

Withersfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan

2026 - 2040



Made Version

Published by Withersfield Parish Council to be 'made' under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

July 2026

A guide to reading this plan

Of necessity, this neighbourhood plan is a detailed technical document. The purpose of this page is to explain the structure and help you find your way around the plan.

1. Introduction and background

This section explains the background to this neighbourhood plan and how you can take part in and respond to the consultation.

2. The neighbourhood area

This section summarises the features of the Parish comprising the village, the Arboretum residential site, part of which is under construction, the Haverhill Research Centre, including the Epicentre, Hanchett End, and the surrounding countryside.

3. Planning policy context

This section relates the Plan to the relevant national and local planning policies of West Suffolk Council.

4. Vision, objectives, and land use policies

This is the key section of the plan. Firstly, it provides a statement on the neighbourhood plan vision and objectives. It then sets out the land use and development policies that are proposed to achieve those objectives. The policies are listed on page 5 and there are policy maps at the back of the plan to show whereabouts in the parish each policy applies.

5. Implementation

This section explains how the plan will be implemented and future development guided and managed. It also identifies issues that have arisen during the preparation of the plan that lie outside the scope of a neighbourhood plan.

Withersfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2026 - 2040

May 2026

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Foreword

This neighbourhood plan is designed to set out what we, as a parish, want to be considered on all future planning policies, applications, and changes to existing buildings in our parish. It has been written to highlight the concerns and record the wishes of the residents in our parish to ensure that we only have developments that are suitable for the location depending upon the type of application and future use.

Julia Korona and Philip Stiles Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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Glossary of key terms

Biodiversity is the term used to describe the whole variety of life on earth. It includes not only all species of plants and animals, but also the complex ecosystems they live within. It ranges from species and habitats which are considered commonplace to those considered critically endangered.

Conservation Areas are designated by the local planning authority under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 69 as being of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance.

Development is defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as 'the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land'.

Listed Buildings are designated for their special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II* or II. Listing includes the interior as well as the exterior of the building, and any buildings or permanent structures (such as wells) within its curtilage. Historic England is responsible for listing buildings in England.

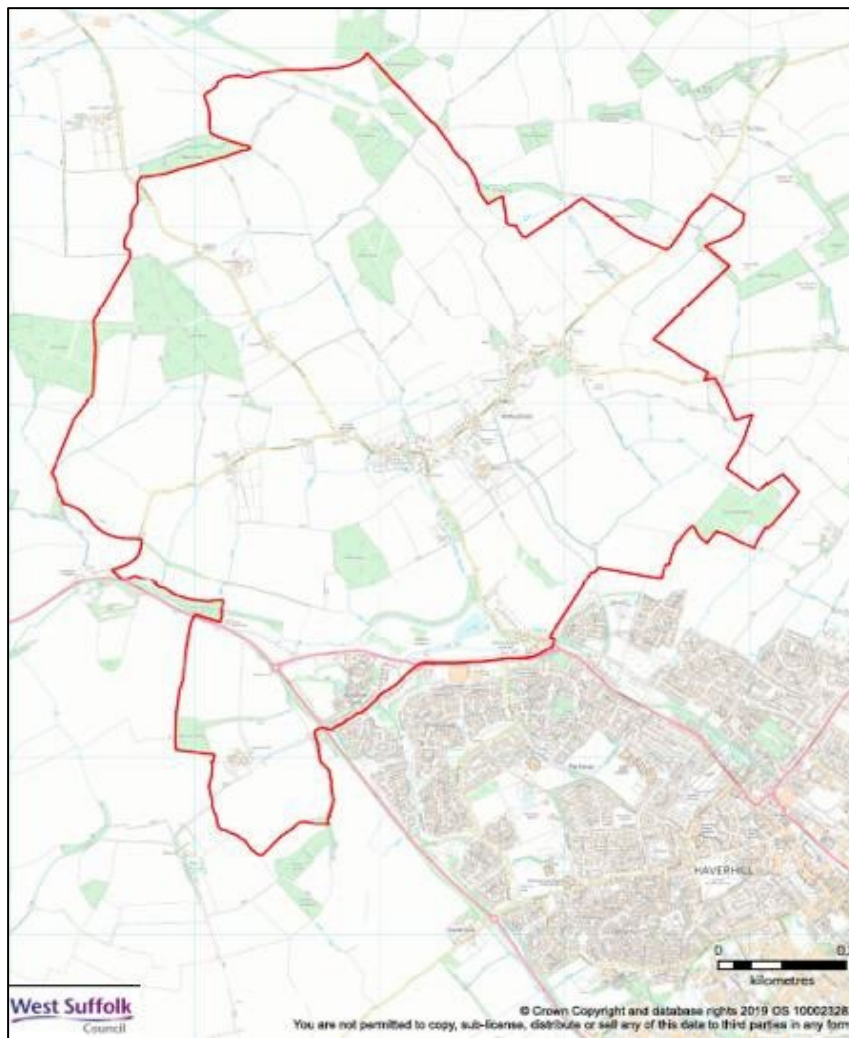
The **National Planning Policy Framework** published by the government sets out its planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Withersfield Parish Council has prepared a neighbourhood plan for the area designated by the local planning authority, West Suffolk Council (WSC), on 7 January 2020. The plan has been prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations of 2012 (as amended).

1.2 The area coincides with the parish boundary (see Plan A below) and comprises the historic village of Withersfield and the Hanchett End and/or Arboretum area of Haverhill.

1.3 The purpose of the neighbourhood plan is to set out a series of planning policies that will be used to determine planning applications in the area in the period to 2040. The plan will form part of the 'development plan' for West Suffolk in respect of this parish.



Plan A: Designated Withersfield Neighbourhood Area.

1.4 Neighbourhood plans provide local communities with the opportunity to manage the quality of development of their areas. The neighbourhood plan becomes a statutory part of the development plan for the area and will normally carry full weight in how planning applications are decided. Plans must therefore

contain only land use planning policies that can be used for this purpose. This often means that there are important issues of interest to the local community that cannot be addressed in a neighbourhood plan if they are not directly related to planning.

1.5 Although there is considerable scope for the local community to decide on its planning policies, neighbourhood plans must meet some 'basic conditions.' In essence, the conditions are:

- Is the plan consistent with the national planning policy?
- Is the plan consistent with local planning policy?
- Does the plan promote the principles of sustainable development?
- Has the process of making the plan met the requirements of UK environmental law?

1.6 In addition, the parish council has demonstrated to an independent examiner that it has successfully engaged with the local community in preparing the plan. The examiner was satisfied that it has, and considers the plan meets the basic conditions, and so the plan went to a referendum of the local electorate. A majority of the turnout voted in favour of the plan being 'made' during the referendum, and now it becomes adopted as formal planning policy for the parish.

