

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, PLANNING & PROSPERITY

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

- (a) That, under Section 34A (4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Cotton End Neighbourhood Development Plan be 'made' with immediate effect.
- (b) That the Council congratulates the neighbourhood plan group and the local community on their work to develop the Plan.
- (c) That the Manager for Planning Strategy and Policy be authorised, in conjunction with the Parish Council, to make minor editorial textual changes to the neighbourhood plan prior to publication if required.

2. Date of decision

2 June 2025

3. Reasons for decision

The purpose of this report is to formally 'make' the neighbourhood plan to confirm it as part of the development plan covering the Cotton End neighbourhood area (Cotton End Parish) and to recognise the significant amount of work undertaken by the neighbourhood plan group and local community in preparing the neighbourhood plan.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

As the Neighbourhood Plan achieved a majority vote in favour of the neighbourhood plan, the Regulations require that the plan must be made within 8 weeks following the referendum unless:

- the local planning authority considers that the making of the plan would breach, or otherwise be compatible with, any EU or human rights obligations, or
- a legal challenge has been brought in relation to the decision to hold a referendum or around the conduct of the referendum.

Neither circumstance exists in relation to the Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan so it must be 'made' by the Council.

5. How decision is to be funded


Costs associated with assisting the neighbourhood plan group to prepare their plan are funded from the Plans and Strategies Reserve.


6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

2 June 2025



Signed: 

Date:

2 June 2025

Name of Decision Taker:

Cllr. Andrea Spice

Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Planning & Prosperity

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:2June2025.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:11 June 2025.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Report to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Planning and Prosperity

Date of Report: 2 June 2025

Report by: Manager for Planning Strategy and Policy

Subject: COTTON END NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Neighbourhood plans are statutory development plans produced by parish / town councils or neighbourhood forums. Cotton End Parish Council has produced a neighbourhood plan for the Cotton End parish area (Appendix A to this report).
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to Bedford Borough Council on 5 October 2023 and, in line with regulatory requirements, was subject to a six-week consultation on two separate occasions (4 June 2024 – 17 July 2024 and 7 October 2024 – 18 November 2024). It has since been formally examined by Wendy Burden who is an independent examiner. The examiner produced a report, which recommended that the Plan be modified in order to meet legal requirements and then be progressed to a referendum of people who live within the designated neighbourhood area. On 6 March 2025 the Council resolved to progress to the referendum stage. The referendum took place on 24 April 2025 and a majority of those who took part voted in favour of the Plan. It must now be formally 'made' by Bedford Borough Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Planning & Prosperity considers this report and, if satisfied, agrees:**
 - (a) **That under Section 34A (4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Cotton End Neighbourhood Development Plan be 'made' with immediate effect.**

(b) That the Council congratulates the neighbourhood plan group and the local community on their work to develop the Plan.

(c) That the Manager for Planning Strategy and Policy be authorised in conjunction with the Parish Council to make minor editorial textual changes to the neighbourhood plan.

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To formally 'make' the neighbourhood plan to confirm it as part of the development plan covering the Cotton End neighbourhood area (Cotton End Parish) and to recognise the significant amount of work undertaken by the neighbourhood plan group and local community in preparing the neighbourhood plan.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan has undergone a referendum and there was a majority vote in favour of the plan. Under the Neighbourhood Planning legislation, the local authority must now make (adopt) the Neighbourhood Plan within 8 weeks of the date of the successful referendum.

5. DETAILS

- 5.1 Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011. New powers allow qualifying bodies (parish or town councils, or neighbourhood forums in areas without parish or town councils) to produce neighbourhood plans which enable communities to set planning policies for their area. Once part of the Council's statutory development plan they must be taken into account alongside Bedford Borough Council's local plans and national policy when planning applications are determined.
- 5.2 Producing a neighbourhood plan allows parish and town councils to increase the amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds they receive from developments within their area from 15% to 25%, incentivising the production of plans, especially those that propose growth.
- 5.3 The stages of preparation of a neighbourhood plan are similar to those for the preparation of a local plan. They are summarised in the following table.

Preparing a neighbourhood plan

Stage	Responsibility	Cotton End parish progress
Neighbourhood Area Designation	Application by parish council, publicity & decision by BBC	Complete (21 August 2019)
Prepare draft neighbourhood plan	NP group / parish council with assistance from others	Complete
Pre submission consultation (Regulation 14)	NP group / parish council (6 weeks minimum)	Complete (10 October – 21 November 2022)
Finalise plan in light of comments made	NP group / parish council	Complete
Submit plan to the local planning authority	NP group / parish council	Complete
Pre-examination consultation (Regulation 16)	BBC (6 weeks minimum)	Complete (4 June – 17 July 2024 and 7 October – 18 November 2024)
Examination	Examiner appointed by BBC (agreed by NP group/ PC)	Complete (5 December 2024 – 20 February 2025)
Consider examiner's recommendations	BBC and NP group / parish council	Complete
Referendum	Organised by BBC	Complete (24 April 2025)
Plan 'made' (part of the development plan)	BBC	We are here

- 5.4 Bedford Borough Council resolved by way of Executive decision on 5 March 2025 that the neighbourhood plan should proceed to referendum. The referendum covered the parish area of Cotton End and anyone who can usually vote in a local election and who is resident in the referendum area was able to vote.
- 5.5 The referendum question was 'Do you want Bedford Borough Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Cotton End Parish to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area?' This form of wording is that required by the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012. **From an electorate of 619 the turnout was 138 (22%) and the votes in favour 128 and against 10.**
- 5.6 As more than half of the people who voted were in favour of the plan, it must now be formally 'made'. It will be used in the determination of planning applications that fall within the parish of Cotton End. Its effectiveness will be monitored by the Parish Council and the need to review it to keep it up to date will be considered as part of this process.

- 5.7 Following Executive's decision to 'make' the Plan, the Parish Council and others who asked to be kept informed will be formally notified. The Plan and supporting documents, including a decision statement, will be published on the Council's web site and made available in line with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 6.1 The Neighbourhood Plan achieved a majority vote in favour of the neighbourhood plan. The Regulations require that the plan must be made within 8 weeks following the referendum unless:
- the local planning authority considers that the making of the plan would breach, or otherwise be compatible with, any EU or human rights obligations, or
 - a legal challenge has been brought in relation to the decision to hold a referendum or around the conduct of the referendum.

Neither circumstance exists in relation to the Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan so it must be 'made' by the Council.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues – relevant legal power

Section 38A (4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Council to 'make' a neighbourhood plan if more than half of those voting in a referendum have voted in favour. In such circumstances the making of a neighbourhood plan is therefore a legal requirement except in narrow circumstances where adoption of the plan would breach or otherwise be incompatible with EU or human rights obligations. In respect of this plan no such circumstances exist, therefore the Council is under a statutory duty to make the Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan and has eight weeks from the date of the referendum in which to do so.

Decisions to 'make' a neighbourhood plan are taken by Bedford Borough Council's Executive rather than Full Council¹.

Bedford Borough Council can be challenged on the making of a plan by way of judicial review. Challenges must normally be made within six weeks of the making of the plan.

Once 'made' the Council must publicise its decision in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

¹ Section 9D of the Local Government Act 2000

7.2 **Policy Issues**

Neighbourhood plans are examined to ensure that they meet the 'Basic Conditions' which are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The 'Basic Conditions' ensure, amongst other things, that appropriate regard has been had for local and national policies. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area (in this case saved policies in the Local Plan 2002, policies in the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 and Local Plan 2030);
- Be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

Regulation 32 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

7.3 **Resource Issues**

Costs associated with assisting the neighbourhood plan group to prepare their plan are funded from the Borough Council's Plans and Strategies Reserve.

When a neighbourhood plan becomes part of the development plan, the percentage of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts payable to a Parish Council arising from development within the parish increases from 15% to 25% resulting in Bedford Borough Council's percentage decreasing to 75%. National Planning Practice Guidance explains that parish councils must use the CIL receipts passed to them to support the development of the parish council's area by funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on the area.

7.4 **Risks**

The making of a neighbourhood plan following a positive referendum outcome is a statutory duty under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. There is a risk that the making of the plan could be challenged in the courts.

7.5 Environmental Implications

The Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan was screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) by Cotton End Parish Council. The SEA screening concluded that it was unnecessary to undertake SEA. The examiner supported this conclusion.

The Plan was further screened to determine if Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was necessary by Cotton End Parish Council. It concluded that the Plan would not have a significant effect on European sites either alone or in combination. Natural England, as a statutory consultee, did not dispute this conclusion. The examiner found no reason to disagree. Both the SEA screening and the HRA screening were reviewed in light of the proposed modifications to the Plan. The conclusions of both remained unchanged.

7.6 Equalities Impact

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

The development of the Cotton End Neighbourhood Development Plan is relevant to Cotton End Parish Council's General Equality Duty. The Parish Council is responsible for discharging their duty. An equality analysis has been carried out by the Parish Council.

7.7 Impact on Families

With regards to the Family Test, the Neighbourhood Plan will have no impact on families.

7.8 Community Safety and Resilience

The Neighbourhood Plan will have no impact on community safety and resilience.

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

The Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan will not have a direct impact on health and wellbeing, however the plan includes designations for Local Green Spaces and improvements to footpaths and cycle routes which will help with health and wellbeing.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

- 8.1 The Plan has been the subject of two statutory consultations. The neighbourhood plan group carried out pre-submission consultation on a draft plan, known as Regulation 14 stage, and the Council undertook post-submission consultation; the Regulation 16 stage. Details of the Regulation 14 responses are included in the Consultation Statement. The Regulation 16 responses were provided to the examiner of the Plan who considered them during the examination. They can be found on Bedford Borough Council's web-site on the [neighbourhood planning pages](#).

8.2 The following people have been consulted in preparing this report:

- Director of Environment
- Manager for Legal
- Chief Officer for Finance
- Energy Team
- Public Health
- Equalities Officer
- Chief Officer for Education
- Community Safety and Resilience

8.3 No adverse comments have been received.

9. **WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS**

9.1 Not applicable for this report.

10. **CONTACTS AND REFERENCES**

Report Contact Officer	Sonia Gallaher Sonia.Gallaher@bedford.gov.uk
File Reference	Neighbourhood Plans
Previous Relevant Minutes	Executive decision 1789 – 5 March 2025
Background Papers	None
Appendices	Appendix A – Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Neighbourhood Development Plan



THE COTTON END PLAN

2023 to 2040

Neighbourhood Development Plan

Referendum: 25 April 2025

Plan made: ?? June 2025

The Cotton End Neighbourhood Development Plan has been produced by the Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.



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Cotton End Plan Steering Group



Andrew Murray DMS
(Chair, Chair CERG &
Vice Chair CEPC)



Andre Merel
(Chair CEPC)



Angela Stimson
(Vice Chair CERG &
Councillor CEPC)



Linda Carter
(Parish Clerk)



Lesley Seymour
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David Champion
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Kelvin Nicholls
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Helen Butcher
(former Councillor CEPC)



Marie West
(former Vice Chair CEPC)

Barry Coope

Carole Coope



Foreword

Our Village Our Vision Our Future

Welcome to the Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan and thank you for taking the time to read this document which will help shape Cotton End's future changes in the built environment.

The Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan is a community initiative which, although sponsored by Cotton End Parish Council (CEPC) and supported by Cotton End Residents Group (CERG), and with funding made available by government, involves you; members of the Cotton End Community.

This document is the result of a lot of people's hard work over the last four years or so. Over 11 local people have been part of the steering groups that looked at areas such as Housing, Green Spaces, Roads, Transport and Parking, all themes highlighted in response to the first questionnaire to all Cotton End residents in early 2020.

The Neighbourhood Plan is part of Bedford Borough's development plan covering Cotton End and as such is used to help make planning decisions.

We would like to thank the members of the Steering Group, Cotton End residents and CEPC Clerk for their time and commitment to this project.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew" with a stylized flourish underneath.

Councillor Andrew Murray
Chair
Cotton End Residents Group
on behalf of the Cotton End Plan Steering Group

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andre Merel" in a cursive style.

Councillor Andre Merel
Chair
Cotton End Parish Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela" in a cursive style.

Councillor Angela Stimson
Vice Chair
Cotton End Residents Group



01 INTRODUCTION

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

1.1 Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the 2011 Localism Act to allow communities to shape development in their areas through the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders.

1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan's Policies are concerned with land use planning matters. However, there are some limitations to what Neighbourhood Plans can achieve, for example: They cannot promote a lesser number of homes than is set out in the Local Plan, nor can they override the National Planning Policy Framework. They cannot address enforcement issues such as speed limits, traffic management and parking regulations. They do not designate conservation areas or enforce Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and matters of Licensing. They deal essentially with spatial issues such as the where, how and what can be built.

1.3 While service issues, such as the funding of a bus route, are not spatial, Neighbourhood Plans can encourage funding for these through developer contributions and identifying them as Community Infrastructure Levy Priorities and Community Priority Projects (see Section 4).

1.4 When a planning application is submitted to Bedford Borough Council (BBC), the Borough Planning Officers are required to refer to the Cotton End Plan (alongside the Borough's own Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)) to check whether the proposed development is in keeping with the policies stated in the Cotton End Plan. In planning terms, the policies set out in Section 3 of this document are the most important part of the Cotton End Plan.

Why do we need a Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan?

1.5 Cotton End, like much of Bedford, is a property hotspot and open market prices in 2021 rose by 19% on the previous year and 46% since the 2016 peak. The demand for homes in Bedford has increased significantly and new Permitted Development Rights are putting further pressure on land used for housing, local employment, services and light industry across the Borough. Due to the Settlement Policy Area boundary around Cotton End village, meeting any demand places development pressure on in-fill and brownfield sites within the village.

1.6 In 2017 Cotton End Residents Group felt that, while it was unclear if Cotton End will have to support an increase in homes outside the current Settlement Policy Area, it would have added influence by having a Neighbourhood Plan. Cotton End Residents Group unsuccessfully lobbied the former Eastcotts Parish Council (EPC) to apply to make a Neighbourhood Plan for the two villages in Eastcotts Ward, Shortstown and Cotton End. Following this, Cotton End Residents Group as a community forum, attempted to apply to make a Neighbourhood Plan for Cotton End, which was rejected by BBC. Subsequently these events were followed by a Community Governance Review of EPC, where Cotton End's representation on EPC was planned to be reduced from 5 Parish Councillors to just 2. Cotton End Residents Group (CERG) decided that it would use this opportunity to campaign for an independent Parish Council for Cotton End, which was successful. Cotton End Parish Council (CEPC) was formed in April 2019 and applied to BBC to have a Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan in July 2019. The plan can shape the design of new developments, landscape and protect the nature of the village.

CEPC was aware that to be effective this plan needed to include ideas from the residents of Cotton End. You did not disappoint and have been responding to questionnaires and sharing your views at various events and meetings (see pages 9-11).

1.7 As a result of these events and questionnaires the Steering Group have been drafting planning policies that specifically address our needs, concerns and ambitions for Cotton End. The policies in the Bedford Local Plan and National Planning Framework still apply but we have, with your input, attempted to create more specific policies and a community priority project list for Cotton End.

1.8 In recent years, much of the housing land supply within the Bedford Borough area has come from windfall sites; sites which were not specifically earmarked for development in the Bedford Borough Council's Local Plan. This has given rise to the concern that this type of piecemeal development is causing harm across Bedford Borough and could affect the character of our village.

1.9 Such speculative developments also make it more challenging for Bedford Borough to secure the funding necessary to deliver supporting infrastructure improvements and affordable housing. A number of factors are driving increased demand for residential development in Bedford Borough such as:

- An ageing population creating a high demand for smaller 'downsized' properties.
- Larger family homes being sought after by families who wish to move out of London in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Redevelopment of 'smaller house' sites into larger family homes.

1.10 Residents have been concerned for some time about the impact of development and how it alters the character of streets, the village and our landscapes.

1.11 Following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, both CERG and CEPC recognised that in preparing the Neighbourhood Development Plan there would be an opportunity to study the character of Cotton End. The aim is to address some of the above concerns and shape any development informed by a sound understanding of the prevailing character of the village, supported by facts and figures from the 2011 Census and our own survey. This resulted in the production of the 'Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan survey' in 2020. The [report](#) was then published by CEPC.

1.12 A number of other issues have also been brought to light through analysis and engagement with local residents, business and other stakeholders, namely:

- High levels of traffic congestion on the A600 at peak times and related air pollution, car parking shortage as well as lack and quality of provision for pedestrians, walkers, cyclists and bus users.
- A need to support the vibrancy of the village by improving the mix of uses of village community facilities.
- A need for affordable housing within the village.
- The existing development sites identified in the village.

1.13 This is the first time that local communities have had the opportunity to create planning policies with this degree of formal weight. Once confirmed by public vote the Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan will carry legal weight and become a statutory planning document for planning decisions in the Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan Area.

What the Plan will do

1.14 Our vision is that in 2040 Cotton End will have maintained, improved and enhanced its tranquil and attractive character surrounded by open countryside, with a diverse community unified as a modern, vibrant village.

1.15 The Cotton End Plan will help Cotton End to keep its character that is so valued by residents and visitors. It will influence how any future proposed developments are planned and developed with the community.

1.16 Other issues that are not strictly related to land use planning have also been included in the Cotton End Plan and will be used to influence other public sector bodies that invest in our area. For example, in transport infrastructure as well as priorities of the Parish. Once adopted, the Cotton End Plan will ensure that that 25 percent of any Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL – a tax on new developments) from any new homes in the Cotton End Neighbourhood Area will be allocated to projects in Cotton End village.

