



Examination of South Cambridgeshire Local Plan

Historic England, Hearing Statement

February 2017

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Historic England Hearing Statement

Introduction

1. In carrying out its role in protecting and managing the historic environment Historic England gives advice to local planning authorities on certain categories of applications affecting the historic environment. Historic England is the principal Government adviser on the historic environment, advising it on planning and listed building consent applications, appeals and other matters generally affecting the historic environment.
2. Historic England is consulted on Local Development Plans under the provisions of the duty to co-operate and provides advice to ensure that legislation and national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework are thereby reflected in local planning policy and practice.
3. The tests of soundness require that Local Development Plans should be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. Historic England's representations in relation to the Publication Draft Local Plan are made in the context of the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework") in relation to the historic environment as a component of sustainable development.
4. This statement addresses the Inspector's questions with regards to Matter SC6A Policy SS/5 Waterbeach New Town.
5. This hearing statement should be read alongside Historic England's comments submitted at previous consultation stages of the Local Plan.

Inspector's Questions

6. We set out below our responses to the Inspector's questions in light of our historic environment role.

Matter SC6A - Policy SS/5 Waterbeach New Town

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, Chapter 3, Strategic Sites, Policy SS/5

Issues:

1. General Policy

vii. Does the area of land identified on Inset H of the Policies Map provide sufficient capacity to achieve the quantum of development associated with the new town whilst ensuring that the setting and historic significance of Denny Abbey is preserved or enhanced?

Introduction

7. Policy SS/5 refers to 8,000 to 9,000 dwellings, along with associated infrastructure. In our representations we welcomed the opportunity for further discussion regarding the capacity of the site and the form of development when the setting study is completed.
8. Since that time, the developers have prepared two settings studies. There have also been on-going discussions between South Cambridgeshire District Council, Historic England and the developers to agree the precise boundary of the northern limit of development, informed both by the setting studies and also site visits.
9. These setting studies have helped to understand the significance of Denny Abbey and its setting and to assess the most appropriate northern limit for built development. This will, in turn, assist in determining the ultimate capacity of the site.
10. Historic England is not in a position to reach a conclusion on the dwelling capacity at this stage. We consider that the precise dwelling capacity of the site will be dependent upon a design led approach to ensure the delivery of a sustainable new settlement that provides appropriate protection to the historic environment. To that end we welcome the Council's proposed modifications to policy SS/5 Waterbeach New Town.
11. However, we are in a position to suggest the most appropriate geographical extent of development. In summary, we propose a northern limit for development as shown on Plan 1. The rationale for our position is set out in more detail below.

Rationale for Historic England's Position in respect of the Northern Limit for Development

12. Historic England, formerly English Heritage, has commented on the potential development of a new town at Waterbeach in consultations on the Local Plan. The heritage issues raised by the proposal relate principally to ensuring that the setting, and therefore the significance, of Denny Abbey, to the north of Waterbeach airfield, is not harmed in the context of the overall scheme. Where changes are proposed to the setting that may impact on this significance, the proposals should minimise such harm, and address this through compensating enhancement measures ensuring that the Abbey and its public appreciation are sustained into the future.
13. Denny Abbey is a Scheduled Monument, and a grade I listed building. The site is in the guardianship of the English Heritage Trust, and open to the public via a management agreement with The Farmland Museum Trust. The site and its surroundings are assessed as having high sensitivity in terms of archaeological potential. The site also includes an unscheduled section of Car Dyke.
14. Policy SS/5 refers to 8,000 to 9,000 dwellings, along with associated infrastructure. In our representations we welcomed the opportunity for further discussion regarding the capacity of the site and the form of development when the setting study is completed. We noted, and welcomed the reference in part 1 b) to protection of Denny Abbey, and in part 6 to the preparation of an Area Action Plan. In particular we note and support, the references in policy SS/5 at 6 c), 6 m), 6 o), 6 p), 6 u), 6 ff).
15. Historic England has welcomed the opportunity to be involved in discussions between the proposers of the new settlement and the District Council. In our representations in 2013, Historic England made it clear that the preparation of a setting study, defining the significance of Denny Abbey and how that significance is experienced, will be a crucial part of the evidence base in determining the capacity of this location for development.
16. Our early conclusion in 2013, from a visual inspection on site, was that the boundary of the major development area defined on inset map H is generally appropriate. We note that within this area there will be provision for open space, and that the northern boundary does not necessarily equate to a built development line. The detail of the development in terms of location, scale, form and massing of new buildings, and in particular those in close proximity to Denny Abbey, was to be established through an Area Action Plan (AAP).
17. Since the submission of our representations in 2013 there have been two settings studies undertaken by the developers. *Denny Abbey and its Setting, 4th November 2014 produced by LDA for RLW Estates and a Heritage Appraisal – Proposed Development of Waterbeach MOD site and neighbouring land, April*

2016 produced by Beacon Planning for Urban and Civic. South Cambridgeshire District Council, Historic England and the developers have been in discussions to agree the precise boundary of the northern limit of development, informed both by the setting studies and also site visits.

