



# MEPPERSHALL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

**2021 to 2035 – Draft Neighbourhood  
Plan May 2022 (Policy H1)**

**#LoveMeppershall**

John Byng, Traveller and author of The Torrington Diaries, 17974 who describes his first impressions of Meppershall.

*“....but placed in a dismal country upon a wretched soil, in a starving village, with roads nearly impassable: (nothing but force could set me down in such a place). “*

## **Contents**

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>11. Housing</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Housing Growth</b>                                      | <b>5</b> |
| <b>Housing mix</b>   | <b>5</b> |
| <b>Housing need</b>  | <b>5</b> |
| <b>Housing development within the Settlement Envelope.</b> | <b>6</b> |

## 11. Housing

- 11.1. Meppershall was, until recently, a typical Bedfordshire village comprising of a mixture of housing of various types and ages, ranging from Victorian terraced cottages to detached houses set in reasonable sized gardens. The predominant house types are detached (53%) and semi-detached, 3 or 4 bedroomed houses (28%) arranged in small developments. There are very few terraced homes, flats or maisonettes (18%). 82% of the homes are owner occupied, with the remainder rented. (2011 census).
- 11.2. Meppershall needs more young people and families remaining in or moving into the village for the community to retain its age balance but, the current shortage of affordable housing denies young people and families the opportunity to live in the village where they grew up. Current housing developments located at 32 Shefford Road and 59 Shefford Road are providing 35% affordable housing (equal to 71 new homes). This is a large number of housing which goes a long way to meeting the demand for local people with links to the village/area to be able to access affordable homes. It is therefore unlikely that there will be the need for any more local demand for the life of this plan.
- 11.3. The village needs smaller homes for elderly residents wishing to downsize and remain in Meppershall and for young singles or couples to take up residence.
- 11.4. The following issues were raised through consultation:
  - Considered redevelopment: residents strongly indicate the desire to maintain the village feel and to protect the surrounding countryside.
  - Proportionate development: generally, an average of 6 to 10 new houses per year was perceived as acceptable, and villagers feel very strongly that Meppershall is providing much more than its fair share of new homes when compared to other Central Bedfordshire locations.
  - Appropriate development: respondents want new housing to respond to local needs. For example, many voiced comments about the lack of affordable housing for young adults and first-time buyers.
  - Most respondents to the Village Plan also agree with the national principal of “presuming in favour of sustainable development”, but express strong concerns about how sustainability is analysed and defined.
  - In addition, 70% of residents would prefer to see multiple new sites, each with a few houses, rather than a few new sites, each with many houses.
  - 88% of Village Plan respondents say their dwelling meets their current needs, and 71% think that it will continue to do so over the next ten years.
  - 29% of Village Plan respondents would like to move away from the village in the next ten years.
- 11.5. Meppershall average house prices over a 12 month period to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 are 57.6% above the average for England and 35.0% above Bedfordshire’s average (£420,212 Meppershall v’s £266,532 England and £311,107 Bedfordshire – data from Rightmove and HM Land Registry). Only 8.32% of Meppershall homes are classed as Council Tax Band A and B with 19.74% in Band C (data correct 31/03/2021). This clearly shows an imbalance, and lack of choice for cheaper homes to buy in Meppershall. This indicates that young people

who have grown up in the village may be forced to seek housing elsewhere, where it is cheaper and more plentiful.

- 11.6. There are some village properties suitable for first time buyers, but many young buyers are unable to obtain mortgages and the properties do not meet the criteria for older buyers downsizing. This is evidenced by the number of people in the 15-24 and 45-64 age groups moving out of Meppershall far outweighing those moving in within those age groups.
- 11.7. **The Local Plan was written prior to the Governments 'First Home' initiative where a minimum 25% of all new affordable units should be provided as First Homes. These units are likely to be secured through legal (Section 106) agreements to ensure that the discounts remain in perpetuity.**
- 11.8. At the other end of the spectrum, older residents are living in accommodation which is too big for them. They are unable to move because of the lack of suitable smaller houses or bungalows that meet their needs.
- 11.9. The proportion of older people (65+) in the population overall will rise. Forecasts for national demographic change between 2008 and 2033 show that the elderly population could increase from 16% to 23% of the total population. The age profile comparison between 2001 and 2011 shows a rise in Meppershall's elderly population from 254 to 300, 16.4% to 17.1% of total Meppershall population. Whilst over the same time period the percentage of under 17's has decreased from 23.4% in 2001 to 21.7%. One person households have increased from 101 households 17.4% of total households to 160, 23.5%. (Source Census information)



FIGURE 19: ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE STUDENTS OF MEPPERSHALL CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY



FIGURE 20: HIGH STREET COTTAGES



FIGURE 21: MARYWELLS



FIGURE 22: RECTORY ROAD



FIGURE 23: RECTORY ROAD

- 11.10. Meppershall has grown by nearly 160 dwellings since the 2011 Census (693 dwellings in 2011 and 853 in March 2021 – data from Central Bedfordshire Council), the highest number being constructed was 78 in 2018/19 as part of the Croudace Homes development which includes Walnut Tree Way.
- 11.11. A further 243 houses have been given planning permission and are either under construction or not yet started (as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021). The largest site that has been given outline planning permission is at 59 Shefford Road for 145 dwellings, with a further site at 32 Shefford Road is for 60 dwellings. The latter development is an allocated site in the emerging Local Plan as reference HAS39. The remainder are small sites or individual houses, including three developments on Fildyke Road and one on the High Street, amongst other smaller developments.

