

Neighbourhood Planning Summary Report

The Neighbourhood Planning Working Group (NPWG) has met twice since the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, on 6th and 23rd June with Cllr T Turner acting as Chair.

The NPWG held a pop-up engagement event in the parish council gazebo at the Jubilee picnic on 5th June and is currently preparing for its next pop up engagement event at the Wickhambrook Fete and Flower Show on 9th July. At this event the group plans to:

- Feed back on the Household Survey Results & Stakeholder interviews
- Report back on West Suffolk's Preferred options for housing in Wickhambrook and feedback on a further consultation NPWG has undertaken online canvassing the views of residents (<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/P2CP3HJ>)
- Set out timelines for the next stages of preparation of the Neighbourhood plan
- Remind residents to submit their views to West Suffolk on its consultation on Preferred Options for the next Local Plan.

The group has also published a consultation paper on the NP pages of the Parish Website, setting out its findings from the Household Questionnaire, the Housing Needs Survey undertaken by Cambridgeshire ACRE, and West Suffolk's Preferred Options for the Local Plan currently under consultation (attached as Appendix A). Local residents were canvassed on their views by means of an on-line Questionnaire, but there were insufficient responses received to be representative.

Shortly after West Suffolk's consultation on Preferred Options opened, two landowners canvassed residents of the parish by means of a hand delivered flyer, proposing an alternative option for housing development in the parish. It is important to note that this option (WS518) is a site which has been omitted by West Suffolk (as were all the other sites put forward under SHELAA). This has, however, caused some confusion amongst residents of the parish and:

- The NPWG is using the pop-up engagement day on 9th July to explain again West Suffolk's Preferred Option and seek the views of residents before continuing with further process on Neighbourhood plan
- The landowners may still have an opportunity to submit the proposal again under any future call for sites, however they will need to provide evidence against West Suffolk's previous decision
- West Suffolk will also call upon Type A parishes and Local Service Centres for smaller sites for up to 10 houses.

The NPWG has also:

- Identified that Master design plan & landscape appraisal for preferred options site, would be a useful element of the next grant application under technical assistance (this would require a further consultation in the autumn prior to publishing a draft Neighbourhood Plan)
- It would be dependent on consensus of agreement from residents for the site proposed by West Suffolk
- Would include a housing survey for the types of houses needed by the community for any new development (Size, type, no Beds), mixed use, in addition to proposals for landscaping of any new site to complement/enhance the parish

- NPWG identified the need to have a full Landscape survey conducted as the one commissioned by West Suffolk is not sufficiently detailed for the NP and would be required to be applied for in next grant application under technical assistance
- Suggested some amendments to images used in the Landscape appraisal work commissioned in March of this year, have provided these to AECAM
- Understood that West Suffolk will recommend that maybe 30% or 40% of any new homes built are 'affordable' – this can mean 'affordable' to buy on the open market
- Next meetings 14th July to review Stakeholder interviews and survey on West Suffolk proposed Site of 40 houses, recommendation on next steps with respect to the Preferred site from West Suffolk

Requests:

Application of next grants to include landscape appraisal, master plan design under technical assistance

A Neighbourhood Plan for Wickhambrook

A group of village residents is working on behalf of the Parish Council to make a Neighbourhood Plan for Wickhambrook. This Plan will help us to manage development in the parish over the coming 20 years.

A questionnaire was sent to every home in the parish asking you for your views. There were 258 replies, representing over half the households – a very good response.

This is what you said:

“We value our village the way it is now:”



The views of Wickhambrook residents

“Wickhambrook is a village not a town – we want it to stay like that.”

- people like the village the way it is
- 95% said our peace and quiet are very important
- 91% value rural feel and access to the countryside
- and people cherish the sense of community

“We value the amenities we have in the village – for example:”

- the shop, the post office and the petrol station
- the health centre and the school
- the pub
- the MSC and the playing field

“We are against large-scale or mass development.”

- 42% wanted fewer than 20 new houses over 20 years
- 82% wanted fewer than 50
- any new housing should be built in small developments

“New housing should meet the needs of local people as a priority.”

- we need a variety of different kinds of accommodation to help local people stay in their community
- 76% support providing affordable homes

“We are undecided about where any new building should happen but:”

- not on valued green field sites
- not in the outlying hamlets or on the outlying greens
- not in between so the greens and hamlets merge together

The views of Wickhambrook residents

“New building must respect the character and landscape of the village – it should:”

- protect green spaces and the natural environment
- keep Wickhambrook’s pattern of separate greens
- conserve listed buildings and their surroundings
- enhance heritage and historical assets

“The environment is important to all of us.”

- 96% said protect open views, green spaces and woodlands
- 96% said protect hedgerows and trees
- 96% value wildlife and biodiversity

“A sustainable future is important.”

- 94% said our fields should continue to be used to grow food
- 82% were in favour of conservation or rewilding
- many think we should develop natural and renewable energy sources (77%) and water harvesting (65%)

“We are not sure about economic development in the village.”

