

## **Appendix 1**

### **South Cambridgeshire District Council's response to the consultation on the submission Cottenham Neighbourhood Plan**

1. South Cambridge District Council (SCDC) is taking the opportunity to provide the examiner of the Cottenham Neighbourhood Plan with the local planning authority's comments on the submission version of the plan.
2. SCDC has worked with Cottenham Parish Council (PC) as they have been preparing their plan. There have been a number of meetings with the neighbourhood plan team to discuss the plan as it has evolved. SCDC has provided constructive comments to the team at these meetings followed up by detailed notes to assist them in their plan making.
3. SCDC is supportive of the aims of the Cottenham Plan and our comments are intended to help the Plan to be successful at examination as well as delivering policies that are clear in their meaning and are unambiguous in their interpretation. SCDC recognise the achievement of Cottenham PC in reaching this stage of submitting their Plan to us for examination.
4. The comments we have made on the Plan are provided in two sections
  - A. General overarching comments about particular issues that relate to the Plan as a whole
  - B. Comments which highlight particular/key issues with policies where it might be helpful if the plan were amended.

#### **A - General overarching comments**

##### ***Are the policies clear and unambiguous?***

5. National planning practice guidance states that policies in a neighbourhood plan should be clear and unambiguous and be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications<sup>1</sup>.
6. The importance of having clear policies is further emphasised in the guidance published by the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (NPIERS) in March 2018. This guidance is supported by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)<sup>2</sup>. It states the checks that a qualifying body should make prior to submitting the plan to the local planning authority (See page 29)
  - 1.7.1. A qualifying body should check that the policies in the plan are precise, and provide a basis for decision-making on planning applications. This is a key area where the local planning authority can help. Policies should generally be positive, rather than negative.*

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<sup>1</sup> (Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 41-041-20140306)

<sup>2</sup> NPIERS Guidance to service users and examiners - <https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/upholding-professional-standards/regulation/drs/drs-services/npiers-planning-guidance-to-service-users-and-examiners-rics.pdf>

*Policies must be justified. Evidence to inform the policies should be proportionate to the issues.*

### **Proposals Map**

7. Although it is acknowledged that a single Proposals Map is not a requirement for a Neighbourhood Plan, SCDC considers that, for complex Plans like Cottenham, such a map helps in providing clarity to those policies that include site allocations and site specific issues. The maps currently in the Plan are generally not referenced in a policy and, in some instances, are of such a scale that it is difficult to identify the boundaries or precise location of a designation.
8. The NPIERS guidance<sup>3</sup> on examinations also mentions the importance of mapping in a neighbourhood plan. It sets out that the qualifying body should check the following prior to submitting a Plan to the local planning authority (Page 29):

*1.7.2. Plans should be supported by clear mapping, including:  
Accurate delineation of the boundaries of the plan  
The boundaries of any site allocations, and designations made in the plan (preferably including street names).*
9. In particular, we feel it would be helpful if site specific designations in the following policies were illustrated on a Proposals Map:
  - Policy COH/1-1 – Protecting vistas / viewpoints
  - Policy COH/1-3: Non designated heritage assets
  - Policy COH/1-6: Village character – the village core or centre
  - Policy COH/1-7: Local Green Space
  - Policy COH/1-8: Protected Village Amenity Areas
  - Policy COH/2-1: Development Framework
  - Policy COH/2-3: Use of brownfield sites for housing – policy refers to two maps within the plan (Figure 14 and 17).
  - Policy COH/3-1.1: Durman Stearn site
  - Policy COH/3-1.2: Co-op site
  - Policy COH/3-2.1: Watsons Yard
  - Policy COH/4-1.1: Recreation & Sports Hub
  - Policy COH/4-2: Multi-purpose Village Hall
  - Policy COH/4-3: Nursery
  - Policy COH/4-4: Sports facilities
  - Policy COH/6-1: Extension of burial grounds
  - Policy COH/7-3: New Durman Stearn site
10. SCDC has concerns about a number of the figures used in the Plan. Those that:
  - a) Do not clearly show boundaries of site specific policies;
    - i. Figure 9: Non designated heritage assets
    - ii. Figure 11: Cottenham focal points, core street, central area and centre
    - iii. Figure 12: Modified LGS boundaries at the Recreation Ground
    - iv. Figure 14: Cottenham's possible development sites
    - v. Figure 17: Brownfield housing sites within reasonable distance of centre

