

Wickhambrook Parish Council

Some questions about making a Neighbourhood Plan for Wickhambrook

Why does Wickhambrook need a Neighbourhood Plan?

Making a Neighbourhood Plan gives members of a community a powerful opportunity to shape and control development and growth in their local area.

Can a Neighbourhood Plan give villagers total control?

No – a Neighbourhood Plan cannot go against district or national policy and it must comply with planning regulations. Growth at some level must therefore always be part of a Neighbourhood Plan. But making a Neighbourhood Plan can help villages to manage growth, to develop agreed proposals in partnership with planning officers and to respond more effectively to individual planning applications.

Is now the right time to make a Neighbourhood Plan for Wickhambrook?

This is a good time to make a Neighbourhood Plan because West Suffolk is in the process of making a Local Plan for the entire district. Villagers will be able to work in parallel with planning officers to make sure that future plans for Wickhambrook are in harmony with wider proposals for the district while also meeting the needs and preferences of village residents.

Is a Neighbourhood Plan all about housing development?

Not necessarily – a Neighbourhood Plan can be about whatever the village decides is important. For example, Neighbourhood Plans can be concerned with housing, transport and infrastructure, community facilities, business and the local economy, listed buildings and heritage assets, landscape and green spaces, conservation and environmental issues, trees and hedgerows, sustainability and affordability in designing new homes, the character of the village and its key features – and other matters of concern to villagers.

Who makes a Neighbourhood Plan?

Making a Neighbourhood Plan depends on all of the residents in the Parish. Whilst the Parish Council will lead the project, it then appoints a working group which will include parish councillors and volunteers from the village (a group of up to 12). This working group can also be supported by independent consultants. It is really important that the working group engages with the wider community right from the start of the process. We need your help and support as residents of the parish.

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How long will it take?

It should be possible to make a Neighbourhood Plan in two years – but it can take longer.

What skills will a steering group need?

Neighbourhood planning involves leadership, project management, organisation, communication, negotiation, analysis and other skills. It also involves compromise, consideration of differing viewpoints and collaborative working. Listening is a key skill.

What How much will it cost?

Most if not all the costs of making a Neighbourhood Plan can be covered by grants and much of the work will be done by volunteers – so the process should not cost the village anything. The parish council has funds set aside in its budget to start this work until grants are approved.

What support will there be to develop a Neighbourhood Plan?

Wickhambrook Parish Council has already committed to support the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish if residents of the parish are committed to participating in this process and there are sufficient volunteers to establish a working group.

There is also a legal requirement for the District Council as the local planning authority to provide support for those preparing Neighbourhood plans.

What will be involved for villagers?

We need your help, we can't do this without your support. You might have the time and skills to take an active role in the working group from the start of the project, or wish to offer ad hoc support for consultation days or delivering questionnaires.

Even if you don't want to get involved in the working group, you can help us by responding to questionnaires and consultations, as this will make any plan more relevant to the parish.

And finally, we'll be asking you to vote on the plan – we'll need your support!

How can I have my say?

Villagers will be asked to give their views and to contribute to decision making at every stage of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is really important that as many people as possible do respond. If you feel you wish to be more closely involved in developing the Plan, please fill out one of our volunteering forms, or contact parishclerk@wickhambrook.org.uk .