

12. Education

Aim: *to work positively and collaboratively with local planning authorities to help ensure that the educational needs of the Parish are met, principally that there are sufficient school places available to meet its needs; and to identify and resolve key issues relating to developments intended to create, expand or alter our schools – or impacting on existing schools.*

Background

12.1 One of the key principles underpinning our Neighbourhood Plan is that the children of the Parish represent the future of our community. It follows that their educational, health and social needs are of prime concern to us, and at the heart of our planning deliberations. The practical impact of any proposed developments within, or adjacent to the Parish, on those needs must be identified and closely examined if our children are to have a sustainable future within our community.

12.2 Wymondley Parish is currently served by four nearby junior schools, three of which are in neighbouring parishes. Children from our parish would be able to attend any of these schools subject, of course, to space requirements and other relevant criteria such as its Published Admission Number (PAN), i.e. the number of pupils in each year group that the admission authority has agreed will be admitted without causing problems for the school. These schools are:

A **Wymondley Junior Mixed and Infant (JMI) School**, situated in Sicut Road, Little Wymondley, Hitchin, SG4 7HN is our parish school: It is a mixed, all-ability school, currently with 109 pupils from 4 to 11 years, grouped according to age. It has a PAN of 15 children per year group, and is currently running at almost full capacity, so would be unable to accommodate a significant increase in demand for places – a fact which has already been recognised by NHDC. The school is situated in spacious grounds surrounded by hedges and trees. It has a large sports field, a hard play area, football, netball and rounders pitches; a nature reserve with a pond and a variety of gardens, including a set of raised beds where the children grow vegetables. Ofsted has recognised that *“pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in the school’s atmosphere of tolerance and harmony.”*

B **Graveley Primary School**, situated in Ashwell Common, Graveley, Hitchin, SG4 7LJ – is a small, 0.5 form entry village primary school, sited in our neighbouring small residential parish of Graveley. It has been at the heart of the community since 1874, and focuses on academic, moral, social and spiritual development of its pupils. It is currently operating at full capacity, with 110 pupils from 4 to 11 years, grouped according to age, with a PAN of 16 children per year group. Its catchment area has extended recently beyond Graveley village into the local area, including Great Ashby and Stevenage and its Old Town.

C **St Ippolyts Church of England Aided Primary School**, situated in Ashbrook Lane, Mill End, Hitchin, SG4 7PB – in St Ippolyts Parish: Founded in 1847, St Ippolyts Primary is a Voluntary Aided Church of England School enjoying strong links with St Ippolyts Church and within the Diocese of St Albans. Its principal aim is to provide the best possible education for each individual child, underpinned by Christian Values. It operates on the basis that each child

is unique, and seeks to provide academic, emotional, social and spiritual support for each one, working in partnership with parents and families. It wants its pupils to be spirited individuals who embrace challenge, think creatively, value achievement and strive to be the best they can be. Each pupil is encouraged to contribute actively to its community and to support others. The school currently has 153 pupils, from 5 to 11 years - grouped according to age, with a PAN of 20 children per year group. Its catchment area is essentially the St Ippolyts Parish boundary, although children from outside the Parish can attend. It is currently operating at full capacity and unable to admit any more children.

D Kingshott School, Stevenage Road, St Ippolyts, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 7JX - a private preparatory school in St Ippolyts Parish: Kingshott School was founded in 1931, initially as a small boarding school for boys in Oakfield House - a country house built in 1859. (It is believed that the school's name derives from King Henry VIII, as the area was part of his hunting ground.) In 1964 the last boarders left; and the first girls arrived in 1983. The school has expanded steadily over the years, and is now a thriving preparatory school with 408 pupils, which offers admission to any child from age 3 to 13 who the Headmaster believes will have a happy and fulfilling time at the school and therefore benefit from the type of education offered. The furthest south is currently Welwyn and furthest north is Ashwell, but pupils are mainly from Hitchin, Letchworth and Stevenage. Consequently, although outside our Parish, it is possible for children from the Parish to attend; and it currently has scope to take more children.

12.3 Attendance at these schools is determined by a series of admission rules applied by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)²⁹. Applications at Wymondley JMI School are all processed by the HCC Admissions Team. Children are submitted at the beginning of the school year in which they are five.

12.4 The Parish does not have any nursery or secondary school facilities within walking distance. In this instance we have concentrated above on the schools close by, which do not truly reflect the needs of the Parish, or parishioners who are dependent upon school facilities available in local towns accessed by road.

The issues

12.5 A key issue for Wymondley Parish is undoubtedly the extent to which any future development will affect our children's ability to attend their parish school (or the nearby ones). Questions arise not only in terms of whether there will be sufficient places to meet demand, but whether children will be able to get to and from school safely, without inconvenience, and without greater risk to their health and safety from increased traffic or on-street parking – or from increased flood risk in the area.

12.6 Undeniably, major parking problems (and related traffic) issues already exist near our schools, principally arising from parents dropping-off and collecting children. (70% of our survey respondents indicated they wished to see general improvements to traffic management, i.e. vehicles, parking facilities etc.) Wymondley JMI School is not on the main road through the village, but there would undoubtedly be a knock-on effect if traffic volumes of through-traffic or on-street parking in the locality were increased. (Sections 11 and 16 of this Plan refer.)

²⁹ <http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/edlearn/admissions/links/admissionrules/>

12.7 Graveley School has an arrangement allowing parents to park in the car park of The Waggon and Horses P.H. opposite in the afternoons, as there is already insufficient parking space. St Ippolyts School has only six car parking spaces, which are insufficient for staff, let alone parents and visitors. Consequently, parking at peak times is such an issue that some parents arrive at the School an hour before they need to, in an attempt to obtain a parking space. Kingshott also has limited parking space in its grounds, so experiences similar parking and traffic problems. It is difficult to envisage how matters would be improved with any future increase in pupils.

12.8 Aside from those pupils who are driven to and from school, there are those who walk or use the local buses. It is vital for their health, safety and well-being that there is a convenient and reliable bus service; and safe and well-maintained footpaths for them to use en route to school. Such infrastructure and transport issues are covered generally in Section 10 of this Plan, but worthy of specific mention in relation to our schools, e.g. the lack of a complete footpath along the main road from Great Wymondley to Little Wymondley. This presents safety risks, particularly in the dark, and means some parents and children use cross-field footpaths to get safely to school – not always particularly practical in the winter months.

12.9 Wymondley JMI School is within walking distance for those pupils who live in Little Wymondley, (and possibly Great Wymondley, subject to the footpath issues mentioned above). It is also on (or near to) the Hitchin to Stevenage bus routes through Little Wymondley. Graveley School is similarly on a bus route.

12.10 Neither St Ippolyts nor Kingshott Schools are on a direct bus route, and the nearby roads are not child-friendly, so there are accompanying safety risks to pupils from both schools. The nearest bus route to St Ippolyts is on London Road, some 200 yards away; and Kingshott is on the A602, so most pupils arrive by car, although some walk. The pathways near St Ippolyts are not deemed wide enough for safe usage, thus presenting risks to safety to those using them. Any increased volumes of traffic resulting from development of the surrounding area are unlikely to improve matters.

12.11 Our recent enquiries indicate that the schools do not currently have direct problems with flooding.

12.12 The educational needs of the Parish must be met, and future needs will necessitate expansion or alteration of our existing schools, or creation of new schools to cope with an increased population. To aid learning, it is vital that our school buildings are conveniently located, (to reduce travel and the effects of it); are suitably equipped with modern technology; and provide healthy and environmentally friendly surroundings to support pupils' mental and physical well-being.