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<sup>3</sup> NPIERS Guidance to service users and examiners - <https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/upholding-professional-standards/regulation/drs/drs-services/npiers-planning-guidance-to-service-users-and-examiners-rics.pdf>

- vi. Figure 26: Preferred expansion of Recreation Ground
  - vii. Figures 27 & 28: Site Location for Village Hall and Nursery
- b) Are of too small a scale;
  - i. Figure 7 Listed buildings and scheduled monuments;
  - ii. Figure 11: Cottenham focal points, core street, central area and centre
  - iii. Figure 14: Cottenham's possible development sites
  - iv. Figure 17: Brownfield housing sites within reasonable distance of centre
- c) Are lacking keys
  - i. Figure 5 National character area and Green Belt
- d) Are not mentioned in the supporting text or policy
  - i. Figure 21: Durman Stearn site
  - ii. Figure 23: Co-op site
  - iii. Figure 25: Watsons Yard
- e) Are wrongly referenced in the policy
  - i. Policy COH/3-2.1: Watson's Yard / Fire Station site (site X5 in Figure 14) – Policy states Figure 22 when it should be 24
  - ii. Policy COH/4-2: Multi purpose Village Hall – Figure 24 referred to when should be 27 or 28
  - iii. Policy COH/4-3: Nursery – Figure 25 referred to in policy be should be 27 or 28
  - iv. Policy COH/7-3: new Durman Stearn site – Figure 27 is referred to in the policy but it should be Figure 31
- f) Those where a number of figures have been included twice with identical or different titles
  - i. Figure 15: Development Framework + Figure 16: Planning Permissions
  - ii. Figure 17 and 19: Brownfield housing sites within reasonable distance of centre
  - iii. Figure 27 and 28: Site Location of Village Hall and Nursery
- g) Those that need the appropriate copyright details for use of the map
  - i. Figure 21.
  - ii. Figure 23
  - iii. Figure 25.

#### ***Supporting text / Justification for policies***

11. There are a number of instances where criteria included within policies are not explained or justified in the supporting text. It is apparent that a considerable and worthwhile amount of work has been carried out to gather evidence as identified by the number of supporting evidence documents. However, it would help the Plan user if the salient points were summarised within the supporting text for each policy. Inclusion of such information would help to tell the story more clearly of why policies are included in the Plan and the reason for particular criteria requirements.
12. For policies in the Plan that add value to a Local Plan policy it would be helpful if the supporting text had referred to the relevant Local Plan policy. This would have helped put the Cottenham policy in context.

13. New policies have been added into the submission version of the Plan that were not in the pre-submission Plan which do not appear to have any evidence base relating to them. Specifically –
  - i. Policy COH/1-6: Village character – the village core or centre
  - ii. Policy COH/4-4: Sports facilities
14. Some of the evidence documents have not been updated to reflect that the Local Plan was adopted in September 2018 or they cross refer to Cottenham policies from earlier versions of the Plan. This makes it difficult to link the current policies to their evidence base.

***Cottenham Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document***

15. The Cottenham Village Design Statement (VDS) was adopted as SPD supporting a policy from the now superseded Local Development Framework. The Neighbourhood Plan could have taken the opportunity to provide some status to the Village Design Statement but, whilst some elements have been included in new policies in the Plan, it is still referred to as assisting with design considerations for future planning applications. The weight of this SPD is now reduced in determining planning applications since the new Local Plan was adopted. If the guidance within the VDS was to be retained it could have been incorporated within a Policy in the Plan to retain the weight it has had previously in guiding design considerations in planning applications.

***AECOM's Assessment Work for the Plan***

16. The Plan makes some mention of the work that AECOM has carried out to inform and provide an evidence base for the Plan.
  - Site Assessment:  
Many sites were assessed but the findings of this are not included in the supporting text to justify particular site specific policies. AECOM in their report had indicated that, for some sites, further work would need to be done with relevant officers at SCDC (e.g. highways, heritage). Further, AECOM highlighted that there will need to be clear evidence to understand why particular sites are eventually included in the Plan and that this information is clearly recorded in the evidence base to support the plan. This further information has not been provided for the Plan.

***Policy and paragraph numbering***

17. SCDC consider that, for clarity and ease of reference, the Plan could helpfully be re-structured to ensure that there is a continuous flow of paragraph numbers that relate to the chapter that they are in. It would also be helpful if the policy numbers were simplified to follow from Policy COH/1 through consecutively to COH/22.

