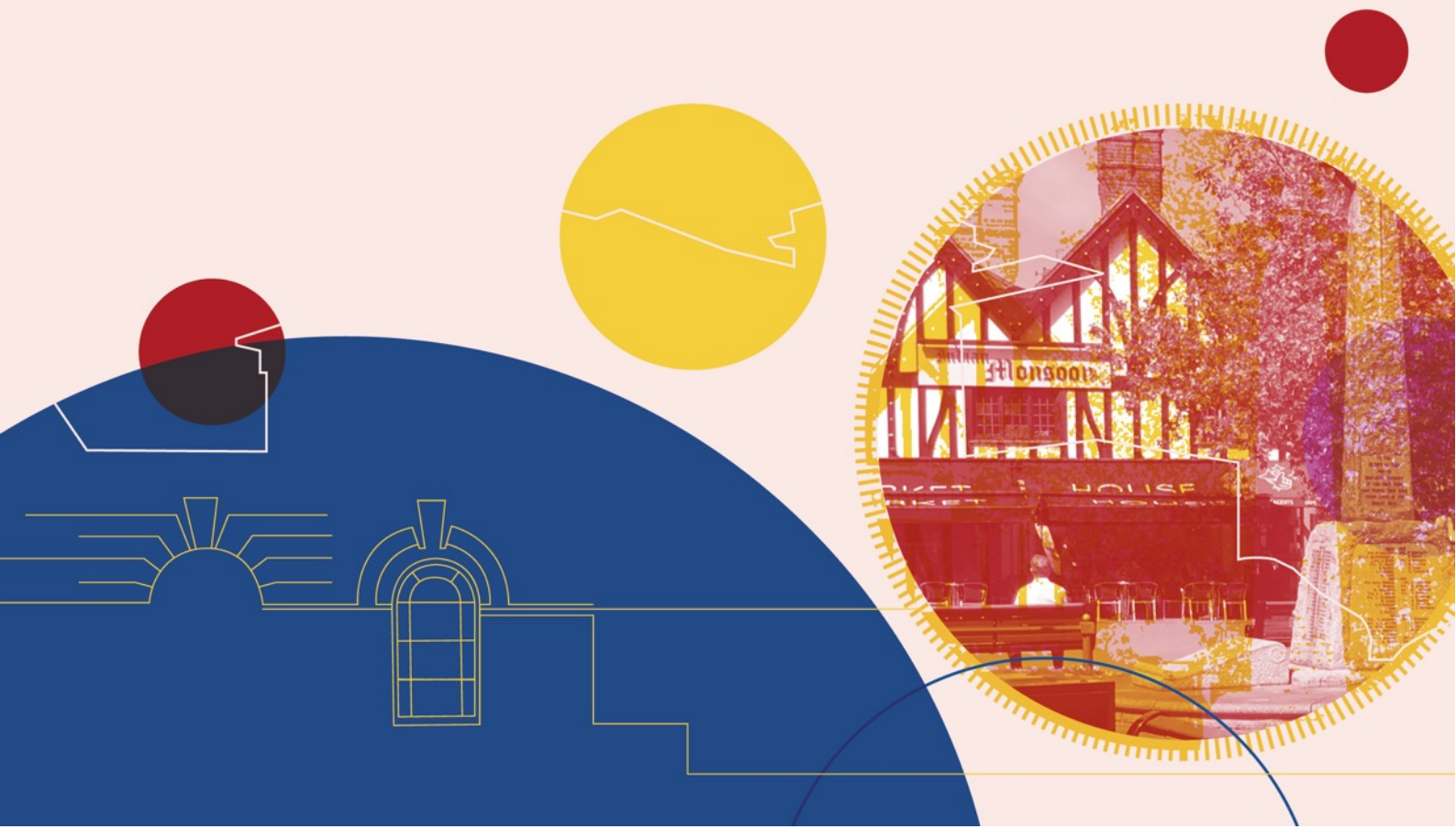




# Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 Draft September 2021







## **Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan**

**Regulation 14 Consultation Draft (V6.2)**

**Biggleswade Town Council**

**September 2021**





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## Foreword

Throughout its history, Biggleswade has been defined by its location. There are prehistoric and Roman remains but the first real settlement was Saxon. This was the point where you could easily cross the River Ivel and it gave the town its name – Biccel's Wade, named after the Saxon chieftain. In Medieval times, it was already a market town serving surrounding communities, the Market Charter being awarded by King Henry III in 1227. In the eighteenth century, Biggleswade was a coaching town, a major staging post on the Great North Road. There were multiple inns and a common occupation was maltster! At the same time, the Ivel Navigation, linking Biggleswade to the Ouse and thence to the port of King's Lynn, allowed trade in coal, timber and grain to develop.

In the nineteenth century, with the coming of the railway, the market gardening industry thrived, with vegetables able to be in Covent Garden market within 24 hours of being harvested. In the mid-twentieth century, some factories thrived alongside the market gardening but as the century wore on and Biggleswade started to expand, it became more and more of a commuter town. The former industries declined but, with Stratton Business Park, new industries provided employment locally.

In all that time, the town's position on the river, the road and the railway - prime means of communication and transport - have enabled it to prosper and adapt to change.

What about the twenty-first century? To add to the A1 and the East Coast Main Line, we will now have dual carriageway from the M1 to Cambridge and an east/west railway just a few miles to the north with a possible parkway station where it crosses the East Coast line. This will have a huge impact on East Bedfordshire, including Biggleswade, and there are already signs of what is to come. There will be much more commercial development because of the very good communication links and, to support the jobs, much more housing.

These strategic decisions are made at national level and much of the detail about how the development happens will be directed by national planning policy and by the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and Highways policies. However, through a Neighbourhood Plan, we, as local residents, can have some say in what happens and it is why this document has been produced.

We have listened closely to what residents and businesses have told us about the town, what is good and what is not so good, and we have taken advice from professionals about possible policies to address the issues. This Neighbourhood Plan is the result and it aims to preserve what is valuable and to encourage the best of new development. We hope the Plan will be seen as a worthwhile document against which further changes to the town will be judged so that Biggleswade continues to be a place where people want to live – a well-balanced, fully sustainable, historic and attractive community.

Thank you for reading this far. We hope you will enjoy studying the document and agree with what we are trying to achieve for the town.

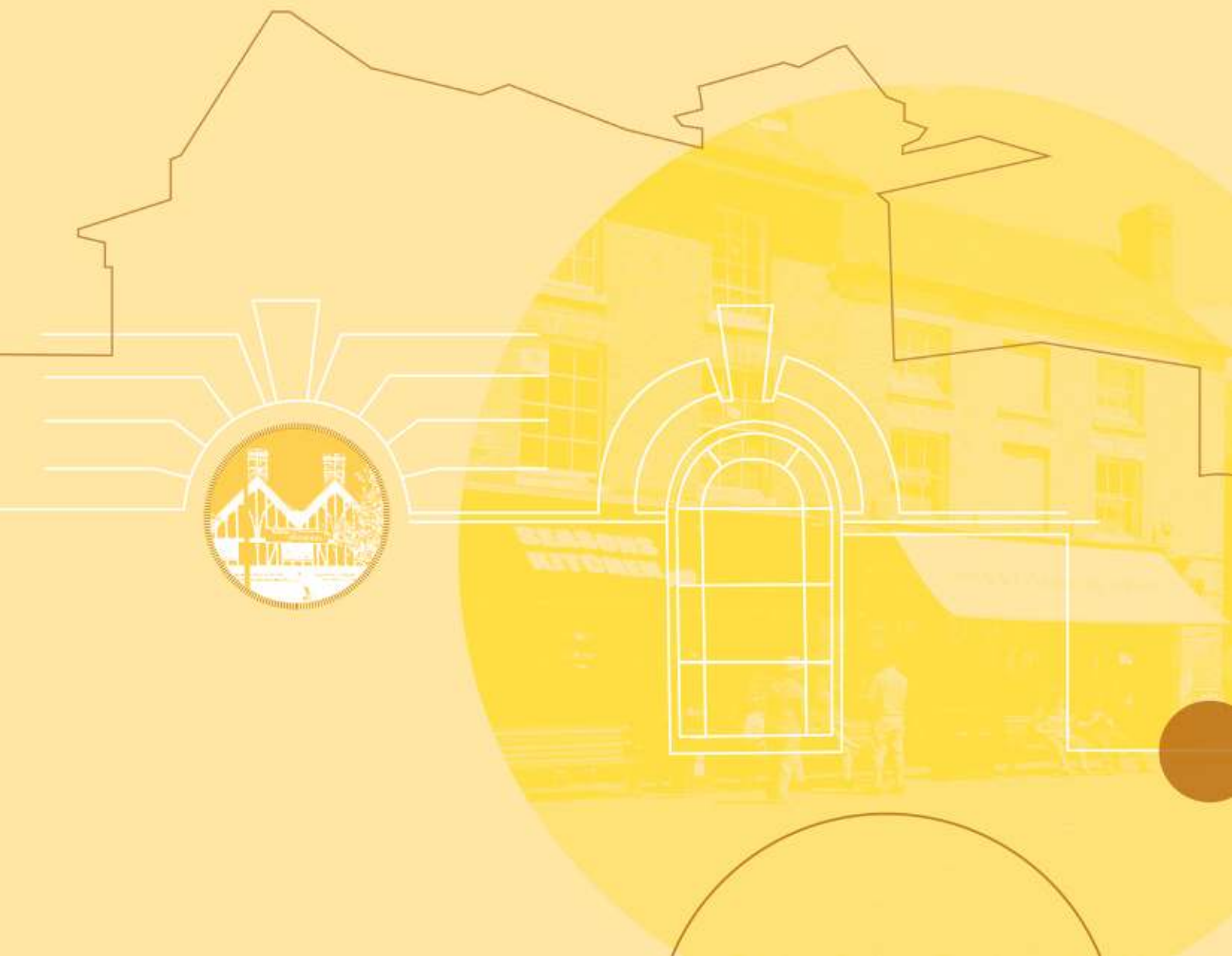
**Madeline Russell**

**Town Councillor and Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Strategy Group.**





# Introduction



## 1. Introduction

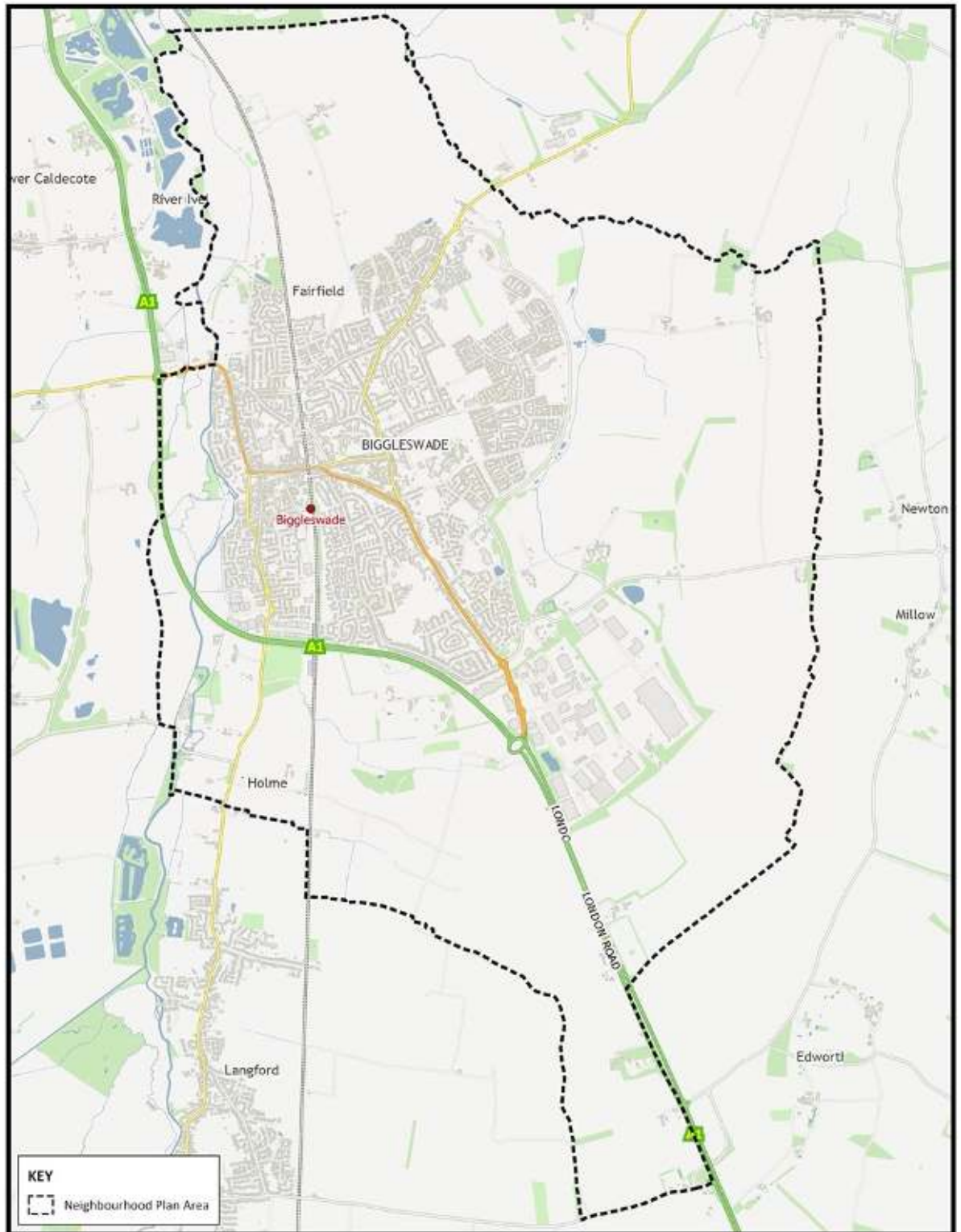
The Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Biggleswade Town Council to guide the future development of the town. The Plan seeks to address the challenges of a rapidly changing world, including the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. The Plan deals with a range of issues including town centre regeneration, residential development, employment, design, green space, heritage, transport and other matters.

In common with towns all around the country, Biggleswade needs to adapt to changing needs and a changing economic environment. An historic market town in Bedfordshire with good communication links, it faces both challenges and opportunities. The town is served by a number of schools; a train station with direct connection to London; and by the A1 strategic highway. The town centre has a charter market and extensive shops and services.

The Neighbourhood Plan is based on analysis of data and of evidence; previous plans; and the views of the community. The Neighbourhood Plan Strategy Group's initial meeting was in June 2018 and the first public engagement was undertaken in March 2019 to gain insight into local issues of importance to the community. These issues then informed the structure of the plan and its policies. Further engagement was undertaken in 2021, testing the vision, aims and key themes of the plan. At the same time, the Town Council has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders involved in the planning and regeneration of the town.

Once made, a Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory development plan for the area, together with the adopted Central Bedfordshire Local Plan. Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be in force until the end of 2035 or until an updated plan is made before that date. The Plan will be reviewed regularly to assess whether an update is necessary.