18. In January 2015, a consensus had been reached on a proposed modification to the northern boundary between Historic England and RLW. Although not formally considered by South Cambs members, officers were informally content with the boundary from the middle of the site to the eastern boundary. In October 2016, Historic England reaffirmed their agreement to this line by e-mail to South Cambridgeshire District Council.
19. In Spring 2016, Urban and Civic/Beacon proposed an alternative buffer zone and extended/transition buffer zone.
20. In October 2016, South Cambridgeshire provided Historic England with details of the developers' jointly agreed new boundary for the northern limit of development. After careful consideration and a further site visit, Historic England proposed a northern line which broadly follows a previous RLW red line agreed in Jan 2015 with a slight variation at the eastern end to incorporate more land around Bannold Box Cottages within the limit of built development. This position was set out in an e-mail dated 5th December 2016. This line is shown on Plan 1.

Denny Abbey, the Causeway and Soldiers Hill

21. The origins of activity in the vicinity of Denny Abbey currently appear to date to the Roman period, and comprise buried archaeological remains and earthworks, including 'Soldiers Hill', close to the causeway, south of the abbey.
22. The historic setting of Denny Abbey is centred on its remoteness. Located on a small island of raised, dry land on the fen edge, west of the River Cam and north of Waterbeach, it was accessed to the south by a short causeway linking it to routes south to Waterbeach. This isolated, fen edge site was well connected to a productive agricultural landscape throughout its life as a monastery, until the post-medieval draining of the fens. It continues to be surrounded by the resultant farmland, characterised by linear dykes and large geometric fields; albeit modified by the twentieth century airfield to the south and modern development to the west. It is this present day landscape, with its links back to the medieval fen edge and fen that contributes to the significance of Denny Abbey. The present day visitor approaching and viewing the buildings, can still discern its micro-topography, the important link provided by the causeway and appreciate views out over a largely agricultural landscape.
23. Historic England's key area of concern with respect to the definition of the northern limit of development in relation to the setting of Denny Abbey is the

area around the earthwork causeway orientated towards Soldiers Hill. Our preferred alignment for the northern boundary is further south of Soldiers Hill than the developers' proposed boundary of Oct 2016. This area of land is considered by Historic England to be particularly important for a number of reasons.

- a) Earthworks and materials dating the Roman period have been found at Soldiers Hill and provide tangible evidence of a Roman period settlement in close proximity to the abbey.
- b) The later Benedictine Abbey founded on the site in the 12th century was made accessible from the south by the causeway to Soldiers Hill, linking the abbey to Waterbeach and the route to Cambridge.
- c) These existing features link the present day landscape back to its Roman and Medieval origins and its links with the historic and medieval fen and make a substantial contribution to the significance of Denny Abbey and its setting.

24. It is for these reasons that we consider it important to step development back from the Abbey in the area around the Causeway and Soldiers Hill as shown on Plan 1.

Summary of background to various alternative lines for the northern limit of development

25. By way of background, Plan 2 provides a summary of the various lines proposed as the northern limit of development by different parties in recent years, as supplied by SCDC in October 2016. It shows;
- the submitted Local Plan Boundary (2013) (solid yellow line)
 - RLW/LDA limit of built area (solid red line) (agreed between RLW and Historic England in Jan 2015)
 - Urban and Civic/Beacon suggested Buffer Zone (solid green line) (Spring 2016);
 - Urban and Civic/Beacon extended/transition Buffer Zone (solid light blue) (Spring 2016);
 - the latest Joint Developers' proposed boundary (18th October 2016)(hatched purple line);
26. Historic England's proposed line (5th December 2016) broadly follows a previous RLW red line agreed in 2015 with a slight variation at the eastern end to incorporate land around Bannold Box Cottages and to include this land within the limit of built development. This follows the original submitted Local

Plan boundary at the eastern end. For the avoidance of doubt, Historic England's proposed line is shown in blue on Plan 1.

Conclusion

27. In conclusion, Plan 1 shows Historic England's preferred northern boundary of built development. This has been informed by the setting studies, site visits and discussions with the developers and Local Planning Authority. Our long held view has been that the development around Soldiers Hill should be set back from Denny Abbey to provide for an appropriate setting to the Abbey for the reasons set out above. This line will in turn inform the ultimate capacity of the site in terms of dwelling numbers through the detailed design stage.

