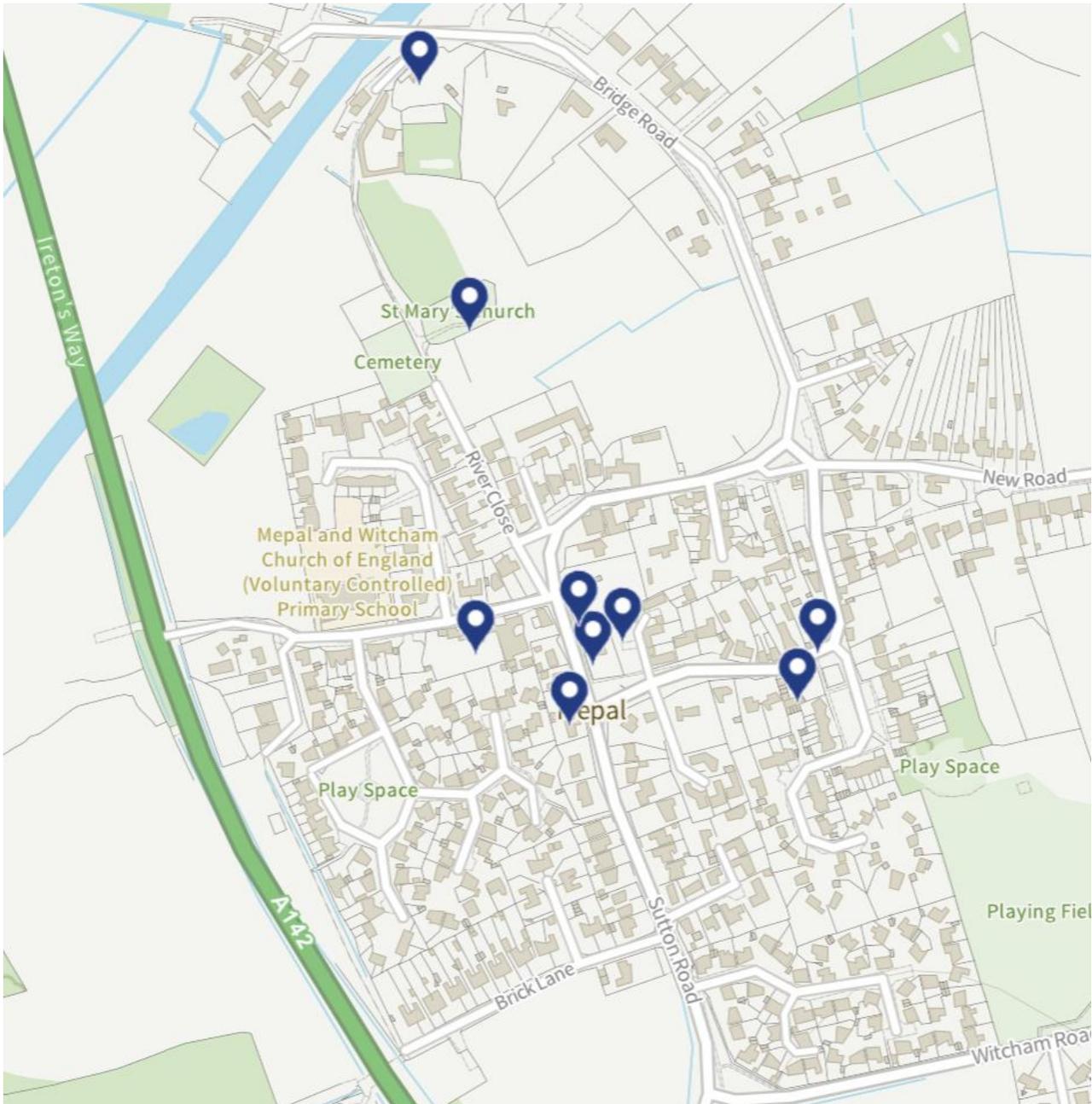
Natural and Built Environment



23. Heritage Assets

23.1 Heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, landscapes and townscapes which have historic or architectural significance; collectively they help make the historic environment. The protection of individual heritage assets is important not only to safeguard the significance of the asset itself but also to protect the wider historic environment.

23.2 In terms of designated heritage assets, Mepal Parish contains a Scheduled Monument, the Parish also contains a Grade II* Listed Building and eight Grade II Listed Buildings as follows:



Map 5 - Listed Buildings © Historic England

Scheduled Monument

- Bowl barrow 250m ESE of Common Farm: part of a dispersed round barrow cemetery in Block Fen

Grade 1

None

Grade II*

- Church of St Mary

Grade II

- Mepal House, 1 High Street
- 3 High Street
- 8 High Street
- 15 High Street
- The Round House, 1 School Lane
- Ash Cottage, 2 School Lane
- Grove House, Bridge Road
- Wisteria House, Brangehill Lane

23.3 In terms of other items of heritage interest, Mepal has two entries on the East Cambridgeshire War Memorials [List](#)¹⁵:

- Small rose garden containing low circular memorial in the centre. Etched squadron badge of 75 (New Zealand) Squadron RAF on top of memorial
- Mepal Cross on four stepped base

23.4 In terms of non-designated heritage assets, the East Cambridgeshire [Buildings of Local Interest Register](#)¹⁶ 2017 has been produced under Policy ENV13 of the Local Plan. It doesn't include any buildings in Mepal, the criteria it uses to define non-designated heritage assets as 'Buildings of Local Interest' is set out below.

CRITERIA FOR LOCAL LIST

Age & Condition

The older a building or structure the more likely it is to be of historical significance;

- b) Does it survive in anything like its original form or condition? This would exclude buildings that have been subject to unsympathetic extensions and alterations, including the installation of UPVC windows and doors.

A5	Post 1945	Buildings or structures of exceptional quality and of significant landmark value
A4	1939-1945	Rare example of surviving war time building or structure
A3	1914-1939	Buildings or structures that are substantially complete and unaltered and a good example of the style
A2	1840-1914	Buildings or structures affected by only minor alterations that could be easily reversed
A1	Pre 1840	Buildings or structures where form is clearly identifiable and there is the potential to restore

Historical Association

Buildings or structures with well documented associations with locally important people or events that also retain some quality in their physical fabric.