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Central Bedfordshire Council

**BIGGLESWADE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Neighbourhood Plan Area



# Vision and aims



## 2. Vision and Aims

### Vision

The plan has the following vision:

**“Our vision for Biggleswade is that it should be a thriving and sustainable market town with a range of community facilities, providing quality of life and economic opportunity to meet the diverse needs of the community and a high-quality environment, including green spaces, to promote healthy lifestyles.**

### Aims

The aims for Biggleswade are:

- 1. To support the development and diversification of Biggleswade Town Centre as a place for shopping, leisure, culture and recreation.**
- 2. To create sustainable, mixed-use, well-connected neighbourhoods.**
- 3. To support housing development that encourages sustainable living in and around Biggleswade Town Centre and meets diverse local needs.**
- 4. To protect and enhance Biggleswade’s natural environment and green spaces for their nature, amenity, and recreational value.**
- 5. To ensure that development is well-designed and sustainable.**
- 6. To conserve and realise the cultural and economic potential of Biggleswade’s historic buildings and places.**
- 7. To promote walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of transport.**



# Strategy for Achieving Sustainable Development



### 3. Strategy for Achieving Sustainable Development

The Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan seeks to achieve sustainable physical and economic development and growth.

Policy BSP1 forms a basis for growth and is augmented by policies on employment, residential development and the development and diversification of the Town Centre.

The Plan does not undertake housing site allocations, leaving this to the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan. However, it does seek to increase the residential population of the Town Centre, improving its vitality.

In preparing the neighbourhood plan potential future development sites were identified to the east of Biggleswade, but it is premature to allocate them at this stage due to infrastructure and other considerations.

The plan seeks to protect green infrastructure including The Green Wheel, Biggleswade Common and open landscape separating the Town from Sandy and Langford. Local Green Space designations are also made.

Design is afforded high priority to ensure that development is sustainable, locally distinctive and pedestrian focused.

Policies are included to protect Biggleswade's designated and non-designated heritage and to encourage sensitive reuse.

The plan promotes a balanced and sustainable range of transport, including facilities for cycling, walking and public transport.

The AECOM 'Design Guidance and Code for Biggleswade' has informed most of the policies. The aim has been to create sustainable mixed-use neighbourhoods, with local facilities and good connections, including for pedestrians and cyclists.

The policies are intended to augment those in the Local Plan, setting requirements more specific to Biggleswade.



# Enabling Growth



## 4. Enabling Growth

### Purpose

To enable sustainable development and growth in sustainable locations.

### Rationale and Evidence

#### National policy

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) Chapter 2 deals with sustainable development.

Sustainable development has economic, social and environmental objectives, set out in Paragraph 8.

Paragraph 11(a) states:

*all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects*

Subsequent Chapters deal with different kinds of development and protection of the historic and natural environment. These chapters are referred to in later policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy BSP1 responds to the requirement in Chapter 2, setting out sustainable patterns of the development. The policy should be applied together with later policies of the Neighbourhood Plan, some of which are specifically cross-referenced.

#### Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2035 (adopted 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021)

The Local Plan identifies Biggleswade as the third largest urban settlement in its predominately rural area and located within the A1 Corridor, a proposed growth area. It is identified as a key employment location, the largest of just three in the authority area designated as a major strategic employment site to accommodate strategic warehousing growth (Use class B8).

The Plan's Spatial Strategy Approach includes seeking to maximise opportunities for intensification and redevelopment and regeneration of urban areas through town centre frameworks or masterplans.

The Plan recognises the role of neighbourhood plans to contribute directly to the delivery of new homes, but does not set any specific targets (para.6.8.5).

Policy SP1a commits to a Partial Review of the Local Plan to provide longer term economic and housing growth, in line with greater clarity around Government decisions on strategic infrastructure in relation to the Cambridge-Bedford-MK-Oxford Arc.

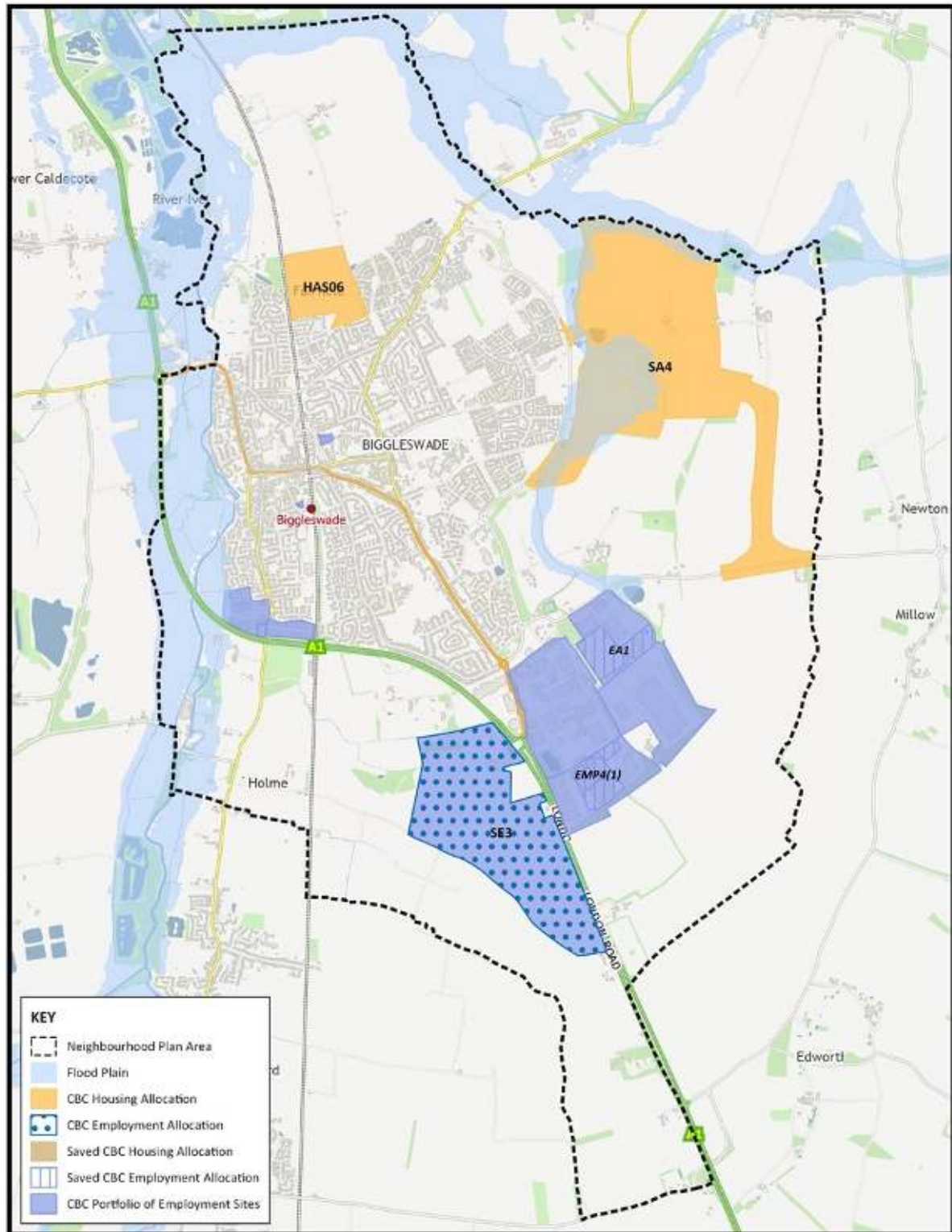
Key Plan policies of specific relevance to the Biggleswade context are:

- Policy SP1: Growth Strategy. Includes the strategic allocation of a new village community east of Biggleswade providing 1500 homes and 2 hectares of employment land together with a further 78 hectares of Council-owned farmland at Holme Farm for employment purposes.
- Policy SP3: Generic requirements for Strategic Housing Allocations. New communities must respect their local context; provide community facilities including integrated health and care hubs and a green infrastructure strategy.
- Policy SP5: Preventing Coalescence and Important Countryside Gaps. Establishes that development in the countryside should avoid reducing open land between settlements that contributes to the separate character, appearance and/or identity of settlements.
- Policy SP7: Development within Settlement Envelopes. Sets out that within the Biggleswade Settlement Envelope housing, employment and other settlement related development proportionate to the scale and role of the settlement will be supported.
- Policy SE3: Holme Farm. Sets out parameters for the employment allocation including up to 38 hectares for “strategic warehousing”; A1 trunk road improvements; approx. 15 hectares for landscaping and green infrastructure contributions.
- Policy SA4: Strategic Housing site allocation east of Biggleswade (garden community). Lays down development principles; developer contributions and other technical requirements.

### **Planning Rationale**

The following Neighbourhood Plan policy acknowledges the important contribution Biggleswade makes in the sub-region identified by the Local Planning Authority. It provides an overview of the opportunities for sustainable growth, including housing, employment and town centre development. It also sets out where growth would be unsustainable. This is then augmented by more detailed policies on residential development, employment, the Town Centre, green infrastructure, design, heritage and other matters.

See also the rationales for the later policies, which augment this overarching policy on growth and sustainability.



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**BIGGLESWADE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Sustainable Development & Growth

See also later Town Centre, Strategic Green Space, Local Green Space and Heritage plans.

## **BSP1: Sustainable Development and Growth**

- 1. In addition to sites allocated in the Local Plan, sustainable development and growth is positively encouraged in the following locations, subject to meeting other policy requirements in this Neighbourhood Plan:**
  - a. the defined town centre, in accordance with Policy BTC1;
  - b. brownfield sites in existing built areas, in accordance with Policies BEM1 and/or BRD1;
  - c. infill residential development for gaps in existing built frontages, in accordance with Policy BPD1;
  - d. demolition and redevelopment of buildings, excluding listed buildings or conservation area buildings that contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the area;
  - e. sensitive refurbishment and suitable reuse of existing buildings, including historic buildings.
- 2. New-build development would generally be unsustainable and would therefore not be supported in the following locations:**
  - a. within high flood risk areas;
  - b. within medium flood risk areas, unless essential to meet local housing need and adequate mitigation measures are designed into the scheme;
  - c. within strategic green spaces and Local Green Spaces, as set out in policies BGS1 and BGS2.
  - d. within the curtilage of scheduled monuments and their settings, subject to Policy BH3.
- 3. Development leading to the loss of Biggleswade's remaining agricultural land will only be supported where alternative sites, including brown field sites, cannot be identified.**

### **Interpretation**

The policy sets a general spatial framework for growth, identifying sustainable locations and sites for growth. The policy should be applied together with later policies relating to growth (Town Centre, employment, community facilities and residential development).

To ensure that growth is sustainable, other policies in this plan deal with green infrastructure, design and placemaking, the natural and historic environments, transport and other matters.

In areas where there is an identified flood risk, flood risk assessments accompanying planning applications will be considered in the application of Policy BSP1.





# Biggleswade Town Centre



## 5. Biggleswade Town Centre

### Purpose

To promote the Town Centre and allow it to adapt to changing needs and realise its economic and community potential.

### Rationale and Evidence

#### National Policy

The NPPF Chapter 7 refers to the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities. Plans should promote long-term vitality and viability, including diversification of uses.

This aim is somewhat compromised by recent changes to the Use Classes Order and permitted development rights, which allow for the loss of ground floor town centre uses and creation of dead frontages.

The NPPF recognises that parking and other transport considerations are integral to the making of high-quality places.

The following Town Centre policy seeks to support the diversification of the Town Centre.

#### Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2035

The Local Plan identifies competitive town centres as being characterised by a range of uses providing customer choice and a focal point for the local community. Whilst larger centres in adjoining authorities are easily accessible; those in Central Bedfordshire have high occupancy rates and attractive shop fronts together with a growing population bringing a potential for increased expenditure. The focus is on improving their vitality and viability through the intensification of town centres uses and implementation of town centre masterplans and frameworks.

Biggleswade is by-definition amongst the authority's most sustainable locations for new development, being classified as one of just three Principal Town Centres in the retail hierarchy which provide a range of shops including many national multiple retailers and independent shops, an extensive range of services, facilities and leisure uses and are home to a large number of businesses.

The Local Plan's relevant policies are:

- Policy R1: Ensuring Town Centre vitality. This supports and encourages main town centre uses within the Town Centre boundary with Primary Shopping Areas the focus for retail (Class E) uses and proposed changes of use away from retail resisted. Proposals for town centre uses such as retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, and community uses will be supported outside the Primary frontages. Proposals for change of use or re-development of properties, away from these uses



will be supported providing that they would be appropriate within a town centre setting and would positively enhance vitality by extending the range of facilities offered.

- Policy R3: Town Centre Development. Development proposals should be in accordance with the principle and objectives of the relevant and up to date town centre masterplans and development briefs. Development proposals elsewhere in town centres should complement and not prejudice development proposed by those documents.
- When planning for the retail provision in the planned urban extensions, proposed strategic allocations and large settlements, it is considered that retail provision should be of a scale to meet local convenience needs in order to complement existing centres (para.13.1.6).

### **Biggleswade Town Centre Adopted Strategy and Masterplan (July 2011)**

The Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan adopted by the LPA in July 2011 was prepared by CBC together with the Town Council and local community groups. The work has informed the guidance note on opportunity sites included in this Plan, part of the Town Centre policy.

The aims were:

- To provide a masterplan and strategy which will assist in bringing forward and guiding change within the town centre.
- To be used as part of the statutory planning framework as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The document sets a vision for Biggleswade over a 15–20-year timespan and the comprehensive masterplan addressed seven key areas of the town centre and their potential regeneration through deliverable projects over short; medium and longer timeframes. Many of the issues it identifies, including the potential of town centre opportunity sites, remain relevant and certain projects, including the rail station public transport interchange, are now reaching implementation stage, whilst the Town Council adopted a comprehensive and detailed Parking Strategy in January 2014 which is continually renewed. The document aims to maintain existing levels of commuter, long-stay, resident and shopper parking.

The role of the masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document remains extant as reflected in Policy R3 of the Local Plan.

### **The Biggleswade Strategic Development Framework**

This document was produced by the local authority's Regeneration & Business Directorate in 2016 to promote the Town; its development and regeneration potential. The work has informed the guidance note on opportunity sites included in this Plan, part of the Town Centre policy.

## Planning Rationale

As with other town centres, COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions have impacted on the town and are likely to have longer-term implications in terms of changes in demand for workspace and live-work patterns.

The importance of the continuing vitality and viability of Biggleswade's town centre and market has been a prominent feature in community engagements and consultations including:

- The Town Plan 2010 - 877 no. (72%) of respondents considered the range of shops and services "insufficient".
- The first NP engagement exercise March/April 2019 sought shoppers' opinions and habits in some detail. It revealed strong opposition to the change of use of shops to residential use however change of use of upper floors was supported.
- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> engagement 92% endorsed the Town Centre and Employment theme which seeks to diversify the centre with a significant proportion citing the need to encourage small businesses to take up empty shop units.

There is a wealth of material on regeneration of the high street, including the Grimsey Reports and resources on the web site of the High Street Task Force. In February 2019, Bill Grimsey accepted an invitation to visit Biggleswade and undertake a town centre tour and "walkabout". Among his suggestions were:

- Selective demolition to provide commuter parking within walking distance of the station, relieving congestion in the centre.
- Lack of green space in the town centre requiring specific intervention to improve leisure experience.
- Return peripheral buildings with struggling occupiers to residential use.
- Provide a mixed-use town centre community hub.