**B - Comments on Policies**

18. There are some common issues that relate to a number of policies:
  - a) SCDC has concerns that many of the criteria based policies within the Plan are linked by 'and' which would mean that all criteria would have to be met by a development for it to comply with a policy. These policies do state the criteria are to be met 'where practicable.' In some instances, it could be onerous and perhaps unreasonable for a proposal to meet all the criteria. The Plan includes in Chapter 1 at paragraph 1.50 – 1.53 (Page 10) under the title 'Deliverability' an explanation about these criteria based policies. The Plan states that

such criteria should ‘ideally’ be met and that in some circumstances a ‘concession’ may be considered. However we consider that, if this is the intention of a particular policy, it would be helpful to specify so within the policy itself. The policies within the Plan that include such wording are –

- i. Policy COH/1-4: Village Character- alterations and extensions
  - ii. Policy COH/1-5: Village Character – new build
  - iii. Policy COH/2-2: Large Site Design
  - iv. Policy COH/2-4: Locally affordable housing and CLT
  - v. Policy COH/5-1: New Recreation Ground
- b) For many of the site specific policies, a criterion has been added referring to car parking requirements. Unless these on-site standards are different from those included in the adopted Local Plan in Policy TI/3 such a criterion is not required in the Plan. Is there local evidence to justify different parking standards in Cottenham?
19. The following section sets out SCDC’s comments for each policy highlighting only the key issues where it may be helpful to amend the wording of the policy for clarity of meaning.

#### **Chapter 4 Conserving village character**

20. Policy COH/1-1: Landscape character
- a) SCDC supports the aim of the policy to protect views that contribute to the character and attractiveness of Cottenham. It would have been helpful if the selection of views had been supported by evidence setting out how the important views have been selected.
  - b) It is not clear where criterion d) would apply as development can only provide planting within the application site. If this is the intention then we feel the policy should be clear in its wording.
21. Policy COH/1-2: Heritage Assets
- a) It would have assisted the understanding of the policy if evidence had been included to support why applications to demolish pre-1945 buildings are to be treated differently from other buildings in the Conservation Area. It is not clear whether these are the typical buildings described in paragraph 1-2a?
  - b) The wording in the part a) of this policy is confusing. By linking the two elements of part a) of this policy with the word ‘or’ the policy as drafted could allow for buildings in a good state of repair to be demolished as long as the replacement building uses the reclaimed materials. Is this the intention of the policy?
22. Policy COH/1-3: Non-designated heritage assets
- SCDC supports the identification of such assets in the Plan. We feel that a larger scale map showing clearly the location and extent of each asset would assist the user of the Plan to identify whether a proposal might impact on a building in the policy.
23. Policy COH/1-4: Village Character – alterations and extensions
- It would have benefited the supporting text to this policy if both the Village Design Statement SPD and the AECOM Heritage and Character Assessment had been more fully referenced.

**24. Policy COH/1-5: Village character – new build**

SCDC support the overall object of this policy to provide guidance for new buildings so that they can enrich the character of Cottenham. However, the policy as written would result in a terrace of four dwellings potentially failing this policy despite such a proposal positively adding to the street scene. Is this the intent of the Policy?

**25. Policy COH/1-6: Village character – the village core or centre**

- a) This would benefit from a larger scale map to identify clearly the four focal points in the village. Figure 11 is of too small a scale.
- b) It is difficult to see how the criteria in the policy will be achieved as many of the requirements are not deliverable as they are reliant on others to deliver (E.g. County highways). Also the focal points and centre are within the village core with limited space for extra features.
- c) The identification of the four focal points was not included in the Regulation 14 consultation and it is unclear as to whether the local community has not had the opportunity to comment on the policy or the focal points identified.

**26. Policy COH/1-7: Local Green Space (LGS)**

- a) SCDC welcomes the policy but its wording is not clear. The policy includes both a revised boundary to a LGS designated in the Local Plan and a new LGS assessed in the neighbourhood plan. The justification for both of these sites is included in the supporting text to the policy which is to be welcomed.
- b) The supporting text does not mention the adopted LGS policy NH/12 in the Local Plan which would help to put in context this specific local policy.
- c) It would help the understanding of the policy greatly if a larger and more detailed map was included to identify both LGSs - the revised boundary for the Recreation Ground and the new boundary for the Les King Wood – Figure 12 is very confusing.

