

Neighbourhood Planning

Since 2015/16 Wickhambrook Parish Council has been putting funds into earmarked reserves for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish. At year end 2020/21, Earmarked reserves will stand at £7,500.

Whilst no work has yet commenced on a Neighbourhood Plan, with West Suffolk's recent consultation on Issues and Options as part of its development of a new local plan (report **WPC.20.11** refers) and the parish council's decision in November 2020 to part fund a Housing Needs Survey, to be undertaken by Community Action Suffolk (**Minute 20.11.7** refers), the question of whether to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish has become more of a priority.

At its extra-ordinary meeting on 21 January, the parish council considered report **WPC.21.01.01** and also, in setting its budget, made provision for administrative support from the clerk during the next financial year should it decide to proceed with developing a Neighbourhood Plan (report **WPC.21.01.03** refers).

As a consequence, at its February meeting, the parish council considered oral advice from:

- Cllr Philip Reeve of Great Barton Parish Council (whose plan is awaiting referendum; and
- Mr Ian Poole – Places4People – a neighbourhood planning consultant

(**Minute 21.02.06** refers).

In very simple terms, a neighbourhood plan is:

- A document that sets out planning policies for the neighbourhood area – planning policies are used to decide whether to approve planning applications
- Written by the local community, the people who know and love the area, rather than the Local Planning Authority
- A powerful tool to ensure the community gets the right types of development, in the right place

For example, the plan could include things like improvement of streets and public spaces or where community facilities should be located. This would provide the context for negotiations with local authority departments (e.g. highways) and could help to influence their future works or development. Great Barton developed the following themes when working on their plan:

- housing
- transport (of any form, and its infrastructure)
- character of Great Barton (what they liked about it and wanted to enhance)
- community facilities (including education)
- business.

Developing a Neighbourhood Plan is not a decision to take lightly. It generally takes between 18 months to two years, but can take substantially longer. Some parishes can complete in 12 – 18 months.

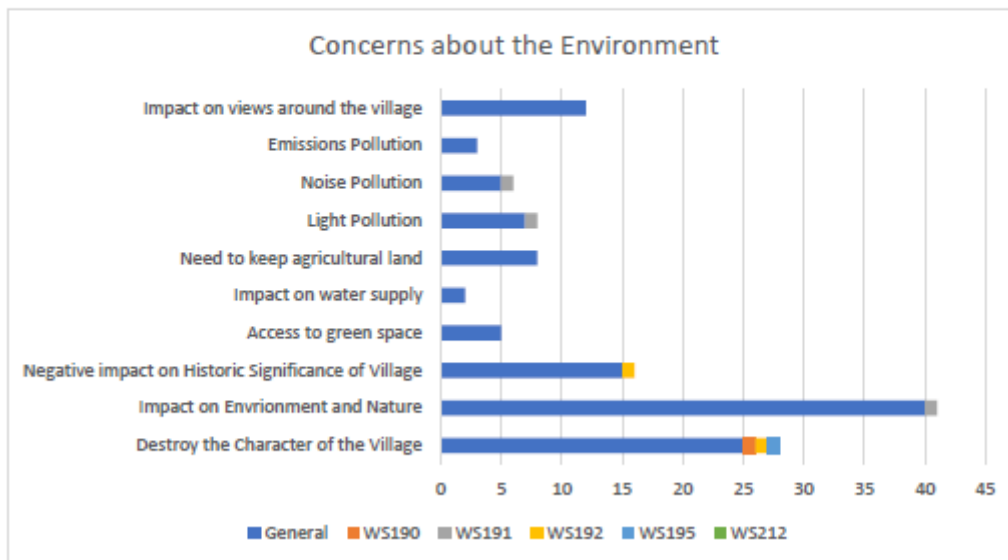
A Neighbourhood Plan cannot go against what is in the local plan, nor the national planning policy, and cannot allocate less housing than the local plan proposes. Certain regulations and procedures need to be followed in developing it, requiring the parish council to take the lead in developing it, typically forming a working group of about 10 people (anything more and it gets unwieldy, anything less it is a lot of work for a few people).

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. A balanced team of people with different skills should be the aim. Whilst it should be supported by the parish council, it must be a community led plan and should not be undertaken wholly by the parish council, but collaboratively, with a group of community volunteers. This is sometimes known as co-production, and a summary of this style of working is attached as **Appendix A**.

