

## **You told us:**

- Godmanchester was big enough and we shouldn't have further large development  
We asked the Planning Inspector if we could have a boundary around the Town that would allow us to say no more development beyond that boundary. The Inspector said “yes”. And we have this in **Policy 1**. The Inspector said we would have to allow small additional developments of up to 59 houses along that boundary. This is because current Government Planning Policy supporting new houses and we must be in line with this. That said, 59 is significantly better than the 1000's developers are hoping to build around us. As we did not offer up new sites for development in the Neighbourhood Plan any new sites to go through the planning permission process. It won't make it easier to build.
- You like that the Town still feel like it's in the open countryside and want to keep it that way.  
We have said the countryside around us is special and that valuable agricultural land should not be built on – **Policy 1** sets out to reduce the likelihood of more urban sprawl across our fields.
- You told us that our nature reserve is an important asset and should be protected.  
We agree but are also aware that in time it may need some onsite facilities such as a visitor's centre or toilets – **Policy 2** would make this possible.
- You like the Town having green open spaces, trees and allotments. You also worried that some of our green spaces could be developed in future and you felt they should stay as green open spaces.  
We have used that national planning policy to designate some as protected “Local Green Spaces”: this is equivalent to Green Belt Status. Please look at the list of what would be protected by this policy. Those that were too small to come under that policy are listed and we've made it clear they are also worth keeping as green and undeveloped areas. See **Policy 3** for the full list of names spaces in the back of the documents for details. You also wanted to make sure that any new development kept our Town feeling like it's in the countryside and **Policy 4** does that. **Policy 6** also seeks to increase our green spaces in future and **Policy 7** seeks to keep us connected to the one countryside around us.
- You think the river is great feature of the Town and we should encourage people to use it more for quiet activities: for boating and kayaking, to visit the Town and for fishing.  
**Policy 5** sets out to help with that and talks about ensuring the river can be used by all whilst also seeking to look after it.
- You liked the play and recreation spaces in the Town and thought we should have enough for everyone to use and enjoy.  
If we do get more development, then **Policy 8** asks for more than the minimum to be offered.  
  
You felt that being able to walk from the Town straight onto the countryside was what makes Godmanchester special and a great place to live.  
**Policy 9** would require any new development to ensure that its it connected to the countryside beyond it by providing footpaths.
- You wanted to keep our allotments and community plant nursery as green recreational spaces.  
We have listed the Nursery as both a Local Green Space and as a community Asset – both these Government Lanning policies should reduce the risk of becoming a housing estate in the future.

However, should we ever face the possibility of that happening to that site or our allotments **Policy 8** would require a developer to replace like with like, which would be better than losing it forever.

- You liked that we have a football club and cricket club with their own grounds in the Town You also thought we should have more places to play sports in future.  
We have listed The Rover Ground and Cricket Club as Amenity Assets and Local Green Spaces (**Policy 3**). We have also made the policy positive about wanting more of these spaces in future.
- We should preserve and protect the historic centre of the Town and its rich variety of buildings. We've mapped this central area, as well as the Town Conservation areas and we've added **Policies 10** and **11** that makes it clear that any new building which is proposed in these areas must be in keeping with the houses and spaces around it. We also felt that where buildings are being redeveloped they should also keep some of their history: **policy 12** should help protect some of the building which are not listed but are important to us.
- You were worried we were cramming in too many houses as well as worrying that we were turning into an urban sprawl. You felt that no new development sites should be offered. We took the decision not to offer any new development sites – the inspector has allowed this. We also asked that there was no development outside off the new boundary line. The Inspector said that, to be in line with national policy, we couldn't say “no” but we could take the smallest amount possible under that planning legislation – up to 59 houses (see **policy 13**). We would have preferred none but this is a small compromise when we know that developer would like to apply to build more than a 1000 new houses here. This doesn't give developers any rights to build -they would still have to apply for planning permission and demonstrate that they meet national, District and our Planning policies.
- You like that Godmanchester has character and doesn't look like everywhere else. This included being covered in signs, lights, bins etc that weren't in keeping with the Town: we need these things but they ought to be thought about to ensure they are best ones for the where they are to be put up/in.  
We have **Policy 15** to try and ensure that all the trapping of modern day living is as sympathetic to our Town's heritage as possible.