12.13 At the present time, no new schools are planned to open in North and East Herts in 2016 and 2017.³⁰ Recent enquiries of the four schools mentioned above indicate that consideration has not yet been given to expansion on current sites to accommodate any future demand arising from future development.

12.14 As stated at paragraph 12.2A above, Wymondley JMI School is the only school falling within our parish – and therefore the only one falling within the scope of our Neighbourhood

³⁰<http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/edlearn/admissions/links/admissionrules/Admarr1617/newschools/>

Plan. An Ofsted inspection of the School was carried out on the 29th and 30th November 2012 and the previously “Satisfactory” report was raised to “Good” during this inspection. It is also important to note that, in relation to “behaviour and safety of pupils” this school was found to be “Outstanding”. It would be a concern of the school governors and management team, (as well as of parents), that any form of expansion may create pressures affecting standards.

12.15 Operating almost at full capacity, and at the limit for its current buildings, there is no doubt that any expansion to the population of the Parish – in particular the villages of Little and Great Wymondley would require investment in the School.

12.16 HCC has already recognised that the number of additional local infant and junior age children that could potentially reside in NHDC’s proposed WY1 development south of Little Wymondley could not be accommodated at the village school.³¹ Furthermore, Wymondley JMI School does not have existing development potential unless additional land is acquired or detached playing fields can be identified. Potentially, the School would need to be relocated – which would raise other issues for the Parish children.

12.17 Related issues arise in relation to secondary school children, whose ability to attend schools in Hitchin would seemingly be dependent on successful development expansion in South West Hitchin and the creation of two new secondary schools, as existing Hitchin schools would not have sufficient capacity to accommodate them.

12.18 Increased need for youth and library facilities would also need to be taken into account, and any significant residential development within the Parish is likely to generate an increase for additional services.

12.19 Other sections of this Plan provide more detailed coverage of our conclusions on issues highlighted here. In summary, our policies in relation to the impact of housing development on our children and their education are:

Policy E1: We will continue to work with authorities involved in local education and planning, to ensure that our children’s educational needs are catered for in terms of sufficient school places and Information Technology infrastructure; and that they are not adversely affected by any future development activities.

Policy E2: As part of this process we will seek to ensure that all key issues are taken into consideration, not only in our Neighbourhood Plan, but in neighbouring and cross-boundary plans and development proposals.

Policy E3: We will carefully consider, (in tandem with others), any knock-on effects of development on our children’s health, e.g. through greater emissions and reduced air quality due to increased traffic; and on their ability to continue to use existing recreational facilities – particularly those involving enjoyment of designated Green Spaces and Green Belt.

³¹http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/34_wymondley_ho_reps_as_at_28062013-3.pdf

13. Telecommunications and Broadband

Aim: *to ensure the Parish has a high quality communications infrastructure, through ongoing liaison with relevant telecommunications and broadband providers.*

Introduction

13.1 For individuals and businesses alike, communication is one of the most important aspects of day-to-day life, and global adoption of telecommunications technology has impacted tremendously on society – influencing the way we live our life and conduct our business.

13.2 Long distance communication has been around for centuries, but we have moved on considerably from the eras of smoke signals, the telegraph and telephoning via a cable laid beneath the ocean. Satellite technology has released communications from the wired format, and Wi-Fi and 4G technologies are commonplace everywhere in the western world.

13.3 With the help of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) it is now possible to conduct virtually every aspect of business and domestic life from home. We depend routinely on e-mail, Internet, mobile phones and voice-mail access and, in some cases, functionality allowing remote control of home appliances. For most people, therefore, reliable and effective telephone and broadband services are an essential part of life. In relation to broadband, speed is of particular importance.

13.4 Broadband is inextricably linked to the emergence of greater Internet functionality, so its availability (or the lack of it), is a major factor in our ability to develop our local and national economy; to communicate with friends, family and business associates; and to seek and obtain information to educate ourselves

13.5 The advantages of a high-quality broadband service are many and varied:

- Support home working;
- improve access to Public Sector services
- support online learning and access to Cloud based facilities
- help us to stay in touch and maintain independence;
- support simultaneous use of smart phones, tablets, PC's and TV's;
- enable streaming of films and TV shows in seconds; and
- enable online games play.

Telecommunication and Broadband provision for Wymondley Parish

13.6 Wymondley Parish is served by two Telephone exchanges: Stevenage (01438) and Hitchin (01462). By following this link, <http://www.connectedcounties.org/home> and entering their postcode, residents can establish if fibre broadband is currently available to their property - and then make the necessary arrangements with their service provider to get connected.

13.7 As things stand at the moment, telecommunications and broadband services in the Parish fall somewhat short of state of the art. Cable TV is unavailable, and access to broadband Wi-Fi

services is therefore dependent on telephone landlines. Service outage difficulties often arise, due to flood damage to the BT lines, and there are also mobile phone signal problems, so telecommunications can be a somewhat haphazard affair.

13.8 Whilst the overall delivery is considered to be patchy throughout the Parish, many properties can currently receive high-speed fibre broadband of 75.28 Mbps. However, there is general dissatisfaction with the telecommunications and broadband services, which was demonstrated by 66% of our survey respondents indicating that they would like to see improvements to the telecommunications network, principally to achieve faster broadband – which would make it easier to gain the advantages listed at paragraph 13.5 above.

Future telecommunication and broadband service improvements

13.9 There are several telecommunication companies based in Hertfordshire that advertise an ability to provide fast speed Broadband services to Wymondley Parish. Residents believe that provision of their communication services can be further improved and, to this end, the WPNPF has established that responsibility for ensuring such improvements currently rests with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

13.10 Adapting and improving Telecommunication facilities across Hertfordshire is an obvious means of establishing and maintaining the area's sustainable growth. Wymondley Parish wishes to benefit from such improvements, so that our local businesses, as well as local residents, are able to use them to their own advantage.

13.11 Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), which is part of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, is responsible for delivering superfast broadband and better mobile connectivity to the nation. In Hertfordshire the Connected Counties programme is targeted with making fibre broadband available to over 90% of homes and businesses in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire by April 2016 – which equates to approximately 734,500 premises in total, (682,000 from BT's commercial deployments and 52,500 as a result of the Connected Counties programme).

13.12 The programme is being funded jointly by Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire County Councils, the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) for each county, BT and BDUK. Of the total contract valued at £18m, HCC has invested £5.08m. Herts LEP has invested £0.5m -to bring superfast broadband to key Business Parks (i.e. Maylands, Centennial and Gunners Wood).

13.13 The programme aims to ensure that everyone in the two counties has access to a minimum of 2 Mbps broadband speeds (i.e. fast enough to watch BBC iPlayer). Herts LEP advises that 98% Broadband coverage is intended by 2018 and that many rural areas already receive the service following roll-out of a previous similar Government scheme.

Importance of Telecommunication and Broadband for Little Wymondley

13.14 An area can have many advantages and an excellent environment, but cannot be considered well developed until, and unless, the operability of its telecommunications is also excellent. This is particularly important in a rural community, to facilitate access to services which are not directly available in the neighbourhood, for example healthcare, supermarkets, retail outlets etc.; and also to maintain contact with friends and family who may live further afield.

13.15 A fast, efficient and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic and social development, as well as impacting on public safety, education, social cohesion and health care. Without it certain sections of the community, for example those who are unable to drive, have a disability, or are elderly or less mobile, may be disproportionately affected; and residents who work from home, and businesses in the Parish may be similarly disadvantaged .