The parish needs to consider what its objectives are, e.g. to:

- have control over development in the village
- protect Local open spaces and local heritage values (for example controlling the amount and style of development in the vicinity of local open spaces or listed buildings), for example, Wickhambrook is based on a unique Saxon village pattern with houses in a number of separate greens, which residents might wish to preserve in the planning of any future development.
- Concerns about the impact of development on the local environment, as summarised in the parish council's recent response to West Suffolk's consultation on developing a new local plan (see report [WPC.20.11.01 Issuesandoptions](#)), excerpt below:

Responses to the proposals submitted by local residents to Wickhambrook Parish Council focussed strongly on the need for encouraging sustainable modes of transport, environmental quality and halting the loss of biodiversity through green infrastructure provision, improving air quality, and ensuring sufficient water capacity.



NP's can also cover non-planning stuff. For example, if there is a parish plan, they can include community actions. For example, if the household survey identifies a problem with dog waste, the plan could include a community action that the parish council would invest in more dog waste bins. This helps to show that the parish council has listened to the household survey, and generate support for the NP.

Some community actions identified in Wickhambrook's 2011 Parish Plan included:

- promote existing, and solicit interest in new, community buying plans (e.g. heating oil).
- Notify school and transport authorities of the parking, transport and traffic opinions of the residents.
- Notify Local Authorities and Police on the opinions of residents on traffic problems and recommend a working party to be created to investigate solutions.
- Investigate ways to action Community Projects for Wickhambrook Youth.
- Investigate ways to improve services and information for local businesses.

Having made a formal decision to go ahead, the parish council would need to approach West Suffolk Council to designate a neighbourhood plan area. This would normally be the whole parish, anything less than this requires West Suffolk to consult on the boundary (which would delay the process by six to eight weeks).

Typically would need to gather evidence to support the plan which would eventually go to a referendum (requires a simple majority vote in favour to go forward). It is important to keep people informed. In the early stages gathering evidence would often involve a household survey to seek their opinions on matters such as:

- Planning
- Assessing green spaces
- Important views and
- Locally important heritage buildings

And may also uplift other evidence, such as identified housing need and tenure types from other sources (for example, the Housing Needs Survey commissioned from Community Action Suffolk).

The NP needs to be backed up by evidence, and shouldn't repeat what is in the Local Plan – it needs to sit alongside the Local Plan and be used equally in determining planning applications, their purpose is to add value.

There are a number of ground rules that the Parish Council will need to be aware of, such as not allocating less housing in the neighbourhood plan than the Local Plan proposes.

Having gathered all of this information, the next stage is to draft a plan, typically 50 – 70 pages and then as a parish council need to consult on the plan for a minimum of 6 weeks with residents and statutory consultees (a complex process which is important to get right). At the end of the consultation any comments need to be reviewed and any amendments made to the plan. The plan and supporting docs then go into West Suffolk Council. For the parish council, the majority of the work is then complete.

West Suffolk Council then consult for a period of 6 weeks, after which, the plan goes to an independent Neighbourhood Plan examiner who examines whether it meets Government defined "basic conditions". They sometimes require changes and then conclude whether the plan should proceed to referendum. West Suffolk Council then call a referendum, at their cost. If a majority vote in favour, the plan is made. West Suffolk would then have to formally adopt the plan (under their constitutional rules), which then sits alongside the local plan in determining planning applications.

Local planning authorities and planning inspectors considering planning applications or appeals must make their decisions in accordance with the policies of the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Emerging neighbourhood plans may be a material consideration in planning decisions.

Wickhambrook parish council currently has earmarked reserves of £7,500 set aside for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan, and has made provision for some initial administrative support for developing a neighbourhood plan in the next financial year. The government can also make available up to £10,000 towards a Neighbourhood Plan (the parish council would have to bid for it based on costings).

If the parish council decided it wanted to:

- allocate some land for housing development and/or
- include design guidance in the plan

this would release up to an extra £8000 of grant and free technical support to assess potential sites for housing or prepare design guidelines. Ian Poole very strongly recommended the latter as this detail cannot be addressed in local plans, and further advised that in his experience, over 90% of parishes he had worked with had completed their Neighbourhood Plans within the grant funding, at no cost to the parish itself.

