



Watton

Neighbourhood Plan

Your chance to shape our future

Public Consultation

February - April 2022

Watton Town Council

A Neighbourhood Plan for Watton

Your chance to shape the future of our town

A Neighbourhood Plan is a way of helping local communities to positively influence the planning of the area in which they live and work. It means you can:

- have a say where new developments should be built and what they should look like
- make sure there are enough community facilities for current and future residents
- protect the local character and landscape, including important green spaces

Neighbourhood plans were introduced through the Localism Act in 2011. Once complete, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan, and this means that Breckland District Council must use the Neighbourhood Plan as a starting point when considering new planning applications. But a neighbourhood plan cannot stop development that already has planning permission.

Background to the Neighbourhood Plan

Work to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan began in April 2017 with community events to seek opinion and identify matters that needed considering. A Working Group was established by the Town Council whose membership has fluctuated throughout the process with a core of members involved until the Plan is complete.

Support was secured by way of the Government's Neighbourhood Plan support package which has enabled a Town Centre Master Plan to be prepared. The same support package also provided a Site Assessment which considered the suitability of sites that were potentially appropriate for the infrastructure that residents wanted to see in the Town such as a Retail Centre, Business Centre, Country Park etc. The same support package enabled the Town Council to commission specialist town planning support from Ian Poole of Places4People Planning Consultancy, to help with the preparation and drafting of the Plan.

Locally, the Working Group enabled the preparation of a Character Area Appraisal to include areas of historical interest and buildings of significance across the whole Town.

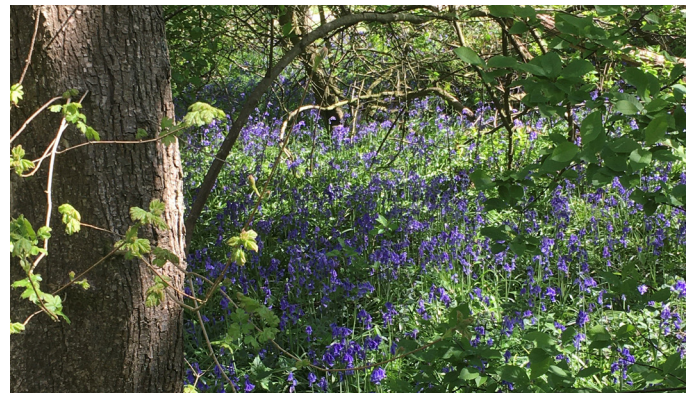
The Draft Neighbourhood Plan

We've now reached a major milestone with the consultation on the Draft Plan. Consultation will last until **Friday 8 April**, a period of just over six weeks. It's your chance to say whether or not you support the content of the Plan or would like to see some changes. The final page of this summary leaflet explains how you can comment. It is important that you use this opportunity to have your say, even if you're fully supportive of the Plan.

The Plan itself is a large document and necessarily quite complex in places as it will be used to decide whether planning applications should be approved. This leaflet briefly explains what each topic area covers, including the coverage of planning policies and the proposed "community actions" to deliver better services and facilities.

You can view the full Neighbourhood Plan by visiting the Town Council website at

<https://www.wattontowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/> or paying a visit to the Town Council offices or Watton library.



The Process

From now on, the Neighbourhood Plan must follow set Stages, as illustrated:



The Referendum on the Plan, as amended by the Examiner, will be open to all on the Electoral Roll in Watton. A simple majority in favour of the Plan will mean that it can be used by the District Council when making decisions on planning applications.

Vision for Watton 2036

Watton will maintain its reputation as a vibrant, helpful and friendly Town with a cohesive and inclusive community. It will be regarded as a welcoming town for business and residents alike with facilities serving the needs of all sectors whilst maintaining its Market Town character.

Watton will have ample open and formal spaces for health and recreation and a strong sense of place with links to surrounding landscapes.

Watton will have strong links with but an identity separate from other Brecks towns celebrating both its own unique history and demonstrating its future sustainable development.

It will provide equal opportunities for living, working and learning for all its residents during their healthy, safe and prosperous lives.

