

West Suffolk Council Local Plan

What is the West Suffolk Local Plan?

A local plan sets out a strategy for growth and development of an area and policies which set out the way that this plan aims to meet the housing, employment, social and community needs of an area while at the same time protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment. Balancing growth and development with protecting and enhancing the environment is often referred to as sustainable development. It is a statutory requirement that local authorities produce a local plan for their area and keep it up to date.

The local plan vision for West Suffolk 2040

By 2040 we will have ensured a variety of well-designed new homes have been delivered in appropriate locations that meet the needs of our residents. Businesses and our diverse rural economy will have had the opportunity to grow and prosper. All new development will have been designed to respect, protect and enhance the natural environment and adapt to and mitigate for climate change and have achieved net zero carbon emissions in construction, energy sources and future use.

All our settlements from towns to rural villages will be places where families and communities can live safe and healthy lives with infrastructure to be provided to accompany growth, particularly in respect of transport including highway improvements, providing pedestrian and cycling routes, social infrastructure (such as access to police services, and support networks), and access to open areas.

The special quality, character and heritage of our West Suffolk built and natural environment, and its historic assets will have been protected and enhanced.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.13. Since consultation on the first step of the new local plan, the issues and options consultation in October to December 2020, the National Planning Framework has been updated (July 2021). Some of the key changes include increasing emphasis on placemaking and creating beauty, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and a requirement to deliver biodiversity net gain on all new developments.

The West Suffolk Local Plan has been divided into three parts:

Part one – Strategic policies

Part two – Non- strategic policies

Part three – Site allocations. This document sets out the preferred site allocations. They include residential, mixed use and employment allocations.

West Suffolk Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation – Part One – Strategic Policies

Strategic objectives (set out in more detail on p13 – 15)

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Business and local economy
- Homes
- Rural areas
- Environment
- Communities, well – being and culture
- Connectivity and accessibility

Strategic Policies

Pages 16 – 74 set out West Suffolk Council’s preferred strategic policies in more detail:

- SP1 Climate change, health and well-being (P17 – 19). The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework and direction that will ensure an optimum and comprehensive approach to sustainable development.
- SP2 Health and well-being (P20 – 23). The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all new development optimises the health and well-being of all who live and work in Suffolk.
- SP3 Design (P24 – 26).). The purpose of this policy is to create well-designed and connected communities.
- SP4 Infrastructure (P27-29). The purpose of this policy is to ensure the infrastructure needed to support planned growth is provided alongside development at the appropriate time and to set out the development requirements needed to deliver these.
- SP5 Housing – Settlement hierarchy and types of places (P30 – 37). The purpose of the settlement hierarchy is to reflect the scale and capacity of in terms of their service provision as well as their ability to link to other higher order settlements, particularly by sustainable means of travel.
- SP6 Existing operational uses (for example RAF bases and HMP Highpoint) (P38 - 41)
- SP7 Housing needs (P41 – 47)
- SP8 – Overall housing distribution (48 – 50). The purpose of this policy is to set out how the housing need will be distributed across West Suffolk.
- SP9 – Strategic employment (P51 – 57). The purpose of this policy is to make provision for employment land to meet the needs identified over the plan period to 2040.
- SP10 – Retail and main town centre uses (P56 – 59). The purpose of this policy is to support the role and function of town centres and local centres in West Suffolk in providing services and facilities for local communities.
- SP11 – Breckland Special Protection Area and special area of conservation (P60 – 63). The purpose of this policy is to protect the Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which are national and European designations.
- SP12 – Recreational effects of development (P64 – 66). The purpose of this policy is to ensure that new residential development will not increase recreational pressure on publicly accessible sensitive ecological sites such as the Brecks, Devil’s Dyke and Red Lodge Heath).
- SP13 – Green Infrastructure (P67 – 70). The purpose of this policy is to deliver green infrastructure in West Suffolk.
- SP14 – Biodiversity net gain (P71 – 75). The purpose of the policy is to set locally specific biodiversity net gain requirements to be implemented in West Suffolk.