At some point in the future, WSC will develop another new Local Plan. When that is updated it is recommended that the parish review its NP (e.g. at the Annual Meeting to consider whether it is still fit for purpose). Reviewing an NP to bring it up to date brings in further grant funding, most of which can be undertaken by a consultant, as most of the work has been done.

Places4People, a specialist planning consultant, has provided some initial advice about the process and their anticipated costs for supporting the parish council (**Appendix B refers**).

Alternatives to a neighbourhood plan

There are alternatives to producing a neighbourhood plan. These could include:

- influence an emerging local plan core strategy or supplementary planning documents as part of the local plan, for example by making representations at consultation stages;
- influence or help to prepare design and development briefs for key sites (working closely with the local planning authority);
- comment on planning applications and/or get involved in pre-application discussions;
- focus time and money on delivering actions in existing plans (e.g. a parish plan);
- persuade the local authority to produce an area action plan or consider new designations, such as a conservation area or Article 4 Direction (it should be noted that neighbourhood plans cannot make such designations);
- develop a community project and raise funds for its delivery.

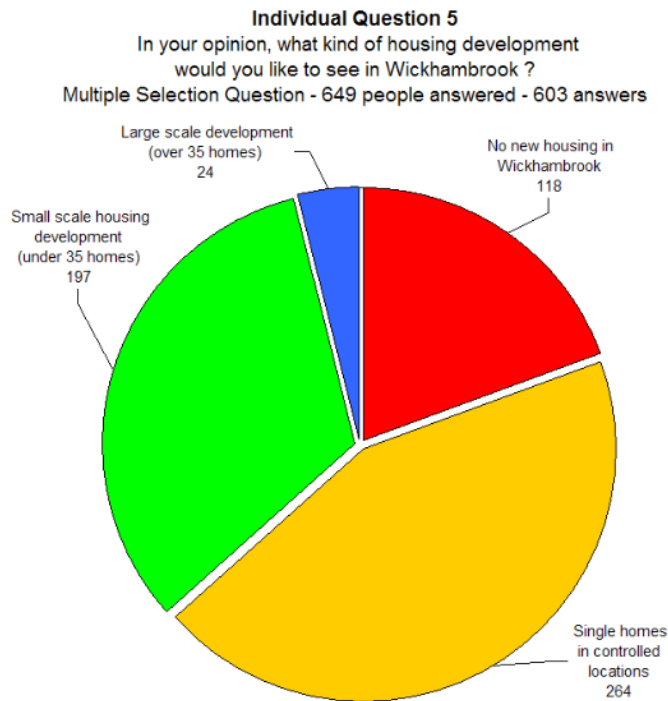
These actions could also be undertaken in parallel to preparing a neighbourhood plan.

There are also more informal plans such as parish plans or community plans. These would be a material consideration in planning decisions, but they do not have statutory status as part of the local development plan, so would carry far less weight.

Wickhambrook Parish Council undertook a parish plan which was published in 2011, which can be found at [Microsoft Word - Wickhambrook Final Report A4.docx](#). This survey found that 148 people in the parish would be likely to need alternative housing within the next five years. Since the report, a new development in the centre of Wickhambrook, the Meadows is making provision for 6 affordable homes, and the Parish council has agreed to undertake a Housing Needs Survey funded by West Suffolk Council, delivered by Community Action Suffolk. This may result in the Parish Council working to develop a Rural Exception Site.

Residents preferences for the type of housing development identified in the 2011 Parish Plan is inset below:

Six Hundred and Forty Nine (649) people gave their preferences for the type of housing development they would like to see in Wickhambrook.



The expressed options in terms of the size of housing development were clearly stated by the majority of people (96%) as being no development at all or single/small scale development.

