

Watlington Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036



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Introduction

1. Watlington is a village within West Norfolk and is situated approximately six miles south of King's Lynn, and seven miles north of Downham Market. The parish has a population of 2,455 (Census, 2011) and is served by Watlington railway station (on the Fen Line between London Kings Cross and King's Lynn) which is situated less than a mile from the centre of the village.
2. Watlington has a range of community facilities which include a general practice surgery, primary school, bus route, railway station, General Store/Post Office, and pub. The area provides a local employment base which has developed from its role in serving the local agricultural community.
3. Large parts of the parish consist of low-lying fields bordered by the river Great Ouse, located about 1.5km west of the village centre. The river creates a natural western boundary to the parish. The village is situated within the 'Settled Farmland with Plantations' landscape character type. This type of landscape is defined in the Landscape Character Assessment¹, as having intact mature landscape structure including mature parkland and trees, intact hedgerows, and woodland plantations. There is also a patchwork of grazed parkland with views and a moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area².
4. Watlington is a very rural village. Angel Field Millennium Green, due to its central location and location of the village sign at its entrance, is the focal point of the settlement. Local islands of greenery are dispersed across the village, including play areas at several locations such as Warren Close, Stone Close, MUGA, the play area on the church recreation field, the church yard of St Peter and St Paul's, the grounds of the primary school, and the sports pitches north of the Village Hall. Due to the sparse settlement pattern, many properties look out onto open fields and small woodland areas, which is an important part of the character of the village. Watatunga Wildlife Reserve is a large expanse of green space valued by many residents, and also a significant draw to the area. However, it must be noted that part of Watatunga is located outside of the neighbourhood area.
5. Although Watlington doesn't have a Conservation Area for planning purposes, it does have noteworthy architectural legacy, with several historic buildings that are representative of the Norfolk vernacular. There are seven listed buildings and structures, including the Grade I listed St Peter and St Paul's Church, as well as one Scheduled Monument, the moat at the Old Rectory.
6. The housing requirement for Watlington over the plan period is 32 new homes, which is to be met through allocation G112.1- Land South of Thieves Bridge Road in the borough council's emerging local plan. This allocation was carried over from the current adopted local plan (SADMP, 2016) as it yet to be built out. In

¹ Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (2007) Landscape Character Assessment Final Report, Chris Blandford Associates

² [SADMP Plan Adopted 2016 \(1\).pdf](#)

December 2021 a planning application was submitted for 40 new homes (Ref. No: 21/02421/FM); 37 of these are affordable homes to rent or which provide routes to home ownership. This allocation with the proposed 40 new homes would provide an additional 8 dwellings to the windfall housing numbers. The permission status is still showing on the Borough Council website as awaiting decision³.

7. In addition to this, over the last five years permission has been granted for 41 new dwellings, with a large development of 22 homes on Downham Road permitted with outline permission (20/01661/OM) in September 2021 (which includes some affordable homes). These permissions represent windfall development, outside of any planned growth in the local plan. There has been some modest housing growth in recent years and as the local plan allows for windfall development, and infill, within the main settlement area, there may be more. This plan will influence housing development, including the design and mix of any new homes, and will ensure that the special parts of the parish, such as green spaces, will be protected.

Neighbourhood Planning

Overview of Neighbourhood Planning

8. Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011. Neighbourhood planning legislation came into effect in April 2012 and gives communities the power to agree a Neighbourhood Development Plan. It is an important and powerful tool that gives communities such as parish councils statutory powers to agree a shared vision and shape how their community develops and changes over time.
9. Watlington is in the borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk and so the neighbourhood plan sits within the context of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan. The borough council has the adopted 2011 Core Strategy and the 2016 Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) document over the plan period to 2026. The borough council is also working on an emerging local plan review with a timeframe to 2036 with a revised lower housing target based on the standard method.
10. The neighbourhood plan will be a document that sets out planning policies for the Parish and these will be used, alongside the local plan, to decide whether planning applications are approved or not. It's a community document, that's written by local people who know and love the area.
11. The neighbourhood plan has to support the delivery of the 'strategic policies' contained in the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan, and so it cannot promote less development than set out in local plan for example. The local plan sets the overall strategic policies such as the amount of new development and the distribution of that development across the district and the general protection of the environment.

³ Status of this application last checked on the Borough Council website- 10/11/2022

12. Within the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy (2011) Watlington is a key rural service centre under policy CS02 because they provide a range of services which meet every day needs for the local and wider community. The local plan review seeks to promote Watlington within the Settlement Hierarchy (LP02) to a Growth Key Rural Service Centre for two main reasons, firstly it currently has a wealth of facilities including the railway station and secondly it is geographically located within the Local Plan review's A10/main rail line growth corridor, being almost central between King's Lynn and Downham Market⁴.
13. As stated in para 4.1.22-4.1.23 of the emerging local plan review (2016-2036) under LP02 Settlement Hierarchy, the borough council does not seek to make specific allocations for those areas who are preparing or have adopted a neighbourhood plan within the review period. This is because there is no absolute need for further allocations to meet the local housing need at this moment in time, instead they encourage neighbourhood plans to promote site allocations in their plan area if appropriate sites come forward. If neighbourhood plans, choose to do this the homes will be treated as additional flexibility or windfall rather than figures to be relied upon for calculating the local housing need⁵.
14. The adopted SADMP (2016) allocates one site for development which is policy G112.1- Land south of Thieves Bridge Road, this has been carried forward into the emerging local plan review and is land of around 1.8 hectares and allocated for residential development of at least 32 dwellings. No further allocations as explained previously in para 10 have been made for Watlington. Whilst Watlington is encouraged in the local plan review to consider allocation appropriate allocations regarding its status in the settlement hierarchy, Watlington has chosen not to do so since there is no absolute need.
15. The neighbourhood plan can include 'non-strategic policies', such as the mix of housing, design principles for new development, conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment, protecting local green spaces from development, and setting out other development management policies. Importantly, the neighbourhood plan will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
16. Once a neighbourhood plan has been 'made', following consultation with residents, examination, and a local referendum, it becomes part of the statutory development plan for the parish and will be used by the borough council in deciding on all planning applications in the parish.

Process of developing this Neighbourhood Plan

17. The parish area shown in **Figure 1** was designated as a neighbourhood plan area in March 2020. Working on behalf of the community, Watlington neighbourhood plan steering group has prepared this draft plan that will shape and influence

⁴ [Local Plan Review Pre-Submission Stage 2021 - Keystone \(objective.co.uk\)](#)

⁵ [Local Plan Review Pre-Submission Stage 2021 - Keystone \(objective.co.uk\)](#)

future development and change across the parish. Looking at **Figure 2**, we are at the stage of consulting on the pre-submission plan (Regulation 14).

18. A broad range of evidence has been reviewed to determine issues and develop policies for the plan. This includes population data from the Office of National Statistics, housing data, a review of environmental designations and historical records. Further work to gather new evidence has also been undertaken, including an assessment of local green spaces, key views, heritage assets and the impact of second homes, all supported by consultation activities with the community.
19. Any new development should serve both current and future residents. The policies contained within this plan will enable us to influence the design and type of any new homes being delivered in the parish, as well as ensuring infrastructure improvements are delivered alongside growth to maximise community benefit.

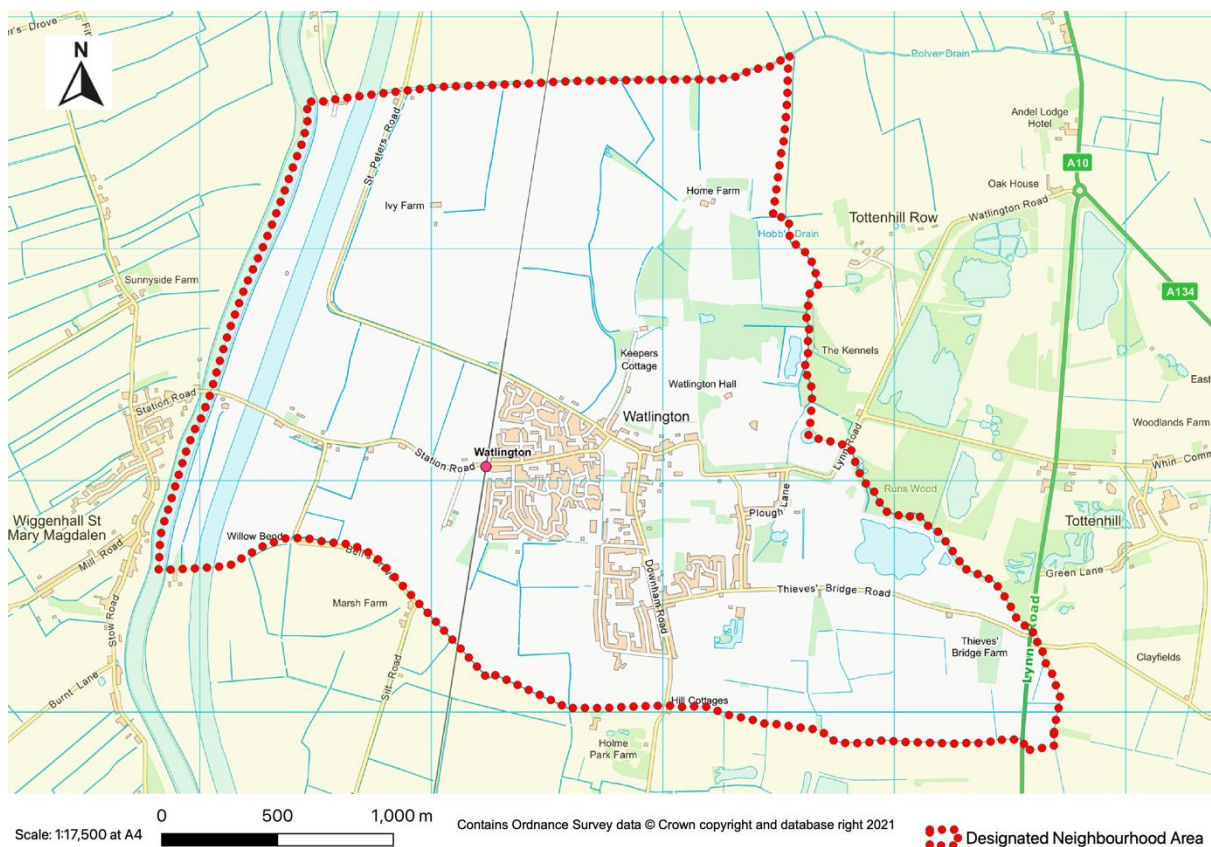


Figure 1: Designated Neighbourhood Area

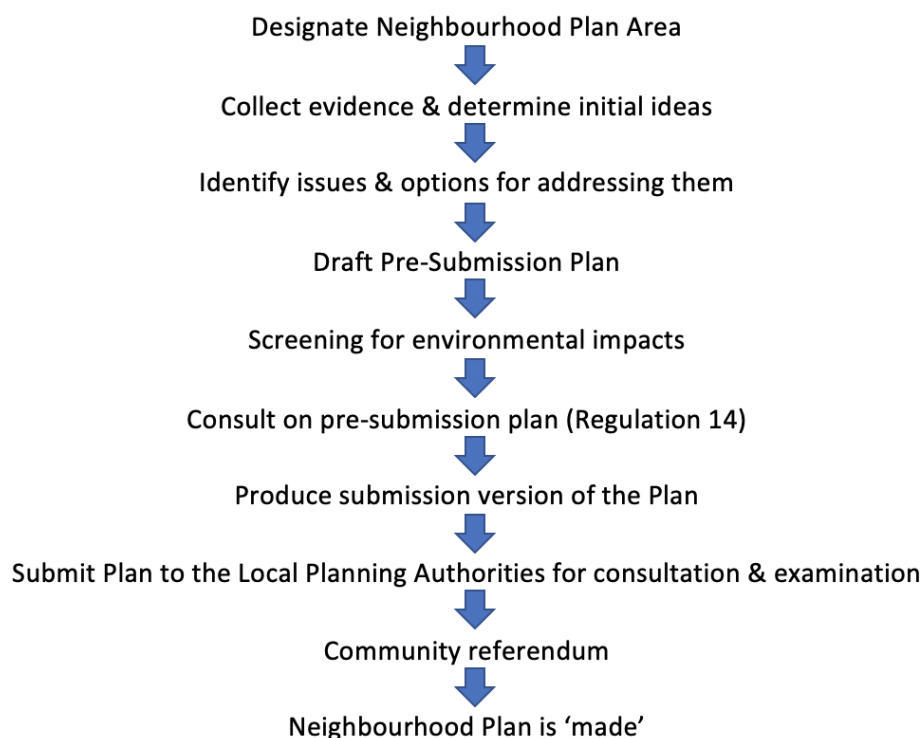


Figure 2: Neighbourhood Plan Process for Watlington

Consultation with Residents

20. The Watlington neighbourhood plan has been developed by residents and parish councillors, reflecting the views and aspirations of the wider community. A steering group, comprising a mix of residents and councillors, has overseen the process throughout on behalf of the Parish Council as the 'qualifying body'. Engaging the wider community in the plan's development has been a key focus for the working group.
21. A consultation exercise ran for 10 weeks from 16 February to 28 April 2021. This included a survey with 17 questions. 25 Feb 2021, this ran until 31 March but was extended to 9 April 2021. There were 205 responses which is 10% of the village's population. The overriding sense from the survey was that whilst people will accept a small degree of change to the village, respondents are protective of its rural, green location with the essence of a peaceful village life that offers a safe and secure environment for all that live here.
22. **The main issues and concerns raised in the survey included:**
 - People want improvements to their health and wellbeing and quality of life. The survey findings indicate that there are some quick wins to be had from the creation of additional foot and cycle paths within new and existing developments.
 - Protecting woodland and wildlife sites were equally important as is the need to create more wildlife habitats.

