

8. Flood Risk

Aim: to contribute to the well-being of the Parish by seeking to address the current shortfall in Flood Prevention Measures; and to work constructively with local planning authorities to pre-empt the future effects of climate change and ensure that any development proposals are sustainable, have no adverse effect on potential flood risk and will contribute to existing and necessary future infrastructures.

Background

8.1 The landscape and topography of the land comprising and surrounding Wymondley Parish was sculpted and formulated by the advance and retreat of some twenty or so Ice Ages during the Pleistocene Era.

8.2 Since then, of course, there have been interventions and changes wrought by man. For example, the construction of the London to Scotland railway; the Great North Road; its conversion to the A1(M) and, latterly, the A602 Wymondley Bypass have all crossed or used the Wymondley Valley - in some cases altering the topography of the area through their construction.

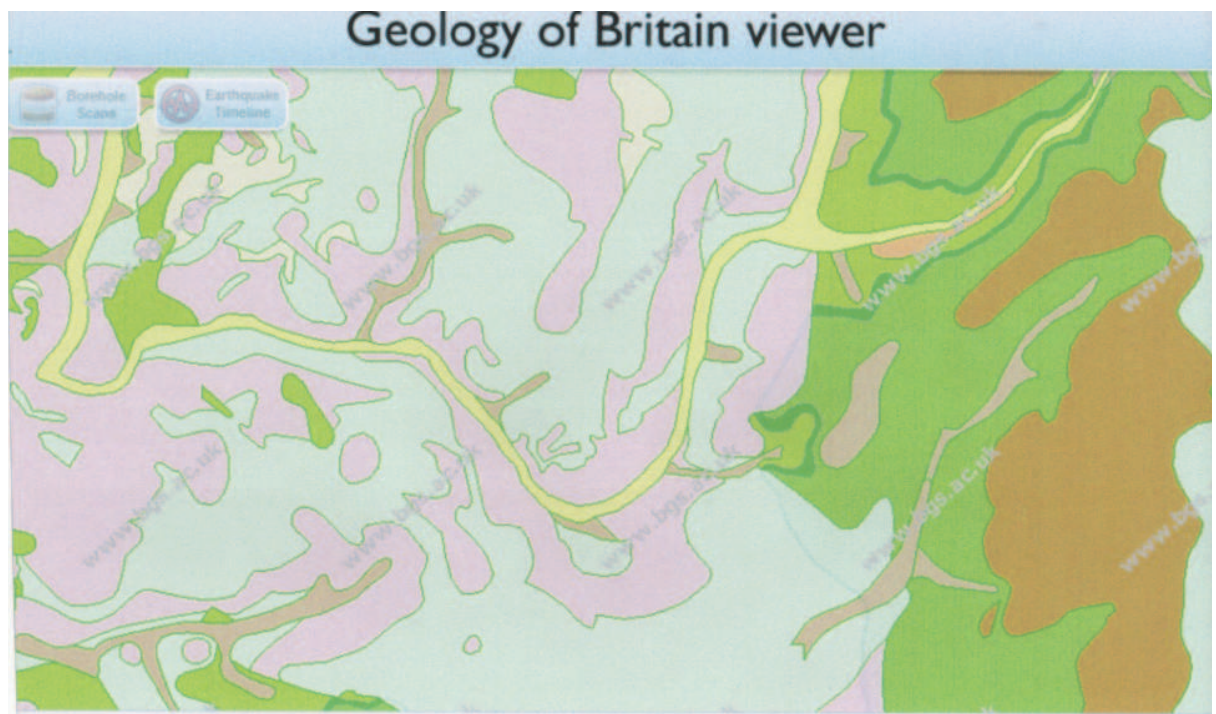
8.3 Wymondley Parish is essentially an old river valley, with Little Wymondley occupying the lower portion of the valley. Great Wymondley lies to the north, on slightly higher ground, and the hamlets of Todds Green, Titmore Green and Redcoats Green are to the south – again, on slightly higher ground.

8.4 The geological map below, (and the Environment Agency flood map of the same area which accompanies it), show the surface geology of the area and illustrate the flood route. The areas shown in yellow on the geological map, (which are Glaciofluvial deposits of mid Pleistocene sands and gravels), follow the course of Ash Brook from Graveley, through Corey's Mill and Little Wymondley, to join further tributaries of the River Purwell at Ninesprings.

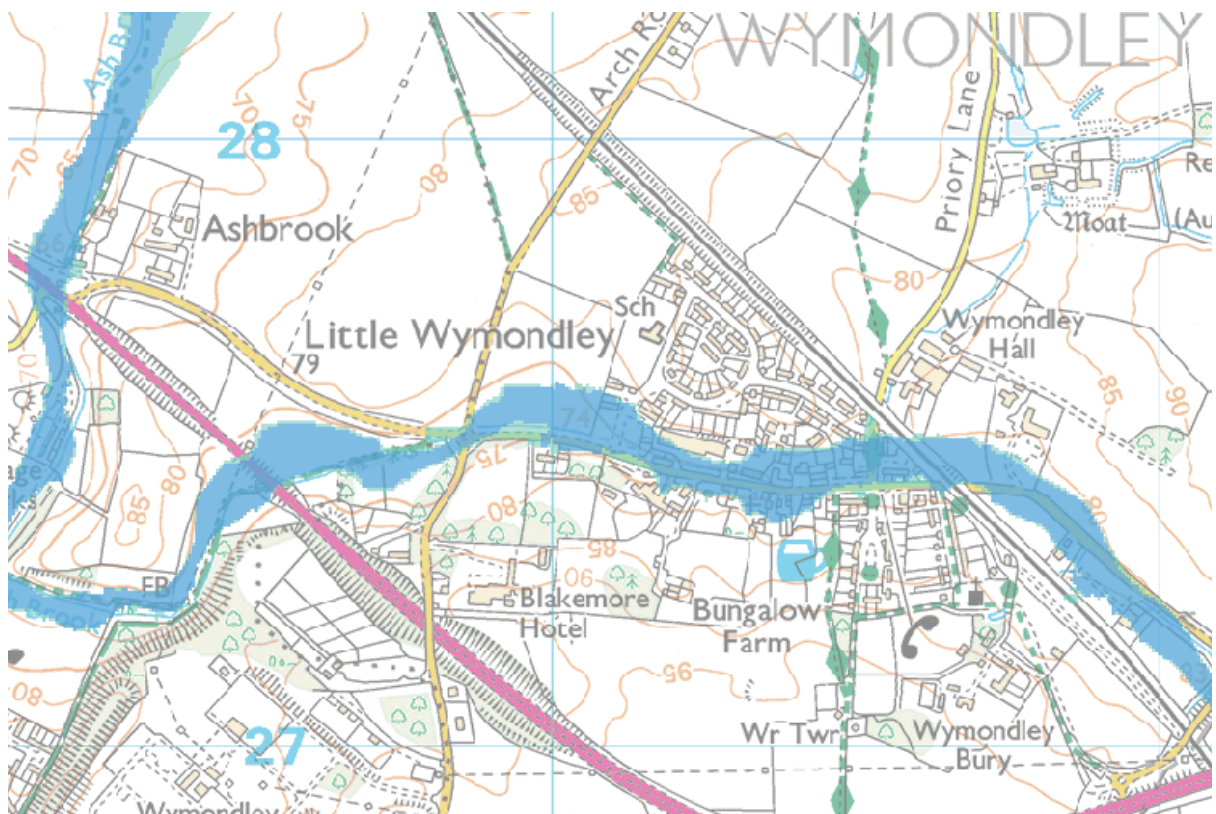
8.5 The photographs which follow the maps show examples of flooding in Little Wymondley.