1.17 There are three key themes under which the steering group has drafted policies. They include:

- **Housing & Design** (see page 28) aimed at providing design codes (standards) to promote local distinctiveness and character within the village setting, as well as providing strong support for more affordable smaller homes, homes for later life and starter homes.

- **Getting Around** (see page 48) aimed at improving access, capacity, appearance and function of parking facilities for cars, bicycles and motorbikes. Enhancing the public street space to make a positive contribution to the natural and built environment. Ensuring all residents have access to community green and open spaces.

- **Open Space & Recreation** (see page 56) aimed at promoting an active community within the village, with improved community and cultural facilities for residents, particularly youth and visitors.

Community Priority Projects

1.18 A number of initiatives are proposed to enhance the neighbourhood socially, economically and environmentally. Sometimes these do not fall within the remit of Town and Country Planning or cannot be delivered through a Neighbourhood Development Plan. However, these issues are extremely important to the community and it is clear that these are areas which need to be addressed and dealt with, to provide the results that the local people want to see. We have called these initiatives "Community Infrastructure Priority Projects" and have included them in Section 4 of this document.

1.19 We propose to advance these Community Priority Projects through CEPC and CERG, working, as needed, in partnership with BBC, any developers and other partners including local groups and associations. It is the intention that these projects should be financed where possible by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), S106 monies from developers and other funds as they become available.

How the Cotton End Plan was prepared

1.22 Cotton End Parish Council (CEPC) was formed in April 2019 and applied to BBC to have a Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan in July 2019. Later in 2019 a Steering Group was formed to oversee the production of the Cotton End Plan. The initial group considered what data was needed to build the evidence base such as socio-economic profile of the local population and employment trends, housing and transport profiles, land uses, natural environments, heritage assets and local services.

SECTION 1: ABOUT YOU	Number of Respondents
How old are you?	
16-24	2
25-39	11
40-69	43
70+	31
Total	87



1.23 The group also formulated an initial questionnaire which was used to raise awareness of the Cotton End Plan and to collect initial information from villagers. Some 87 questionnaires were completed giving an excellent return rate of 24.3%. It detailed what a Neighbourhood Plan would entail and could achieve. The questionnaire was posted to all households in Cotton End in February 2020 and every resident over 16 was invited to complete it.

1.24 Once analysed it became apparent that the majority of replies (49.4%) had come from residents aged between 40-69, and 31% who were aged over 70. As illustrated in Figure 2 questions related to the village itself, the Physical Environment scored the highest with 70% of villagers who responded with Community Spirit closely behind with 57% of villagers. In Figure 3 we can see that 60% of villagers intend to continue living in Cotton End in 10 years time.

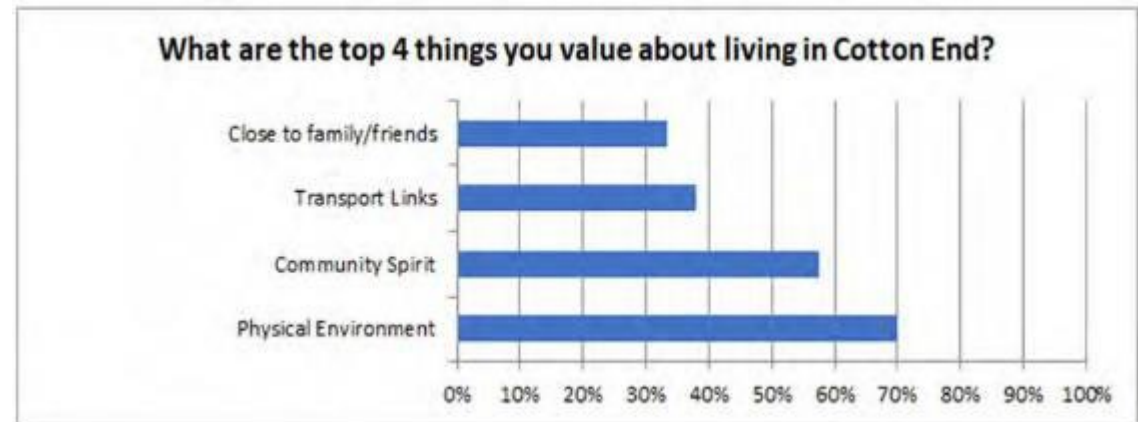


Figure 2: Extract of results from Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2020 | Villagers Key Priorities

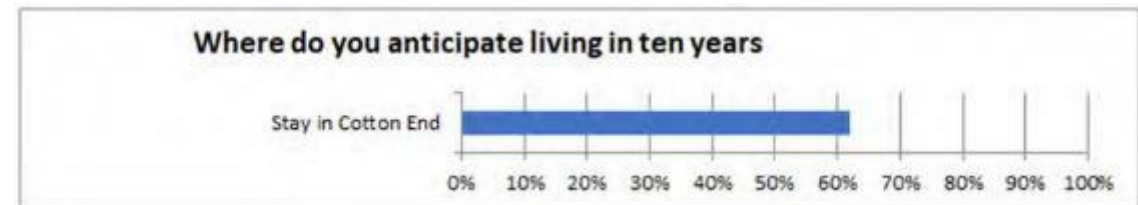


Figure 3: Extract of results from Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2020 | Villagers Key Priorities

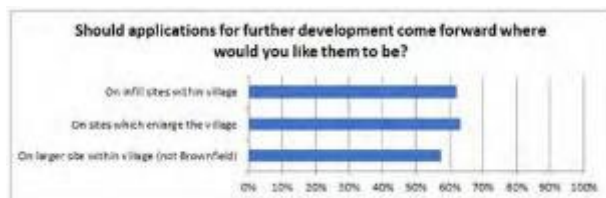


Figure 4: Extract of results from Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2020 | Villagers Key Priorities

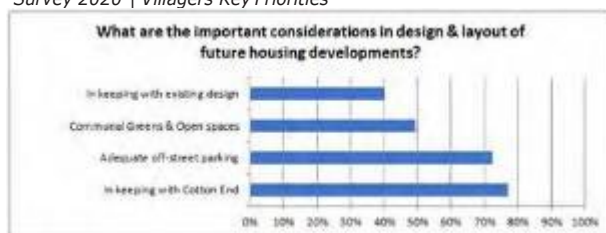


Figure 5: Extract of results from Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2020 | Villagers Key Priorities

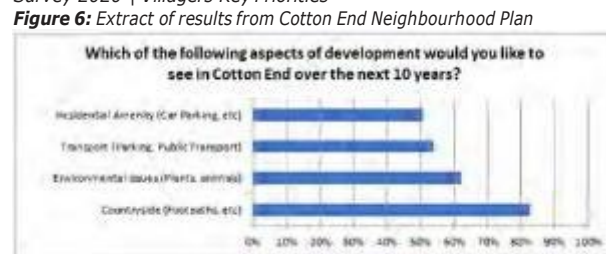


Figure 6: Extract of results from Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2020 | Villagers Key Priorities

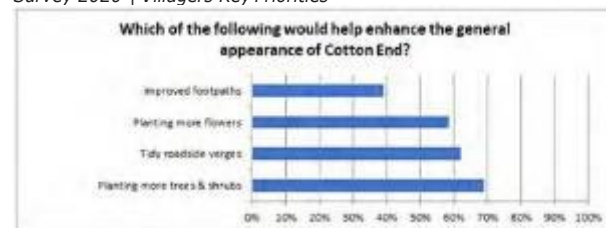


Figure 7: Extract of results from Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2020 | Villagers Key Priorities

1.25 When asked about possible sites for development, villagers indicated they would overwhelmingly prefer sites within the current village SPA (Figure 4).

1.26 Villagers felt that the design and layout of any future housing should be *In keeping with existing design* of Cotton End (Figure 5).

1.27 More than 80% of villagers who responded want to see improvement in the *Countryside (footpaths, etc)* over the next 10 years (Figure 6).

1.28 To enhance the general appearance of Cotton End, almost 70% of those who completed the survey wanted to see the *Planting of more trees and shrubs* (Figure 7), with *Tidy roadside verges* and *Planting more flowers* also receiving support from more than 50% of villagers who responded.

1.29 Once the results of this initial survey had been analysed a report was produced and shared with every house in the village.

1.30 Following the success of this initial survey, in early November 2020 the Steering Group via CEPC bid for a funding grant for a formal Housing Needs Survey to be carried out by Bedford Rural Communities Charity (BRCC). The funding was granted at the end of November 2020 and the survey was commissioned in January 2021.

1.31 The BRCC Housing Needs Survey (HNS) was delivered to every house in the village in January 2021 and the returned forms were received by BRCC in February 2021. BRCC then produced a report from the surveys which was shared with the village in summary form during March 2021.

1.32 In January 2022, an outline first DRAFT1 'Pre-Submission Cotton End Plan' was created by the Chair and shared with the Steering Group and a number of CEPC councillors to demonstrate how The Cotton End Plan might look, for the purpose of testing its format and potential content.

1.33 As the first DRAFT1 version of 'The Cotton End Plan' was well received, the Chair of the Steering Group took up the task of developing the content of the plan, and further monthly drafts of 'The Cotton End Plan' were produced for the monthly CEPC meetings from February to July 2022.

1.34 The Final Draft (pre-submission) version of 'The Cotton End Plan' was launched at the Cotton End Village Hall on 26th July 2022, attended by 25 residents. All were invited and encouraged to comment and were given a blank pre-printed Regulation 14 consultation comments form. A further 11 residents saw the Cotton End Plan at a breakfast event at the Village Hall on 26th July 2022.

1.35 The Final Draft (pre-submission) version of 'The Cotton End Plan' was made available as a downloadable copy, an online electronic book on Issuu and on paper by request. We received and reviewed over 14 responses and representations from residents and stakeholders.

1.36 From 26th July and 2nd December 2022, we carried out the statutory Regulation 14 publication and consultation period on our Pre-Submission Plan. We reviewed your feedback and prepared a Consultation Statement documenting the engagement process to date.

1.37 This is published on The Cotton End Plan website (cutt.ly/cottonendplan) for you to review including all the feedback received. We would like to thank you very much for your contributions, support and ideas to improve the Cotton End Plan.



01 Introduction

02 COTTON END A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Topography and Landscape

2.1 Cotton End Parish is situated about 3 miles south east of Bedford some way south of the river on the A600 at the foot of Hammer Hill, part of the Greensand Ridge. It comprises of land south of Shortstown, Cotton End village, Shocott Spring, Exeter Wood and the hamlet of Herrings Green. Cotton End lies in the flood plain of the River Great Ouse, except near the boundary with Old

Warden at the south-east where it lies on a clay escarpment. The village is quite low-lying - the Baptist church stands at 33m above sea level and 32 Wood Lane for example, at 34m. Herrings Farmhouse is 38m above sea level. The parish lies at 26m above sea level at its lowest point, and 96m at its highest point on Hammer Hill (see Figure 8). Throughout the area, though, the solid, or underlying, geology is Oxford Clay, a mudstone laid down between 154 and 164 million years ago in the warm, shallow seas of the Jurassic Period.

2.2 The village is bounded by arable farmland, and the parish contains both ancient and modern woodlands. Exeter Wood was planted sometime between 1600 and 1643 when the Lesser Cardington Manor was owned by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Earls of Exeter. Shocott Spring which covers some 52 hectares, is a fairly recent woodland, with planting taking place between 2005 and 2011. Shocott Spring contains picnic tables and benches, with mown and surfaced paths that are level enough for buggies and wheelchairs. The village itself contains recreational facilities at the Village Hall.

The Origins of “Cotton End”

2.3 Historically the names of Eastcotes, Eastcotts and Cotton End all have the same Anglo-Saxon origin. Eastcotes and Cotton End are compounds of the same words. In Anglo-Saxon, Cote is a dwelling, and Ea is water. Multiple dwellings are “Eas,” and by adding “Cote” we get Eascote. But what is “Cotton End”? The word Cotton can apply to an agricultural district. If we analyse it “Cote is near enough to Cotton as far as sound goes, the English of which is “the dwelling in.” But the dwelling in what? If we go back to the origin of Eastcotts the answer is “Cote-eu-Eau” - a dwelling in a marshy or wet area.

Over 150 years ago the local pronunciation was “Cotton Ean” – not Cotton End. As “Eas” is the singular of “Ea,” Ean” is the plural of the same word. “Cote en Ean” is literally a dwelling in the waters. Historically in certain wet seasons the village was in a flooded condition, and before the watercourses were made (which are a relatively modern development) the village merits its watery origin.

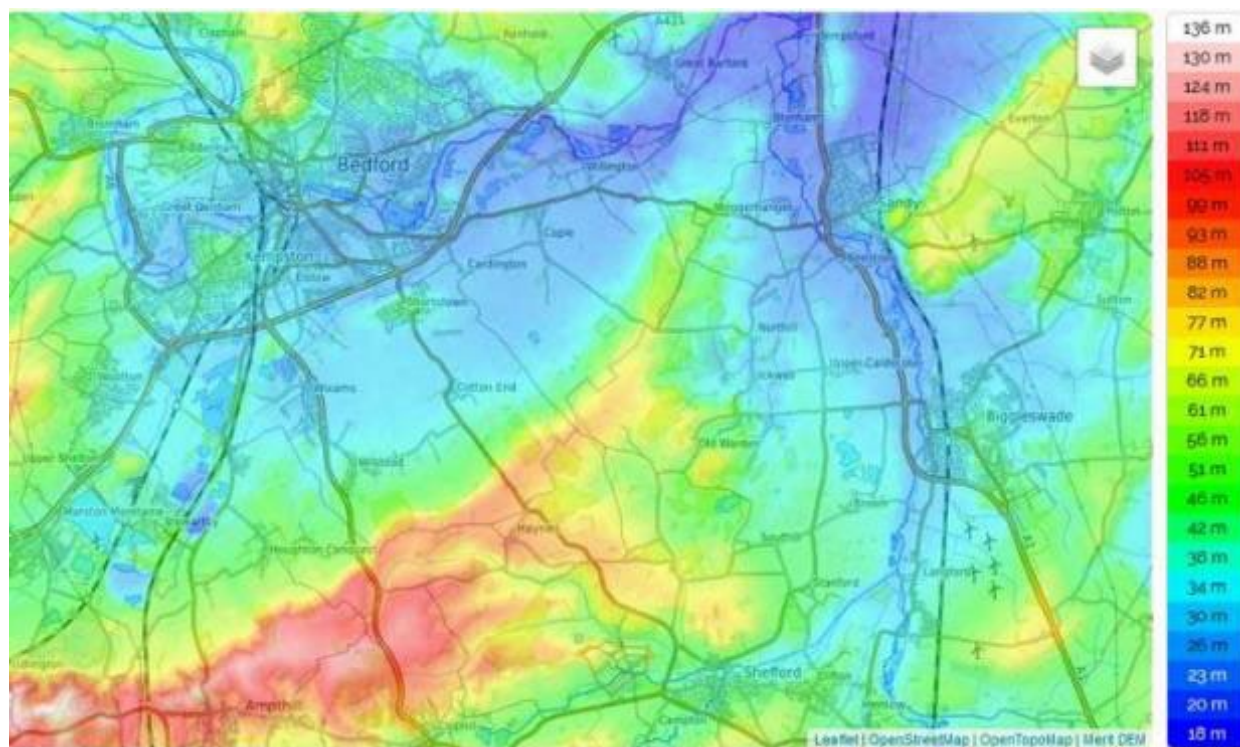


Figure 8: Cotton End topography *Source: Character Assessment: Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan, for Cotton End Parish Council 2020*

Settlement History

Cotton End before the Middle Ages

2.4 A number of archaeological discoveries have been found since the 1970s indicating there were ancient settlements in and around what is now Cotton End village from before the Middle Ages. The oldest artefact was a Palaeolithic hand-axe found between Shortstown and Cotton End. Around 1976 some flint flakes dating to the Mesolithic or early Neolithic periods were found south-east of Exeter Wood. More evidence of occupation was found for the Iron Age period north-west of Rookery Farm where crop marks show a complex of linear features as well as clusters of enclosures. The enclosures include two clusters of enclosures with curved walls that are suspected to date to the Iron Age. A third cluster includes a rectangular enclosure and a possible banjo enclosure which indicate a later use of the site.

2.5 Extensive areas of crop marks exist in the parish, some suggesting prehistoric activity. Double-ditched track ways, small enclosures and ring ditches have been identified on the border of Eastcotts and Wilstead, between Cotton End and Shortstown. Late Iron Age as well as Roman material has been found here, including large quantities of fragments of pottery, roof and floor tiles, and a small number of metal objects. Ring ditches are usually associated with the Bronze Age either as the remains of barrows or huts. North of Rookery Farm is a small isolated sub-rectangular enclosure crop mark. A rectangular crop mark is also visible west of the High Road at its dog-leg turning south-east in Cotton End.

2.6 Late Iron Age pottery has also been found at Hammer Hill south of Cotton End, along with a very rare silver coin of Cunobelin, a king in late pre-Roman Iron Age Britain, dating from circa 15 to 35 AD.

2.7 There is some evidence of later activity in and around Cotton End. A possible Roman road has been traced in Cotton End which may have run from Bedford to Ickleford in Hertfordshire close to or on the site of the modern A600. At Cotton End Nurseries, now the site of Hermitage Gardens, a sestertius of Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161) was found. Four of these large brass coins were the equivalent of one silver denarius

2.8 An opaque turquoise bead, thought to be Anglo-Saxon, was found west of Exeter Wood. It was irregularly decorated with specks of opaque white, marbled with red-brown, which was possibly originally red. Its surfaces are weathered and its circular perforation has a red-brown colouration around one end.