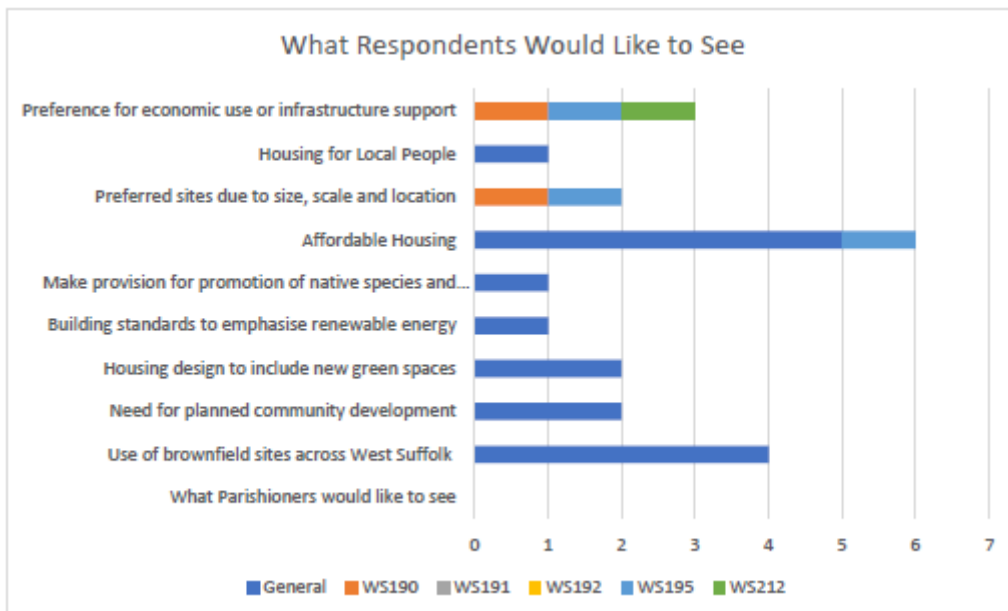
Only 24 people said they wanted to see large scale development of over 35 homes take place.

In terms of where the development should take place, 49 people said by Filling Gaps between Greens, 177 said Filling Gaps between Individual Houses.

In addition to these options a very significant 365 people expressed that they would like to see the Conversion of Redundant Buildings into housing.

It is felt that the responses to this question together with others, bear out the assertion that people want to retain the rural nature of the village and preserve the exceptional Saxon layout of multiple greens.

The recent West Suffolk Council’s consultation on issues and options for developing a Neighbourhood Plan also identified a concern of residents of the parish that whilst development would be likely to take place, they would like to see provision made for affordable homes within the parish, and housing that is available to, and homes for residents in the parish who want to downsize, or relations of residents who wish to move back into the village (see inset below, based on over 80 submissions to the parish council):



A public meeting would be an effective way to establish the level of support from residents of the parish to developing a neighbourhood plan, and identifying a developing a good volunteer team would be key to ensuring continuity of a long term project of this nature.

Whilst it is not currently possible to hold public meetings, this situation should have changed by June this year. A summary of anticipated costs for a public meeting is inset below:

Item	Cost £
Hire of Dulcie Smith room at Memorial Social Centre @ £10.00/hour	£30.00
600 A5 flyers for delivery to homes in the parish to notify a public meeting	£80.00
Cost of Planning Consultant to attend meeting to explain the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan Time (1.5 hrs travel and 1.5 hours at the venue) plus mileage (80 miles)	£200 plus VAT
Total	£310.00

Since the last meeting I have been contacted by four local residents who support the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish and would be willing to contribute their time and expertise to a volunteer group.

Recommendation:

The Parish Council agree to:

- 6.1 arrange a public meeting (when COVID regulations permit this) to present information to residents of the parish about Neighbourhood Planning, and authorise the cost of such a meeting, including hire of meeting room, refreshments, publicity and the time of a Neighbourhood Plan planning consultant, at a cost of not more than £500.00 plus VAT from the Neighbourhood Plan; and**
- 6.2 in the event that residents of the parish agree at that meeting that they wish to establish a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish, appoint two councillors to the steering group.**



INGREDIENTS

Accessibility

Trust

Equality

Mutual benefit

Evaluation

Diversity

A RECIPE FOR CO-PRODUCTION

Phone: 01449 703 949

[www.healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk
/co-production](http://www.healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/co-production)

Healthwatch Suffolk held a community event called '**Cooking Up Co-production**'.

The theme of cooking inspired many to get involved and have a voice in how organisations and people who use services can work together.

Principles are the foundations of working together in a way that we all agree is right.

Following the event, people voted to decide what each of the principles of co-production really mean.

This card shows the principles, and how following a recipe for co-production can help make sure people work together in co-production.