You worried that all the new house we are getting now would lead to surface water problems and risk flooding existing houses. You thought more houses in the future could cause even more problems.

Whilst all new developments are check by the Environment Agency and Anglian Water to make sure they won't cause problems we have included **Policy 16** as a backstop.

You think the events run by the community making living here a good experience. You like that we have halls and buildings that can be used by clubs to offer things for residents to enjoy.

Whilst developers cannot always be required to provide these building or contribute towards them we have made it clear it's what we would want and its included as **Policy 17** to make it clear that anyone hoping to build here should consider what it might offer to contribute to this community by providing extra community buildings and spaces.

If we do get bigger how will our services (GPs, schools and cemetery) cope?

Any additional buildings will naturally put pressure on what is already here. We have added several policies to help address this problem: Policy 18 welcomes developers to provide us with extra land for a lawn cemetery. **Policy 19** makes it clear we want more health care facilities (Dr's, Dentists) in the Town. **Policy 20** has been superseded by a Government initiative which means we have just been allocated a new secondary school to be built in the Town. Currently it has no site so **Policy 20** might come into action sooner rather than later<sup>1</sup>

You didn't want us to become a commuter Town with little employment opportunities. Nor did you want to see any employment land automatically being turned into housing land. You thought any new jobs should be in businesses that contributed to the Town but that did not have a huge impact on how the Town looks / feels or our environment. In short, no large-scale factories or heavy industry but rather more of the sort of things we have currently – small scale business units, shops and offices.

**Policy 21** says just that. We think some more small business, shops, offices and small assembly business are appropriate to the Town. Of course, they would still have to apply for planning permission as not all sites could be suitable.

You thought traffic in the Town was terrible. This was said over and over and we all seem to agree!

There isn't much we can use in planning policy terms to argue against development if the Statutory Planning Consultee (Cambridgeshire County Council) say that a development can be managed with existing roads or small changes – even though we may whole-heartedly disagree with their view. The most we can use is the new **Policy 22** which says that new houses must not make a significant impact on current traffic conditions. We have used this policy to also ask for more to be done on making roads safer for users, including bikes.

Cycling in Town doesn't feel safe. Some cyclists avoid the roads as they feel they are too fast or have too many parked cars to pass or are too busy. Whilst we have some designated cycle routes this also means we have bikes on footpaths, making them unsafe for those on foot. We especially worry about our children who bike to school.

We have the challenge that much of Town is not capable of having new cycle paths put in – roads are too narrow and footpaths are too narrow. The best we can do is to ensure that any future development does at least build in cycle routes from the start: this is covered by **Policy 23**.

- Buses not turning up, turning up late and not going where you think they should was a key theme in consultation.

The lack of reliability of the local bus service is not something we can solve through a planning policy. However, we can have a policy that makes it clear that we do want these things to be improved and **Policy 24** says this.

Those of you who walk told us that pavements are full of uneven sections or parked cars. You also told us that not all footpaths join up very well making getting from place to place more difficult.

**Policy 25** asked that any walking routes are better thought through to make it easier to get around the Town on foot.

- You told us lots of other important things that we should consider trying to improve in the Town.

The ones which couldn't be covered by a planning policy and this Neighbourhood Plan, we captured in **Section 9** and might be things that the Town Council wish to explore. Not all are necessarily things the Town Council can do something about. Some might cause new challenges or cost more than the benefit they bring. It will be for the Town Council to consider the list and decide what action to take.

And the conclusion of the Independent Planning Inspector:

*“Finally, I wish to commend the Godmanchester Town Council and its local community for the years of hard work which have been put into preparing this Neighbourhood Plan, ensuring that local people were properly consulted and engaged, and informing themselves about the complex town planning system. Although some people will be disappointed by the modifications which are proposed in this report, which I am compelled to make to meet the relevant legal requirements, I hope they will appreciate that I am fully supportive of their aims for a compact town which maintains its distinctive and historic character set in the countryside, and will thrive in the future for the benefit of its residents and businesses. The GNP should provide a strong basis for good quality, decision-making on development proposals which take full account of the local community’s wellbeing”.*

*Jill Kingaby*

Examiner