The Submission Plan

1.7 The Submission Plan embraces the core planning principle of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024), namely, to contribute to sustainable development; to foster well-designed places with accessible services and open spaces; to protect and enhance our historic environment; and to improve biodiversity.

1.8 It is the version of the plan that was voted in favour of being 'made' during the referendum. It has followed a formal consultation period on the 'Pre-Submission' version of the plan in November – December 2022, on which the parish council consulted on its proposed vision, objectives, and draft policies of the Plan. It has reviewed the comments made by the local communities, West Suffolk Council (WSC), other statutory bodies, land interests, and other stakeholders. Some changes have been made as a result of their comments, which are summarised in the separate Consultation Statement.

Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Habitats Regulations

1.9 WSC confirmed in its screening opinion of December 2021 that the scope of the plan does not have the potential for significant environmental effects and therefore no strategic environmental assessment of the plan is required, as per the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended).

1.10 The screening opinion also confirmed that the plan would not have any likely significant effect on any of the internationally designated habitats sites that lie within 20km of the parish. As a result, it concluded that no habitats

regulations assessment would be required, as per the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

2. The Neighbourhood Area

2.1 The village can trace its historic roots back to at least the Domesday Book of 1086 ('Wedresfelda') with clear signs of much earlier Saxon, Viking, Roman and earlier occupation in this location. Examples include Silver Street in the western parish forming part of the Roman 'Via Devana' connecting towns in the Midlands with the coast at Harwich and the early 11th century manor house of Withersfield Pettigrues that once occupied the moated site at Hall Farm (with the 16th century 'Withersfield Hall' now the barn on the same site). At the time of the Domesday Book the village was recorded as prosperous and twice the size of the average English village settlement.

2.2 The Church of St. Mary the Virgin dates from the 14th century although the village had an earlier church, parts of which have been reused in the present building. The building is of the Perpendicular English Gothic style and sits above the road next to Stour Brook and apart from the surrounding buildings. Church Farm just to its west at the foot of Hollow Hill comprised a surviving 17th century farmhouse and later farmstead, now developed for housing.



Plan B: Withersfield 1783

(Source: Image is the copyright of Larks Press, taken from "Hodkinson's Map of Suffolk in 1783", published by Lark's Press, Ordnance Farmhouse, Guist Bottom, Dereham, Norfolk, NR20 5PF)

2.3 This was one of fifteen working farmsteads in or the village or elsewhere in the parish recorded at the end of the 19th century. The earliest are Hall Farm (16th century), Charity Farm and Lilley Farm (both 17th century) which were

located along the main road from the village astride Button Green (now 'Burton Green'), a village green that extended from Town Green to the south up to Charity Farm (as shown on Hodskinson's 'County of Suffolk Map' of 1783 – see Plan B). The Green encompassed all of Lilley Farm and widened out beyond the present, smaller green to the junction with Withersfield Road at Bittons Farm.

2.4 There are also surviving 17th and 18th century buildings around its northern extent (Cartref, the Cottage and Willow Cottage) that continue to define that historic space, as well as Guildhall, Whitehall, Coronation Cottage, and Jasmine Cottage that all lay within its enclosure. Encroachment into the space continued throughout the 18th and 19th centuries to narrow its width along Turnpike Road and/or Thurlow Road and Rose Hill. However, the space survives in the field gaps either side of the main road north of Lilley Farm and in the woodlands south of Rose Hill.



Plan C: Withersfield 1949 (Source: National Library of Scotland).

2.5 Elsewhere, a group of 17th and 18th century buildings survive at the junction of Silver Street and Skippers Lane, including the White Horse Inn. And towards the foot of Hollow Hill there are a line of 17th century cottages along Church Street, with the 18th century The Grange opposite the church and the 15th century Turnpike House facing Town Green. The separate Turnpike Cottage of 1766 located on the road edge opposite at Town Green was demolished to widen the road bend in 1970.

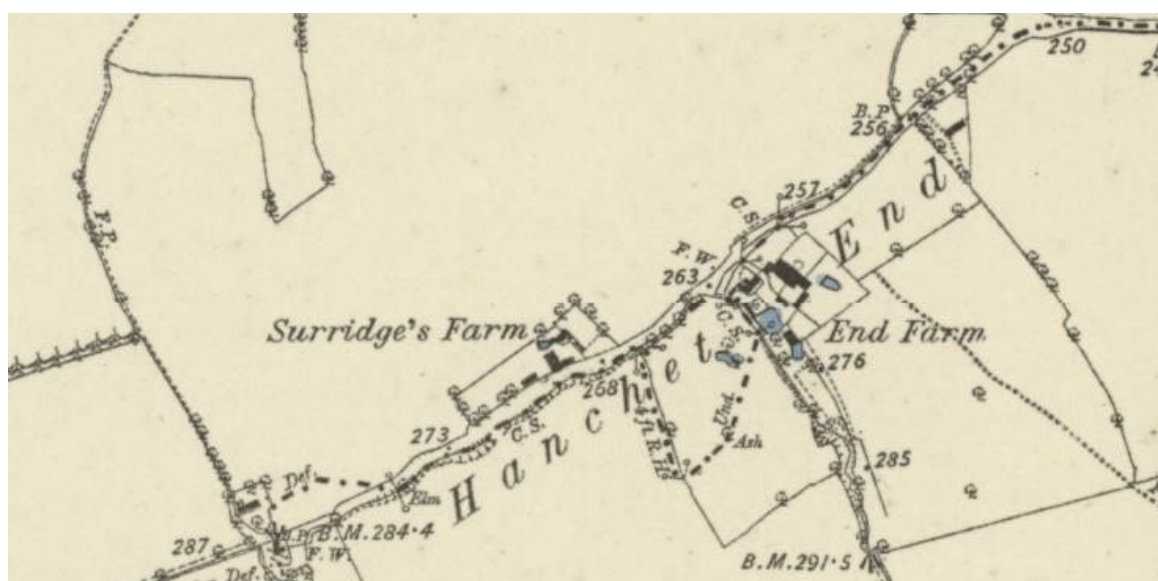
2.6 These once well separated buildings have been gradually infilled since with important village services like the Post Office and Smithy north of Turnpike House. Towards Burton Green other services were added – the Methodist Chapel in 1893 in the garden of Vendore House, which itself served as a grocery, drapery, and bakery from the mid 19th century. Two pubs – the Fox and the Duke of Wellington – were built in the 19th century to serve Burton Green and both survive as houses (the Fox has been converted and its gable end pub sign

has been retained). There were other 19th century smithys and bakehouses in the village, which survive as converted houses.