Accessibility means...

1. Creating a safe and welcoming environment for everyone to join in.
2. That all participation is valuable, it doesn't have to be throughout a project, people can usefully drop in and out.
3. Having flexibility; projects, ideas and ways of doing things, can change as they develop.

Trust means...

1. Communicating and agreeing a clear vision from the start so everyone is on the same page, using language that we all can understand.
2. Allowing people to talk openly and honestly. Including about budgets, resources and limitations.
3. Telling each other what works and what is not working.

Equality means...

1. Giving everyone an open opportunity.
2. Being non-judgemental.
3. Respecting the things that are important to service-users.

A RECIPE FOR CO-PRODUCTION

Mutual benefit means...

1. Feeling empowered, appreciated, and like that you are making a difference.
2. Sharing resources and knowledge between service-users and services.
3. Developing each others' skills.

Evaluation means...

1. Service and service-users agree the shared goals at the beginning.
2. A measure for improvement and quality in services.
3. Thinking about what we have done and learning from that experience.

Diversity means...

1. That everyone is an expert in their personal experience.
2. Respecting differences.
3. Every individual is unique, and this can enrich the journey of co-production.

Getting co-production initiatives right

Eight key learning points for all involved in the developing of co-production initiatives

- 1. You cannot co-produce a solution if you have not identified the problem or challenge with people in co-production first.** Co-production means involving people from the start.

- 2. Co-production means everyone's active involvement.** All contributions are equal. It is particularly important to have diversity, from those who use services and those who understand the wider community.

- 3. Co-production does not work if people think they already have the answers.** All participants should be willing to explore and negotiate different ways forward.

- 4. Leadership needs to facilitate and be appropriate in style.** Leaders will be found in different places in co-production, not just in a manager who is responsible for delivering the project or change.

- 5. Do not expect short-term changes when starting co-production - it's an approach to gain long-term benefits.** People need to understand the nature of co-production and how to take it forward, and there needs to be trust and understanding between everyone involved.

- 6. The starting point for change is cultural and behavioural.** Listen to and act upon information that was not previously heard, and work in ways to include different people, and considering different types of solutions.

- 7. It is essential to evidence the outcomes of co-production.** Co-production requires resources and people giving their time. As a result, there is a need to show evidence of valuable outcomes that justifies this.

- 8. It is different everywhere.** Given all the above points, and the huge variety of ways that co-production can be used, there is no real template for how to do it. This means you can be creative and innovative with a tailored approach.



Click the NDTi logo to read a full report on co-producing support for people with long-term health conditions.



Click Healthwatch Suffolk's logo to see the secret local recipe of agreed principles that underpin any co-production.

Wickhambrook Neighbourhood Plan

OUTLINE FEE PROPOSAL
January 2021

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Background

Places4People Planning Consultancy are pleased to submit this outline fee proposal to provide professional support for the preparation of the Wickhambrook Neighbourhood Plan.

The proposal has been prepared prior to meeting the client and understanding what skills might be available within the community to undertake some of the tasks. It is based on our experience of working with other neighbourhood plan groups since 2015 but we therefore reserve the right to amend the Fee Proposal once more information is known.

The Proposal

The proposal is broken down into phases based upon what we consider to be needed to assist the Parish Council through to the completion of the Plan, having regard to the statutory requirements for the preparation of neighbourhood plans. The phases included in this proposal are:

1. General support in gathering evidence to support the Plan.
2. Preparation of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan and "Pre-Submission" consultation
3. Completion of the statutory documentation required for the submission of the draft Plan to the Local Planning Authority
4. Examination and post-examination stage

Phase 1: General Support and Guidance

We have allowed a set number of hours to provide "critical friend" advice and support in establishing a Working Group and getting work underway on the Plan and to provide guidance on:

- information collection,
- securing free Technical Support available from the Government Neighbourhood Planning support packages,
- advising on other work that might be necessary to provide evidence to support the neighbourhood plan policies, and
- community engagement including the production of consultation material.