- 67% said this was not important or had no opinion
- some people (35%) would like to see more support for small businesses or self-employed people locally
- better broadband (42 responses) and spaces to socialise (39 responses), work (12 responses) and meet (11 responses) would help some people

The views of Wickhambrook residents

“Infrastructure in Wickhambrook cannot cope with more houses, more people and more traffic.”

- 90% said this is important
- roads need to be maintained, pot holes filled and hedges trimmed
- we need better road safety and traffic control
- parking is a problem at the school and health centre

“We need better footpaths, quiet lanes and cycle ways.”

- 83% want to make the village safer and easier for pedestrians and cyclists

“We are all concerned about the quality of our environment – and litter and dog fouling in particular.”

- many people are also worried about vandalism, air quality and light pollution

“In 20 years’ time, we hope Wickhambrook . . .”

- still has community spirit
- enjoys peace and quiet
- still has a rural feel – with lots of green space and access to open countryside
- has looked after its historical assets and pattern of hamlets and greens
- is still a village that people love to live in.



Affordable homes and rural exception sites

Cambridgeshire ACRE carried out a Housing Needs Survey at the same time as the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire. In total, 182 forms were returned – representing around a third of households.

Most people who responded considered that their current home is suitable for their needs. Cambridgeshire ACRE say that ten households with strong connections to the community may be in need of affordable housing to allow family members to stay in the village. These people are of various ages and would need different types of accommodation.

To ensure that affordable homes can be protected for local people, national planning policy allows such development to occur on a 'rural exception site' – normally agricultural land outside the settlement boundary of the village where land values are lower. These homes would be for rental or shared ownership for people with a local connection and would be provided in addition to any houses built elsewhere in the village for sale on the open market.

To ensure that housing always remains available to local people as a priority, these kinds of affordable homes can be provided through a community land and a housing association.

