

Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2037

Submission Plan - January 2023



Elmswell Parish Council



Elmswell Parish Council
Supported by Places4People Planning Consultancy



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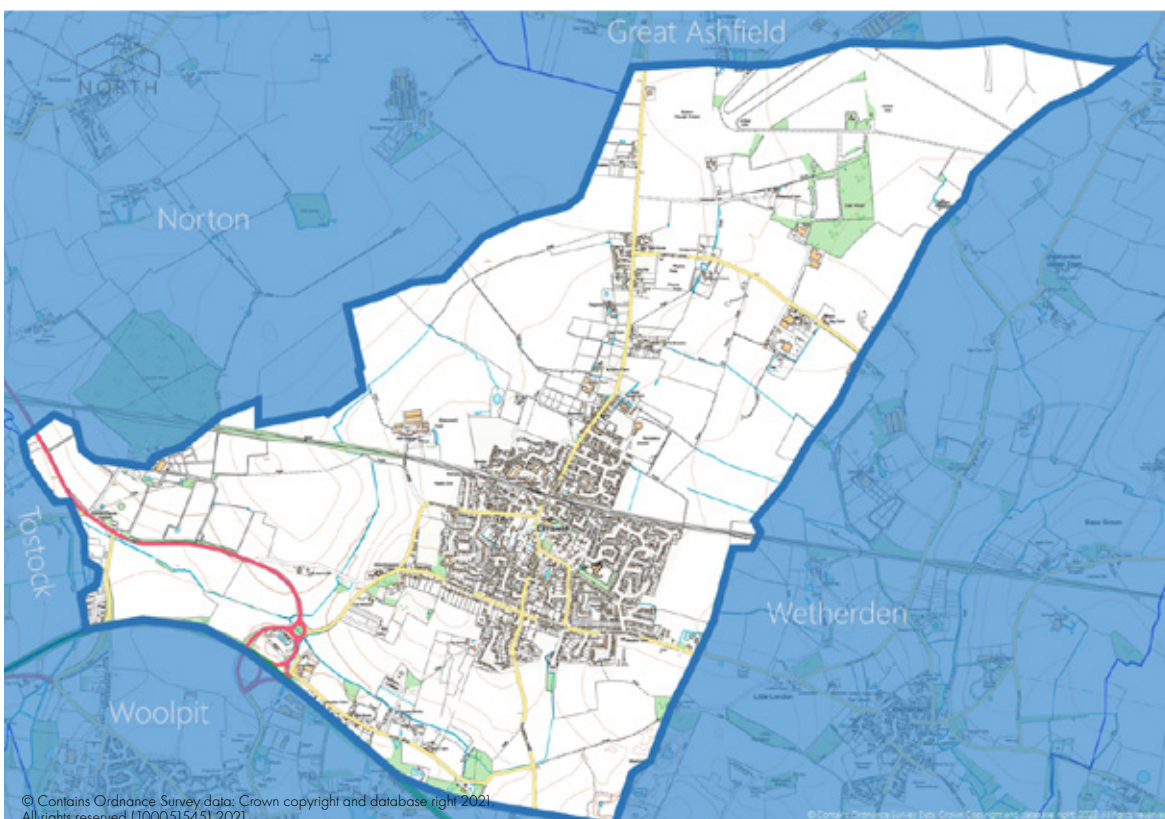
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2011 the Government introduced a new layer of planning policy documents that could be produced by local communities and which, when complete and supported at a local referendum, would form part of the statutory planning policy framework for the area they cover. Known as Neighbourhood Plans, Parish Councils were given the powers to draw them up with engagement with the local community.
- 1.2 A Neighbourhood Plan is, therefore, a community-led planning framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area.
- 1.3 Parish Councils are encouraged to produce their own Neighbourhood Plans, enabling local people to have a say as to how their neighbourhood grows and develops. In a designated "Neighbourhood Area", that Council is responsible for the preparation of the Plan. Neighbourhood plans cannot contradict the main government planning

policies or the strategic policies in the Local Plan for the area. For example, they cannot propose less development than is planned for in the District Council's Local Plan.

- 1.4 In 2013 Elmswell Parish Council took the decision to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan to cover the whole parish and in January 2014 the whole parish was designated as the Neighbourhood Area, as illustrated in Map 1. Over the following years the preparation of the Plan was stalled, primarily due to the volume of planning applications for major housing development that redirected the focus of the Parish Council into responding to the proposals. In 2015 Mid Suffolk District Council announced the commencement of the preparation of a new Joint Local Plan for Babergh and Mid Suffolk. The likely impact of the Joint Local Plan on Elmswell was a further matter that caused some slowing down of the Neighbourhood Plan production.