- B1** Is it associated with any important historical figure or family?
B2 Is it a rare or fine example of a building or structure that illustrates the local social, economic or industrial history?
B3 Is it associated with an important local historic event?

Architectural Interest

Consideration will be given to a building or structure that is of local architectural value and includes design qualities typical of the local area.

- C1** Is it a good example of a local vernacular?
C2 Is it related by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings and contributes positively to their setting?
C3 Is it a rare or pioneering example of a building type or structure?
C4 Was it built by a famous local or national architect?
C5 Is it a particularly good example of an architectural style?

Local Characteristics

Consideration will be given to buildings or structures that contribute to local identity and distinctiveness.

- D1** Is it a structure that exhibits distinctive characteristics relative to the area (i.e. post box, milestones, street furniture, etc)?
D2 Is it a structure that is a landmark feature that makes a particularly positive contribution to the distinctive character of the place?
D3 Is it a locally important building type, such as a Church, Chapel, School or water feature?

Extract from the East Cambridgeshire Buildings of Local Interest Register

23.5 The historic environment contributes to:

¹⁵ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/conservation/war-memorials-0>

¹⁶ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/conservation/buildings-local-interest>

- a sense of place, by providing local distinctiveness in terms of building styles and materials and providing landmark features;
- the local economy, by attracting visitors to specific heritage assets;
- quality of life, by creating attractive places to live and work including the provision of accessible recreation space and opportunities for community involvement in restoration work; and
- an understanding of the history of the United Kingdom, by offering physical links to the past

23.6 Mepal has a number of architecturally valuable and important old buildings or buildings which are important historically which are not statutorily listed. The Neighbourhood Plan has considered the criteria in the East Cambridgeshire Buildings of Local Interest Register and as a consequence considers that there are a small number of buildings and structures worthy of being identified as non-designated heritage assets. Quite a few buildings identified in the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record have been demolished over the years.



23.7 The village is located within an area of archaeological potential with archaeological remains associated with the former extent of the medieval village of Mepal. The medieval Church of St Mary lies in this area and between the Church and Bridge Road lie earthwork remains of the shrunken village. Limited archaeological work has been carried out in the village, notably to the south of the church and south-west of the earthworks, where medieval features have been investigated which may be part of a moated site.

Policy 6 - Non-Designated Heritage Assets

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the buildings below as ‘Locally Important Buildings’ as non-designated heritage assets (shown on Maps 6a and 6b):

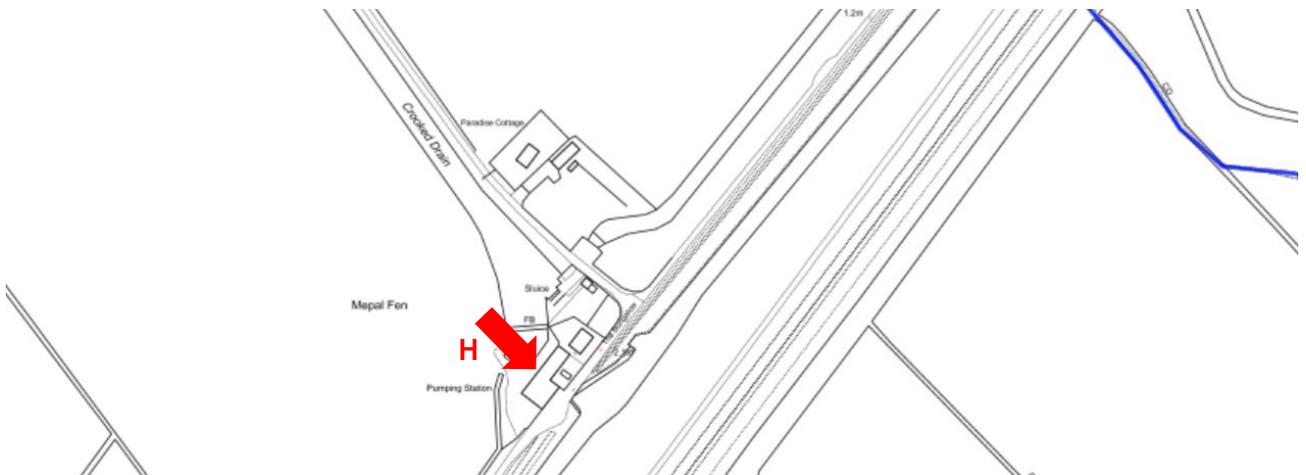
- Mepal Baptist Chapel, School Lane (dated 1846, the attached Hiam Memorial schoolroom dates from 1992) * + (A)
- Manor Farm, School Lane * (B)
- Village Hall (Old School), School Lane * # + (C)
- Mepal Cross War Memorial, High Street * # + (D)
- Rose Garden War Memorial, Laurel Close * # + (E)
- Mepal Bridge (dated 1930) + (F)
- The Old Chapel, New Road (dated 1846) * + (G)
- Mepal (Fortrey’s Hall) Pumping Station, Engine Bank # + (H)

*(Key - * Architectural Interest # Historical Association + Local Characteristics)*

(Note the letters in the bullets in the policy are reference letters on the maps below)



Map 6a - Non-Designated Heritage Assets © Crown Copyright



Map 6b - Non-Designated Heritage Assets © Crown Copyright

 Non-Designated Heritage Assets  Plan Area Boundary

24. Local Distinctiveness, Public Realm and Views & Vistas

- 24.1 All new development should respect the local character of the area, ensuring that the building height, size and choice of external materials complement the existing fabric and do not obscure important views into and out of the settlements in the Parish. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure that any new development or change to buildings should respond to local character and the history and identity of local surroundings. Maintaining local distinctiveness includes ensuring that the form of a vernacular building is respected. This includes architectural detailing and the nature of the locally available construction materials.
- 24.2 A high quality public realm made up of well-designed streets, pavements and other publicly accessible areas, together with the boundary treatments to local properties and front gardens, make a positive contribution to how Mepal looks. A high-quality public realm contributes to a high quality of life which can help to maintain healthy living, prevent anti-social behaviour and encourage high standards of property maintenance.
- 24.3 The potential for extensions to dwellings and other buildings could erode the quality of the built environment where they are not well-designed. The inter-relationship between the public realm and the traditional built form of the village has the potential to be eroded through inappropriate siting of extensions and outbuildings. In most cases it is unlikely that extensions to front elevations or outbuildings set forward of the host property will be acceptable.