Should the policy include a requirement for a setting study to be submitted at the planning application stage in respect of the relationship of the development to the designated heritage assets within the site?

28. Any application will need to be accompanied by an integrated Heritage Impact Assessment as part of the Environmental Assessment and will need to include chapters on Cultural Heritage/The Historic Environment and Landscape and Visual Assessment. This will need to incorporate the findings of the Denny Abbey setting studies that have been prepared. It should also include an assessment of other designated and non-designated historic assets.

x. Would other land not identified on Inset H of the Policies Map be required to facilitate storm and foul drainage arrangements?

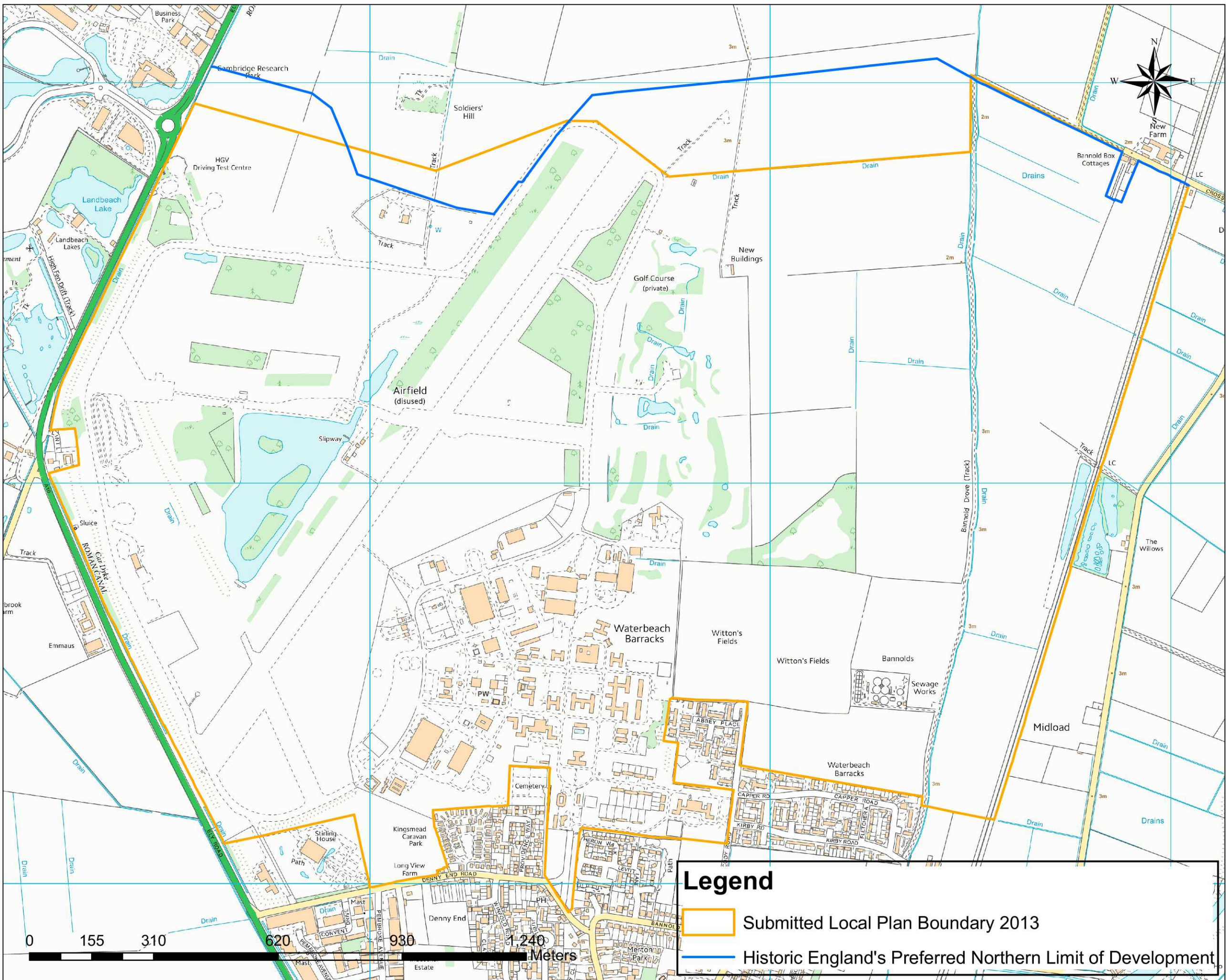
29. If any additional land is needed to facilitate drainage arrangements, consideration will need to be given to the potential impact upon the historic environment.

iii. Paragraph 6p: Would the assessment of heritage assets also include World War II structures on the site which may be worthy of retention?