Post-Medieval Cotton End

2.9 The settlement of Cotton End is currently thought to have been largely deserted after the medieval period and subsequently re-occupied in the later post medieval period. The present village is mainly located within the medieval boundaries, but the use of land has seen a slight shift to the south. Exeter Wood lies in the southern part of the parish and is a fragment of ancient woodland. It is known that in 1240 both Exeter Wood and Manor Wood were included as part of a more extensive woodland landscape.

Eastcotts Castle

2.10 Exeter Wood hides a secret – Eastcotts Castle, a Norman motte-and-bailey castle. The castle stands on a broad terrace below the summit of Hammer Hill, and was formed by the excavation of a wide ditch around a central mound, or motte, raised from the up-cast soil.

The motte, which is circular in plan, measures about 20 metres in diameter. It stands approximately 1.8 metres above the level of its surroundings and the surface, which would originally have supported the timber tower, has a slightly domed profile. The surrounding ditch measures approximately 4.5 metres in width, 1.4 metres in depth and a low moat bank surrounds the outer edge. As there is no trace of a causeway spanning the moat, access to the castle is thought to have been provided by a timber bridge.

Eastcotts Castle is thought to have been constructed in the late 11th or the 12th century, either as part of the consolidation of the countryside after the Norman invasion, or as a matter of local defence during the period of sporadic civil war between Stephen and Matilda (1134-1148). Just outside the south-east corner of Exeter Wood lie crop marks and earthworks indicating two rectangular enclosures, thought to be the site of a 12th century hermitage.

From the Domesday Book to Whitbread

2.11 Cotton End Manor was known variously as Cotes Manor, Cotton Manor, Eastcotts Manor and Cardington Cotton End Manor. It seems to have its origin in Nigel de Albini's manor, the largest of the three manors held at Harrowden, recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. So Cotton End Manor may have extended further than just the settlement of Cotton End to include part of Harrowden or what later became Shortstown.

2.12 The de Albini family were Barons of Cainhoe (today's Clophill) and Cotton End Manor stayed in the family until 1233 and the death of Robert de Albini. It was then divided between his sisters Isabel, Ascelina and Joan. The manor was eventually re-united by Amalric, son of Joan and her husband Ralph Saint Amand, and remained in the Saint Amand family until 1403 when Almaric de Saint Amand died. He was the last in the line and his estates passed to his grandson, Gerard de Braybrook.

2.13 Braybrook died in 1427 and his lands passed to Sir William Beauchamp and his wife Elizabeth, Gerard's daughter. Sir William became Lord Saint Amand in 1449 and died in 1457. His son, Richard, was accused by King Richard III (1483-1485) of plotting with Henry Tudor in 1483 and the following year all his lands were given to Lord Stanley and his son. The Stanley's deserted Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 where he was defeated and killed by Henry Tudor, who became King Henry VII (1485-1509). Despite their support, Henry took Lord Saint Amand's lands from them and restored them to their original owner as soon as he entered power.

2.14 In 1491 Elizabeth, Richard Amand's former wife, but by then widow of Sir Roger Tocotes, held the manor and passed it to her son Richard, who died in 1508. By the 1530s the manor was held by Lord George Cobham, who gave it to Richard Osbaldiston around 1534. Two years later Osbaldiston gave it to his wife Dorothy, who died four months after him in 1541. Their son John inherited the manor and gave it to Sir George Gascoigne of Cardington in 1544.

2.15 Gascoigne mortgaged the manor to Thomas Colby of London in 1566 and a legal dispute arose soon afterwards, presumably for non-payment of interest. Colby took ownership of the manor and it passed to his daughter Dorothy and her husband Philip, Lord Wharton who sold it to Robert Mildmay and John Cason for £600 in 1612 or 1613.

2.16 By 1633 Sir Arthur Savage died owning the manor and was inherited by his son, but by 1693 it was in the ownership of Charles Palmer who had bought it from Lawrence Purchase. By 1770 it was owned by another Charles Palmer, whose daughter Dorothy sold it in 1779 for £4,000 to Samuel Whitbread of Cardington.

2.17 The manor remained in the possession of the Whitbread family into the 20th century until manorial rights were extinguished in 1924. Southill Estates, owned by the Whitbread family still owns most of the land south of Cotton End village, including Exeter Wood.

Development of the Village 1500 to 1800

2.18 Few records of the development of Cotton End exist before the 19th century, however the residential development and expansion has largely remained within the same settlement outline for more than 200 years.

2.19 Like much of Bedford, non-conformity grew in popularity as a result of John Bunyan, and Bunyan is believed to have preached in Cotton End. In 1776 the non-conformist Cotton End Meeting was formed, including a Meeting House (church) in the area where Meeting Close now exists.

2.20 The oldest known buildings in Cotton End date from the late 1500s to the late 1700s. The oldest is the Grade II listed Manor House a late 16th Century building of red brick with stone facings and an old clay tiled roof, with two storeys and attics. Originally, it was built in an H-plan, but the south cross-wing was destroyed in a fire. 21 High Road, again Grade II listed, dates from the early to mid-1700s and is a timber framed building with pebble-dashed rendering and a tiled roof.

2.21 The Bell public house, also Grade II listed has been dated to the 1700s, however, it may only date to the 1780s. It is timber-framed with colour-washed roughcast rendering and a thatched roof. The building is an L-shape with one storey plus attics. A 20th Century single storey block lies within the angle of the L linking the main building to a thatched one storey block at the rear.

2.22 Herrings Farmhouse, originally known as Cotton End Farm, stands in Herrings Green. The house, which is Grade II listed, dates from before 1782, and was rebuilt in 1786.

Development of the Village 1800 to 1945

2.23 Today Cotton End contains a mix of ancient iconic heritage assets and 20th century architecture that make up its quality and create its village character.

2.24 The beginning of modern development and the shaping of Cotton End as we know it today started in the Victorian era, with the construction of the Baptist Church in 1836, followed by the nearby Church Hall, originally known as the School House with two attached cottages between 1836 and 1873. Eastcotts School opened in 1875, the Whitbread cottages in 1886 and the former Harrows public house, where the current building has now been converted into multiple dwellings, was rebuilt on the same site in 1899.

2.25 Figures 10 and 11 on pages 17 and 18 show the expansion of Cotton End between the years 1901 and 1948. Since then, the number of dwellings in Cotton End has grown significantly, while the village has remained within its 19th Century Geographic the beginning of the 20th Century, Cotton End had some 5 pubs, with the core housing along the eastern side of the High Road and a few houses along Wood Lane leading to Exeter Wood.

Development of the Village 1945 to today

2.26 The village remained spatially very small until after World War II, when the first major developments started with the construction of 8 dwellings in The Crescent and 26 dwellings in Meeting Close some time before 1948.

2.27 Since 1950 the rate of development has been comparatively fast for the small size of the village, although it has been relatively piecemeal, rejecting the monotony and uniformity of controlled growth and imposed plans in favour of organic, undisciplined and haphazard spontaneity.

2.28 Infilling along Wood Lane, on land that was previously garden land began around 1950, and has continued to today, resulting in 94 homes along its length, including 6 flats in Gascoyne House at no. 62 built in 2017.

2.29 Further development in the 1960s created 19 homes in Manor Way, a further 31 homes in Hall Way and another 38 homes in Bunkers Drive.

2.30 Rather surprisingly, little development occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, being limited to infilling throughout the village.

2.31 Development started again in the mid-1990s with the construction of 28 homes in Hermitage Gardens, on the brownfield site that was previously Cotton End Nurseries.

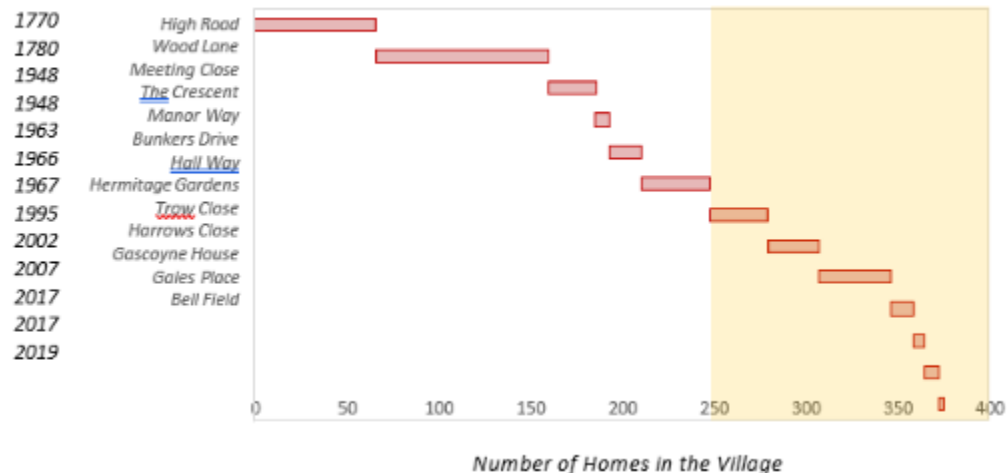
2.32 The new century saw Trow Close built, providing 39 homes on a brownfield site of 4 demolished cottages, along with 12 homes in Harrows Close.

2.33 Gales Place, a mix of private, shared ownership and social housing was built in 2017 on the site of the Wood Lane flats. This comprises both houses and flats.

2.34 The latest development in Cotton End, while small scale, provided 3 houses on the site of Bell Field adjacent to The Bell pub, formerly a site of stables, and included sympathetic conversion of the historic barn.

2.35 As shown in Figure 9 below, the number of homes in Cotton End has increased by a quarter (25%) within the last 30 years.

Figure 9: Cotton End - A Development Timeline



Settlement Structure and Role of Cotton End

2.36 The parish of Cotton End was established on 1st April 2019 as the result of a 'Reorganisation of Community Governance Order'. The Parish of Eastcotts was dissolved and the area divided into 2 newly established parishes of Cotton End and Shortstown. As a result, all available demographic information relates to the former parish of Eastcotts.

2.37 Cotton End is the main settlement within the Parish of Cotton End, part of the Borough of Bedford Borough. The settlement is situated between Shortstown, to the north, and Haynes in Central Beds, to the south, and lies 42 miles north of London, just south of the A421 Bedford Southern Bypass and almost midway between the M1 motorway J13 and A1 Black Cat Roundabout.

2.38 There are frequent commuter train services from Bedford station (5 miles) and Arlesey station (8 miles) into central London (St Pancras International and other City stations), south London and Gatwick and Luton airports. Heathrow airport is less than 60 miles away by road.

2.39 Bedford Borough was ranked as the 128th prosperous place in the UK in 2021, above average and in the top third of local authorities. It is also ranked at 94th for Living Conditions placing it in the top quarter of least deprived areas in the UK (Legatum Institute, 2021).

2.40 The village contains many detached houses with large gardens. Herrings Green contains properties with large tracts of land.

2.41 A distinct and cherished characteristic of Cotton End is its tranquil, verdant and mature landscape setting. This is illustrated in Figures 13a and 13b showing a few photographs of typical local street and tranquil landscapes scenes.

2.42 The many mature trees, hedges and front gardens and verges give those visiting and passing through the village the impression of a semi-rural setting. Mature trees in gardens, sightlines enhanced through the local topography and the mostly low rise housing typologies further heightens this sense of the tranquil verdant character of Cotton End.

2.43 Cotton End's residential character and spatial organisation as a village does not follow typical residential characteristics, consisting of circa 373 homes spread over approximately 26 hectares, giving a density of around 14 dwellings per hectare. As would be expected for the village's semi-rural environment, the 14 dwellings per hectare is substantially lower than the UK National standard density for suburban districts of 20 units per hectare, but is in line with the density for Green Belt Land. The dwelling density varies significantly between the village itself and the other parts of the parish.

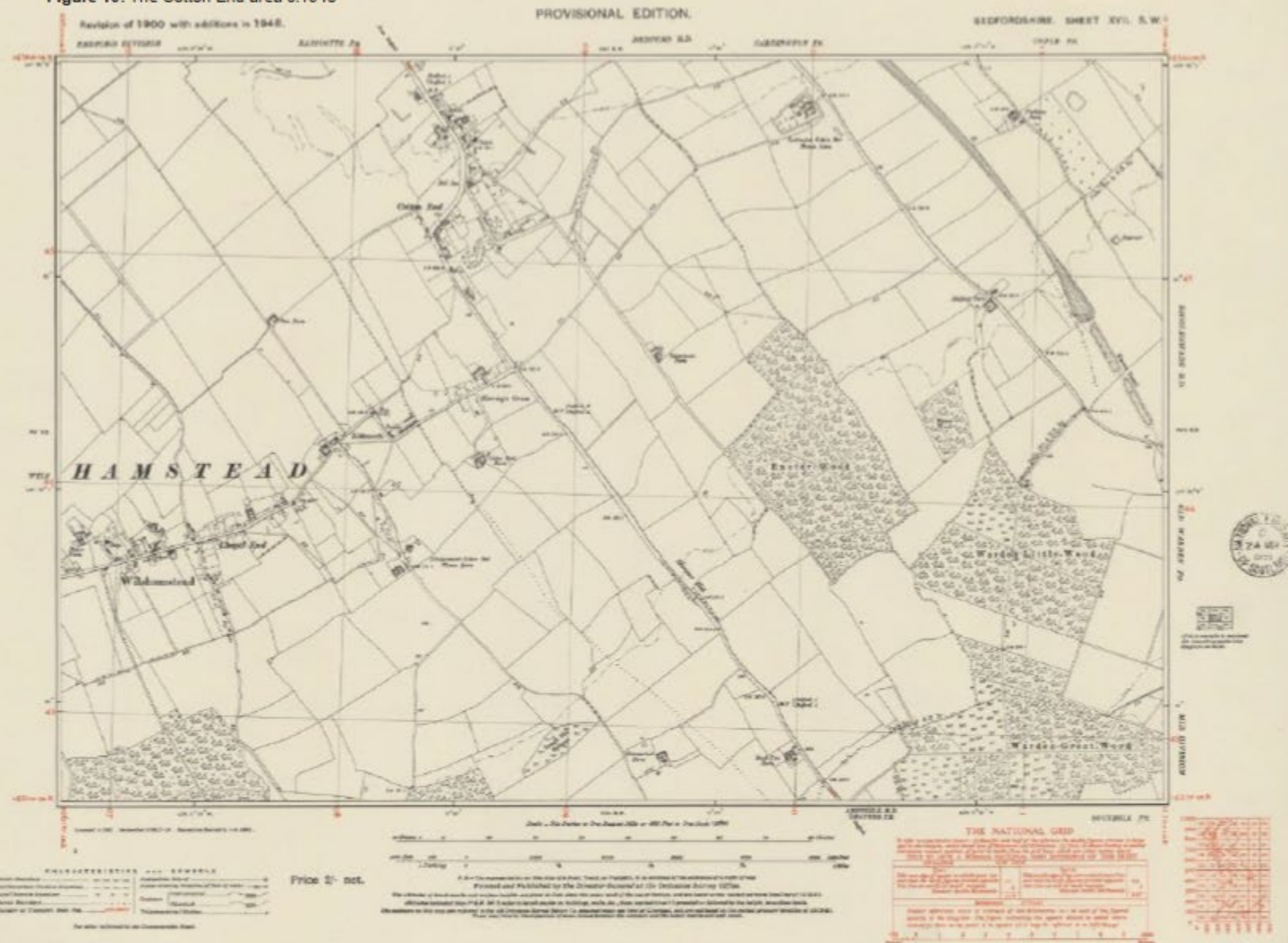
2.44 Many of Cotton End's 650 residents commute into Bedford, and to other towns such as Milton Keynes for work, which highlights the importance of good walking, cycling, public transport provision, and road transport links.

2.45 The A600 is the only road running through Cotton End, running north to Bedford and south to Hitchin. The village contains no shops, services or local amenities. Bedford itself is the main retail centre in the borough and is also a key local employment centre. Other out of town retail areas include The Alban Retail Park on the A600 itself, and the nearby St Johns Retail Park. Other outlying areas have major retail provision such as the Interchange Retail Park just off the A421 near Kempston and Fairfield Park at the north of Bedford. Superfast broadband was rolled-out to Cotton End in 2015, enabling local residents, facilitated through technology, to work or run businesses from home.

2.46 The Parish has a mix of community facilities. The Village Hall has disabled access, disabled toilet, hearing loop, baby changing facilities, along with ample parking and the adjacent playing field includes a children's play area. The Bell is the only surviving village pub. Amberleigh Gardens, a Wedding venue is at Gorse Farm at the north of the village. Outside the village centre is Herrings Green Activity Farm & Birds of Prey Centre. At the southern end of the Parish, at Summerfield Barns, is Bedford Model Engineering Society's Summerfields' Miniature Railways. At the extreme southern edge of the Parish, where Bedford Borough meets Central Bedfordshire, is Summerfield's Trout Fishery which physically spans both local authorities.

2.47 Additional shops and services are found nearby. One mile north is Shortstown the more prominent destination for Cotton End's residents, where two convenience stores, one with a post office, a pharmacy and a doctor's surgery can be found. One mile south west in Wilstead, there are further facilities with a convenience store/post office.