The full notes of the visit outcomes are available on the Council's website.

As part of a strategy to address town centre regeneration, the following policy supports:

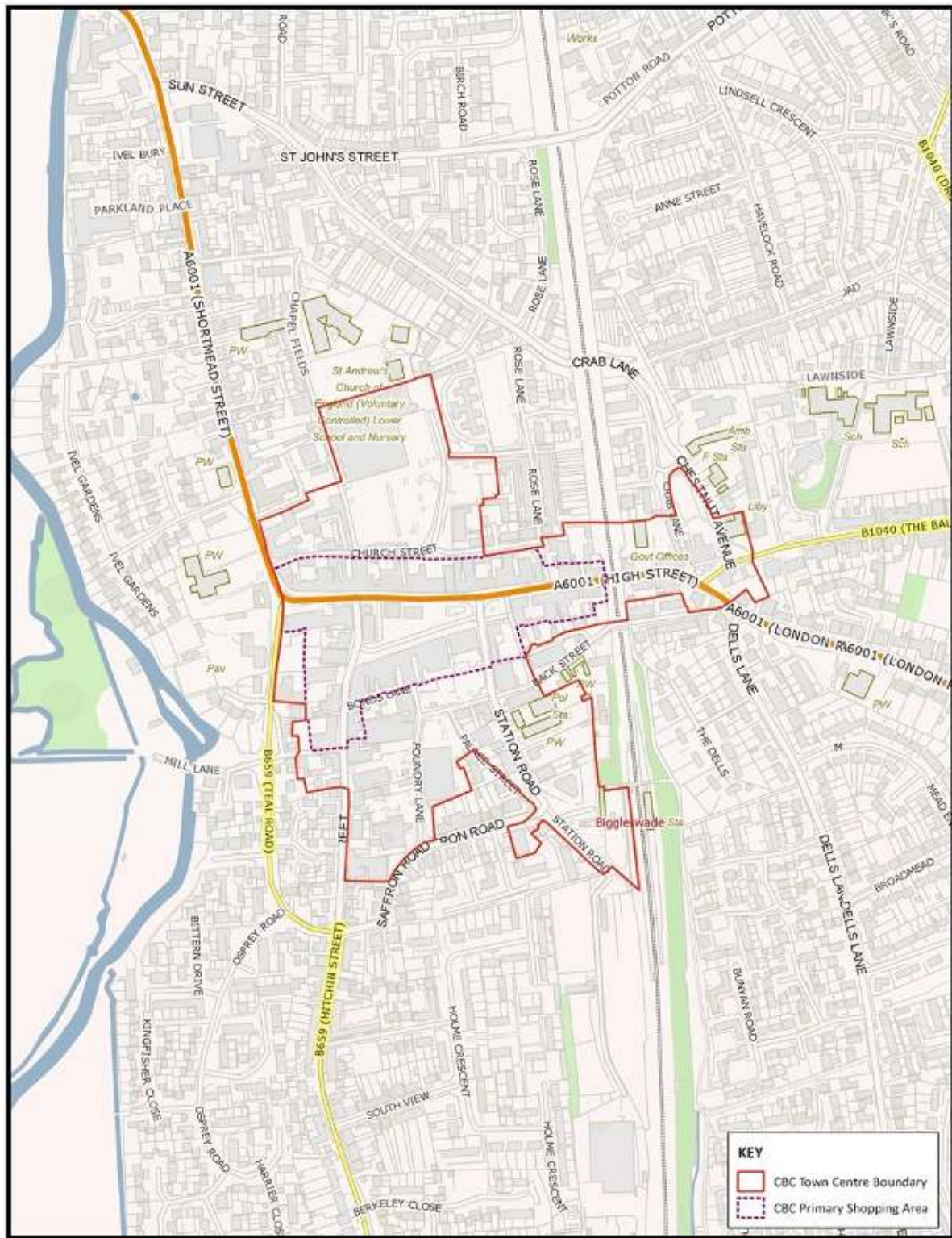
- Diversification in uses, including a range of cultural, arts and other uses to attract people into the town.
- Population (residential) of the town centre.
- More efficient use of land, especially in terms of car-parking provision.
- Promotion and protection of 'quality of place' as a factor in town centre competitiveness.



**Biggleswade Town Centre provides a concentration of shops, food and drink outlets, and community facilities and is well-connected by a range of transport types. The Town Centre must continue to change and adapt, to retain its vitality and competitiveness.**







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## BIGGLESWADE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

CBC Town Centre Boundaries

## **BTC1: Development in the Town Centre**

- 1. Within the defined Town Centre, development will be supported where it maintains or enhances the Town Centre's character, vitality and competitiveness as a market town.**
- 2. Where such development involves identified opportunity sites, it should take account of the 'Town Centre Opportunity Sites Guidance Note' that follows this policy.**
- 3. Within the Town Centre primary frontages (Primary Shopping Area), ground floor frontage units should remain in town centre uses, including retail, food and drink, professional services, leisure, performance, community facilities, hotels, health and fitness, visitor attractions, cinema, arts and culture, personal services, recreation, and culture and other uses open to the public.**
- 4. Residential uses and other uses not-open to the general public will be supported for upper floors and sites within the town centre, but will not be supported in ground floor street frontages.**
- 5. Within Town Centre primary frontages (Primary Shopping Area), shop fronts must be retained or provided at ground floor level, meeting the requirements of Policy BPD3.**
- 6. Redevelopment of sites in and immediately adjacent to the Town Centre must take account of likely generation of demand for parking spaces.**
- 7. To ensure the efficient use of land, parking provision within redevelopment schemes should be accommodated within the building footprint of the scheme or through multi-storey provision, but not through surface car parking.**
- 8. The redevelopment of surface car parks in the town centre will be supported, providing the development includes an equivalent car-parking provision within the scheme or nearby.**

### **Interpretation**

The policy supports growth and diversification of the Town Centre, including uses in Use Class E, but also other uses that would enhance its attractiveness. The policy also encourages expansion of the Town's residential population, to increase its catchment.

Other policies also address the Town Centre directly, including policies on the Biggleswade Conservation Area and shopfront design. The policy requires retention of shopfronts in key frontages, to protect character and avoid dead (inactive) frontages.

Informal guidance on opportunity sites within the defined Town Centre is on the following page.

## Town Centre Opportunity Sites Guidance Note

Opportunity Sites for Potential Development in and around the Town Centre include:

### 1. Century House / Market Square

There is an opportunity to enhance and diversify the Town Centre “offer”, with removal of bus loop (following the granting of planning permission for the new transport interchange). Century House may provide an opportunity for redevelopment or demolition, to enhance the Market Square, with appropriate provision of alternative bus and toilet facilities. The aim should be to support leisure, community, or cultural events or other facilities to attract people into the Town. Redevelopment would provide an opportunity for exemplar green design.

### 2. Bonds Lane/Foundry Lane

Redevelopment could address the current mix of untidy and unattractive individual sites and possibly include the Aldi store.

Redevelopment provides an opportunity to improve this part of the town centre, with an emphasis on improving the pedestrian experience and creating a new, distinctive quarter.

Potential uses could include community facilities (a community hub), culture, leisure/recreation, healthcare, community or other town centre uses. Residential development at upper levels could help increase the catchment and viability of the Town Centre.

Development of sites in Hitchin Street could help to provide an enhanced link to the riverside.

Site assembly would be necessary, due to fragmented ownership.

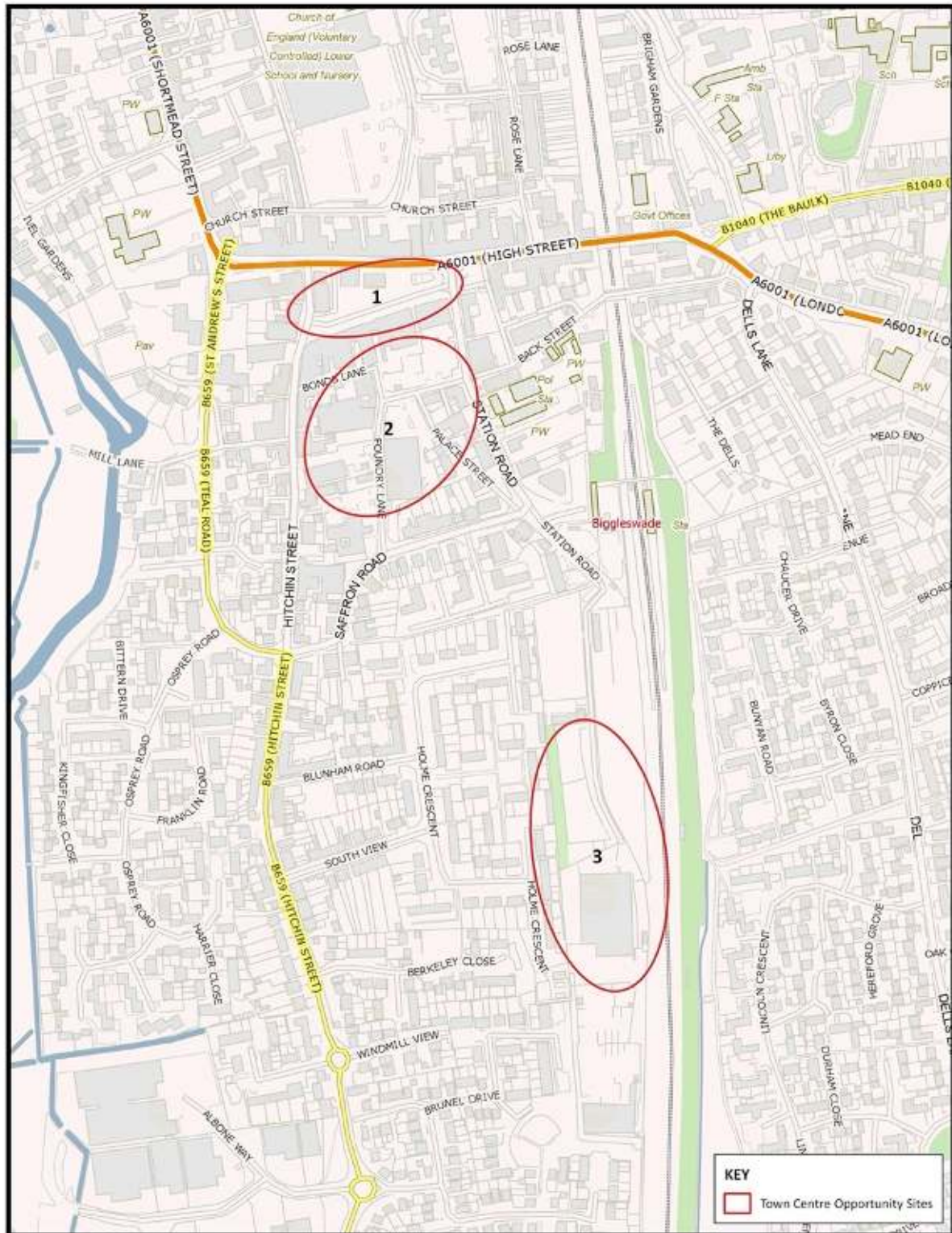
### 3. South of Station

This is a narrow but significant central site, part vacant. The proximity to the station and town centre provides a sustainable location for office or other commercial development. The nature of the site would require a creative design solution.

The Network Rail carpark may provide an opportunity for decked parking, increasing capacity.

Contamination (from previous metal recycling use) and restricted vehicular access will need to be addressed (though location may provide an opportunity for development with a greater emphasis on sustainable forms of transport, including cycling, walking and train).





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## BIGGLESWADE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Town Centre Opportunity Sites





# Employment and Community Facilities



## 6. Employment and Community Facilities

### Purpose

To enhance local economic opportunities and enable more sustainable live/work patterns.

### Rationale and Evidence

#### National Policy

Chapter 6 of the NPPF 2021 deals with building a strong, competitive economy and the need to create conditions for businesses to invest, expand and adapt.

This includes consideration of economic and investment strategy, infrastructure, and flexibility to changing practices.

*planning policies should ... set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth ...*

Chapter 7 refers to the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities. Plans should promote long-term vitality and viability, including diversification of uses.

Chapter 8 deals with promoting healthy and safe communities. Planning policies should aim to achieve 'healthy, inclusive and safe places ...'. This includes promoting social interaction, being safe and accessible, and enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles. Policies should also make provision for shared spaces and community facilities and guard against loss of valued facilities and services.

The following policies seek to maintain and enhance employment opportunities and community facilities in Biggleswade.

#### Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2035

The Local Plan champions Central Bedfordshire's strategic location; excellent transport links; strong, high-performing economy and expected future key role in the Oxford-Bedford-MK-Cambridge Arc. It adopts a "positive, enabling approach" to supporting employment opportunities, in particular in a number of high growth sectors which include Transport & Logistics. It promotes choice in the range and size of both available land and premises to enable new business start-ups, to meet local demand for existing businesses to grow and to encourage new inward investment.

Following Government guidance, the Local Plan has assessed future need for employment land through its Functional Economic Market Assessment (FEMA) and Employment Land Review (ELR) which covered a period to 2031. The ELR identifies that, "in quantitative terms, there is sufficient existing supply of employment land in Central Bedfordshire to satisfy demand" however it cites "real world" factors which it feels suggest that jobs growth could exceed the identified target. Whilst the "pipeline of employment land is large", there is a short term need to meet local demand. Accordingly, to meet the objectives of the Plan, new

employment land allocations will be delivered as part of mixed-use developments as well as stand-alone employment sites.

The Local Plan further proposes that, due to Central Bedfordshire's location and excellent transport connections, there is a strong case for contributing to meet national demand for "footloose" warehousing logistics sector operations at major strategic transport locations, specifically along the M1 corridor but also through Strategic Allocation SE3 on 78 hectares of CBC owned land adjoining the A1 at Holme Farm, Biggleswade. This allocates a maximum of 38 hectares to accommodate this need, strategic employment being defined in the Plan as "that which is significantly large in scale and which is advantageously located adjacent, or in very close proximity to, the strategic transportation network including road and rail.

Policies relevant to this Neighbourhood Plan:

- Policy EMP1: Small and Medium Employment Sites: In addition to strategic policies SP1 and SE3 this policy confirms saved allocations from previous Local Plans including both Land East of Stratton Park and Phase 4 of Stratton Business Park in Biggleswade in order to meet the objectively assessed "employment needs of the district" identified in the FEMA.
- Policy EMP3: Employment Development on Non-Allocated Sites: It supports employment generating proposals for new employment land within or immediately adjacent to Settlement Envelopes, subject to meeting a number of criteria and on previously developed land outside the Envelope, subject to residential amenity considerations.
- Policy HQ3: Provision for Social & Community Infrastructure: This policy stresses the importance of social and community infrastructure to support growth and requires, where appropriate, developers to contribute towards new facilities, based on integrated, co-located facilities and multi-functional space. Changes of use away from community use will only be granted on demonstrable lack of need and/or suitable equivalent replacement. New social and community facilities within Settlement Envelopes will in principle be supported and, on sites adjoining Envelopes, will be acceptable subject to need; lack of alternative site availability within that Envelope and ability to meet policy R1 in relation to main town centre uses.
- Policy HQ4: Indoor Sport & Leisure Facilities: These are required to support residential developments in accordance with the requirements identified in the CBC Leisure Facilities Strategy. Any loss of such existing facilities will be resisted unless demonstrated to be surplus to requirements or replaced.