**27. Policy COH/1-8:Protected Village Amenity Areas (PVAA)**

- a) The supporting text to this policy would benefit from having mention of the relevant policy in the Local Plan - Policy NH/11: Protected Village Amenity Areas.
- b) There does not appear to be a justification for including The Dunnocks as a new PVAA. It does not appear in the VDS as open space valued by the community.

## **Chapter 5 Providing more housing**

**28. Policy COH/2-1: Development Frameworks**

SCDC considers that the Local Plan policy that designates a Development Framework is a strategic policy and that amendments to the development framework of a village is not one for a neighbourhood plan to include. Changes to a framework boundary to reflect current and future proposed growth on the edge of a village will be considered in a future review of the Local Plan

**29. Policy COH/2-2: Large Site Design**

Whilst welcoming the aim of this policy to provide design guidance for large sites in Cottenham, there are criteria that identify locally specific requirements without providing justification for them

- i. Criterion c) relates to play space – LEAP which is different from the requirement in the Local Plan - Policy SC/7: Outdoor Play Space, Informal Open Space and New Developments and Figure 10 which provides a guide for the on-site provision of open space ( pages 207-211). This criterion could result in the development having a lesser provision of open space – is this the intention of the policy?
- ii. Criterion d) relates to the distribution of affordable houses. In the Local Plan Policy H/10 for affordable housing it mentions that this sort of housing should be in small groups or clusters distributed throughout the site. It is not clear that there is locally supported evidence to support the neighbourhood plan approach to have individual affordable houses pepper potted through a site?

**30. Policy COH/2-3: Use of brownfield sites for housing**

- a) SCDC considers that this policy would seem to repeat the site-specific policies for these three sites and it is not sure what the policy adds to the Plan?
- b) The total housing potential in the table (page 41) is 24. If Durman and Watson's site come forward first with a total of 15 then is it the intention of the Plan that the Co-op site cannot provide any housing as it would be in excess of the 15 total specified in the policy.
- c) As this is a policy allocating sites, it is unusual for two figures to be identified in a policy to show the location of any sites. Neither maps shows clearly the boundary of the three sites and are at too small a scale. If Figure 4 is the Site Specific Policies Map for the Plan then we recommend this should be referred to in the policy.

**31. Policy COH/2-4: Locally affordable housing and CLT**

We feel that this policy could be misinterpreted to imply that it is promoting housing development in the open countryside. In criterion a) it states that homes are located on sites *near* or immediately adjacent to Cottenham's development framework boundary. We feel that the term "*near*" would need to be defined very precisely. Developers could see this as an opportunity to propose sites well away from the existing built area of the village of Cottenham which would be contrary to national and local plan policy. Would a preferable term be 'adjoining' to the framework? This would conform to the wording in the Local Plan policy on rural exception sites (Policy H/11)

## **Chapter 6 Improving Amenities and Facilities**

**32. Policy COH/3.1: Medical & Drop-in & Chat Centre**

We are unclear as to how the policy adds to the Plan, given that potential sites are identified in Policies COH/3-1.1 and COH/3-1.2, unless other sites come forward. In this case, the policy does not help determine where such sites might be or the requirements of a medical centre other than it must be in a central location.

**33. Policy COH/3-1.1: Durman Stearn site (site X4 as shown on Figure 14)**

- a) SCDC welcomes Figure 20 which shows the site location. However Fig

- b) Figure 21, showing indicative redevelopment, is also included in the Plan. The Plan would be clearer if the policy or supporting text explained its status.
- c) SCDC considers that there is a lack of clarity concerning housing numbers when compared to Policy COH/2-3.
- d) There is a current planning application for this site - Ref S/4698/18/OL

**34. Policy COH/3-1.2: Co-op site (site X6 as shown in Figure 14)**

- a) SCDC welcomes Figure 22 which shows the site location however Figure 23 showing indicative redevelopment is also included but not mentioned in policy or supporting text. The Plan would be clearer if the policy or supporting text explained its status.
- b) There is a lack of clarity concerning housing numbers when compared to Policy COH/2-3

**35. Policy COH/3-2: Supermarket**

We consider that this policy somewhat duplicates Local Plan Policy E/22: Applications for new Retail Development and we are unsure as to what this policy adds that is specific to Cottenham other than that it allows for residential uses on upper floors of a supermarket?