- 24.4 There are a number of public views and vistas around the village and the wider Parish that contribute to the sense of place and are worthy of protection. The village gateway along Mepal Road forms an important entrance vista into the village. The verdant and undeveloped character and appearance is of significance to the overall landscape setting of the village.

Policy 7 - Views and Vistas

Proposals should not result in the loss of the following important public views and vistas shown on Map 7:

- Mepal Bridge - Looking North-East along Ouse Washes (K)
- Mepal Bridge - Looking South-West along Ouse Washes (L)
- Ireton's Way Bridge - Looking South-West along Ouse Washes (M)
- River Close (a.k.a Church Lane) - Looking North to the Church of St Mary (N)

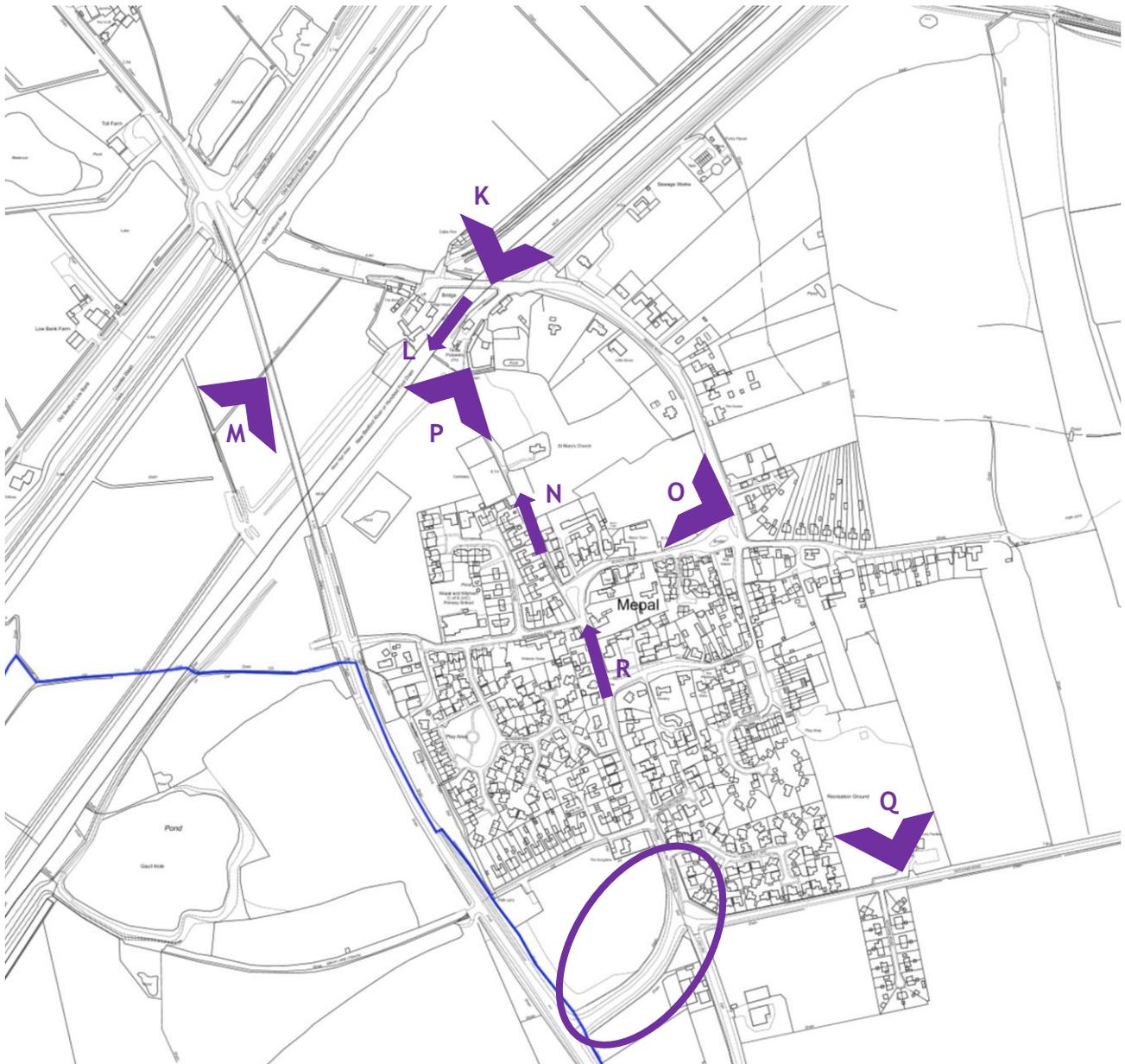
Mepal Neighbourhood Plan (Draft)

- Opposite The Green - Looking North-West to the Church of St Mary (O)
- Three Pickerels Pub - Looking South-West towards Pond (P)
- Recreation Ground - Looking North towards Trees (Q)
- Sutton Road by the Round House - Looking North (R)

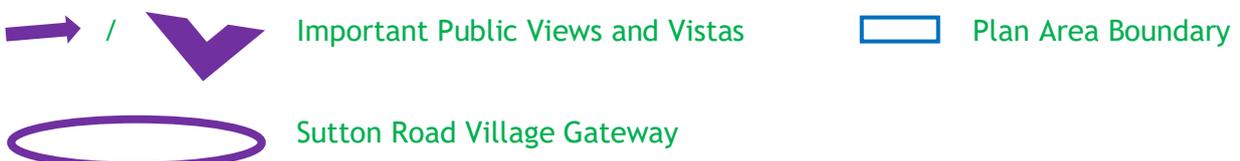
Proposals which actively enhances or promotes the important views and vistas will be supported.

Proposals which harm the verdant and undeveloped character of the Sutton Road village gateway as shown on Map 7 will not be supported.