- People want to maintain the green spaces in the centre of the village and generally only build on the perimeters.
- The services such as the Medical Centre and the village shop are central and important to village life.
- Respondents want any buildings to be sympathetic with the look and feel of Norfolk aesthetically.
- As a generalisation people don't want many new homes built. This is backed up by the survey that demonstrates the most popular answer is that villagers want no more than between 0 and 10 new dwellings.
- Respondents favour dwellings that are eco-friendly and affordable 2 bed dwellings with villagers and their family's given priority.
- A call for sites was originally done by the Borough Council and the most popular location for development was the site West of the Station (585/580). The next most favoured sites were St Peters Field (H469) and, as selected by the Local Plan, (WAT13) running along Thieves Bridge Road and Downham Road. The least favoured were the playing fields (286) and the Mill Road/Downham Road fields (H464, 465, 370). **However, these haven't been taken forward.**

23. Further detail of the consultation activity undertaken to develop this plan is included within the Consultation Statement (which will accompany the final plan once submitted to West Norfolk Borough Council).

Vision and Objectives

Vision

The rural character and special identity of Watlington will be protected and enhanced. The rural character is defined by many features, but especially habitats and green infrastructure for wildlife, the openness of the landscape, historic buildings, and the tranquillity of the parish and village.

In protecting and enhancing this rural character, the plan will result in a more coherent, connected, and expansive ecological network of key habitats that delivers a significant net ecological gain for wildlife over the plan period. The plan will ensure that the openness of the landscape is retained for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike, adding as it does to the tranquillity of parish, and that the parish's historic and heritage assets continue to provide a sense of place. There is a real vibrancy within the community, and the plan builds on this by protecting green spaces and community facilities, which help people to stay in the parish, and create opportunities for people to meet, interact, and get to know each other.

Finally, the plan will make a key contribution towards addressing climate change, both through reducing greenhouse gas emissions and overseeing a radical change in the development of a network of trees and hedgerows to absorb CO₂.

Objectives

- A. Ensure the natural environment is a key consideration in all decisions about how Watlington changes;
- B. Conserve and enhance Watlington's ecological network;
- C. Ensure any future housing development meets the needs of current and future residents of the parish;
- D. Promote sensitive development that responds to local character and protects and enriches the landscape of the parish, and safeguarding key views;
- E. Ensure that new development and conversions are sympathetic to the character of the parish's historic areas;
- F. Respond meaningfully to climate change, promoting sustainable development and energy efficiency;
- G. Conserve the significance of heritage assets;
- H. Protect important green spaces;
- I. Promote access to the countryside for recreation and enjoyment; and
- J. Reduce the impact of traffic through the village, investigating ways to emphasise entrances to the village, signifying the change from rural roads to speed restricted areas.

24. Responding to climate change is a central part of the neighbourhood plan, as can be seen in the following policy areas:
- Policy 2 requires new homes to be designed to high standards of sustainability. This will reduce energy consumption which should reduce CO₂ emissions;
 - Policies 5 and 6 promote the protection of the natural environmental and natural features such as trees, as well as the planting of new trees, hedges and habitats. Increased vegetation should not only have a cooling effect on air temperature, but will absorb CO₂ emissions;
 - Policy 7 focuses on flood risk and drainage, which will need to take account of the increase in severe weather storm events due to climate change; and
 - Policy 11 encourages the use of sustainable transport such as walking. This should reduce some car journeys which in turn will reduce CO₂ emissions.

Housing and Design

25. NPPF Chapter 5 requires plans ensure a significant increase in the supply of new homes. The local plan policy CS02 designates Watlington a Key Rural Service Centre, making it appropriate for limited growth appropriate to secure the sustainability of the settlement. Watlington is identified as a 'Growth Key Rural Service Centre' in the emerging local plan. LP01 allows for appropriate levels of growth to take place.
26. The housing requirement for Watlington over the plan period is 32 new homes, which is to be met through an allocation in the borough council's emerging local plan. This was allocated in the adopted local plan as Policy G112.1 (Watlington – land south of Thieves Bridge Road) and is being rolled forward to the emerging Local Plan as it yet

to be built out. In December 2021 a planning application was submitted for 40 new homes (Ref. No: 21/02421/FM); 37 of these are affordable homes to rent or which provide routes to home ownership. The site is shown below in **Figure 3**.

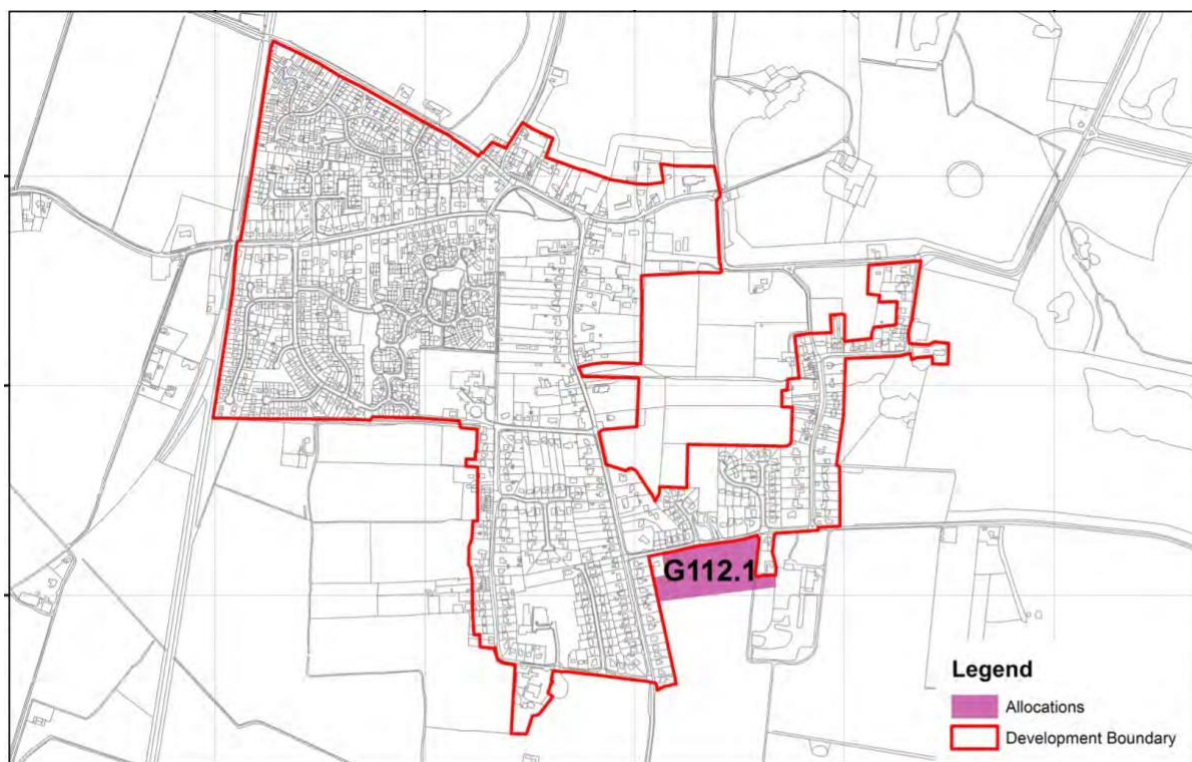


Figure 3: Watlington Site Allocation in the BCKLWN Local Plan

27. The Local Plan describes the site as ideally located for residential development since it would represent a natural continuation of housing along Thieves Bridge Road, without significantly extending the village into countryside.
28. Over the last five years permission has been granted for 41 new dwellings, with a large development of 22 homes permitted in 2021 (which includes some affordable homes). These permissions represent windfall development, outside of any planned growth in the local plan. There has been some modest housing growth in recent years and as the local plan allows for windfall development, and infill, within the main settlement area, there may be more. This plan will influence housing growth, including the design and mix of any new homes, and will ensure that the special parts of the parish, such as green spaces, will be protected.
29. There's a good level of support for the neighbourhood plan itself promoting a small amount of residential development. Sustainability of the village, and its ability to retain existing services, is a key concern. Modest additional housing could support the ongoing viability of some local services, as well as maintain the social vitality of the village. For any new housing provided in the parish, it will be important to ensure it is of the right design and includes a mix of housing types that help to meet local needs.

Housing growth

30. The local plan includes a development boundary around the village, shown as the red line in **Figure 3** above. Policy CS02 – Settlement Hierarchy – of the 2011 Core Strategy designates Watlington as a Key Rural Service Centre, as mentioned earlier. With regard to such designations, the policy explains that, *“Limited growth of a scale and nature appropriate to secure the sustainability of each settlement, will be supported within the Development Limits of the Key Rural Service Centres,. In accordance with Policy CS06 Development in rural areas”*.
31. It follows that a general development proposal outside of the Development Limit will not be supported. This is made very clear in the 2016 local plan. Policy DM 2 – Development Boundaries – explains that, *“Development will be permitted within the development boundaries of settlements shown on the Policies Map provided it is in accordance with the other policies in the Local Plan. The areas outside development boundaries (excepting specific allocations for development) will be treated as countryside where new development will be more restricted and will be limited to that identified as suitable in rural areas by other policies of the local plan.”*
32. This policy framework in essence means that outside the development boundary new general housing is unacceptable in principle (specific exception such as affordable housing could be allowed), whilst inside it is acceptable, depending on detailed considerations. There will therefore continue to be windfall housing development within the development boundary over the plan period, though it is difficult to say how much. Furthermore, such applications are unlikely to provide for any affordable housing as they are likely to be small developments of fewer than four dwellings, and the trigger for affordable housing is five dwellings or more.
33. There is no pressure to allocate a site for housing as part of the NP as the projected housing requirement is being met by the local plan through the allocation for 32 dwellings (subject to a 2021 application for 40). However, just under 75% of respondents felt that more than 10 homes should be built in Watlington over the plan period. Almost a third of people felt there should be 40+ new home, which is more than those allocated in the emerging local plan.
34. Given the level of support, the NP Steering Group made the decision to explore the option of allocating some land for residential development in the plan. It organised and carried out a ‘call for sites’ running from Tuesday 23 November 2021 to 4 January 2022, for sites of less than 0.5ha. Unfortunately, only one small parcel of land (suitable for one dwelling) was put forward. This was inside the development boundary of the village and so is acceptable in principle anyway. It was therefore decided not to pursue this any further.
35. In the adopted local plan, residential development would be considered unacceptable in principle outside of the development boundary, except for specific types such as affordable housing. In the emerging local plan (Policy LP31), small scale residential development outside the development boundary that is reasonably related to the settlement could be permitted. However, the policy sets out this this does not apply

where there is a 'made' neighbourhood plan unless that neighbourhood plan specifically allows it. Once 'made' this neighbourhood plan will not allow this.

Housing Mix

36. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) para 61 requires plans to have policies that meet the housing needs of different demographic groups, such as older people, disabled people, self-builders, families etc. This provides an opportunity to include a policy in the NP that sets out the housing mix that is expected from new residential developments.
37. There is an ageing population in Watlington. There appears to be no specialist accommodation in the parish at present for older people. However, Watlington has a significantly high proportion of bungalows (over one third of all homes), which may appeal to older people and those with mobility challenges. The Housing Needs Assessment found that there is a need for specialist accommodation for older people based on the ageing population, although it also says that this might be better located in more sustainable places such as King's Lynn or Downham Market. Discussions with Norfolk County Council seemed to confirm this.
38. The Housing Need Assessment (HNA) carried out a modelling exercise which suggests that new residential development might involve the following share of dwelling sizes: 39.8% as one bedroom, 0% as two bedrooms, 49.7% as three bedrooms, 0% as four bedrooms and 10.5% as five or more bedrooms. This recommended mix is somewhat unusual, as it suggests there is no need for further two- or four-bedroom dwellings over the plan period. This also contrasts with the findings of local consultations, which suggests a high demand for two bed bedroom dwellings. This could be because two-bedroomed homes offer more flexibility over one-bedroomed, for relatively little additional cost, especially for a young family or couple.
39. Putting these findings together would suggest a housing mix policy that aims to provide for more homes that are three bedrooms or less would be a way forward. Between 2011 and 2020 there was a notable increase in two- and three-bedroom properties in Watlington. The figures from the HNA suggests that such smaller homes should comprise around 90% of new home, but it is not good practice to be too precise or restrictive in this regard.
40. The requirement for new homes to be modest sized will increase the current proportion of such homes within the community. It is recognised that with building conversions and self-build this may not be possible.
41. Although there is an ageing population, compared to the district it has a fairly high proportion of residents in younger age groups and a high proportion of families. Younger people and families find it difficult to get on the housing ladder.
42. Affordability is a serious and worsening challenge in Watlington. One way to address this is to ensure homes come forward of an appropriate size for residents' needs and budgets. Affordable Housing (subsidised tenure products) is another way to combat this. There is strong support in the community for affordable housing (40% feel that

more is needed). The HNA, looking at house prices and incomes, identified a need for affordable homes, especially to rent.

43. The NPPF sets out a policy approach to affordable housing, including the need to ensure at least 10% of new houses are affordable homes to buy. Policy on Rural Exception Sites⁶ for affordable housing is also covered in the NPPF and the local plan, with the local plan requiring such development to be of an appropriate size, adjacent to the settlement and not detrimental to the local environment or residents. The local plan (policy CS09) sets out that affordable housing is required for development of 5 or more dwellings.
44. This policy framework provides scope for some affordable housing to come forward. In practice there have been no recent applications for a Rural Exception Site. However, the site allocated in the local plan south of Thieves Bridge Road has come forward for 40 dwellings, of which 37 are for affordable homes, split roughly 50/50 between affordable rent and affordable home ownership.
45. The 37 affordable homes will go a long way towards meeting the affordable housing requirement Watlington. It is, however, not quite enough and provides in particular for too few affordable rent, according to the Housing Needs Assessment which identified that the split should be nearer 64% affordable rent and 36% affordable ownership. To redress this need, the HNA recommended a tenure split going forward of 70:30. The local plan (policy CS09) sets out that affordable housing is required for development proposals of 5 or more dwellings to a ratio of 70:30 rented to shared ownership. This should therefore help with the local housing need and there is no benefit to be gained from having a separate policy on this in the NP.
46. However, the HNA did identify that First Homes (a fairly new affordable housing product), discounted by 40% to 50%, can provide a more affordable ownership option to shared ownership schemes. First Homes will need to meet all of the criteria set out in national policy, such as having a price cap of £250,000. First Homes are designed to allow people to get on the housing ladder in their local area and to support this the local eligibility criteria set out in Policy 1 will apply for a maximum of 3 months from when a home is first marketed. If a suitable buyer has not reserved a home after 3 months, the eligibility criteria will revert to the national criteria so as to widen the consumer base. It should be noted that local connection criteria do not need to apply to those meeting the national Armed Forces criteria.