**36. Policy COH/3-2.1: Watson's Yard / Fire Station site (site X5 in Figure 14)**

- a) SCDC is concerned that this site is not big enough for all the uses that are proposed for the site. Figure 25 showing indicative redevelopment is included in the Plan but not mentioned in the policy or supporting text. The Plan would be clearer if the policy or supporting text explained its status.
- b) As this is the only site being proposed for a supermarket, is it necessary to have COH/3-2 too?
- c) There is a lack of clarity concerning housing numbers when compared to COH/2-3

**Policies COH/4-1.1; COH/4-2; COH/4-3 and COH4-4**

**37. There are many policies relating to potential development in and around a concentrated area in the village and it is difficult to understand clearly the story of all the existing and proposed uses. It would be very helpful if there was a comprehensive large scale map or series of maps included in the Plan illustrating all the uses and how they relate to one another.**

**38. Policy COH/4-1.1: Recreation and Sports Hub**

- a) This policy has been introduced following the Regulation 14 consultation. The supporting text does not help to explain the hub and all the proposed uses for the area and therefore its interpretation into planning decisions could be compromised.
- b) Figure 27 does not clearly show the different uses and the boundaries for each use at the Recreation Ground.

**39. Policy COH/4-2: Multi-purpose Village Hall + Policy COH/4-3: Nursery**

- a) It is noted that a planning application for the Nursery was approved 20 December 2018 Ref S/2705/18/FL and for the Village Hall on 21 September 2018 Ref S/2702/18/FL. The supporting text could be helpfully updated to clarify this situation.

- b) The maps to show where these uses will be located are not clear. Figure 26 and 27/28 contradict each other. Fig 26 shows a larger site that will accommodate both uses.

**40. Policy COH/4-4: Sports Facilities**

- a) This policy would benefit from having a clear map to show the proposed allocation for the sports facilities. Figure 26 is confusing if you are not familiar with this part of the village.
- b) SCDC has concerns about the impact on residential amenity in relation to criterion d) which seeks floodlit outdoor sports facilities. The site is adjacent to a recent residential planning consent and therefore floodlighting could have a significant detrimental impact without very careful design consideration. It could also have a detrimental impact on the wider fen edge. Policy COH/1-1 requires “subdued lighting on the village edge.

**41. Policy COH/5-1: New Recreation Ground**

- a) It is unclear why Policy COH/4-4 has been given 5 years to be fully achieved? Whilst recognising that additional recreation facilities will be required by the growing population of Cottenham there is a lack of evidence to support the 5-year deadline for the land adjacent to the Recreation Ground. This is not mentioned in the policy relating to this site – COH/4-4.
- b) Whilst recognising that more recreation land is required, the Plan is not clear at explaining where this would be found if not adjacent to the existing recreation ground. Criteria d) implies it would be to the south-east of the village? If this is what is intended then perhaps it should be made clearer?

**42. Policy COH/6-1: Extension of burial grounds**

SCDC welcomes the inclusion of this policy to ensure that there is adequate burial land within the village. As worded the policy is not clear whether it is actually allocating sites or providing criteria for the consideration of new sites? The supporting text (para 6-1d) refers to extensions or provision of new space but the policy only refers to extensions.

## **Chapter 7 Encouraging Employment**

**43. Policy COH/7-1: Village Employment**

While this approach is supported, we would question whether such an approach is achievable given the shortage of suitable land for providing additional car parking. Is it feasible to require sites in such a tight knit village core to provide on-site parking?

**44. Policy COH/7-2: Rural employment**

- a) As currently worded, the policy allows any proposals that increase rural employment and there is no indication of the scale of development or whether the proposal is on a brownfield site. It is not clear whether this policy applies to any site outside the Development Framework? If it does, then the sustainability of such a policy is questioned as it may not conform to the NPPF
- b) The employment policies in the Local Plan could cover the aspirations of this policy.

**45. Policy COH/7-3: new Durman Stearn site (X11 in Figure 14)**

- a) The site is located in the Green Belt and the proposal is potentially contrary to Green Belt policies. The Local Plan does not allow for amendments to be made to the Green Belt in Cottenham. There would have to be very special circumstances to include a policy in the Plan within the Green Belt
- b) There is a current planning application for this site - Ref S/4747/18/OL