Issues

8.6 Over recent years, (most notably in February 2014 and on 8 March 2016), the risk of flooding in Little Wymondley has become increasingly apparent - with greater disruption caused to properties in 2014 than in past years. The floods followed exactly the path of Ash Brook - and demonstrated the effects both of intervention by man, and the lack of maintenance of existing flood control measures during times of spate.



Wymondley geological map



Wymondley flood map



Siccut Road, near Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley 1968



Priory Lane, Little Wymondley 1968, looking up the Lane



Priory Lane, Little Wymondley 1968, near the Plume of Feathers, looking towards Stevenage Road and Tower Close



Priory Lane, Little Wymondley 2014, the same location 46 years later

8.7 As a consequence of the 2014 flood, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) commissioned a report into it. On 22 October 2015 it presented its findings to residents, business owners and other interested parties at a public meeting at Wymondley JMI School.

8.8 Opinions voiced there, and in response to our Parish survey carried out in July 2015, left stakeholders in no doubt as to the impact of the 2014 flood, and the level of importance parishioners attach to alleviating the flood risk; improving and properly maintaining the current Parish infrastructure; and ensuring that the consequences of any future development are properly and realistically assessed and accounted for in any such proposals.

8.9 The HCC Flood Investigation Report on the Little Wymondley flood and the associated Flood Alleviation Feasibility Study on Little Wymondley, undertaken for HCC by McCloy Consulting Ltd are attached as pdf documents and available online at: www.wymondley.org They clearly illustrate the inadequacies of the current installed system and its state of repair, notwithstanding that they failed to take into account the run-off from the southern side of the valley.

8.11 It can readily be seen that developments that could increase the strain on an already damaged, (and demonstrably inadequate), existing system should be implemented with no increase in risk or, preferably, reduce the existing problem.

Socio-economic impact

8.12 72% of survey respondents had concerns about flooding in the Parish, wanting to see improvements to flood risk management and drainage. Unsurprising, given the physical, emotional and economic impact of your home or business being subject to flooding; or affected by flooding to neighbouring roads and land, and related loss of access; or loss of telecommunications. Insurance cover, loss of revenue, additional costs and inconvenience come hand in hand with flooding risk. (The Plume of Feathers P.H. in Little Wymondley, for example, was flooded in 2014 causing £40,000 worth of damage, and cannot now obtain insurance.)



Flooding along Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley, February 2014



Little Wymondley Flooding, 9 March 2016 - Arch Road/Stevenage Road Junction

8.13 Horse riding is a very popular activity in the area, with a number of equestrian businesses in the Parish - as well as privately owned horses. Consequently, horse grazing fields are a common feature of our parish landscape, and flooding is a serious issue for them - not only in terms of loss of grazing, (and the resulting increased cost of providing replacement feed and bedding), but also in relation to access to, and condition of, fields and bridleways.

8.14 There is an economic impact, for example the knock-on effect on customers of increased livery and lesson prices, and inability to access stables etc, which may lead to loss of business – particularly in relation to businesses located near Priory Lane or Stevenage Road in Little Wymondley. It could also be argued that disabled riders might be disproportionately affected, as the Stevenage Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) uses Courtlands Riding Stables' ponies on a weekly basis. The Stables is situated off Chantry Lane in Todds Green, with fields adjacent to the Stevenage Road in Little Wymondley, which are prone to flooding.



Priory Lane, at the Junction with Stevenage Road, February 2014

8.15 As well as the domestic and business disadvantages of flooding, there are also repercussions for recreational activities in the Parish. Construction of the Multiple Use Games Area (MUGA) on the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields in Little Wymondley, for example, has exacerbated the pre-existing problems with flooding there - resulting in complaints about waterlogged and unplayable football pitches (and associated revenue and other consequences); and flooding on the MUGA itself on occasions.

8.16 Given the size of the MUGA, we can only wonder what the potential flooding impact would be of a large-scale housing development in the immediate vicinity, such as that proposed by NHDC and known as WY1¹⁶; or of proposals for an industrial estate on a flood plain adjacent to

¹⁶[http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/sheet a - hitchin leetchworth and baldock.pdf](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/sheet_a_-_hitchin_leetchworth_and_baldock.pdf)

the village, as proposed by Stevenage Borough Council in its draft Local Plan.¹⁷ We raised our concerns when the proposals were first mooted, and our discussions with the relevant authorities are ongoing.

8.17 Our petanque teams are similarly concerned about flooding, particularly in relation to the Little Wymondley pistes. If the pistes flood, (as they have done in the past), it has a detrimental effect on players' ability to participate in both social and league matches – and ultimately on individual/team performance and success.

8.18 As the premier stakeholder in this matter of flood risk evaluation for Wymondley Parish, our Neighbourhood Plan is intended to assist in developing sustainable and justifiable plans which could impact upon the flood risk to Wymondley. The well-being of our community is our primary consideration, and we would be failing in the stated aims of this Plan if we did not seek to address local concerns and remedy the situation. Our flood risk policies reflect this:

Policy FR1: We will rigorously pursue the need for implementation (and regular maintenance) of satisfactory Flood Prevention Measures in the Parish, particularly in relation to Little Wymondley.

Policy FR2: We will continue to work with HCC to develop a SWMP for the Parish. We view this as particularly important, given the absence of a SUDS policy in relation to Stevenage Road in Little Wymondley, notwithstanding the fact that it follows the natural contour of an Ice Age river bed.

Policy FR3: We will work constructively with local planning authorities, flood authorities, and other stakeholders, to ensure that any development proposals are sustainable and address local concerns regarding exacerbation of flood risk.

Policy FR4: We will robustly oppose any proposed development that fails to address the required infrastructure implementation needed to mitigate and reduce flood risk to our community.

8.19 When considering development in an area such as Wymondley Parish, where the flood risk is high and there are major implications for residents and business arising from inadequate drainage and other Flood Prevention Measures, we believe it is essential that proposals comprehensively assess issues such as water run-off down roadways – and include adequate provision for their management and control.

8.20 There is currently no legislative requirement in England and Wales for designers and planners to consider, in an urban context, the interaction between drainage and roads – and ensure that adequate measures are taken to protect roads' structural integrity and address related issues. In Scotland, however, regulators, enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders have seen the light and through partnership working have produced practical guidance on the application of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)¹⁸ to road design – a key factor in achieving sustainable long-term environmental and social improvements.

¹⁷<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/149690/planning-policy/90175/154858/>

¹⁸<http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/assets/business/files/connections%20documents/june%202015%20uploads/20100805sudsforroadsfinal.pdf>

8.21 When taken as part of a holistic flood risk and water management process, incorporating Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRAs)¹⁹ and Surface Water Management Plans (SWMPs)²⁰, SUDS help create a vital tool for local organisations to develop a shared understanding of, and ability to manage, local flood risk. This includes setting out priorities for action, maintenance needs and links into Local Development Frameworks and Emergency Plans.

8.22 Annex 5 provides a brief explanation of the critical relationship between rainfall, surface water flooding and drainage – and the need for joined-up working by stakeholders to properly assess and manage flood risk. More comprehensive information is contained in the DCLG Planning Guidance on SFRAs, the DEFRA technical guidance on SWMPs, and the Scottish guidance on SUDs. (See footnotes below.)