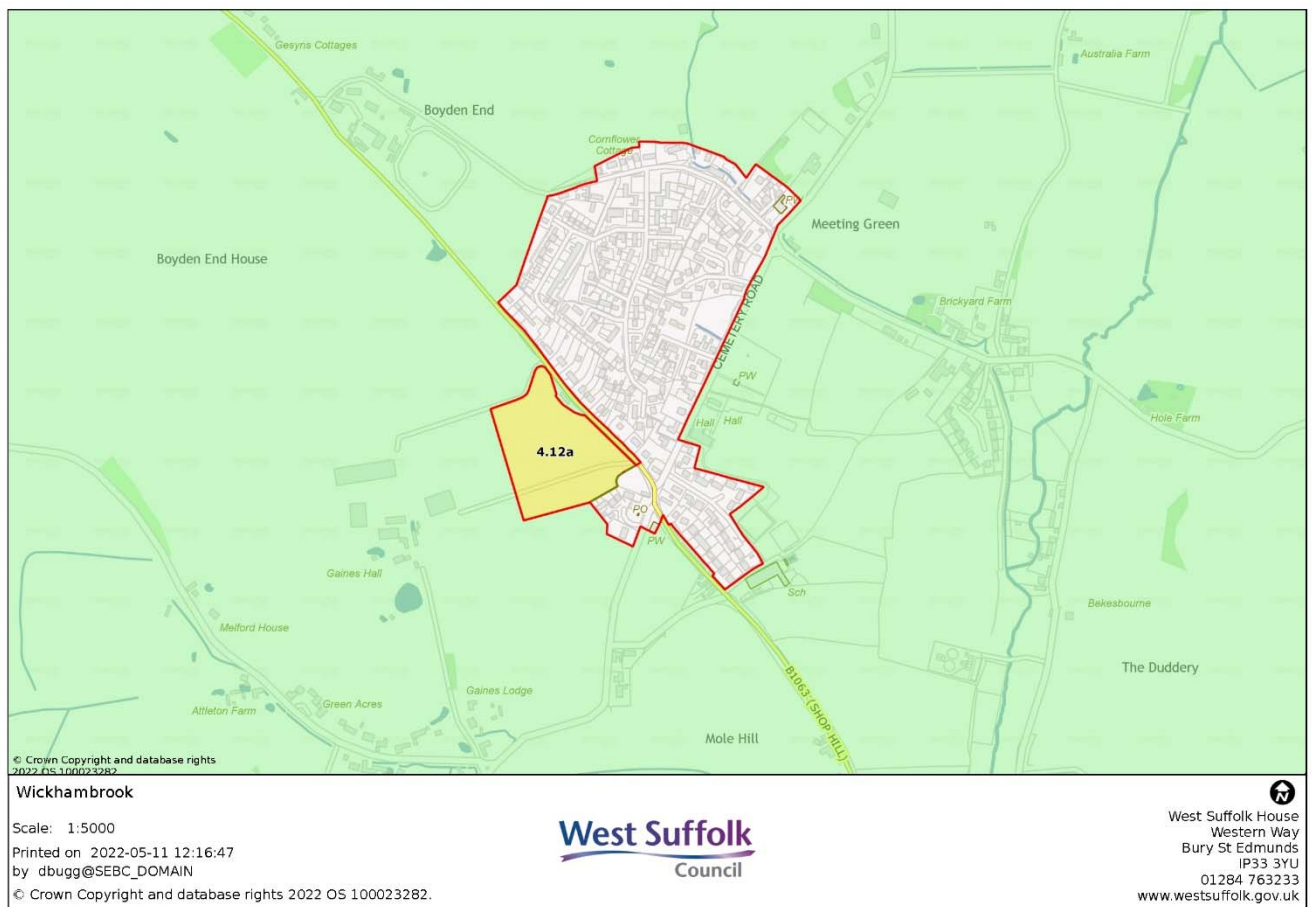


West Suffolk's Preferred Options for the Local Plan

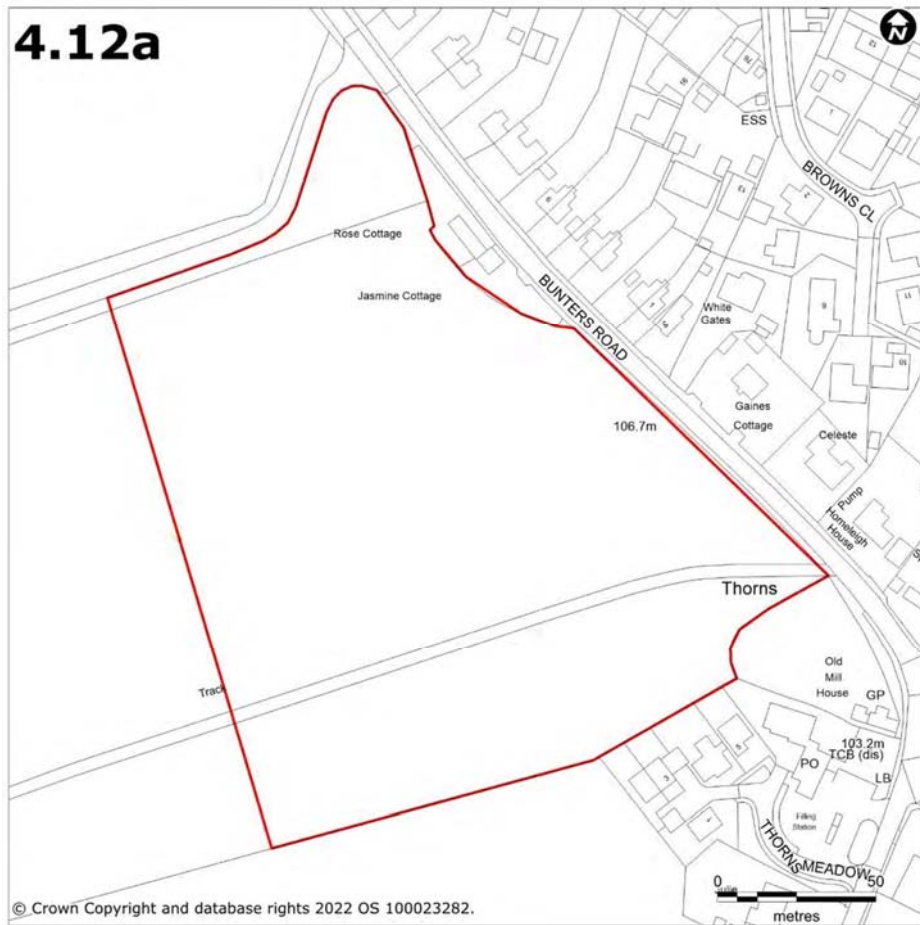
West Suffolk is preparing a Local Plan to govern development throughout the district for the coming 20 years. Many of us will have commented on their general proposals at the Issues and Options stage.

West Suffolk has now put forward a specific proposal for Wickhambrook as part of the Preferred Options phase of the development of the Local Plan. We have a chance to comment on this proposal until 26 July 2022.

West Suffolk suggests that Wickhambrook should allow 40 new houses to be built in the parish over the coming 20 years. Their preferred site is south-west of Bunters Road between the Old Mill House and the access road for Claydon Drills. The site occupies 2.85 hectares.



West Suffolk's Preferred Options for the Local Plan



West Suffolk say that there is an opportunity for 'mixed-use development' on this site to include community facilities, retail or working spaces for small local businesses as well as houses. These houses would be for sale on the open market, but West Suffolk are also proposing that, on sites like this, 40% of the homes should be affordable. Provision would have to be made for extensive landscaping and screening.

In identifying this site, West Suffolk has rejected, for a variety of reasons, all the other sites considered during Issues and Options.

We would be interested in your views about this proposal for new building and the recommendations on affordable homes – give your views here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/X6J5H25>