13.16 We currently have a vibrant and cohesive local community in the Parish, and wish to sustain this for the future. To help us achieve this, and to improve quality of life and advancement of our neighbourhood, improvements must be made to the standard, extent and efficiency of our communications infrastructure.

Policy TB1: *We will work closely with the Herts LEP, local telecommunications, companies and other stakeholders, to highlight the Parish's communications infrastructure requirements and ensure that necessary service improvements are made.*

14. Supporting Local Business and Employment

Aim: to encourage rural economic growth and employment, through support of business expansion and development which is appropriate and in keeping with the Parish's intrinsic character and environment.

Introduction

14.1 Located between the triangle of three large towns, (Stevenage, Letchworth and Hitchin), Wymondley Parish provides a unique and idyllic setting for numerous residential and commercial businesses. It combines easy access to and from arterial routes with the benefits of working in a rural village setting.

Business diversity

14.2 The Parish is populated with businesses which are diverse in nature. Similarly, the proportion of those people who are economically active and work from home covers a varied cross-section of skill sets, with approximately 40 businesses active within the Parish.

14.3 The Office of National Statistics (ONS) reported that, in the 2011 Census, of the recorded 975 residents in our neighbourhood catchment area, 133 people were self-employed. That equates to 13.6% of the total residents.

14.4 Whilst resident businesses provide employment in areas such as those set out below, they rarely employ large numbers of local residents and we seek to encourage this where we can:

- Farming
- Landscaping
- Arboriculture
- National grid
- Petro chemical
- Leisure and hospitality
- Nursing Home
- Used car Sales
- Wedding Venues (including churches)
- Equestrian

14.5 A harmonious balance presently exists between achieving economic prosperity for our resident businesses and preserving the rural character of our villages, and it is imperative to the community that this is maintained. The impact of any physical expansion of business premises is therefore a key factor in our consideration of any development proposals.

The hub of our community

14.6 Wymondley Parish has several public houses providing food, local ales and a meeting point for customers from near and far. Little Wymondley has the benefit of the newly opened Needham House Hotel, a facility which provides fine dining, accommodation and a new conference centre - to name but a few of its services. Similar facilities can also be found elsewhere, for example at Redcoats Farmhouse Hotel and Wymondley Priory Barn.

14.7 In more rural areas, when stand-alone post offices and village shops have become unviable, local pubs have often diversified to offer those additional services to the community. Many years ago, in recognition of this and other benefits of wider involvement with the local community, Adnam's Brewery coined the phrase "*The Pub is the Hub*". As the pub industry started to decline in popularity, the idea was that public houses became the "Hub" of the community – acting as a meeting place where people of all ages and abilities could enjoy a variety of refreshments, engage in recreational activities and share their experiences. This informal social and business networking has a positive impact not only on the publican's business, but also generates business (and other) opportunities for local tradesmen and residents, and is beneficial to the community's general well-being and socio-economic health.

14.8 We are fortunate that our parish hostelries play an active part in community life, not only as described above, but through charitable fund raising and practical support of village Fun Days etc. (Recent fund-raising examples are the acquisition of a defibrillator, (currently kept at the Plume of Feathers in Little Wymondley), and a CPR training pack for Wymondley JMI School.) We do indeed view our public houses as the hub of our community, and regard their continued existence as an important influence on the quality of life in a rural parish – from both a social and economic perspective.

Keeping Businesses local

14.9 In recent years, consumers have increasingly been encouraged to move away from large, impersonal "big-box" retailers, to support smaller and more local businesses in their own towns and villages. Such businesses include local farmers, craftsmen, mobile grocers, fish mongers and other product providers, with items made and produced locally and sold on a small scale.

14.10 By supporting our local businesses, both within the Parish and in neighbouring towns, we enjoy a number of direct and indirect benefits such as greater confidence in the origins and quality of the products; smaller carbon footprint; and an improved local economy, leading to increased local investment and better facilities. There are also other tangible benefits to be gained. Aside from convenience, availability of unique products unavailable in larger chain-stores, and the satisfaction of indirectly helping to make our communities better places in which to live, we can benefit from:

- Improved health: through access to fresh, locally-sourced, organic and free-range produce. (Such produce also benefits the environment, live-stock and natural flora and fauna);
- Improved local economy: as significantly more locally-spent money stays in the community. Local business owners often have incentive to support other local

businesses, for both business and personal reasons, whereas chains tend to have corporate suppliers and less opportunity (or interest) in buying locally;

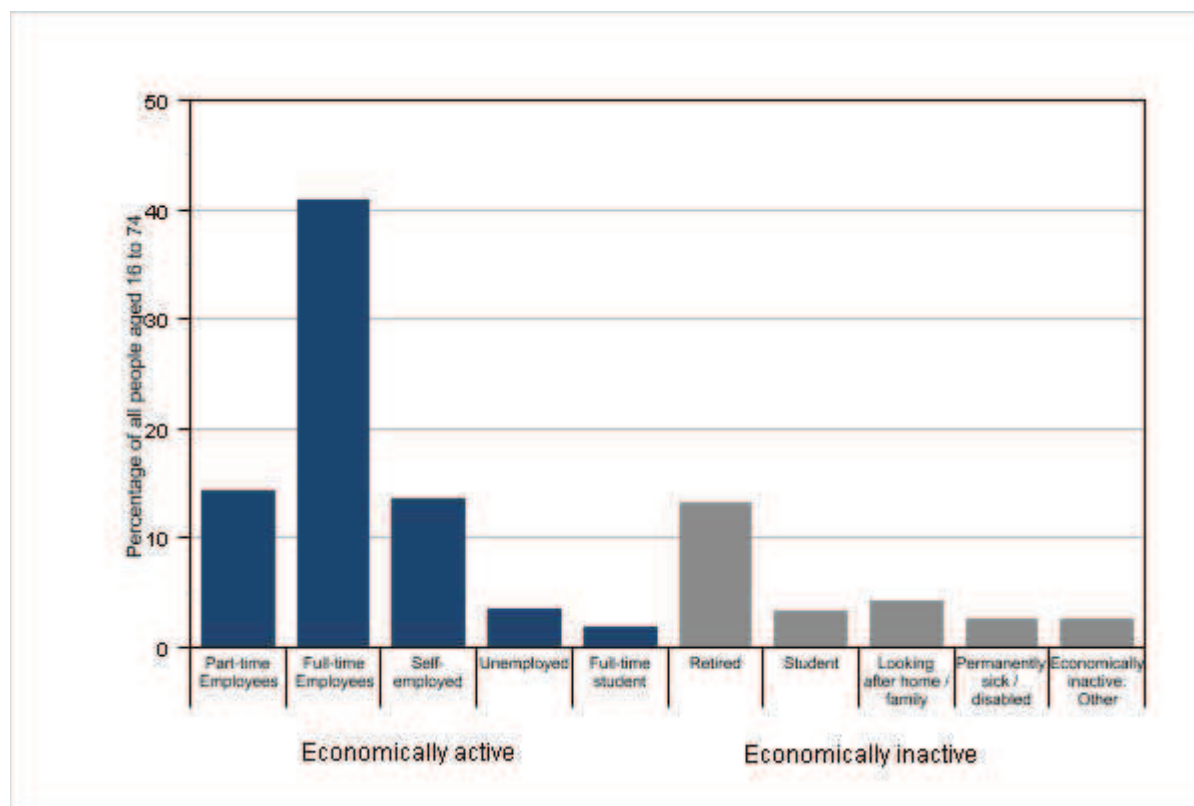
- Familiarity breeding content, (as opposed to contempt): as local business owners and staff are generally part of the community and therefore often keener to provide a better, more personalised service and quickly resolve any issues. Personally knowing who you are dealing with creates connections and personal investment, resulting in supplier and consumer being prepared to go that extra mile (literally) to keep their customers satisfied or support a particular business;
- Sustaining the unique character of our community: because local businesses help give a community its individual flavour and contribute to its character. Most towns across the UK have similar chain restaurants, grocery and department stores and are suffering an identity crisis. By supporting our unique local businesses instead of national chains we help to ensure that the individuality of our community's character is sustained; so
- Use it or lose it: for the reasons given above, the community genuinely cares when a local business does well, and mourns its loss; and such businesses often contribute to the life of the community through donations, sponsorship and involvement. In more rural areas, local businesses can be a vital part of life, but they need to be supported to survive.