2.7 Two more buildings – the 18th century Jacobs Manor serving as the Church Rectory and the former schoolhouse of 1865 (now the village hall) – are prominent reminders of the village past, as is the War Memorial, a granite obelisk of 1921 sitting on the edge of Town Green opposite the village hall.

2.8 The simple historic grain of the village remains much intact, formed by those farmsteads, Town Green, Burton Green alongside the centuries old, linear road pattern. The post war additions along Turnpike Road and Rose Hill have made the Village Green more difficult to discern but their generally low heights and wide and deep plots have resulted in the incursions being less impactful than may have otherwise been the case.

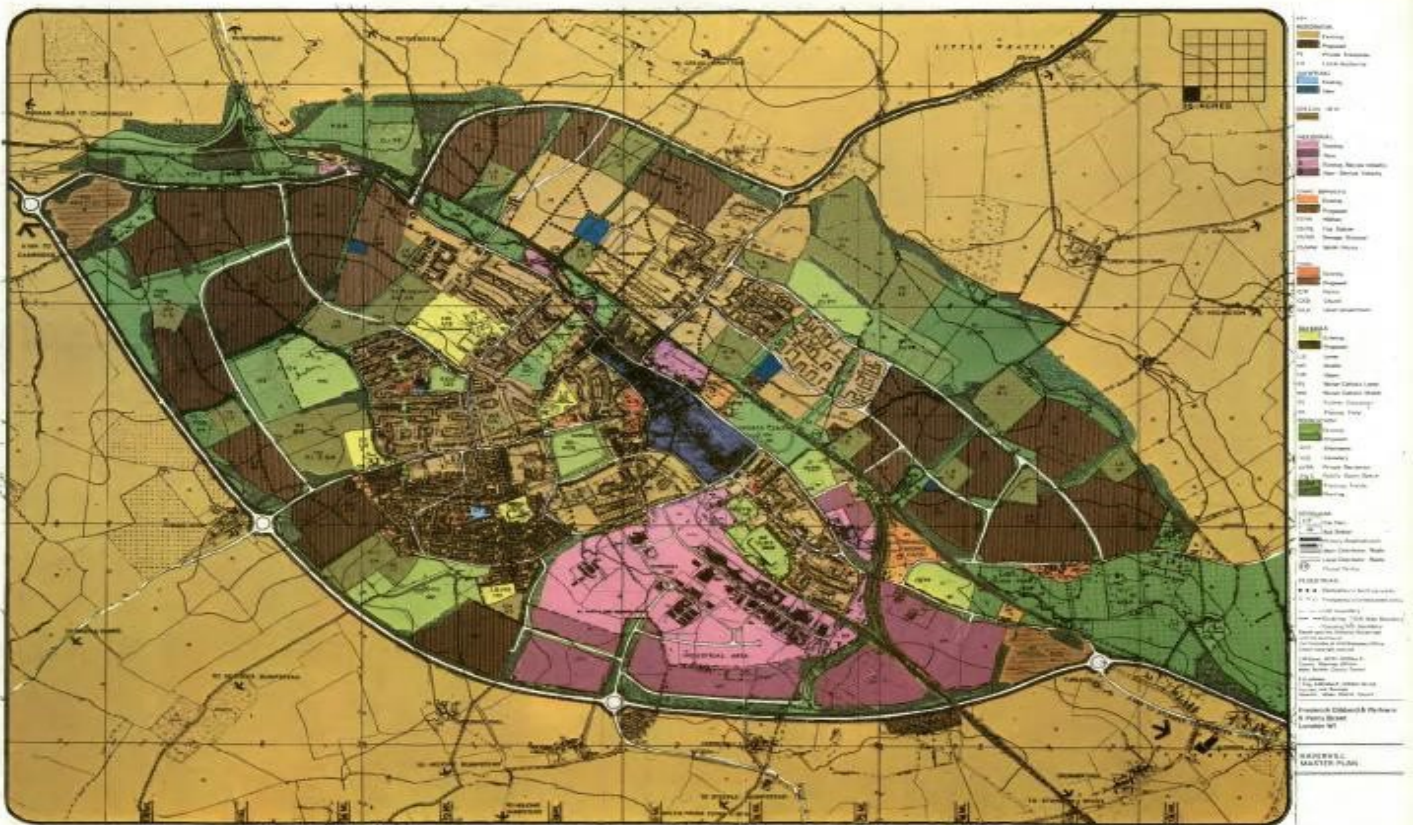
2.9 The former hamlet of Hanchett End lies in the southern corner of the Parish that now forms a part of the larger town of Haverhill. It comprises two parts: the historic route of Hanchett End along which the two main farmsteads of Hanchett End Farm and Surridge's Farm were located; and the recent Haverhill Research Centre office and 'Arboretum' residential developments area between that route and the junction of the A1307 and A1017 at the very northern end of the town.



Plan D: Hanchett End 1885 (Source: National Library of Scotland)

2.10 The 1971 Haverhill Masterplan, produced by Sir Frederick Gibberd as the basis for planning the new town, gave little attention to Hanchett End itself. It proposed new private housing (Haycocks Road and Notley Drive) and a 'Special Town Entrance Site' to its north-west to 'reinforce the town's identity underlined by the provision of major architectural compositions' and to 'attract industry or commercial development'.

West Suffolk County Council
Haverhill Urban District Council



WITHERSFIELD PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: MADE VERSION – July 2026

Planning Issues

2.11 The village has seen little in the way of new development in recent years. The last scheme built of any scale was the redevelopment of Church Farm in the late 1980s (now 'Homestall Crescent'). Before that was the cul-de-sac scheme of the 1960s at Burton Hill. Since then, the village has seen some occasional plot infill and redevelopment along Turnpike Road and Thurlow Road. A recent proposal for a significant plot intensification scheme for five homes at Milton House on Thurlow Road was refused and the subsequent appeal has been dismissed.

2.12 The scale of change at Hanchett End and its surroundings has been considerably different since the 1990s. The lane itself has seen housing schemes along its length but no significant change since then. The land to its south was originally built as part of the expansion of Haverhill in the 1980s and whilst remaining within the Parish of Withersfield, the land to its north has been developed as the Haverhill Research Centre (the 'Epicentre') with a new pub and day nursery and as the Arboretum residential scheme. The remaining vacant land was intended to be used for additional commercial development as part of the centre but a new housing scheme for 155 homes was consented on appeal in 2020. A small part of the A1307 frontage next to the centre has been safeguarded for future commercial development.

Planning Policy Context

3.1 The Parish of Withersfield lies within the West Suffolk Council local planning authority area, formerly the St. Edmundsbury Borough Council planning authority area.