Policy 1: Housing Mix

Housing proposals will need to reflect local housing need using the best available and proportionate evidence. The Housing Need Assessment (2022) will be acceptable evidence.

Except for developments comprising self-build, and conversions where justified, new residential development should offer a housing mix whereby at least 80% of homes are

⁶ Exception Sites for affordable housing is usually on land where planning permission would not normally be granted

three-bedrooms or fewer, unless evidence is provided either showing there is no longer such a local need, or the scheme is made unviable.

Affordable home ownership should comprise of First Homes in preference to shared ownership. These should be discounted by a minimum of 40%. In addition to the national eligibility criteria, the following local eligibility criteria, which aim to establish a local connection as a preference, will be applied:

- i. Current residents of the parish who are renting or living with other family members;
- ii. Ex-residents of the parish who are renting or living with other family members and who moved away within the last three years; or
- iii. People who are renting or living with other family members outside of the parish but who have caring responsibilities in the parish.

Design

47. Design is another key area where the neighbourhood plan can have influence. The Government is raising the importance of good design with the development of national design guides, and encourages neighbourhood plans to have design policies. National Framework Chapter 12 requires plans to have design policies that have community support and pick up the defining characteristics and historic character of the area, but also encourages innovative design with high levels of sustainability. Innovative design with high levels of sustainability is supported and trees are seen as an important part of design, as is integrated biodiversity net gains. There is strong support for good design and beautiful homes, and the requirement is for poor design to be refused. Design covers not just appearance but how a place functions. The National Design Guide⁷ illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.
48. CS08 of the local plan requires all new development to be of high-quality design, and the emerging local plan also has a similar policy, although these are naturally quite general as they cover the whole borough.
49. The settlement of Watlington is quite a mix of styles. Although of a fairly historic character around the centre, elsewhere the character is more modern, often with estate-type layouts in places. The design of any new homes is considered important to the community. 81% of respondents feel that excellent design is important in all new development.
50. There is also considerable support for good design from a sustainability perspective. Policy CS08 in the local plan encourages sustainability and energy efficiency measures, including designs that exceed the present technical standards set by Building Regulations. It is possible for Local Planning Authorities such as the borough council to set energy performance technical standards for new homes above those required by building regulations, but neighbourhood plans cannot do this, although

⁷ National Design Guide, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2019.

they can have more general policies, such as requiring a Sustainability Statement as part of any planning application to set out how new development is meeting a high level of sustainable design and construction and has been optimized for energy efficiency.

51. Through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Neighbourhood Planning Programme AECOM was commissioned to provide design support to the Parish Council. This focused on developing design guidelines and codes which could be used to inform the design of future planning applications and developments in Watlington. This included a high-level assessment of the neighbourhood area, site visit and meeting with the community and preparation of a bespoke design guide and codes. **Policy 2** on design is based on this work and sets clear expectations on design.
52. In terms of context, the neighbourhood plan area is dominated by open fields, with the only built-up area the village of Watlington. Outside of this there are dispersed small clusters of buildings. The overall settlement pattern is one of low density and scale, with most properties having front and back gardens and buildings having one or two storeys. The oldest part of the village runs along School Road and Church Road, and also along Mill Road and Plough Lane. These areas concentrate most of the pre-20th century buildings. The settlement pattern here follows the organic layout of the roads, with gentle meandering variations of road widths. Most buildings here are placed directly at the edge of the road without front gardens, creating a higher level of enclosure than more recent parts of the village. 20th and 21st century developments occupy most of the remainder of the built-up area. Ribbon development fronting the road, with properties having deep back gardens predominates. Buildings from later development, in contrast, are arranged in clusters accessed by meandering cul-de-sac and loop roads. Built-up areas within the village are interrupted by green spaces and open fields. As a result, many properties either face or back onto fields or small areas of woodland.
53. Traditional buildings in Watlington are characterised by a high level of architectural variety rather than being dominated by a particular style or building material. The local vernacular includes Carstone with galletting, bricks of various colours, clay pantiles, and coloured render, see **Figure 4**. Most 20th and 21st century developments in contrast area typically uniform both in shape and materials.
54. **Figure 5** shows an extract from the Watlington Design Guidelines and Codes and shows the four distinct character areas of the parish. This clearly shows the three periods of development described above; these are explained in some detail in the guide in terms of their land use, development patterns, building line, boundary treatment, heights and roofline and public realm.



Carstone with red brick dressing



Red brick



Coloured render



White Gault brick



Clay pantiles



Slate tiles



Black glazed pantiles



Landscaped hedges



Red brick wall



Red brick and carstone boundary wall with galletting

Figure 4: Examples of building materials that contribute to the local vernacular



Figure 5: Character Areas in Watlington

Policy 2: Design

All new development within Watlington must demonstrate high-quality design and promote a good sense of place. The design codes, taken from Watlington Design Guidelines and Codes (2022) must be followed, with the checklist in **Appendix B** completed. Proposals should take account of their respective Character Area and seek to enhance and reflect its existing features.

A. Site Layout

- SL.01 Consider the context: Each development must demonstrate an understanding of its relationship to the larger physical context of Watlington.
- SL.02 Pattern of growth and layout of buildings: The internal arrangement of each development should demonstrate an appreciation of the existing character and building patterns of Watlington.
- SL.03 Views and landmarks: Key views and vistas should be maintained and where possible enhanced.

B. Built Character

- BC.01 Building scale and massing: New buildings and modifications should be sympathetic in mass, height and scale to the existing context. Scale and massing of buildings should seek to maximise energy efficiency by reducing energy consumption and optimising possible solar gains.

- BC.02 Building height and roofline: Development should be designed to ensure a good variety in the roofline. Buildings should generally be one or two storeys in height, with the scale of the roof in proportion with the dimensions of the building. Variations in the roofline should reflect the existing variety. The design of the roofline must respond to the natural environment of the site and its surroundings.
- BC.03 Enclosure: Development will achieve a good sense of enclosure by creating clearly defined spaces that produce a cohesive and attractive built form.
- BC.04 Building line and boundary treatment: Boundary treatments should reinforce the sense of continuity of the building line and help define the public realm, appropriate to the character of the area. Appropriate forms of boundary treatments should be used to contribute to the rural and historic character of Watlington. This includes use of continuous hedges and low brick walls, made of traditional materials, as found elsewhere in the built-up area. The use of panel fencing or metal or concrete walls in publicly visible boundaries should be avoided as they conflict with the rural character.
- BC.05: Building extensions and modifications: Residential extensions and conversions must follow and maintain local character.
- BC.06 Materials and architectural details: New development or any change to the built environment should provide a sympathetic response to the existing character and architectural details found in the plan area, especially when located within or near buildings of historic character.

C. Sustainable Drainage

- SD.01 Sustainable drainage: Development proposal should incorporate Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), in line with **Policy 7**.
- SD.02 Permeable Paving: Permeable pavements should be used where appropriate on footpaths, public squares, private access roads, driveways and private areas within individual development boundaries.
- SD.03 Storage and slow release: The capture and reuse of grey water should form an integral part of house design.
- SD.04 Bioretention systems: Bioretention systems, must be designed to sit cohesively with the surrounding landscape, reflecting the natural character of the parish. Vegetation must reflect that of the surrounding environment.

D. Open spaces and sustainability

- OS.01 Green fingers and green corridors: Opportunities to connect the areas of open space in the centre of Watlington to the network of woodland to the north and east should be sought. **Policy 5** identifies green corridors in the parish.
- OS.02 Woodland, trees and hedgerow: New development and any change to the physical environment should incorporate existing native trees and shrubs and avoid loss of flora. Front and rear gardens should contain rich vegetation to improve visual impact and mitigate air pollution.
- OS.03 Carbon neutral homes: Energy efficient technologies should be considered and incorporated into new buildings.

- OS.04 Servicing: Servicing arrangements should be considered when choosing waste storage solutions. Bins should be placed close to the dwelling's boundary and the public highway, but not so as to obstruct pedestrian or vehicle movements or create a negative visual impact.

E. Traffic calming and parking

- TC.01 Pedestrian connectivity: Development should aim to create a permeable road pattern that allows for multiple connections and choice of routes, particularly on foot.
- TC.02 Traffic calming: New roads should be designed to be adequate and with self-enforcing traffic calming through the layout of buildings and variations in the level of enclosure.
- TC.03 Car and cycle parking: Measures should be taken to integrate parking areas into the fabric of the village with a good mix of parking typologies deployed. Cycle parking should be integrated into all new housing. **Policy 4** sets out residential parking standards.
- TC.04 On-plot front or side parking: Areas of hard standing and driveways must be kept to a minimum and boundary treatment used to avoid a car-dominated character and reduce heat island effects.
- TC.05 On-street vehicle parking: The streetscape should not be dominated by continuous on-street parking spaces. Where possible, tree planting and other gaps between parking bays should be incorporated.
- TC.06 Cycle parking: Secure covered cycle parking should be provided in all new residential developments and publicly available cycle parking in the public realm.

55. There is concern that infill development could increase the density of development within Watlington and harm the character of the area. Adverse impacts of this include loss of the village character, amenity, overlooking, loss of green space, trees or hedgerow, loss of visual separation or parking. It is important that infill development, whilst generally acceptable within the settlement area in accordance with the local plan, must be designed to sit appropriately with its surroundings. **Policy 3** applies to the whole neighbourhood plan area, rather than just within the settlement boundary.

Policy 3: Infill Development

Proposals within the development boundary that would lead to over-development of a site, or the appearance of cramming, will not be supported. It should be demonstrated that any new development will:

- a) Be of a similar density to properties in the immediate vicinity, with similar spacing between buildings;
- b) Protect existing amenity;
- c) Be of a similar plot size to and integrating with adjacent properties in proximity of the proposal site; and
- d) Include adequate off-road parking for private vehicles, to meet adopted standards, see **Policy 4**; and

- e) Protect important features such as traditional walls, hedgerow and trees.

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they contribute positively to the key features of the respective character areas identified within the Watlington Design Guidance and Codes.

Residential parking standards

56. Although the local plan policy CS11 promotes integrated and safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists, it also recognises that the car remains an important means of travel in rural areas. Given that local service provision is limited in Watlington, the car is an important means of getting to various facilities and meeting many needs. This raises issues of adequate parking availability, and often cars are parked inappropriately in the village.
57. The narrowness of some roads makes two-way passing very difficult and means that parking on the roads needs to be discouraged as much as possible. The high car ownership levels in the parish, no doubt in part because of the need to own a car, would suggest a requirement to have adequate levels of off-road parking spaces in any new development.



Figure 6- Examples of on street parking issues in Watlington

58. There are signs of inadequate parking availability in residential developments. This could indicate that more off-road parking and/ or better designed parking will be needed going forward. It is felt that recent developments have not had sufficient off-street parking. 87% of respondents feel that plenty of designated parking is important.
59. The neighbourhood plan could help to ensure that new residential development does not make the matter worse by failing to provide adequate off-road parking. It is now widely recognised that restricting the off-road space to park vehicles at home does not restrict car ownership, but instead leads to indiscriminate on-street parking. The national Planning Practice Guidance now discourages the use of *maximum* parking standards unless clearly justified, but *minimum* standards can be used such that development needs to provide *at least* a given amount of parking.
60. In light of the relatively high car ownership levels in the parish and limited availability of local services and facilities such as frequent public transport, the use of *minimum* parking standards, where possible, in this neighbourhood plan is fully justified and based on an analysis of vehicle ownership. According to the Census (2011) for Watlington Parish there were a total of 1021 households in 2011 and 1550 cars/vans in the area. This suggests that the average number of vehicles per household was 1.5 (1550/1021⁸). In 2011 the usual resident population was 2,455 and it is estimated to have risen to 2717 in 2020 from Office of National Statistics Data⁹. This could suggest that with a rise of 262 people in the population over the last 10 years that an increase in car ownership has also risen since percentages of adults (18+) in 2011 made up 77.8% of the parish and in 2020 the percentage of adults (18+) estimates at 80.3%.
61. With the percentage of adults in the parish most likely growing and car ownership in rural areas still being a prominent factor it would be reasonable to create parking standards to avoid further issues of inadequate off-road parking. Examples of pictures in figure 5 shows that within the newer housing developments taken place in Watlington that a lack of off-road parking within development schemes has led to unfavourable habits within the street scene including parking on corners and on pavements making movement awkward for pedestrians especially with accessibility needs. This concern is raised further with other issues the parish have problems with on residential streets including:
- a) when visitors come and park on the streets making the roads more congested.
 - b) When parents are doing the school run and drive to pick up their child/children leading to busier streets
 - c) Congested parking around the railway station on roads by commuters/visitors who park outside of the railway station car park
62. As set out in the emerging local plan Policy LP14 takes the approach of providing minimum parking standards for residential development because it is recognised that

⁸ [Local Area Report for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk/)

⁹ [Norfolk - Overview - Ward | Watlington | InstantAtlas Reports \(norfolkinsight.org.uk\)](https://norfolkinsight.org.uk/)

providing a reduced number of parking spaces at a travel origin does not discourage people from owning a car, clause 1 of policy LP14 is as followed¹⁰:

New dwellings (including flats and maisonettes) will be required to include car parking to the following minimum standards:

One bedroomed unit – 1 space per dwelling.

Two or three bedroomed unit – 2 spaces per dwelling.

Four or more bedroomed unit – 3 spaces per dwelling.

Policy 4: Residential Parking Standards

All new dwellings (including flats and maisonettes) will be required to include car parking to the following minimum standards where practicable and feasible:

- One bedroomed unit – 1 space per dwelling.
- Two or three bedroomed unit – 2 spaces per dwelling.
- Four or more bedroomed unit – 3 spaces per dwelling.

Garages will not count towards the provision. Where the standards cannot be met, meeting the standards would be too obtrusive in the street-scene, or where there is a potential for on-street parking to occur because of the needs of visitors, streets will need to be designed to safely accommodate some on-street parking, which may include formal parking facilities such as laybys. Rear parking courts will not be an acceptable solution apart from to meet the needs of visitors.

Managed residential developments will be expected to provide a considerate parking management scheme which will need to be implemented and maintained.

Community Action 1: Parking for the Rail Station

It is recommended that the Parish Council will work with external agencies, including the Highway Authority and future developers, to address parking issues around the station.