Housing Need – number of homes required

- 4.69. **Overall housing requirement** – The local housing need assessment for West Suffolk Council has determined 15,200 homes are needed to be planned for the period 2021 to 2040. As of 31 March 2021, some 8,600 homes already have planning permission in West Suffolk. After taking account of sites already with planning permission, this leaves a remainder of at least 6,600 to be identified through the local plan. A total of 7,134 homes have been identified at the preferred options stage, from new site allocations, as well as carrying forward some sites already allocated in existing adopted local plans. Each site identified has been assessed for its suitability, availability and deliverability.

15,200 housing requirement
8,600 with planning permission

Leaves 6,600 homes to be identified in this plan

- 4.70. In seeking to address the overall identified housing need, the council proposes to provide at least a five per cent supply buffer to the housing need. This comes from additional housing allocations in part three of this plan, where the indicative dwelling number has not yet been determined and additional supply from windfall sites. This provides overall confidence that housing needs can be met while ensuring choice in the market and a continuous supply coming forward over the plan period.
- 4.71. In calculating how the overall housing need will be met, sites with planning permission which are also existing local plan allocations, have been counted as sites with planning permission. Sites with planning permission where the development has commenced are not included in part three of this plan as they are already committed. This is with the exception of strategic sites where the development has commenced which are included in part three of this plan to enable them are brought forward in accordance with the policy requirements of this plan.

Overall Housing Distribution

Policy parameters

- a. Development will be brought forward in line with the broad distribution of housing as set out below, with the focus of growth on the towns, key service centres, local service centres and type A villages through urban extensions and infilling where infrastructure and environmental constraints allow.
- b. Indicative additional housing provision to be planned for (and met by site allocations in part three of this plan) by settlement category for the period 2021 to 2040 is set out below:

Towns 4,913
Key service centres 1,384
Local service centres 741
Type A villages 96

Total 7,134 homes

- c. For some allocated sites in part three of this plan the indicative dwelling number has not yet been determined, therefore it is expected the overall housing provision planned for is likely to be higher than 7,134 homes identified above. In addition, the existing commitments will contribute to meeting the overall housing requirement.

Wickhambrook has been categorised as a Local Service Centre.

Local service centres

- 4.44. These settlements tend to have fewer dwellings than key service centres and a smaller range of services but will have as a minimum a school and convenience shop or community run shop and/or post office and village hall. These settlements are less accessible than the higher order settlements but can still meet some needs of other nearby smaller settlements. The opportunity for site allocations will be explored through the local plan.

Scale of growth in settlements

- 4.48. The scale of growth suggested on sites within each settlement category at this preferred options stage is as follows:

Towns: major schemes dependent on infrastructure and environmental capacity.

Key service centres: indicative maximum scheme size of around 200 dwellings.

Local service centres: indicative maximum scheme size of around 100 dwellings.

Type A villages: indicative maximum scheme size of around 20 dwellings.

Type B villages: indicative maximum scheme size of around five dwellings as infill plots within the housing settlement boundary.

- 4.49. The number of sites allocated within a particular settlement will be dependent on that settlement's infrastructure and environmental capacity

- 4.52. The levels of growth considered appropriate reflect the position of that settlement in the hierarchy and the need to be proportionate in scale to the size of the settlement. All sites allocated will need to meet the local plan's overall housing requirement and distribution, but it is also important to recognise that not all settlements may achieve the suggested scale of growth on a site due to a variety of factors which can include:

- The availability and size of deliverable of sites in a settlement.
- The level of services and facilities provided in an individual settlement and its overall sustainability.
- The presence of environmental and other constraints, including national and local wildlife designations such as special protection area and special areas of conservation.
- Specific infrastructure requirements which may justify an increase to the scale of growth on a site.
- The number of planning commitments delivered and/or allocated in the previous five years in a settlement which could justify a different approach.
- The need to ensure the viability of a site and that it is fully policy compliant in terms of affordable housing and/or open space provision and so on.