Plan Themes

The Neighbourhood Plan covers the subjects illustrated. Within each subject chapter, the Plan identifies the issues and proposes planning policies and, where necessary, local "community actions". The planning policies can only relate to matters that require planning permission. These have to conform to national and local planning policies. Community actions cover matters that do not necessarily relate to planning but address issues that have been raised during the preparation of the Plan which we feel can be resolved.

Infrastructure
and Services

Development
Design

Housing

Natural
Environment

Town Centre
and the
Economy

Built
Heritage

Access and
Transport

Community and
Social Facilities

Neighbourhood Plan Content

Infrastructure and Services

Objectives

- To ensure that any new development does not cause surface water flooding on site or elsewhere in the parish and that foul sewers are of a size that is fit for purpose.
- To support the provision and maintenance of social health and wellbeing services and infrastructure.
- To establish new burial facilities.

It is really important that there are sufficient and appropriate levels of services and facilities to meet the needs of residents. At one of the first consultation events it became evident that major issues affecting existing development and infrastructure was suffering from poor planning and maintenance along with a lack of clear lines of responsibility for the surface water and sewerage systems serving the Town.

It is essential that an appropriate level of services continues to be provided in the town to reduce the need to travel. The provision of adequate capacity in essential services to meet the demand of additional development has been identified as an important consideration when preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Plan contains planning policies for:

- managing flood risk
- providing new infrastructure



Community Actions

The community actions for Infrastructure and Services involve the Town Council working with others to:

- mitigate flood risk and the surcharging of foul sewers.
- set up a flood alert system, to train flood wardens, to purchase relevant equipment and devise a flood emergency plan.
- find ways to reduce the amount of grass cuttings being washed into the highways drains as these provide all the surface water drainage in many of the estates in the town.
- encourage good practice in water and waste issues where problems are identified.
- promote the work of charity service providers within Watton. Where appropriate, it will seek to work with and support charities which provide local services that contribute to the well-being of Watton residents.
- improve existing play areas, encourage the provision of new play areas and to work with the Trustees of the Wayland Academy to improve the site bordering Thetford Road.
- work with the Watton Medical Practice and its Patient Participation Group to ensure that all funds available from planning obligations are accessed and that services not provided by GPs are well publicised and available to patients of the Practice.
- support charitable efforts to provide support for the residents of Watton where a deficit of provision is identified and it falls under the remit of the Town Council.
- work with the relevant agencies to see if additional health and wellbeing provision can be established.
- meet local need to establish a new cemetery located within 5 miles of the town.

Development Design

Objectives

- Ensure that new development respects the local character and scale, historic and natural assets of the surrounding area, and takes every opportunity, through design and materials, to reinforce and enhance the distinctiveness of Watton and a strong sense of place.
- New development should be sympathetic to the existing form, scale and character of its location and be appropriate to its rural context. Development should respond to the character of both the built and natural environment. Materials and boundary treatments should be sympathetic to the character and landscape of the part of the Parish area in which they are proposed.

The design of any new development can have a lasting impact on the surrounding areas as well as those that live in or use what is built. We want future new development to be designed to the highest quality as well as limiting the impact of the proposal on the environment. Sustainable development aims to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and in the future. The principles of sustainable development should form the basis for individual decisions which people take regularly about where to live, work, shop, where to travel, how to dispose of waste, how to use energy and other natural resources efficiently.

There are certain broad requirements which all development should meet if it is to be acceptable in the relationship between the natural environment and built development, reflecting;

- the typical patterns of built form that contribute positively to local character;
- the street pattern, their proportions and landscape features;
- the proportions of buildings framing spaces and streets;
- the local vernacular, other architecture and architectural features that contribute to local character.

The Plan contains planning policies for:

- the design and impact of all new development
- the design and provision of outdoor space for new housing development

Community Actions

The community actions for Development Design matters involve the Town Council working with others to:

- ensure the density of residential and commercial development respects the gradual increase in density associated with the setting of Watton as a rural town on all approaches.
- see if the desires of the community for a retail centre, a Country Park, Centralised Health and Wellbeing Centre can be met.
- pursue remedial action or enforcement for all development considered not to comply with Local District and Neighbourhood Plan objectives and planning conditions.
- highlight the Breckland District Council the relevant planning policies and relevant material considerations when considering planning applications..