### **Planning Rationale**

COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions are likely to have longer-term implications in terms of changes in demand for workspace and live-work patterns. This includes need for flexible workspace close to the areas where people live.

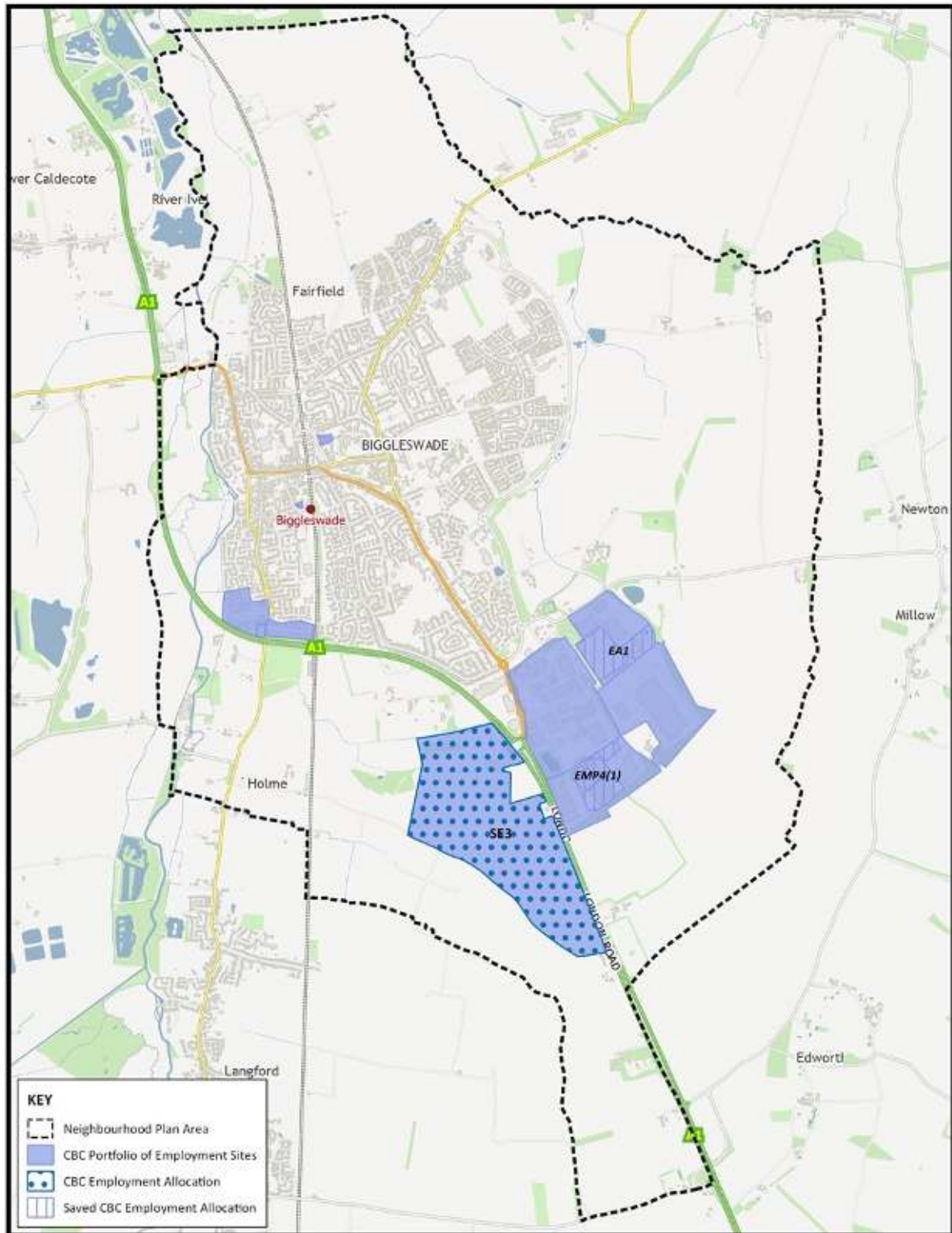
The Town Council has consistently supported the expansion of Stratton Business Park in order to provide additional local employment opportunities. Recent developments however

suggest that the market is increasingly encouraging footloose “strategic” warehousing demand at the expense of relocating / retaining local businesses.

The Council did not oppose the initial allocation of Holme Farm for local employment purposes but is concerned that the significantly increased size and southerly further extension of the development could further stimulate and encourage demand for low-density employment and heavy vehicle traffic generation. Adverse impacts on amenity could arise from the use itself or from disturbance from additional vehicle movements.

The population of Biggleswade has grown significantly in recent years and the ability to commute both south to London and east to Cambridge has been a factor in this. The provision of additional local jobs gives recently arrived residents the opportunity to reduce or eliminate commuting time in favour of a more sustainable, improved quality of life.

The engagement processes undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan have prompted a frequent response seeking improved local commercial leisure facilities particularly to meet the demands from younger residents. In addition, there has been a longstanding concern over the availability and suitability of primary medical facilities, in particularly general practitioner provision. Biggleswade is intended by the Bedfordshire CCG to be an early beneficiary of a new Integrated Health and Care Hub on the NHS-owned Biggleswade Hospital site.



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BIGGLESWADE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

CBC Employment Sites

## **BEM1: Employment**

- 1. Offices or light industrial uses, including co-working space or flexible workspace, will be supported for brownfield sites, including sites within the Town Centre and sites close to residential areas or as part of a mix of uses in new residential development, subject to:**
  - a. There being no significant adverse impact on the amenities of any nearby residential properties or Biggleswade's historic or rural environments, including from noise, disturbance, vibration and other impacts;**
  - b. Restrictions being in place to prevent changes of use to retail or other town centre uses for sites outside of the defined Town Centre.**
- 2. General industrial and distribution uses will be supported in existing industrial estates, subject to there being no significant adverse impact on the amenities of any nearby residential properties and Biggleswade's historic and rural environments, including likely impacts from additional heavy vehicle movements.**
- 3. Development involving large-scale industrial or warehouse buildings must be designed to minimise their prominence and avoid adverse visual impacts, including through landscape design and screening.**

### **Interpretation**

The policy supports employment-related development, but seeks to protect residential amenity, viability of the Town Centre, and Biggleswade's historic and rural environments. The latter are dealt with in more detail by the plan's green infrastructure, design and placemaking and heritage policies.

Design, transport and other requirements for employment-related development are dealt with in other policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.

## **BEM2: Community Facilities**

- 1. New community facilities will be supported, subject to there being no significant adverse impact on the amenities of any nearby residential properties, including impacts from noise, disturbance, vibration and other impacts.**
- 2. The impact of new-build residential development on the capacity of local community facilities should be considered and new or expanded facilities should be provided to support additional population.**
- 3. The loss of existing community facilities will be supported only if:**
  - a) A similar or better facility is provided in close proximity;**
  - b) It can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer viable, including by placing it on the open market.**

### **Interpretation**

Community facilities can include shops, pubs, community centres, fitness facilities, health centres, education, meeting space and other public facilities. In particular, there is a need for improved primary health care facilities in the area, as demonstrated by outcomes from community engagement.

Larger-scale housing schemes could include a cluster of community facilities in the form of a community hub.

In the building of new schools or improvement of existing schools, consideration should be made of including facilities open to the general public.

Design, transport and other requirements for community facility development are dealt with in other policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.





# Residential Development



## 7. Residential Development

### Purpose

To ensure that new housing is sustainable and meets local need.

### Rationale and Evidence

#### National Policy

Chapter 5 of the NPPF deals with supply of homes, mix and affordability. Land considerations and density are dealt with in Chapter 11, whilst design is dealt with in Chapter 12.

This neighbourhood plan enables residential development, especially within the Town Centre, as a means to regeneration. The neighbourhood plan does not make housing site allocations. Future site allocations could be done through either the neighbourhood planning or local planning processes. The focus of policy is on the quality and character of residential development.

#### Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2035

The Local Plan emphasises the importance of achieving an appropriate and inclusive housing mix in order to achieve well-designed places that produce strong community cohesion and cater for a diverse range of household needs. In addition to good quality housing, new developments need to provide a variety of homes including flats, bungalows, and family housing for all parts of the community.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2017 (SHMA) is the basis for the housing types, sizes, mix and tenure types needed in Central Bedfordshire and forecasts the housing requirements for the period up to 2035 (Objectively Assessed Need). It takes into consideration population forecasts, births, deaths and migration to indicate household need and highlights growth in particular groups such as the elderly and first-time buyers and self-builders. The SHMA establishes that 30% of housing on all development sites should be affordable.

- Policy H1: Housing Mix: requires that all major developments for new dwellings must include a mix of housing types and sizes to meet needs and to encourage sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities in accordance with the SHMA. Housing should be delivered in a various tenure forms.
- Policy H2: Housing Standards: applies Nationally Described Space Standards; adaptable and accessible home standards.
- Policy H3: Housing for Older People: requires specific provision for older persons in their housing mix on development proposals of 100 or more dwellings and an Extra Care Facility at 300 units or more.

- Policy H4: Affordable Housing: sets out that all qualifying sites will be expected to provide 30% affordable housing on site or in certain circumstances an off-site contribution. The tenure/rental mix relies on the most up to date SHMA.
- Policy H6: Self-build and Custom Housing (SBCH): requires sites of 10 or more dwellings to provide a minimum of 10% of the dwelling capacity as serviced SBCH plots.

### Planning Rationale

The NP policy deals with a range of factors to ensure that housing meets local needs and is well equipped and designed. The design aspects need to be applied together with more detailed design requirements set out in other policies.

The policy recognises the opportunities for more urban development around the town and for more garden-based schemes in the outlying areas.

The Neighbourhood Plan does not make specific housing site allocations. This was considered by the Housing Site Analysis Report March 2021. The site in question had potential for development, but this was subject to certain infrastructure challenges first being met. Therefore, it was decided to leave the site allocation to the Local Plan, probably at its first review. The Neighbourhood Plan does identify the Town Centre as a sustainable location for residential development.

The policy does not seek to amend affordable housing requirements in terms of quantities, but to guide how affordable housing provision should be made, to best meet local need. The expansion of Biggleswade eastwards in the last decade has provided significant new housing opportunities for the local needs of the community including affordable housing; help to buy; shared ownership and other tenure models.

The new garden community is predicated on providing a range of housing types, sizes and styles in a green environment which will include opportunities for self and custom build as required by Policy H6.

Biggleswade housing completion data	
Year	Units
2011/12	185
2012/13	151
2013/14	220
2014/15	204
2015/16	353
2016/17	401
2017/18	421
2018/19	263
2019/20	238
2020/21	114

10 Yr. Total = 2,550 at an average of 255 pa

As a result of the success of this annual build out, the local community has had the opportunity to access a wide range and large number of housing types and tenures in the last decade. This build out will continue as a result of the strategic housing site allocation for the garden community, now with planning permission, as shown in the housing trajectory which is Appendix 7 to the adopted Local Plan. This envisages the delivery of the first units in 2023/24 and an annual build out of 140/150 units p/a throughout the following decade.

The following policy deals with housing standards and amenities and also sets general design requirements, which should be applied in conjunction with the later Sustainable Design policy.

## **BRD1: Residential Development**

- 1. For residential development within, adjacent to and close to the defined Town Centre, the type, mix and character of accommodation should include:**
  - a) urban forms of housing, such as town houses (terraced houses) or low-rise apartments. Single or semi-detached dwellings with individually fenced gardens would not complement the character of the town centre, so will not be supported.**
  - b) The mix of accommodation should reflect the typical demographic of Town Centre dwellers, in particular through provision of one and two-bedroom units and including accommodation suitable for the elderly.**
- 2. For residential development on suburban housing sites, the type, mix and character of accommodation should include:**
  - a) creation of garden suburbs or garden villages, with a variety of housing combinations (detached, semi-detached, terraces, bungalows, apartments) together with provision of gardens, green spaces, trees, hedges and other green infrastructure.**
  - b) The mix of accommodation should include family houses, units for first-time buyers or people looking to downsize and housing suitable for the elderly.**
- 3. All new residential development must have access to external green amenity space in the form of private gardens or shared private space or public space in close proximity to the scheme or balconies of sufficient size to accommodate planting.**
- 4. Affordable housing and First Homes required to meet Local Plan requirements must be provided as an integral part of each development and must be tenure blind. Where there are planning reasons to provide affordable housing outside of the site, it should be provided as close to the site as possible and within Biggleswade, so as to meet local need, rather than being provided remotely through financial contributions.**
- 5. Room sizes should meet the Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard 2015, or any equivalent standard replacing that document.**
- 6. All new dwellings must have screened storage space for bins and recycling.**
- 7. All new dwellings must include secure, covered cycle and scooter storage, as required by Policy BTM1.**

### **Interpretation**

The policy sets out different characteristics for development adjacent to the town centre and more outlying sites in the rural hinterland, including the new garden community.

In meeting the requirements of the policy on mix and character of accommodation, particular support will be given to the provision of space to allow food growing.

Urban forms of housing would include higher density developments comprising smaller dwellings, designed as apartments blocks but unlikely to be acceptable if significantly taller than the predominant height of adjoining dwellings.

Tenure blind means that the affordable housing and market housing are similar in design, with affordable provision being an integral part of the scheme.

Design, transport and other requirements for employment-related development are dealt with in other policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.

Self-build and custom-build housing are dealt with by the Local Plan and are encouraged by this Neighbourhood Plan.



# Green Infrastructure



## 8. Green Infrastructure

### Purpose

To ensure that Biggleswade maintains and extends its existing network of green infrastructure and to prevent unsustainable encroachment into the rural hinterland.

### Rationale and Evidence

#### National Policy

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment is dealt with by Chapter 15 of the NPPF 2021. Planning policies should protect and enhance valued landscapes, intrinsic character and beauty of the landscape, habitats, and provide net gains in biodiversity.

Designation of Local Green Space is dealt with in Chapter 8, Paragraphs 101-103. The stated criteria for Local Green Spaces has formed a basis for the designations in this Neighbourhood Plan.

The following policies respond to Chapters 8 and 15 by seeking to protect or enhance biodiversity and wildlife, strategic green spaces, Local Green Spaces and footpaths.

#### Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2035

The Local Plan values Green Infrastructure (GI) for its many wide-ranging benefits. These include mitigating and adapting to climate change; improving health and well-being; facilitating strong, cohesive communities; supporting economic growth through encouraging investment; regenerating land; creating a sense of place; improving heritage settings, access to nature and enhancing biodiversity. Central Bedfordshire is however yet to produce an authority – wide umbrella GI strategy to evidence net gain which is the basis of their policy approach but is committed in the adopted plan to do so. This will enable the Council to identify and remedy local area needs and deficiencies.