Natural Environment

63. There are no Natural England statutory designated sites in Watlington. There are however three non-statutory wildlife designations within the neighbourhood area, Watlington Railway Sidings County Wildlife Site (CWS), Runs Wood Meadow CWS and Thieves Bridge Meadow CWS. County Wildlife Sites are areas of land rich in wildlife outside of nationally protected areas such as National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). County Wildlife Sites do not receive statutory protection but are given some protection through the planning system. There is also Tottenhill Quarry, part of which falls within the neighbourhood area,

¹⁰ [Local Plan Review Pre-Submission Stage 2021 - Keystone \(objective.co.uk\)](https://www.objective.co.uk/)

which is a candidate County Geodiversity Site. This is a geological equivalent to a CWS, sites of importance for geology.

64. Parts of the parish contain Habitats of Principle Importance for biodiversity conservation, those which are most threatened, in greatest decline or where the UK holds a significant proportion of the world's total population. The predominant type of priority habitat is 'deciduous woodland', but there is also 'no main habitat' and 'traditional orchard'. Local authorities have a duty to consider the conservation of these habitats, and development that would adversely affect these would not normally be acceptable. There is an area of Open Mosaic Habitat west of Barley Close, where a minor aquifer is located, which also has particular nature conservation value.
65. Approximately 4.5km outside of the neighbourhood plan area is the SSSI at Setchey which was designated because of its importance for studies of Flandrian sea-level change as part of a network of Fenland sites.
66. The Ancient Tree Inventory identifies that there are two veteran trees in Watlington, one off Old Chapel Close (in private ownership) and the other on Fairfield Lane¹¹. There are many other ancient, veteran, and notable trees not listed on the Ancient Tree Inventory. Ancient trees provide food and shelter for thousands of plants, animals, and fungi, including many rare and threatened species. They are also part of our heritage.
67. Wildlife designations and habitat networks in the neighbourhood area and within close proximity are shown in **Figure 7**.

¹¹ [Tree Search - Ancient Tree Inventory \(woodlandtrust.org.uk\)](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/tree-search/)

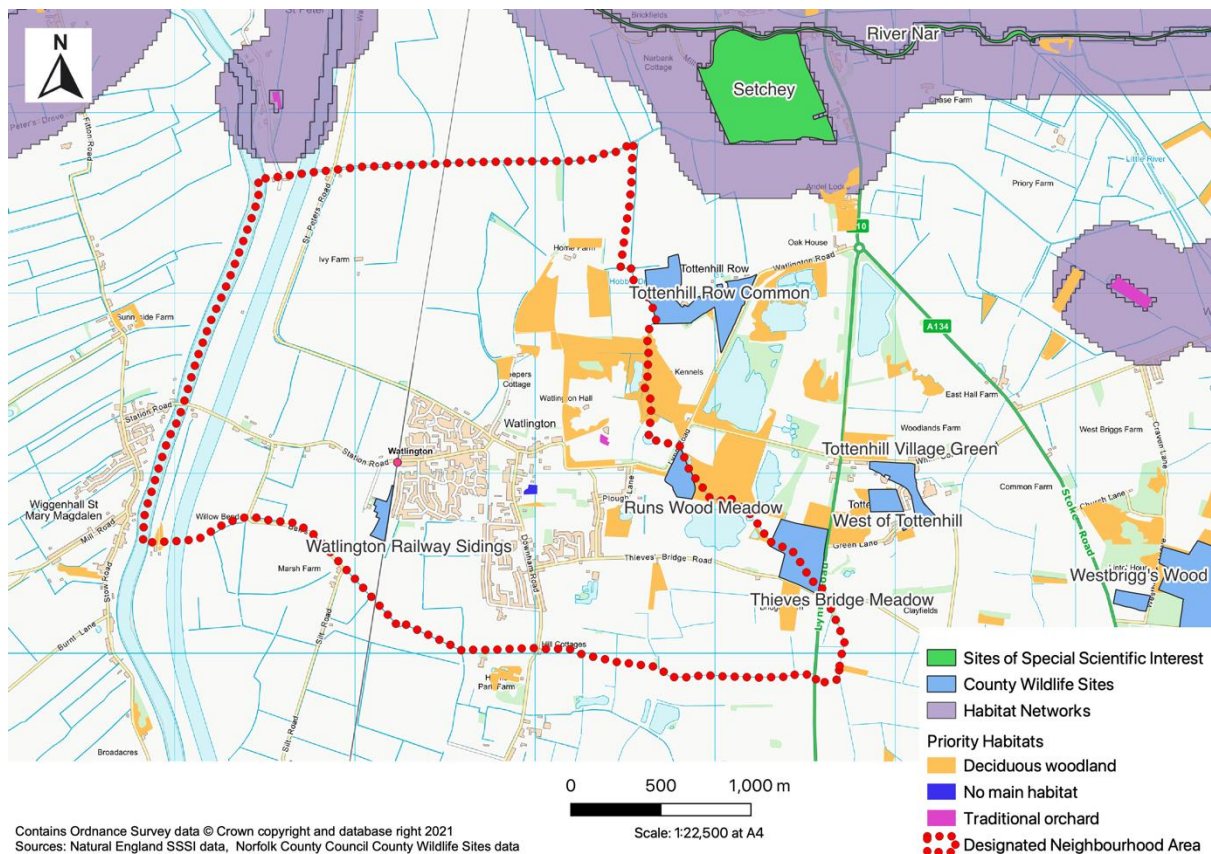


Figure 7: Wildlife Designations and Habitat Networks

68. There is strong support locally for protecting and improving wildlife habitat. Eighty-one percent of respondents to the neighbourhood plan consultation felt that protecting woodland and wildlife sites is highly important, and 74% felt habitat creation is highly important. There is also strong support for tree and hedgerow planting and 98% of respondents felt that open green space and tree lined streets should be incorporated into development
69. Legislation and the NPPF (chapter 15) afford considerable support for protecting and enhancing key landscapes and areas of value in terms of biodiversity. This also includes the need for biodiversity net gains in developments. Para 174 supports the mapping of ecological assets and networks, including for enhancement or creation. NPPF paras 96 -101 covers protecting existing green open spaces and creation of new ones. The NPPF also makes it clear that all new streets should include trees, and that planning policies should ensure streets are tree lined.
70. The Environment Act (2021) requires all development schemes to deliver a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) to be maintained for a period of at least 30 years. The concept seeks measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Development proposals must 'leave biodiversity in a better state than before'. This will become law mid-2023, with secondary legislation and detail yet to come. There will be three ways to deliver BNG, onsite within the red line, off site locally with biodiversity enhanced in conjunction with nearby landowners, or through

statutory credits. The requirement for BNG is in addition to following the usual mitigation hierarchy to avoid, mitigate or compensate for biodiversity losses. Some developers are already designing net gain into their development projects and as set out above, the National Planning Policy Framework encourages the net gain approach, though the requirement to measure this or meet a particular level of BNG is not yet mandatory nationally or within the borough council area.

71. The West Norfolk Local Plan Policy CS12 requires development avoids, mitigates or compensates for any adverse impacts on biodiversity. It also provides a level of protection for County Wildlife Sites and priority habitat. Additionally, Policy DM 22 provides some Protection of Local Open Space (recreational space, amenity, biodiversity etc), but no spaces are designated in Watlington. The policy also supports the identification of Local Green Space in neighbourhood plans.

Biodiversity and Green Corridors

72. As part of developing the neighbourhood plan Green Corridors have been identified to connect areas of wildlife habitat across the parish. Each Green Corridor will be a focus for the community and landowners to increase biodiversity and connectivity, for example by planting more trees and hedges, by allowing grassland areas to grow wilder, and by installing features like bird and bat boxes. These will also be a target for biodiversity net gain where it is not feasible to deliver improvements on site.
73. The Green Corridors in **Figure 8** and shown on the **Policies Map in Appendix A** have been identified according to the following principles:
 - The location of wildlife sites including Watlington Railway Sidings CWS, Runs Wood Meadow CWS, Thieves Bridge Meadow CWS and Tottenhill Quarry County Geodiversity Site.
 - Areas of habitat between these sites which enable high quality core habitats to be connected by corridors;
 - Other locations where existing priority habitats or habitats such as woodland and hedges can be connected and augmented.
74. The Green Corridors link the key blocks of habitat in the Watlington area, identifying where there is likely to be best opportunity for improved ecological connectivity. Further work to determine the condition of existing habitat and engagement with the local community and landowners to identify the exact location and nature of improvements will take place over the course of the plan and beyond. In this respect, the mapped corridors are indicative, as it may be that the best opportunities to improve or create habitat arise adjacent or just outside the corridors.
75. Green Corridors benefit wildlife and people. Mammal species such as hedgehogs and bats, many species of birds including barn owls and yellow-hammers, and numerous insect and plant species require continuous habitat features to thrive. Many wildlife species have reduced in abundance because of habitat destruction

and fragmentation, and Green Corridors will go some way to reducing this trend in Watlington.

76. In addition to wildlife benefits, green corridors can be combined with other uses such as footpaths, which means there would also be benefits for residents and visitors in Watlington. Spending time close to nature is good for mental and physical wellbeing, and these Green Corridors would increase the opportunity for people to do this, either through recreation on publicly accessible land or through assisting with conservation activities. There is also evidence that Green Corridors can mitigate flooding by intercepting and slowing run-off in high rainfall events. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can be used to provide multiple additional benefits as well as water management, such as wildlife, biodiversity and recreation, see the **Flood and Water Management** section for further detail on this.

Policy 5: Biodiversity and Green Corridors

The importance of the area for wildlife will be safeguarded, retained and habitats enhanced through positive action as part of the development process. All development proposals will need to demonstrate at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity, which should be achieved in the following ways:

- a) In consultation with the local planning authority, use of an agreed biodiversity metric and biodiversity net gain plan;
- b) Habitat secured for at least 30 years via planning obligations or conservation covenants;
- c) Delivery of biodiversity net gain on site wherever possible and if it can be demonstrated that this is not feasible then delivery elsewhere in the parish boundary, in the green corridors identified in **Figure 8** as a priority;
- d) Contribute towards enhancing, restoring or maintaining existing green infrastructure (such as county wildlife sites, priority habitats or corridors to those sites);
- e) Wherever possible extending priority habitats, to reduce the loss of these valued habitats through fragmentation;
- f) Through effective layout and design, development should recognise the location of existing green infrastructure including the identified Green Corridors (see xx) and support appropriate uses and functions; eg. Through incorporation of invertebrate, swift or bat boxes into the design of built infrastructure; and
- g) Use of native British species of flora and fauna of local provenance.

Proposals that will affect trees or hedgerow must be accompanied by a survey which establishes the health and age of affected trees and/or hedgerow, and, and appropriate management plan. Where the incorporation of existing trees and hedgerows in the development design or translocation is not feasible and only as a last resort, any loss of trees or hedgerow must be compensated for by adequate replacement provision of greater value than the tree or hedgerow lost. Replacement species must be native British species of local provenance. Developers should ensure local ecological connectivity is maintained and sufficient space is made available on the development site for this.

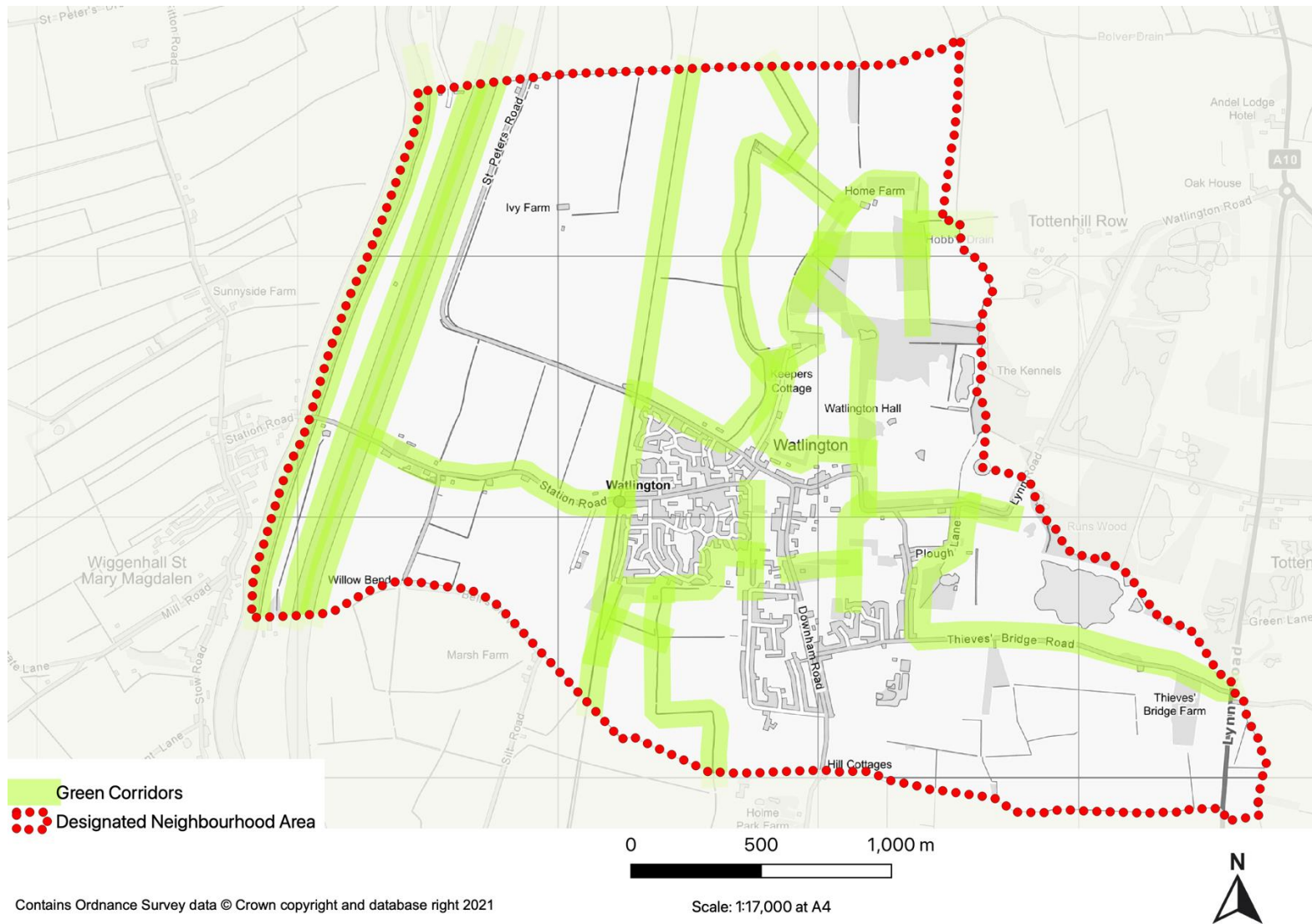
Development within or adjacent to a Green Corridor will be resisted, unless the proposal is able to:

- a) Demonstrate a significant improvement in overall habitat connectivity;
- b) Enhance the function of the corridor; and
- c) Demonstrate how it will mitigate anything which reduces the ability of wildlife to move through the corridor, including barriers like buildings and hard surfaces, redirecting water courses, adding artificial lighting, and insensitive management of habitats e.g. hedge cutting in the bird breeding season.