MAP 1 - THE DESIGNATED NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

- 1.5 Given the stage at which the Joint Local Plan has reached, as referred to in Section 2 below, it is now appropriate to complete the Neighbourhood Plan and put an additional layer of locally based planning policies and designations in place. It has an end date of 2037, unless superseded by a more up-to-date Plan in the interim.
- 1.6 A lot of work took place in the early days of preparing the Plan. However, having reviewed the situation with the Joint Local Plan, it was decided to limit the content of the Plan to that which would provide a layer of local detail to supplement the higher-level planning policies.

The Draft Plan

- 1.7 The Neighbourhood Plan contains planning policies that, when the Plan is complete, will be used alongside the Joint Local Plan as a starting point for consideration of planning applications. The initial draft of the Neighbourhood Plan, known as the “Pre-submission Plan”, was consulted on for six weeks in Spring 2022.. At the end of the consultation, comments were reviewed and any necessary amendments to the Plan made ahead of submission to Mid Suffolk District Council for further consultation and then scrutiny by an Independent Examiner. Following the examination, and subject to the Examiner’s response and Mid Suffolk’s approval, a referendum of residents on the Electoral Roll will be held to vote on whether the Plan should be used by the District Council when deciding planning applications.

- 1.8 The projected timescale for the completion of the Neighbourhood Plan is set out below:





2. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in the context of the content of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the relevant Local Plan documents that cover the parish. The Plan must be in general conformity with both the NPPF and the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan. The paragraphs below identify how these are relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's high-level planning policies that must be taken into account in the preparation of development plan documents and when deciding planning applications. In July 2021 the Government published a Revised NPPF while in December 2022 a consultation was launched on proposed changes to the NPPF. Those proposed changes have not been taken account of in the Neighbourhood Plan as it was submitted to Mid Suffolk District Council prior to the end of the consultation. The Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states:

Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:

- a) 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;
- b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Mid Suffolk Local Plan

- 2.3 At a local level, and as previously referenced, the Local Plan situation in Mid Suffolk is an evolving one. The current development plan comprises:
- the saved policies of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan 1998
 - Mid Suffolk Core Strategy 2008
 - Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review 2012

The Core Strategy defines a settlement hierarchy across the district, defining Elmswell as one of a number of "Key Service Centres" which will be the main focus for development outside of the towns.

Emerging Joint Babergh Mid Suffolk Local Plan

- 2.4 Early in 2015 Mid Suffolk District Council announced its intention to prepare a new Joint Local Plan with Babergh District Council that would provide a planning framework for the management of growth across the two districts in the period to 2037.
- 2.5 In November 2020 the District Council consulted on the final draft of the Joint Local Plan ahead of its submission to the Secretary of State and the subsequent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. That examination commenced in 2021 but in December the Planning Inspectors determined that the distribution of new housing allocations across the two districts could not be supported and that the Joint Local Plan should be divided into two documents, with Part 1 setting the overall housing requirement and Part 2, to follow, setting the distribution of that requirement and allocating new sites in accordance with that hierarchy of distribution. Until Part 2 is adopted, the Settlement Boundaries for Elmswell will be those contained in the 1998 Mid Suffolk Local Plan (see Section 3 for how the Neighbourhood Plan addresses the Settlement Boundary for Elmswell).
- 2.6 The November 2020 draft Joint Local Plan identified Elmswell as a Core Village which would make a contribution towards meeting the wider needs of the future growth of Mid Suffolk. It proposed the construction of an additional 834 homes in the parish between 2018 and 2037, of which 480 had planning permission as of 1 April 2018. However, that requirement is being taken out of what will be Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan and it is now not possible



for the Neighbourhood Plan to identify what the housing requirement will be in the final Joint Local Plan.

- 2.7 It is unlikely that Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan will be adopted until sometime in 2023, after the Neighbourhood Plan has been examined, while Part 2 is likely to take a further 2-3 years to complete. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to have regard to what is expected to be in Part 1 of the Plan.
- 2.8 Given the local plan hiatus in Mid Suffolk, particularly concerning the amount and location of future housing growth, this Parish Council has decided that the Neighbourhood Plan is not the appropriate mechanism for determining the amount and future location of any further housing growth in Elmswell. This will be a matter for Mid Suffolk District Council to determine, having regard to the content of the Neighbourhood Plan.