(Note the letters in the bullets in the policy are reference letters on the maps below)



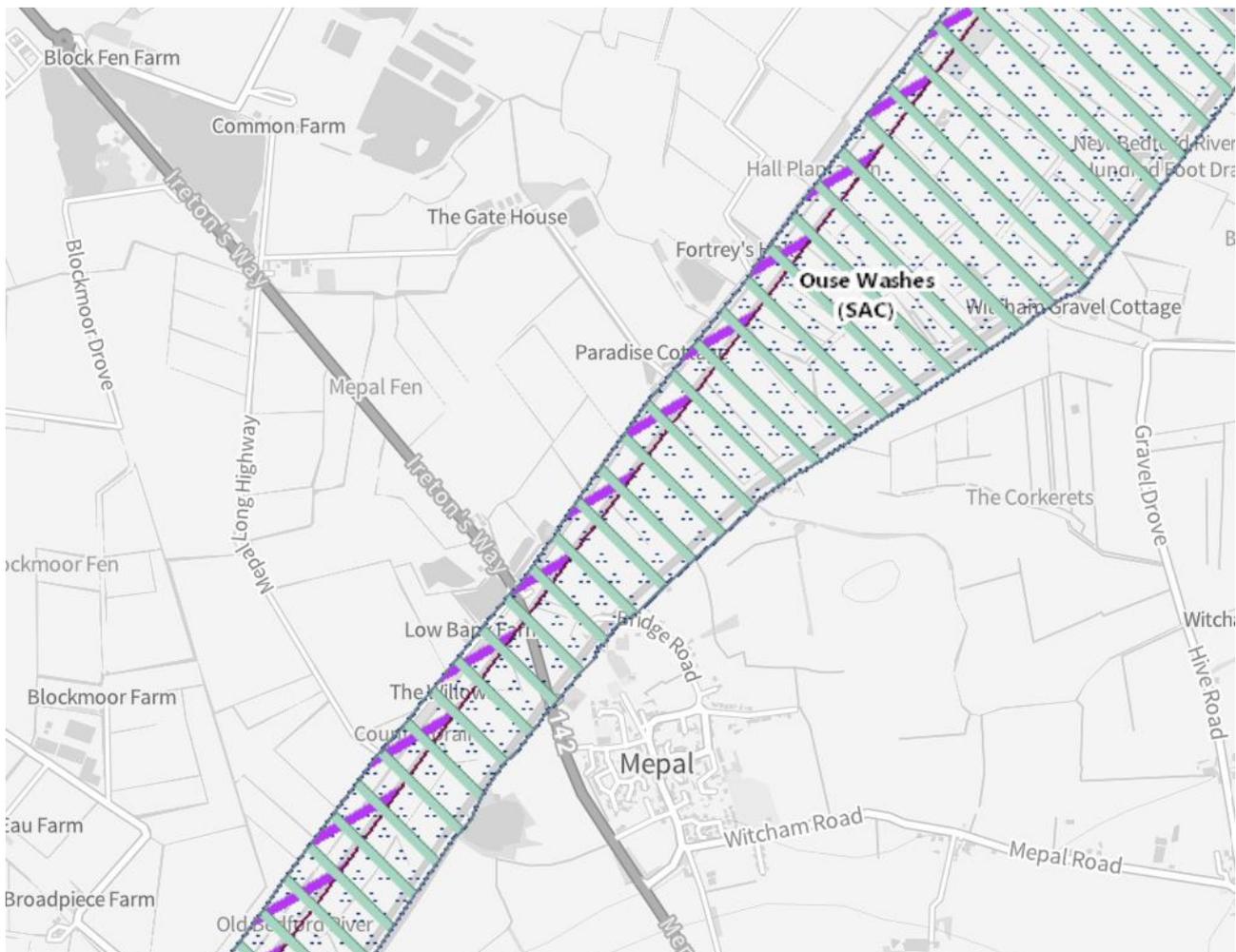
Map 7 - Important Public Views and Vistas © Crown Copyright



25. Natural Environment

25.1 Most of the Parish is rural and contains substantial areas of farmland which contributes significantly to the character of the Parish and the setting of the village.

25.2 There is a need to assess the likelihood of proposals or policies within a Neighbourhood Plan having a significant effect on the ‘National Sites Network’ consisting of areas designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA’s). Consideration of the internationally designated Ramsar sites is also necessary; many Ramsar sites are also SACs or SPAs. In the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the ‘National Sites Network’ of interest are the river corridors of the New Bedford River, Old Bedford River and River Delph that is part of the extensive Ouse Washes. The Ouse Washes is a Special Protection Area, a Special Area of Conservation, a Ramsar Site and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.



Map 8 - National Sites Network © Natural England

25.3 Outside of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the closest other ‘National Sites Network’ are Fenland SAC/Wicken Fen Ramsar lying approximately 15km to the south-east; the Portholme SAC (Huntingdon/Godmanchester) lying approximately 22km to the south-west; the Fenland SAC/Woodwalton Fen Ramsar lying approximately 21km to the west; Nene Washes SAC/SPA/Ramsar lying approximately 22km to the north.

25.4 SACs were previously classified in accordance with EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). Article 3 of this Directive requires the establishment of a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitat types and 788 species identified in Annexes I and II of the Directive. These sites are now designated under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

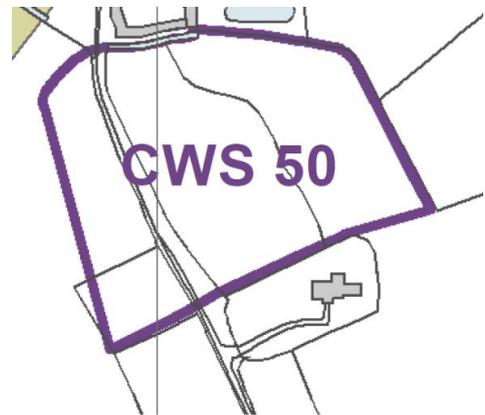
25.5 SPAs were sites first classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC), more commonly known as the Birds Directive. They were classified for rare and vulnerable birds, listed in Annex I to the Birds Directive, and for regularly occurring migratory species. These SPA sites are now designated under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 2010 (as amended).