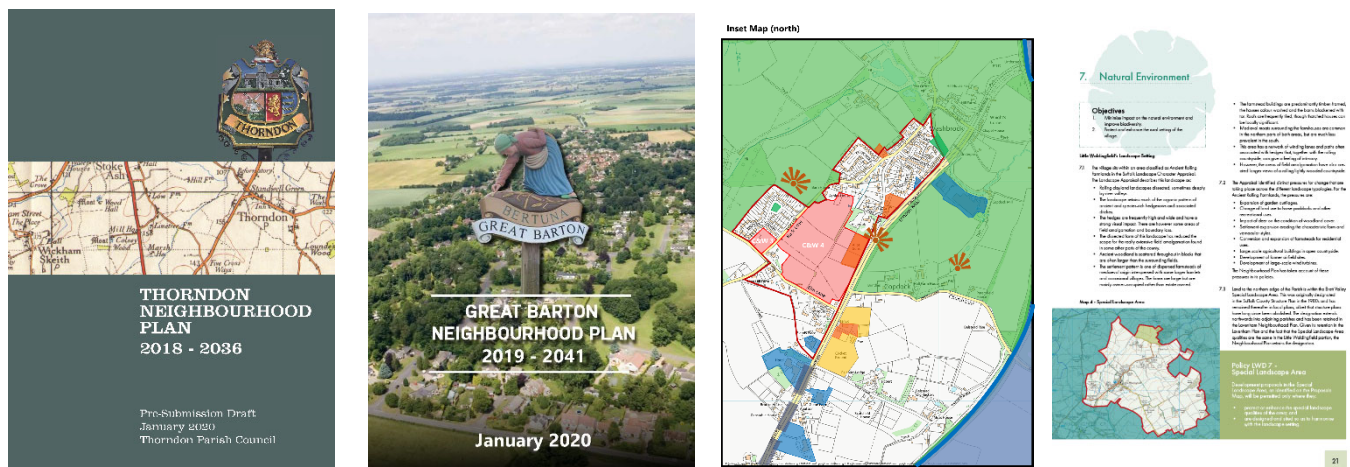
The support would also include attending meetings of the Working Group as necessary. Given the unknown quantity of work involved at this stage, we would provide a set number of hours to provide support including, subject to the lifting of current restrictions, travel costs involved in attending up to six meetings of the Group.



Phase 2: Preparation of Draft Neighbourhood Plan and "Pre-Submission" consultation

We would liaise with the Working Group to complete the preparation of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Typically, we would prepare the draft planning policies and supporting text in accordance with a timetable to be agreed with the Working Group. The Working Group would contribute additional content. We would also prepare the statutory maps that are required within the Plan but will require the Parish Council to subscribe to the Parish Online mapping package. We would allow for attending three meetings of the Working Group.

Prior to finalising the Plan for the formal "pre-submission" consultation stage (Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan regulations), we would seek informal comments from West Suffolk Council Planning Policy Officers and ask the Council to screen the emerging Plan as required by the Strategic Environmental and the Habitats Regulations.



Once the draft Plan has been agreed by the Working Group, we would advise on consultation arrangements in order that the statutory requirements under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations are met. The Parish Council, as the "qualifying body" will be responsible for heading up the consultation process and therefore the draft Plan will need to be formally approved for consultation by the Council.

We would also provide document design and desk-top publishing of the Neighbourhood Plan (examples are illustrated above).

Phase 3: Submission of Plan to West Suffolk Council

We would liaise with the Working Group to agree post-consultation modifications and the preparation of the supporting material that is required to be submitted to West Suffolk Council.

Phase 4: Examination of the Plan

We would advise and provide support on matters relating to the public consultation to be undertaken by West Suffolk Council and the independent examination of the Plan.

Fees

Without knowing the detail of the amount of support required or what the Plan will cover, we can only provide an indicative fee range based on experience of working with other Parish Councils. On this basis and without prejudice, it is considered that our fees would be in the region of £8,000 to £10,000 +VAT. These costs could be met by applying for a Government Neighbourhood Planning Grant, where up to £18,000 plus additional free Technical Support is available. Generally, there is rarely a need for a Parish Council to incur any costs in preparing a Plan.

Places4People Planning Consultancy

About us

Places4People draws on over 40 years of experience in a range of town planning fields including the preparation of strategic and local plans, site briefs and concept statements, community engagement, public realm advice, parish plans and projects in historic towns.