West Suffolk Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation - Appendix A Part Three – Site Allocations

Key Points

Wickhambrook – Local Service Centre (page 213)

Wickhambrook is a village located in the southern part of the district 16 kilometres from Haverhill and Newmarket and 18 kilometres from Bury St Edmunds. It has a population of 1,286 (2019 mid-year estimate). Wickhambrook is designated as a local service centre with a range of services including a primary school, GP Surgery, a public house, recreation facilities and convenience food store and post

The parish council have embarked on the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan area was designated by West Suffolk Council on 1 October 2021.

Constraints and opportunities

- Wickhambrook comprises of a core village area surrounded by a number of hamlets and small groups of dwellings to the north-west, south and east. There is a need to prevent coalescence of these historic hamlets to preserve the character of Wickhambrook.
- The landscape character assessment notes that the village lies within the Glem and Wickhambrook Farmlands character area, comprising of undulating ancient farmlands.
- The topography of the area creates long views out of the village. Land to the north-west and to the east of the settlement is on higher ground where there is a risk that large scale growth would be prominent in the landscape.
- The village green to the south-east of the village acts as an entrance to Wickhambrook, which forms a key feature of the village and should be protected.
- Flood zones 2 and 3 run adjacent to the eastern fringes of Thorns and Meeting Green which may potentially be a constraint to There is occasional localised surface water flooding within the village.
- Bus services are less frequent than hourly or operate during limited times.
- There is a conservation area at Wickham Street to the south-east of the main settlement.
- The roads are narrow in places and lack footpaths and safe pedestrian routes.

Preferred allocation

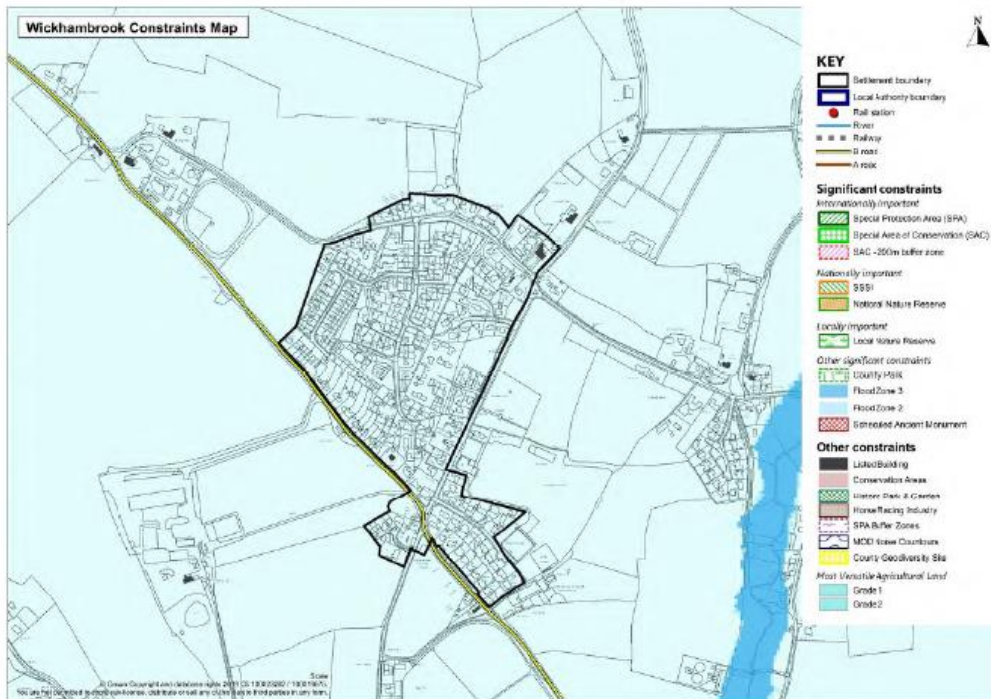
One new site is proposed as a preferred site for mixed-use development in Wickhambrook providing an indicative capacity of 40 dwellings, with the opportunity for community facilities or retail and/or employment to be explored and determined through a site development brief.