### Housing mix

- 11.12. The provision of additional houses in Meppershall gives an opportunity to change the balance of village homes available. A good mix of dwellings is required, including fewer large homes and smaller affordable dwellings; the mix should also include some homes suitable for older residents who wish to downsize and some starter homes. Bungalows would be welcomed, as would apartments, provided that they are not higher than the predominant 2 storeys in the village whilst adhering to the character of the village.
- 11.13. Units likely to be suitable for young families or older people should be built to ‘The Lifetime Homes’ standards which incorporate design criteria supporting the changing needs of individuals and families at different life stages allowing easier access and movement within the property and ensuring properties are suitable for young families or older people. The Lifetime Homes standard may be superseded by Building Regulations and Government standards, in which case the most up to date standards will apply.

### Housing need

- 11.14. The proportion of new housing development which is required to be affordable is set by Central Bedfordshire Council. The Neighbourhood Plan requires proposals for new housing developments to conform to up to date CBC specifications, both in overall requirement and tenure mix. Affordable Housing in the parts of CBC is provided by Housing Associations.

11.15. CBC records (up to 6<sup>th</sup> April 2021) show there are 22 households currently resident in Meppershall parish waiting for affordable housing. In addition to these households, there are a further 628 households not currently resident in the parish on the waiting list stating Meppershall as a preference of location. The current lettings policy in place means that those in greatest housing need with a local connection to the whole of Central Bedfordshire have first refusal at occupying vacant houses that come up in Meppershall. Lettings will continue this way in the parish, so as to conform to Central Beds Allocations Policy. Current policy can be found at:  
<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/housing/strategic/developments.aspx>.

## Housing development within the Settlement Envelope.

- 11.16. Opportunities for new housing development are likely to continue to arise in Meppershall throughout the plan period. Meppershall is classified as a 'small village' within the Local Plan. The Settlement Envelope for Meppershall is defined in the Local Plan and separates the village from the surrounding countryside. Within Settlement Envelopes of Small Villages, development will be limited to infill development, small-scale employment uses, and community facilities according to Policy SP7 of the Local Plan.
- 11.17. New homes may be built on redeveloped sites or through infill development. Infill sites are defined as spaces between existing houses where new housing will repeat or respect the surrounding pattern of development. Generally, 'infill' sites can be acceptable for 1 to 2 new houses, provided that the amenities of the adjacent properties are not adversely affected and that the street scene and pattern of development remains appropriate to the rural character of the village.

### **Policy H1: Housing**

**New housing development should be located within the Settlement Envelope unless allocated in the Local Plan.**

**On larger developments (more than 5 houses) the sizes of dwellings should be mixed, with a larger proportion of smaller, more affordable homes to provide for younger people and older people wishing to downsize.**

**Affordable housing will be supported in new development as required by Local Plan Policy SL20. Within that provision, a minimum of 25% of new affordable homes shall be provided as First Homes.**

| Policy Number             | Description  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <p><b>H1: Housing</b></p> | <p>New housing development should be located within the Settlement Envelope unless allocated in the Local Plan.</p> <p>On larger developments (more than 5 houses) the sizes of dwellings should be mixed, with a larger proportion of smaller, more affordable homes to provide for younger people and older people wishing to downsize</p> <p>Affordable housing will be supported in new development as required by Local Plan Policy SL20. Within that provision, a minimum of 25% of new affordable homes shall be provided as First Homes.</p> |



Consultation Statement and Annexes as follows:

| Number       | Document  | Description   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Annex – 001A | Meppershall Village Plan 2017-2027                        | Full report from the village plan published in 2017 which includes survey results and supporting publications |
| Annex – 001B | Meppershall Village Plan 2017-2027 Questionnaires         | Original questionnaires   |
| Annex – 001C | Meppershall Village Plan 2017-2027 Questionnaire Data     | Questionnaire data  |
| Annex - 002  | Meppershall Green Infrastructure Plan 2020                | Green infrastructure plan including the supporting surveys and publications                                   |
| Annex - 003  | Village MeppFest  | Summary, photos and survey results from the village event held at Meppershall Academy in 2018                 |
| Annex – 004  | Communications Summary                                    | A summary of publications and communications on the Neighbourhood Plan  |
| Annex - 005  | Steering Group Meeting Minutes and Parish Council Reports | Steering group meeting agendas and minutes & Parish Council Reports   |