National Planning Policy

3.2 The most recent version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published by the government in December 2024 is an important guide in the preparation of neighbourhood plans. The following paragraphs of the NPPF are considered especially relevant to the objectives and policies of this neighbourhood plan:

- planning for sustainable development (paras 11 and 16)
- neighbourhood plans setting out non-strategic planning policy (paras 18 and 29 – 31)
- designating Local Green Spaces (para 106)
- achieving well-designed places (paras 131 – 141)
- conserving and enhancing the natural environment (paras 187-201)
- protecting and enhancing biodiversity (paras 192-195)
- limiting the impact of light pollution (para 198)
- planning positively for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment (paras 207 and 210).

3.3 The government published its first National Design Guide in autumn 2019 to encourage better design outcomes from the planning system. The guide encourages local communities to engage in understanding the character of their areas and, where preparing neighbourhood plans, to prepare design policies specific to their local areas. With this encouragement, a design code has been prepared for Withersfield village (see Appendix A).

Strategic Planning Policy

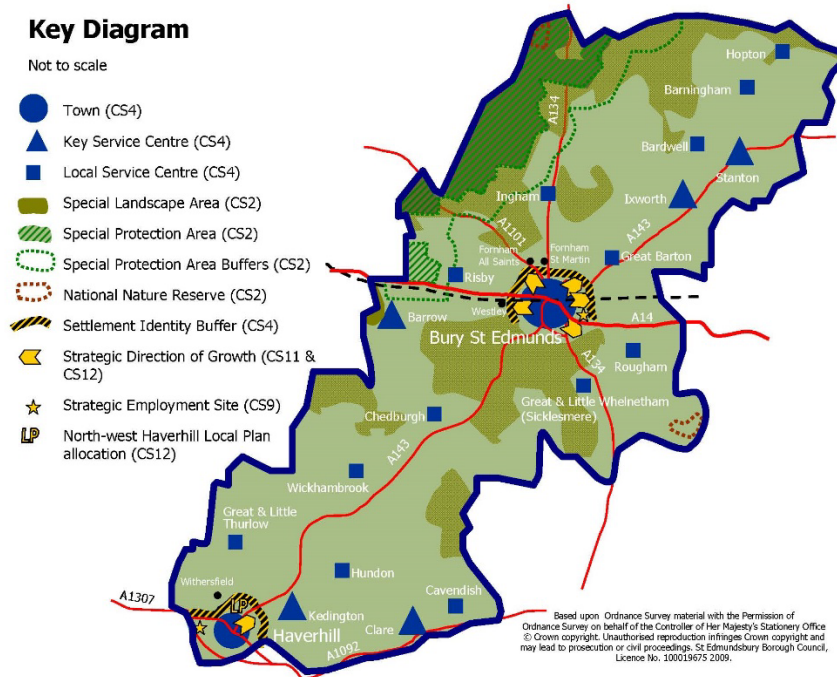
3.4 The neighbourhood plan must be in 'general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan.' Through the development of the Neighbourhood Plan for Withersfield, compliance has been paid to relevant planning policies. The first three on the list below have been superseded by the West Suffolk Local Plan, but we give details of the previous plans for context.

- the adopted St. Edmundsbury Core Strategy of 2010 (covering the period to 2031).
- the Haverhill and Rural Visions 2031 adopted in 2014.
- the Joint Development Management Policies Document adopted in 2015.
- the West Suffolk Local Plan adopted in 2025.

3.5 Their key policies applying to the Parish are:

Core Strategy

- CS1 and CS4 Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy – identifying Haverhill as a main focus for new development and Withersfield as an Infill Village (where only infill schemes comprising single dwellings or small groups of five homes or less is acceptable) with a strategic landscape buffer between the two settlements.



Plan E: St. Edmundsbury Core Strategy Key Diagram

- CS3 Design and Local Distinctiveness – setting out the goals for conserving and enhancing the historic and natural environments (including saving former Local Plan 2006 Policy L5 on safeguarding 'amenity open spaces')
- CS9 Employment – allocating the land known as the Haverhill Research Park in the Parish for 12 Ha of strategic employment land (see Plan F).
- CS13 Rural Areas – confining development to that reflecting the need to maintain the sustainability of local services for the communities they serve, the diversification of the economy and the provision of housing for local needs.
- CS14 Community Infrastructure – identifying amenity open spaces at Meldham Washlands and at Hanchett End (see Plan F).



Plan F: St. Edmundsbury Core Strategy Inset Map for Hanchett End (showing the CS9 strategic employment allocation in blue, amenity open spaces in bright green, the existing Haverhill settlement boundary in red and the countryside in light green)