14.11 As well as the types of resident businesses mentioned at paragraph 14.4 above, a good network of self-employed tradesmen exists within the Parish; and we are fortunate that neighbouring towns such as Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Stevenage provide us with a wide range of local shops and businesses, as well as national chain stores. Hitchin Market, for example, is well known throughout the county and well supported locally - as are the regular Farmers/Food Markets and local butchers and fishmongers, (including mobile businesses serving our Parish).

Employment in our parish

14.12 Wymondley Parish, as reported by the 2011 Census, provides statistical data regarding the type of employment held within our community³². (See graph below.)

Economic activity in your neighbourhood, March 2011



14.13 Small businesses can impact on the local community by employing local people in order to meet the market demand for goods and services; and this is certainly the case within our parish. Although 60% of employed parishioners hold senior and administrative jobs, there is also scope (particularly through local networking) for further such employment within the community and surrounding area, for example through contracting of self-employed workers.

14.14 New employment opportunities provide chances for previously unemployed or under-employed workers to increase take home pay and better meet their financial obligations. Increased employee earnings lead to a higher rate of consumer spending which, in turn, benefits other businesses which depend on consumer sales to stay open and pay vendors. A small business hiring additional employees can achieve these effects on a small scale and increase the money circulating in the marketplace, which leads to a healthier overall local economy and allows more businesses to thrive.

Summary

14.15 We believe that our community and businesses continuing to work together is key to the survival of the Parish in its current form.

³²<http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/NeighbourhoodProfile.do?a=7&b=6275182&c=SG4+7HY&g=6433884&i=1001x1012&j=6305522&m=1&p=1&q=1&r=0&s=1456211492206&enc=1&tab=4&inWales=false>

Policy SLBE1: *We will continue to support and seek to encourage the economic growth of our local businesses - particularly the public houses which form the hub of our community; our local farmers who manage and conserve our natural environment; and the hotels/wedding venues and other businesses which encourage visitors to the Parish, thereby boosting its economy.*

14.16 We must nevertheless bear in mind the intrinsic rural nature and historic character of the Parish, and the need to ensure that any physical expansion of those businesses does not detract from its key features and further urbanise it. (Issues relating to this are covered in more depth in Sections 6 and 7 of this Plan.)

Policy SLBE2: *We will work positively with local businesses, landowners and relevant planning authorities to ensure that any proposed business development within Wymondley Parish is appropriate in terms of location, scale and type; and is otherwise in keeping with the intrinsic character and environment of our parish. (In relation to business premises on the Elms Close industrial estate in Little Wymondley, for example, we would seek to limit any expansion on this site to within its current boundary.)*

Policy SLBE3: *We will carefully scrutinise any proposals for the development of additional industrial premises in, or directly adjacent to, the Parish (as put forward by Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), for example). Where there is evidence that such development would have a detrimental effect on existing parish businesses; be wholly inappropriate due to inconsistency with the look and feel of the area; or would exacerbate existing infrastructure problems (particularly in relation to flood risk and traffic management) we will oppose them.*

14.17 Due to the surrounding Green Belt, and the associated development prohibitions, there are no justifiable opportunities for development of additional business premises outside of Little Wymondley. With limited space within Little Wymondley, expansion of the Parish's existing businesses, (or development of additional businesses), would therefore necessitate a move to a larger or more suitable location within existing industrial sites in nearby towns, or consider alternatives.

Policy SLBE4: *Given the number of already vacant plots in Stevenage and Hitchin, we find further encroachment on our surrounding Green Belt, (through urban creep of commercial or domestic development from both towns), totally unacceptable and we oppose it.*

15. Social Cohesion and Well-being

Aim: to improve quality of life, social cohesion and well-being for our community, through positive action to retain local services and community amenities and, where suitable opportunities arise, improve them to meet parishioners' needs.

Introduction

15.1 The NPPF emphasises the role of neighbourhood planning in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities.³³ Section 8 of the NPPF, in particular, provides that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve places which promote opportunities for meetings between members of the community who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, including through strong neighbourhood centres which bring together those who work, live and play in the vicinity; and safe and accessible environments and developments which do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion – and which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.

15.2 The development of this Plan has been driven by the desire to enrich the overall quality of life and well-being of the people who live and work in Wymondley Parish; and of visitors. The policies it contains have therefore been developed with the overarching aim of protecting and enhancing the aspects of parish life which are fundamentally valuable to people, and addressing those which detrimentally affect their quality of life or threaten to undermine our community.

15.3 This particular section of the Plan covers some of the features of life in the Parish which encourage social cohesion, and what could be done in future to offer further opportunities for social interaction and to help create a healthy, inclusive community.

Improving health, well-being and social cohesion

15.4 Wymondley is a relatively small, but very busy, community whose members are involved in a varied mix of recreational activities and interests. As a rural Parish, we are fortunate to have easy access to the surrounding countryside, which enables parishioners and visitors alike to enjoy the benefits it brings in terms of associated leisure activities, not least their positive impact on fitness levels and well-being.

15.5 Field sports such as shooting and ferreting occur in and around the Parish and, (as mentioned in Section 6 of this Plan), our natural environment is also home to several rare and protected species of flora and fauna, which encourages more benevolent activities involving wildlife such as botany, bird watching and butterfly spotting. (Several parishioners are actively involved in the Herts Natural History Society and have recorded local sightings of protected species such as polecats, pipistrelle bats and red kites.)

15.6 The Parish chapel/churches actively encourage community interaction. In addition to their religious services, they offer a variety of secular opportunities for community engagement, such as plant sales, bring and buy events, bell-ringing, lunch, gardening and other clubs; and various

³³ <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/8-promoting-healthy-communities/>

meetings. There is also an annual Christmas Nativity Procession from Wymondley JMI School to St Mary the Virgin in Little Wymondley, via the Baptist Chapel, which incorporates carol singing at various points en route, a nativity scene at the Buck's Head, ending with a carol service at St Mary's.

15.7 As mentioned in Section 14 of this Plan, the public houses in the Parish, (most of which are dog-friendly), are the hub of our community and undoubtedly play a key role in encouraging community cohesion in a variety of ways.

15.8 Sporting activities are a key feature of life in the Parish, and Petanque is a sport which is very popular with all age groups. Our teams have been very successful at local and national level, and have produced international players. The Plume of Feathers in Little Wymondley actively supports three Petanque teams and the Parish's football team via sponsorship and post-match refreshments; together with a darts team. (A "Past v Present" charity football match is currently being planned.)