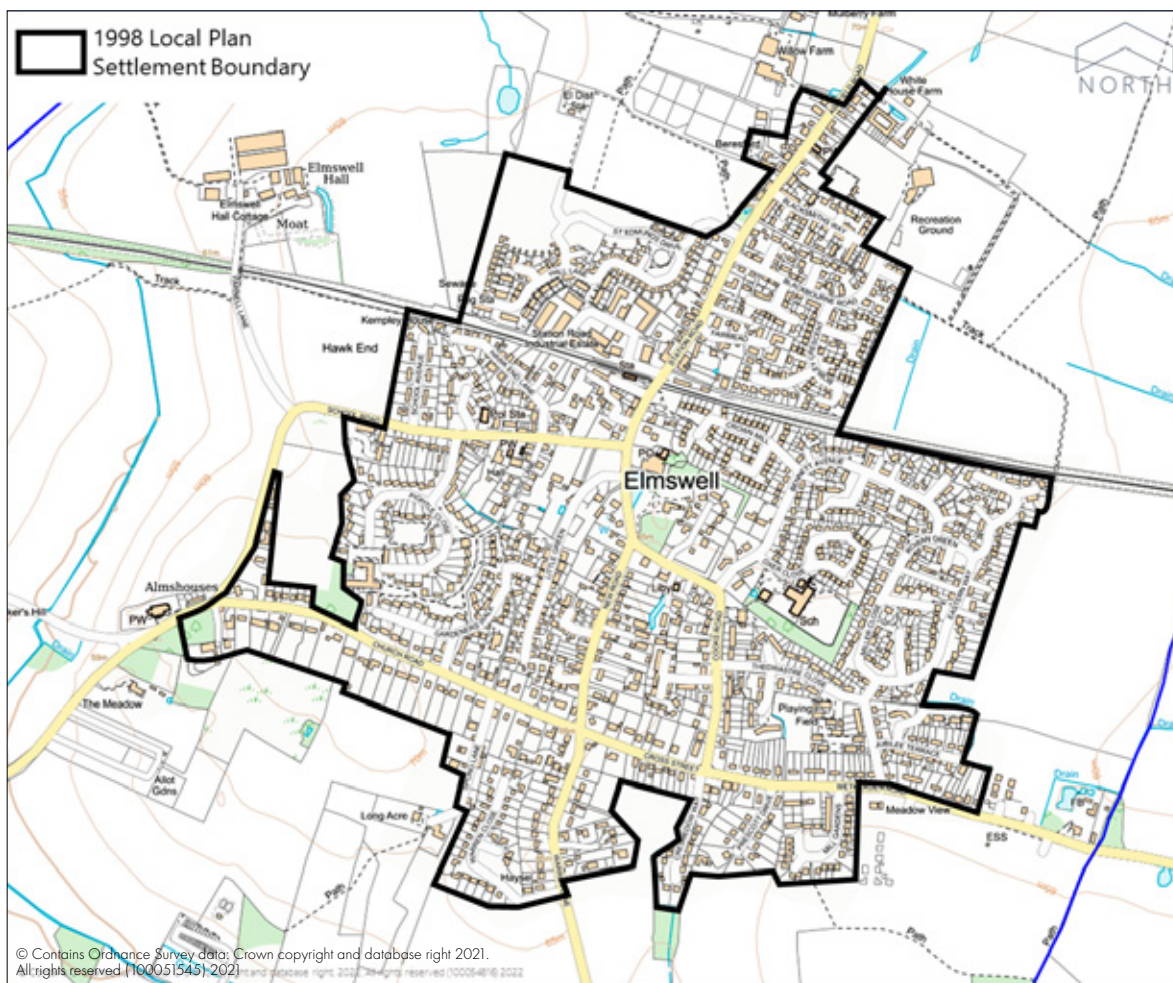
3. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

3.1 The emerging Joint Local Plan contains a number of policies which address the day-to-day matters that are taken into account when considering a planning application. These are expected to form the main content of Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan and therefore are not repeated in the Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan therefore covers the following policy matters:

- 1. Planning Strategy and Settlement Boundaries
- 2. Landscape Character and Views
- 3. Local Green Spaces
- 4. Sport and Recreation Facilities
- 5. Employment Sites

Planning Strategy

3.2 Local plan documents generally define “settlement boundaries” around the main built-up area of a village. In general, there is a presumption in favour of new development within a settlement boundary, whereas development on land outside them is only allowed in certain circumstances. The delayed progression of the Joint Local Plan means that the Settlement Boundary for Elmswell will be that defined in the 1998 Mid Suffolk Local Plan, as illustrated in Map 2, until such a time as it is superseded by a new local plan or this neighbourhood plan.