The Bedfordshire & Luton Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan 2007, which pre-dates the formation of Central Bedfordshire Council, has provided a strategically planned and managed network of accessible green space and access routes to meet the needs of existing and new communities. It establishes the Green Infrastructure Network to be protected, conserved and enhanced. The network is multi-functional and meets a wide range of social, environmental and economic needs, connecting urban and rural settlements and the countryside. Green infrastructure opportunities identified address areas deficient in strategic accessible green space including Biggleswade.

The Local Plan's approach is based on the Council's Environmental Framework produced in 2016. The Environment Framework supports green Infrastructure plans and emphasizes the aim to protect and enhance the green infrastructure network in Central Bedfordshire. Further, the Framework emphasizes that the green infrastructure network is designed to be a strategically planned and managed system of green spaces, access routes, wildlife habitats, landscapes and historic features that meet the needs of

communities. It also provides important national and local information on enhancing biodiversity.

A number of green infrastructure plans therefore exist within the Local Authority area at different levels of scale and detail, which may include Green Wheels and Greenways, as is the case in Biggleswade.

### **Biggleswade Green Infrastructure Report 2021**

BRCC was initially commissioned in 2010 to prepare a Green Infrastructure Plan for the Town Council and this has recently been updated and refreshed as part of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, including the opportunity to introduce Local Green Spaces. The defining role of BRCC establishes its relationship with the local community to the extent that the outcomes from their work essentially belong to the local community. Both pieces of work involved extensive engagement with the community during 2020/21 in terms of identifying locally important infrastructure and prioritising potential interventions.

Green space and infrastructure are therefore recognised as being of key importance to Biggleswade in terms of health, environment, community and economy, including the following:

- Supporting recreation and physical activity;
- Supporting good physical and mental health;
- Providing a high-quality environment, which is crucial in making Biggleswade a place where people want to live and work;
- Supporting walking and cycling and linking different parts of the area;
- Providing amenity space for residents;
- Improving air quality;
- Supporting wildlife and biodiversity.

The report underpins the policies on Strategic Green Space and Local Green Space designations.

Positive green design and landscape improvements could include the following proposals and projects:

- A deficit in green spaces in the town centre could be mitigated through active place shaping, whilst designation of Local Green Spaces will safeguard locally important sites in the town.
- The Green Wheel, since its launch in 2015, has become a prized part of Biggleswade's green infrastructure offer and further improvements and extensions are being actively pursued.
- The proposed country and town park adjoining the River to the west of the town was identified in the original 2010 study and remains a high priority, as does opening up the river to the town generally.
- Linking Biggleswade Common, a much-prized asset locally, to the town is ongoing and strongly supported.
- Coalescence with adjoining settlements particularly to the north and south (with Sandy and Langford) should be avoided.

### **Local Green Space Report 2021**

The Local Green Space (LGS) policy is based on a thorough assessment of the special community value of the space, within the context of the NPPF Paragraph 100 criteria. The report identifies 15 spaces as being suitable for LGS designation. These are important spaces to protect as part of Biggleswade's green infrastructure. They provide benefits in terms of wildlife and ecology, recreation, amenity, historic value and other values. They also contribute to good physical and mental health.

A number of other reports and studies are relevant to the Biggleswade GI context and are referenced elsewhere in this Neighbourhood Plan. These include:

### **Central Bedfordshire Design Guide 2014**

This comprehensive guide to development in the authority includes information on how to "link with, integrate and improve" green infrastructure within development proposals.

### **Central Bedfordshire Council Strategic Gap Report 2017**

This report identified proposals to avoid potential coalescence between existing settlements. It proposed a gap to the north of Biggleswade, required to defend against coalescence with Sandy, whilst better integrating the Town with Biggleswade Common.

### **Countryside Gap Assessments (Land Use Consultants, 2018)**

This consultancy report for CBC reinforces the need for the gap identified in the Strategic Gap Report 2017 above following an objective analysis.

### **Planning Rationale**

The proximity of the open countryside surrounding Biggleswade, together with the development of the town alongside the River Ivel, have resulted in the community "owning" a strong affinity with its local green infrastructure. This may be particularly true as the riverside acts in lieu of having a Town park.

This is clear from the public engagement exercises carried out both by the Town Council and BRCC on its behalf in relation to green infrastructure and LGS.

The following NP policies provide protection for the various kinds of green space and green infrastructure, as part of the plan's wider strategy for sustainable development and growth.

The Common is too big to be designated as LGS, but is of strategic importance, so has been recognised as a strategic green space. Strategic green spaces also include the Green Wheel and also coalescence gaps with Sandy and Langford. Coalescence with other surrounding settlements involves land outside of the Neighbourhood Area, but is being addressed by other neighbourhood plans.



**Green spaces are important for environmental quality, sense of place, recreational opportunities and good physical and mental health. They help to create the kind of places in which people want to invest, live, work, and spend leisure time.**



**Street trees and verges are a way of introducing greenery into the design and layout of new housing development.**

## **BGS1: Biodiversity and Wildlife**

- 1. Development must have no overall or significant adverse impact on Biggleswade's natural and green environment.**
- 2. Any loss of ecology or wildlife habitat, including overgrown sites, must be balanced by positive design and landscape features within the development, including features to support wildlife or local food growing, trees, hedges or other landscape features.**
- 3. All development must achieve biodiversity net gain.**
- 4. Development should retain existing trees and hedges and incorporate them into the design, layout and landscaping.**
- 5. Where loss of trees is unavoidable, suitable replacements using native species must be provided within the development, to provide a similar level of amenity.**

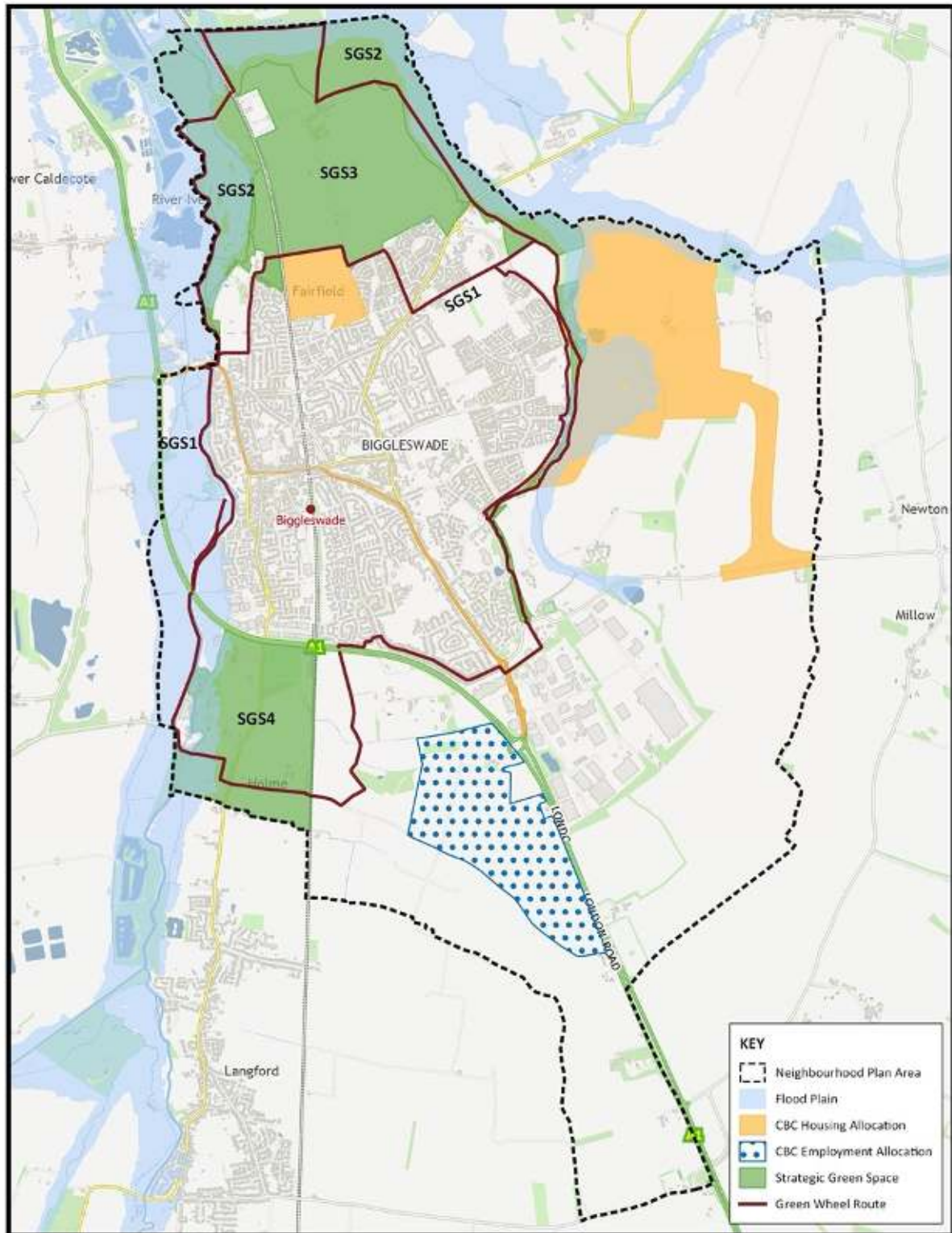
### **Interpretation:**

The policy provides general protection to Biggleswade's green and natural environments.

In addressing the need to achieve biodiversity net gain, particular support will be given to provision of space in development for food growing.

Features to support wildlife could include bat or bird bricks or boxes or hedgehog gaps in fences.





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BIGGLESWADE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Strategic Green Space

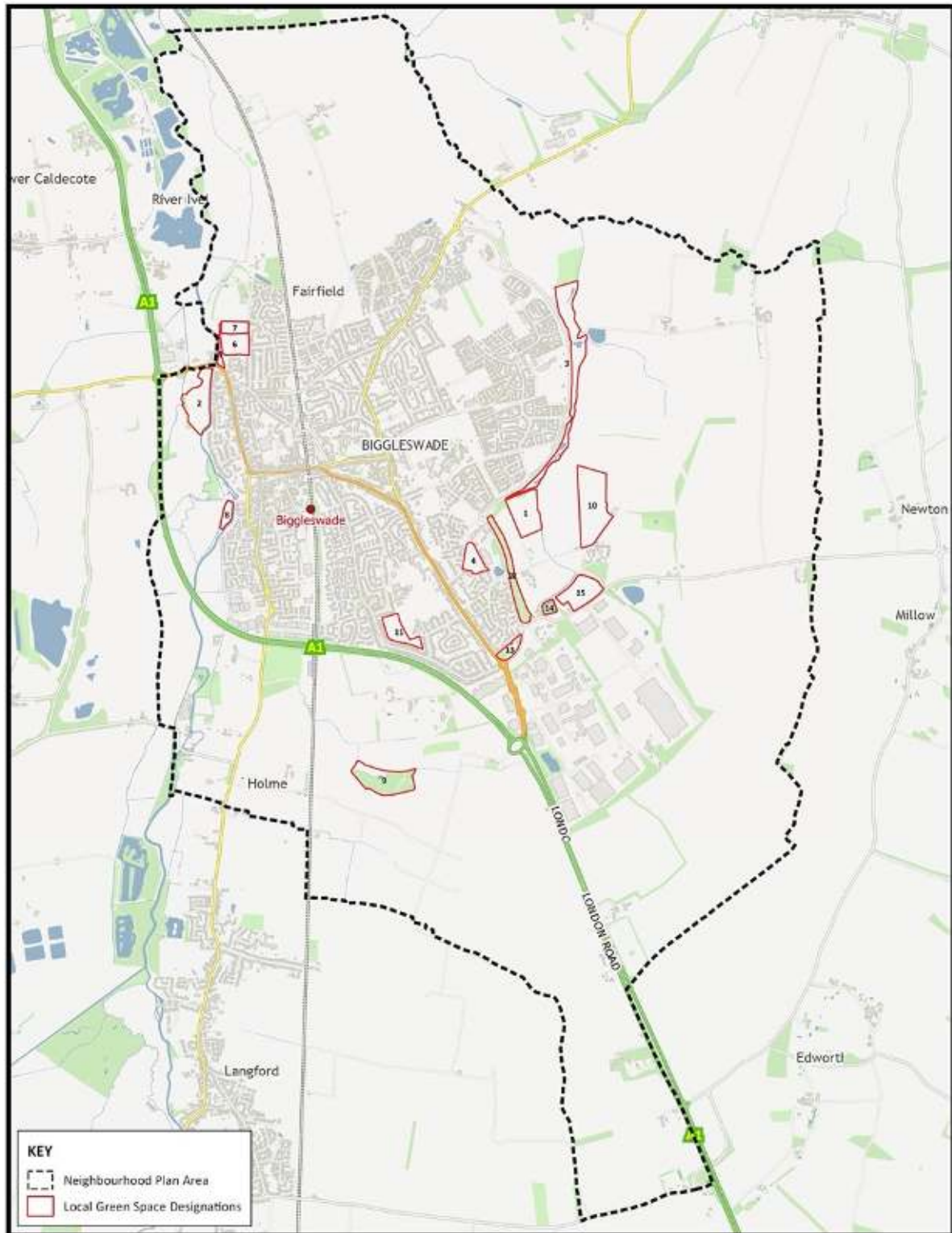


## BGS2: Strategic Green Spaces

1. To protect the amenity, character and open setting of the town and other settlements, the following are identified as strategic green spaces (see Strategic Green Space plan):  
  
  - SGS1    The Green Wheel;
  - SGS2    Biggleswade Common;
  - SGS3    The buffer zone that separates Biggleswade Town from Sandy.
  - SGS4    The buffer zone that separates Biggleswade Town from Langford.
2. Built development must not encroach onto strategic green spaces, unless all of the following requirements are met:  
  
  - a) it is directly related to the recreational use or management of the space;
  - b) it does not compromise the open character or strategic importance of the space;
  - c) it does not harm the open setting and separation of the Town Centre and other settlements.
3. Development adjacent to strategic green space must have no significant adverse impact on the community use, amenity, safety or accessibility of the space.

### Interpretation

The policy protects key green spaces, for their amenity value and to protect the open setting of different settlements. The Biggleswade Green Infrastructure Report 2021 includes more information on the spaces, so may be useful in securing compliance with the policy.





## BGS3: Local Green Space

**1. The following sites are designated as Local Green Space:**

LGS1	Allotments & Wildflower Meadow
LGS2	Back Meadows
LGS3	Baden Powell Way Linear Park
LGS4	Chambers Way Recreation Ground
LGS5	Dan Albone Picnic Area
LGS6	Fairfield First Meadow
LGS7	Fairfield Second Meadow (including the play area)
LGS8	Franklins Recreation Ground
LGS9	Holme Green Wood
LGS10	Jubilee Wood & Orchard
LGS11	Kitelands Recreation Ground
LGS12	Saxon Drive Linear Wood
LGS13	Saxon Gate Pocket Park
LGS14	Stratton Moat
LGS15	Stratton Moat Meadow (Dunton Lane)

**2. Built development must not encroach onto Local Green Space. An exception to this may be for small-scale built development, subject to the following:**

- a) it is directly related to the community use and/or management of the space;
- b) it does not compromise the open green character or special community value of the space;
- c) It is well-designed and uses materials to reduce its visual impact.