15.9 The Bucks Head hosts further Petanque teams; and is the regular venue for meetings of a number of motorcycle and classic car owners' clubs.

15.10 Aside from sport related activities, the public houses actively encourage and participate in community activities, both recreational and social, (as do the churches/chapel). They and the other dining establishments in the Parish offer a wide range of dining options, from bar snacks and set lunch menus to wild food gourmet nights.

15.11 There are regular beer festivals and themed nights throughout the year; and they also support local singers/bands, (and traditional entertainers such as Morris dancers), by regularly providing buskers' evenings, gigs and a warm welcome.

Policy SCW1: We will 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.

Retaining and improving local services and community amenities

15.12 The generous and welcoming community spirit within the Wymondley Parish is supported and nurtured by regular, on-going social and recreational activities, which are inclusive by nature to parishioners and visitors alike. These make full use of our existing parish amenities, which include allotments and other green spaces (see Section 9). Great Wymondley comprises a church, village hall, recreation field with children's play area and space for sports area; and the Green Man public house. In Little Wymondley there is a school, church, chapel, non-food shop, tennis courts, Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), recreation field, children's play area and two public houses – the Buck's Head and Plume of Feathers.

15.13 The following maps give an overview of the Parish settlements and an indication of their amenities:



Map of Great Wymondley, showing the Green Man P.H. (The village hall is on the left opposite the cottages. The recreation ground is in the top right hand corner.)

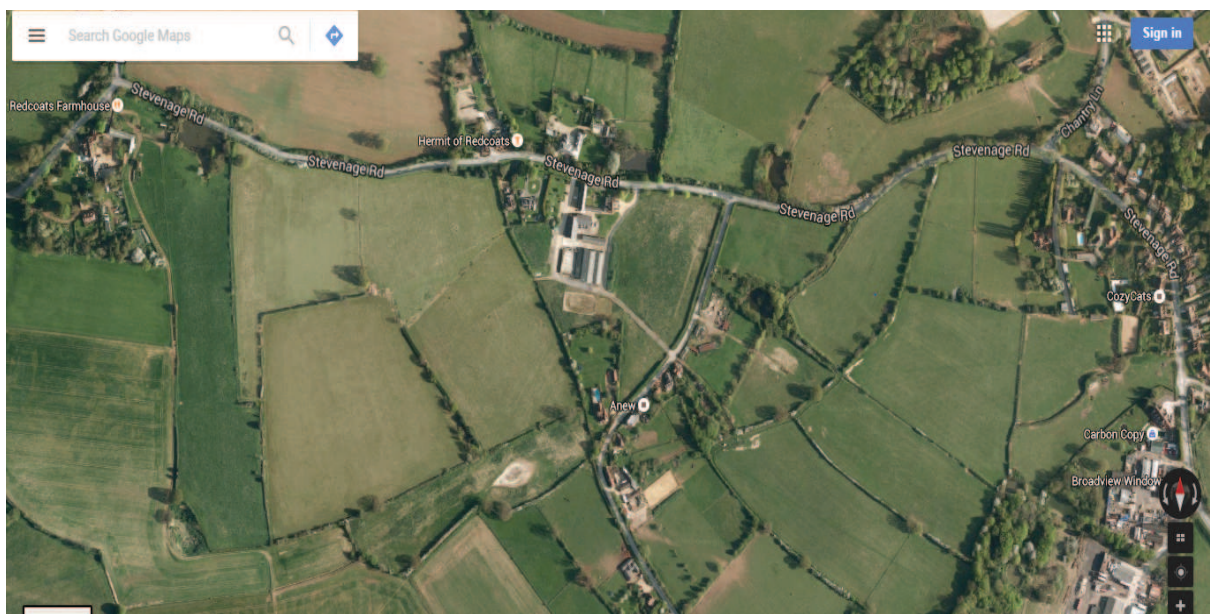


Map of Great Wymondley, showing the Green Man P.H., Wymondley Woods and the Scout Hut



Little Wymondley shown within the Green Belt, and with amenities indicated

15.14 Titmore Green has the Hermit of Redcoats public house; and Redcoats Green contains the Redcoats Farmhouse Hotel and restaurant. Other hotels in the vicinity include the Needham House Hotel (a conference and wedding venue, with brasserie, gymnasium and spa) in Little Wymondley; and The Priory Barn, also in Little Wymondley, which is a popular and picturesque celebratory venue for weddings etc.



Map showing the Parish hamlets and their amenities

15.15 The NPPF promotes the retention and development in villages of local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings,

public houses and places of worship. In devising our Neighbourhood Plan we have specifically explored possibilities for increasing amenities to compliment and expand existing parish activities, and for ensuring that current amenities are protected against the unintended consequences of proposals put forward in relation to other major issues. We do not wish to see the fabric of the community destroyed by inappropriate, large-scale developments, which negatively impact on integration and community cohesion.

15.16 Sadly, the Parish has lost some of its amenities over the years, i.e. a village shop, sub-Post Office and two petrol stations, mainly due to the arrival of the Sainsbury's store at nearby Corey's Mill. We have tentatively considered the potential for re-instating a village shop, however, as this has proved to be financially unviable in the past, further work needs to be done to establish demand and discover a suitable/available location.

15.17 As far as formal community centres are concerned, although facilities at the Baptist Chapel, School and public houses in Little Wymondley are utilised for community activities and meetings, there is only one purpose built village hall in the Parish. Situated in Great Wymondley, it can be hired for functions and is used by the community for social gatherings such as coffee morning's, children's parties etc. The Ramrugge Clog Morris dancers and local table tennis club also meet there.

15.18 Feedback from our survey results indicated a demand for a similar facility in Little Wymondley, to help increase social cohesion. As with the village shop, exploratory work needs to be undertaken in relation to demand and potential location.

15.19 Gardening is a keen interest of many of our parishioners, confirmed by the existence of a gardening club, and the fact that long-standing garden plots (allotments) in both Great and Little Wymondley are regularly and enthusiastically used - with plot holders forming their own informal community, based on common interest and applying to the National Allotment Society (National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd.) for associate membership. We wish to secure these amenities permanently for residents, and will take steps to do so. (See Section 9 for further details, and related policies.)

Encouraging active and continual use of public areas

15.20 It is clear from the responses to our parish survey, that our green spaces and recreational facilities are an essential factor in improving the health and well-being of the Parish, and enabling social cohesion. We value them, along with our other existing amenities, and want to ensure they are maintained and upgraded where possible, to encourage their greater and continuing use.

15.21 Great and Little Wymondley host annual village gatherings that are well attended by local residents and by people from the neighbouring towns. The Great Wymondley Fete (which has run for over 40 years) is held on Church Green; and the Little Wymondley Fun Day is held on the Sicut Road green. In recent years, the latter green was enhanced by the addition of a boat made from recycled material, for use as a children's play area; and a nearby bench.

15.22 Both Great and Little Wymondley have playing fields for use by the community. Additionally, Wymondley Woods is a popular exercise and recreation spot for families, dog walkers, ramblers etc; and there is also a Scout Camp there. Other parish green spaces,

footpaths, bridleways and local lanes are similarly used by cyclists, runners and dog walkers, as well as a number of walkers/ rambles groups, and we are keen to support measures that will encourage greater use of these “green routes” to improve movement and interaction between Parish settlements. (Sections 9 and 10 of this Plan cover related issues.)