Figure 10: The Cotton End area c.1948



02 Cotton End | A Brief Overview

Figure 11: The Cotton End area 1901
(Bedfordshire Archives, Ordnance Survey 25 inches to the mile series second edition 1901,
<https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/CottonEnd/CottonEnd%20Maps.aspx>)

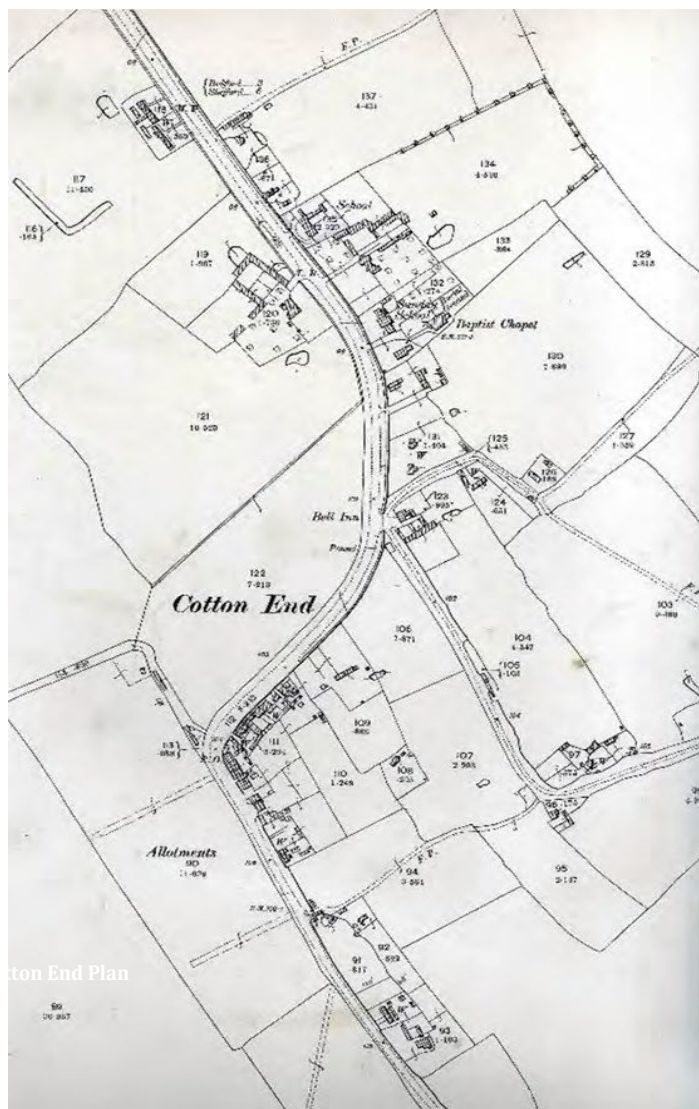


Figure 12: Building footprints within the Settlement Policy Area, 2020
(Bedford Borough Council, Policies map Cotton End 2020,
<https://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=0a95pLC12nL9y+c8yoVdqq==&name=Policies Map Inset Area 11 A4 P Cotton End.pdf>)





Figure 13a: Verdant character of Cotton End



Figure 13b: Verdant character of Cotton End



Note: The Neighbourhood Plan Area encompasses Cotton End village and around 75% of Shocott Spring, part of the Forest of Marston Vale. Area, and includes heritage assets including the Manor House, which is Grade II* listed.

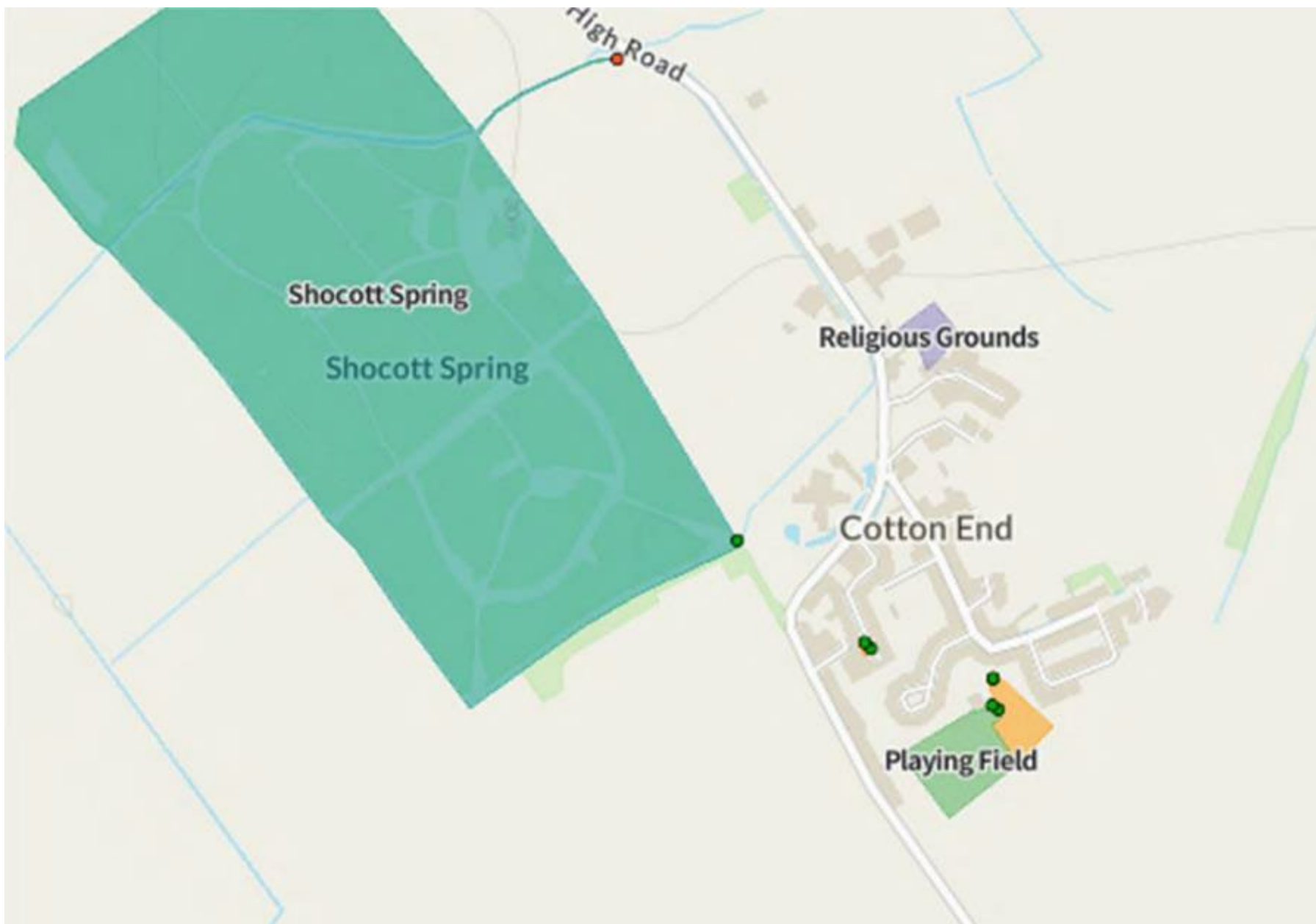


Figure 14: Green Spaces and Cotton End village





03 THE COTTON END PLAN



3.1 COTTON END PLAN VISION & OBJECTIVES

Our Vision

In 2040, Cotton End will have maintained and improved its attractive character as a tranquil verdant village, retaining its heritage, identity and spirit, surrounded by highly cherished tranquil open countryside, maintaining separation from, and does not coalesce with Shortstown and Wilstead, with an active, thriving and diverse community.

This is helped by:

- + A variety of types, sizes and styles of attractive and durable homes positively reflecting the character of the area;
- + Protecting and enhancing the leafy and biodiverse nature of Cotton End's village neighbourhood and surrounding open countryside;
- + Easy access to the open countryside and a well-maintained network of footpaths, bridleways, cycle paths and roads within Cotton End Parish;
- + A broad range of well-kept and highly frequented community and cultural facilities within easy walking distance of public transport, with transport links to other destinations nearby such as shops and services;
- + A diverse mix of local residents and employees of different faiths, ages, ethnicity and socio-economic means being able to live, work, study, and socialise;
- + Good accessibility for public and private modes of transport and sufficient parking for all modes including cars, bicycles and motorbikes.

Our Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

The presented objectives guided the development of the Neighbourhood Plan Policies and Community Priority Projects. The objectives were shaped by what was learnt from engaging with residents and from analysis of facts, figures and trends. These are:

- + To protect and enhance the tranquil verdant character of Cotton End (Objective 1);
- + To meet new housing demand in a manner that is sensitive to the character of the village, without infringing on green spaces, while preserving the landscape character of the village and remaining within the Settlement Policy Area only, having regard to context and the character of Cotton End (Objective 2);
- + To support the retention of smaller homes available to younger people and older downsizers (Objective 3);
- + To promote the protection and positive use of the Green Space surrounding the village Settlement Policy Area by providing more opportunity for the community to access it by foot, horseback and bicycle (Objective 4);
- + To protect open spaces in the village Settlement Policy Area from development and to ensure that all residents have access to community open spaces for leisure and recreational purposes within a reasonable walking distance (Objective 5);
- + To maintain a modern and vibrant village, by supporting smart and green technologies throughout Cotton End enabling a more connected and mobile community, and improving ease of access to local products and services outside the village (Objective 6);
- + To promote an active community within the village, with improved community and cultural facilities for residents and visitors (Objective 7);
- + To encourage and facilitate the development of community buildings and sites in the village, in order to protect and enhance community facilities and amenities for the community and visitors (Objective 8);
- + To encourage walking and cycling to and from key local destinations by improving the facilities for safe walking and cycling, and adequate parking (dedicated and safe paths, lanes and tracks) within and outside Cotton End (Objective 9);
- + To require any development and public realm improvements to make a positive contribution to the natural, built and historic environment of Cotton End Parish (Objective 10);
- + To support proposals improving access, capacity, appearance and functioning of parking facilities for cars, bicycles and motorbikes; (Objective 11);
- + To seek improvements to roads and transport infrastructure facilitating a smooth traffic flow through the village (Objective 12);
- + To ensure Cotton End Parish Council, Cotton End Residents Group, and all the local community have a meaningful opportunity to engage with any developers and their design teams in the early stages of designing proposals for sites, including the key locations for development as identified in the Key Proposal Map (Objective 13).

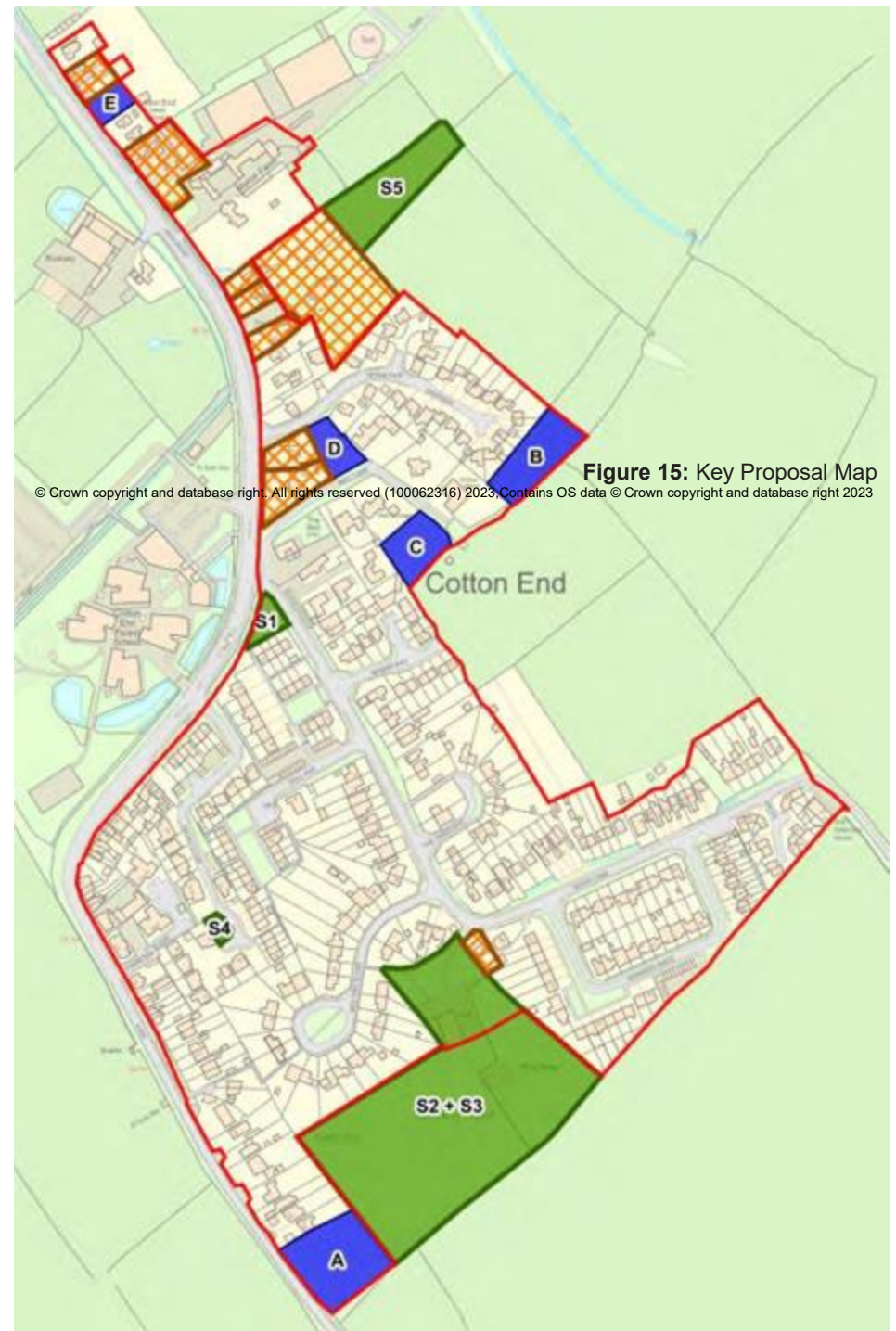


Figure 15: Key Proposal Map





03 COTTON END PLAN POLICIES

HOUSING & DESIGN

HD1 | HD2 HOUSING CHOICES

CONTEXT AND REASONED JUSTIFICATION

3.1 The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) requires Local Authorities to plan for and deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. This is to be achieved through delivering a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes).

3.2 The [Bedford Borough Local Plan Housing Strategy 2021-2026](#) states: “The affordability ratio for Bedford Borough rose from 7.32 to 9.82 over the period 2012 – 2018, a rise of 34%. In the same period the affordability ratio for England rose from 6.77 to 8.00 (18.2%) and for the East of England from 6.79 to 9.12 (34%). The rise in the affordability ratio in Bedford Borough is therefore consistent with the East of England but significantly greater than that of England as a whole. ... In 2018 Bedford Borough had the second highest affordability ratio of the Bedfordshire and adjoining local authorities”. As of September 2019, there were 1214 applicants on the Bedford Borough Council Housing Register (a 9% increase since September 2018). In March 2021 there were 5 households on the Bedford Borough Council Housing Register who are currently living in Cotton End Parish.

This represents the number of households with identified housing need at that point in time, and is made up of families and vulnerable people. The people on this list require social and affordable rented homes.”

3.3 The ability to provide affordable housing in Cotton End is limited by:

- the lack of development sites in the Settlement Policy Area (SPA);
- the current 10 or more dwellings site threshold for triggering affordable housing;
- the relative high cost of ‘affordable market housing’ in the Bedford area;
- the high price of development land.

3.4 [Bedford Borough’s Local Plan 2040 DRAFT](#), Theme 4: Better places objective states it will: “Support and create a high quality, inclusive and safe built environment which values local landscapes and settlement character, and which conserves and enhances the historic environment to be enjoyed by all. Where it is viable and sustainable to do so, encourage the re-use of land that has been previously developed.”

3.5 Our [2021 Housing Needs Survey](#) shows that the majority of residential buildings in Eastcotts are semi-detached (39.9%). There is also a large portion of terraced houses (29.2%), which are mainly found in the High Road, Hall Way and Trow Close areas near the A600.

3.6 The 2011 census data (Figure 16) however, shows that homes tend to be larger in Eastcotts with 64% of homes being detached or semi-detached homes compared to 59.6% in Bedford Borough (see Figure 16 for reference), reflecting the prevalence of detached or semi-detached homes in nearby Shortstown at that time.

3.7 In considering the age profile of Cotton End (Figure 17), the Cotton End Plan Steering Group acknowledges that the general lack of homes with 3 or fewer bedrooms, providing downsizing and step-free living environment opportunities for more mature residents, is unlikely to be resolved just through the retention and adaptation of the existing bungalows in Hall Way and Bunkers Drive. Delivering well-designed homes for downsizers needs to be considered more comprehensively and planned for to reflect future demographic change. This approach will have to take account of the large proportion of detached and semi-detached properties in Cotton End, the needs of an ageing population, young people’s ability to access housing, and high local property prices. [The Bedford Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2016 \(Report of Findings and Addenda November 2018\)](#), calculates for instance the need for Specialist Housing for Older Persons in the period 2015-35 for Bedford Borough to be 828 in that period (equates to an annual need of 42).

