

# Cotton End Parish Council



**THE COTTON END PLAN 2022 to 2040**

Neighbourhood Development Plan  
Made (FINAL DRAFT) July 2022  
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## Equalities Assessment

September 2023

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## 1 Introduction

Section 149 of The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate conduct prohibited by the Act, advance quality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant “protected characteristic” and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant “protected characteristic” and persons who do not share it. Protected characteristics are defined as: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared by The Cotton End (Neighbourhood) Plan Steering Group on behalf of Cotton End Parish Council. It is an analysis of the Policies within the Neighbourhood Development Plan to scrutinise the potential for an adverse impact on any persons or group, and in particular those people/groups with a protected characteristic.

An assessment has been made on the impact of The Cotton End (Neighbourhood) Plan and the policies within it on whether the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan have a positive, negative or neutral impact each of the protected characteristics.

## 2 The Cotton End Plan Vision & Objectives

### 2.1 Our Vision:

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

This is helped by:

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

## 2.2 Our Neighbourhood Plan Objectives:

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

**2.3 Our Housing & Design Policies:**

- Policy HD1 INCREASING HOUSING CHOICES
- Policy HD2 DEVELOPMENT AT 161 HIGH ROAD
- Policy HD3 RESPECTING AND ENHANCING VILLAGE CHARACTER AND DESIGN
- Policy HD4 DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LAND
- Policy HD5 HEALTHY HIGH QUALITY TREES AND HEDGES
- Policy HD6 DITCHES OR CULVERTED WATERCOURSES
- Policy HD7 THE COTTON END BUNGALOWS

**2.4 Our Getting Around Infrastructure Policies:**

- Policy GA1 WALKING AND CYCLING

**2.5 Our Open Space & Recreation Policies:**

- Policy OS1 PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACES
- Policy OS2 DESIGNATION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES
- Policy OS3 DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO OPEN AND LOCAL GREEN SPACES
- Policy OS4 LOCAL PLAY AREAS

### 3 A Profile of Cotton End

The Parish of Cotton End was established on 1st April 2019 as a result of a ‘Reorganisation of Community Governance Order’. The Parish of Eastcotts (which incorporated Cotton End and nearby Shortstown) was dissolved and the area divided between 2 newly established parishes of Cotton End and Shortstown. Work started on The Cotton End Plan shortly afterwards.

The result of this change necessitated that the available demographic information from the 2011 Census relating to the former Eastcotts Parish was used in The Cotton End (Neighbourhood) Plan.

However, following the undertaking of the 2021 census, demographic information specific to Cotton End Parish is now available and as a result the information presented here is based on the data now available for Cotton End Parish. This Census data from the 2021 has been used in this Equalities Assessment to provide information on the following protected characteristics: age, disability, race, religious belief and sex (gender). Data relating to sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity is unavailable at a Parish level.

#### 3.1 Age Profile

In 2021 the population stood at 830. Located in the south of Bedford Borough, Cotton End has an older age profile than all of Bedford Borough, with fewer residents aged 20-39 and a higher proportion aged over 40, including more than 18% over 65. The level of non-White British residents (over 11%) is less than half of all of Bedford Borough. Cotton End has a slightly higher level (18%) of Disabled (Disabled under the Equality Act) residents than Bedford Borough.

Age	Cotton End Parish	Percentage
Aged 0 to 4	44	5.3%
Aged 5 to 9	53	6.4%
Aged 10 to 14	58	7.0%
Aged 15 to 19	45	5.4%
Aged 20 to 24	34	4.1%
Aged 25 to 29	45	5.4%
Aged 30 to 34	52	6.3%
Aged 35 to 39	57	6.9%
Aged 40 to 44	56	6.8%
Aged 45 to 49	51	6.2%
Aged 50 to 54	57	6.9%
Aged 55 to 59	67	8.1%
Aged 60 to 64	56	6.8%
Aged 65 to 69	42	5.0%
Aged 70 to 74	49	5.9%
Aged 75 to 79	20	2.4%
Aged 80 to 84	24	2.9%
Aged 85 and over	17	2.1%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

### 3.2 Ethnic Group

Ethnicity	Cotton End Parish	Percentage
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	15	2%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	21	2%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	52	6%
White	789	89%
Other ethnic group	12	1%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

### 3.3 Disability

Disability Category	Cotton End Parish	Percentage
Disabled under the Equality Act	160	18%
Not disabled under the Equality Act	730	82%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

### 3.4 Religion

The dominant faith in Cotton End is Christian (47.9%) which is slightly higher than Bedford Borough at 47.6%. However, only 3.2% follow other religions, which is almost 4 times lower than the Bedford Borough figure of 12.4%. Within Cotton End 48.7% of the population have no religion or have not stated a religion, which is much higher than the figure for Bedford Borough figure of 39.9%.

Religion	Cotton End Parish	Percentage
No religion	396	44.5%
Christian	426	47.9%
Buddhist	1	0.1%
Hindu	4	0.4%
Jewish	1	0.1%
Muslim	4	0.5%
Sikh	12	1.3%
Other religion	7	0.8%
Not answered	37	4.2%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

### 3.5 Sex (gender), Gender Reassignment and Sexual Orientation

Cotton End is reflective of Bedford Borough with regard to sex(gender) with an identical split between the sexes, with 51% Female and 49% Male residents.