15.23 We maintain, and progressively enhance, the recreational facilities in Wymondley Parish, so that they remain fit for purpose and meet parishioners’ requirements. Most recently, as part of that process, a new purpose-built changing facility was built on the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field in 2015, for use by local football teams and officials – replacing the container that had previously been utilised. (There are two football pitches with team's playing on Saturday, and the possibility of a Sunday team being explored.) Consideration is also being given to re-establishing the Great Wymondley cricket pitch on the recreation ground there.

15.24 The Little Wymondley playing fields also provide a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), suitable for adults or older children to play five-a-side football or basketball. There are adjacent tennis courts, which Wymondley Tennis Club leases from the Parish Council; and a young children’s playground equipped with swings, slide, climbing frame etc. (the land having been bequeathed to the village for use by its children).

15.25 When asked whether they would like to see additional or improved recreation areas for the children of the Parish, 58% of our survey respondents said they would. We have therefore considered how best to satisfy that demand, and our proposals for additional facilities are outlined in Section 16, together with the rationale behind them.

Policy SCW2: *We will take action to ensure that our amenities, public spaces and recreational facilities are regularly maintained and upgraded; and seek to extend and enhance them when suitable opportunities arise.*

16. Housing and Other Development

Aim: to promote sustainable development in our Parish, by ensuring any necessary development is well-designed and located appropriately, i.e. where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of our community; reflect the identity of our parish; and respond to its local character and history. Also, through consideration of demographic trends and community needs, and by identifying possible “deliverable”³⁴ sites within the Parish, we will strive to ensure that any proposed housing is affordable and of a suitable size, type, tenure and range for the community.

Introduction

16.1 We recognise that, in order to help meet the needs of our Parish, consideration must be given to future housing development. This presents us with a significant challenge, given the location and character of the Parish and the need for us to represent the wishes of the parishioners accurately. In rising to that challenge we have taken a pragmatic approach, concluding that to safeguard best what is important to parishioners, we have to consider the unpalatable prospect of development on Green Belt land within and adjacent to the Parish.

16.2 However, for the reasons cited in Section 6, (and in line with the Government Green Belt policy), we have focused on possibilities for affordable housing and other facilities through limited infilling or partial redevelopment of brown-field sites; and re-use of existing permanent buildings on Green Belt land. (Green Belt issues are specifically covered in Section 7 of this Plan.)

16.3 A conservation area covers most of Great Wymondley village, and this has so far preserved and protected its character from inappropriate development – something we would wish to continue, and which has therefore been a key factor when considering potential development sites within the Parish.

16.4 Looking more broadly at the Parish: we are fortunate to have a wide variety of features illustrating its development through the ages, and we believe it is important to protect our heritage for the benefit of current and future generations. We therefore aim to ensure that any proposed development would not have a detrimental effect on them. As Section 6 of this Plan presents a broader picture of the particular historical and archaeological features of our parish heritage – and also deals with identified biodiversity and environmental issues, they are not covered here.

³⁴ In line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), “deliverable” means available now, offering a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. For further details see page 12 of the NPPF.

Community population and housing need

16.5 For the purposes of this Plan we have generally used demographic data taken from the 2011 census, that being the most recent available. (See Annex 8) At the time of the 2011 census, the parish had 480 dwellings, and a population of 1,153.³⁵

16.6 With regard to the demographic of the Parish population, the 2011 census for North Hertfordshire indicates approximately 32% of the population is between the ages of 16-40; 34% between the ages of 40 and 59; and 33% 60+. We believe Wymondley Parish's current age demographic leans more heavily towards the older end of the age scale.

16.7 We estimate that approximately 30% of Parish housing is public sector, with the remainder privately owned dwellings, some of which are rented. There is a good mix of housing types - with good numbers of 2 and 3 bedroom family houses; and approximately 20% of the existing stock being 1 or 2 bed flats or starter homes, suitable for younger people. There are around ten public sector retirement bungalows in the Parish, (plus other privately owned bungalows), amounting to an estimated 6.5% of our housing stock. The remainder is made up of substantially larger properties and character properties.

16.8 Assuming that the Parish population concurs with national demographic trends, this indicates a potential shortfall in suitable accommodation for older parishioners. We believe that any plan to build new dwellings should reflect the needs of the community, and seek to address the current imbalance in terms of property type and tenure. A mix of affordable public and private sector retirement bungalows would therefore seem to be ideal, although more work may need to be done to confirm this.

Policy HOD1: In considering housing proposals impacting on the Parish we will consider demographic trends and community needs, and work with stakeholders to ensure that any housing delivered meets community needs in terms of affordability, type, tenure and range.

Potential development options

16.9 Responses to our survey, and discussions at local meetings on the issue, indicated a reluctant acceptance of future development, with many respondents commenting that they did not want to see any development at all. When asked how many homes they felt it would be proportionate and reasonable to build, 76% of respondents took the view that 50 or less was the appropriate number, (this being the minimum option offered for people to choose).

16.10 The overwhelming feeling in the Parish is that any development must be proportionate to the size and character of the Parish; appropriate in terms of type and location; suitable for parishioners; and affordable and available to them. Essentially, no more than 50 dwellings of the right type, in the right place, at the right price.

Policy HOD 2: In considering planning applications and other development proposals impacting on the Parish we will work to ensure that developments are well-designed and

³⁵<http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/NeighbourhoodSummary.do?a=7&b=6275182&c=SG4+7HY&g=454879&i=1001x1012x1013&j=6305522&m=1&p=4&q=1&r=0&s=1456044632328&enc=1&tab=1&inWales=false>

located appropriately, i.e. where they will enhance or maintain the vitality of our community; reflect the identity of our parish; and respond to our local character and history.

16.11 Opinions voiced at the Parish public meeting held on 26th October 2015, (where the results of our parish survey were made public to the residents of the Parish), were robustly against any suggestion that 300 (or more) dwellings would be a proportionate or reasonable number to add to the Parish. Such numbers, particularly given the locations currently proposed by our accountable and neighbouring councils would be wholly disproportionate to the existing settlements. Aside from the fact that they fly in the face of Government Green Belt policy, they would undoubtedly have a detrimental effect not only on the rural environment and intrinsic character of the Parish, but on its social and economic well-being and the quality of its parishioners' lives. Crucially, a number of pre-existing environmental and infrastructure problems, (covered elsewhere in this Plan), would be exacerbated.

16.12 The above figures cannot be viewed in isolation. They must be considered as part of the bigger picture, i.e. our overall objective of sustainably meeting the needs of our parish, while seeking to preserve its rural environment and intrinsic character. The clearest mandate (92 % in favour) arising from our survey was that the existing Green Belt, (which prevents our villages being subsumed into Stevenage or Hitchin via their urban sprawl), should be preserved.

16.13 Having taken this and the Green Belt requirements into account, together with the principles of sustainable development and the relevant over-arching factors specific to the Parish, we identified and considered potential development options within the Parish – dividing them into the following categories:

- a) Green Belt – areas for consideration to convert existing buildings (brown-field sites) into dwellings;
- b) Non-Green Belt – areas for consideration to convert business units into dwellings;
- c) Non-Green Belt – areas for consideration for additional parking facilities; and
- d) Non-Green Belt – areas for consideration for additional children's play areas.