Policy FR5: We believe an integrated, risk-based approach to flood risk management is the way forward, and strongly support the inclusion of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) in any development proposal. We will work positively with local authorities and other stakeholders to ensure they are fully considered from the design stage onwards; and that development proposals include (and implement) measures to satisfactorily address issues highlighted in SFRAs and SWMPs.

8.23 Until now, it has been demonstrably apparent that our planning system has stratified responsibilities to such an extent that project planners are absolved of any responsibility to address infrastructure problems and costs arising from implementation of their plans. We are hopeful that the recently introduced concept of “locality”, (which allows communities and people most affected by planning and development decisions to have their say at Neighbourhood Plan level), will ensure that, from the beginning, adequate infrastructures are discussed, planned and implemented.

¹⁹<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change/strategic-flood-risk-assessment/>

²⁰https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69342/pb13546-swmp-guidance-100319.pdf

9. Green Infrastructure and Spaces

Aim: to contribute to the health and well-being of our Parish, by ensuring community access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation - including consideration of Local Green Space designation; and by seeking to ensure that any proposed development within, (or impacting on), the Parish or its green infrastructure is consistent with national Green Belt policy.

Background

9.1 The NPPF defines “Green infrastructure” as “a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities”.

9.2 Our natural and historic environments, their role in our green infrastructure, and the value they have to our community are a key factor in our efforts to ensure sustainable development within our parish and neighbouring areas. In a rural environment such as ours, there is a clear understanding of the need for careful management and best use of our local resources, to sustain the benefits we gain from them for ourselves and others; and to conserve the natural and historic environments of our parish – together with its character.

9.3 In a broader context, we recognise the importance of green infrastructure in reducing carbon footprints, for example through access for individuals and businesses to locally grown produce from our allotments and farms; and in actively encouraging sustainable forms of transport between urban and rural areas, such as walking, cycling and horse-riding. These issues, plus associated influences such as flood and traffic management are key considerations in the future development of Wymondley Parish, and are covered in various sections of this Plan.

9.4 Issues relating to application of the Government’s Green Belt policy in and near our Parish warrant special consideration, and are therefore covered separately in Section 7.

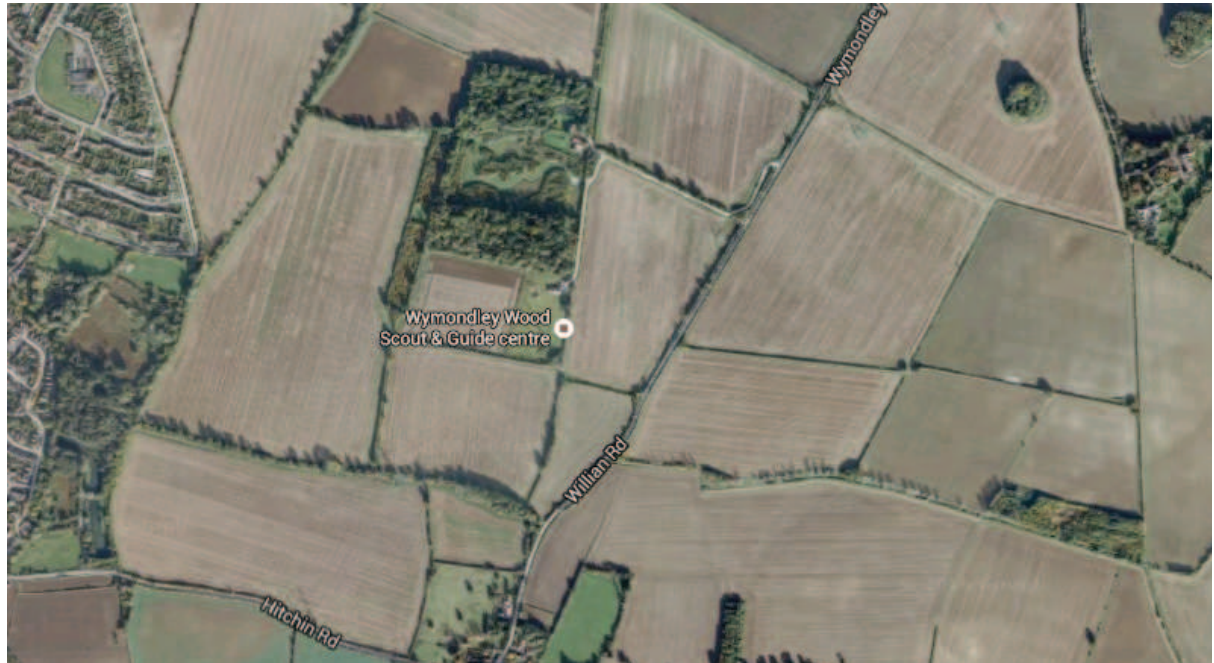
9.5 As a rural parish Wymondley is blessed with a considerable range of green spaces, all of which are greatly valued and regularly used; and which offer parishioners and visitors the opportunity to carry out a variety of different recreational activities. (Further details of recreational activities and their impact on community cohesion and well-being are contained in Section 15.) Details of our green spaces (and related issues) are set out below:

Policy GIS1: We will conserve and, (where possible), enhance our green spaces for their positive impact on the health, quality of life and social cohesion of our current community and future generations.

Wymondley Parish Green Spaces

9.6 As mentioned above, Wymondley Parish has a fairly wide variety of green spaces, some of which are protected from development by their current designation as common land, village green or playing field. Others, although equally beneficial to the health and social well-being of our community, have no such designation. The situation is as follows:

Wymondley Woods: was planted in two stages between 1997 and 2000, amidst mature woodlands. Consisting primarily of locally-grown oak and hornbeam, it was created as an educational resource for managed groups. It features a special nature conservation and field study area, adjacent to existing and newly planted forest environments which provide food and cover for a wide variety of wildlife all year round – in marked contrast to the surrounding arable fields. It forms part of the Garden City Greenway, which was funded (and is owned and managed) by the Heritage Foundation, to act as a permanent commemoration of Letchworth Garden City's first centenary in 2003.



Wymondley Woods and Scout Hut

Church Green, Great Wymondley: was granted to the Wymondley Parish Council (WPC) on 7 August 1968 by a Deed of Gift from the late Captain Wilshire, and is registered Common Land.



Church Green, Great Wymondley

Siccut Road Green, Little Wymondley: is divided by Siccut Road, but counts as one plot of land, not two. It was transferred from NHDC to WPC in November 2007, and has Village Green status.



Siccut Road Green, Little Wymondley

Recreation Ground, Graveley Road, Great Wymondley: conveyed from Miss Wilshire to the Parish Council on 1st February 1929, 'for the purpose of playing fields'. This land does not have Village Green status.



Recreation Ground, Gravely Road, Great Wymondley

Tower Close Green, Little Wymondley: which is on the left as you enter Tower Close from Stevenage Road, was transferred from North Herts District Council (NHDC) to WPC in November 2007, and has Village Green status.