25.6 Ramsar Sites are designated under the International Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention, Iran 1971 and amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although Ramsar Sites are not protected in law by domestic UK legislation as a matter of policy government has decreed that unless otherwise specified procedures relating to SPAs and SACs will also apply to Ramsar Sites.

25.7 The Habitats Regulation Assessment screening identifies that the Neighbourhood Plan proposals would not individually or cumulatively result in any potential significant effects on any European designated site.

25.8 The Parish contains no National Nature Reserves. The Plan area contains a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the Ouse Washes. The part of the SSSI is recorded as being in unfavourable - no change condition. The woodland to the north of the Church of St Mary is identified in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan as a County Wildlife Site (CWS 50). The Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire demonstrated strong support for wildlife conservation.

25.9 Mepal lies within the Great Ouse Strategic Green Infrastructure Area identified in the Local Plan. Development therefore needs to look at providing opportunities for green corridors that provide biodiversity enhancement across the plan area. Areas of biodiversity enhancement offer the potential to complement the existing Sites of Special Scientific Interest.



26. Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

26.1 As much of the Parish contains substantial areas of farmland there are actually few areas of trees and no large woodlands. There are no ancient woodlands within Mepal. The local landscape does have a character derived from having some Elm within the tree stock present. Field hedgerow and tree planting is therefore important as part of the landscape character. There are some trees and small woods on the entry to the village on the A142 and Sutton Road; around the Recreation Ground, Play Park and Allotments; Laurel Close; north of the Church of St Mary; and around some of the lakes.

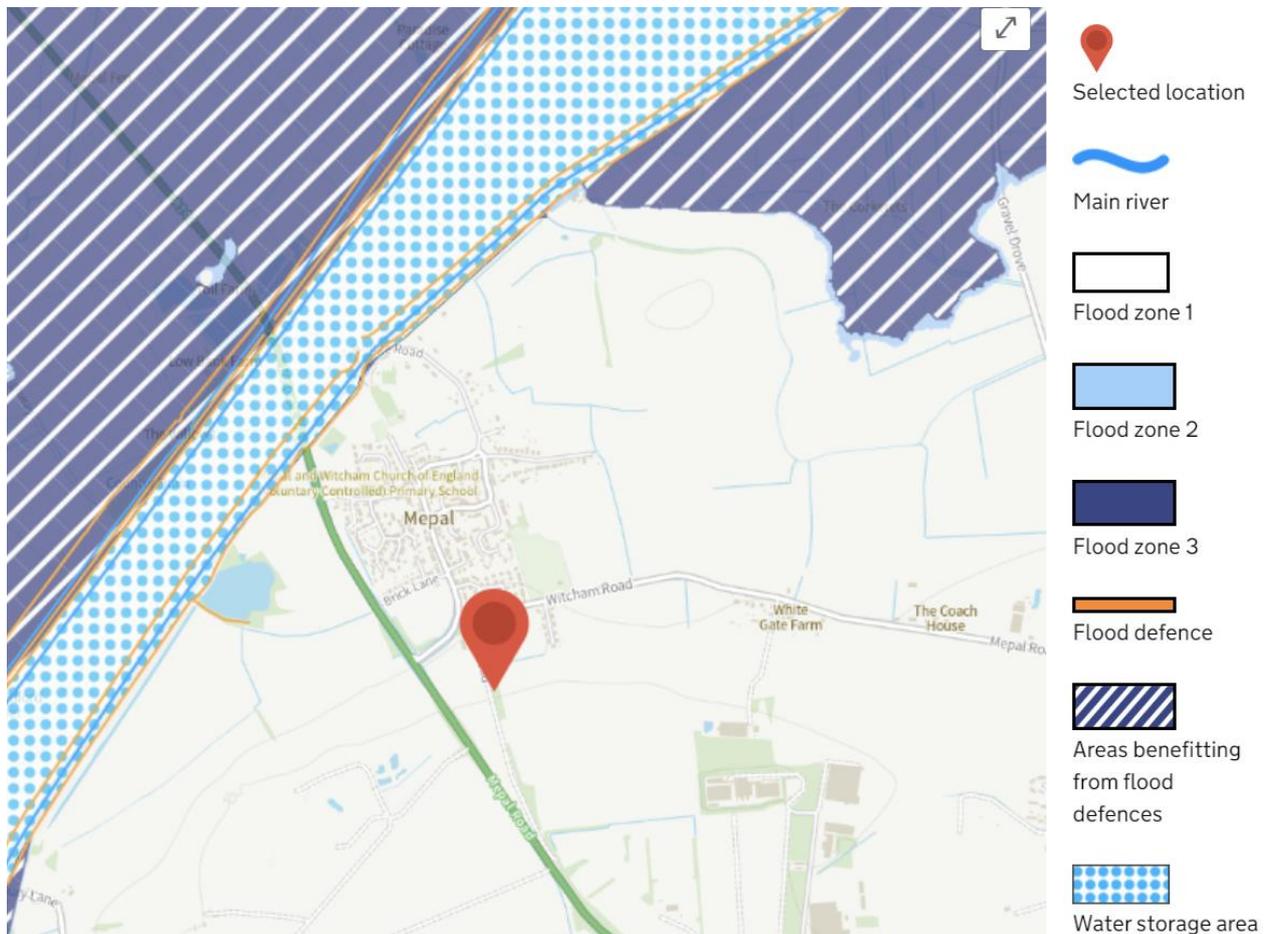
26.2 Lilibet Woods is the narrow piece of land that runs between Brangehill Drive (Footpath/Byway at the back of Meadow way) and the A142. Brangehill Grove and Lilibet Woods are owned by Mepal Parish Council. Lilibet Woods was planted by the Parish Council and local volunteers as a new woodland to increase tree cover and biodiversity. Additional tree and woodland planting across the Parish would help to improve ecological networks within the Parish and contribute to biodiversity net gain. The Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire demonstrated strong support for wildlife conservation.

Policy 8 - Boundary Treatment, Hedgerows, Trees and Public Realm

Development proposals which negatively impact boundary treatments, landscaping, hedgerows or trees which make a positive contribution to the streetscene and/or public realm will not be supported. Any new development will be expected to demonstrate, where relevant, how it will contribute to high quality streets, pavements and other publicly accessible areas (the public realm) within Mepal.