Green Belt – areas for consideration to convert existing buildings (brown-field sites) into dwellings

16.14 We believe there are several agricultural buildings on various Green Belt sites within the Parish, which are open to possible conversion to dwellings if they are classed as brown-field sites. The photographs below show three which have so far been identified, namely:

- a) Existing units near the allotments on Stevenage Road;
- b) Farm buildings on Wymondley Hall Farm; and
- c) Redcoats Farmhouse – where planning permission has already been granted for conversion of semi-derelict barns to residential accommodation. These barns are currently for sale with the Planning Permission.



Units on Stevenage Road, near the Allotments.



Wymondley Hall Farm



Redcoats Farmhouse

16.15 The relevant landowners will be specifically consulted on this draft Neighbourhood Plan, in line with our statutory obligations. Any development proposals for these sites will be considered in the usual way, in the light of relevant Government and other policies – including those contained in this Plan.

Non-Green Belt – areas for consideration to convert business units into dwellings

16.16 We considered the possibility of converting existing business units in Elms Yard, (and two other small business premises in Priory Lane), Little Wymondley into dwellings. However, given the arguments in favour of supporting local business and employment, (see Section 14 of this Plan), we did not feel it was appropriate to suggest redevelopment of established and thriving local businesses.

16.17 Additionally, while the two adjacent business sites in Priory Lane, (located near an existing residential area) may be suitable for a small number of dwellings with off-street parking, the undoubted flood risk may render them unsuitable, unless adequate control measures are in place to prevent further such incidences.



Non-Green Belt - Areas for consideration of additional parking facilities

16.18 Insufficient parking facilities are a current bone of contention within the Parish, particularly in the Wymondleys. A large percentage (70%) of our survey respondents sought improvements to traffic management, including parking, and we therefore considered options for developing brown-field sites to provide increased parking facilities within the Parish and alleviate concerns.

16.19 There are designated public parking areas in Little Wymondley, adjacent to the Tennis Club and football pitches on the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields, but these are exceptionally small for the facility itself. Other than that, parking facilities are residential, (as described below); attached to specific premises for use by their business customers or churchgoers; or on the public highway.

16.20 Many streets in Little Wymondley were built in the 1950's and earlier, so many houses have no direct parking facilities. Approximately ten years ago, NHDC added driveways to some houses on the north side of Grimstone Road, but these were generally single-space driveways, and most houses now have two or more cars. The council did not add driveways to the south side, nor on the adjoining Sicut Road, where parking facilities are still inadequate and there is general on-street parking on the public highway. Most of the privately owned houses have driveways, but by no means all, so installation by NHDC of additional driveways where appropriate may be a positive way forward in alleviating on-street parking problems in the vicinity.

16.21 Any increase in housing development and/or reduction in current available ad-hoc off-street parking opportunities would undoubtedly exacerbate the current parking situation. Issues relating to the inevitable increase in the volume of traffic passing through the village are primarily covered in Sections 10, 11 and 12 of this Plan. We believe there would be a corresponding increase in risk to the health and safety of children using Wymondley JMI School, (and to those who regularly use the adjacent green spaces and recreational facilities) if traffic congestion increases in Sicut and Grimstone Roads; or more on-street parking becomes necessary there.

16.22 Another unintended consequence of any increase in on-street parking in Sicut and Grimstone Roads will be that the road becomes obstructive to large vehicles such as buses, waste collection vehicles and emergency services vehicles. There is already evidence of these vehicles struggling to get through at present, with large stretches of the grass verges on the south side of Grimstone Road being driven on and churned up, causing water drains in the road to block and the road to flood under moderate rainfall. Apart from the obvious health and safety issues, there would be a negative impact on those parishioners who use the local bus service, (particularly elderly residents of the retirement bungalows), were the bus service to be withdrawn as a result of the road becoming impassable for such vehicles.

16.23 North Herts Homes (NHH) owns an area of land behind Sicut Road, which contains a green space (formerly allotments), and 30 parking spaces which can be rented by village residents. Garages originally stood on each of these spaces, but many were removed when the land was sold to NHH in 2003; and must now be removed as and when individual spaces are given up by residents. Further garages may not be erected, but residents are still utilising the spaces to alleviate the parking congestion on Sicut/Grimstone Roads.

16.24 Elms Close and Tower Close, (both in Little Wymondley), also have inadequate residential parking facilities. Elms Close has driveways/allocated parking for all dwellings, with a large car park adjacent to the flats. However, as with Grimstone and Sicut Roads, the parking arrangements provide for only one car per dwelling – whereas most households tend to have more. Consequently, the parking facility is barely adequate for current needs, and frequently necessitates residents double-parking.

16.25 Tower Close dates from 1921, when cars were not commonplace, so some houses have driveways, but approx. 50% do not, and most residents currently park on-street outside their houses or in the lay-by areas around the central green. (There is another lay-by towards the Stevenage Road end of the Close, which is badly maintained and therefore discourages parking there.) Some residents of Tower Close have requested an increase in parking facilities there - particularly at the top of the Close, where there is little on-street parking available and the steep

gradient causes problems for less able residents, if parking spaces are unavailable near their homes.

16.26 We considered the possibilities for additional parking facilities, and identified three potential sites, photographs of which are provided in Section 9 or below. These are:

- a) the NHH land including a green space (formerly allotments) and garage plots in Siccut Road;
- b) a grassed area in Tower Close between Numbers 4 and 6; and
- c) additional parking spaces to be created at the top of the central Tower Close green.

16.27 Option a) above would involve conversion of an existing, unused green space adjacent to the council-owned garages in Siccut Road; and potential use of vacant garage plots in the same location. The parking arrangements on this area would need to be redesigned to increase the number of garages/spaces available, possibly by building new ones that back onto residents' gardens, to make better use of the land and alleviate the on-street parking problems in the nearby roads. However, this may necessitate termination of existing contracts for rental of the parking spaces, removal of the existing garages and aggravating tenants and parking problems as a result – so is unlikely to be a viable option.

16.28 The site is currently unsuitable for residential development, as the entrance does not meet current legal requirements for emergency services' vehicle access. (Annex 9 refers.) There is little scope for widening because of the houses either side. Given its location, we are now proposing to apply to have the green space, (which was formerly allotments), designated as a Local Green Space (see Section 9), so that it can once again be managed and used by the community.

16.29 Options b) and c) aim to improve the parking issues in Tower Close, and propose the creation of some additional spaces by removal of the grass verge between numbers 4 and 6, Tower Close; a small reduction in the central green at the top of the Close (and some slight amendment to the design of the existing lay-bys) to increase parking space; and allocation of parking spaces (to ensure those with health problems can park near their residences in light of the gradient). We will consult residents at a later stage to ensure any re-design plans meet their needs.

16.30 The Tower Close central green, although not designated as a village green, is a fairly substantial green space, which contains a number of large trees and is a key environmental and recreational asset to the Close and village. It is regularly used by children living in the Close (and elsewhere in the village); and by local dog walkers. There are currently parking lay-bys on either side, which are used by those residents without garages or other off-street parking facilities; and there is scope to alleviate local parking issues slightly, by making a small reduction at the top end of the green.



Tower Close, Top of Green and Grass area No's 4&6

16.31 Redesign of the existing lay-bys (including the one further down the road), plus removal of the wide grass verge between numbers 4 and 6 Tower Close would also assist. However, this would mean loss of a cherry tree, and consideration of any related environmental implications or structural impact on the nearby houses relating to its roots etc.

16.32 Section 9 of this plan sets out our proposal to apply to NHDC to have this green designated as a Local Green Space, excluding a small portion which could be used for additional parking spaces, as described above, without detriment to the overall appearance and use of the green space and its locality.