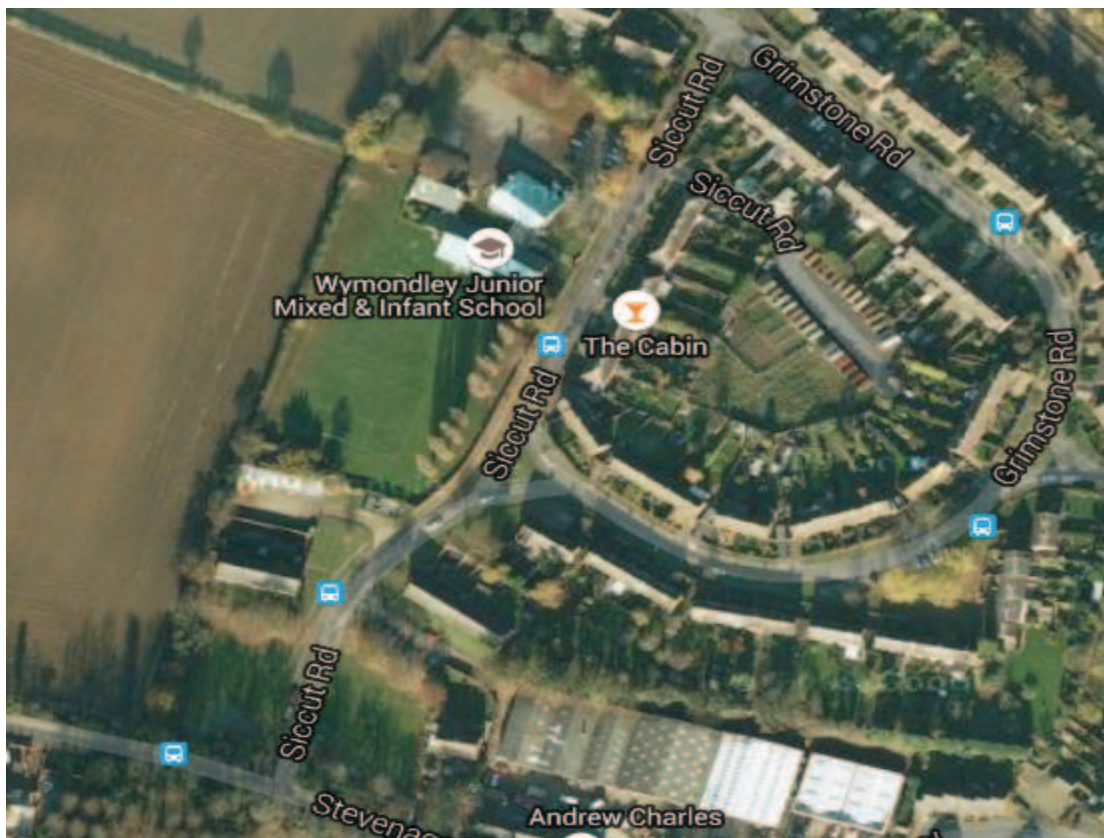
Tower Close Green, Little Wymondley

Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields, off Tower Close, Little Wymondley: has, since 29 September 1947, been leased by its custodial trustee Fields in Trust (formerly the National Playing Fields Association) to its managing trustee Wymondley Parish Council. The lease runs for 99 years, with an annual peppercorn rent of 2/6d, which is not demanded. In July 2012, the playing fields acquired Queen Elizabeth II Field status, as part of the Fields in Trust Challenge, which established a grass-roots legacy of protected land in connection with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and Olympic and Paralympic Games. Consequently, it is protected in perpetuity for use as a public playing field and recreation ground.



Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields, Little Wymondley

Green space (former allotments), Sicut Road, Little Wymondley: this land was transferred from NHDC to North Herts Homes (NHH) in 2003, and was used 'under licence' by WPC as allotments. This licence was cancelled in May 2012, as the plots were no longer being used.



Allotments, Sicut Road, Little Wymondley

Garden Plots (Allotments), Great Wymondley: this land was transferred from NHDC to NHH in 2003, and was used 'under licence' by WPC. However, since February 2011 the licence agreement has been a direct arrangement between WPC and the plot holders there.



Garden Plots (Allotments), Great Wymondley

Allotments, Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley: the history of these allotments is a little unclear, but they have been in existence for at least a century. They are on land which currently forms part of Wymondley Hall Farm, and leased by allotment holders who pay an annual rent directly to the landowner.



Allotments, Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley

Tower Close, Central Green, Little Wymondley: is a large, green space in the centre of the Close, populated by a number of large, native trees and planted with spring flowers. It is used on a daily basis as a recreational facility by village children and dog walkers, and if lost it would totally change the character of that part of the village. (A smaller area of grass at the end of the Close has already been designated as a village green.)



Tower Close Central Green, Little Wymondley

Designating Local Green Spaces (LGS)

9.7 As part of the neighbourhood planning process, the NPPF enables local communities to identify, (for special protection), green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space (LGS) local communities can rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Designation can only take place when a plan is being prepared or reviewed; and needs to be consistent with sustainable development and complement investment in homes, jobs and other essential services. It also needs to be capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period.

9.8 The NPPF makes it clear that designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open spaces, and sets out criteria for its use, namely:

- the green space should be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- the green area should be demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and
- the green area should be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

9.9 Local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with Green Belt policy.

Policy GIS2: we will apply to NHDC for Local Green Space designation in relation to green spaces within Wymondley Parish which are special to the local community; meet the relevant criteria, and which are not otherwise protected.

Issues

9.10 Our survey of Wymondley parishioners specifically asked about the type of improvements or measures they would like to see in the Parish. 57% of respondents indicated that they would like to see improvements/enhancements to the look and feel of the villages in the Parish. Aside from the primary concern that our Green Belt land should be protected from development, other key “green” issues in this connection were the need for better maintenance of trees, hedges, grass verges and pavements; and preservation of our green spaces.

9.11 Additionally, 58% of respondents indicated that they wished to have additional or improved recreation areas for the children of the Parish. (Further background on this and our related proposals are contained in Sections 15 and 16 of this Plan.)

9.12 It is clear from the responses to our survey of Wymondley parishioners, that our green spaces are seen as vital to the health and well-being of the Parish, as well as to its social cohesion. We believe that steps should be taken to protect those green spaces which are not already safeguarded for use by our community and future generations. We therefore propose to apply for LGS designation in relation to the following green spaces – all of which are within the community they serve; meet one or more of the criteria required to demonstrate they are special to the local community; and are non-extensive, self-contained tracts of land which are local in character:

- Recreation Ground, Graveley Road, Great Wymondley: on the basis that it was originally conveyed from Miss Wilshire to the Parish Council on 1st February 1929, ‘for the purpose of playing fields’; is adjacent to a historic conservation area and used by parishioners as a recreational facility. It therefore meets all three required criteria;
- Garden Plots, (Allotments) Great Wymondley: on the basis that this land has been in use as allotments for some considerable time and, as with the other Great Wymondley green spaces, it is adjacent to a historic conservation area and valuable to the health and well-being of parishioners who use it as a calm and relaxing recreational facility;

- Allotments, Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley: on the basis that this land has also been in use as allotments for some considerable time, i.e. at least a century. As with the Great Wymondley allotments, they are valuable to the health and well-being of parishioners who use them as a calm and relaxing recreational facility. It is also a haven for wildlife, including protected species such as polecats;
- Tower Close, Central Green, Little Wymondley: on the basis that it is an unfenced and easily accessible green space; used “*as of right*” without force, secrecy or permission; and without interruption for at least the last 20 years, (i.e. since the houses were built in 1921), for lawful sports and pastimes by village children and dog walkers. (Section 16 of this plan sets out our proposals to redesign adjacent lay-bys and reduce the top end of this green by a small amount, to provide some additional parking spaces, but this would not be detrimental to the overall appearance and use of the green space or its locality.); and
- Green space (Former allotments), Sicut Road, Little Wymondley: on the basis that it is located in a residential area of the community; has recreational value, (with potential to return it to its former use as allotments); and is not an extensive tract of land.

10. Transport Links

Aim: to promote, facilitate and encourage use of sustainable transport within the Parish; and work effectively with the Highways Agency, local authorities, landowners and other relevant stakeholders to support cyclists, pedestrians and other non-motorists in their use of “green” routes within the Parish.

