

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.

Neighbourhood planning was introduced in the [Localism Act 2011](#). It is an important and powerful tool that gives communities statutory powers to shape how their communities develop.

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.

For more information about Neighbourhood Planning, see:

- West Suffolk council's web pages on [Neighbourhood plans; \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](http://westsuffolk.gov.uk) (this also includes links to plans being prepared)
- the Locality guide "[Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap](#)"

West Suffolk's policy officer has advised that

- Neighbourhood plans are part of the statutory development plan once 'Made' (adopted) by the council.
- Because it is the case that the last plan to be adopted takes precedence in the making of planning decisions (in terms of the relationship between the Neighbourhood and Local plan), West Suffolk Council as the local planning authority does try and work closely with neighbourhood planning groups to ensure that their aspirations are reflected in the local plan. In terms of timings, this would be one benefit of starting a plan now whilst West Suffolk are reviewing their local plan.
- Neighbourhood Plans are a pro-growth tool that were brought in to try and increase development.
- The neighbourhood plan preparation is led by the parish council, but West Suffolk council can provide assistance in some areas e.g. mapping and is also engaged at

various statutory stages of the process, for example in terms of checking the documents produced meet the statutory requirements and organising the submission consultation and referendum.

- If the parish decides to proceed with developing a Neighbourhood Plan, a meeting with West Suffolk should take place at an early stage so that responsibilities are clearly understood.
- Although they cannot recommend any consultants, it would be worth speaking to the following parishes, who are preparing plans:
 - Newmarket
 - Feckenham
 - Ixworth

And that a good plan to look at would be Great Barton which is awaiting referendum later this year.

https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/Planning_Policies/neighbourhood-planning/upload/Great-Barton-NP-Referendum-Version-Webfile-23-11-2020.pdf

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.

Once a neighbourhood plan has been completed, it will have to be submitted to the local planning authority and then be subject to an independent examination. This will make sure that the proper legal process has been followed and that the plan meets the basic conditions described previously (also see later section on Meeting the basic conditions).

Neighbourhood plans are subject to an independent examination and any necessary modifications are then made to ensure they meet legal requirements. They are then subjected to a public referendum. It is necessary that more than 50% of those voting in the referendum vote "yes" in order to bring the plan into force.

If successful at referendum, a neighbourhood plan comes into force as part of the statutory development plan for the area alongside the local plan. 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.

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.

Financial support

Possible sources of financial support include

- specific neighbourhood planning grants (such as those provided through the Locality neighbourhood planning support programme
- precept (for town/parish councils);
- local donations;
- developers and landowners;
- local businesses/chambers of commerce.

The Government has a grant system which should cover almost the full costs of producing a neighbourhood plan, although sometimes it's necessary for a local top-up if additional studies are required. The current earmarked reserves should therefore serve to underwrite the project and be available to draw on to kick start the project, for example:

- consultant attendance at council meeting to answer questions on NP process
- consultant talk on process and advice on survey content £800
- publicity and household survey
- specific additional studies not covered by the principal grant
- any additional time required of the Clerk & RFO to support the project.

Professional and other support

Professional support may be available from various sources, including:

- technical support through the Locality neighbourhood planning support programme
- council officer time and other support by the local planning authority (which has a duty to support the preparation of the neighbourhood plan);
- pro-bono support from local firms (e.g. planning practices, legal firms);
- pro-bono planning support through national and regional organisations;
- local working or retired professionals;
- websites (e.g. Planning Portal);
- local branches of professional bodies;
- local organisations that may be able to help with printing, developing websites/publicity/communications;
- community members, which may become apparent through identifying the skills and knowledge available in the local community (there has been some interest from community members following the Issues and Options Consultation which the parish council might draw on in establishing a group).
- Contracting a specialist consultant to provide advise through key stages of the development of the plan

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

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.

Neighbourhood Plans generally take around 18 months to 2 years to complete at the Parish stage before Plans are submitted to the District Council for the final statutory stages. That

can take, on average, around 6 months (this has been delayed further for some parishes, due to COVID-19. Referendums were due to be held alongside the May '21 local elections.

There may be a resource and/or cost implication with respect to the support of the clerk and RFO throughout the process.