Source: ONS Census 2011 for Eastcotts Parish

Figure 16: Dwelling Types

	% Eastcotts	% Beds Borough
Detached house	24.1	27.4
Semi-detached house	39.9	32.2
Terraced house	29.2	21.9
Flat	6.7	17.6
Caravan/other temp. accommodation	0.2	0.9

Figure 17: Age Profile

Age	% Eastcotts 2011	% Eastcotts 2001	% Bedford Borough 2011
0 - 4	9.6	11.1	6.3
5-15	16.4	17.0	14.3
16-17	2.7	1.9	2.6
18-29	14.2	19.4	15.7
30 - 64	48.6	44.0	46.0
65-84	8.0	6.2	13.1

Figure 18: Size, type and tenure of housing sought

Type of property	No. of households
Flat / Apartment	1
House	3
Bungalow / Retirement property	0
Size of property	
One bedroom	0
Two bedroom	1
Three Bedroom	4
More than Three bedrooms	1
Tenure of Property	
Private Rental	1
Affordable Rental (through a housing association)	3
Buy on the Open market	0
Shared Ownership (part own & part rent – through a housing association)	2
Starter home (home to buy at 20% below market price up to £250,000)	1

3.8 This consideration is part and parcel of promoting more local and affordable housing choices for the elderly, supporting the stability of local informal social support networks, whilst maintaining and enhancing the character of the built and natural environment.

3.9 The [Bedford Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2016 \(Report of Findings and Addenda November 2018\)](#), indicates that the number of residents aged over 65 is expected to grow substantially, by 63%, between 2015-30, with 39% growth in those aged 75 or over – principally as a result of improving health and life expectancy. Evidence within the Housing Needs Survey (Figure 18) from local residents and property sales, support the view that the most sought after homes are accessible, smaller homes and more affordable medium-sized 3 bedroom homes, for a range of tenures (rented, shared equity, housing association etc.). In 2011, 21.7% of all household tenures in Eastcotts were registered as 'Social Rented' sector. The average in Bedford Borough was 16.1%, in England as a whole it is 16%.



Shifts in existing housing stock: Loss of smaller residential properties

3.10 A detailed analysis of granted planning applications in Cotton End from 1994 to today (Figure 19) shows that 92% of the 104 homes delivered, which account for the village growing by a quarter in the same period, were on larger development sites, compared to just 8% on infill sites in the village.

3.11 Further detailed analysis of granted planning applications in Cotton End, covering the years 1994 through to today (Figure 20) shows that planning permission was granted to extend some 65 houses in the village.

3.12 Where there was sufficient information regarding these planning applications (Figure 21), planning permission was granted for two storey extensions on 20 houses, accounting for some 31% of all planning applications to extend homes.

Figure 19: No. of Homes Delivered 1994 to 2021

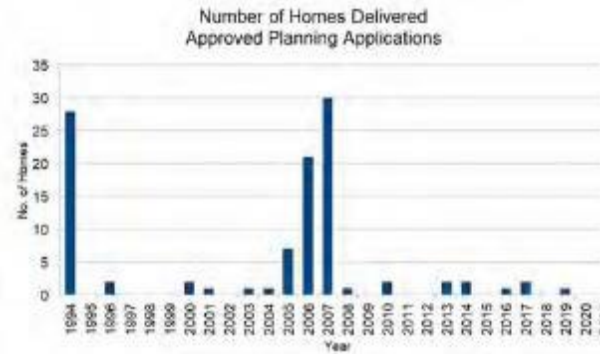


Figure 20: No. of Extensions Approved 1994 to 2021

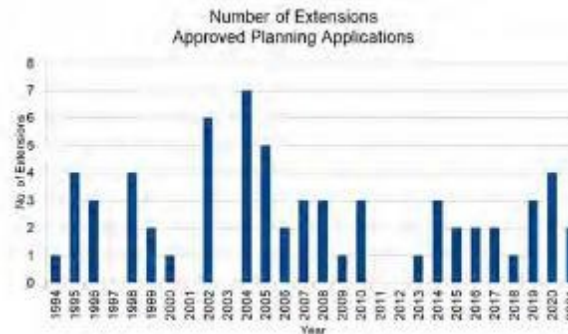
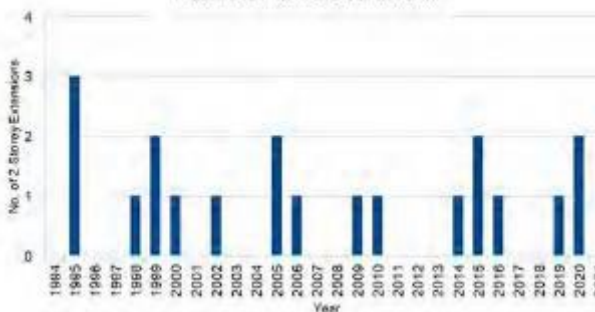


Figure 21: No. of Extensions Approved 1994 to 2021



Safeguarded Land

3.13 In 2018, BBC carried out a [Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment](#) (SHELAA). The purpose of the study was to identify sites that may have some potential for housing or economic development. Developers and landowners put forward ten sites for housing development surrounding the Cotton End SPA. The study found that all of the sites were “excluded from further assessment as the local plan strategy did not require additional residential sites”.

BBC has not yet, designated any land within recent BBC Local Plans as ‘Safeguarded Land’ or Important Countryside Gaps (ICGs) to avoid development, protect the countryside and help keep settlements separate from one another to stop urban sprawl. However, the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 Policy 3S – Spatial strategy states:

“viii. Safeguarding the intrinsic character of the countryside and the environment and biodiversity within it (to fulfil the requirements of European directives) through the careful management of development to meet local needs whilst supporting the rural economy.”

(see also xiii. in Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040 Policy DS2(S) Spatial strategy.)

Figures 19 to 21: The 28 years from 1994 to 2021 Approved Planning Applications for housing in Cotton End (*Detailed review of all planning applications analysed by Cotton End Plan Steering Group Chair, Andrew Murray, 2022*)

POLICY INTENT

- To meet new housing demand in a manner that is sensitive to the character of the village, without infringing on green spaces, while preserving the landscape character of the village and remaining within the Settlement Policy Area only, having regard to context and the character of Cotton End; (Objective 2)
- To support the retention of smaller homes available to younger people and older downsizers; (Objective 3)

POLICY HD1 INCREASING HOUSING CHOICES

Proposals for the development of the Key Locations and any other residential development proposals for more than two dwellings must provide:

- For a mix of housing types and tenures aligning with the demand evidenced in the Cotton End Housing Needs Survey
- Facilities to support home working in each dwelling, with flexible space adaptable to a home office.
- Generous levels of private amenity in the form of private garden.
- At least one smaller dwelling of at least 80 sq metres usable floor area to meet the Neighbourhood Area's identified needs.
- The provision of accessible and flexible forms of accommodation to meet the needs of disabled and older people will be supported.

POLICY HD2 DEVELOPMENT AT 161 HIGH ROAD

Residential development at 161 High Road will be supported where it provides for the long term retention and enhancement of the Oak tree (subject to a TPO) as a landscape feature for the housing scheme. Proposals should consider opportunities to provide homes of excellent quality suitable for both young and older people.





03 COTTON END PLAN POLICIES

HOUSING & DESIGN

HD3 | HD4 | HD5 | HD6 | HD7 VILLAGESCAPE & LANDSCAPE CHARACTER & PATTERNS

DESIGNING COTTON END:

UNDERSTANDING THE CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE

3.14 The 2020 Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan survey highlighted the significance local people place on the retention and improvement of Cotton End's tranquil verdant character. Cotton End is characterised by its rural location, with clear visual breaks between houses, visibility of mature trees, shrubs and hedges, combined with green spaces, with all development contained within the Settlement Policy Area surrounded by open farmland. The draft and as yet unadopted [Bedford Borough Design Guide Settlements and Streets](#) (2022) provides helpful guidance overall, but does not consider the character of Cotton End. This Neighbourhood Plan provides more detailed insight and policies for the village.

3.15 One of the key aspects residents love about our village is its tranquil verdant nature with many residential roads framed by grass verges, green hedges, shrubs and mature trees. Results from the Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan survey in 2020 consistently suggest the biggest areas of concern are environmental issues and countryside.

3.16 Results from the Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan survey in 2020 and the Housing Need Survey in 2021, consistently suggests the most sought after homes are accessible, smaller homes and more affordable medium-sized 3 bedroom homes.

3.17 The detailed review of all planning applications suggest that a trend of concern is extension of existing housing stock, and nearly 20% of all homes in the village have been extended over the last 30 years. These extensions have largely transformed small and medium-sized-family homes into much larger, 4+ bedroom homes with up to 2 floors of habitable accommodation. These extended dwellings often occupy a large percentage of their plot, can dominate neighbouring properties and permanently alter the street scene. This trend also restricts the opportunity for older residents to downsize. There is anecdotal evidence from older residents, not reflected in the survey results, for the retention and expansion of the number of homes and bungalows to which they can downsize, thereby releasing larger houses for families. Estate agent data too, confirms that the demand for smaller homes and bungalows is greater than the stock currently available.

3.18 The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) states in §126 and §127: *'To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, plans or supplementary planning documents should use visual tools such as design guides and codes. These provide a framework for creating distinctive places, with a consistent and high quality standard of design. However their level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- b) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment;*
- c) and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for*
- g) existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.'*

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs key strategy document [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#) and the [BiodiversityNet Gain](#) rules for development further justify the approach taken in this Neighbourhood Plan.

Cotton End Character Assessment

3.19 Assessing Cotton End's character provides a key resource in understanding Cotton End expressed in distinctive village and landscape patterns. These are seen across a range of architectural features in the village's designated and non-designated heritage assets, such as illustrated in Figure 22 and detailed in Figures 26 and 27. Additionally this is also seen in the landscape topography, where Cotton End is home of one of the very few surviving fortifications and castles in Bedfordshire, Eastcotts Castle as well as the significant earthworks that lie to the north of Rookery Farm and the east of Shocott Spring.

3.20 The openly observed appearance displays a mix of old and modern architecture. Much of this architecture has helped form an indelible image of the village's character for residents. However, the village's iconic non-designated heritage assets are at risk. They enjoy no formal protection in the planning process and therefore could be subjected to major alteration, redevelopment or inappropriate nearby developments. So it is important for any development to understand the unique character of the village.

3.21 First and foremost, this involves recognising the importance of context. Rather than focusing on any restrictive limitations we should consider the opportunities it may present in response to the village's development challenges. Prioritising suitable design solutions that enhance the village rather than undermine it.



Figure 22: Early Development – Pre-1945

Figure 23: Modern Development – Post-1945

3.2 Housing & Design Policies



3.2 Housing & Design Policies

3.22 For example, qualities such as scale, proportion, materials, informality and intimacy, thus avoiding the same incongruous, identikit architectural anonymity that dilutes the character and individuality in many recent developments in Bedford Borough. In today's planning environment, character is supposedly all the rage. 'Placemaking' is frequently quoted by planners, developers and architects as something they wish to create. Despite it dominating planning applications, little or no effort is ever made to define character in specific or quantitative terms.

3.23 Character is not a distinct or scientific entity; it cannot be described in definitive historic or decorative terms like an architectural style, nor does it have measurable technical or structural attributes like a single building or a bridge. Part of the quality and charm of the village's character is its very atmospheric nature; the 'feeling' of a place is always harder to describe than its 'look'. But that 'feeling' is an absolutely important part of how we judge and experience villages. Yet, how that 'feeling' is created is hardly understood. The problem with something that is difficult to understand is that it is easy to ignore. And that is exactly the crisis Cotton End and similar villages face today.

3.24 This plan's purpose is to strive to forge a deeper understanding of Cotton End's character so that those charged with influencing development of our village are better equipped to intervene in a manner that strengthens rather than weakens Cotton End's unique identity. This is not a manifesto to suppress change, but a strategy to enrich it.

3.25 In order to define and understand Cotton End's character, we must first look at how the village developed. Cotton End was founded hundreds of years ago in area where the village centre stands today. This is the oldest part of the village and constitutes its geographical centre. But it is important to note that the village did not expand in a steady, radial, concentric fashion. It was a changing and uneven build-up of dwellings in a messy process dragged out over several centuries.

3.26 But it was the 20th century when Cotton End's growth, turbocharged after World War 2, expanded beyond all previous measures. Therefore, understanding and respecting the unique and divergent quality of Cotton End's composition is crucial to understanding the overall character of the village. This includes a diversity of early and modern architectural styles, materials, colours, streets and public spaces, building forms and soft and hard landscaping treatments. This ingrained lack of uniformity therefore, is also a unique aspect of Cotton End's wider character.

3.27 With diversity inevitably comes contrast, and contrast too forms a major theme of Cotton End's village character. All manner of visual and social contrasts can be found operating within the village's fabric: rich and poor, new and old, formal and informal, regular and irregular, public and private, intimate and open.

3.28 Again, to a degree, all villages will include any number of these contrasts as part of their DNA, and here lies one of the problems for Cotton End's character. This contrast can be cynically exploited to justify almost any kind of development. If a village has a tradition of contrast then the belief is that it does not matter if, for example, a modern housing estate is placed beside a Grade II-listed heritage asset, particularly if the planning system is vague and imprecise enough not explicitly to prohibit this type of inappropriate development.

3.29 It is important not to mistake contrast as chaos by manipulating it as a precursor to the kind of inappropriate development that can harm character. Cotton End is one of the greenest parishes in Bedford Borough, with most of the parish area allocated to public green spaces, gardens and the surrounding open farmland.

3.30 If nature is organic and an organic composition presents the opposite of a formal, rational, predictable structure, then informality and irregularity play a significant role in Cotton End's character. This is most vividly conveyed in the village's street plan, which contains an undisciplined and haphazard layout that is diametrically opposed to the rational geometry of the straight-lined roads of large new developments across Bedford Borough.

3.31 Cotton End's layout is symbolic of a village that has grown in a form of organised chaos, a village that has largely rejected the dullness and consistency of controlled growth and imposed urban plans and revels instead in freedom of an informal and uneven spirit.

Figure 24: Cotton End's Assets of Community Value

Assets of Community Value	
Asset	Reason For Listing
The Bell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only remaining public house in the Parish accessible to all residents and family focused used by residents of nearby villages which do not have a pub in their village holds - family events, quiz nights, live music band days and open mic nights, darts, dominoes, BBQs, senior games afternoons, MacMillan coffee mornings, Christmas carol nights, visits from Father Christmas mobile takeaway food outlets visit weekly only open commercial site in the village
Baptist Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only place of worship in the Parish accessible to all residents, family and community used by churchgoers from Bedford Borough holds regular religious services, family and children's events
Church Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhances the social wellbeing, cultural, and recreational and interests of local community various community groups use the venue including cub and cub, dance plus occasional children parties plus winter warmer groups used by Parish Council for meetings/events
Old School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one of oldest purpose built school buildings in Bedfordshire dating from 1875 reflects the design style of Southill Estate properties closed in 2018 when replaced by the Cotton End Forest School reopened in 2022 as MacIntyre No Limits Bedford caters for young people with Special Education Needs s to continue education and develop skills for adulthood when not used for educational purposes, property returns to Southill Estate
Village Hall & Social Club, including Boules court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhances social wellbeing, cultural, recreational and interests of local community various groups use the venue for community activities including knit and natter, gardeners club, cinema club, whist, bowls, social club, light lunch boules playing used for community events such as seasonal celebrations, shows, fayres and fetes rented for private functions, weddings, parties etc.