Sex	Cotton End	Percentage
Female	452	51%
Male	438	49%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

## **4 Impact on Protected Characteristics**

### **4.1 Age – IMPACT: POSITIVE**

The Cotton End Plan seeks to provide housing need and growth reflective of the scale of the village and within the Settlement Policy Area. This is achieved through the allocation of four small sites, supported by Policies HD1 and HD2 which are anticipated to provide no more than 7 homes together. Policy HD2 requires the mix and tenure of any housing proposed at 161 High Road should meet identified needs, and this should include quality small homes and/or bungalows for the elderly or disabled. In addition Policies HD7.1 and HD7.2 seek to protect and retain The Cotton End Bungalows in Wood Lane and Bunkers Drive. These policies require all future planning applications to demonstrate how the proposed developments will assist in meeting the local housing need.

This will help to ensure that housing provision within Cotton End caters for all ages, including younger people seeking housing for the first time, and/or older people looking to downsize by requiring that housing proposals properly address identified local needs as far as possible.

Policy HD3 requires all new homes to be in accordance with The Cotton End Design Code and all new homes, and Policy HD1 requires new homes should incorporate accessibility for people with limited mobility in their design. The impact on all age groups will be positive.

Policies OS1, OS2, OS3 and OS4 seeks to protect and enhance areas of open spaces and local green spaces within the village, ensuring Cotton End retains open spaces and local green spaces for the benefit of all villagers. In addition, Policy GA1 seeks to encourage healthy lifestyles through walking and cycling.

Policy HD1 seeks to encourage the growth of home working, which will help to create working opportunities for villagers of working age, and will help to enhance choices and opportunities for villagers of all ages, young and old, who have restricted mobility or other sensory disabilities by improving access to home-based employment and access to online goods and services.

### **4.2 Disability – IMPACT: POSITIVE**

Some 18% of residents in Cotton End, almost 1 in 5, are disabled under the Equality Act, which is higher than Bedford Borough which has 15.5%. The needs of the disabled, including those with limited mobility, are addressed in Policy HD1 which looks for housing to meet the needs of various groups to meet local housing need. This is also supported by Policies HD7.1 and HD7.2 which seek to preserve The Cotton End Bungalows in Wood Lane and Bunkers Drive as housing for those with limited mobility and/or disabilities.

Policy GA1 provides a commitment from the Parish Council to continue to support safe and attractive local walking and cycle routes and the enhancement of such, to enable villagers with disabilities or mobility issues to enjoy nearby open spaces such as Shocott Spring.

Policies OS1 and OS2 seek to protect village Open Spaces and designate Local Green Spaces to maintain the verdant character of Cotton End, and are supported by Policies HD4 and HD5.

Polices HD1 and HD2 aim to provide housing to meet the needs of the local community in Cotton End, and provide a positive impact on anyone with a disabilities or impaired mobility.



#### **4.3 Ethnicity – IMPACT: POSITIVE**

Only 1.6% of the population of Cotton End are from non-white ethnic groups. The plan will have the same impact on the local population regardless of race. Policies BNP1, BNP2, BNP3 and BNP4 seek to create well designed development, including safety considerations to reduce any possible hate crime (there is no evidence that any takes place in Cotton End).

The impact of The Cotton End Plan will be positive on people of all ethnicities.

#### **4.4 Religion – IMPACT: NEUTRAL**

Just under half of the population in Cotton End is Christian, with just 7.4% a being of other religions or not answered. All community facilities within the village are currently used by all faiths. Policies within the plan are neutral and do not consider any form of religion, other than defining the Baptist Church, Church Hall, Church Cottage and The Manse as Non-Designated Heritage Assets. Therefore impact of The Cotton End Plan will be neutral in terms of religion.

#### **4.5 Sex (gender), Gender Reassignment and Sexual Orientation – IMPACT: NEUTRAL**

The Cotton End Plan proposals and policies have been written to provide the same opportunities to both sexes, so neither sex disadvantaged, and to provide the same opportunities to all residents regardless of sexual orientation or if they are undergoing gender reassignment.

Whilst the The Cotton End Plan (Neighbourhood) Plan cannot address social attitudes that may result in discrimination, all our policies have been written to ensure that there is a safe built environment for all.

Policy HD1 encourages the growth of home working, which will help to create and expand working opportunities for all sexes (genders) and this policy also enhances choices and opportunities for those during pregnancy and maternity. by improving access to home-based employment.

The impact of The Cotton End Plan will be neutral on all people regardless of Sex, Sexual Orientation or Gender Reassignment.

## 5 Conclusion

The Cotton End (Neighbourhood Development) Plan provides a range of policies and proposals which will result in net positive benefits for all members of the community in the village, including those with protected characteristics or disabilities. The Cotton End Plan makes equal provision for all housing and community facilities which will benefit everyone living in our village.

<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Impact</b>
INCREASING HOUSING CHOICES	HD1	Positive Impact
DEVELOPMENT AT 161 HIGH ROAD	HD2	Positive Impact
RESPECTING AND ENHANCING VILLAGE CHARACTER AND DESIGN	HD3	Neutral Impact
DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LAND	HD4	Neutral Impact
HEALTHY HIGH QUALITY TREES AND HEDGES	HD5	Neutral Impact
DITCHES OR CULVERTED WATERCOURSES	HD6	Neutral Impact
THE COTTON END BUNGALOWS	HD7	Positive Impact
WALKING AND CYCLING	GA1	Positive Impact
PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACES	OS1	Positive Impact
DESIGNATION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES	OS2	Positive Impact
DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO OPEN AND LOCAL GREEN SPACES	OS3	Positive Impact
LOCAL PLAY AREAS	OS4	Neutral Impact