Community Action 2: Local Action to Encourage Wildlife

The Parish Council will work with the local community to encourage action to enhance habitat and wildlife public areas, in people's gardens and at the train station. This may include activities to encourage insect friendly planting, use of bird feeders, bird and bat boxes, making the most of compost and encouraging wild patches. In public areas actions will be investigated including less frequent mowing, pond maintenance and planting trees. In relation to this, priority will be to work with local landowners to improve habitat for wildlife within the green corridors.

Figure 8: Green Corridors



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Local Green Space

77. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that specific areas of land that are demonstrably special to the local community may be protected against development through designation as Local Green Space (LGS). These are often found within the built-up area and contribute to the character of a settlement. These can vary in size, shape, location, ownership, and use, but such spaces will have some form of value to the community and help define what makes that specific settlement what it is.
78. The designation should only be used where:
- The green space is reasonably close to the community it serves;
 - The green area is demonstrably special to the community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife; and
 - The green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
79. A robust process has been followed to determine which green spaces within Watlington should be designated:
- a) Initial ideas were suggested by residents as part of consultation activities
 - b) These were reviewed to consider at a glance whether they would meet the national criteria for designation. Some suggestions such as highway verge or public footpaths were removed at this stage;
 - c) A site visit was undertaken by the working group and further evidence gathered on each of the remaining green spaces;
 - d) An assessment against the national criteria for LGS was made for each of the potential areas;
 - e) Landowners were contacted to make them aware that their land was being considered for local green space designation and to invite them to make representations;
 - f) A final decision was made by the steering group and parish council as to which green spaces to designate.
80. This neighbourhood plan designates **14** Local Green Spaces for protection, these are identified in **Figure 9** and on the **Policies Map in Appendix A**. These are important not only for the wildlife they support, but provide significant quality of life benefits to residents, for example through encouraging recreation. Justification for each LGS is found in Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Local Green Space assessment.
81. The LGS policy is important, as is the precise wording. Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that, “Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.” The justification for the policy wording used here is provided in **Appendix C**.

Policy 6: Local Green Space

The following areas are designated as Local Green Space for special protection:

1. Millennium Green
2. Recreation ground / MUGA
3. Playing field (Football field/Glebe field)
4. Land between Downham Road and Mill Road
5. Glebe field
6. Pope's land (Sheep field)
7. Martingales green space
8. Meadows Green (John Davis Way green space)
9. Featherby Drive green space
10. Nolan Close Aquifer green space
11. Warren Close play area
12. Runs Wood meadow
13. Thieves Bridge meadow
14. Watlington railway sidings

These will be protected from inappropriate development in accordance with Green Belt Policy, except for the following deviations:

New buildings are inappropriate development, with the only exceptions to this:

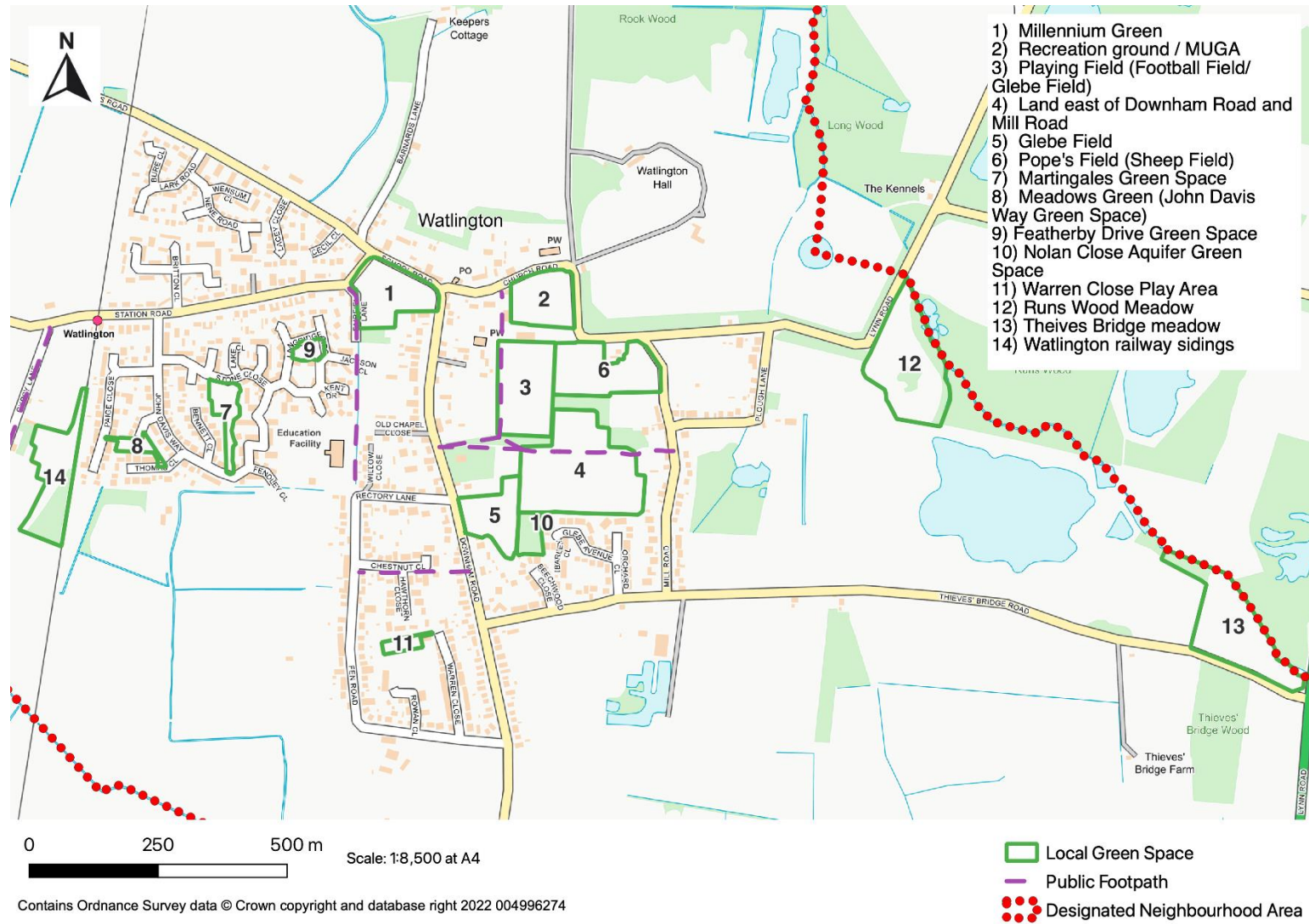
- a) Buildings for forestry or agriculture where the Local Green Space is used for commercial woodland or farmland;
- b) The provision of appropriate facilities in connection with the existing use of land where the facilities preserve the openness of the Local Green Space and do not conflict with the reasons for designation that make it special to the community, such as for recreation or ecology;
- c) The extension or alteration of a building if it does not impact on the openness or the reasons for designation that make Local Green Space special to the community; or
- d) The replacement of a building provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.

Other appropriate development includes:

- a) Engineering operations that are temporary, small-scale and result in full restoration;
- b) The re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; or
- c) Material changes in the use of land where it would not undermine the reasons for designation that make it special to the community.

Proposals that are on land adjacent to Local Green Space are required to set out how any impacts on the special qualities of the green space, as identified by its reason for designation, will be mitigated.

Figure 9: Local Green Space



Flood and Water Management

82. Flooding can cause serious damage and have significant impacts for homeowners. By thinking about flood risk early, it may be possible to avoid it, manage it more efficiently or in a way that adds value to biodiversity and the natural environment more widely. The BCKLWN Strategic Flood risk Assessment identifies that flood risk from tidal/fluviat sources in Watlington. The western part of the settlement is located within Flood Zone 3, affecting a number of properties. Several watercourses that flow through/from the settlement are Ordinary Watercourses; in some cases, these are managed by an Internal Drainage Board. Such watercourses may not have been accounted for in the Environment Agency Flood Zone mapping. There is the potential that the settlement could flood from one or more of these watercourses, independently to tidal flooding. There are a series of flood walls, embankments, and bridge abutments along the River Great Ouse, however, there remains a risk of flooding should the defences be overtopped or fail.
83. Environment Agency future flood risk modelling shows that whilst the whole plan area is at a relatively low risk from surface water flooding there are pockets of medium risk in the built-up area of Watlington, and some individual roads/properties are at higher risk. Of note are areas in the vicinity of Stone Close. Environment Agency modelling does not account for blocked drains or very heavy rainfall, so sites in a low-risk flood zone may still experience flooding. According to the Lead Local Flood Authority over the last 10 years there have been 2 verified reports of internal flooding in Watlington, on Lynn Road and Downham Road.
84. The BCKLWN Strategic Flood Risk Assessment reviews historical incidents of flooding from sewers. This occurs when intense rainfall overloads the sewer system capacity (surface water, foul or combined), and/or when sewers cannot discharge properly to watercourses due to high water levels. Sewer flooding can also be caused when problems such as blockages, collapses or equipment failure occur in the sewerage system. Even where sewers are built to current required specifications, they are likely to be overwhelmed by larger events of the magnitude often considered when looking at river or surface water flooding. Four incidents of sewer flooding have been recorded in Watlington based on data supplied in 2017.
85. Chapter 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework, *'meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change'*, seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that development addresses flooding and flood risk. This includes a focus on use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
86. In line with national policy, local plan policy CS08 requires that flood risk is fully mitigated through appropriate design and engineering solutions.
87. Drainage systems can contribute towards sustainable development and improve places where people live and work. Approaches to manage surface water that take account of water quantity, quality, biodiversity, and amenity are collectively

known as SuDS. Traditionally piped drainage networks convey water much more quickly than natural processes. Flooding can occur when housing and other development such as paving increases the volume and speed of run-off. SuDS seek to manage rainfall in a similar way to natural processes, by using the landscape to control the flow and volume of surface water, prevent or reduce pollution downstream of development and promote recharging of groundwater. Natural vegetation, including trees, in SuDS helps attenuate flows, traps silts and pollutants and promotes infiltration.

88. **Policy 7** focuses on maximising the use of natural SuDS features which manage flood risk but also provide benefits such as enhancing public open space, contributing to the character of an area, and providing wildlife habitat. SuDS schemes that consist of underground plastic/concrete boxes to store rainwater, although recognised to reduce flood risk by releasing rainwater more slowly will not deliver the additional benefits.

Policy 7: Surface Water Management

Development proposals must be designed to manage flood risk effectively and not increase, and wherever possible reduce, the overall level of flood risk both to the site and elsewhere. Proposals specifically to improve surface water drainage, such as works to reinstate an effective drainage scheme, are encouraged.

Proposals should incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) that are appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and designed to be an integral part of the green infrastructure. These may include:

- Attenuation ponds;
- Planting;
- Introduction of permeable driveways or parking areas;
- Rainwater harvesting and storage features;
- Green roofs.

Such measures will be required except where this is not technically feasible or where it can be demonstrated that other factors preclude their use. Housing developments that do not result in water run-off that would add to or create surface water flooding, shall include the use of above ground open Sustainable Drainage Systems.

To mitigate against the creation of additional impermeable surfaces, there should be attenuation of greenfield (or for redevelopment sites as close to greenfield as possible) surface water runoff rates and runoff volumes within the development site boundary. These measures will be required unless the developer can provide justification to demonstrate that it is not practicable or feasible within the constraints or configuration of the site.

Community Action 3: Maintenance of drainage ditches

The Parish Council will work proactively with riparian owners, landowners, and statutory agencies, such as the Lead Local Flood Authority, to ensure that watercourses are properly maintained with a view to ensuring that they continue to play their role in the management of water and flood risk.

Community Services and Facilities

89. Watlington is a fairly sustainable location, with a good range of local services and facilities, including rail station, recreational spaces, a GP surgery, church, village hall and sports/ social club, allotments, primary school, bus route, Post Office/ shop, pub, and other retail uses. Watlington provides a local employment base which has developed from its role in serving the local agricultural community. Importantly, there is Watatunga, a nature reserve that also offers tourism opportunities. This local service provision is one of the reasons it is designated as a Key Rural Service Centre in the local plan. In addition, Watlington is a thriving community with many organised social/sports clubs and leisure activities on offer to residents.



Figure 10- A selection of community facilities in Watlington

90. Adjacent to the neighbourhood area a new pioneering approach has been taken to protect some of our planet's endangered wildlife. Watatunga nature reserve is situated west of the neighbourhood plans designated area on around 170 acres of wetland, grassland and woodland offering a home to a range of wildlife around the world including deer, antelope, great bustard, pheasants and more. The park has international recognition and brings visitors to the area through guided tours, education programmes and holiday accommodation. It is an important conservation project which Watlington cherishes and supports, embracing the importance of living with nature. The land is owned by one of the major landowners in the area who lives within Watlington parish and has a team who passionately support the education of conservation to visitors and young students to advocate outdoor naturalist learning¹².

¹² [About - Watatunga | Holidays in Norfolk](#)

91. Embracing this important local asset is important to the neighbourhood plan. Its influence as a tourist and wildlife site also has a positive effect on the community facilities and economy within Watlington.