**3. Development adjacent to Local Green Space must not have any adverse impact on the community value, amenity, safety or accessibility of the space.**

### Interpretation

Local Green Space designation introduced similar protection as green belts. However, in making decisions, it should be noted that the purpose of Local Green Spaces is different to the purposes for green belts.

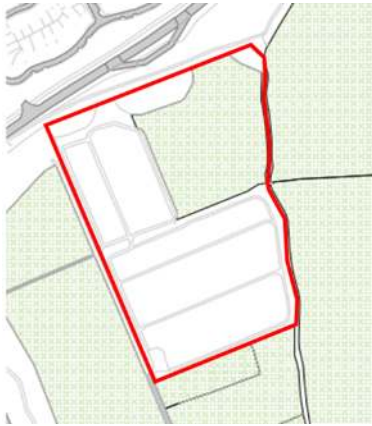
The Local Green Space Report 2021 contains more information on the special community value of each space, so may be useful in applying or securing compliance with the policy.

An example of small-scale development within Local Green Space that may be acceptable under the policy is storage space for grounds maintenance tools. This could include a green or brown roof and green walls to reduce its visual impact.



The following plans show the boundary of each individual LGS designation. Detailed assessment of the special community value is contained in the Local Green Space Report, April 2021.

**LGS1 Allotments & Wildflower Meadow**



**LGS2 Back Meadows**



**LGS3 Baden Powell Way Linear Park**



**LGS4 Chambers Way Recreation Ground**





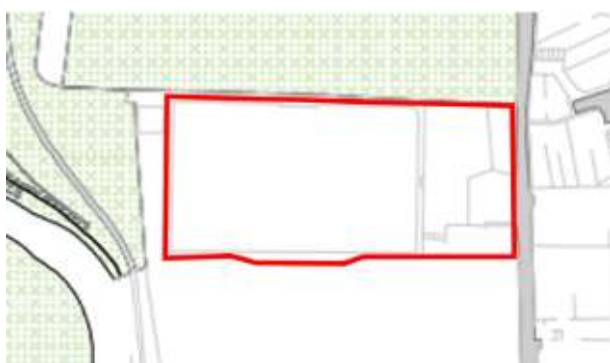
**LGS5 Dan Albone Picnic Area**



**LGS6 Fairfield First Meadow**



**LGS7 Fairfield Second Meadow (including the play area)**



**LGS8 Franklins Recreation Ground**



**LGS9 Holme Green Wood**



**LGS10 Jubilee Wood & Orchard**



**LGS11 Kitelands Recreation Ground**



**LGS12 Saxon Drive Linear Wood**



**LGS13 Saxon Gate Pocket Park**



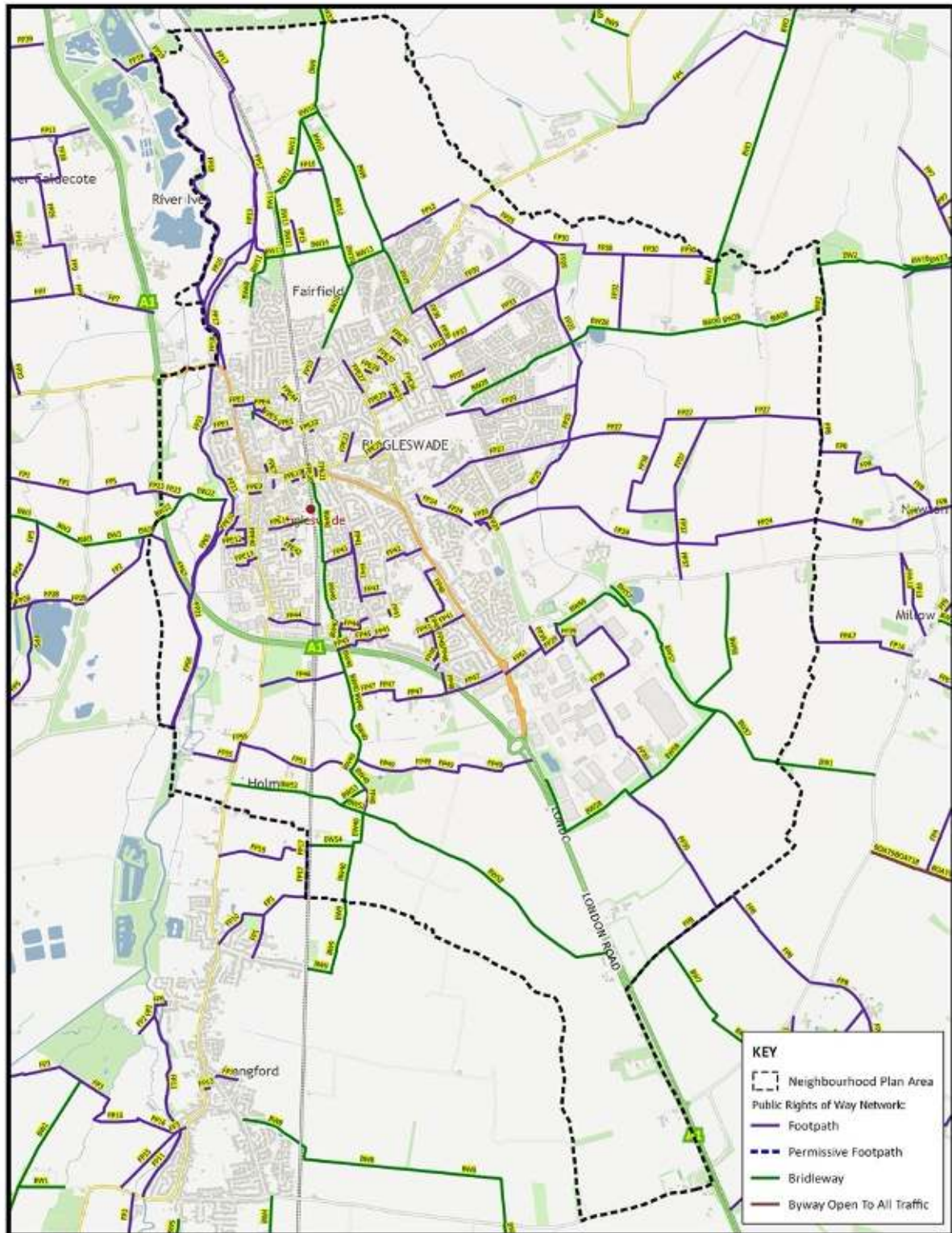
**LGS14 Stratton Moat**



**LGS15 Stratton Moat Meadow (Dunton Lane)**







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## BIGGLESWADE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Public Rights of Way Network



## **BGS4: Footpaths and Rights of Way**

- 1. Development must not encroach on Biggleswade's public footpath or cycle path network.**
- 2. Development adjacent to footpaths or cycle paths, or of sites containing public footpaths or cycle paths, must have no significant adverse impact on their amenity, safety or accessibility.**
- 3. Opportunities should be taken to enhance the amenity, safety and accessibility of public footpaths and cycle paths in the design and layout of development.**

### **Interpretation**

The policy protects footpaths and cycle paths and requires careful consideration of impacts of development around them. This includes all greenways and rights of way.

An example of harm to amenity and safety would be if development flanked a footpath with high, blank walls, fences or building elevations, so creating a hard urban edge and preventing natural surveillance.



# Placemaking and Design



## 9. Placemaking and Design

### Purpose

To ensure that development is well designed, sustainable and complements Biggleswade's distinctive identity.

### Rationale and Evidence

#### National Policy

Design is dealt with by Chapter 12 of the NPPF 2021. This states:

*The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.*

Design considerations include: function, adding to the quality of the area, visual attractiveness, effective landscaping, being sympathetic to local character and history, not discouraging innovation and change, maintain strong and distinctive sense of place, optimise site potential, and making safe, inclusive and accessible places.

The National Design Guide (2021) establishes that well-designed places have ten characteristics. These are context, nature, identity, use, resources, movement, built form, public space, homes and buildings and lifespan.

The following sustainable design policy applies national policy and guidance, dealing with a range of issues including character, sustainability, inclusivity, and local responses to climate change. This is followed by policies on design of shop fronts and extensions.

#### Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2035

The Local Plan requires new developments to respect the diverse character of the Central Bedfordshire area. Good design creates distinctive, functional and sustainable places. The following general principles apply:

- Responding to local context - new developments should be well integrated and positively related to their surroundings.
- Placemaking – well-designed spaces that support activity; facilitate movement and encourage social interaction.
- Movement and legibility - emphasis should be placed on creating a hierarchical network of well-connected streets which meet the needs to all street users.
- Sustainable design - appropriate consideration is given to orientation, landscaping, drainage, energy, water use and potential for pollution.
- Materials and detailing - A coordinated approach should be taken to the use of materials.
- Community safety - address community safety concerns.

- Inclusive design - integrated design that promotes health and well-being.
- Density – schemes that make the best and most efficient use of land, designed to respect the character of surrounding areas

Policy HQ1: High Quality Development - ensuring that all developments are of the highest possible quality and respond positively to their context. It requires development proposals, including extensions and change of use, to meet 13 separate criteria together with the Design Guide (see below).

### **Central Bedfordshire Design Guide 2014**

The Design Guide provides technical guidance to support Local Plan policy. It establishes placemaking principles and provides advice on character. Generally, the placemaking principles address:

- Connections.
- Facilities and services.
- Public transport.
- Meeting local housing requirements.
- Character.
- Working with the site and its context.
- Creating well defined streets and spaces.
- Wayfaring - finding your way around.
- Streets for all.
- Car parking.
- Public and private spaces.
- External storage and amenity space.

Design supplements provide detailed advice on specific types of development including Supplement 6: shopfronts & signage and 7: householder alterations & extensions

### **Place Make Report 2020**

A place making study was carried out for the Town Council in January 2020. The “First Thoughts” report and presentation identified a 12 point programme for the town, which included:

- Improving east-west connectivity throughout the Town
- Revitalising the railway station quarter
- Re-enforcing the role of the two A1(M) junctions, north and south, as “front doors”
- Integrating the river corridor immediately to the west as a valued asset
- Creating an east/west spine of activity from the Stratton House Hotel/Station Quarter to the river

### **AECOM Design Report (2021)**

A Locality funded Design Code study was carried out in Biggleswade by a team from AECOM through the national neighbourhood plan programme. AECOM were asked to study and

advise on 5 separate but linked policy areas relating to design and heritage. The AECOM report underpins the following and other policies in this plan.

### **Planning Rationale**

The public engagement reports identify many responses which have urged the Town Council to be pro-active and diligent in encouraging developments to add to, rather than detract from, the character and environment of the Town centre, including in relation to the Biggleswade Conservation Area.

There is a direct relationship between quality of design and quality of built environment and a range of other factors, including:

- Image and perceptions;
- The ability of the area to attract people to live and work or to visit;
- Attracting investment and businesses into the area;
- The vitality of the town centre;
- Quality of life.

The NP policies address a range of urban design factors, to ensure that new housing and other kinds of development are sustainable and prioritise the needs of pedestrians. The policies have been informed by the Design Council's 'Buildings for Life' and other guidance documents.

A policy has been included with regard to shop front design, an important part of ensuring that the Town Centre remains attractive.

Extensions are also addressed, with a focus on residential amenities, subject to recent relaxation in government permitted development rights.



## **BPD1: Sustainable Design**

1. Development must create sustainable and locally distinctive places, meeting the following requirements of this policy, proportionate to the scale and nature of the development.
2. Development must complement the townscape character of the local context in terms of:
  - a. Scale, massing and degree of set-back of building frontages from the road.
  - b. The predominant 2-3 storey height of buildings.
  - c. In residential areas, the established pattern of front and rear gardens.
3. Higher buildings may be supported in appropriate locations around the Town Centre, outside of the Biggleswade Conservation Area, providing they comprise exceptional design quality.
4. Development involving new roads or paths must create a clear hierarchy of streets of varied widths and surface treatments and clearly defined public spaces, convenient to pedestrians and capable of supporting social interaction.
5. The layout of development must create good pedestrian permeability and safe routes for cyclists within the site, and convenient connections to surrounding paths, facilities, public transport services and routes to the Town Centre.
6. Development must be designed to create safe environments, including provision of active frontages (with windows) to overlook streets and public spaces and provide natural surveillance.
7. Building materials must be durable and have a high standard of finish and use of local, reclaimed, recycled or green materials will be supported.
8. Development must include positive design and landscape features to reduce carbon impact and achieve biodiversity net gain, as required by policy BGS1.
9. Creative and innovative design that adds to the architectural quality and diversity of the area will be supported, especially where it incorporates superior environmental performance and design and landscape features to reduce carbon impacts and create biodiversity net gain.
10. New housing should be sufficiently spaced to allow for maintenance to be undertaken.
11. Hard surfaces should be designed and landscaped to provide good visual quality and should be permeable to allow surface water to soak into the ground.

### **Interpretation:**

The way in which this policy is applied clearly depends on the scale and nature of development. Some parts of the policy apply only to development where new layout is being created.

An integrated approach must be taken to the design of buildings, streets, spaces and landscape to create sustainable and locally distinctive places. Taking an integrated approach to design means consciously seeking to create a development with a sense of place, appropriate to Biggleswade. This placemaking approach is at odds with the poor practice of basing design solely on highway standards, division into plots, standardised layouts and landscaping of leftover land.

For residential development, this design policy should be applied together with Policy BRD2, which addresses the urban or suburban form of development.

The starting point for meeting the requirements of this policy is in analysis of the local context and wider character of Biggleswade. The design and access statement that accompanies some planning applications may then use this analysis to explain the scheme relative to this and other design policies.

The policy should not be interpreted as implying stylistic imitation. The local character is based on architectural diversity, including both vernacular buildings and more formal architecture (often with national or international influences – for example classical buildings).

For higher buildings in the Town Centre, use of independent design review would be expected to help in considering whether they comprise ‘exceptional design quality’.

Local materials in Biggleswade include red and buff/yellow/cream bricks, white or cream render or roughcast, slate or plain clay roof tiles and a few thatched roofs, some timber frame buildings, stone lintels and detailing, timber window frames. Boundary treatments include low brick walls, metal railings and hedges.