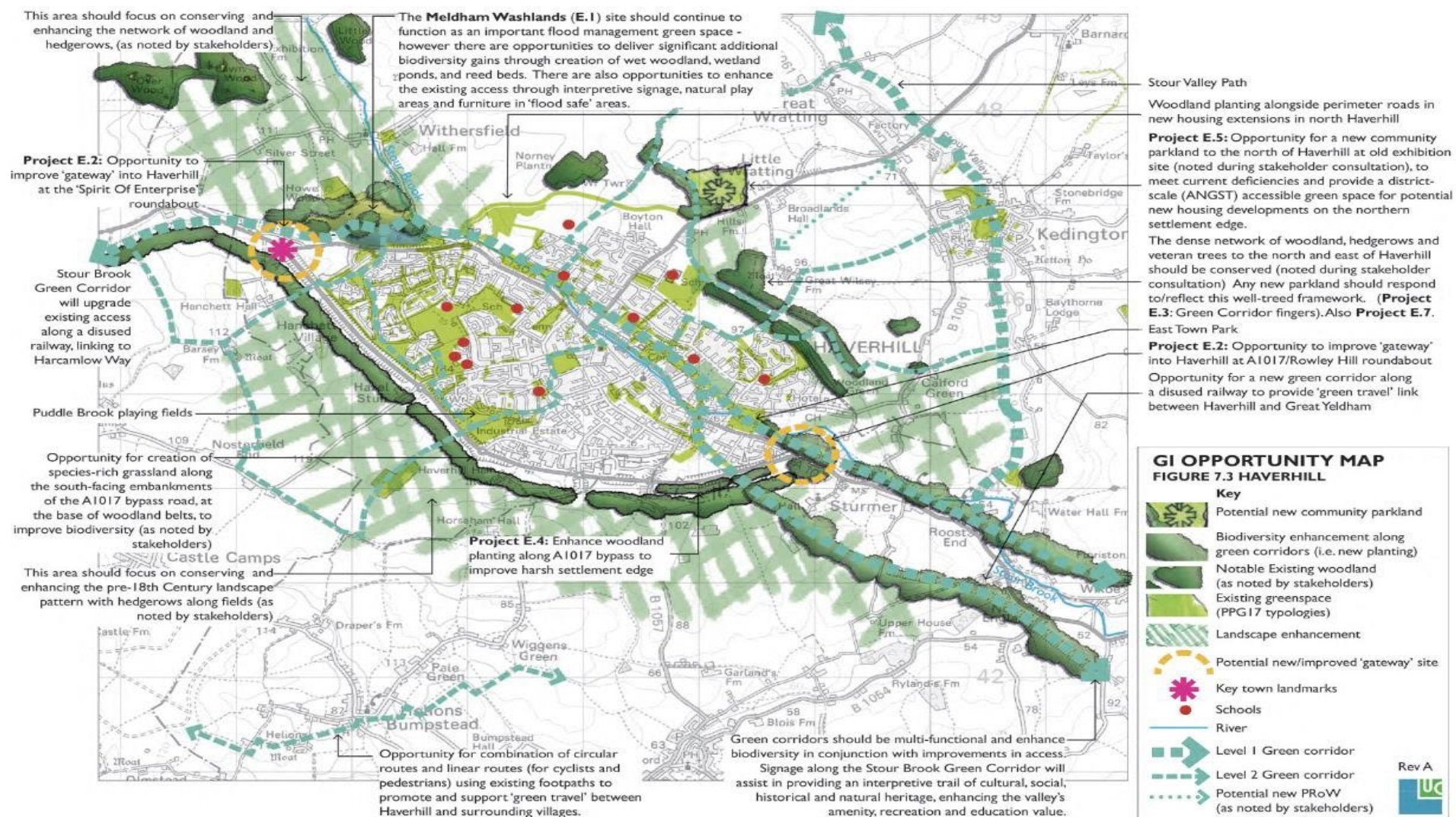
Haverhill Vision 2031

- Vision – including the statement that ‘existing surrounding settlements will be protected from coalescence and have green buffer zones developed between them and Haverhill to maintain their integrity.’
- HV10 Hanchett End Strategic Employment Site – allocating the land for the Research Park comprising (now Class E) business units for firms in the high technology sectors, but also accepting the 150 homes enabling development (see Plan G).



Plan G: Haverhill Vision 2031: Haverhill Research Park Masterplan 2011

- HV18 Green Infrastructure – defining a network through and around the town, including connections with Withersfield village (see Plan H)



Plan H: Haverhill Vision 2031: Green Infrastructure Opportunity Map (Source: Haverhill Vision 2031)

Joint Development Management Policies

- DM2 Creating Places – setting out the key principles of development to maintain local distinctiveness.
- DM5 Development in the Countryside – protecting the defined countryside from harmful development.
- DM13 Landscape Features – identifying the Stour Valley as a valued landscape and recognising the significance of gaps between settlements and the nocturnal character of the landscape.
- DM14 Minimising Pollution – identifying the tranquillity and general amenity of the natural environment for protection.
- DM15 Listed Buildings – requiring applicants to have special regard for the preservation of Listed Buildings and their setting.
- DM16 Local heritage Assets – defining these locally valued buildings and structures for recognition in decision making.
- DM17 Conservation Areas – requiring applicants to demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the conservation area and/or its setting and how a proposal preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- DM22 Residential Design – setting out the key principles for designing housing schemes.
- DM42 Open Spaces – protecting existing open spaces from unnecessary loss but without reference to Local Green Spaces, nor taking forward the former ‘amenity open spaces’ policy.

3.6 This suite of development plan documents, prepared and adopted over two decades, presents a complex policy context for the neighbourhood plan, though this will be resolved through a combination of the plan and the West Suffolk Local Plan. However, it is clear that the context sees the parish in two very different ways: protecting the distinct rural character of Withersfield village and the wider landscape of the parish on the one hand, and regarding that small part of the parish forming a functional part of Haverhill town at Hanchett End (‘the Arboretum’) as a strategic future employment asset on the other (but see paragraph 3.9 below).

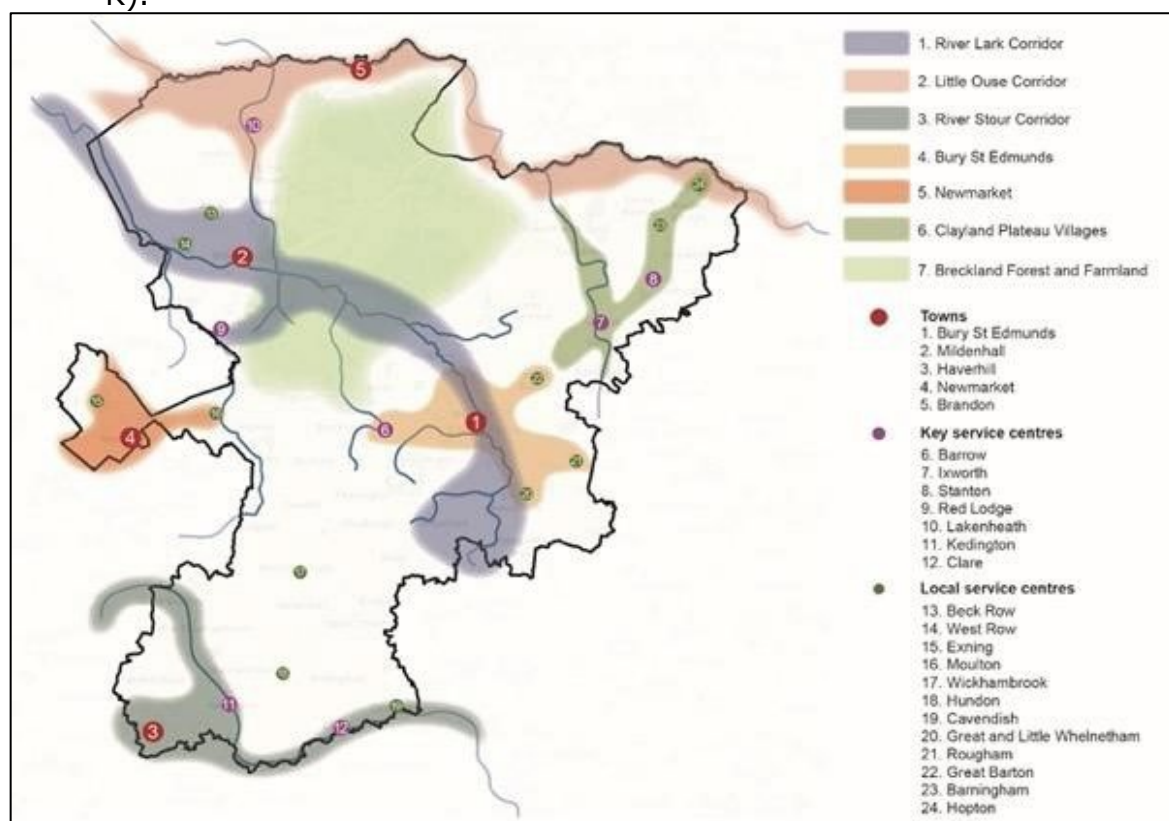
3.7 This context presents the neighbourhood plan with opportunities to refine existing policies and to restate some important policy principles that have been lost with the replacement of different documents, notably in terms of the landscape buffer between the village and town and of amenity open spaces.