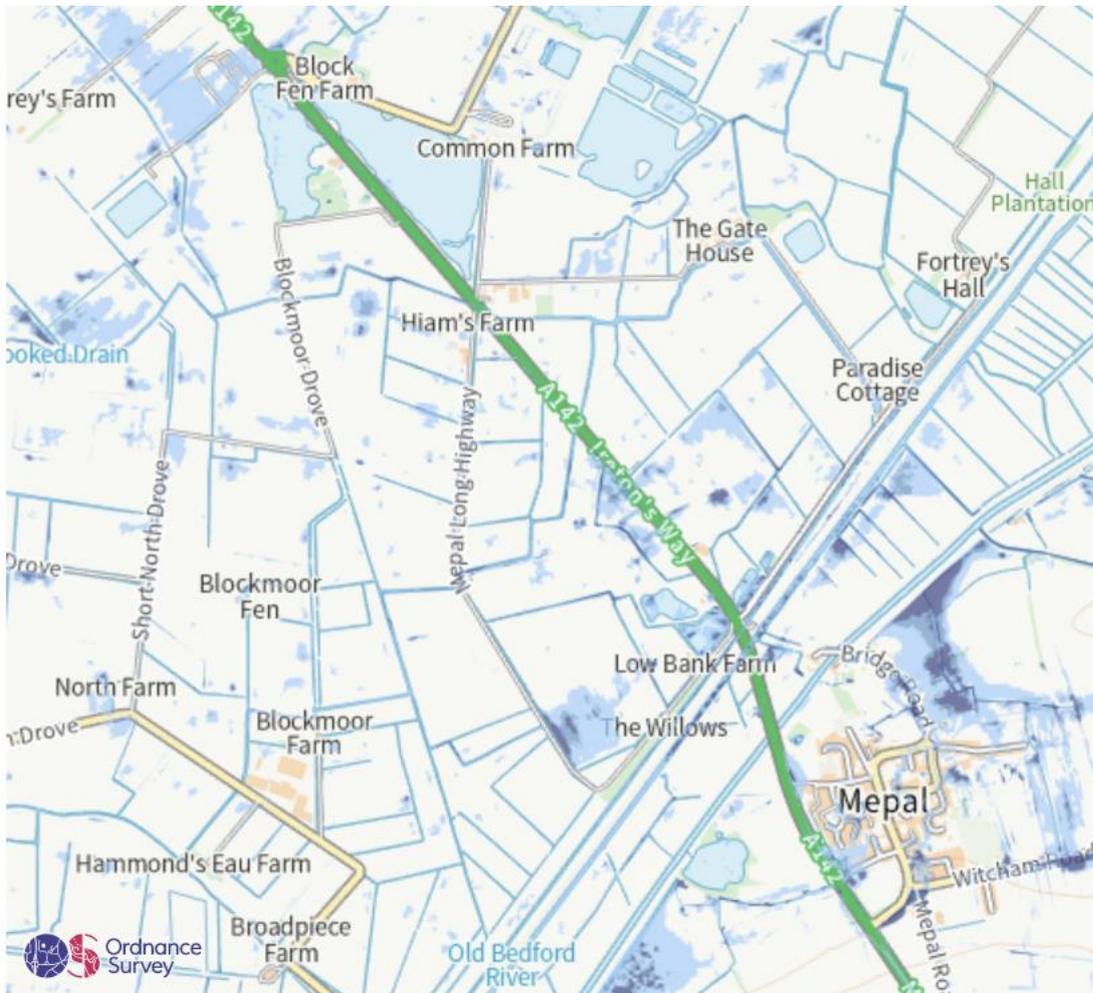
27. Flood Risk and Drainage

27.1 Parts of the Parish is subject to fluvial (river) flood risk as shown on the map below. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided, by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future).



Map 9 - Flood Map for Planning © Environment Agency

- 27.2 Where development is necessary in such areas the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere¹⁷. Most of the northern part of the Parish lies within Flood Zone 3 and is therefore at a risk of flooding greater than 1 in 100 years. Flood Zone 3 also extends along the A1307 corridor (the old A14 route).
- 27.3 Surface water flooding potential affects parts of Mepal as shown on the map. Notably surface water flood risk (High or Medium risk) affects Bridge Road; Brick Lane; and Chestnut Way. Surface water flooding is a matter to be taken into account in the planning application process. The Neighbourhood Plan alongside the Local Plan and the NPPF strives to promote sustainable drainage techniques (SuDS).



Extent of flooding from surface water

- High ● Medium ● Low ○ Very low

Map 10 - Surface Water Flooding © Environment Agency

- 27.4 SuDS are an approach to managing surface water run-off which seeks to mimic natural drainage systems and retain water on or near the site as opposed to traditional drainage approaches which involve piping water off site as quickly as possible. SuDS offer significant advantages over conventional piped drainage systems in reducing flood risk by attenuating the rate and quantity of surface water run-off from a site, promoting groundwater recharge, and improving water quality, biodiversity and amenity.

¹⁷ See NPPF paragraphs 159 onwards, paragraph 160(b) of the NPPF aims for development to be safe for the lifetime without increasing flood risk and where possible reducing flood risk overall

27.5 Opportunities for increasing biodiversity at opportunity sites and in the protected settlement breaks are discussed within the Neighbourhood Plan. There is a potential for increasing biodiversity through the use of SuDS features such as attenuation basins, ponds and swales in these circumstances.

28. Local Green Space

28.1 In 2012, the Government introduced a new designation of Local Green Space through the NPPF allowing local communities to put forward green areas of particular importance to them for protection. Once designated, planning permission will only be granted for the development of the sites in very special circumstances or if the development clearly enhances the Local Green Space for the purposes it was designated. The Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire demonstrated that the majority of local residents thought that the green spaces in Mepal were good or excellent.

28.2 Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used where the green space meets the criteria set out in the NPPF. Namely that it is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. Green space used for recreation use can also be protected under the Policy dealing with community assets.