Our transport challenge

10.1 As detailed in Sections 6 and 7 of this Plan, Wymondley Parish comprises five small settlements located within a rolling agricultural landscape, characterised by narrow, winding lanes and tall hedgerows. Its individual settlements lie within, or are surrounded by, Green Belt land which acts as a protection against urban sprawl from the neighbouring towns of Letchworth, Stevenage and Hitchin.

10.2 Its location and natural environment do not lend themselves to easy travel between the settlements, particularly for non-motorists, so getting around within the Parish is a challenge. This is likely to increase, given the ageing population of the area - and the fact that the Parish has not been planned as an area that people would live and work in, but one which they would commute to and from.

10.3 As a result, transport access via all modes is a major constraint to the growth of the economy and population of the Parish in the future, which could increase by around 1000 people if development proposals currently being mooted by NHDC²¹ and SBC proceed.²² Furthermore, development in or near the Parish, (whether domestic or industrial), is likely to add to existing traffic congestion and exacerbate related problems. (Section 11 on Traffic Management refers.)

10.4 Pressure to accommodate this growth also presents a challenge to protecting the existing natural, economic and social assets of the Parish. In rising to meet this challenge we have considered how we might make best use of the Parish's natural features to improve internal links between the settlements; as well as between the Parish and its neighbours. As part of this, we want to promote, facilitate and encourage more sustainable modes of transport; and greater use of “green” routes – thereby simultaneously supporting non-motoring residents, workers and visitors.

²¹ <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/local-plan-emerging-policy/draft-local-plan-2011-2031>

²² <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/149690/planning-policy/90175/>

Transport links in the Wymondley Area

10.5 Our parish survey identified transport links as an issue of concern, particularly in relation to the local bus service and the Parish road infrastructure. Improvements to the latter were demanded, to increase safety and improve access. Most people felt there were sufficient footpaths and bridleways, although concern was expressed about their maintenance and comments made about connectivity.

10.6 Our rural location means we require good and reliable transport links, to enable non-motoring parishioners to access services and facilities; and to encourage motorists to use alternative means of transport for business, domestic and recreational purposes.

10.7 Walking in more rural areas is more ubiquitous than in urban areas, and the benefits of walking and cycling are demonstrated within the Department for Transport's document "*Local Area Walking and Cycling Statistics 2013/14*" ²³

10.8 A network of public rights of way, including footpaths, green lanes, byways, white roads and bridleways crosses the Parish, connecting the settlements, and the A602 was designed to allow continuity of rights of way where paths have been crossed by it. These routes are frequently used by ramblers/hikers, dog-walkers, joggers, horse-riders and cyclists. In particular, two long distance pathways, i.e. the Hertfordshire Way and Gypsy Lane pass through the Parish – attracting locals and visitors alike.

10.9 Increased use of these environmentally-friendly routes, not only for recreational purposes, but for travel to work - and to link urban and rural parts of the Parish, can only benefit the community. Aside from improvements to users' health and well-being, through increased exercise and decreased stress, the potential knock-on effects of decreasing the number of motorists also benefit the rest of the community. Traffic, noise and pollution levels would be reduced, for example, thereby improving air-quality and road-safety. Easily accessible, safe transport routes between the urban and rural parts of the Parish would also generate more interaction between the settlements – leading to more community cohesion.

Policy TL1: We will support appropriate initiatives to maintain, extend, improve, promote or facilitate use of, these "green" transport routes; and make recommendations to Hertfordshire Highways, (and local landowners), with the intention of improving footpaths and bridleways to facilitate safe walking, riding and cycling within the Parish and reduce motoring, where possible.

Local bus services

10.10 Public transport links within the Parish serve the area well with regard to the two largest settlements. Regular connections between the two most popular destinations of Hitchin and Stevenage are frequently used, with the predominance of use being in Little Wymondley.

10.11 There are two bus routes serving the Parish, which connect Stevenage and Luton (Arriva UK Number 101); and Centrebus (Beds and Herts) Number 80, connecting Stevenage to

²³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/437001/local-area-walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2013-14.pdf

Hitchin. Both services operate a regular service, with buses approximately every hour during the day and more frequently at peak travel times.

10.12 As with most rural communities, the bus services provide a valuable link to towns (and amenities) further afield. As well as needing to be regular and reliable, the specific bus routes need to be sustained because without them, various sections of the Parish population are disadvantaged.

10.13 To our knowledge, there is no intention to reduce the bus services which serve the Parish, which is fortunate as older and/or non-motoring residents depend on the bus services to reach the local hospital and neighbouring towns. They rely heavily on buses as an alternative to costly services such as taxis - and utilise free bus passes where possible.

10.14 Section 12 of this Plan specifically mentions the need for a convenient and reliable bus service, and safe and well-maintained footpaths for school pupils to use. It particularly highlights health and safety issues arising in relation to junior school pupils, (and others), due to inadequate footpaths between Great and Little Wymondley; and near St Ippolyts School.

10.15 Wymondley JMI School is on (or near to) the Hitchin to Stevenage bus routes through Little Wymondley; and Graveley School is also on a bus route. There are also safety risks to pupils attending St Ippolyts and Kingshott Schools, as neither school is on a direct bus route and nearby roads are very busy. (Road traffic and parking issues relating to our Parish schools are covered in Sections 11 and 12.)

10.16 Aside from those attending junior schools which serve the Parish, many secondary school students from the Parish use public transport to get to and from Schools in Hitchin and Stevenage

Policy TL2: *We will support initiatives to increase provision of relevant local bus services, which would reduce the need for pupils to be driven to school or walk along unsafe footpaths; thereby also reducing traffic and benefiting the environment and Parish residents.*

Railways

10.17 There is no railway station in the Wymondley area. The nearest railway stations are situated in the larger towns of Stevenage and Hitchin - both of which are approximately 3 miles away. Both stations access the East Coast Main Line and direct routes to Cambridge and beyond.

Car and road Infrastructure

10.18 As for the rest of Hertfordshire, reliance on the car within the Parish is above national averages – and likely to increase with any new housing provision, unless public transport services can be improved.

10.19 Like most roads in the North Herts District, Wymondley Parish's road network, was not designed for the volume of traffic now using it. The current road network linking areas within the Parish provides sufficient capacity for regular use of traffic. However, our recent traffic study shows increased pressure on the network makes road use difficult for residents - particularly in

Great Wymondley, where there are considerable delays for residents' vehicles exiting their properties onto the carriageway, especially at peak times and there are also concerns relating to the corresponding levels of air pollution.

10.20 At peak times the network is characterised by congestion heading in several directions, mainly resulting from traffic trying to circumvent the A1(M) or A602 and using the Parish's narrow single carriageway roads as "rat-runs". This impedes accessibility within and between settlements, and causes a number of problems for residents and businesses, including detrimental effects on air quality to potentially dangerous levels.

10.21 Existing pinch points in Great and Little Wymondley are not adequate enough in reducing speed, which was another issue raised by our survey respondents. (See Section 11 on Traffic Management for further commentary on these and related issues including access, safety, air quality and noise.)

Pedestrian infrastructure

10.22 The route from Great Wymondley, along Hitchin Road to join Wymondley Road in Hitchin lacks a footpath (pavement), which makes it very dangerous for pedestrians, even with current traffic volumes. Similarly, there is no dedicated footpath between Little and Great Wymondley. The main footpath linking the two areas ends in both villages at the final properties exiting them. A public right of way exists, but this borders privately owned fields, involves traversing uneven ground - and so not particularly user-friendly in the dark or during bad weather. This situation increases safety risks for pedestrians, particularly children or those taking them to and from school in Little Wymondley. Other sections of the community may also be disadvantaged, for example those who, for various reasons, are less able to cross fields to make the journey between the settlements.