Figure 25: Cotton End's Designated Heritage Assets

Designated Heritage Assets	
Asset	Reason For Listing
The Bell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade II of special interest building from 17th century, but may only date to 1780s timber framed with colour washed roughcast rendering, thatched roof, eyebrow dormers building is an L-shape with one storey plus attics
21 High Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade II of special interest building from early to mid-18th century timber framed, refronted in pebbledash in 20th century, tiled roof, end brick stacks one and a half storeys, gabled dormers
8 to 12 Bell Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade II of special interest building from 18th century timber framed with colour washed roughcast exterior and a clay tiled roof. 20th century lean-to extension to rear
Manor House and Dovecote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manor House Grade II* of greater than special interest late 16th century building red brick with stone facings and clay tiled roof originally H-plan but the south cross-wing was destroyed two storeys and attics main room has an exceptional plaster ceiling which may depict the coat of arms of Thomas Colby of London who bought manor in 1566 Dovecote listed separately as Grade II. 18th century, made of red brick, with clay tile roof with weather-boarding above
Herrings Green Farmhouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade II of special interest formerly known as Cotton End Farm, stands in location traditionally known as Herrings Green rebuilt in 1785-1786, comprises red brick, rendered at basement level, clay tiled roof two storeys and attics, under two separate parallel roofs
Eastcotts Castle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduled Monument earthworks of site of medieval motte and bailey castle in Exeter Wood below the summit of the Greensands Ridge



Figure 26: Cotton End's Designated Village Open Spaces

Designated Village Open Spaces	
Asset	Reason For Listing
Village Hall Sports Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important green space asset • only dedicated green space for sports in the village
Village Hall Play area and green space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • largest play area and green space asset in village • the major children's play area in the village

Figure 28: Cotton End's Non-Designated Local Green Spaces

Non-Designated Local Green Spaces	
Church Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • important green space asset • used for community events such as seasonal celebrations and shows, fayres and fetes.
'Village Green'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • located at the entrance to Wood Lane adjoining Hall Way • owned by the Parish Council • symbolic green space at heart of the village
Trow Close Play Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community asset managed by CEPC primarily for young people to engage in constructive play

Figure 27: Cotton End's Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Non-Designated Heritage Assets	
Asset	Reason For Listing
23-31 High Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorian to early 20C terrace of 4 cottages (23-29) and house (31) • built before 1880, comprising local yellow brick with decorative red brick detailing to upper windows and red brick diamond patterns between each property, bay ground floor windows, tiled roofs
Village Water Pump	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outside 23-31 High Road • only surviving water pump in Cotton End • late Victorian to early 20C, c1895-1915 • mascaron lion's head spout, fluted cast iron cylindrical column, moulded domed cap, small finial resembling a pineapple. Original wind handle, tin cup and chain missing. Patented self-closing, anti-freezing pillar fountain, manufactured by Glenfield and Kennedy of Kilmarnock
Old School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one of oldest purpose built school buildings in Bedfordshire dating from 1875 • reflects the design style of Southill Estate properties, comprises local yellow brick, tiled roof
Baptist Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • built in 1837 as Meeting House • comprises local yellow brick, tiled roof
Church Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjacent to Baptist Church • incorporates former southern cottage • comprises local yellow brick, tiled roof • originally church schoolroom for Cotton End Ministry and Congregational Training College for Home Missionary Society • attended by William Booth founder of the Salvation Army
Church Cottage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjoins Church Hall to the north • semi-detached local yellow brick, plaster and slated cottage, with two bedrooms in the roof
War Memorial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjacent to Baptist Church • small squat, granite, column with a coping stone on the top and inscriptions around the side set on a stepped plinth and base • erected 1921
The Manse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjacent to Baptist Church • comprises local yellow brick, tiled roof
57 & 59 High Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • built 1885 • archetypal Southill Estate properties, comprising local yellow brick, tiled roofs
Rose Cottage 32 Wood Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dated to the 17th or 18th centuries • timber framed cottage, roughcast render, thatched roof • formerly listed Grade III
Rookery Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site of ridge and furrow earthworks recognised nationally by Historic England. relatively little survives in Bedfordshire

Trees, Woodlands and Hedgrows

3.32 A biodiversity characterisation study was published for Bedford Borough Council in 2009 as part of the 'Rebuilding Biodiversity' opportunity mapping by the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Partnership (now the Wildlife Working Group). This report followed on from the Bedfordshire study published in 2006. The Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 policies 42S – Protecting biodiversity and geodiversity and Policy 43 – Enhancing biodiversity require planning applications for development to assess the impact on the biodiversity and geodiversity value of any development site and its surroundings. However, neither policy directly advises on wildlife and biodiversity issues that may overlap into the area of trees and hedges. Trees and hedges are our most easily encountered key wildlife habitats, found lining roads and footpaths, bordering fields and gardens. The British Standard 5837 (2012) Trees is considered the key national practice guidance in relation to design, demolition and construction in this context.

3.33 In the Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2020 72 people stated their support for development of Countryside (Footpaths, etc.) and 54 people stated their support for Environmental Issues (Plants, animals), over the next 10 years, reinforcing the community's intent to retain the tranquil verdant nature of the parish. While Cotton End only has 4 trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders (these can be seen on [Bedford Borough Council's Interactive Planning Map](#)) the Cotton End Plan Neighbourhood Area contains large extents of clusters and networks of trees, woodlands and mature hedges in the Parish that are not protected.

3.34 Protecting the tranquil verdant character of Cotton End is closely related to retaining groups, networks and individual healthy mature trees and hedges, particularly within the SPA. Larger clusters and networks in residential gardens, open spaces and roads, form important networks of wildlife corridors and are critical for local character, amenity, wildlife, biodiversity, flood risk prevention and the less discussed 'calming soundscape' when the wind blows through the tree canopies.

Access to Shocott Spring

3.35 Shocott Spring sits to the northwest of Cotton End village. There is limited access to the woodland via a poor quality footpath from the A600 just north of the centre of the village diagonally opposite Hermitage Gardens. Improving access for pedestrians, particularly older residents, the disabled and infirm, to Shocott Spring is a key objective of CEPC. More generally and importantly for appearance, amenity and the community benefit of Shocott Spring, CEPC regularly works with CERG to improve ease of access via the footpath as part of the twice yearly Village Tidy Weeks, and to improve the look of the area.

Ditches

3.36 Drainage ditches are not covered by national planning policy or local plans, so they do not address issues such as maintenance and care, or improvements to their functionality. All major ditches within Cotton End Parish fall under the responsibility of the Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board, part of The Bedford Group of Drainage Boards.

3.37 However in many cases, these ditches fall under Riparian Ownership. A riparian owner is anyone who owns a property where there is a ditch within or adjacent to the boundaries of their property. Affected ditches run along both sides of the A600, and along the eastern edge of Wood Lane. Due to previous incidents of the ditch flooding in Wood Lane, the Cotton End Plan therefore specifically aims to protect the watercourses in the Parish and their associated habitats. Any scheme adjacent to the ditches should be designed with a naturalised buffer zone from the ditch to any property in order to protect and enhance the conservation value of the ditch and ensure access for flood defence maintenance and avoid increased flood risk.

Local Green Spaces

3.38 Bedford Borough Council designated just two Village Open Spaces, the Village Hall Play Area and Sports Field, in the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 (S2 & S3 in Figure 15). However, Neighbourhood Plans can designate Local Green Spaces, and this plan designates 3 sites as Local Green Spaces in Figure 15. All sites allocated for development have been excluded from consideration.



Cotton End Design Code – Core Principles

Cotton End Parish Council wish to ensure that the design and appearance of any development, replacement or any alterations are in character with the rural identity and meet the design aspirations of the **Cotton End Design Code**. Engagement on these things by landowners and developers will be greatly welcomed and the Parish Council will, where possible, seek to work with parties to achieve the following, all aimed at protecting and enhancing Cotton End's attractive characteristics:

a. Plot coverage

Achieving plot coverage that respects its surroundings. Plot coverage should be between 30% to 50%, but not exceed 50%.

b. Ridge height – Figure 29

Ensure development takes account of gradients and restricts ridge heights to a height that respects the organic roof line character of neighbouring properties without regularising the street scene.

c. Spacing between building and boundary (set-in) – Figure 30

Ensure that there is a 1 metre minimum distance from the side of the plot boundary to the ground floor level, and a minimum of a 4 metre break on the first floor between buildings.

d. Entrances

Ensuring that all entrances requiring planning permission respect the village character and do not dominate their surroundings.

e. Front gardens

Ensuring that new homes are designed such that spaces in front of them contribute to the tranquil verdant character of the village. Front gardens should not be dominated by vehicle parking. Ensuring that hard surface coverage within housing plots is limited and that hard surfacing is permeable, to achieve biodiversity gains and actions to prevent flood risk.

f. Building materials

Encouraging the use of durable, high quality locally sourced or reclaimed materials that appear in keeping with the surrounding village.

g. Parking, refuse and recycling facilities

Sensitively integrating parking, refuse and recycling facilities into the landscape and street scene.

h. Datestones

New properties should include a Datestone, recording the construction year of each property.

i. Highway boundaries

Ensuring that boundary treatments reflect the prevailing character of boundaries, with special attention to retaining open character and green hedges, and avoiding boundaries that appear unduly dominant.

j. Grass verges and highway trees

Respecting grass verges and street trees.

k. Rear Gardens

Properties should aim to provide rear gardens or at least a small buffer to the public sphere where the provision of a garden is not possible.

l. Flexibility

With Ultrafast Full Fibre Broadband (FTTP – Fibre to the Premises) due to be available in Cotton End by April 2024, all new dwellings should offer working from home facilities/capabilities.

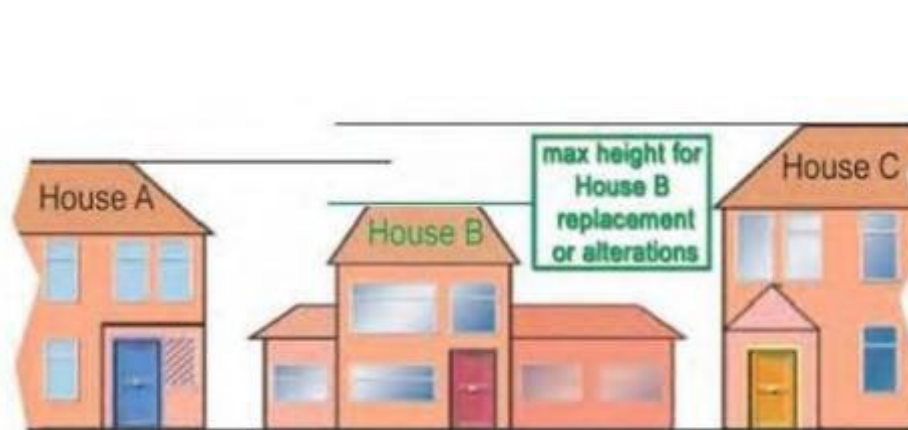


Figure 29: Ridge height



Figure 30: Spacing between building and boundary

THE COTTON END DESIGN CODE

Cotton End Design Code – Architectural Style

In order to enhance and improve the existing character of Cotton End, the design of new properties within the Settlement Policy Area should reflect the existing character of the village:

m. The pattern and layout of existing buildings must be appreciated when contemplating new development, whatever its size or purpose.

n. Be designed to be respectful of the historical designated or non-designated buildings in Cotton End whilst being clearly 'of their time'. This may include taking design cues from historical styles, but with a modern interpretation.

o. Provide examples and inspiration for new development.

p. Be high quality in terms of materials and finishes and sympathetic to the Cotton End Character Assessment.

q. Demonstrate the use of locally sourced or reclaimed building materials wherever possible.

r. Reflect local and historical context and should not be from a standard palette of developer house types that are non-specific to anywhere in the country.

s. Buildings should be sympathetic in scale to the surrounding context.

t. The scale of the roof should always be in proportion with the dimensions of the building itself.

u. Site layout and building massing should ensure access to sunshine and avoid overshadowing neighbouring buildings.

v. New developments should also maximise opportunities for long distance views.

w. Consistent window styles and shapes must be used across a given façade to avoid visual clutter and dissonance.

x. In proximity to historic buildings, fenestration (the arrangement of windows in a building) must reflect an understanding of locally distinctive features such as scale, proportions, rhythm, materials, ornamentation, and articulation. This should however not result in pastiche replica.

y. Building appearance – Figure 31

Ensuring that new homes are designed to respect and enhance the character of the village's iconic heritage assets and reflect the character, scale, proportion, materials, informality, intimacy and natural context of the design style of the buildings erected by the Whitbread family/Southill Estates within the village and other adjacent parishes.



Figure 31: A Southill Estates property

z. Household Extensions

- The original building should remain the dominant element of the property. The newly built extension should not overwhelm the building from any given point.
- Extensions should not result in a significant loss to the private amenity area of the dwelling.
- Designs that wrap around the existing building and involve overly complicated roof forms should be avoided.
- Extensions should be compatible with the pitch and form of the roof to respect the existing building's character and dimensions.
- Extensions should demonstrate an intelligent understanding of the materials, architectural features, window sizes, and proportions of the existing building in order to match and complement the built environment.
- As a rule, floor space of the existing building can be extended by up to 30%, providing that other Design Code considerations are met, such as scale, appearance and consideration of impacts on neighbours and the wider area. This is to avoid overbearing neighbouring properties and significantly altering the street scene.
- In case of side extensions, the new part should be set back from the front of the main building and retain the proportions of the original building. This is in order to reduce any visual impact of the join between existing and new.
- In case of rear extensions, the new part should not have a harmful effect on neighbouring properties in terms of overshadowing, overbearing, or privacy issues.
- All two storey extensions should provide working from home facilities/capabilities.

THE COTTON END DESIGN CODE

Cotton End Design Code – Eco Design



Figure 32:
Bee bricks



Figure 33:
Bat boxes



Figure 34:
Swift bricks



Figure 35:
House Martin cups



Figure 36:
Electric Car charging



Figure 37:
Solar Panels



Figure 38:
Rainwater
Harvesting

Eco Design combines energy efficient construction, appliances, and lighting with commercially available renewable energy systems, such as solar water heating and solar electricity with battery storage, coupled with rainwater harvesting and incorporating ecohabitats in homes. Starting from the design stage all these elements of sustainable living can be incorporated in new development, rebuilding or building extensions. The aim of these interventions is to reduce overall home energy use cost effectively and to promote biodiversity by and maintaining and increasing population levels of local wildlife.

To support the UK government's low carbon renewable energy strategy and biodiversity vision, all new developments, rebuilding, and two storey extensions in Cotton End must incorporate all of following:

aa. Bee bricks – Figure 32

Bees are an important part of the environment, and bee bricks are used by solitary bees. These create a nesting habitat within the brick, but the bees are unable to enter the home.

bb. Bat boxes – Figure 33

The availability of roost sites for bat species is becoming more limited, so Bat boxes provide artificial roosts designed to encourage bats into areas where there are few natural roosting sites.

cc. Swift bricks or boxes – Figure 34

Swift bricks or boxes under the eaves of houses provide homes for the local population and helping to preserve and expand the Swift population. The Swift is an amber-listed bird of conservation concern in Europe.

dd. House Martin cups – Figure 35

Disappearing waterways, drier springs and summers, along with evaporating puddles, all mean that the mud vital for house martins to build or repair their nests, is in short supply. Also, dry summers can also cause House Martin nests to break up or fall from a house, which is devastating when eggs or young chicks are inside.

ee. Electric Car Charging – Figure 36

All new petrol and diesel cars and vans will be phased out by 2030, and one in four UK households intend to buy an electric car in the next five years.

ff. Solar energy – Figure 37

Solar electricity panels, also known as photovoltaics (PV), capture the sun's energy and convert it into electricity that can be used in homes. By installing solar panels, homes can generate their own renewable electricity. Typical systems on domestic homes contain around 15 panels, with each panel generating around 355W of energy in strong sunlight.

gg. Rainwater harvesting - Figure 38

There are various rainwater harvesting methods available, but generally rainwater is collected from roofs and redirected to a rainwater harvesting tank, either above ground or below. Rainwater harvesting is traditionally used for watering gardens but modern technology rainwater harvesting systems can be plumbed into a home's pipework so that harvested rainwater can be used to flush your toilets, wash clothes and many other non-drinking applications.

hh. Heat Pumps

Heat pumps take energy from outside and transfer it into heat that is circulated around the home heating and hot water systems. Like traditional gas heating, heat pumps use electricity to run the components of the system to transfer the energy from the heat source into the heating system.

THE COTTON END DESIGN CODE



POLICY INTENT

- To protect and enhance the tranquil verdant character of Cotton End Parish; (Objective 1)
- To meet new housing demand in a manner that is sensitive to the character of the village, having regard to context and the Cotton End Character Assessment; (Objective 2)
- To require development and public realm improvements to make a positive contribution to the natural, built and historic environment; (Objective 10)

POLICY

HD3 | HD4 | HD5 | HD6

VILLAGE & LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

HD3 RESPECTING AND ENHANCING VILLAGE CHARACTER AND DESIGN

Development proposals are required to reflect and respond positively to the village and surrounding landscape character. Development within the Cotton End Settlement Policy Area should have regard to the Cotton End Character Assessment and the Cotton End Design Code. All development must respect local character and preserve the significance of heritage assets, including non-designated heritage assets.

HD4 DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

All development must respect Cotton End's distinctive tranquil, green and verdant qualities. The loss of agricultural land outside the Cotton End Settlement Policy Area to new housing development will not be supported.

HD5 HEALTHY HIGH QUALITY TREES AND HEDGES

Development proposals should provide new, and retain existing, healthy high quality trees, woodland and hedges in the Cotton End Neighbourhood Area.

HD6 DITCHES OR CULVERTED WATERCOURSES

Development proposals near to ditches or culverted watercourses should be designed with a minimum easement of 6 metres, 3 metres either side of the centreline, or 10 times the diameter of the culvert, plus the invert depth of the culvert, divided by 2 to give the distance either side of the centreline. This is to protect and enhance the conservation value of ditches, ensure access for flood defence maintenance and avoid flood risk.



03 COTTON END PLAN POLICIES

HOUSING & DESIGN

HD7 THE COTTON END BUNGALOWS

CONTEXT AND REASONED JUSTIFICATION

3.39 The Cotton End bungalows are located in Hall Way and Bunkers Drive. The criteria for inclusion in this plan is the buildings' contribution to the local housing stock, providing a much needed opportunity to those who are looking to downsize into smaller properties, more suitable to older persons due to retirement or medical needs/disabilities.

3.40 There is no policy statement, either at local or national level that supports the contention that bungalows are required to meet the needs of elderly people.

Importance

3.41 At the time of the Cotton End Housing Needs Survey in January 2021, there were no bungalows or smaller properties being marketed as accessible available for sale on the open market in Cotton End. The bungalows consist of 6 units in Hall Way and 16 units in Bunkers Drive, plus 1 unit in Trow Close, approximately 6% of the village's total housing stock.

Architectural significance

3.42 Bungalows are uniquely designed as low-rise, single-storey houses to provide easy accessibility. One of the greatest advantages to bungalow living is the ease and accessibility that comes with having all rooms on a single floor. They are small, easy to maintain and are therefore ideal homes for the elderly or people with disabilities. They are also cost-efficient, as heating and cooling costs tend to be lower due to the smaller building footprints.

The Bungalow's contribution to the local community

3.43 Just 2 per cent (approximately 500,000) of the UK's existing housing stock are bungalows. While Cotton End exceeds this average, in terms of housing need as identified in the Housing Needs Survey, some 38% of the total housing demand is for bungalows. This identified community need for bungalows, will in turn free up larger family houses for those residents, families looking for a larger home to meet their needs. This was evidenced by the respondents to our Housing Needs Survey, who indicated they would be looking for more suitable larger properties at some point over the next 10 years.

