

**REPORT TO:** Council  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Planning & New Communities

23 February 2017

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**South Cambridgeshire Local Plan**  
**Policy SS/5 - Waterbeach New Town: Boundary of the Major Development Site**

**Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is to recommend to a proposed modification to the boundary of the Major Development Site shown on Inset map H for the new town at Waterbeach (Local Plan Policy SS/5).
2. This is not a key decision.

**Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that Council agrees that a proposed modification to the Major Development Site boundary of Waterbeach new town (Policy SS/5) as shown on Inset Map H of the submitted Policies Map be put forward to the examination, as shown on the attached map

**Reasons for Recommendations**

4. Historic England is the public body responsible for England's historic environment. Their support for the Local Plan boundary of the submitted Local Plan was subject to requiring a setting study to see if any changes were necessary. Two such studies have been prepared and Historic England has now advised the Council of its preferred boundary for the Major Development Site insofar as it relates to the setting of Denny Abbey. The Council's position, as set out in the report to the Planning Portfolio Holder on 8 November and Council of 17 November 2016, is to take account of the advice of Historic England reached having given detailed consideration to the appropriate boundary in light of setting studies prepared since the submission of the Local Plan, in view of the objective to make best use of this strategic site whilst providing an appropriate setting to Denny Abbey. In this situation the submitted Local Plan boundary for the Major Development Site would not be sound without modification to reflect the views of Historic England.

**Background**

5. An important consideration in deciding where the northern limit of built development at the new town should be is the need to make best use of this strategic site whilst providing an appropriate setting for Denny Abbey, which is a Scheduled Monument and Grade 1 Listed Building. Please refer to the attached map which locates Denny Abbey, the northern limit of built development shown on Inset map H of the submitted Local Plan, and an alternative boundary which is the subject of this report.
6. The Local Plan report to the November Portfolio Holder meeting of 8 November 2016 and Council meeting of 17 November 2016 advised at paragraph 26 as follows:

7. The site promoters have also asked the Council and Inspectors to consider a revision to the northern boundary of the Major Development Site to extend it a little further north whilst retaining an appropriate setting to Denny Abbey scheduled monument. The Major Development Site defines the maximum extent of built uses but does not mean that the whole area will be built on. The northern boundary of the Major Development Site included in the submitted Local Plan sought to make best use of this former air base site whilst ensuring that an appropriate setting was retained for Denny Abbey. It was defined in consultation with Historic England (at that time English Heritage) following site visits, and they advised that setting studies were needed to confirm whether any refinements were justified. The promoters have prepared a joint position that is currently being considered by Historic England, but due to staff changes, Historic England has not been able to reach a view on it at the time of writing this report. If Historic England concludes that the boundary could be revised whilst retaining an appropriate setting to Denny Abbey, it would be consistent with the approach taken in the submitted Local Plan to consider modifications to give effect to such a change.
8. It was made clear to Members that if Historic England reached a view on the boundary that was at variance with the submitted Local Plan boundary, that a further report would be brought to Members.

### **Considerations**

9. The submitted Local Plan boundary was agreed with English Heritage before the Local Plan was submitted for examination in March 2014, following site visits that included the site promoters. English Heritage made representations to the proposed submission Local Plan to this effect and advised that a setting study was needed to confirm whether any refinements to the boundary were justified.
10. Setting studies were subsequently prepared by each of the two site promoters. For RLW, a setting study is provided by a 'Denny Abbey and its setting: Analysis and Recommendations for Waterbeach New Town' document (November 2014), examination reference document RD/SS/320) informed by a 'Landscape and Heritage Appraisal of Denny Abbey and its Setting' (October 2013, submitted as part of their representations to the examination) examination reference document RD/SS/310. For Urban & Civic a setting study is provided by a 'Heritage Appraisal of the Proposed Development of Waterbeach MOD site and Neighbourhood' (April 2016, examination reference document RD/SS/330). The RLW study concluded that a different boundary to that in the submitted Local Plan was justified. That boundary would be one field further to the north on the east of the site, it would be pulled back further south due south of Denny Abbey, and extend further north on the west part of the site. The Urban & Civic study only looked at the western boundary and concluded that a boundary south of Denny Abbey could extend further to the north than the submitted Local Plan boundary (or that in the RLW study).
11. Officer reports to the 8<sup>th</sup> November Planning Portfolio Holders meeting and to Council on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2016 advised that the site promoters had agreed a joint position on the boundary that was currently being considered by Historic England (the new name for English Heritage).