10.23 Similar safety issues arise in connection with pedestrians wishing to travel from Titmore Green to Little Wymondley, or cross the A602 or Corey's Mill roundabout; and responses to our parish survey included several demands for facilities such as subways or footbridges to minimise the risk.

10.24 The condition of existing pavements is inconsistent throughout the Parish, with some in a state of deterioration, and there were also calls for better and more regular maintenance of pedestrian walkways (and highways) generally – including weeding, clearing of drains/gutters, trimming of hedges and litter-picking etc.

Policy TL3: As part of our on-going liaison with the Highways Agency, local authorities and other relevant bodies, we will be proactive in ensuring necessary maintenance work is promptly and satisfactorily undertaken; and support appropriate initiatives to protect the safety of pedestrians within the Parish.

11. Traffic Management

Aim: *to work positively and collaboratively with local planning authorities to ensure that the traffic management needs of the Parish are met effectively; principally that there are sufficient measures available to identify, mitigate and resolve key issues relating to building developments.*

Background

11.1 As stated elsewhere in this Plan, Wymondley Parish is bordered by the towns of Stevenage, Hitchin and Letchworth. In 1992, the A602 Wymondley Bypass was constructed to allow traffic flow from Hitchin (and surrounding areas) to access the Corey's Mill roundabout at the A1(M), Junction 8 (J8), for onward travel south to London, or to Stevenage without passing through Little Wymondley.



A602 Wymondley Bypass towards Hitchin 07.55 a.m. – 1 March 2016

11.2 The main road through Little Wymondley, (Stevenage Road), leads from the A602 Wymondley Bypass at Ashbrook to the Corey's Mill roundabout, at which point a number of roads coincide, including the slip-roads from and to the A1(M), J8. On the outskirts of Little Wymondley it meets Arch Road and Blakemore End Road at a crossroads, (which is prone to flooding), and where there is a mini-roundabout.

11.3 The following photographs show the most recent episode of disruptive flooding at the roundabout, and the resulting tailback from it to Great Wymondley:



Blakemore End Road roundabout (at Arch Road and Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley) 9 March 2016



Arch Road flooding tailback from Great Wymondley to Little Wymondley - 9 March 2016

11.4 Empirical traffic flow evidence regarding “rat runs” in Wymondley Parish indicates that:

- traffic leaves the A1(M) at J9 (Letchworth Gate), travelling through Willian, Great Wymondley and Little Wymondley and onward, via the lanes and Codicote, to reach A1 (M), J6 (Welwyn);
- traffic from the Ninesprings area of Hitchin travels along Hitchin Road to the Green Man intersection at Great Wymondley, and continues through the village along Arch Road to Little Wymondley, where it joins Stevenage Road at its junction with Blakemore End Road; and
- from there, the rat-runs continue either left along Stevenage Road to Corey’s Mill and beyond; or straight across the crossroads and onward to Stevenage, via the hamlets of Redcoats, Titmore and Todds Green.

The issues

11.5 The A1(M) is clearly inadequate for the current volume of traffic using it, particularly at peak times. This fact has been recognised by HCC and other relevant authorities²⁴, (see Annex 6 and screen shot below), and is clearly highlighted by the resulting rat-runs created on the roads and lanes within Wymondley Parish by motorists trying to avoid the congestion.

Figure 3.2.2 Traffic Forecasts by District

Town	2021 (% increase from 2014)	2031 (% increase from 2014)
Great Britain	5.8%	13.0%
Eastern Region	7.2%	16.3%
Hertfordshire	6.2%	12.7%
Broxbourne	4.7%	9.6%
Dacorum	6.6%	13.8%
East Hertfordshire	3.5%	6.9%
Hertsmere	5.5%	11.9%
North Hertfordshire	6.8%	16.1%
St Albans	6.1%	12.2%
Stevenage	9.4%	19.0%
Three Rivers	5.3%	11.2%
Watford	6.9%	12.6%
Welwyn Hatfield	7.5%	15.1%

DfT - National Transport Model (NTM09) using TEMPro Version 6.2
Based on car driver trips for an average weekday

Figure 3.2.2 shows the latest predictions from the National Trip End Model (Tempro - dataset 6.2) and indicates that between 2014 and 2021 car traffic growth in Hertfordshire will increase at a faster rate than nationally, but thereafter will slow in Hertfordshire to become more in line with growth elsewhere.

There is considerable variation between districts in the predicted growth rates over the next twenty years. The main factor behind these growth rates are the proposed increases in the numbers of households and jobs in each of the districts in addition to continued increases in car ownership.

It should be noted that these projections are likely to change as district local plans are published.



11.6 Detrimental consequences of the inevitable, (at least) twice-daily tail-backs of traffic from Corey's Mill and rat-run usage include: increased noise, critically poor air quality and risk and inconvenience for parishioners experiencing difficulty in entering or leaving their driveways; crossing the road, or safely entering Corey's Mill roundabout itself.

11.7 Unsurprisingly, traffic management was highlighted as a major issue in our parish survey – with 70% of respondents seeking improvements to it. Suggestions included traffic calming measures (such as increased speed restrictions on the Stevenage Road); safety measures such as traffic lights at the Stevenage Road junction with Corey's Mill; and pedestrian footbridges/underpasses in relation to the A602, Corey's Mill roundabout - and to link Titmore Green with Little Wymondley.

11.8 In the light of feedback from our parish survey, and to inform this Neighbourhood Plan, we undertook a series of ad hoc Traffic Surveys at points in the Parish known to have significant traffic issues. The photographs included in this Plan, together with the survey results shown at Annex 7, indicate the levels of traffic using parish roads to try to circumvent the inadequacy of both the A1(M) generally - and J8 in particular.

²⁴ www.hertsdirect.org/ttdr



A1 (M) South 08.09 a.m. – 1 March 2016



A1 (M) South 09.05 a.m. – 1 March 2016



A1 (M) South (from other side of the bridge) 09.05 a.m. - 1 March 2016

Safety issues

11.9 We have been informed that there is no prospect that the capacity of the A1(M) will be increased before 2031, save upgrading the motorway to smart status, whereby the hard shoulders of the motorway will be used as additional lanes. This being so, there will undoubtedly need to be better traffic control at the A1(M) J8 junction, to address not only congestion issues, but also related health and safety concerns.

11.10 Access onto the Corey's Mill roundabout from both Little Wymondley and Graveley is not currently traffic light controlled. Motorists accessing the roundabout from the preceding roads and traversing the traffic lights at amber, (and frequently at red), shorten the available time for egress from Little Wymondley and Graveley onto the roundabout.

Policy TM1: We support the need for safety cameras on the Corey's Mill traffic lights to deter "red light runners", thereby giving increased time and opportunity for motorists from Little Wymondley and Graveley to access the roundabout safely. We also support the need for traffic lights at those two junctions with the roundabout.

Traffic calming

11.11 Associated traffic noise reduces the appeal of the Parish for residents and visitors; and affects their quality of life. Accident and speeding incidents on the road network are a cause for concern amongst residents and businesses, and there is a need to improve the network at certain locations to address these issues.