3.44 Census data from the year 2011 showed there are about 8.6% of local residents aged 65 and older. While the age profile overall is younger than that of Bedford Borough as a whole, this had increased from 6.7% in 2001. Given the UK's demographic profile, it is reasonable to expect this trend to continue and climb to around 16.1% by 2040, representing around 1/6th of the village's population, reinforcing the value and importance of retaining the Cotton End bungalows.

POLICY HD7 INSET Maps 1 & 2 on page 45 highlight the location of the single-storey bungalows located in Hall Way and Bunkers Drive



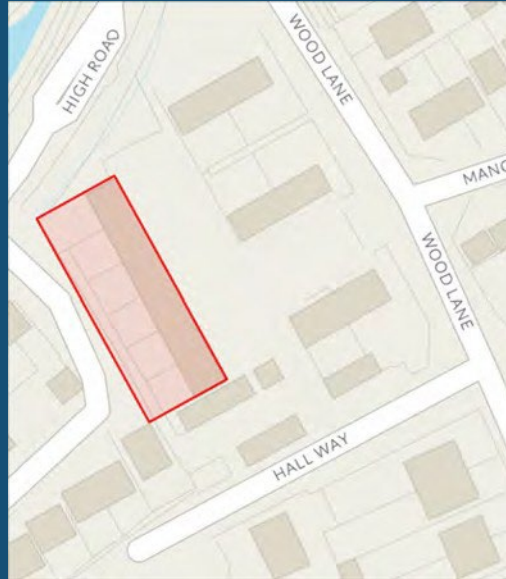
3.2 Housing & Design Policies



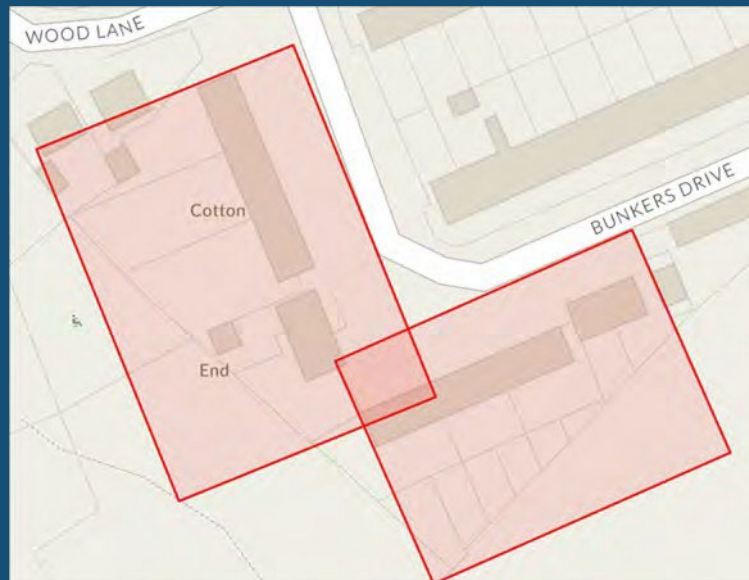
3.2 Housing & Design Policies



POLICY HD7 INSET Map 1



POLICY HD7 INSET Map 2



POLICY HD7

THE COTTON END BUNGALOWS

HD7.1 Development proposals which impact on any of the Cotton End Bungalows identified in Hall Way (POLICY HD7 INSET Map 1) or Bunkers Drive (POLICY HD7 INSET Map 2) for their individual and/or group value in contributing positively to housing need and village character will not be supported. Any proposals should protect or enhance this contribution.

HD7.2 Replacement or extension of any of the existing bungalows identified for its individual and/or group value must be broadly commensurate in terms of its existing ridge height and respect its wider setting. All applications shall respond positively to and be in keeping with the key features typical of the bungalows and their setting while meeting or exceeding current building, access and energy efficiency standards.



03 COTTON END PLAN POLICIES

HOUSING & DESIGN

DESIGNING WITH LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

CONTEXT AND REASONED JUSTIFICATION

3.45 As a local community, we recognise our role in supporting good design in our built environment and speeding up the planning process by working pro-actively, constructively and positively with landowners and developers.

3.46 A 'Design and Development Brief' is a recognised tool to achieve better design and resolve possible issues early on. All applicants must set out at the pre-application stage their proposals for any development schemes of two or more properties, with sufficient detail to allow the local community to understand what is being proposed and engage in a meaningful consultation process. A 'Design and Development Brief' is part of an iterative design process with the village, through which local views and knowledge can be incorporated into the evolution of the design of the development and form part of the required Design and Access Statement in the Planning Application.

3.47 Cotton End Parish Council would like to have greater and earlier involvement in planning applications and encourages developers to engage with the community as early as possible and as much as possible. The Parish Council will encourage developers to set out in Design and Access Statements how the development proposal will contribute to achieving the Vision for Cotton End set out in this plan.

3.48 The provision of this information could be supported through active engagement with Cotton End Parish Council and the local community. We strongly encourage developers to undertake design workshops, to use Design Panel Reviews and to consider the guidance in [Building for a Healthy Life](#).

3.49 Active community engagement from the earliest stages will support the provision of a strong and effective Statement of Community Consultation.

A 'Design and Development Brief' might include:

- An illustrative layout that shows how the proposed development could be accommodated on the site, features typical of local homes and their setting while adapting to current building, access and energy efficiency standards
- Scale, footprint, bulk and height of buildings
- Mix of dwelling types and tenure
- Design style and guidelines
- Improvements to local infrastructure and facilities
- Access, parking and pedestrian ways and any required traffic impact and parking assessments
- Landscaping and publicly accessible open spaces
- The location of new trees and any existing trees that may be affected by the development
- Indicative timing and phasing of the proposed development
- Community benefits to be provided and when they occur in the phasing and delivery
- All relevant factual information explaining proposed dwelling and tenure mix, infrastructure provision and community benefits from a financial viability point of view



3.2 Housing & Design Policies



04 Getting Around Policies



04 COTTON END PLAN POLICIES

GETTING AROUND POLICIES

CONTEXT AND REASONED JUSTIFICATION

4.1 The NPPF promotes the consideration of transport issues from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals planning policies with a transport aspect (§102). Transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. BBC's adopted Local Plan 2030 (of particular relevance are Policies 30-33, 35S and 86S-91) underpins the significant role planning must play in promoting sustainable modes of transport and healthy communities with supporting infrastructure provision. BBC's Policies 31, 33, and 86S-89, require that all developments are assessed for their impact on existing local services and infrastructure and that, where necessary, new provision of community facilities is made.

Air Quality

4.2 All local authorities have been assessing air quality across their areas and comparing it against national objectives, originally set out in the Government's Air Quality Strategy (2011), and continued in the Clean Air Strategy (2019), for a number of pollutants including carbon monoxide, benzene, 1,3 butadiene, lead, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and sulphur dioxide. Where air quality is poor an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is declared and, where possible, local action taken to improve the air in that area. Bedford Borough currently has only one declared AQMA due to higher levels of nitrogen dioxide.

4.3 Cotton End is already affected by high levels of through traffic on the A600 and the resultant impact on air quality in the village. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) are known to be the result of traffic emissions and proven to cause respiratory infections, asthma, and chronic lung disease. In addition Cotton End faces the additional burden associated with nearby growth in Bedford Borough and nearby Central Bedfordshire. Much of the 'through' traffic in the area originates from areas outside BBC control, with growth in travel to/from Central Bedfordshire, North Hertfordshire, Milton Keynes and other locations continues to affect how the BBC road networks operate, particularly through Cotton End.

Public Transport

4.4 BBC's [Local Transport Plan 2011-2021](#) (LPT3), contains 'A Vision for Transport in Bedford Borough', relating to cycling and walking reads as follows: "To create a transport system in which walking, cycling and public transport are the natural choices of travel for the majority of journeys because they are affordable, healthy, convenient and safe alternatives to the private car."

4.5 Further, the Local Transportation Plan (section 1.4) clarifies that reducing car dependency and managing traffic growth requires the active promotion of alternatives to the car. In addition the Local Development Scheme creates policies via the Local Plan 2030 on the location of new development and the availability of car parking. Such a 'carrot and stick' approach involves the promotion of public transport facilities, as well as the promotion of walking and cycling opportunities and enhancement of the wider rights of way network.

4.6 Many local people depend already on the local bus services to get to work, school, and further afield via bus and train to London, Luton, Hitchin, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. However, local bus services are limited to twice an hour between 07:00 and 19:00, with no services outside these hours and no service on Sundays.



04 Getting Around Policies

4.7



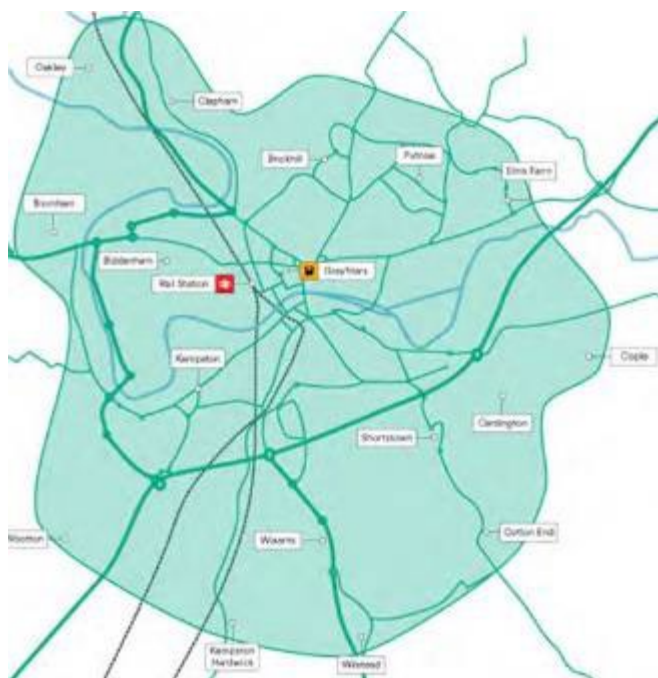
4.7 Cotton End is at the extreme south east of Stagecoach's *Bedford Day Rider* ticket area. The *Day Rider* is valid for a day's unlimited travel in the Bedford zone. There is some demand, particularly from young people and less regular public transport users, for discounted tickets to areas outside the current Bedford Day Rider zone. The higher fares encourage people to drive to destinations such as Milton Keynes to save money, despite the high parking costs. This is clearly inefficient in terms of time, fuel and road usage. Young people are particularly disadvantaged, being non-drivers. Improvements to local bus services are essential to many, particularly to the older, the young, and those without cars.

School drop-offs and pick-ups

4.8 Children in Cotton End children attend up to 8 different secondary schools. A number travel by bus, either provided by their school, or by normal public services. Buses stop at a number of places in the village along the A600, although there is an apparent lack of coordination and management between the different services. However, the number of parents and school children leaving the village in cars is outnumbered by the number of cars arriving in the village to drop-off at Cotton End Forest School. Both add significant congestion in mornings and afternoons to the already busy A600. The Cotton End Plan Steering Group supports a full review, coordination and integrated set of improvements to the public transport provision and provided choices for local residents. The review is considered important because it supports commuters, the elderly, as well as young people, in making better and healthier choices and it helps to reduce dependency on the road system.



Photo: Linda Murray





Improved provision for walking and cycling

4.9 In section 4.2.2 of BBC's [Local Transport Plan 2011-2021](#) (LPT3), it is emphasised that *'there is an urgent need to promote better health and well-being in the residents of the Borough. At a time when public finances are under increasing pressure the potential of low-cost, sustainable measures, such as walking and cycling, are attractive and effective ways of tackling these challenges.'*

4.10 Section 4.2.4 contains the vision *'To create an environment and culture in which cycling and walking are seen as the natural choices of travelling because they are convenient, safe, comfortable, healthy and attractive.'*

4.11 It is widely acknowledged that in order to achieve this, existing cycle lanes and footpaths need improving to make using them easier and safer, particularly for the disabled, infirm, and those using mobility aids, so they become a safer travel option for commuters, students, parents and children, and leisure users alike.

4.12 Many of the side roads in the village are narrowed due to parked vehicles and carry a lot of vehicle traffic at peak times, making it sometimes difficult for villagers to use them as safe cycle routes. This is also a particular issue on the A600 where the shared use cycle/foot path between Shortstown and Cotton End is used by young children walking or scooting to/from Cotton End Forest School.

4.13 Within the village itself, cyclists cannot currently legally use the footpaths but can use bridleways outside the Settlement Policy Area. As outlined in the [Highway Code](#), cyclists are not allowed to cycle on public footpaths. This means cycling on pavements is prohibited, as detailed in [Rule 64](#) of the code, as these are exclusively for pedestrian use.



Figure 41: Beds C.C. Shocott Spring footpath sign
Photo: Linda Murray

Improving footpaths

4.14 The main access point from the village to the Forest of Marston Vale Trust's Shocott Spring woodland is via a footpath from the A600 diagonally opposite the entrance to Hermitage Gardens. This footpath was originally conceived to be an access point to Shocott Spring by the Forest of Marston Vale and the then Bedfordshire County Council circa 2005- 2008 when Shocott Spring was planted. While the footpath was laid, along with official 'Public Footpath' signage, the former Bedfordshire County Council failed to make the order to create the right of way before the County Council was dissolved on 1st April 2009.

4.15 The Cotton End Plan seeks to upgrade and enhance this existing footpath so it provides unhindered access to Shocott Spring for the elderly, infirm, wheelchair, mobility scooter users, and complies with the [Equality Act 2010](#).

POLICY INTENT

- To seek improvements to roads and transport infrastructure facilitating a smooth traffic flow through the village; (Objective 12)
- To encourage walking and cycling to and from key local destinations by improving the facilities for safe walking and cycling (shared and safe paths, lanes and tracks) within and outside Cotton End. (Objective 9)
- To protect and enhance the verdant character of Cotton End (Objective 1)



04 Getting Around Policies



Figure 42: Improvement of public footpath to Shocott Spring



POLICY GA1

GETTING AROUND INFRASTRUCTURE

GA1 WALKING AND CYCLING

Development of well maintained, safe and attractive local walking and cycle routes and the enhancement of such, will be supported. Any development that reduces the quantity, functionality and/or quality of walking and cycle routes will not be supported.



Figure 43: Open Space & Recreation



COTTON END PLAN POLICIES

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

POLICY OS1 | OS2 | OS3 | OS4

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

CONTEXT AND REASONED JUSTIFICATION

5.1 Designated Open Spaces within the Settlement Policy Area Open Spaces were designated in the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013. However other open and recreation spaces exist in Cotton End which are not formally designated. Well maintained open and recreation spaces support education, health, cognitive development and physical wellbeing of people of all ages, and allow opportunities for communities to come together through sports, recreation, gardening etc. This fosters engagement and community responsibility with long-term benefits for the well-being and health of the village. Green space, particularly larger green open spaces, make a vital contribution to overall quality of life in communities, providing a sense of freedom and sanctuary. It provides somewhere to relax, to play, to enjoy and learn about nature, to meet with friends, exercise and enjoy good quality air. It is a vital shared resource. BBC's [Adopted Open Space SPD](#) policy AD28 requires that all developments must make additional provisions of community facilities to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

5.2 The existence of good open spaces also improves biodiversity, positively mitigates flood risk reduction and overall visual attractiveness of the local environment. It helps create the distinctive character of an area and a sense of belonging for those who live and work there and for visitors. This was highlighted in CEPC's Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2020, where 14% of respondents valued the Village Hall Recreation Ground and some 47% valued Shocott Spring.

5.3 Cotton End has three play areas with good facilities owned by CEPC. Two are located at the Village Hall and one at Trow Close. CEPC also owns two open spaces, the informal 'village green' between Wood Lane and Hall Way and the open space at the Village Hall, which contains a sports field. Only part of this open green space falls inside the village SPA.

5.4 Neighbourhood Plans give communities the ability to identify and designate Local Green Spaces within a Neighbourhood Plan. Cotton End Parish Council will work with all parties to seek contributions towards the maintenance and continuity of public recreational spaces, including CEPC owned play areas and Local Green Spaces.



POLICY OS

OS1 | OS2 | OS3 | OS4

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

POLICY INTENT

- To continue to protect the Designated Open Spaces in the village from development, and to ensure that all residents have access to community green and open space for leisure and recreational purposes within a reasonable walking distance;
(Objective 5)
- To formally designate Local Green Spaces in the village to ensure that all residents have access to further community green and open space for leisure and recreational purposes within a reasonable walking distance;
(Objective 5)
- To promote an active community within the village, with improved community and cultural facilities for residents and visitors;
(Objective 7)

OS1 PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACES

The Designated Open Space within the SPA at the Village Hall identified in Figure 43 is afforded protection by BBC's Policy AD40.

OS2 DESIGNATION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES

This policy designates the following as Local Green Spaces:

- The Village Green between Wood Lane and Hall Way
- The open green space at the Village Hall outside of the village SPA, which contains the sports field and play areas

OS3 DEVELOPMENT ON LOCAL GREEN SPACE

Inappropriate development proposals which result in the loss of part or all of a Local Green Space will not be permitted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.



Community Infrastructure Priority Projects 2023 to 2040

VISION: In 2040, Cotton End will have maintained and improved its attractive character as a tranquil verdant village, surrounded by highly cherished open countryside, with an active and diverse community.