30. Yes, given the history of the site, it is important that any assessment of heritage assets also includes World War II structures on the site which may be worthy of retention. Historic England has prepared some initial work in this regard.

Waterbeach: Plan One - Historic England's Preferred Northern Limit of Development



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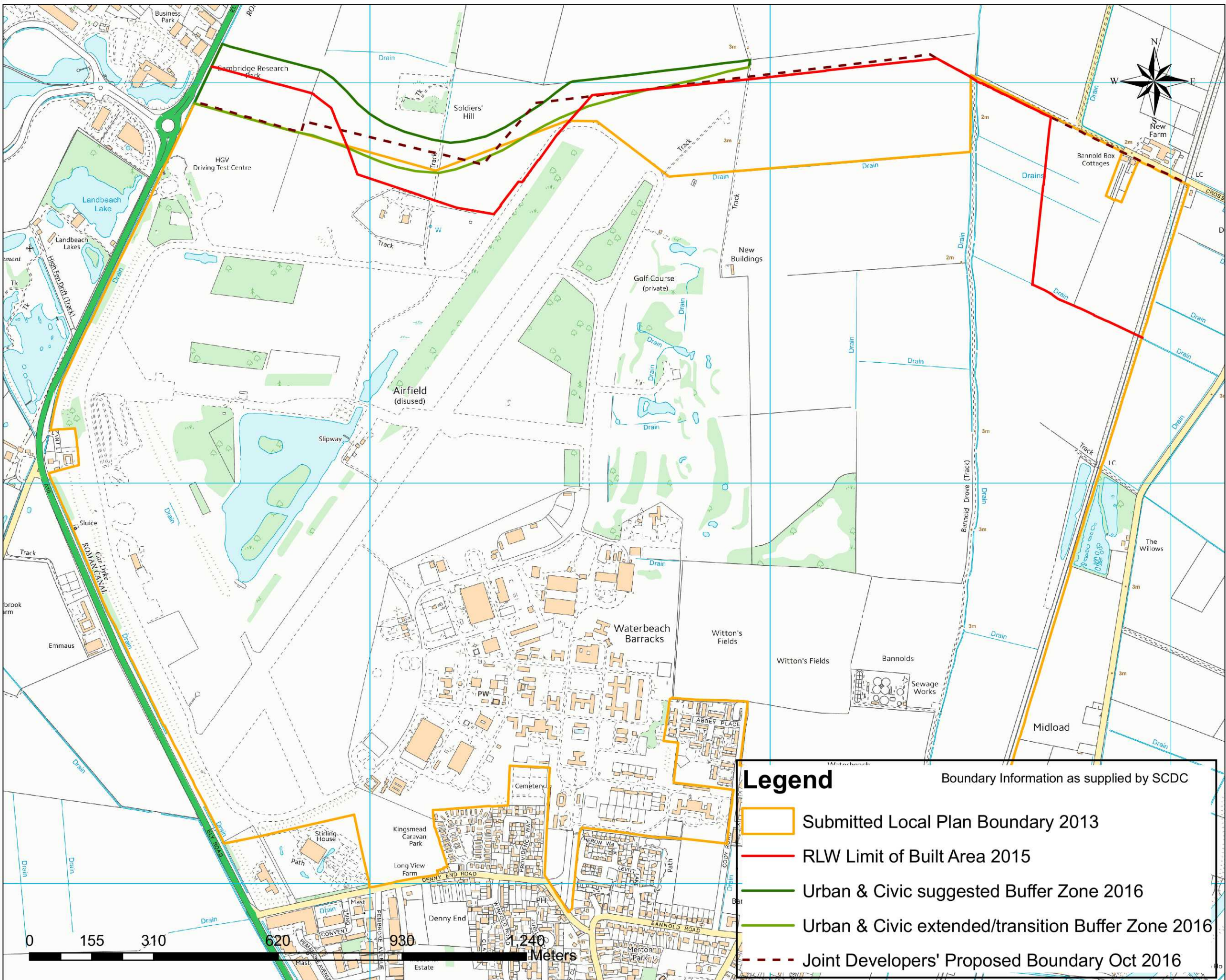
Legend

-  Submitted Local Plan Boundary 2013
-  Historic England's Preferred Northern Limit of Development



Waterbeach: Plan Two - Alternative Proposals for the Northern Boundary

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Legend Boundary Information as supplied by SCDC

- Submitted Local Plan Boundary 2013
- RLW Limit of Built Area 2015
- Urban & Civic suggested Buffer Zone 2016
- Urban & Civic extended/transition Buffer Zone 2016
- Joint Developers' Proposed Boundary Oct 2016