West Suffolk Local Plan

3.8 West Suffolk Council Local Plan 2024 replaced all the current policies for its area. The following policy intentions are the most relevant that apply to this parish:

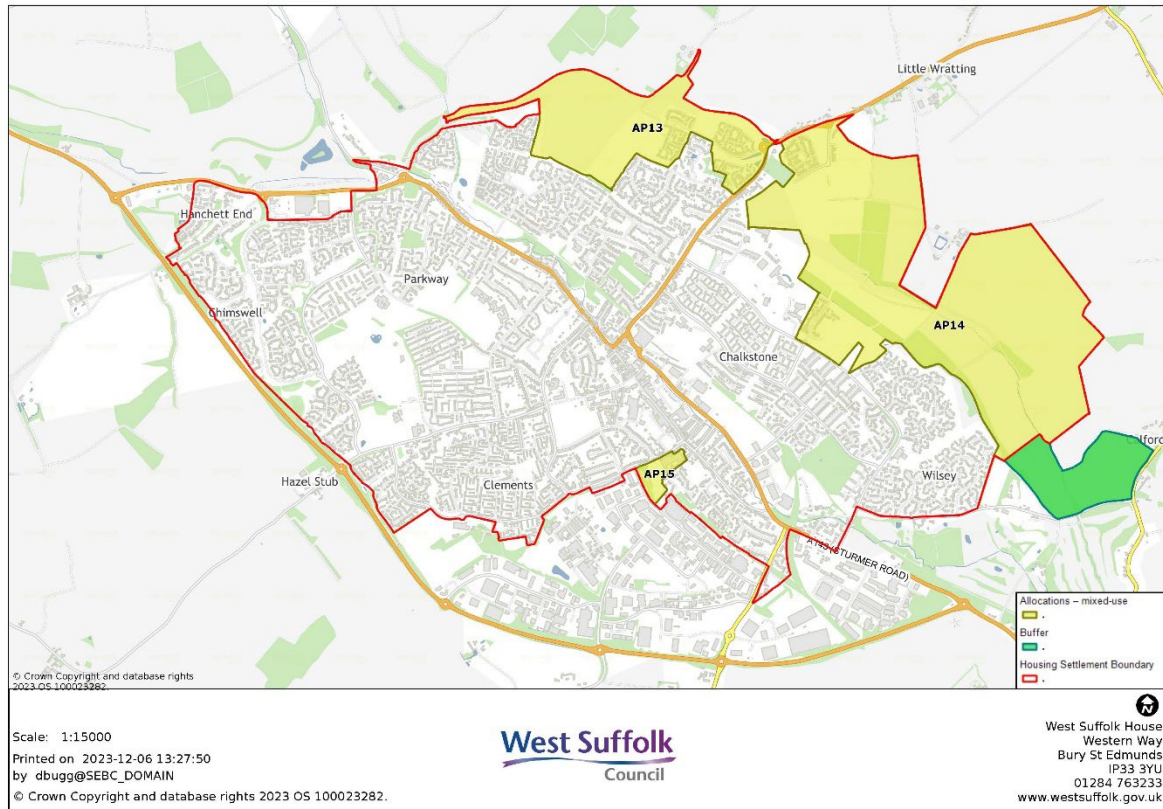
- SP1 The climate and environment emergency and sustainable development – Providing, integrating, and connecting blue and green infrastructure; conserving and enhancing biodiversity and protecting geodiversity of sites and surrounding areas through implementation of the mitigation hierarchy.
- SP2 Flood risk and sustainable drainage

- SP4 Design – Preserving or enhancing and respecting the historic environment including archaeological sites and heritage assets, the setting of, or views into and out of, a conservation area and recognising the distinctive historic character and architectural or archaeological value of the area and/or building.
- SP5 Green Infrastructure – Existing green infrastructure (GI), its integrity and connectivity, should be retained, restored, protected, and enhanced, wherever possible, and new green infrastructure delivered to support sustainable development. Planning permission for development that would impact on the quantity or quality of the existing green infrastructure network will only be granted if it cannot be avoided and if alternative green infrastructure provision of equivalent benefit is provided as part of the development or as a last resort a financial contribution is secured for suitable alternative green infrastructure provision by the relevant authority; The West Suffolk GI Study has identified priority areas for green infrastructure and opportunities for the delivery of green infrastructure within the district. The priority areas have been selected to provide multifunctional benefits to a wide range of people, whilst delivering nature-based solutions to future challenges and conserving the district's most important assets. These are identified as the River Lark corridor, Little Ouse corridor, River Stour corridor, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Clayland Plateau Villages and Breckland Forest and Farmland as shown in figure below (see Plan K).



Plan K: Draft West Suffolk Local Plan: Green Infrastructure Strategy

- SP6 Locally Valued Landscapes – Within West Suffolk, landscapes which are of local value and worthy of recognition have been identified and their special landscape qualities have been described. The locally valued landscapes (LVL) shown on the policies map include Upper Stour Valley. These areas have, by reason of their local distinctiveness, special qualities, and features and or condition, a limited capacity to absorb change that has, or may have, a significant effect on, or detract from, their character and or condition,
- SP7 Landscape – Individual proposals will be assessed based on their specific landscape and visual impact, taking into account any mitigation and future management proposals. Proposals that demonstrate their location, scale, design, and materials will seek to protect, enhance and where possible restore the character of the landscape, including the setting of settlements, and the significance of gaps between them will be supported.
- SP12 Spatial strategy – identifying boundaries around the two parts of Withersfield village (see Plan L and at the Arboretum to define the extent to which residential development proposals will be supported)-
- SP13 Settlement Hierarchy – identifying Withersfield village as a Type B Village
- SP14 Housing Needs – proposing that neighbourhood plans for Type B Villages need not allocate land for housing development (for example confirming a NPPF para 69 housing requirement of zero).
- SP17 Housing Type and Tenure – Proposals should seek to meet the identified housing needs of the district in order to contribute towards the creation of mixed, balanced, and inclusive communities. To achieve this new residential development, should provide a range of housing tenures, types, and sizes.
- SP21 Housing in the countryside.
- SP22 Strategic Employment – identifies a smaller area for the Haverhill Research Park employment proposal as SP12u (formerly site 2.03i) to reflect the loss of part of this employment designation to proposed residential development won on appeal.