16.33 Although there could be scope to build a very small number of dwellings and linked parking facilities on the green, this would significantly alter the character of the road, which was laid out along garden city lines in 1921. It would also mean loss of a well-used green amenity, with the reduction in recreational opportunities for the village children, who play on and around the green daily outside the winter months.

Policy HOD4: We will continue to explore opportunities to increase available parking within the Parish and, when considering development proposals, work with relevant parties to ensure that adequate parking facilities are included in plans.

Non-Green Belt - Areas for consideration of additional children's play area

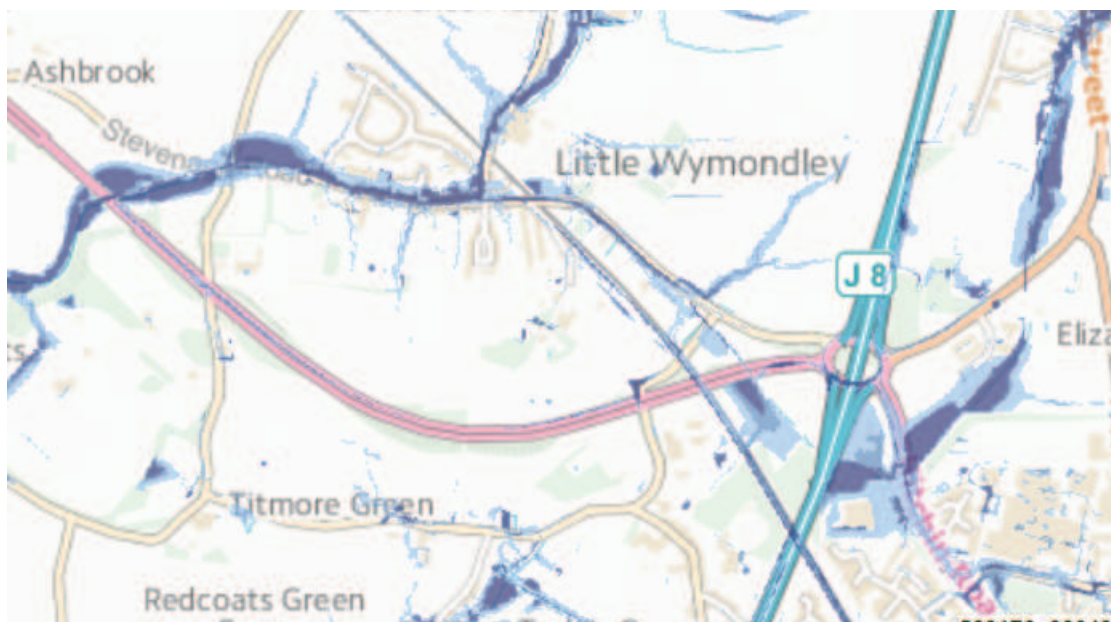
16.34 Section 15 of this Plan covers social cohesion and well-being; and retention and extension of community amenities, including recreational facilities. Responses to our parish survey (58%) indicated that parishioners were keen to have additional children's play areas, which would be beneficial in encouraging children to engage in healthy, outdoor activities; provide a meeting place; and generally improve fitness, well-being and social cohesion in the Parish.

16.35 Three potential locations for additional children's play areas were considered. Section 9 contains photographs of these sites, which are:

- a) The green space (formerly allotments) and council-owned garage plots in Siccut Road;
- b) Siccut Road Green; and
- c) the Tower Close village green (near Stevenage Road).

16.36 Option a): has been covered in conjunction with potential developments for the existing green space and garages at Siccut Road, but has limited potential due to health and safety and access issues. (See paragraphs 16.27 and 16.28 above.)

16.37 Option b): considers the potential for an additional play area to be created on part of the green in Siccut Road. This land is designated as a village green, and used as a recreational area, particularly for village functions. It is also a flood plain (see the Environment Agency flood map below), so inappropriate for development in terms of dwellings or car parking. However, it would be ideal as an additional play area, as it already contains a wooden, seated play boat – and would be enhanced by the addition of other equipment such as swings, climbing frame etc.



Environment Agency flood map

16.38 Option c): involves a designated village green. We do not see this as a barrier, as the Siccut Road village green has play equipment located there. The Tower Close village green may also have potential as an additional children's playground as, although it is close to Stevenage Road, its designation as a village green rests on its use by generations of villagers for a variety of activities.

Policy HOD5: *we will give further consideration to the provision of additional facilities for the Parish's children, to determine the most appropriate location(s) and type.*

Impact assessment

16.39 Although we are not a regulatory body, we feel it is only right and proper that the impact of proposed development should be assessed in relation to the key economic, social and

environmental features of the area to which they relate. This would include looking at any disproportionate impact on different parts of society likely to be affected; impact on social, well-being or health inequalities; impact on provision of facilities or services that support community or cohesion, or in other ways that affect the quality of life in the local community. There may be unintended consequences to consider, (e.g. increased opportunities for crime), things that could go wrong, but also things that might work out better than expected. A whole host of environmental issues also fall to be considered – the most salient to us being rural v urban issues; water pollution; levels of water extraction; exposure to flood risk, air quality, infrastructure issues, safety and bio-diversity.

16.40 At this early stage, the above options are put forward merely for consideration, so that they may be aired, and discounted or pursued – with a view to further work being done at a later stage, dependent on stakeholders' views. At that time, we will ensure that a more detailed and wide-ranging, proportionate assessment is undertaken of the impact of any development proposals on the quality of life within the Parish.

Policy HOD1: *We will work positively and collaboratively with local planning authorities in considering planning applications, and other development proposals impacting on the Parish, to identify and resolve key issues affecting long-term sustainability.*

17. Next Steps

17.1 There are a several key stages in neighbourhood planning, a summary of which forms part of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance, available online at:

<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/>

17.2 Wymondley Parish and the WPNPF having been legally designated as a neighbourhood area and neighbourhood forum; and having prepared our draft Neighbourhood Plan, we are now at Step 3 of the planning process, i.e. public consultation on the Plan and preparation of related documentation.

17.3 Public consultation began on 7 April 2016 and will end at 17.00 hours on 25 May 2016. Copies of the draft Plan, (together with a response form on which you can make constructive comments), are available on our website at: www.wymondley.org Library hard copies and response forms are also available at the Parish's public houses and places of worship.

17.4 Once the consultation period has ended we will analyse responses and review the Plan in the light of them. A Consultation Statement will then be prepared, summarising responses and how they have been addressed. Other required documentation will also be prepared and the Plan submitted to NHDC, with a view to it being publicised for 6 weeks and then submitted to an independent examiner. If the Plan is found to meet its legal requirements and otherwise be in order it will eventually be published before being subject to a local referendum. Subject to the results, it will then be brought into force.

18. Get Involved

18.1 The WPNPF (and the WAF before it) have actively encouraged Wymondley Parish residents to become engaged in shaping its future. Without input from our community we cannot accurately determine what our community needs to enable it to enhance its quality of life and improve our environment sustainably for the future.

18.2 Responses to our parish survey indicated just how passionately residents felt about the need to preserve the feel of village life, and protect our parish environment – particularly the Green Belt. We will continue to consult them on progress being made, and we welcome comments from all stakeholders.

18.3 There are several ways of getting in touch with the group, which meets at 19.30 hours each Thursday in the Plume of Feathers P.H., Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley, (unless otherwise advised). Annex 12 provides members' names and contact details. So, please get in touch and get involved.