The level of development proposed is influenced by the overall housing requirement and the settlement strategy. This determines the distribution of development across the district as well as the existing environmental and physical constraints and the overall capacity for growth in the settlement. Further information on how housing numbers have been derived can be seen in part one of the local plan.

Further information on alternative site options considered but not taken forward can be seen in the table of omission sites in appendix B.

Information on infrastructure can be seen in the draft infrastructure delivery plan (2022) which sets out baseline data for each settlement.

Wickhambrook settlement constraints map



Wickhambrook preferred allocations map



Non-strategic allocation

4.12a land west of Bunters Road, Wickhambrook

New reference number: 4.12a

SHELAA reference: WS195a

Location: Land west of Bunters Road, Wickhambrook

Site Area: 2.85 hectares

Preferred options indicative capacity: 40 dwellings (final capacity to be determined through site development brief)

Site Map**Policy and capacity considerations**

- a. The site is located to the west of Wickhambrook and is part of a large arable field. To the west lies Claydon's agricultural business site and to the east is Bunters Road.
- b. The opportunity for mixed-use development should be explored on the site which could include community facilities and/or retail or local employment.
- c. The amount of land available for development, mix and location of uses, access arrangements, design and landscaping will be informed by a site development brief.
- d. A buffer to the off-site woodland southwest of the site must be provided.
- e. The site is within a great crested newt risk zone (GCN) and participation in the GCN District Level Licensing Scheme should be considered.
- f. Retain and enhance the existing boundary features and hedgerows with appropriate buffers.
- g. There are long views out of the site to the west which require strategic landscaping to create a strong settlement boundary.
- h. Vehicular access should be via Bunters Road to the north of the site.
- i. Pedestrian and cycle routes from the site should be provided to ensure the site is well connected to the settlement. Opportunities to provide greater access to these routes will be required, in line with the Suffolk Green Access Strategy.
- j. The site is within one kilometre of one or more established public rights of way and opportunities to connect to these will be encouraged.
- k. Ongoing discussions with infrastructure providers will establish and define infrastructure requirements generated by the site.

Next steps

- 1.17. It is important to note that no firm decisions have been made on whether the sites in this document will be taken forward to the final consultation draft of the local plan. We are seeking your views at this stage to assist with making these decisions.
- 1.18. At the end of the settlement sections there are questions asking for your opinion on the preferred sites. Please respond setting out the reference number of the site being referred to where applicable.

About this consultation and how to respond

This preferred options consultation draft of the local plan is the second opportunity for you to get involved with preparing the new plan. We want to hear your views and to make this as easy as possible for you to do this. This is #YourFuture #YourSay and now is the chance for you to help shape the future of West Suffolk.

A good local plan is central to the future development of West Suffolk and our communities. It is much more than just about where housing and associated facilities may go but will also set out how best to support the future prosperity of our area and future generations as well as tackling wider issues such as improving the economy, health and tackling climate change. It is about planning to make sure we get the right kind of development in the right place while protecting our environment. The local plan shapes planning and development in West Suffolk here up to 2040 which is why it is vital that people have their say.

How to comment

All of the consultation information is available to view in our [live exhibition hall](#). There is also an online chat facility in the exhibition hall where you can chat to planning officers if you have any questions.

The best way to comment on the local plan is online via the council's [consultation system](#). If you have difficulty commenting online, or you need information in a different format, please let us know and we will be happy to help.

You can email us planningpolicy@westsuffolk.gov.uk and if you have any questions on any aspect of this consultation, please contact a member of the strategic planning team on 01284 757368.

The consultation period runs from 26 May 2022 (9am) to 26 July 2022 (5pm) and all comments must be received by Tuesday 26 July 2022 at 5pm.

We have commissioned and produced background evidence that have helped inform this draft of this plan. These are available to view at West Suffolk Local Plan background evidence documents on our website.