Positive design and landscape features to reduce carbon impact and support biodiversity could include:

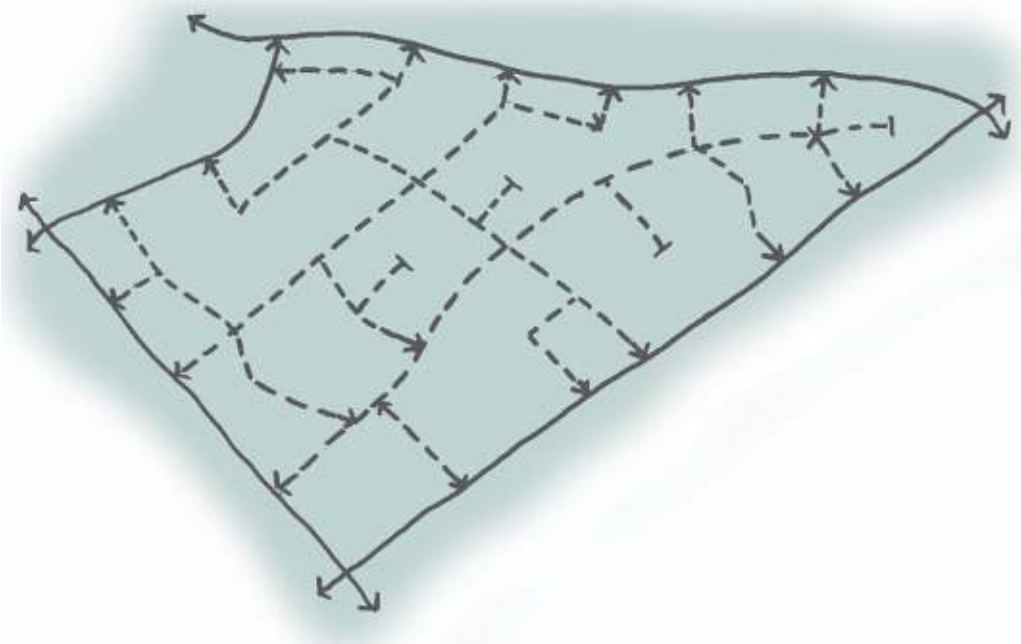
- use of efficient heating and cooling systems, or design to reduce dependency on heating and cooling systems.
- superior insulation properties and airtightness;
- natural ventilation and air flow (for warmer months) to help avoid over-heating;
- use of local, low-embodied energy, recycled and recyclable materials;
- living (green or brown) walls or roofs;
- rainwater capture, storage and reuse (grey water);
- flexible spaces and layouts of housing to accommodate changing demands.
- Use of native species in planting;
- Opportunities for local food growing, including allotments;
- Design features to support wildlife, such as bird boxes or hedgehog gaps in fences.
- Micro-generation, such as small wind turbines, ground heat pumps, photovoltaics, biomass and other technologies.

In complying with the policy, it is useful to learn from some of the problems with past development, so the following should be avoided:

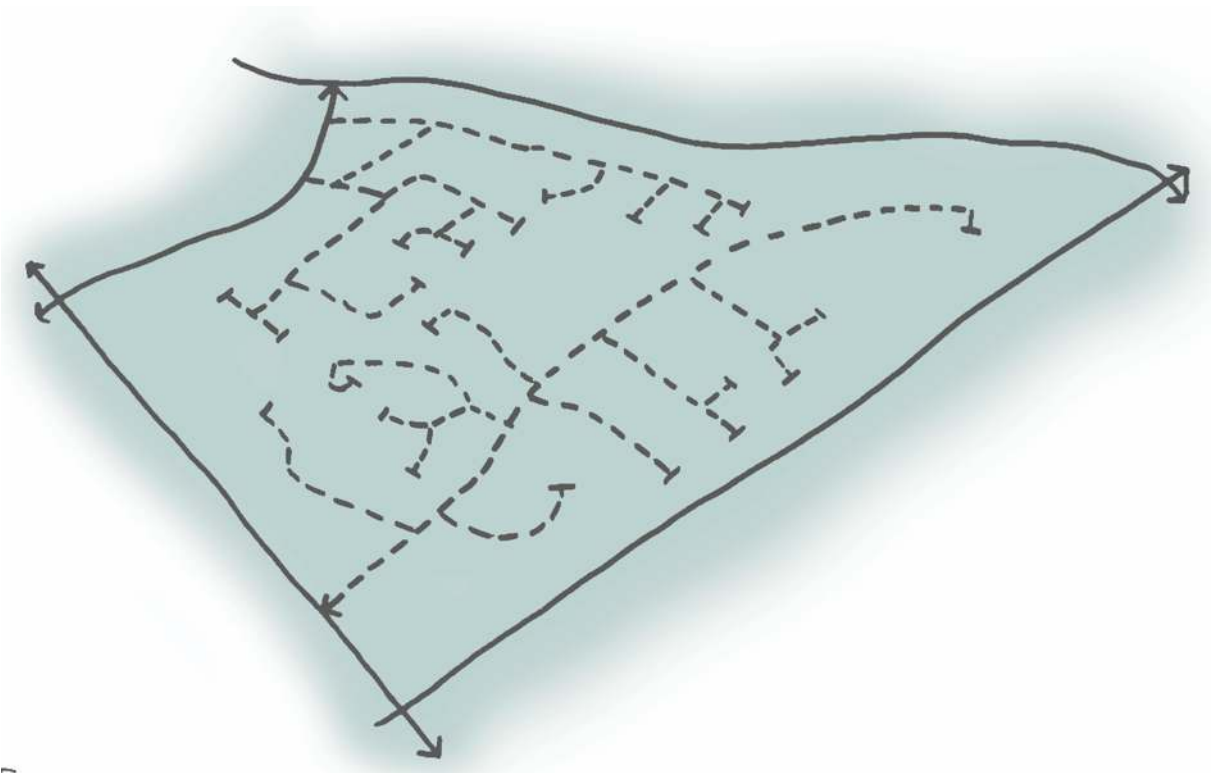
- Lack of variation in street widths or surface treatments;
- Design focused on car movement, rather than pedestrian convenience and quality of public realm;
- Use of standard plots and layouts, rather than responding to local context;
- Illegible development with a lack of distinctive junctions, landmarks or landscape features;
- Lack of sense of place or distinctive identity;
- Lack of variation in building types, townscape and landscape design;
- Fragmented development with weak townscape characteristics, often resulting in an over-reliance on detached and semi-detached house types.

The AECOM Design Report 2021 may be helpful in securing compliance with the policy.





The layout of development and connections should allow for easy and convenient pedestrian movement.



Over-use of culs-de-sac creates impermeable development, with limited choice of movement.

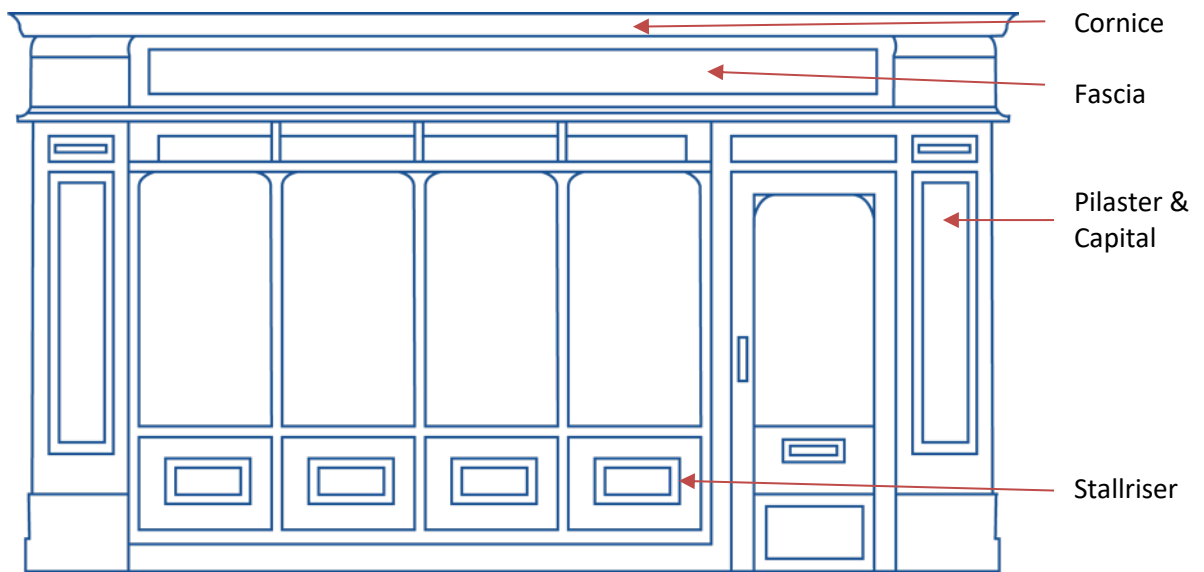
## BPD2: Shopfronts

1. **Shopfronts must be maintained for ground-floor frontages within the town's shopping streets (see CBC Town Centre Boundary plan). Development involving the loss of a shopfront, without a suitable replacement shopfront, will be resisted.**
2. **Reinstatement of historic shopfronts in historic buildings and areas will be supported. Contemporary shopfronts in historic buildings will be supported where they are of high quality and complement the building and wider townscape.**
3. **In designing shopfronts in historic buildings, the following guidelines must be taken into account:**
  - **Elements:** The main elements of a traditional shopfront are the fascia, door, windows, stallriser, pilasters and capitals. The fascia provides space for signage.
  - **Materials:** The stall riser should be of timber, metal and masonry construction. Window frames, doors, pilasters and fascias should be of timber construction. Use of uPVC in shop fronts is at odds with traditional character of the area.
  - **Detail:** To create a good standard of detail, timber panelling should be constructional, rather than adding timber beading to a flat surface.
  - **Finishes:** Paint finishes are more historically authentic than stained finishes.
  - **Lighting:** Projecting external lighting of the shop sign area provides a higher quality effect than internal lighting behind a transparent shop sign.
  - **Shutters:** Any shutters or shutter boxes should be placed internally behind the shop window. Shutters must not block the shop window when in an open position. Shutters should be perforated or of such construction so as to allow vision to the interior beyond.
  - **Canopies:** Canopies should be retractable and of fabric and metal design.

### Interpretation

The requirement is to maintain shopfronts in the town centre and to complement the building and townscape character where new shopfronts are proposed.

See also illustration on the following page.



### Traditional shopfront design

Tradition shopfronts include:

- Fascias (where the signage is normally fixed, usually timber),
- Doors and windows (usually timber frames),
- Stallrisers (the solid part under the shop window, usually timber, metal or masonry),
- Pilasters and capitals (the features at the sides of the shopfront, usually timber).

Historic shopfronts also have features such as cornices, mullions and corbels. If the intention is to reinstate a historic shopfront, then it is important to pay attention to such details.

Doorways can be recessed or flush. Any paneling should be constructional, rather than creating false paneling through application of beading to a flat surface.

The above features could be used in simplified form to create a more contemporary shopfront, though materials should still be sympathetic to Biggleswade's historic character.

## **BPD3: Extensions**

- 1. House extensions will be supported, providing:**
  - a. The extension does not dominate the original building in terms of height, massing or by projecting beyond the front building line of the property;**
  - b. There is no significant loss of garden space and a functional garden space is maintained;**
  - c. There is no loss of parking space, resulting in less than two spaces per dwelling;**
  - d. There is no significant adverse impact on the amenities of adjacent properties;**
  - e. There is sufficient space separating adjacent properties to allow for maintenance to be undertaken.**

### **Interpretation**

The policy applies to extensions that fall outside of the scope of permitted development rights.

In streets with varied building lines, application the policy should take that into account.



# Heritage





## 10. Heritage

### Purpose

To preserve or enhance Biggleswade's heritage and support heritage-led regeneration.

### Rationale and Evidence

#### National Policy

Chapter 16 of the NPPF 2021 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 190 states:

*plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats*

This includes consideration of sustaining or enhancing heritage assets, wider social, economic and cultural benefits, contribution of new development, and character of place.

The following policies form a positive strategy, with a focus on development in Biggleswade Conservation Area and protection of designated and non-designated heritage and scheduled monuments.

#### Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2035

The Local Plan clearly establishes that the historic environment forms the basis of local character, plays an important role in the shaping of places and can help to create a sense of social, physical and mental well-being. It stresses that heritage assets and their settings are a non-renewable resource that the Council believes should be conserved to be enjoyed by the whole community.

With regard to Conservation Areas, the Local Plan emphasises that it is the overall quality of the area that justifies the designation and must be conserved, preserved and enhanced. The LPA requires development in Conservation Areas to provide a level of visual interest equivalent to existing buildings with the choice of materials and detailed design vital elements. This requirement is vague and unclear. The following policy seeks to provide a clearer requirement.

Relevant policies to the Neighbourhood Plan include:

- Policy HE1: Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments - establishes that proposals affecting known heritage assets with archaeological interest (whether designated or non-designated) must be accompanied by an Archaeological Heritage Statement. Where development proposals will impact upon such heritage assets, the preservation of those remains should be achieved in situ.
- Policy HE3: Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas & Built Heritage - Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets will be granted

provided they preserve, sustain and enhance the special character, significance, appearance and/or special architectural or historic interest of the asset in terms of scale, form, proportion, design, materials and the retention of features. In relation to heritage significance, they must be accompanied by a Built Heritage Statement.

### **Central Bedfordshire Design Guide 2014**

The Design Guide requires that any development within a Conservation Area (or in its setting) should preserve or enhance its character or appearance and any contribution made by its setting.

Conservation Area Appraisals are highlighted and promoted as providing guidance on how change can respond positively to character and appearance. The Biggleswade Conservation Area Appraisal provides such guidance to some extent.

The Design Guide establishes considerations for new development proposals in conservation areas including:

- Impact on skylines and views.
- Building form and massing
- Townscape and inter-relationships
- Character and scale
- Sympathetic and positive design

### **Biggleswade Conservation Area Document 2005**

This document is dated but helpful in defining the special architectural or historic interest of the area. The Town Council would encourage and support an update to this document.

### **Planning Rationale**

The character of the Biggleswade Conservation Area is based on historic layout and well-established townscape characteristics. Architecturally, it is diverse, based on a mix of vernacular characteristics, but also polite architecture, based more on national and international influences, which have changed over time. A common error in planning policy is to focus on the vernacular only, but this can be very harmful to historic environments. Conservation Area status should positively support creative, site-specific design, rather than being a barrier, whilst also preserving buildings that contribute to its special architectural or historic interest and character.

Historic environments can help to make town centres more attractive, so can positively support regeneration and economic development. This is recognised in the following Biggleswade Conservation Area Policy.

Biggleswade also has a range of scheduled monuments and also non-designated heritage, which are also addressed in the following policies.



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### Conservation Area & Listed Buildings

## **BH1: Biggleswade Conservation Area**

- 1. Development within Biggleswade Conservation Area must preserve or enhance the character or appearance and special architectural or historic interest of the area, complementing the following key characteristics:**
  - Building frontages set to the rear of the footway, or set back behind shallow front courts;
  - The varied height of buildings, predominantly between one and three storeys;
  - Townscape based on continuous terraces;
  - Accesses through or between building frontages, to allow pedestrian movement;
  - Architectural diversity, including local vernacular and internationally influenced buildings;
  - The varied palette of traditional materials.
- 2. Creative and innovative design that adds to the architectural quality and diversity of the Conservation Area will be supported, including design for superior environmental performance, providing it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.**

### **Interpretation**

The policy seeks to address the problem of mediocre design in and around the Biggleswade Conservation Area. It should be applied closely with policy BPD1: Sustainable Design. Preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area should not be a barrier to high quality and innovative green design (indeed, such designs could add to the architectural quality and diversity of the area).