Since our formation in 2015 we have concentrated on providing specialist support services for neighbourhood planning, providing advice to the following:

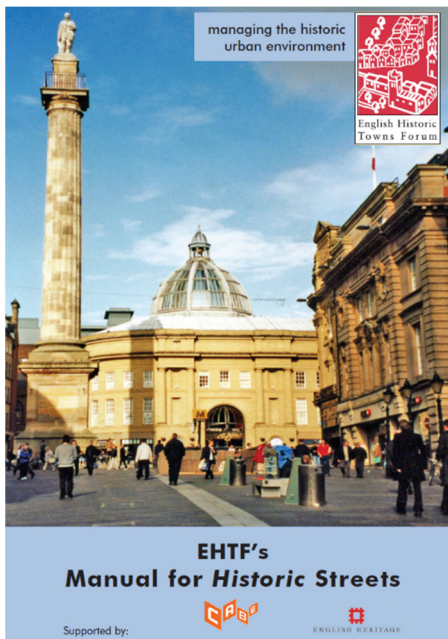
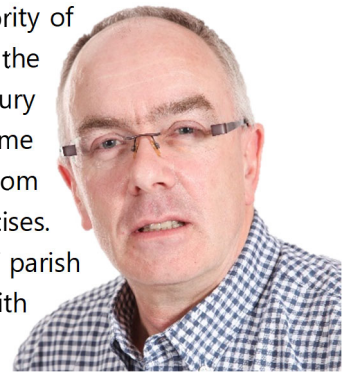
- **Cambridge City Council & South Cambridgeshire District Council** – Neighbourhood Plan support.
- **Thanet District Council** – Neighbourhood Plan support.
- **Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils** - Neighbourhood Plan “Critical Friend” Advice to parish councils including Debenham, Elmswell, Haughley, Stowupland, Stradbroke and Woolpit
- **Direct Neighbourhood Plan support** - We have specialised in providing support packages to parish councils preparing neighbourhood plans. This has included everything from occasional document review and advice to a complete package of project management and document preparation.

To date we have completed seven neighbourhood plans with four currently awaiting a Referendum in May 2021:

Lawshall (made)	Assington (Examination)	Haddenham, Cambs
Hargrave (made)	Little Waldingfield	Reach, Cambs
Aldham (made)	(Examination)	Barningham
Sutton, Cambs (made)	Copdock & Washbrook (at	Freckenham
Rickinghall & Botesdale	consultation)	Great Waldingfield
(made)	West Mersea (at consultation)	Great Bardfield, Essex
Elmsett (made)	Bentley (at consultation)	Rushmere St Andrew
Newmarket (made)	Hartest (at consultation)	Earl Soham
Drinkstone (Referendum)	Beyton	Chilton
Thorndon (Referendum)	Easton	Watton, Norfolk
Great Barton (Referendum)	Broomfield, Essex	Brettenham
Laxfield (Referendum)	Glemsford	

Ian Poole, Owner & Director

Ian has been a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute for 25 years. The majority of Ian's experience has been at local authority level, more recently as the manager of the planning policy, conservation, landscape and urban design service at St Edmundsbury Borough Council. He has also had short periods as Acting Head of Planning at the same authority. Ian has successfully managed the delivery of several local plan documents from inception to adoption and delivered a number of community engagement exercises. During his career, he has also worked with parishes to facilitate their preparation of parish plans and organised community engagement and facilitation courses in conjunction with the then Suffolk ACRE (now Community Action Suffolk).



Planning in historic built environments has figured largely in Ian's career and he has contributed to the preparation of good practice guidance published by the English Historic Towns Forum, an organisation that he chaired between 2004 and 2006. In 2008 he was awarded a travel scholarship by the government backed organisation CABE Space, which involved studying the management and maintenance of streets and squares in European historic cities. Ian was also a major contributor and advisor for the preparation of the Manual for Historic Streets.

Ian is the founder and Managing Director of Places4People Planning Consultancy and is currently advising clients both in local authorities and the private sector. In addition, he is regularly invited to talk at seminars and conferences in the UK and Europe on topics covering planning, historic towns and

public realm.

Ian is also a Commissaire (race referee) for the Union Cycliste International, the World governing body for cycle sport and is employed as a tutor on a casual basis by British Cycling. He is part of the organising committee for the 2021 and 2022 World Masters Cyclo-Cross Championships to be held at Trinity Park, Ipswich.

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