MAP 2 – 1998 MID SUFFOLK LOCAL PLAN SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY

Policy ELM 1 – Planning Strategy

The Neighbourhood Area will accommodate development commensurate with its designation as a Key Service Centre in the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy and Core Village in the Joint Babergh Mid Suffolk Local Plan.

The focus for new development will be within the Settlement Boundaries, as defined on the Policies Map, where the principle of development is accepted.

Proposals for development located outside the Settlement Boundary will only be permitted where they are in accordance with national and district level strategic policies.

Landscape Character and Views

3.6 Elmswell parish is located largely on a plateau above the valley of the Black Bourn river to the south and west. The land rises noticeably from junction 47 of the A14 north-east to that plateau where St John's Church commands a prominent position as a gateway to the village. There are few significant landscape features across the parish. The Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment identifies 30 distinct types of landscape across the County. It was designed to support the maintenance and restoration of the landscape, particularly through the planning system, as well as to promote a wider understanding of Suffolk landscapes. For Elmswell, it records that the main landscape character is "Ancient Plateau Claylands" with an area of "Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze" to the south of the village centre and "Plateau Claylands" in the north-east corner of the parish.

3.7 The Assessment noted that the key forces for change in the Ancient Plateau Claylands are:

- Expansion of garden curtilage
- Change of land use to horse paddocks and other recreational uses
- Settlement expansion eroding the characteristic form and vernacular styles
- Conversion and expansion of farmsteads for residential uses
- Impact of deer on the condition of woodland cover
- Large-scale agricultural buildings in open countryside
- Redevelopment of former airfield sites to new uses
- Development of wind turbines

Given that this landscape typology covers many areas of the county, not all these issues will be a threat for Elmswell. However, reflecting the landscape setting of the village, there is a real danger that the further expansion of the village could have significant detrimental impacts on the surrounding landscape and view towards the settlement.

3.3 Given the level of development that has taken place in Elmswell since 1998, the Settlement Boundary bears little resemblance to what is on the ground. The preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan therefore provides an opportunity to bring the Settlement Boundary up-to-date and reflect the situation on the ground. At the same time, redefining the Settlement Boundary will not be opening the way for further extensive development in the village. In order to provide clarity to the planning process, a new Settlement Boundary for Elmswell is defined on the Policies Map at the rear of this document. It follows that defined in the emerging Joint Local Plan but also takes account of recent planning permissions.

3.4 Policy SP03 of the emerging Joint Local Plan currently states that settlement boundaries are defined "in order to demonstrate the extent of land which is required to meet the development needs of the Plan". It is yet to be seen what the wording of this policy will be post examination of the Joint Local Plan. However, the principle of this approach is supported in the Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan. In order to achieve sustainable growth, it is essential that development is primarily focused on the existing built-up area of the village centre, where existing services and facilities are within easy reach. This will ensure that the important landscape and built character of the parish is protected from inappropriate development.

3.5 Outside the Settlement Boundaries new development will not generally be supported, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as for the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses, or sustainable rural tourism and leisure development that respects the character of the countryside and historic environment. The re-use of redundant farm buildings for business or tourism development is such an example. Proposals of this nature are referred to in paragraph 84 of the NPPF and may be supported where the impact on the landscape can be minimised and where it can be demonstrated that adequate road and infrastructure exists or is capable of being provided in a timely manner. Where planning permission is required, the construction of new buildings outside Settlement Boundaries will only be supported in exceptional circumstances.



3.8 A separate Appraisal of Important Views has been prepared to identify key views from public places (roads or public rights of way) into the built-up area of the village. These key views are identified on the Policies Map at the rear of this document. Inconsiderate development could have a significant and unwanted detrimental impact on the landscape setting of Elmswell and will not be supported. When proposals for development are being prepared, it will be necessary to take account of the impact on views and demonstrate how proposed new buildings can be satisfactorily accommodated within the landscape. Landscape Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) are a recognised tool that specifically aims to ensure that all possible effects of change and development both on the landscape itself and on views and visual amenity, are considered in decision-making.

- demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example, because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. It is recognised that the designation of Local Green Spaces should not be used simply to block development.

3.10 A separate Local Green Space Appraisal has been undertaken as part of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, which demonstrates how certain local spaces meet the criteria in paragraph 102 of the NPPF. The spaces that meet the criteria are identified in Policy ELM 3 and are illustrated on the Policies Map. Their precise boundaries are identified in Appendix 1. The identification of these spaces as Local Green Space means that development is restricted to that which has to be demonstrated as being essential for the site, in line with the Green Belt policies defined by the NPPF. Permitted development rights, including the operational requirements of infrastructure providers, are not affected by this designation.

Policy ELM 2 - Protection of Important Views

Important views from public vantage points either within the built-up area or into or out of the surrounding countryside are identified on the Policies Map. Any proposed development should not have a detrimental visual impact on the key landscape and built development features of those views as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan Assessment of Important Views.

Green Spaces

3.9 There are a number of open areas within the village that make important contributions to the character and setting of the built environment. The NPPF enables the designation and protection of land of particular importance to local communities as Local Green Spaces in neighbourhood plans. Such designations rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Paragraph 102 of the NPPF states that the designation should only be used where the green space is:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

Policy ELM 3 - Local Green Spaces

The following Local Green Spaces are designated in this Plan and identified on the Policies Map and in Appendix 1:

1. Open space south and west of Hanover Court
2. Allotments, Church Hill
3. Cemetery, Church Hill
4. Lukeswood, Church Road
5. Amenity open spaces, Pightle Close
6. Crown Mill play area
7. Hall Lane play area
8. Playing field off Thedwastre Close
9. Town Field, off Spong Lane



Sport and Recreation Facilities

- 3.11** The parish is especially fortunate to have high quality sports and recreation facilities focused, primarily, at the Blackbourne which is managed on behalf of the Parish Council by the Blackbourne & Wesley Management Association.
- 3.12** The provision of sport and recreation facilities can play a significant role in supporting the health and welfare of residents of all ages. It is therefore essential that these facilities are maintained and, when necessary, improved to support healthy lifestyles in future years. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect sport and recreation facilities from being lost, unless an equally good or better recreational facility is provided in an equally accessible location in the village or where it can satisfactorily be demonstrated that the facility is surplus to requirement when assessed against the District Council's adopted standards for that type of facility / pitch and the loss would not result in a shortfall.



Policy ELM 4 – Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities

Proposals for the provision, enhancement and/or expansion of sport or recreation open space or facilities will be permitted subject to compliance with other Policies in the Development Plan.

Development which will result in the loss of existing sport or recreation open space or facilities, including those identified on the Policies Map, will not be allowed unless:

- i. it can be demonstrated that the space or facility is surplus to requirement against the local planning authority's standards for that location, and the proposed loss will not result in a shortfall during the plan period; or
- ii. replacement for the space or facilities lost is made available, of at least equivalent quantity and quality, and in a suitable location to meet the needs of users of the existing space or facility.

Any replacement provision should take account of the needs of the settlement where the development is taking place and the current standards of open space and sports facility provision adopted by the local planning authority.

Where necessary to the acceptability of the development, the local planning authority will require developers of new housing, office, retail and other commercial and mixed development to provide open space including play areas, formal sport/recreation areas, amenity areas and where appropriate, indoor sports facilities or to provide land and a financial contribution towards the cost and maintenance of existing or new facilities, as appropriate. These facilities will be secured through the use of conditions and/or planning obligations.

Clubhouses, pavilions, car parking and ancillary facilities must be of a high standard of design and internal layout. The location of such facilities must be well related and sensitive to the topography, character and uses of the surrounding area, particularly when located in or close to residential areas.

Proposals which give rise to intrusive floodlighting will not be permitted.

Employment and Business Sites

3.13 Elmswell plays an important role in providing employment opportunities for residents and the local area. While a number of individual businesses operate across the parish, the main concentration of business premises can be found at the Station Road Industrial Estate and at Grove Lane Industrial Estate. Their retention for employment use into the future will be secured. Changes at these and other employment locations will generally be acceptable provided that such proposals do not result in a detrimental impact on the local landscape (including identified important views), designated heritage assets, residential amenity (including noise, light and air pollution, loss of privacy and overlooking) and existing highways.