The policy does not seek to impose stylistic imitation or addition of heritage ‘wallpaper’ to standard buildings. Architectural diversity resulting from different periods and types of buildings are part of the character. The policy would support creative, site-specific design to complement the urban context.

The palette of traditional materials in the Conservation Area includes red, and buff/yellow/cream bricks, white render or roughcast, slate or plain clay roof tiles, some timber frame buildings, stone lintels and detailing, timber window frames. Boundary treatments include low brick walls, metal railings and hedges.





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## BIGGLESWADE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

### Fairfield House & Landscape Setting

## **BH2: Local Heritage**

- 1. Sensitive refurbishment and reuse of statutorily protected heritage and non-designated heritage assets will be supported.**
- 2. Development affecting non-designated heritage assets should preserve or enhance the architectural or historic character and setting of those assets.**
- 3. Development must preserve or enhance the open and green character of the landscape setting of Fairfield House.**

### **Interpretation:**

The requirement for 'sensitive' refurbishment relates to the need to consider impacts on the heritage asset. In the case of statutorily designated heritage, this includes impacts on the special architectural or historic interest of the building or area. This should be done against the context of Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which set out special statutory duties for development affecting listed buildings and conservation areas.

For non-designated heritage assets, the policy requirement is to preserve or enhance 'architectural or historic character', as opposed to 'special architectural or historic interest' for designated heritage assets.

Fairfield House is a listed building and the policy emphasises the importance of the landscape setting to the building.





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## Archaeology



### **BH3: Scheduled Monuments**

- 1. Development must not harm scheduled monuments or their landscape settings.**
- 2. Opportunities should be taken to enhance scheduled monuments and their settings.**

#### **Interpretation**

The policy recognises the sensitivity of scheduled monuments and their landscape settings, including the group of monuments to the north of the town.



# Transport and Movement



## 11. Transport and Movement

### Purpose

To ensure that development is supported by balanced transport provision, including public transport, walking, cycling and other sustainable modes of travel.

### Rationale and Evidence

#### National Policy

Chapter 9 of the NPPF 2021 deals with promoting sustainable transport and states:

*“transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals ...”*

This includes consideration of impacts of development, existing and proposed infrastructure, promotion of walking, cycling, and public transport, environmental impacts, and movement, streets, and parking in the design of schemes.

The following policies address sustainable transport including walking.

#### Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2035

The Local Plan recognizes that Central Bedfordshire has a number of transport concerns related to capacity, especially in larger towns; connectivity and communities’ response. It therefore requires new developments to reflect a sustainable approach to travel to mitigate impacts on the existing network. A range of measures, interventions and improvements, including transport assessments and travel plans, to demonstrate that a proposed development minimises potential impact on the local transport network are advocated that will reduce the need to travel by car and promote sustainable transport. The Local Plan highlights that accessibility issues are particularly important for those without access to a car. It encourages walking and cycling for shorter trips.

Policy T1: Mitigation of Transport Impacts on the Network - establishes that development proposals should demonstrate how they reduce the need to travel and secure a modal shift towards active travel and public transport. Transport Assessments should:

- Give priority to pedestrians and other vulnerable road users
- Provide comprehensive; convenient and safe pedestrian and cycle links to schools, local employment and service provision.
- Connect with existing walking and cycling networks.

Travel Plans will be required to be updated on an annual basis over 5 years and to demonstrate that anticipated targets are being achieved.

Policies of particular relevance are:

- Policy T2: Highway Safety & Design - proposals must not have a detrimental effect on highway safety and patterns of movement; must provide appropriate access and meet the Council's standards.
- Policy T3: Parking - parking provision should meet the guidance set out in the Design Guide(2014) and the Local Transport Plan. It supports the provision of innovative approaches to parking including electric charging points, dedicated priority spaces for car sharers and secure, covered cycle shelters.
- Policy T4: Public Transport Interchanges - stresses the importance to the transport strategy of accessing bus and rail services in supporting the viability of public transport and the ongoing vitality of market towns. Provision of a facility in Biggleswade has long been a feature of studies such as the Town Plan; the Town Centre Adopted Masterplan and the Strategic Development Framework together with public consultation responses. Planning permission was granted for such a facility in Station Road, Biggleswade in summer 2021 with capital funding identified through the successful HIF bid linked to the proposed Garden Community.
- Policy T5: Ultra Low Emission Vehicles – requires certain developments, including retail areas and employment sites, to provide charging points and supply infrastructure.
- Policy T6: Movement & Management of Freight – this policy seeks to control the effects of developments that will generate significant freight movements, such as strategic warehousing sites, including restricting vehicles to a Designated Road Freight Network and avoiding town centres such as Biggleswade.

### **Our Future Town – Community place making and transport planning**

The Town Council and the garden community developer UKR have both participated in the Royal College of Art led study “Our Future Town – Community place making and transport planning” which is examining the potential for sustainable forms of transport improvements in chosen locations. A potential light transit solution which could link the new Biggleswade garden community with the rail station interchange and town centre has been proposed. Feasibility work is continuing.

### **Transport data and trends**

The Department of Transport's Road Traffic Estimates: Great Britain 2019 sets out that:

Since 1949 motor vehicle traffic has increased more than twelve-fold from 28.9 to 356.5 billion vehicle miles, largely driven by steady growth in car traffic.

Compared with 2018, car and taxi traffic increased by 2.2% in 2019.

Bus and coach traffic fell by 2.2% between 2018 and 2019 - the largest decrease of any vehicle type. This is similar to the trend seen in recent years.



Pedal cycles travelled 3.5 billion miles on roads in 2019, 3.4% further than in the previous year, and over a third more than twenty-five years ago.

### **AECOM Design Report (2021)**

The Design Report previously mentioned includes material on highways, in particular design aspects to create a high quality public realm.

### **Planning Rationale**

The Sustainable Transport policy places emphasis on sustainable forms of transport and also walking, to ensure that the needs of non-car people and households are considered.

The Highways and footways policy does not contain highway specifications, which would fall outside of the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, but does highlight important issues that need to be considered in the design of development, including layouts.



## **BTM1: Sustainable Transport**

- 1. Development that is likely to generate additional travel must provide a balanced and sustainable range of transport options, meeting the following requirements of this policy, proportionate to the scale and nature of the scheme.**
- 2. Development must provide convenient links for pedestrians and cyclists, meeting the requirements of Policy BPD1(4).**
- 3. Where development requires parking, it should include a mix or provision, so that streets and spaces are not dominated by parking.**
- 4. Parking provision should be within the curtilage of the housing it serves, rather than being provided remotely.**
- 5. Where use of parking courts is unavoidable, they must be in very close proximity to, and overlooked by, the housing being served.**
- 6. Development must include secure, covered storage for cycles and scooters, including for all new houses.**
- 7. Electrical vehicle charging points must be provided as part of new parking provision, with potential for all spaces to have charging points retrofitted.**

### **Interpretation**

The policy requires development to address pedestrian convenience and sustainable modes of transport in its design and layout.

Mixed provision of parking could include some street parking, driveways, or garages. Parking courts are not encouraged by the policy, but where used must be in very close proximity and be overlooked, so that there is continual surveillance.

For flats or apartments, cycle/scooter provision may be provided in a communal facility.

The policy does not specify a level of provision for electrical charging points, but makes clear that there must be some provision. During the lifetime of this plan, it is likely that all parking spaces will require charging points for development to be saleable. This should be taken into account, for example by providing cabling, so as to avoid digging up the car park in future.

The AECOM Design Report 2021 may be useful in securing compliance with the policy.



## **BTM2: Highways and Footways**

- 1. Where new layout is being created, pavements, pathways and public spaces must be suitable for people with varying degrees of mobility, including through the provision of dropped Kerbs.**
- 2. Footways must be of sufficient width to allow for easy passage for personal mobility vehicles.**
- 3. New road layouts must be designed to accommodate access and turning by refuse collection and other service vehicles and emergency vehicles, taking account of likely on-street parking.**

### **Interpretation**

Highway widths should be sufficient to allow a range of vehicles to pass each other and turn. That would normally indicate a minimum highway width of 5.5 metres. Highway widths of 4.8 metres have proved to be problematic in terms of access by service and emergency vehicles.

Early consultation with the highways authority is recommended.

The AECOM Design Report 2021 may be useful in securing compliance with the policy.

# Sports and Allotments



## 12. Sports and Allotments

### Purpose

To support outdoor activities and local food growing, to support sustainable and healthy lifestyles.

### Rationale and Evidence

#### National Policy

Chapter 8 of the NPPF 2021 deals with promoting healthy and safe communities, including support healthy lifestyles.

Policies should also make provision for shared spaces and community facilities and guard against loss of valued facilities and services.

#### Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2035

The Local Plan recognises that new residential development often increases pressures on social and community infrastructure. It accepts that the Local Planning Authority has a critical role therefore in ensuring that new developments deliver sport, recreation and physical activity facilities and opportunities to support and promote physical activity, increase well-being and tackle the causes of ill-health. The Local Plan promotes approaches to enhance provision and supports the delivery of new, and the enhancement of existing, outdoor sporting facilities.

Policies of particular relevance are:

- Policy HQ3: Provision for Social and Community Infrastructure establishes that new housing developments will be required to contribute towards the provision of social and community infrastructure.
- Policy HQ4: Indoor Sport & Leisure Facilities-see NP Ch. 12 Employment & Community Facilities
- Policy EE13: Outdoor sport, leisure and open space requires new residential developments to provide adequate on-site open spaces and outdoor sports facilities.
- Policy SA4: East of Biggleswade Garden Community –this requires the allocation to provide indoor and outdoor sports and leisure facilities and open space in accordance with the above policies.

## **Central Bedfordshire Council Leisure Strategy SPD**

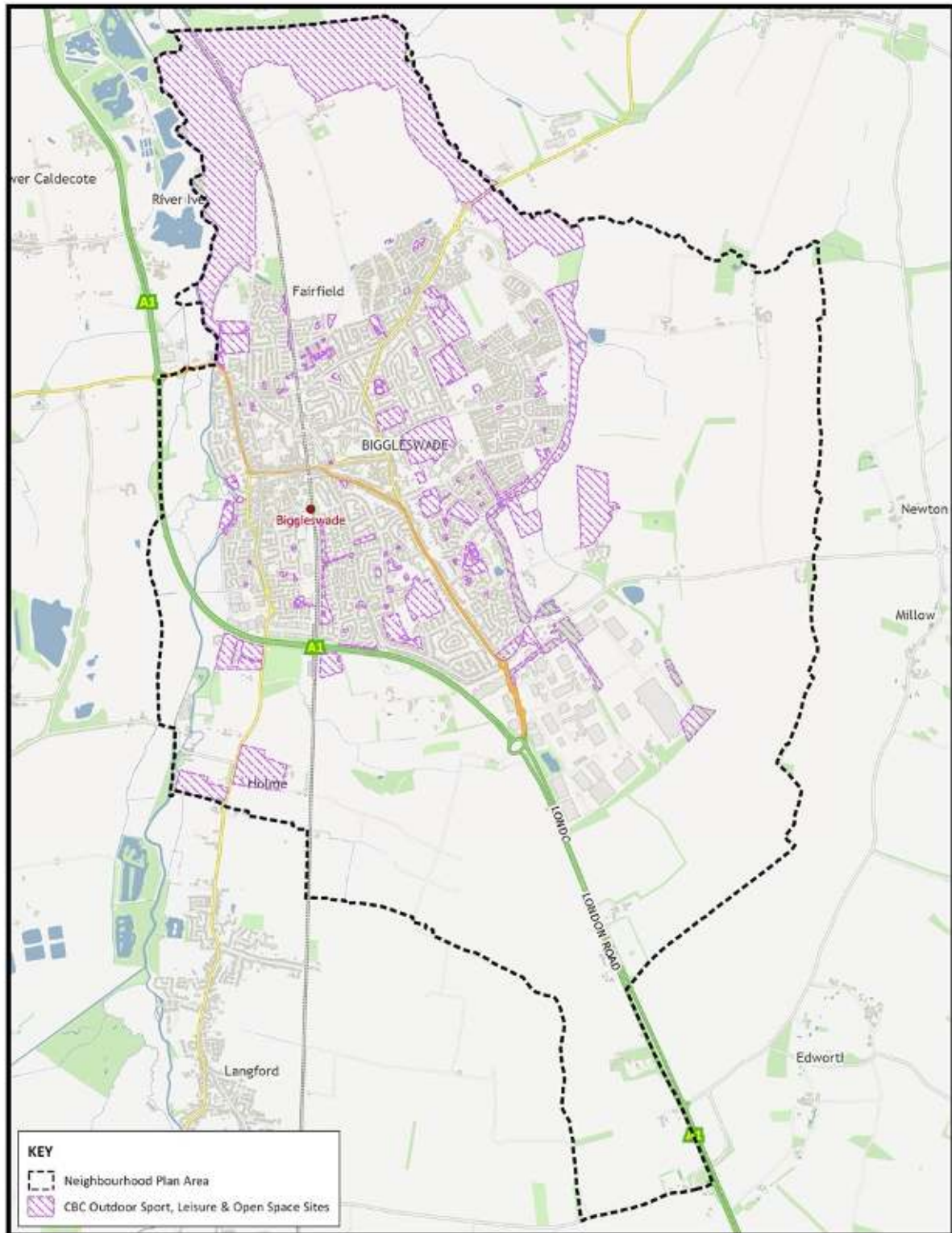
This document considers national and local standards of provision including indoor sports facilities; recreational open space and playing pitches, highlighting an under-provision of recreational facilities and allotments.

### **Planning Rationale**

The policy seeks to enable development to support sports, physical activity and local food growing, in the interests of promoting health and sustainable lifestyles.

Biggleswade Town Council currently has some 59 people on their waiting list for allotment plots (full and half plots, with 3 people on both) – the current first person for a full plot has been waiting since 06/07/2020. The Council has currently a total of 206 plots at its Kennel Farm site – 114 are half plots, 92 are full plots. Some 34 plots (mixture of full and half) were re-allocated to new tenants in the last calendar year. The Council has been working with the local allotment association to identify potential additional sites.

As the local population continues to grow, including through development of the Biggleswade Garden Community, local recreational facilities and allotment provision needs to expand



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Central Bedfordshire Council

**BIGGLESWADE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

**Sports, Recreation & Allotments**





## **BSP1: Sports, Recreation and Allotments**

- 1. Development to create new sports pitches, football facilities, water-based recreation and allotments will be supported in sustainable locations, which are:**
  - a) Sites close to or in walking distance of residential areas or the Town Centre;**
  - b) Sites near to public transport routes, with regular services.**
- 2. A priority of this Neighbourhood Plan for the allocation of infrastructure monies is to provide new allotments.**

### **Interpretation:**

The policy provides support for new sports pitches or allotments in sustainable locations. The reference to residential areas would include the proposed garden community.

Clause 2 of the policy seeks to guide decisions by the Local Planning Authority and the Town Council in the use of planning infrastructure financial contributions.

## 13. Acknowledgements

Biggleswade Town Council (BTC) would like to thank everyone that has contributed to the creation of the Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan. In particular, thanks are given to the following people for their help and assistance:

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