28.3 The village has a small number of areas of informal green space. The village has the churchyard, cemetery and the recreation ground which provide a more formal role. The churchyard is protected by virtue of it being the setting of the Church of St Mary as a Listed Building.

28.4 The sites listed in the policy have been assessed as according with the criteria for Local Green Space as set out in the NPPF. A tabular assessment of each of the designated Local Green Spaces against these criteria is set out below the maps following the policy. A brief written summary describing what makes each of the Local Green Spaces demonstrably special to the local community is set out following the respective map.



Policy 9 - Local Green Space

The following sites are designated as Local Green Spaces and are identified on Map 11:

- Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drove (LW)
- Meadow Way Green (MW)
- Land at School Lane (SL)
- Land at High Street (HS)
- Land at Laurel Close (LC)
- The Green (TG)

The sites listed above and shown on the plan below are designated as areas of Local Green Space, which will be protected in a manner consistent with the protection of land within Green Belts



Map 11 - Local Green Spaces © Crown Copyright



Local Green Spaces



Plan Area Boundary

Description of Local Green Spaces

Site	Demonstrably Special Significance				
	Beauty	Historic Significance	Recreational Value	Tranquillity	Wildlife Richness
Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drove	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Way Green	✓	X	✓	X	X
Land at School Lane	✓	X	X	✓	✓
Land at High Street	✓	✓	X	✓	X
Land at Laurel Close	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Green	✓	✓	✓	X	✓

Lilibet Woods and Brangehill Drove

Lilibet Woods is the narrow piece of land than runs between Brangehill Drove (Footpath/Byway at the back of Meadow Way) and the A142. Brangehill Grove and Lilibet Woods are owned by Mepal Parish Council. The Footway/Byway give the opportunity for recreational value and tranquillity for local residents. The trees offer important ecological habitat. It provides the opportunity for informal recreation. It forms a green buffer between the village and the A142 and makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area.



Meadow Way Green

It provides the opportunity for informal recreation and has the visual appearance of a modern style village green. In this respect it makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area. It is crossed by a defined footway and links via a footpath to Brangehill Drove, it is part of a natural circular walk on public footpaths around the western side of the village. It has a formal play area at the centre which is protected as a community asset.

Land at School Lane

This area contains a bench for quiet reflection, it also contains the village sign and forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. A mature tree is located within the land which makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contributes to ecological habitat.

Land at High Street

This area contains a bench for quiet reflection, it also contains the war memorial cross which has historical significance. It also forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. A small tree is located within the land which offers the potential to make a future important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribution to ecological habitat when it is more mature.

Land at Laurel Close

This is a multi-functional green space, the area contains a bench for quiet reflection, it also contains the rose garden war memorial which has historical significance. It also forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. It provides the opportunity for informal recreation and has the visual appearance of a modern style village green. In this respect it makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area. It contains a number of mature trees which make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribute positively to ecological habitat.



The Green

The Green is marked on the 1885 OS Map and hasn't changed shape over time, it does unusually have a property within one corner. The area forms part of a network of attractive large grass verges throughout the village. It provides the opportunity for informal recreation and makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area. It contains a number of mature trees which also make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the local area and contribute positively to ecological habitat.

Implementation and Delivery

- 29.1 The implementation and delivery section sets out what actions are required to turn this Neighbourhood Plan into reality on the ground.
- 29.2 The Parish Council needs the help of public and private partners to create a sustainable community and deliver the policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council will work with a number of partners, including the following, to implement the Plan:

Delivery Partners

Mepal Parish Council (PC)
 East Cambridgeshire District Council (DC)
 Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC)
 Private Developers (PD)
 Local Schools (LS)
 Infrastructure Providers (IP)
 Community Groups (CG)
 Local Residents (LR)
 Local Businesses (B)

- 29.3 New development creates a need to provide new infrastructure, facilities and services to successfully incorporate new development into the surrounding area to benefit existing, new and future residents. As provided for within national planning policy, appropriate financial contributions will be obtained from developers to combine with public funding to deliver the necessary facilities in infrastructure. The determination of planning applications also allows matters to be secured through planning conditions. The table below sets out the relevant implementation partners for the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

- 29.4 The Neighbourhood Plan provides a positive framework to ensure that development in Mepal will bring positive benefits to the Parish.

Policy	Delivery Partners	Implementation Method
Sustainable Growth		
Policy 1 - Settlement Boundary (Update to Development Envelope)	PC, DC, PD & LR	Determination of Planning Applications
Policy 2 - Community Assets	PC, DC, PD, HP, LR, LS & CG	Determination of Planning Application s& Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy or Community Initiatives
Policy 3 - Allotments	PC, DC, CCC, PC, LR & CG	Determination of Planning Applications, Community Infrastructure Levy and Community Initiatives
Policy 4 - Highway Impact	PD, DC, CCC, PC & LR	Pre-Application Consultation and Determination of Planning Applications
Policy 5 - Climate Change Mitigation	PC, DC, CCC, PD, LR, LS, B, IP & CG	Determination of Planning Applications

Policy	Delivery Partners	Implementation Method
Natural and Built Environment		
Policy 6 - Non-Designated Heritage Assets	PC, DC, PD, LR & CG	Pre-Application Consultation and Determination of Planning Applications or Community Initiatives
Policy 7 - Views and Vistas	PD, DC, PC, LR & CG	Pre-Application Consultation and Determination of Planning Applications
Policy 8 - Boundary Treatment, Hedgerows, Trees and Public Realm	PD, DC, PC, LR & CG	Pre-Application Consultation and Determination of Planning Applications
Policy 9 - Local Green Space	PC, HDC, PD, LR, B & CG	Determination of Planning Applications or Community Initiatives

29.5 Mepal Parish Council is committed to Localism and bringing greater locally informed influence over planning decisions and it will be the key organisation in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Council will build upon its excellent track record in engaging in planning decisions (reactively through being consulted and proactively through promoting the policies and proposals of this Plan), and by delivering projects and infrastructure for the local community. However, the Council recognises the need to involve a range of other organisations if the potential of this plan is to be realised.