Housing

Objectives

- To ensure any new housing is available, appropriate and accessible to people of all ages and circumstances in order to maintain a balanced and diverse population.

Breckland's Local Plan makes provision for new housing development to meet the Town's needs up to 2036. Our consultation with residents carried out in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan identified that the following types of housing were needed in the Town:

- More starter homes
- Family Homes 1-3 bedroom
- Bungalows 1-3 bedroom
- Warden Assisted
- Retirement and Care homes

Across Breckland there is a need for three bedroomed dwellings, both in market housing and affordable housing schemes. Additionally, for affordable housing one third of the need is for two bedroomed homes.

It is recognised that the alteration of houses to flats and self-contained bedsitters can make a valuable contribution to our housing stock provided that public health standards are maintained, including the provision of amenities, means of escape in case of fire and intensity of occupation. However, over recent years, there have been instances where the conversion of residential properties to "Houses in Multiple Occupation" (HMO) has impacted adversely on the amenity of residents in surrounding properties.

The Plan contains planning policies covering:

- Housing mix (numbers of bedrooms)
- Houses in multiple occupation

Community Action

The community action for Housing involves the Town Council working with others to:

- work proactively with developers/builders of new sites to ensure that the types of housing needed for the Town are implemented.

Natural Environment

Objectives

- Minimise the impact of development on international, national and local natural environment designations.
- Seek, where appropriate, to deliver net biodiversity gains in new development proposals.
- Ensure access routes are created with and between new developments and improve the quality of access to and use of countryside route-ways for non-vehicle users, for both recreational and local travel opportunities.
- Ensure that existing green spaces are retained and their quality improved, and that sequences of green spaces are maintained to protect the visual amenity of all green spaces that contribute to the identity of the town.

The town is located in the vicinity of a number of international, national and locally important wildlife sites. Development will have to take account of these designations and make sure that we protect them from the adverse impacts of development.

Across the town there are also a range of locally important open spaces that are proposed for protection as Local Green Spaces. These are:

1. George Trollope Road
2. South of South Road
3. Merton Road crescent
4. Memorial Green, Memorial Way
5. Open space at Ventura House
6. Langmere Road
7. Stokes Avenue
8. Bridle Road
9. Heron Way
10. Youth and Community Centre
11. Between Queensway and Edinburgh Close
12. Jubilee Road

13. Allotment Gardens off Thetford Road
14. Play area, Bowes Close
15. Open Spaces, Bowes Close/Byfords Way
16. Balancing pond, Byfords Way
17. Vicarage Walk / Chestnut Road
18. Whitebeam Crescent
19. Dye Road
20. Lovell Gardens Play Area
21. Lovell Gardens Open Space
22. Lovell Gardens Amenity Spaces
23. Akrotiri Square Amenity Space
24. Shire Horse Way / Horse Shoe Close Amenity Spaces
25. Harvest Road / Blenheim Way Open Space
26. Badger Drive Open Space
27. Wheatcroft Drive Open Space
28. Cemetery
29. Allotments
30. Loch Neaton
31. Field Maple Road
32. Church Walk

The Plan contains planning policies covering:

- The designation of Local Green Spaces
- The future delivery of a Country Park

Community Actions

The community actions for the Natural Environment involve the Town Council working with others to:

- improve and maintain the quality of pedestrian and cycle route-ways through and around Watton.
- have existing green spaces protected in the Adopted Local Plan by an addendum to the Plan.
- enhance relevant land/premises.
- encourage the creation of access routes linking new development with existing routes around the town expressly for pedestrian and cycle use.
- encourage the provision and improvement of links to the countryside surrounding the town expressly for pedestrian and cycle routes.
- seek improved and consistent signage of local character to encourage the use of non-vehicle route ways to access facilities and services within the town.
- actively seek opportunities to preserve existing tree cover and work to increase the green canopy throughout the administrative boundary in order to improve the visual appearance of the town, the environment in general, its flood resilience and its biodiversity. The planting of trees of varying species will be encouraged in appropriate locations on both public and private land.
- work with partner agencies to establish the residents desire for a country park.