Figure 11- Pictures of Watatunga Park

92. The existing local services with Watlington are valued by residents and retaining these are important. The medical centre and pharmacy are particularly important services. 59% of respondents believe the village shop is one of the most important aspects of the village. The allotments are also notably important to the local community. There is an increasing trend for people to work from home due to the Covid pandemic, and therefore many residents are now making use of their local facilities and services on a more regular basis.
93. NPPF paragraph 92 supports the protection of existing village services and the delivery of new ones to maintain the vitality of rural communities. In the local plan, community facilities are protected under CS13 and DM9, and new cultural facilities are actively encouraged. Protection seems to already be provided by the NPPF and in the Local Plan and there does not appear to be a need to have a NP policy on this specifically. However, the neighbourhood plan could set out those community facilities it believes should be afforded protection by local plan policy.

Policy 8: Protection of community facilities

The following community facilities and services will be designated as community facilities for the protection provided by Policy DM9 of the local plan.

- a. The Angel Public House
- b. GP surgery
- c. Allotments (Britton Close and Paige Close)
- d. Post office/ shop
- e. Primary school
- f. Rail station
- g. Village hall

h. Sports and social club

94. The modest additional housing proposed in the local plan could support the ongoing viability of some local services and facilities. The extra demand can also cause capacity issues. For example, there are two allotment sites in the village, one at Paige Close and the other Britton Close. Paige Close has 21 full plots (7 of which are split into 2 halves) and Britton Close has 5 full plots. Both are well used with full capacity and there is a waiting list of 3 people (Feb 2022). The parish council did seek to investigate further land for allotment purposes outside of the neighbourhood plan process however nothing was available despite contacting various private landowners.
95. National and local plan policy require large developments to provide open recreational space. Policy DM16 in the local plan requires developers of 20 dwellings or more to provide specific amounts of open recreational space. The policy also specifically aims to protect existing allotment land and aims to provide new allotment land as part of very large or strategic developments as long as there is a need, balanced against the need for other types of open space. Watlington is unlikely to accommodate such strategic-scale developments and so this policy will not deliver additional allotment land in Watlington. Given the need for additional allotment land in the parish, it will be important to take the opportunity to increase capacity with a view to meeting the demand.

Policy 9: Provision of Recreational Open Space

Residential development that is required to provide open recreational space must provide allotment land unless:

- a. the need has already been met;
- b. there is an over-riding and demonstrable need for other open space uses;
- c. it will make the development financially unviable; or
- d. the amount of provision is too small for viable allotment use.

96. There is local support for retaining and growing business opportunities, especially of a scale and impact proportionate to the size and role of the village. This is important in light of the high proportion of younger and working age groups in the parish. Policy CS06 of the local plan states that priority will be given to retaining local business sites unless it can be clearly demonstrated that continued use for employment of the site is economically unviable. This seems to offer protection for existing businesses. Over half of respondents support the idea of additional small business workshops. The neighbourhood plan could have a policy on supporting small-scale economic development of this type.

Policy 10: Economic development

New development within the development boundary that provides facilities for micro or small businesses will be encouraged and supported in principle, conditional on appropriate

mitigation and design. Any proposal for an employment-generating use will need to demonstrate that it will:

- a. Not have unacceptable adverse impacts, including on residential amenity, the transport network, heritage assets and key views;
- b. It can accommodate all related parking within its site, including for visitors; and
- c. It provides a good standard of broadband.

Transport and accessibility

97. Watlington has a sparse network of roads composed mainly of local and rural roads. St Peters Road, Station Road, and Downham Road form the main network in the village and connect Watlington to neighbouring settlements. The only major road is a short section of the A10 which can be accessed from the far east of the plan area via Thieves Bridge Road and Lynn Road. Due to the rural character of the parish, road markings and traffic calming features are uncommon. Only the vicinity of Watlington Primary School and Angel Field Millennium Green have high-visibility crosswalks, and traffic across the railway is regulated by a level crossing.
98. As shown in the previous section, Watlington is a fairly sustainable location, with a good range of local services and facilities, including the rail station. Many people can walk or cycle to the local facilities because of the short distances involved. Better facilities for public transport, walking and cycling, alongside a reduction in car traffic can create many benefits. This includes improved health, air quality and nicer public spaces. Alongside this these measures will help to meet environmental commitments. Latest figures indicate that the transport sector is responsible for approximately 34% of all CO₂ emissions, so reducing car usage can bring significant savings. Achieving improved sustainable travel infrastructure and promoting its use are important measures to support improved health outcomes for the community.
99. Footpaths and walking are important – just over half of respondents felt these were one of the most important aspects of the village. 95% of respondents would like to see footways and cycleways included as part of new development. 55% of respondents would like to see improvements to cycle paths, with 40% of people wanting to see a cycle link over the railway. The National Planning Policy Framework Chapter 9 supports walking and cycling being integral to design considerations. Also, it requires development to maximise opportunities to promote walking and cycling and use of sustainable transport. Local plan policy CS11 promotes integrated and safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists, whilst recognizing that the car remains an important means of travel in rural areas.
100. Plans that improve walking supports a low carbon economy and the health and wellbeing of residents by removing barriers to sustainable travel. The importance of walking for recreation is also recognised. There are currently some barriers to walking in the village, such as traffic speeds and narrow or incomplete footways. The historic areas of Watlington are characterised by organic paths with gentle bends as well as variable widths. Due to their narrowness, some sections either lack pavements or only have them on one side.



Figure 12- Examples of narrow and one-sided footways in Watlington

101. Most existing walking trips are likely to take place within the village as this is where most people live and where local services and facilities are. It is also currently easier, with existing footways and the 30mph speed limit making these travel options safer and more attractive. It is also where most of the new housing will take place, and so the number of people who will have good sustainable access to the local facilities will increase. Importantly, new developments also present opportunities to provide the necessary sustainable transport infrastructure improvements.
102. Outside of the built-up area, the network of public rights of way is very sparse and offers limited access to the countryside or neighbouring settlements. The village does not have any dedicated cycling infrastructure but is on the designated route of the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 11.
103. The neighbourhood plan has identified a core footway network that can be a focus for improvements and that will provide improved access to key community facilities. This is shown in **Figure 13**.
104. Developments will be expected to take all reasonable opportunities to provide for safe and convenient pedestrian access. This could include providing new or enhanced facilities as well as improving the physical condition of existing facilities. This is especially important for any development related to the school.
105. Another important aspect to consider when providing safe and convenient networks is regarding the design of streetlights and pedestrian safety/security. Guidelines have been created around planning for good exterior lighting. Outdoor lighting should be carefully designed regarding its placement, duration, colour, and timing in areas. The quote “*more light is not necessarily better light*¹³” is discussed in the GOV Light Pollution Guidance and Dark Sky Society (2020) paper when discussing promoting safety. This is because if fixtures give off

¹³ [Light pollution - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/light-pollution-guidance)

an unsafe glare this can result in reduced visibility and accidents on the road and streets especially when vision is readapting to darker areas¹⁴.

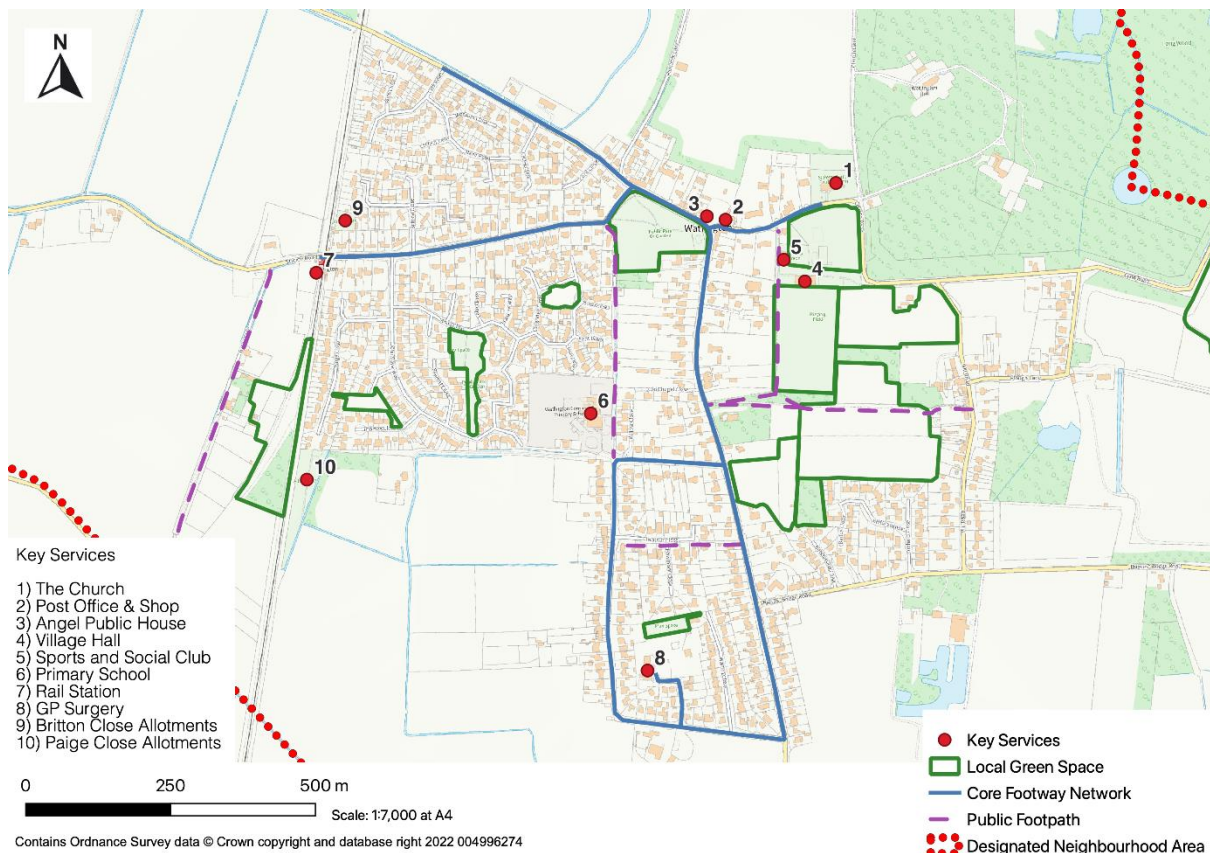


Figure 13: Core Footway Network

106. There are a range of guidance out there to understand how to deal with good lighting. Fixture types used as examples for reducing glare and light trespassing in the night sky are:

- fully shielded fixtures (enclosed in full cut off or canopy fixtures);
- lighting which is directed downwards;
- using energy efficient bulbs/low light levels such as white LED, metal halide or fluorescent sources;
- controlled lighting on timers, motion detectors when needed including no dusk to dawn lights¹⁵ and;
- using warmer colour lights such as yellow where possible avoiding blue, or ultraviolet content since these are generally more disruptive to humans and wildlife.

¹⁴ [LightingPlanGuidelines.pdf \(darkskysociety.org\)](https://darkskysociety.org/lightingplanguidelines.pdf)

¹⁵ [Towards-A-Dark-Sky-Standard-V1.1.pdf \(southdowns.gov.uk\)](https://southdowns.gov.uk/towards-a-dark-sky-standard-v1.1.pdf)

Policy 11. Walking and the core footway network

New development will seek to provide suitable new or improved links to the core footway network and, where reasonable, make improvements to footways comprising the network itself.

Any development adjacent to the routes comprising the core footway network will be expected to support their improvement in line with creating safe, accessible, all-weather routes. The core footway network is shown at Figure 13.

Good sustainable access by walking will include consideration of personal security and whether the route to key services and facilities is well-lit by street lighting when appropriate. Where it is reasonable to do so, new development will be expected to support sustainable access by introducing carefully designed street lighting on the core footway network. The introduction of street lighting for external use must respect the following criteria by being:

- a) Fully shielded (enclosed in full cut-off flat glass fitments)
- b) Directed downwards (mounted horizontally to the ground and not tilted upwards)
- c) Avoid dusk to dawn lighting introducing timed motion detectors; and
- d) When possible, use white light low-energy lamps such as LED, metal halide or fluorescent sources.

107. The village is subject to a 30mph limit, and the neighbourhood plan aims to ensure that speed limits are respected (see **Community Action 4**). It is generally accepted that most people will be able to cycle on roads of 30mph, depending on the volume of traffic and the number of heavy vehicles. The NP could, however, develop a walking network that becomes the priority for future infrastructure funding, including requiring any new development to link with it. This could be used to improve access to the station. It would help to focus infrastructure investment.



Figure 14- Speed limit in Watlington

108. The rail station is accessible by walking and bike for much of the village and provides routes for commuting / leisure to nearby towns and to stations to London. Policy CS11 of the local plan places priority on improving strategic networks including the rail link between KL and Cambridge, to achieve a better frequency and quality of service. The rail station is highly valued by the community. 60% of respondents indicated it was one of the most important aspects of the village. **Policy 8** aims to offer some protection for the rail station through its designation as a community facility.
109. Speeding is a community concern, 75% of respondents in the consultation survey would like to see more speed restrictions or at least vehicles being driven at or below the prevailing speed limit. According to the parish council, there was a speed watch team set up some years ago to track speeding in the village, but this work could not be maintained due to the lack of committee members.
110. Highway safety and the general functioning of the road network is extensively covered by higher level policies within the Local Plan and NPPF. These, for example, set out that new developments are required not to have an unacceptable adverse impact on highway safety. NPPF paras 108 and 109 cover highway safety and the operational efficiency of the roads generally. Traffic speeds, however, are not strictly a planning matter, but the community feels that the NP could include a community policy on working with agencies to address speeding through the village.

Community Action 4: Traffic speeds

The Parish Council will work with Norfolk County Council as the Highway Authority, as well as other agencies, to introduce the following measures that seek to reduce traffic speeds through the village:

- Village gateway schemes to alert drivers to speed limit changes and the village environment.
- A community speed watch initiative.

Historic Environment

111. The parish has a long history, having first appeared in records in 1166 but with evidence of human activity dating back to Mesolithic and Neolithic times (Stone Age). Norfolk Heritage Service's Heritage Explorer described Watlington's name as coming from the Old English for "settlement of wacol people" with wacol meaning watchful¹⁶.
112. The church, St Peter and St Paul's is the oldest surviving building in the parish; a medieval church with Norman origins, built almost entirely from carstone. Only the base of the Norman tower remains. The church was rebuilt around 1300 and the chancel added around 1340. The building was further altered in the 15th

¹⁶ [Parish-Summary-Watlington-\(Parish-Summary\) - Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#)

century including a new west window in the tower and a small spire (now gone). The Victorians restored the church between 1900-1902 with much of the medieval interior surviving. The tower has six bells: two date back to 1450 and the others to 1910. All were restored in the 1990s. The clock in the tower is from 1920 and was given in thanks for the return of soldiers after World War One.