29.6 In England, communities that draw up a Neighbourhood Plan and secure the consent of local people in a referendum, which is then legally ‘Made’, benefit from 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) revenues arising from development that takes place in their area. However, this only applies to development permitted after the making of the NP and is not applied retrospectively. Up until that time the provision of eligibility for 15% of the CIL generated in the area applies, subject to a cap per annum as specified in CIL Regulations.



29.7 Contributions through CIL will be obtained from any housing development taking place in the Parish. The money raised through CIL is used to fund district-wide and local infrastructure projects that benefit local communities as set out in Section 216 (2) of the Planning Act 2008. The element of CIL which is the district portion will be spent by East Cambridgeshire District Council on district-wide infrastructure in line with the priorities that they have set. The neighbourhood proportion of the CIL monies goes to the Parish Council and will be spent on local infrastructure as required by law.

29.8 The neighbourhood proportion of the CIL will be focused on assisting the delivery of community infrastructure projects located in Mepal Parish. In terms of priorities for spending the neighbourhood portion of CIL these will include consideration of the infrastructure projects in the Mepal Parish Council 5 Year Plan:

- Picnic Benches at Play Park
- Fit Trail Equipment
- Replacing Play Equipment

- Communal BBQ in Recreation Ground
- Provision of Allotments

29.9 In addition, the Parish Council will seek to influence annual and other budget decisions by East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council on housing, open space and recreation, economic development, community facilities and transport, through respective plans and strategies. The Parish Council will also work with the appropriate agencies and organisations to develop funding bids aimed at achieving Neighbourhood Plan policies and objectives. This might include the Lottery, UK Government programmes and any partnership programmes.

Monitoring and Review

30.1 Continual plan review is a fundamental element of the planning system. It is important to check that the plan is being implemented correctly, ensure that outcomes match objectives and to change the plan if they are not. This Neighbourhood Plan will be carefully monitored by the Parish Council and reviewed if it becomes apparent that the vision, goals and objectives of the Plan are not being met.

30.2 Monitoring is a shared responsibility of the Parish Council as the qualifying body; East Cambridgeshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority; and users of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council will consider the effectiveness of the policies and proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan each time it makes representations on a planning application; alongside seeking views on the Neighbourhood Plan at each Annual Parish Meeting. The Parish Council will request East Cambridgeshire District Council to raise with it any issues arising out of the development management process in determining individual planning applications. Users of the Neighbourhood Plan are encouraged to make comments on monitoring of the Neighbourhood Plan to the Parish Council at any point.



30.3 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to guide development up to 2031. It is unlikely that the Neighbourhood Plan will remain current and entirely relevant for the entire plan period and may, in whole or in part, require some amendments before 2031.

30.4 There are a number of circumstances under which a partial review of the plan may be necessary, in accordance with best practice, Mepal Parish Council and its partners will consider undertaking a partial review of the Neighbourhood Plan no later than 5 years following its finalisation.

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Glossary

31.1 The majority of the glossary is copied from the NPPF to ensure consistency¹⁸. The terms set out below are either included within the Neighbourhood Plan or are within parts of the NPPF or the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan that is referred to in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Affordable housing *: Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following categories: affordable housing for rent; starter homes; discounted market sales housing; and other affordable routes to home ownership including shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). *[Note a more detailed definition is included in the NPPF¹⁹]*

Amenity *: A positive element or elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area. For example, open land, trees, historic buildings and the inter-relationship between them, or less tangible factors such as tranquillity.



Ancient Woodland: An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

Conservation (for heritage policy): The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) *: A levy allowing local authorities to raise funds from owners or developers of land undertaking new building projects in their area.

Development plan: Is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made and published spatial development strategies, together with any regional strategy policies that remain in force. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.

Economic development *: Development, including those within the B Use Classes, public and community uses and main town centre uses (but excluding housing development).

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.

Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

¹⁸ Those items in the glossary which do not match the NPPF or are not defined in the NPPF glossary are marked with an Asterix *

¹⁹ See Annex 2 on page 64 of the NPPF

Historic environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

International, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity: All international sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites), national sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and locally designated sites including Local Wildlife Sites.

Living Conditions *: The circumstances affecting the way in which people live, especially with regard to their well-being. Relevant factors include: internal space; access to external space; outlook; privacy; daylight; sunlight; overbearing impact; impact from pollution including noise.

Local planning authority: The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority include the district council, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority, the Mayor of London and a development corporation, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities. *[The local planning authority for this area is East Cambridgeshire District Council]*

Local Plan: A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.

Neighbourhood plans: A plan prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.



NPPF *: National Planning Policy Framework, this forms the overall planning policy produced by the Government to inform the making of Development Plans including Neighbourhood Plans and decision making on planning applications.

Open space: All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

Policies Map *: A document which illustrates on a base map all the policies and proposals contained in this Neighbourhood Plan or another document which forms part of the Development Plan.

Planning condition: A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Planning obligation: A legally enforceable obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

Planning Practice Guidance *: this forms the overall national planning practice guidance and advice produced by the Government to inform the making of Development Plans including Neighbourhood Plans and decision making on planning applications.

Ramsar sites: Wetlands of international importance, designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention.

Rural exception sites: Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding. *[Also see Policies HOU 3 and HOU 4 of the Local Plan]*

Scheduled Monument *: Those monuments that are given legal protection by being scheduled by Historic England.

Self-build and custom-build housing: Housing built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing. A legal definition, for the purpose of applying the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended), is contained in section 1(A1) and (A2) of that Act.

Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Settlement Boundary *: The boundary drawn around various towns and villages to limit new development and define the 'built-up area' of the settlement. Outside of the settlement boundary is considered to be the countryside.



Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC): Areas defined by regulation 3 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been given special protection as important conservation sites.

Special Protection Areas (SPA): Areas classified under regulation 15 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds.

Site of Special Scientific Interest: Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Strategic Environmental Assessment: A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Supplementary planning documents: Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

Sustainable transport modes: Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

Verdant *: Countryside green with grass or other rich vegetation.

Windfall sites: Sites not specifically identified in the development plan.



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Mepal Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2031

Draft Plan
February 2023

The Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Mepal produced in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012



<https://www.mepalparish.org/mepal-neighbourhood-plan/>

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