Project 1: Footpath improvements outside the Settlement Policy Area

Project description: Statutory dedication of, and improvement of the footpath from the A600 diagonally opposite the entrance to Hermitage Gardens to the Forest of Marston Vale Trust's Shocott Spring woodland – **Page 54 Figure 42**

Delivery lead: Bedford Borough Council working in partnership with CEPC, Forest of Marston Vale, CERG and other stakeholders

Time scale: 2023 to 2025

Project 2: Local Play Areas

Project description: Maintenance and improvement work to the Play Area S3 and support for the maintenance, improvement and continuity of the existing public recreational open space **S2** at the Village Hall – **Page 26 Figure 15**

Project description: Maintenance and improvement work to the Play Area **S4** at Trow Close – **Page 26 Figure 15**

Delivery lead: CEPC working in partnership with other stakeholders

Time scale: 2023 to 2040

Project 3: Allotments

Project description: Provision of allotments within Cotton End Parish. Section 23 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 requires that *"If the council of any borough, urban district, or parish are of opinion that there is a demand for allotments in the borough, urban district, or parish, the council shall provide a sufficient number of allotments, and shall let such allotments to persons resident in the borough, district, or parish, and desiring to take the same."*

Delivery lead: CEPC working in partnership with Bedford Borough Council, landowners, other stakeholders and village residents

Time scale: 2023 to 2040





Glossary

A Neighbourhood Planning Glossary from [myCommunity.org.uk](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/services/help/glossary) also see Planning Portal (<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/services/help/glossary>)

ADOPTION – The final confirmation of a development plan by a local planning authority.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING – Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT – A report that allows the Local Authority to assess the extent to which policies and proposals set out in all the local development documents are being achieved.

APPEAL – The process by which a planning applicant can challenge a planning decision that has been refused or had conditions imposed.

AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) – A formal designation of an area where planning control is based on the protection and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area.

ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION – A direction restricting permitted development rights within a specified area. They are often used in conservation areas to provide protection for things like windows, doors, chimneys, etc. or restrict permitted development rights related to change of use.

BANANA – An extreme kind of NIMBY – Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone. **BBC** – Bedford Borough Council.

BIODIVERSITY – The degree of variation of life forms within a particular ecosystem. Biodiversity is a measure of the health of an ecosystem. Human activity generally tends to reduce biodiversity, so special measures often need to be taken to offset the impact of development on natural habitats.

BROWNFIELD LAND – Land that has been previously developed.

BUILDING FOR LIFE – A technique for assessing the quality of housing proposals using 20 criteria including sustainability, urban design and social/community factors.

BUILDINGS AT RISK – A term used to describe historic buildings that are vacant and/or in poor condition. Some local authorities have buildings at risk surveys.

CALL IN – A discretionary power of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to 'call in' certain planning applications and subject them to a public inquiry if the granting of planning permission may substantially conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework or with adopted local planning policy.

CAPACITY BUILDING – Training, education and awareness-raising initiatives, often used as part of community engagement initiatives, to inform people about things like neighbourhood planning and related issues.

CASE LAW – Decisions by the courts on the interpretation of legislation.

CBC – Central Bedfordshire Council.

CEPC – Cotton End Parish Council.

CERG – Cotton End Residents Group.

CERTIFICATE OF LAWFULNESS – A certificate that can be obtained from the local planning authority to confirm that existing development is lawful.

CHARACTER APPRAISAL – An appraisal, usually of the historic character of conservation areas or other historic areas, such as terraced housing.

COMMUNITY – A group of people that who hold something in common. They could share a common place (e.g. individual neighbourhood) a common interest (e.g. interest in the environment) a common identity (e.g. age) or a common need (e.g. a particular service focus).



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT – Involving the local community in the decisions that are made regarding their area.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) – Allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their areas. Money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure such as transport schemes, schools and leisure centres.

COMMUNITY PLAN – A plan produced by a local authority-led partnership to improve the quality of life of people living in an area. Community plans take a wide view and cover social and economic issues which development plans, including neighbourhood plans, do not normally address.

COMMUNITY PROFILING – Gathering statistical data on the community, e.g. population size, income which helps build up a ‘social profile’ of the community.

COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID – Aims to give community groups the time to develop bids and raise money to buy public assets that come onto the open market.

COMMUNITY RIGHT TO CHALLENGE – Gives voluntary and community groups the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local service.

COMPULSORY PURCHASE – A legal process initiated by a local authority to acquire privately owned land in order to implement public policy without the agreement of the owner.

CONDITIONS – Planning conditions are provisions attached to the granting of planning permission.

CONFORMITY – There is a requirement for neighbourhood plans to have appropriate regard to national policy and to be in conformity with local policy.

CONSERVATION AREA – An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which are preserved and enhanced by local planning policies and guidance

CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT – Consent needed for the demolition of unlisted buildings in a conservation area.

CONSULTATION – A communication process with the local community that informs planning decision making.

CORE STRATEGY – A development plan document forming part of a local authority’s Local Plan, which sets out a vision and core policies for the development of the area

DELIVERY VEHICLE – The means of making things happen. It could refer to a partnership or a community development trust or other arrangement designed to make projects happen.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT – A short report accompanying a planning permission application. Describes design principles of a development such as layout, townscape characteristics, scale, landscape design and appearance.

DESIGN CODE - A type of design guidance but detailed and written as a set of instructions or rules. A design code prescribes very detailed requirements particularly to meet the distinctive characteristics of a locality, and provides design guidance to influence its future development.

DEVELOPMENT – Legal definition is “the carrying out of building, mining, engineering or other operations in, on, under or over land, and the making of any material change in the use of buildings or other land.”

DEVELOPMENT BRIEF – Guidance on how a site or are should be developed in terms of uses, design, linkages, conservation, etc.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (also Development Management) – The process of administering and making decisions on different kinds of planning applications.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN – A document setting out the local planning authority’s policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the area.

DUTY TO CO-OPERATE – A requirement introduced by the Localism Act 2011 for local authorities to work together in dealing with cross-boundary issues such as public transport, housing allocations or large retail parks.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – Improvement of an area's economy through investment, development, job creation, and other measures.

ENFORCEMENT – Enforcement of planning control ensures that terms and conditions of planning decisions are carried out.

ENFORCEMENT NOTICE – A legal notice served by the local planning authority requiring specified breaches of planning control to be corrected.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT – Evaluates the likely environmental impacts of the development, together with an assessment of how these impacts could be reduced.

EVIDENCE BASE – The evidence upon which a development plan is based, principally the background facts and statistics about an area, and the views of stakeholders.

FLOOD PLAIN – An area prone to flooding.

FRONT LOADING – An approach to community engagement in which communities are consulted at the start of the planning process before any proposals have been produced.

GENERAL (PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT) ORDER – The Town and Country Planning General (Permitted Development) Order is a statutory document that allows specified minor kinds of development (such as small house extensions) to be undertaken without formal planning permission.

GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE – A power conveyed by the Localism Act 2011 to give local authorities the ability to undertake any action in the best interest of their communities unless it is against the law.

GREENFIELD SITE – Land where there has been no previous development.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE – Landscape, biodiversity, trees, allotments, parks, open spaces and other natural assets.

GREEN SPACE – Those parts of an area which are occupied by natural, designed or agricultural landscape as opposed to built development; open space, parkland, woodland, sports fields, gardens, allotments, and the like.

GREEN TRAVEL PLAN – A package of actions setting out how to travel to the place in question using options that are healthy, safe and sustainable, and reduce the use of the private car.

HIGHWAY AUTHORITY – The body with legal responsibility for the management and maintenance of public roads. In the UK the highway authority is usually the county council or the unitary authority for a particular area, which can delegate some functions to the district council.

HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS – Not-for-profit organisations providing homes mainly to those in housing need.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION – An examination of a proposed Neighbourhood Plan, carried out by an independent person, set up to consider whether a Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions required.

INFRASTRUCTURE – Basic services necessary for development to take place e.g. roads, electricity, water, education and health facilities.

INQUIRY – A hearing by a planning inspector into a planning matter such as a Local Plan or appeal.

JUDICIAL REVIEW – Legal challenge of a planning decision, to consider whether it has been made in a proper and lawful manner.

LEGISLATION – The Acts of Parliament, regulations, and statutory instruments, which provide the legal framework within which public law is administered.

LISTED BUILDINGS – Any building or structure which is included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT – The formal approval which gives consent to carry out work affecting the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building.



LOCALISM – Shifting power away from central government control to the local level. Making services more locally accountable, devolving more power to local communities, individuals and councils

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (LDF) – see Local Plan.

LOCAL AUTHORITY – The administrative body that governs local services such as education, planning and social services.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER – Local Development Orders allow planning authorities to implement policies in their development plan by granting planning permission for a particular development or for a particular class of development.
LOCAL LIST – A list produced by a local authority to identify buildings and structures of special local interest which are not included in the statutory list of listed buildings.

LOCAL PLAN – The name for the collection of documents prepared by your local planning authority for the use and development of land and for changes to the transport system. Can contain documents such as development plans and statements of community involvement.

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY – Local government body responsible for formulating planning policies and controlling development; a district council, metropolitan council, a county council, a unitary authority or national park authority.

LOCAL REFERENDUM – A direct vote in which communities will be asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal.

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN – Plans that set out a local authority's policies on transport on a five yearly basis.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS – Factors which are relevant in the making of planning decisions, such as sustainability, impact on residential amenity, design and traffic impacts.

MICRO-GENERATION – The small-scale generation of renewable energy usually consumed on the site where it is produced.

MINERALS PLAN – A statement of the policy, advice and guidance provided by local authorities regarding the extraction of minerals.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF) – The government policy document adopted in 2018 intended to make national planning policy and guidance less complex and more accessible. The National Planning Policy Framework introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It gives five guiding principles of sustainable development: living within the planet's means; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA – The local area in which a Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order can be introduced.

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT ORDER – An order introduced by a Parish or Town Council, or a Neighbourhood Forum, as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process, which grants planning permission for a specific development or type of development that will fulfill the vision and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan for the Neighbourhood Area.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – A planning document created by a Parish or Town Council or a Neighbourhood Forum, which sets out vision for the Neighbourhood Area, and contains policies for the development and use of land in the area. Neighbourhood Plans must be subjected to an independent examination to confirm that they meet legal requirements, and then to a local referendum. If approved by a majority vote of the local community, the Neighbourhood Plan will then form part of the statutory development plan.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM – Designated by the local authority in non-parished areas, an organisation established for the purpose of neighbourhood planning to further the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the neighbourhood area. There can only be one forum in an area.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING – A community-initiated process in which people get together through a local forum or parish or town council and produce a plan for their neighbourhood setting out policies and proposals for the development they wish to see in their area.

NIMBY – 'Not In My Back Yard' – Used when discussing planning issues. Term is used to define the opposition of residents who are against new developments that they believe will devalue their properties.



NON-DETERMINATION – When a planning application is submitted and the local authority fails to give a decision on it within the defined statutory period.

OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on over, or under land; part of the statutory definition of development (the other part being material changes of use of buildings or land).

PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT – Certain minor building works that don't need planning permission e.g. a boundary wall below a certain height.

POLICY – A concise statement of the principles that a particular kind of development proposal should satisfy in order to obtain planning permission

PARISH PLAN – A plan produced by a parish council that sets out a vision for the future of a parish community and outlines how that can be achieved in an action plan.

PARKING STANDARDS – The requirements of a local authority in respect of the level of car parking provided for different kinds of development.

PLAN-LED – A system of planning which is organised around the implementation of an adopted plan, as opposed to an ad hoc approach to planning in which each case is judged on its own merits.

PLANNING GAIN – The increase in value of land resulting from the granting of planning permission. This value mainly accrues to the owner of the land, but sometimes the local council negotiates with the developer to secure benefit to the public, either through Section 106 Planning Obligations or the setting of a Community Infrastructure Levy.

PLANNING INSPECTORATE – The government body established to provide an independent judgment on planning decisions which are taken to appeal.

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990 – The primary piece of legislation covering listed buildings and conservation areas.

PLANNING OBLIGATION – Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, secured by a local planning authority through negotiations with a developer to offset the public cost of permitting a development proposal. Sometimes developers can self impose obligations to pre-empt objections to planning permission being granted. They cover things like highway improvements or open space provision

PLANNING PERMISSION – Formal approval granted by a council allowing a proposed development to proceed

PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – The concept introduced in 2012 by the UK government with the National Planning Policy Framework to be the 'golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking'. The NPPF gives five guiding principles of sustainable development: living within the planet's means; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

PUBLIC INQUIRY – See INQUIRY.

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE – Open space to which the public has free access.

PUBLIC REALM – Areas of space usually in town and city centres where the public can circulate freely, including streets, parks and public squares.

QUALIFYING BODY – Either a Parish/Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum, which can initiate the process of neighbourhood planning.

REFERENDUM – A vote by the eligible population of an electoral area may decide on a matter of public policy. Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders are made by a referendum of the eligible voters within a neighbourhood area.

REGENERATION – Upgrading an area through social, physical and economic improvements.

RURAL – Areas of land which are generally not urbanised; usually with low population densities and a high proportion of land devoted to agriculture.



SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT – A nationally important archaeological site, building or structure which is protected against unauthorised change by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

SECTION 106 – see Planning Obligation.

SEQUENTIAL TEST – A principle for making a planning decision based on developing certain sites or types of land before others, for example, developing brownfield land before greenfield sites.

SETTING – The immediate context in which a building is situated, for example, the setting of a listed building could include neighbouring land or development with which it is historically associated, or the surrounding townscape of which it forms a part.

SETTLEMENT POLICY AREA – A settlement boundary around the main physical built up edge of a village or around the area of a village with a 'built-up character' which encloses it and excludes undeveloped areas or less built up areas.

SIGNIFICANCE – The qualities and characteristics which define the special interest of a historic building or area.

SITE ALLOCATION PLAN – A plan accompanying a planning policy document or statement which identifies sites within the plan area on which certain kinds of development are proposed, e.g. residential or retail development.

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST – A protected area designated as being of special interest by virtue of its flora, fauna, geological or geomorphological features. SSSIs are designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 by the official nature conservation body for the particular part of the UK in question.

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SOUNDNESS – The soundness of a statutory local planning document is determined by the planning inspector against three criteria: whether the plan is justified, whether it is effective, and whether it is consistent with national and local planning policy. Plans found to be unsound cannot be adopted by the local planning authority. It should be noted, neighbourhood plans are NOT required to meet these tests of soundness.

SPA – See SETTLEMENT POLICY AREA.

SPACE STANDARDS – Quantified dimensions set down by a local planning authority to determine whether a particular development proposal provides enough space around it so as not to affect the amenity of existing neighbouring developments. Space standards can also apply to garden areas.

SPATIAL PLANNING – A wider view of planning, which involves co-ordination and integration across different sectors such as transport and industry. Brings together all policies and programmes which have an impact on the environment in which you work, live or play.

SPD – See SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT.

STAKEHOLDERS – People who have an interest in an organisation or process including residents, business owners and government.

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – A formal statement of the process of community consultation undertaken in the preparation of a statutory plan.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT – Environmental assessment as applied to policies, plans and programmes. Has been in place since the European SEA directive (2001/42/EC).

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL – An assessment of the environmental, social and economic impacts of a Local Plan from the outset of the preparation process to check that the plan accords with the principles of sustainable development.

STATUTORY DEVELOPMENT PLAN – Focus on land use development set within the context of wider social, economic and environmental trends and considerations. Reflects national planning policies to make provisions for the long-term use of land and buildings.

STRATEGIC PLANNING – The overall vision and policies for the planning system in an area. Lays out what an area wants development to accomplish.



STRATEGIC POLICY – A policy that is essential for the delivery of a strategy, for example, the overall scale and distribution of housing and employment in an area.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – Provides detailed thematic or site-specific guidance explaining or supporting the policies in the Local Plan.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – An approach to development that aims to allow economic growth without damaging the environment or natural resources. Development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – Currently the main planning legislation for England and Wales is consolidated in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990; this is regarded as the ‘principal act’.

TENURE – The terms and conditions under which land or property is held or occupied, e.g. five year leasehold, freehold owner occupation, rented, etc.

TENURE-BLIND - Entrances are identical, regardless of whether you have bought, rent at full market rate, or are a council or housing association tenant. Tenure blind doors and stairwells may also make sense from the developers' perspective. It should ensure a consistent higher standard and suggests a more flexible housing stock where private or rented can be interchanged as market and other pressures shift.

TPO – See **TREE PRESERVATION ORDER**.

TREE PRESERVATION ORDER – An order made by a local planning authority to protect a specific tree, a group of trees or woodland. TPOs prevent the felling, lopping, topping, uprooting or other deliberate damage of trees without the permission of the local planning authority.

USE CLASSES ORDER – The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) is the statutory instrument that defines the categories of use of buildings or land for the purposes of planning legislation. Planning permission must be obtained to change the use of a building or land to another use class.

VERNACULAR - The way in which ordinary buildings were built in a particular place, making use of local styles, techniques and materials.

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT – A document that identifies and defines the distinctive characteristics of a locality, and provides design guidance to influence its future development and improve the physical qualities of the area. Village design statements have generally been produced for rural areas, often by parish councils.



References

Photos

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- **Photo 3** Murray, A. (2020) *The Baptist Church*.
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THE COTTON END PLAN
2023 to 2040
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