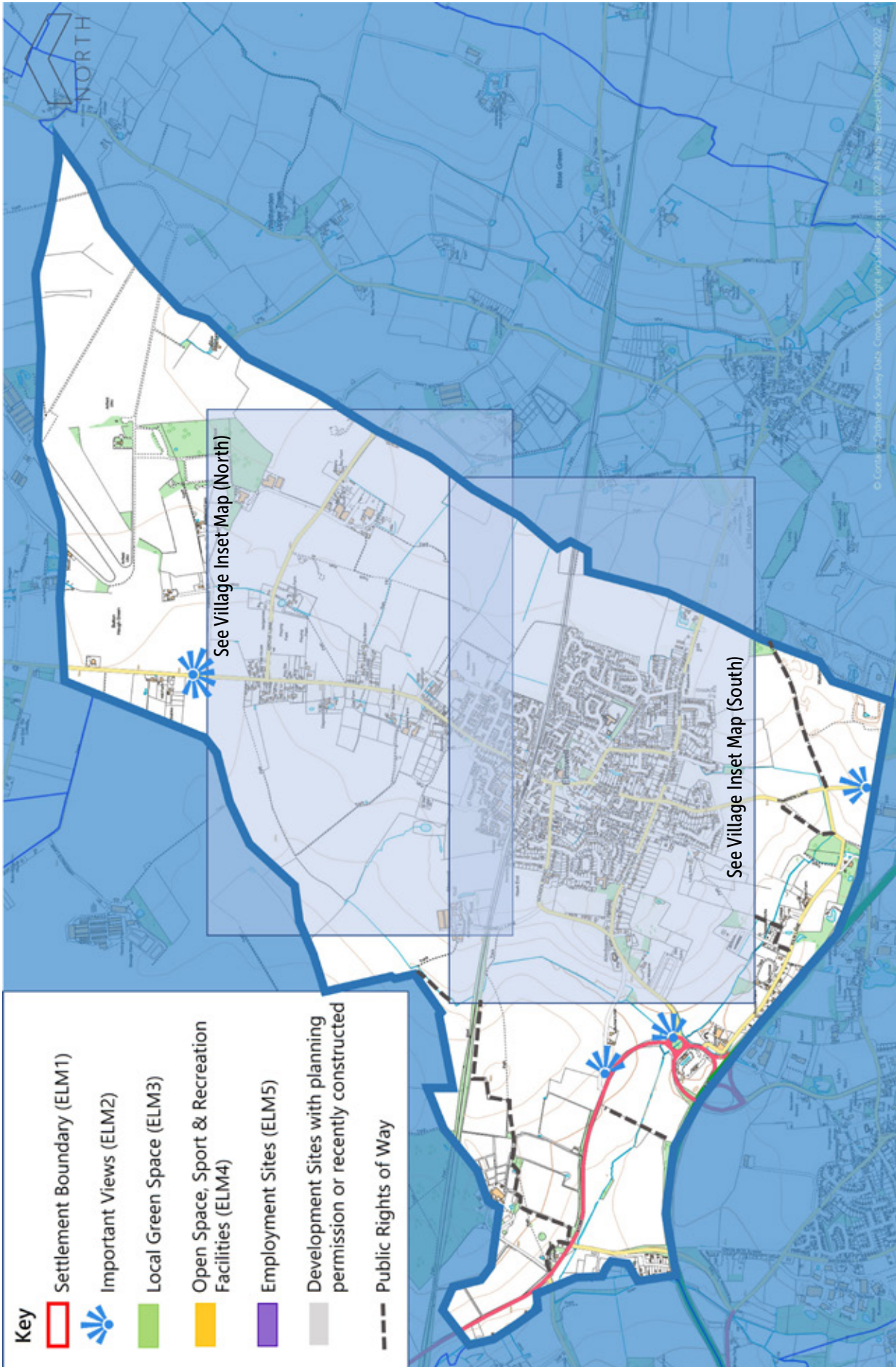


Policy ELM 5 - Employment Sites

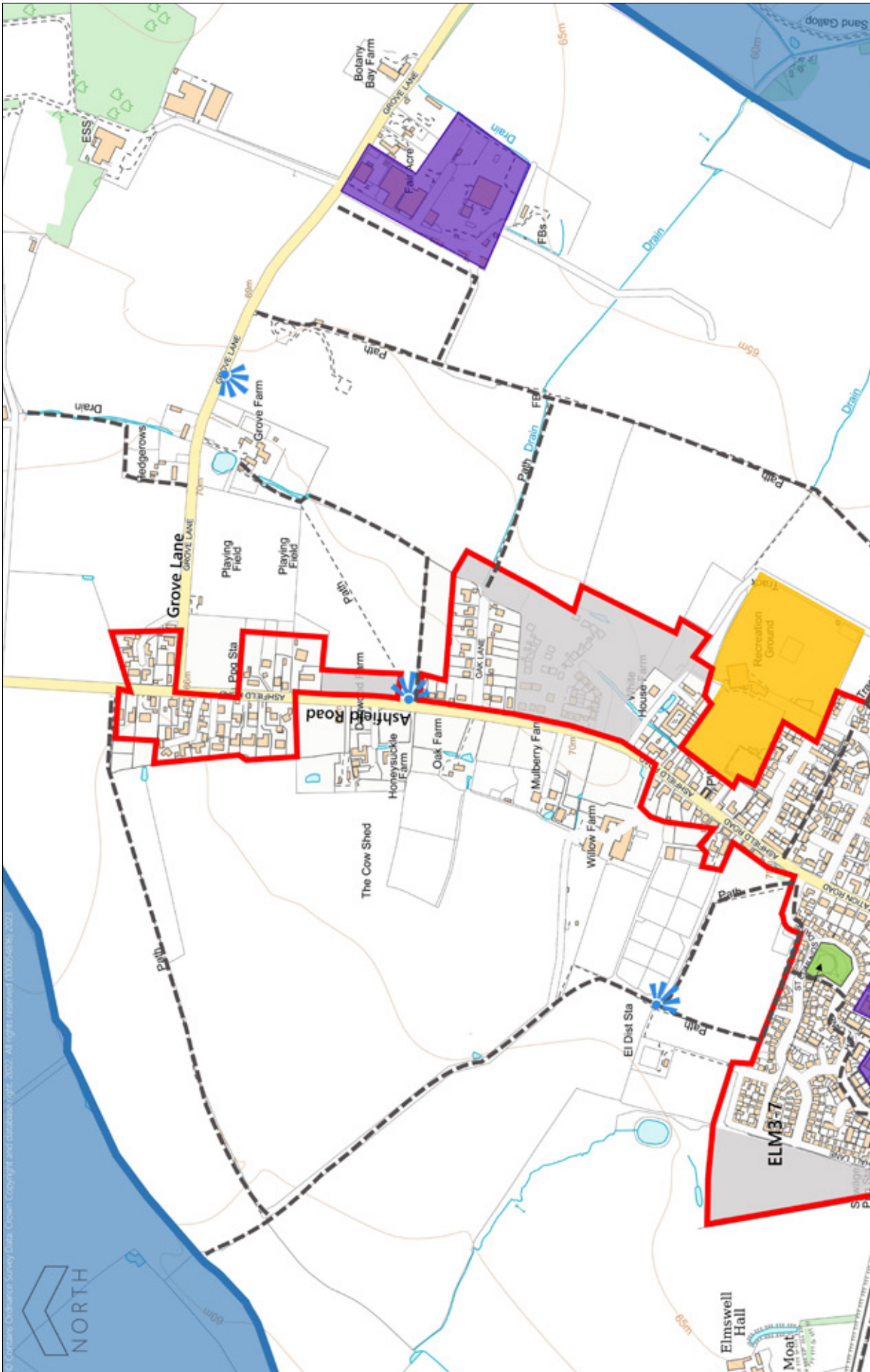
The retention and development of existing employment and other business uses, including those identified on the Policies Map, will be supported providing such proposals do not have a detrimental impact on the local landscape character (including important views identified on the Policies Map), designated heritage assets, residential amenity (including noise, light and air pollution, loss of privacy and overlooking) and the existing highway network. Proposals for non-employment uses or a business use that requires planning consent and which is expected to have an adverse impact on employment generation, will only be permitted where one or more of the following criteria has been met:

- i. financial evidence can be provided that the site/premises has been marketed for sale/let for a minimum period of six months, and that it can be demonstrated that no suitable or viable alternative employment/business uses can be found or are likely to be found in the foreseeable future; or
- ii. the existing use has created over-riding environmental problems (e.g. noise, odours or traffic) and permitting an alternative use would be a substantial environmental benefit that would outweigh the loss of an employment / business site; or
- iii. an alternative use or mix of uses would assist in regeneration and offer greater benefits to the community in meeting local business and employment needs; or
- iv. it is for an employment related support facility, such as employment training/education or workplace crèche; or
- v. an alternative use or mix of uses would provide other sustainability benefits that would outweigh the loss of an employment / business site.