11.12 Traffic calming can employ a variety of methods, depending on the desired outcome. Its main purpose is to reduce the flow of traffic which, in turn, has the desired effect of reducing speed. Both issues were identified by our survey as a concern of residents - who called for traffic calming measures, including speed restrictions on Stevenage Road in Little Wymondley.

11.13 All roads leading into Wymondley Parish are unrestricted single carriageway roads, which pose additional problems with speeding through the villages. There are several pinch points (build-outs) intended to reduce speed, located on Hitchin Road and Arch Road in Great Wymondley; and along the Stevenage Road in Little Wymondley. However, these pinch points are ineffective at reducing speed through both areas, as they do not restrict the flow of traffic in either direction effectively. (They can have the reverse effect, as oncoming vehicles often speed up to beat oncoming priority traffic.)

11.14 Changes in speed have been shown to bring about reductions in injury accident numbers. A good rule of thumb is that a 5% reduction in injury accidents can be expected to result from a 1 mph reduction in mean speed (Taylor et al, 2000).²⁵ The reduction varies according to road type, and is 6% for urban roads with low average speeds; 4% for medium-speed urban roads or lower-speed rural main roads; and 3% for higher-speed urban roads or rural main roads.

11.15 In some traffic-calmed areas, personal injury accidents have been reduced by 60–70% cent following speed reductions of about 9 mph. The proportion of accidents that are fatal or involve serious injury has also been reduced (Webster, 1993a; Webster & Mackie, 1996; Barker & Webster, 2003).²⁶

Policy TM2: We will work with the Highways Agency, HCC, local planning authorities and other stakeholders to ensure improved traffic calming measures are put in place, in line with Government guidance, specifically the Local Transport Note 01/07²⁷

Air Quality management

11.16 Local authorities have a duty to monitor the air quality in their district under the Environment Act 1995, because poor air quality has the potential to adversely affect public health.

11.17 Our congested local road network (the A1(M), the A602 and our local access roads) increases pollution due to idling traffic, which in turn can cause or exacerbate existing health issues for our parishioners. Elevated levels and/or long-term exposure to air pollution can lead to more serious symptoms and conditions affecting human health. This mainly affects the respiratory and inflammatory systems, but can also lead to more serious conditions such as heart disease and cancer. People with lung or heart conditions may be more susceptible to the effects of air pollution.

11.18 In March 2016, the BBC produced a news article highlighting that local authorities across the country are failing to meet the central government targets. Particular emphasis was placed on Hitchin, as being amongst the worst areas in the country.²⁸ (The charts below illustrate the position.)

²⁵ Taylor M C, Lynam D A and Baruya A (2000): *The effects of drivers' speed on the frequency of road accidents*. TRL Report 421. Transport Research Laboratory, Crowthorne.

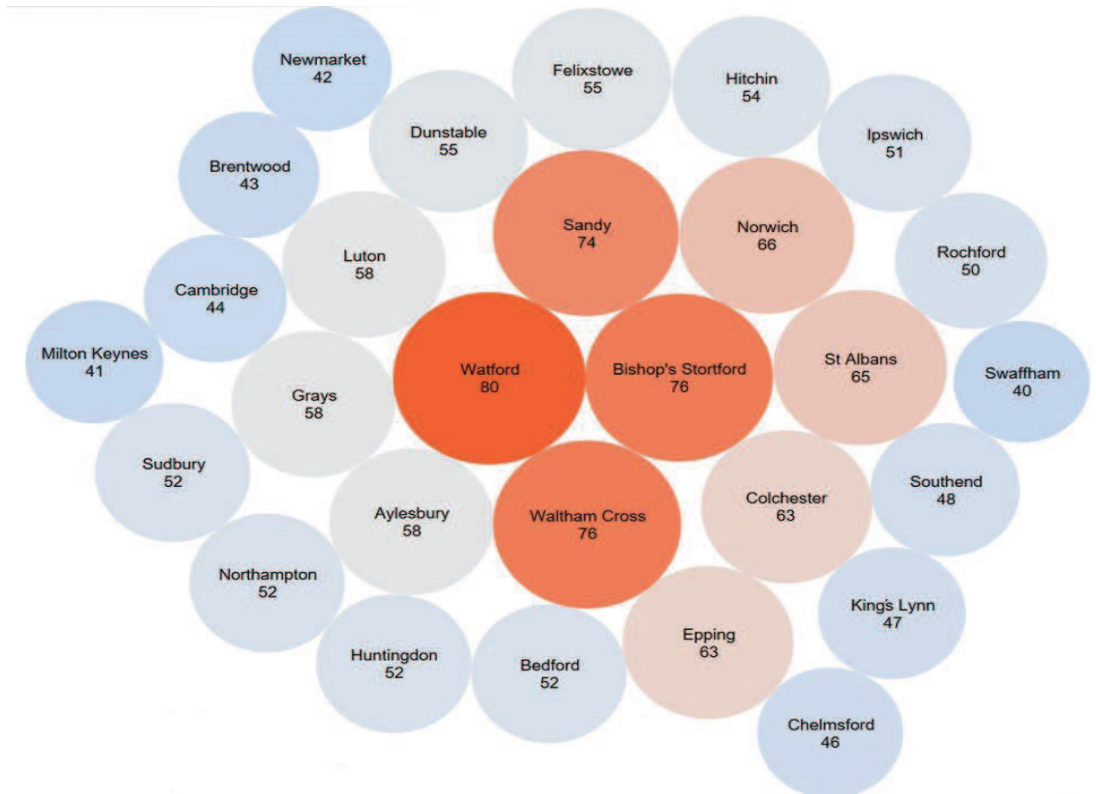
²⁶ Webster D C (1993a): *Road humps for controlling vehicle speeds*. TRL Project Report 18. Transport Research Laboratory, Crowthorne. Webster D C and Mackie A M (1996): *Review of traffic calming schemes in 20 mph zones*. TRL Report 215. Transport Research Laboratory, Crowthorne. Barker, Judith and Webster, David (2003). *The Safety Benefits of 20 mph Zones Located Outside London*. TRL Annual Research Review 2003

²⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/329454/ltn-1-07_Traffic-calming.pdf

²⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-35458600>

Air Quality

East England towns and cities that have illegal NO₂ levels



The highest nitrogen dioxide readings recorded at various towns and cities in the eastern region. The legal limit is 40 micrograms in each cubic metre of air

Illegally-high levels of nitrogen dioxide were recorded at more than 50 sites in the east of England, it has emerged. The legal annual mean limit is 40 micrograms of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) per cubic metre of air (µg/m³).

ClientEarth, a group of environmental lawyers, is planning High Court action against the government over illegally high readings. The government said it supported local authorities to tackle air quality.

NO₂ is released when fuels such as car diesel or in central heating boilers are burned. There is evidence high levels of NO₂ can inflame the lungs and cause long term health issues.