Plan J: West Suffolk Local Plan: Haverhill Policies Map Inset

- LP5 Water quality and resources.
- LP9 Well-designed places.
- LP12 Trees.
- LP17 Alterations and extensions to dwellings including self-contained annexes.
- LP21 Open space, sport, play, and recreation facilities– protecting existing open spaces from unnecessary loss but without reference to Local Green Spaces.
- LP23 Local green spaces
- LP35 Listed buildings.
- LP36 Local Heritage Assets – requiring proposals to respect the historic fabric, design, materials, elevational treatment, and ornamentation of the original building; not result in an unacceptable level of loss, damage or covering of original features; and have regard to the setting, plot layout, and any boundary features as appropriate.
- LP37 Conservation Areas – identifying the Withersfield Conservation Area and requiring applicants to demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the conservation area and/or its setting and how a proposal preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area (see Plan L).



Plan L: West Suffolk Local Plan: Withersfield Village Inset Map
(showing Settlement Boundary in red, countryside in light green, valued landscape in red hatching and Conservation Area boundary in red dashes)

- LP41 Active and sustainable travel.
- LP44 Parking standards.

3.9 In effect, the Local Plan carries forward the spatial strategy and suite of development management policies for the village and the Arboretum area of the adopted policies. There is no expectation of housing growth at the village and the focus of change in the Arboretum area is the completion of the Haverhill Research Park employment allocation. It is noted however that the allocation has been overtaken by events, with a 145-home scheme being consented on appeal in April 2021 (APP/F3545//20/3256979).

3.10 The development plan also includes the Suffolk Minerals and Waste Plan adopted in July 2020. It identifies the 'water recycling centre' (AW219) south of the village, which is safeguarded under Policy WP14, and the Minerals Consultation Area, which extends along Stour Brook from south of the village to Haverhill under Policy M10. There are no made, or emerging neighbourhood plans in the vicinity.

3.11 The parish has seen few development proposals of any scale in recent years, other than those on its southern edge with the growth of the Arboretum area inside the parish and on the northern edge of Haverhill. Land around the village has been promoted for development in the past by landowners and proposals have been refused in the village at Milton House as unsuitable for the location. More recently, proposals have emerged for an anaerobic digester facility in the southwestern area of the parish,

which may have the potential to undermine the separate visual identity of the parish from Haverhill and cause amenity and traffic problems.

4. Vision, Objectives and Land Use Policies

Vision

4.1 The vision of the neighbourhood area in 2040 is:

The village of Withersfield will have conserved its special historic interest as schemes to change, extend, or redevelop buildings will have been of a high quality and fitted in with the grain and character of the village. Some sensitive infill will have led to a small number of new, affordable homes being built.

The village hall and pub will remain the centre of community life and Town Green and Burton Green will continue to be precious open spaces. Our most important historic buildings will have survived in good repair and together with other buildings that remind us of our past and our wealth of local nature, we will have kept our rural identity.

Although Haverhill will have continued to grow it will have crept no closer to the village and the new residential scheme at the Arboretum will have stitched well into the existing community. Hanchett End will have remained a rural lane and Barsey Green a valued public open space. The Haverhill Research Centre will have been completed to provide a valuable source of local employment and allow some residential development.

The roads through the village will have got no busier. There will have been a significant switch to EV vehicles in the area, making the village quieter.



The White Horse Inn Public House

Objectives

4.2 The key objectives of the neighbourhood plan are:

- To conserve and enhance the special architectural and historic interest of Withersfield village and its landscape setting.
- To sustain the local character of Hanchett End, the Arboretum, and the proposed residential development on the Haverhill Research Park, as distinct and enjoyable places to live.
- To prevent any further visual coalescence of the village with Haverhill.
- To protect and improve the green infrastructure of the parish to support a thriving local agricultural economy, local nature recovery, and biodiversity net gain, as well as encouraging and enabling our local communities to walk, cycle and horse ride around the parish.
- To encourage the building of lower cost homes when the opportunity arises for sensitive infill in the village development boundary.

Land Use Policies

4.3 The following policies relate to the development and use of land in the designated neighbourhood area of Withersfield. Each policy is numbered and titled and it is shown in bold italics. Where necessary, the area to which it will apply is shown on the Policies Map at the back of the document. After each policy is some supporting text that explains the purpose of the policy, how it will be applied and, where helpful, how it relates to other development plan policies.

Policy WITH1: Design Quality

Development proposals within the Withersfield Housing Settlement Boundary (as shown on the Policies Map) will be supported where they respond positively to the Withersfield Parish Design Code and other policies in the development plan.

4.4 This policy recognises the distinct, historic village of Withersfield (as shown on Policies Map p. 32). It requires applicants to acknowledge, understand and respond to the new Withersfield Parish Design Code (see Appendix A). The code has been derived from an assessment of the Withersfield Conservation Area and the built-up area at Hanchett End undertaken as part of the neighbourhood plan and has used the approach recommended by the National Model Design Code where relevant to the parish.

4.5 The assessment followed the guidance of Historic England for Conservation Areas as all Withersfield village falls within that designation, but the same approach has been taken to Hanchett End. In doing so, the policy refines the general design provisions of the West Suffolk Local Plan (2025).

4.6 It identifies and describes all those features of the parish, including the landscape setting to the historic village, which contribute to defining its heritage significance. Applicants will be able to draw on its analysis relative to their location in the parish to shape positive responses to land use, plot and form character, site edges, and key views for example. Where an applicant chooses a design solution that does not accord with that analysis then they will be expected to demonstrate their case.

4.7 The Hanchett End area is very different in character to the historic village, with the Fleming Way and/or Darwin Walk area having been built in the last five years to an agreed masterplan. As noted in Section 3, the Research Park employment scheme has been superseded by the consent in 2021 for 155 homes and the reserved matters applications has been granted.

Policy WITH2: Buildings of Local Importance

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following buildings and structures, as shown on the Policies Map, as Buildings of Local Importance by way of their local architectural or historic interest:

- 1. Fox House, Burton Hill**
- 2. Vendore House, Thurlow Road**
- 3. Methodist Chapel, Thurlow Road**
- 4. Village Hall, Town Green**
- 5. Nos 2 – 6 Queens Street**
- 6. Surridge's Farmhouse, Hanchett End**

Development proposals affecting the identified buildings should demonstrate that the significance of its role as a Local Heritage Asset has been understood and considered in determining the scale of any harm to or loss of that significance.