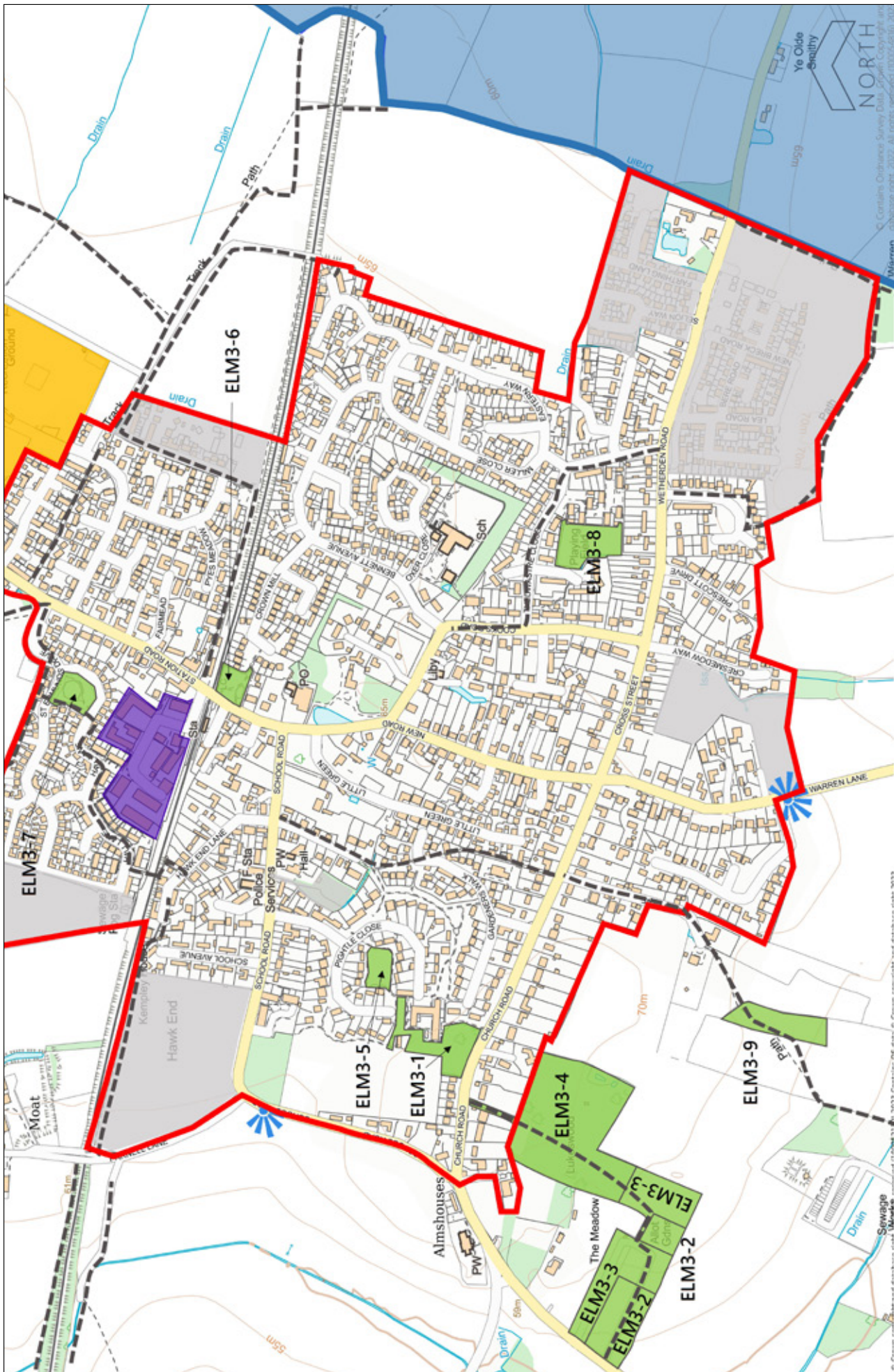
POLICIES MAP



INSET NORTH



INSET SOUTH





Amenity open spaces, Pightle Close



Crown Mill play area



Hall Lane play area



Playing field off Thedwaste Close



Town Field, off Spong Lane





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