Actions:

- 1. The Parish Council is asked if it wishes to formally consider developing a Neighbourhood Plan (commencing in the next financial year) at the February meeting of the parish council.**

If, yes

Recommendation:

The Parish Council authorise the cost for a specialist consultant to attend the next meeting of the parish council to provide further initial advice on the process and commitment the parish council would be undertaking at £80.00 plus VAT.

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.

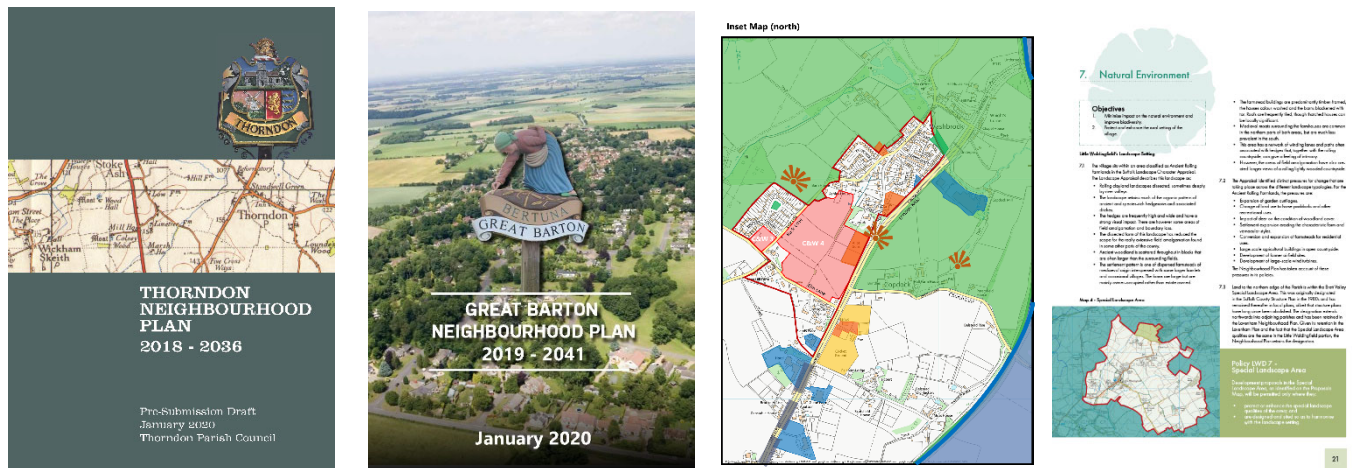
The support would also include attending meetings of the Working Group as necessary. Given the unknown quantity of work involved at this stage, we would provide a set number of hours to provide support including, subject to the lifting of current restrictions, travel costs involved in attending up to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

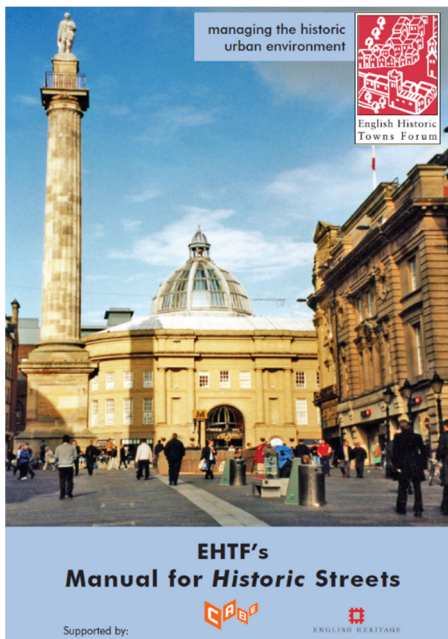
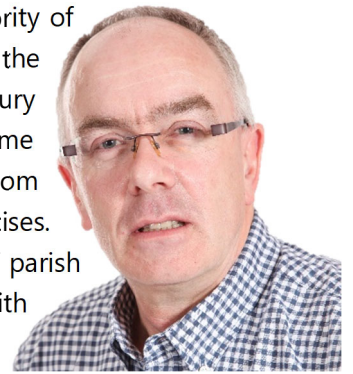
- **Cambridge City Council & South Cambridgeshire District Council** – Neighbourhood Plan support.
- **Thanet District Council** – Neighbourhood Plan support.
- **Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils** - Neighbourhood Plan “Critical Friend” Advice to parish councils including Debenham, Elmswell, 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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