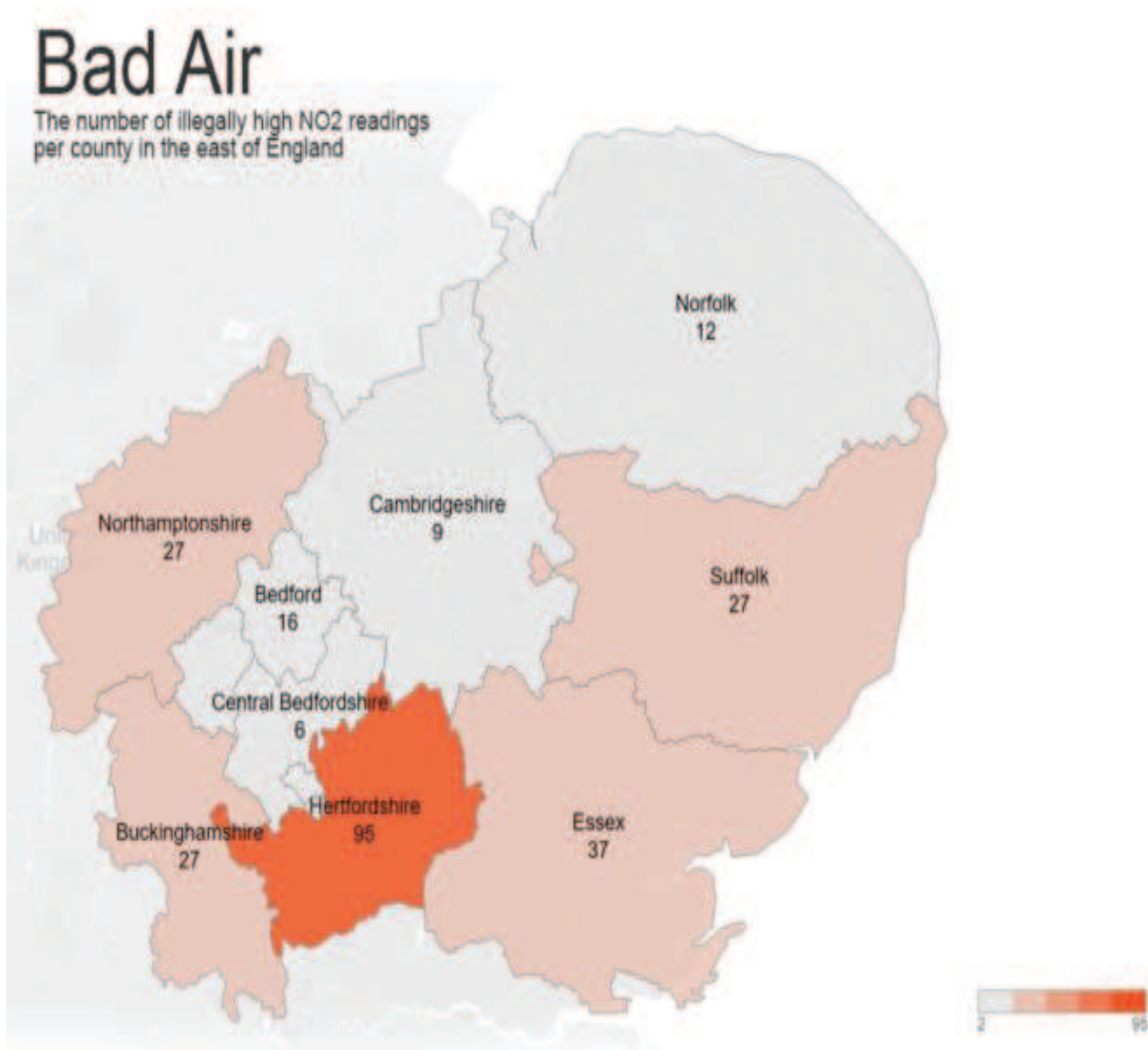


Image copyright Tableau Image caption the number of illegally high readings in the various counties of the east of England

The figures, although illegally high, are a far cry from some readings found in central London where the average annual level of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in Grosvenor Place, near the Queen's central London residence reached 152 µg/m³ in 2014.

Illegally high readings have also been frequently recorded in cities such as Leeds, Birmingham, Southampton and Derby

Alan Andrews, a lawyer with Client Earth, said they had been fighting a legal battle with the government for five years because "levels of air pollution in towns and cities across the UK are above legal levels".

'Create healthier air'

He said Client Earth was now planning High Court action against the government because its plans to deal with the problem were "just not good enough".

"Air pollution is one of the biggest public health issues we face as a society," he said.

"A plan which thinks it is okay for us to be breathing illegally high levels of pollution until 2020 to us isn't good enough and we're pretty confident judges looking at it will feel the same way."

A spokeswoman for the Department for Food and Rural Affairs, said: "Our plans clearly set out how we will improve the UK's air quality through a new programme of Clean Air Zones, which alongside national action and continued investment in clean technologies will create cleaner, healthier air.

11.19 Evidence gathered in a report published by NHDC identified congestion corridors that contribute heavily to Nitrogen Dioxide concentration levels. The report states: *"The main source of air pollution in the district is road traffic emissions from major roads notably the A1(M), A505 and A602. In terms of traffic congestion the most significant locations are associated with the A505 through Baldock and the A602 and A505 through Hitchin."* The area east of the Three Moorhens Roundabout, on the A602 Stevenage Road in Hitchin is a designated Air Quality Management Area, where regular air quality monitoring is undertaken. More information can be found in the NHDC report, which is available online at:

http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/USA_2015_North%20Hertfordshire%20final.pdf

There is a concern that the Parish of Wymondley currently has dangerous levels of NO₂ and CO₂, which need to be monitored at peak hours. Any development which adds traffic to the parish has the potential to cause rises in levels of NO₂ and CO₂ to illegal and health-damaging levels.

Policy TM3: We will press for air quality monitoring on all congested local roads at peak hours, and additional safety measures, in relation to the Corey's Mill roundabout and other key traffic "hot-spots" identified as being of concern to residents.

Parking issues

11.20 Due to the nature of the Parish being primarily residential there are no specific car parks for public use. Residential parking takes place on the already congested local roads or on off-street parking spaces on private property. 72% of parish survey respondents wanted improvements to traffic management, including issues such as parking facilities.

11.21 As highlighted in Section 12 of this Plan, there are clear concerns about the traffic and parking situation around Wymondley JMI School creating hazardous situations for pedestrians and vehicles, particularly at times when parents park outside the school when dropping off or collecting children. Such situations are well documented nationally as being dangerous to children, parents and residents in the school vicinity.

11.22 The road directly outside the School is already designated as a "No Parking" zone between the hours of 08.00 and 17.00 hours; and the entrance to the School is marked with yellow "Keep Clear" road markings which have little or no effect. With few alternatives for parents dropping off children by car, either on the way to work or travelling in from outside the Parish, control methods must be enforced or alternatives sought to prevent accidents from occurring.

11.23 Proposals for new housing development in the Parish could have a significant impact not only in terms of increased volume of traffic, but on the need for adequate parking provision. Depending on location, there may be specific implications, not least for parking and traffic

management in the vicinity of Wymondley JMI. (Further consideration of these issues is given in Section 16 of this Plan.)

11.24 Provision of car parking in shared courts on new developments is generally unpopular with residents, who want their vehicles to be easily accessible, visible and less vulnerable to crime. Sufficient spaces for residents' vehicles and visitor spaces are also deemed necessary, to avoid conflict over spaces and other parking difficulties.

11.25 Accessibility into new developments also needs to be properly considered. It is often overlooked, with roads being too narrow to accommodate parking for residents' vehicles and the need for service vehicle access, such as refuse and recycling collections, emergency services etc.

Policy TM4: *We will work to identify and implement appropriate solutions to local parking problems*

The way forward

11.26 Wymondley Parish residents have a right to expect the quiet enjoyment of their environment, and this remains a prime requisite of the Neighbourhood Plan. Our traffic management policies aim to help achieve this, together with a quieter, safer and healthier Parish.

Policy TM5: *We will study closely any development proposals, impacting on the Parish, to ensure that road infrastructure issues have been properly considered and addressed from project concept to implementation; and where insufficient account has been taken to mitigate the effects of increased traffic we will object accordingly.*