Figure 15-Pictures of the St Peter and St Paul's Church

113. There is a Medieval or Tudor moat which is a Scheduled Monument located on the site of the Grade II listed Old Rectory, a Georgian building with an earlier timber-framed core of probable 16th century date. Other post-medieval buildings include the Grade II Listed Church Farmhouse (also known as The Old Manor Farmhouse) on Church Road from the mid-17th century. Watlington Hall Park is a late 18th century historic parkland which is shown in records from 1839 as being a pleasure grounds with stables and a kitchen garden. Plantations were established around the parkland by 1869 and lodges built at the ends of the east and west drives by 1885¹⁷. The most recent historical entry in the Norfolk Heritage Explorer records that in Watlington there is a World War Two pillbox south of School Road and within LGS3- Angel Field Millennium Green. Ariel photographs from 1946 show the earthworks of an anti-aircraft or searchlight battery in the same place¹⁸.

¹⁷ [MNF31972 - Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#)

¹⁸ [MNF40107 - Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#)

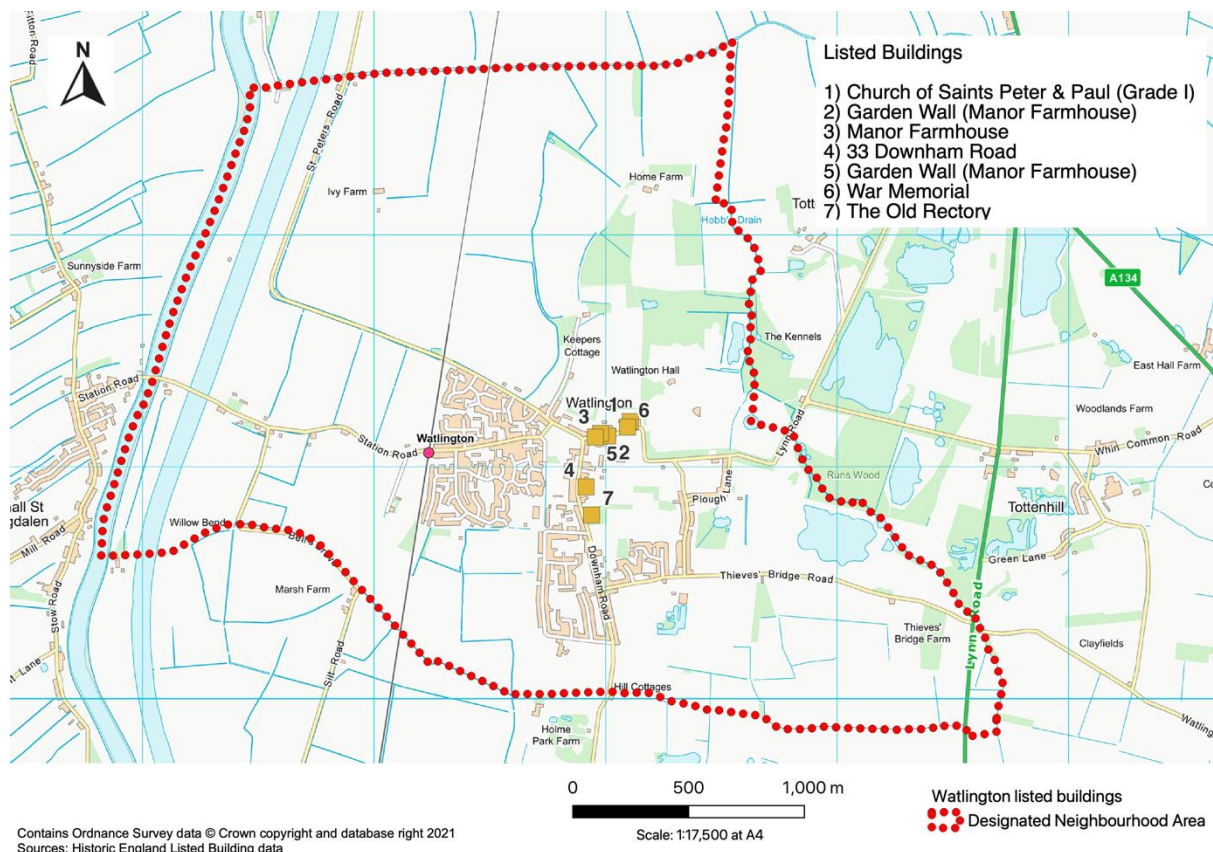


Figure 16: Listed Buildings in Watlington

114. Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’, recognizes that the nation’s heritage assets comprise an irreplaceable resource. Paragraph 189 of the Framework requires all heritage assets to: “...be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance...”. It goes on to set out a detailed and carefully nuanced approach to the conservation of heritage assets. The current local plan policy CS12 sets out that development should avoid, mitigate, or compensate for any adverse impacts on heritage.

115. The Government’s Planning Practice Guidance recognises that there are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas, or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which are not formally designated heritage assets. In some areas local authorities keep a local list of non-designated heritage assets, incorporating those identified by neighbourhood planning bodies. Paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework determines that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be considered in determining the application.

116. Non-designated heritage assets should be identified against a clear set of consistent criteria. A comprehensive review by the working group of designated heritage assets, the Conservation Area appraisal and the Historic Environment Record was undertaken prior to considering whether there were other assets of heritage value worth identifying in the neighbourhood plan. Local knowledge and

the Historic Environment Record was used to find out more about their history. These were subsequently assessed in accordance with Historic England's guidance on Local Heritage Listing¹⁹, using the commonly applied selection criteria. Those

117. The assets determined to have historic significance are identified as non-designated heritage assets **Figure 17** and on the **Policies Map in Appendix A**. Further details of how each of the assets meets the criteria for identification is set out in **Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Non-Designated Heritage Assets Assessment Document**. They will receive protection in accordance with **Policy 12: Non-Designated Heritage Assets**. Owners of these assets had an opportunity to respond to the Regulation 14 consultation on the draft plan. Should an owner wish for their asset to be removed from the list subsequently they should contact the Parish Council for consideration. It should be noted that these are not the only non-designated heritage assets in Watlington, just those considered of local importance when developing this plan.
118. In relation to archaeology, Norfolk County Council, acting as advisors to the local planning authority, will advise on suitable mitigation measures (if required on all new developments within the parish) if they potentially affect buried archaeological remains.

Policy 12: Non-Designated Heritage Assets

All heritage assets will be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the following non-designated heritage assets (shown in **Figure 17** and on the **Policies Map in Appendix A**):

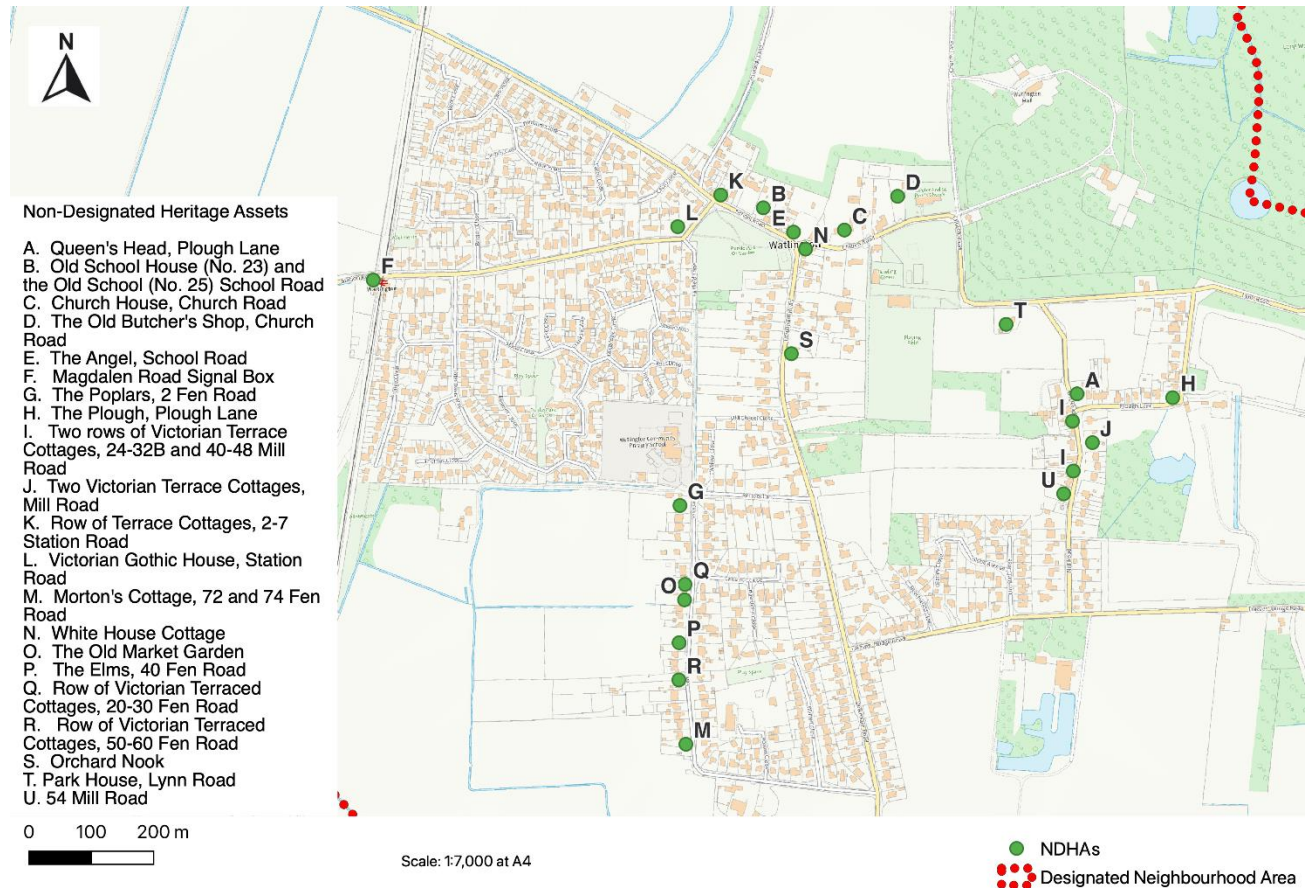
- A. Queen's Head, Plough Lane
- B. Old School House (No.23) and the Old School (No.25) School Road
- C. Church House, Church Road
- D. The Old Butcher's Shop, Church Road
- E. The Angel, School Road
- F. Magdalen Road Signal Box
- G. The Poplars, 2 Fen Road
- H. The Plough, Plough Lane
- I. Two rows of Victorian Terraced Cottages, 24-32B and 40-48 Mill Road
- J. Two Victorian Terraced Cottages, Mill Road
- K. Row of Terraced Cottages, 2-7 Station Road
- L. Row of Terraced Cottages, Station Road
- L. Victorian Gothic House, Station Road
- M. Morton's Cottage, 72 and 74 Fen Road
- N. White House Cottage
- O. The Old Market Garden
- P. The Elms, 40 Fen Road
- Q. Row of Victorian or earlier Terraced Cottage, 20-30 Fen Road
- R. Row of Victorian or earlier Terraced Cottages, 50-60 Fen Road

¹⁹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7/heag301-local-heritage-listing/>

- S. Orchard Nook
- T. Park House, Lynn Road
- U. 54 Mill Road

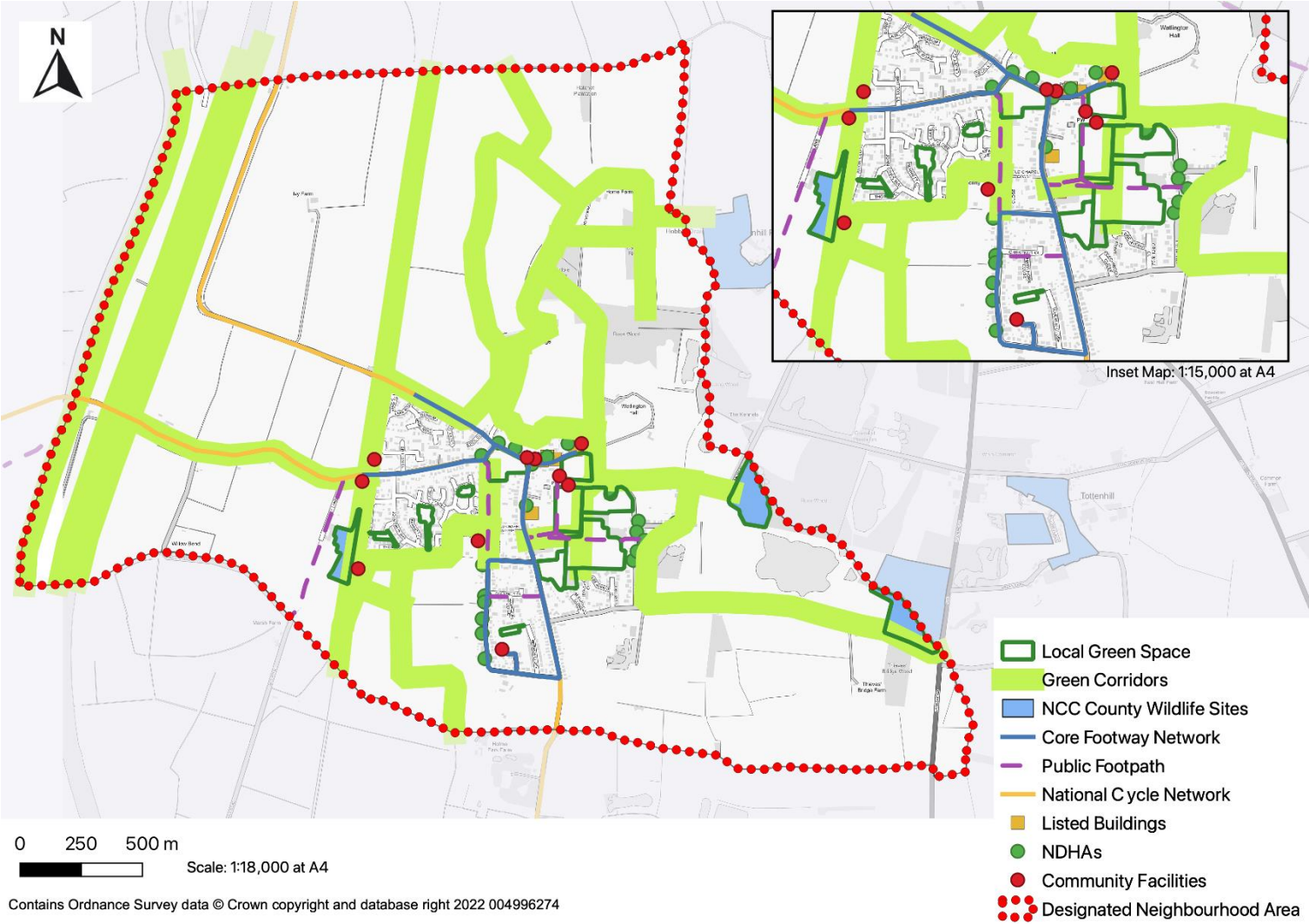
Proposals that are adjacent non-designated assets should demonstrate that consideration has been given to preserving the heritage asset and its distinctive historic features.