Town Centre and the Economy

Objectives

- Preserve the Market Town character of Watton, including the spatial balance between the rural and built environment, historical assets and Town Centre whilst improving design based on surrounding character.
- To support opportunities for expansion and growth of existing Watton businesses in precision engineering (metals, wood and plastics); food processing, packaging and delivery; agri-technology and farming, retail, traditional foundry and stone masons; tourism and the hospitality industry
- To attract and encourage new business in line with key investment opportunities (New Anglia LEP Economic Plan; Cambridge-Norwich Tech Corridor (CNTC)) particularly agri-technology and food processing, and digital and creative media
- To encourage and support all appropriate new and existing opportunities for business and employment in the parish arising out of development along the designated A47 and A11 corridors

The Town Centre

So that Watton can be in a position to manage the impact of change and to seek opportunities for the improvement of the Town Centre, two separate reports were commissioned as part of the Neighbourhood Plan preparation process, both funded by the Government Neighbourhood Plan support programme. The first looked at the Market and its operating conditions concluding that the preferred option would be to relocate it to Middle Street and Old Dereham Road. The second provided detailed design guidance for the High Street against which future planning applications will be considered.

The Plan contains planning policies for:

- Design of new development in the Town Centre

Jobs

The Local Plan identifies three "General Employment Areas" in the town, namely Norwich Road Industrial Estate, Breckland Business Park and adjoining properties north of Norwich Road, and Cranswick Country Foods. In addition, the Threxton Road Industrial Estate adjoins the Parish. Policy EC 03 of the Local Plan guides what type of development will be accepted on them. Outside the General Employment Areas, proposals for business and employment uses will have to have regard to the potential impact of the proposal on its surroundings and the amenity of existing residents in the area.

Community Actions

The community actions for the Town Centre and for Jobs involve the Town Council working with others to:

- maintain and enhance the shopping and retail experience in the High Street, the development and growth of the Wednesday Market.

- encourage and promote the provision of business opportunities within the town. It recognises the importance of existing businesses in the areas of in precision engineering (metals, wood and plastics); food processing, packaging and delivery; agri-technology and farming, retail, traditional foundry and stone masons; tourism and the hospitality industry.
- support strategies designed to maximise opportunities that attract and encourage new businesses in line with identified key investment strategies, at present these are agri-technology, food processing and digital and creative media. These have been identified within the new Anglia LEP economic plan and the Cambridge – Norwich Tech Corridor (CNTC).
- promote the provision and development of youth oriented social facilities an upgrade of existing buildings or new build. The design of new provision will include access to physical and e-sports activities, space for youth-oriented clubs, societies, training and skills development in innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly relating to digital and creative media.
- establish safe places for the Youth of the Town to socialise.
- support the Wayland Chamber of Commerce and the Wayland Partnership in its work with the Delivery Board of the Cambridge/Norwich Tech Corridor.
- support and encourage the development of opportunities to enable residents to maximise their employment potential.
- support and encourage the provision and development of youth orientated facilities aimed at improving the educational and employment opportunities of young people, including the obtaining of recognised practical qualification.

Built Heritage

Objectives

- To protect and enhance the historic assets of the Town and take every opportunity, through design and materials, to reinforce and enhance the distinctiveness of Watton.
- To promote the Character of Watton as an Historic market Town.

Listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments are collectively known as "heritage assets" and are protected from development harm by Government legislation. The preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan has identified a number of buildings and structures in the town that are of local significance. These buildings and structures form part of our heritage which is viewed as an essential part of the Town's character and distinctiveness. These include:

The National School
Loch Neaton
Queen's Hall
Site of the Old Cattle Market
Old Brewery
The Alms Houses
The Old Infant School, Church Walk
Disraeli House
Burleigh House
108 Dereham Road (from 1470)

4 Merton Road (Suffolk Pink House)
85 and 87 Dereham Road (Railway Heritage)
15 Church Road (Railway Heritage)
Former RAF Officers Mess (Ventura House)

The Plan contains planning policies for:

- the retention and protection of local heritage assets and buildings of local significance



Community Actions

The community actions for the Built Heritage involve the Town Council working with others to:

- pursue the registration of non-designated heritage assets that are of local significance as Local Heritage Assets with the District Council so that they are recognised as Local Heritage assets.
- maintain and enhance the quality and appearance of buildings on the High Street.
- request or, where necessary, enforce compliance with appropriate regulations relating to High Street design/building infringements.
- promote the heritage and historic assets of the Town.
- seek and provide, where appropriate, improved signage of local character within the town

Transport and Travel

Objectives

- Reduce the impact of vehicular traffic flows throughout the town.
- It is important that the increased provision of non-vehicle travel options is supported throughout the town.
- To encourage increased provision of non-car travel options in and around the parish including cycle paths and secure cycle racks.

The Neighbourhood Plan is limited on what it can do to improve travel and our roads as most projects are within the highway and do not require planning permission.

Community Actions

The community actions for Transport and Travel will involve the Town Council working with others to:

- reduce the impact of vehicular traffic flows throughout the town. This will initially concentrate on peak periods and the impact of large vehicles.
- in the long term, support the introduction of traffic management systems that balance residents and business needs and improve all aspects of the environment.
- seek to influence opportunities to improve public transport.
- improve and increase pedestrian and cycle access around the town linking residential and commercial areas away from the main traffic routes.
- preserve and improve transport links to and from key employment, commercial, recreational, amenity and residential areas.

Community and Social Facilities

Objectives

- To encourage, support and promote initiatives aimed at improving health, well-being and social cohesion within our community; particularly those which make best use of our current amenities, public spaces and recreational facilities.
- Look to provide facilities and services that promote and provide for the health, physical and mental wellbeing of the community.
- To publicise information in relation to events and services within the town.
- To work towards a more sustainable future.

The Town is well placed to provide for most day-to-day facilities which are required by residents and businesses. However, demands change and decisions made by external bodies and operators can have a direct impact on both the quality and level of services.

Community Actions

The community actions for Community and Social Facilities will involve the Town Council working with others to:

- support existing activities such as the Park Run and provide new opportunities aimed at the general physical health and mental wellbeing of residents.
- ensure residents know what medical services and facilities are available.
- promote facilities and services provided at the Community Centre by the Charlotte Harvey Trust and its partners and establish a community hub for all ages and sectors of the community.
- provide a live "What's on in Watton" notice board with all forthcoming activities and events advertised.
- improve the dissemination of information regarding clubs, facilities and services within the town by making better use of digital media platforms and improving its own website and continuing to support the provision of Wayland Chamber of Commerce's resident's information book.
- expand facilities for recycling, the reduction of waste and the reuse of goods and materials

How to view the full Neighbourhood Plan and comment

The full version of the Plan is available to download at <https://www.wattontowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/> where an online comments form will also be available to complete.

If you don't have access to the internet, paper copies will be available to view at the Town Council Office and The Library where there will also be collection boxes for written comments.

Opening times

Town Council Office: Monday to Friday 9.00am to 1.00pm

Watton Library:

Monday: 10am-1pm and 2-5pm; Wednesday: 10am-1pm and 2-6pm;

Thursday: 10am-1pm and 2-5pm; Saturday: 10am-2pm

Full versions will also be available to borrow by appointment from the Town Council at Wayland Hall, Middle Street

How to comment

During the consultation period the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Town Council website will have an online survey form which you can complete.

The above venues and contacts will also have printed response forms which you can complete and leave in the post boxes provided or post back to the Town Council.

We want your comments, even if you support everything in the Plan.

**COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY FRIDAY 8 APRIL
WE CANNOT ACCEPT COMMENTS AFTER THIS TIME.**