12. Since late November Council officers have explored whether it would be possible to agree a major development site boundary that would be acceptable to Historic England and the site promoters and met with Historic England in late January 2017.
13. Historic England has considered both of the promoters' studies and has now confirmed a clear preference for a northern limit of built development that follows the line in the RLW study which provides for a larger open landscaped buffer between Denny Abbey and the built edge of the new town due south of the Abbey, along the line of the ancient causeway route to the Abbey from the village. In doing so they have rejected the promoters' jointly agreed boundary.
14. Historic England's statement to the Local Plan examination hearings confirms this position and sets out the reasons why it prefers a different boundary to the submitted Local Plan, in order to provide an appropriate setting to Denny Abbey. It is attached as Appendix A.
15. The Historic England statement states (paragraph 23) that "Historic England's key area of concern with respect to the definition of the northern limit of development in relation to the setting of Denny Abbey is the area around the earthwork causeway orientated towards Soldiers Hill." It states (paragraph 21) that "the historic setting of Denny Abbey is centred on its remoteness. Located on a small island of raised, dry land on the fen edge, west of the River Cam and north of Waterbeach, it was accessed to the south by a short causeway linking it to routes south to Waterbeach". The heritage significance of Soldiers Hill located on this causeway is therefore particularly important and Historic England considers it important to "step development back" (paragraph 24) from the Abbey, further than in the submitted Local Plan in the area around the Causeway and Soldiers Hill.
16. However, Historic England considers that there are areas towards each end of the northern boundary that are further away from Denny Abbey and where additional land could be included in the Major Development Site whilst providing an appropriate setting to Denny Abbey (paragraph 25 bullet point 6).
17. The Council's position, as set out in the report to the Planning Portfolio Holder on 8 November and Council of 17 November 2016, is to take account of the advice of Historic England which has been reached in light of its detailed consideration of the appropriate boundary having regard to setting studies prepared since the submission of the Local Plan.
18. The boundary preferred by Historic England has given more detailed consideration to the land that should be retained as setting of Denny Abbey than was possible at the time the Local Plan was submitted and will ensure that the most sensitive part of the setting is reflected in the boundary of the Major Development Site. This alternative boundary would also provide a slightly larger development area than the boundary in the submitted Local Plan and so would make best use of the proposed allocation, a large part of which is previously developed land. Not all of this additional land will necessarily be built on and it is not proposed to increase the capacity of the site from approximately 8,000 to 9,000 dwellings. The location, design and treatment of



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development along the northern boundary of the new town will be a matter for consideration in the proposed Supplementary Planning Document.

19. In this situation the submitted Local Plan boundary for the Major Development Site would not be sound without modification that reflects the views of Historic England.
20. It is recommended that a proposed modification to the Local Plan be put to the examination in the Council's hearing statement to amend the northern limit of built development boundary to that preferred by Historic England, as shown on the map at Appendix B. Council officers are finalising our own statement to the hearings this week, the deadline for submission of which being midday on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February. This proposed modification it will be included in the Council's hearing statement with a note that this is subject to confirmation by full Council on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February. The Local Plan Examination Inspector will be advised of the decision of Council after the 23<sup>rd</sup> February.
21. The new boundary would then fall to be considered at the examination hearings. If the Inspector decides to amend the boundary it would be subject to sustainability appraisal and included in the public consultation into a number of plan modifications which will almost certainly be needed after all planned hearings into the Local Plan have taken place.

### Options

22. Alternative Option 1: to not propose a proposed modification to the boundary of the Major Development Site shown on Inset Map H of the Local Plan.
23. Reason for rejection: The Local Plan Inspector will expect the Council to be able to respond to the alternative boundary at the Local Plan hearings into policy SS/5 for the new town now that Historic England have confirmed their support for a different boundary than the one included on Inset map H of the submitted Local Plan.
24. Alternative Option 2: to propose a modification that would state that the boundary of the Major Development Site would be determined in the SPD, and that it would be within a narrow band of land lying between and including the boundary of the Major Development Site shown on Inset Map H of the Local Plan and the boundary preferred by Historic England.
25. Reason for rejection: The key area of concern for Historic England lies around the ancient causeway between Denny Abbey and Waterbeach south of Soldiers Hill, where they have made a clear choice between the alternative boundaries based on the available setting studies and boundaries.

### Implications

26. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, there are no significant implications

## **Consultation responses**

27. No substantive consultation has been possible in relation to this decision although Local District Members have been notified of the proposed modification to the Local Plan, and that if agreed by the Portfolio Holder, it will be subject to the decision of full Council on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017.

## **Effect on Strategic Aims**

### **Aim 2: We will work with partners to create and sustain opportunities for employment, enterprise and world leading innovation.**

28. The plan modifications take account of the views of Historic England as a key stakeholder in the plan making process.

### **Aim 3: We will ensure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for our residents.**

29. The Council has a duty to secure sustainable development. This lies at the heart of national planning policy and covers all three aspects of sustainability – economic, social and environment. The proposed modifications have a focus on sustaining and enhancing the qualities of South Cambridgeshire that in national surveys consistently identify the District as one of the best places to live in the UK.

## **APPENDICES**

- A The Historic England hearing statement for matter SC6A (Policy SS/5 Waterbeach New Town) (note includes Historic England plans 1 and 2)
- B Map of the Proposed modification to the Local Plan to amend the northern limit of built development boundary to that preferred by Historic England

## **Background Papers**

- LDA Denny Abbey Setting Study for RLW made up of the two documents referred to in this report. Examination reference library documents RD/SS/310 and RD/SS/320:  
<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/local-plan-core-documents-library>
- Beacon Planning Heritage Appraisal for Urban and Civic referred to in this report. Examination reference library document RD/SS/330 at the above link.
- The Historic England hearing statement for matter SC6A (Policy SS/5 Waterbeach New Town) which is attached as Appendix A

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