Figure 17: Non-Designated Heritage Assets



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Appendix A: Policies Map



Appendix B: Design checklist²⁰

Because the design guidelines cannot cover all design eventualities, this section provides a number of questions based on established good practice against which the design proposal should be evaluated. The aim is to assess all proposals by objectively answering the questions below. Not all the questions will apply to every development. The relevant ones, however, should provide an assessment as to whether the design proposal has considered the context and provided an adequate design solution.

General design guidelines for new development
Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity
Reinforce or enhance the established village or smaller settlement character of streets, greens, and other spaces
Harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form, architecture and land use
Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long-distance views
Reflect, respect, and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness
Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development
Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing
Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details
Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality
Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features;
Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other
Make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation, and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours
Ensure that places are designed with management, maintenance and the upkeep of utilities in mind
Seek to implement passive environmental design principles by, firstly, considering how the site layout can optimise beneficial solar gain and reduce energy demands (e.g.

²⁰ From the AECOM Design Guides

insulation), before specification of energy efficient building services and finally incorporate renewable energy sources
Positively integrate energy efficient technologies
Street grid and layout
Does it favour accessibility and connectivity? If not, why?
Do the new points of access and street layout have regard for all users of the development; in particular pedestrians, cyclists, and those with disabilities?
What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern? Are these reflected in the proposal?
How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing street arrangement?
Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?
Green spaces, views and character
What are the particular characteristics of this area which have been taken into account in the design; i.e. what are the landscape qualities of the area?
Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken into account?
Has the proposal been considered within its wider physical context?
How does the proposal affect the trees on or adjacent to the site? • Can trees be used to provide natural shading from unwanted solar gain? i.e. deciduous trees can limit solar gains in summer, while maximising them in winter
Does the proposal maintain or enhance any identified views or views in general?
In rural locations, has the impact of the development on the tranquillity of the area been fully considered?
How does the proposal affect the character of a rural location?
How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area and how are these views incorporated in the design?
Can any new views be created?
Is there adequate amenity space for the development?

Does the new development respect and enhance existing amenity space? Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
Will any communal amenity spaces be created? If so, how will this be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?
Is there opportunity to increase the local area biodiversity?
Can green space be used for natural flood prevention e.g. permeable landscaping, swales etc.?
Can water bodies be used to provide evaporative cooling?
Is there space to consider a ground source heat pump array, either horizontal ground loop or borehole (if excavation is required)?
Gateway and access features
What is the arrival point, how is it designed?
Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing gaps between settlements?
Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?
Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?
Buildings layout and grouping
What are the typical groupings of buildings?
How have the existing groupings been reflected in the proposal?
Are proposed groups of buildings offering variety and texture to the townscape?
What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
Does the proposal maintain the character of dwelling clusters stemming from the main road?
Subject to topography and the clustering of existing buildings, are new buildings oriented to incorporate passive solar design principles, with, for example, one of the main glazed elevations within 30° due south, whilst also minimising overheating risk?
Can buildings with complementary energy profiles be clustered together such that a communal low carbon energy source could be used to supply multiple buildings that might require energy at different times of day or night? This is to reduce peak loads. And/or can waste heat from one building be extracted to provide cooling to that building as well as heat to another building?

Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens? How is this mitigated?
Building line and boundary treatment
What are the characteristics of the building line?
How has the building line been respected in the proposals?
Has the appropriateness of the boundary treatments been considered in the context of the site?
Will the roof structure be capable of supporting a photovoltaic or solar thermal array either now, or in the future?
Will the inclusion of roof mounted renewable technologies be an issue from a visual or planning perspective? If so, can they be screened from view, being careful not to cause over shading?
Building heights and roofline
What are the characteristics of the roofline?
Have the proposals paid careful attention to height, form, massing, and scale?
If a higher than average building is proposed, what would be the reason for making the development higher?
Household extensions
Does the proposed design respect the character of the area and the immediate neighbourhood, or does it have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties in relation to privacy, overbearing, or overshadowing impact?
Is the roof form of the extension appropriate to the original dwelling (considering angle of pitch)?
Do the proposed materials match those of the existing dwelling?
In case of side extension, does it retain important gaps within the street scene and avoid a 'terracing effect'?
Does the proposed extension respond to the existing pattern of window and door openings?
Are there any proposed dormer roof extensions set within the roof slope?
Is the side extension set back from the front of the house?

Does the proposed extension respond to the existing pattern of window and door openings?
Does the extension offer the opportunity to retrofit energy efficiency measures to the existing building?
Can any materials be re-used in situ to reduce waste and embodied carbon?
Car parking
What parking solutions have been considered?
Are the car spaces located and arranged in a way that is not dominant or detrimental to the sense of place?
Has planting been considered to soften the presence of cars?
Does the proposed car parking compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?
Have the needs of wheelchair users been considered?
Can electric vehicle charging points be provided?
Can secure cycle storage be provided at an individual building level or through a central/communal facility where appropriate?
If covered car ports or cycle storage is included, can it incorporate roof mounted photovoltaic panels or a biodiverse roof in its design?
Building materials and surface treatments
What is the distinctive material in the area? Does the proposed material harmonise with the local materials?
Does the proposal use high-quality materials?
Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves and roof details been addressed in the context of the overall design?
Does the new proposed materials respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?
Are recycled materials, or those with high recycled content proposed?
Has the embodied carbon of the materials been considered and are there options which can reduce the embodied carbon of the design? For example, wood structures and concrete alternatives.

Can the proposed materials be locally and/or responsibly sourced? E.g. FSC timber, or certified under BES 6001, ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems?

Appendix C: Justification for the Local Green Space Policy wording

1. This Neighbourhood Plan designates **14** Local Green Spaces (LGS) for protection across the plan area, these are identified in **Figure 9**. They are important not only for the wildlife they support, but provide significant quality of life benefits to residents, for example through encouraging recreation.
2. Many of these contribute to the distinctiveness of their local community, making it an attractive place to live. Justification for each of the Local Green Spaces is found in **Watlington: Local Green Space Evidence Document**.
3. The LGS policy is important, as is the precise wording. Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that, *“Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.”*
4. This at least implies that LGS designations require a policy for managing development, rather than just a list of those designations. This seems likely as:
 - First, it refers to LGS ‘policy’ for managing development. Policy should set out how decisions should be made when determining a planning application. A list of LGSs does not do this as it does not guide the decision maker, simply informing them of which sites are LGSs.
 - Second, Para 103 implies that LGS policy is a separate entity to national green belt policy.
 - Third, development affecting a LGS cannot be determined using green belt policy; green belt policy applies only to green belt, not to LGSs. An attempt to use green belt policy is likely to be unlawful and challengeable.
5. Regarding *Lochailort Investments Limited v. Mendip District Council and Norton St Philip Parish Council*, [2020] EWCA Civ 1259, this found that LGS policy need to be consistent with Green Belt policy and that any departure needs to be explained in a reasoned way. According to that judgement, *“The ordinary meaning of “consistent” is “agreeing or according in substance or form; congruous, compatible”. What this means, in my judgment, is that national planning policy provides that policies for managing land within an LGS should be substantially the same as policies for managing development within the Green Belt.”*
6. The neighbourhood plan needs to have ‘due regard’ to this requirement. ‘Due regard’ does not mean LGS policy has to conform to the requirement in every respect, but any departure will nevertheless need to be fully justified and explained. The judgements

support this, explaining that, *“provided the departure from the NPPF is explained, there may be divergence between LGS policies in a neighbourhood plan and national Green Belt policy.”*

7. It is therefore necessary to assess green belt policy in the NPPF to identify its features and requirements.
8. National Green Belt policy at para 148 explains that openness and permanence are essential characteristics of Green Belt and that it why it is designated - to preserve its openness and permanence. This is the purpose. The designation of LGS aims to protect smaller parcels of land for a variety of purposes that are in addition to their openness, such as its ecology, recreational value or history as set out as examples in the NPPF.
9. These must (NPPF para. 101) be capable of enduring beyond the plan period; this is a lower bar than needing to be permanent. It can endure beyond the plan period as long as there is not undue pressure for needed housing on those parcels of land, either by virtue of allocations for meeting local housing need being provided in the neighbourhood plan, or there being other land available to meet any unmet need. Another threat to the capability to endure would be a long list of different types of development that could be appropriate or acceptable.
10. The judgement in the case of R (Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and others) v North Yorkshire County Council [2020] UKSC 3, found that openness is not just a spatial or volumetric concept, but a visual one such that visual impact is a key matter. This is likely to be a particular matter of relevance for Local Green Spaces given that they tend to be small and so any development will have a visual impact.
11. The NPPF sets out that local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use.
12. Green Belt policy sets out that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It goes on to say that ‘very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
13. New buildings are considered to be inappropriate in Green Belt. There are some exceptions to this. Green Belt policy sets out a list of development that is not inappropriate, such as in-fill in villages, and affordable housing. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This includes mineral extraction and local transport infrastructure. These examples might still not be permitted if they would result in harm as para 148 says, *“When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt.”*

14. There are many exceptions listed at paras. 149 and 150 of the NPPF. As Green Belt areas are large, it is plausible that many such developments could take place within the Green Belt without undermining its overall openness and permanence, or resulting in only minor harm. This is not the case for LGSs, which cannot be extensive tracts of land. This means that even small-scale development risks undermining the purpose of designation and having an immediate and harmful visual impact. A LGS policy that would simply refer to the list of Green Belt exceptions in the NPPF could undermine the designation process as this large number of exceptions would suggest that the designation is not capable of enduring beyond the plan period. LGS policy therefore needs to consider each in turn, and with the aim of limiting the number.
15. The table below reviews each element of the Watlington LGS policy and provides justification for the diversion from Green Belt policy. In particular, the table justifies diversion from Green Belt policy with respect to what is considered an exception to inappropriate development, for example infill or minerals extraction.

Figure 18: Justification for LGS Policy Deviations from Green Belt Policy

LGS Policy	Justification for deviation from Green Belt Policy
New buildings are inappropriate development with the only exceptions to this: a) Buildings for forestry or agriculture where the Local Green Space is used for commercial woodland or farmland. b) The provision of appropriate facilities in connection with the existing use of land where the facilities preserve the openness of the Local Green Space and do not conflict with the reasons for designation that make it special to the community, such as for recreation or ecology; c) The extension or alteration of a building if it does not impact on the openness or the reasons for designation that make the Local Green	Para 149 (of the NPPF) sets out that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate apart from identified exceptions (listed a-g below). A number of these exceptions could undermine the openness of LGS or impact upon their reasons for designation - a) Buildings for agriculture or forestry; this is a reasonable exception for LGS policy where land is commercial woodland or farmland as it may otherwise hinder someone's business. b) Provision of appropriate facilities; this is a reasonable exception for LGS if such development could support the ongoing use and help to make the LGS capable of enduring. c) Extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building; this is a reasonable exception for LGS where it does not impact upon its openness or reasons for designation; d) Replacement of a building, provided it is the same use and not materially larger; this is a reasonable exception for LGS; e) Limited infill in villages; This is not a reasonable exception for LGS. Openness is not just a spatial concept, it is also visual, as determined by the Supreme Court. Any infill on small LGS designations

LGS Policy	Justification for deviation from Green Belt Policy
Space special to the community; or d) The replacement of a building provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.	will seriously undermine their openness and their reasons for designation. f) Limited affordable housing for local community needs; This is not a reasonable exception for LGS. Any affordable housing on small LGS designations will seriously undermine their openness and their reasons for designation. g) Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use; this is not a reasonable exception for LGS. It is unlikely that LGS will be brownfield when identified in accordance with Para 101, and infilling and complete redevelopment is likely to fully undermine the designation of the LGS.
Other appropriate development includes: a) Engineering operations that are temporary, small-scale and result in full restoration; or b) The re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; or c) Material changes in the use of land where it would not undermine the reasons for designation that make it special to the community.	Para 150 sets out that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate provided they preserve the openness of Green Belt and do not conflict with the purpose (listed a-f). A number of these exceptions could undermine the openness of LGS or impact upon their reasons for designation - a) Mineral extraction; This is not a reasonable exception. Though highly unlikely to apply in any LGS, but nevertheless the quarry would be so large and the operations so long term that it would not enable the LGS to endure beyond the plan period. b) Engineering operations; This is a reasonable exception. LGS policy could allow for this if temporary, small-scale and restored fully c) Local transport infrastructure; This is not applicable as it specifically requires a Green Belt location d) Re-use of buildings; This is a reasonable exception. e) Material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); This is a reasonable exception. LGSs are designated for reasons related to their specific use or quality, such as recreation or ecology. Change of use could be supported in LGS policy as long as the new use would not undermine the reason for designation that makes it special to the community. f) Development, including buildings, brought forward under Community Right to Buy or Neighborhood Development Order; this would not apply as the community is designating the land as LGS so as to keep it open and protect its special qualities.

LGS Policy	Justification for deviation from Green Belt Policy
Proposals that are on land adjacent to Local Green Space are required to set out how any impacts on the special qualities of the green space, as identified by its reason for designation, will be mitigated.	There is no requirement in Green Belt policy that relates to adjacent land. However, the setting of LGS or adjacent land use may be part of or impact upon what makes it demonstrably special, particularly where LGS are very small.