4.8 This policy identifies buildings and structures (known as 'Buildings of Local Importance' in West Suffolk) highlighted in the Design Code as having some local architectural and/or historic interest to the extent that they can be defined as 'nondesignated heritage assets' in accordance with Section 16 of the NPPF. This gives weight to such 'assets' in decision making in accordance with the nature of their interest, as does Policy LP36 of the Local Plan which provides greater detail on how benefit and harm are measured, and on the information required from applicants. This list is not exhaustive as further Buildings of Local Importance may be added as they are discovered.

Policy WITH3: Green Infrastructure and Local Green Spaces

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a Green Infrastructure Network, as shown on the Policies Map, comprising sites of special scientific interest, county wildlife sites, woodlands, significant trees and hedges, water courses and bodies, green spaces, footpaths, and bridleways. Development proposals that lie within or adjacent to the Network should respond positively to its natural features and demonstrate that they will not undermine its ecological or functional integrity by way of their location, scale, and nature. Proposals that will lead to an improvement to a specific feature or to the spatial connection between features, and that are suitable in all other relevant matters, will be supported.

A. Within the Green Infrastructure Network, the Neighbourhood Plan designates the following as Local Green Spaces, as shown on the Policies Map:

- 1. Town Green, Withersfield.**
- 2. Burton Green, Withersfield.**
- 3. Barsey Green, Barsey Close, Hanchett End**
- 4. Three Counties Way Open Space, Hanchett End**

B. Development proposals for the identified Local Green Spaces should be consistent with national policy on Green Belts.

4.9 This policy refines Policy SP5 of the West Suffolk Local Plan by defining in greater detail how the former St. Edmundsbury Green Infrastructure Strategy (superseded by the West Suffolk Green Infrastructure Study (April 2022) and Haverhill Green Infrastructure Opportunity Map relate to the parish. Using the information of that strategy and map (as shown in Section 3 above) and evidence from other sources, a network of green infrastructure assets has been identified. The policy requires proposals to acknowledge, understand and respond to the definition of the network in relation to their local, scale and nature.

4.10 The West Suffolk Green Infrastructure Study identified a number of elements of the Green Infrastructure (2022: Figure 1.2). For natural green spaces, the 2015 Strategy identifies the SSSI at Over and Lawn Wood on the northwestern boundary of the Parish (which extends into Cambridgeshire) and the county wildlife sites at Howe Wood, Littlely Wood, North Wood, Abbacy Wood, Norney Plantation and Meldham Washland. It also highlights areas of ancient farmland throughout the parish. For linear linkages, the 2015 Strategy and the West Suffolk GI Study (2022) identify the Stour Brook Green Corridor (running from well to the east of Haverhill, through the town and then through the Parish out into Cambridgeshire), with other 'local links' extending from the Corridor. In addition to these assets, regarding aspects of the wider

environment, mapping work has identified more subtle features, including other smaller areas of trees and copse and mature hedgerows that not only define (in some cases, ancient) field boundaries but provide habitat connectivity, often linking the main woodland and stream assets.

4.11 Some development proposals that lie within or next to the network may create opportunities to improve its quality or its functional value, perhaps in establishing stronger habitat connectivity, through their layout and landscape schemes. At the very least, proposals should not undermine the existing value of the network.

4.12 In four specific locations in the network, the policy designates land as Local Green Space in accordance with para 102 of the NPPF where proposals will be judged on the equivalent Green Belt tests. The four spaces lie within the network and their designation reflects their special value of cherished, publicly accessible open spaces within the built-up areas. With future pressure to intensify existing settlements it is important that these spaces retain their open value for the community to enjoy. Further details on how each space meets the NPPF criteria is provided in Appendix C.

4.13 It is acknowledged that some parts of the defined network serve other purposes, notably in forming essential gaps in the built-up village frontages in some places. Where this is the case, that visual value is identified in the Design Code and is therefore a consideration under Policy WITH2.

4.14 The Environment Act 2021 will require planning applications to deliver at least 10 per cent of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) from what is expected to be November 2023. The West Suffolk Council local plan (SP6) states that qualifying development proposals are required to achieve a biodiversity net gain of at least 10 per cent, calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric. Biodiversity net gain will preferentially be delivered on-site where this would deliver the most appropriate outcome for biodiversity and to provide local benefit.

Policy WITH4: Dark Skies

Development proposals should be designed to reduce the occurrence of light pollution wherever practicable, or as a minimum, kept to current levels. New or replacement external lighting, and other externally projected lighting, should:

- **demonstrate a need for new external lighting for its intended purpose, including safety and/or operational requirements, through clear evidence or significant community demand; and**
- **use energy-efficient forms of lighting that reduce light scatter.**

Permanent street lighting will not be supported in the Withersfield Village area, except where it is required to address highways or public safety matters.



4.15 There is limited street lighting in Withersfield and the village emits very little visual coalescence between Withersfield and Haverhill. The major development and highways schemes of the Haverhill expansion on the southern edge of the parish have already had an impact on existing lighting levels. The brightest levels can already be seen to be straying into the village's night sky (see Plan M).

Plan M: Light Pollution Map

(Source: lightpollutionmap.info and Microsoft Corporation)

4.16 Many councils across England support measures to protect and enhance the dark night sky, but there is no current policy in the development plan for West Suffolk. To help achieve these objectives the policy is designed to guide decisions on new and replacement lighting and help private householders and businesses make the right lighting choices.

4.17 'Development proposals should demonstrate how they have been designed to prevent light pollution. Information on these measures should be submitted with development proposals. Where a development would potentially impact on light levels in the area, an appropriate lighting scheme will be secured by planning condition. Wherever it is practicable to do so, proposals should meet or exceed the current guidelines established for rural areas by the Institute of Lighting Professionals.'

4.18 For all proposed developments, factors that will be considered when deciding the appropriateness of artificial lighting, include the location, the hours of operation, the quantity of lights proposed, brightness and control, and direction of the beam. Appropriate mitigation and control measures secured by planning conditions to prevent unnecessary light pollution include:

- The use of 'curfew hours' (12pm – 6am) through automatic timers, and night-time dimming.
- The use of proximity infrared motion sensors, timers or any additional shielding or coving, including angling the front surface of lights to below the horizontal.
- The use of different surface types to reduce the amount of reflectivity.
- Screening or shielding to reduce the impact of reflectivity; and

Reflect the latest best practise guidance on light types in terms of lumens, wattage, angle, height, colour warmth, etc.

5. Implementation

5.1 The neighbourhood plan policies will be implemented through the determination of planning applications for development in the Parish by the local planning authority.

Development Management

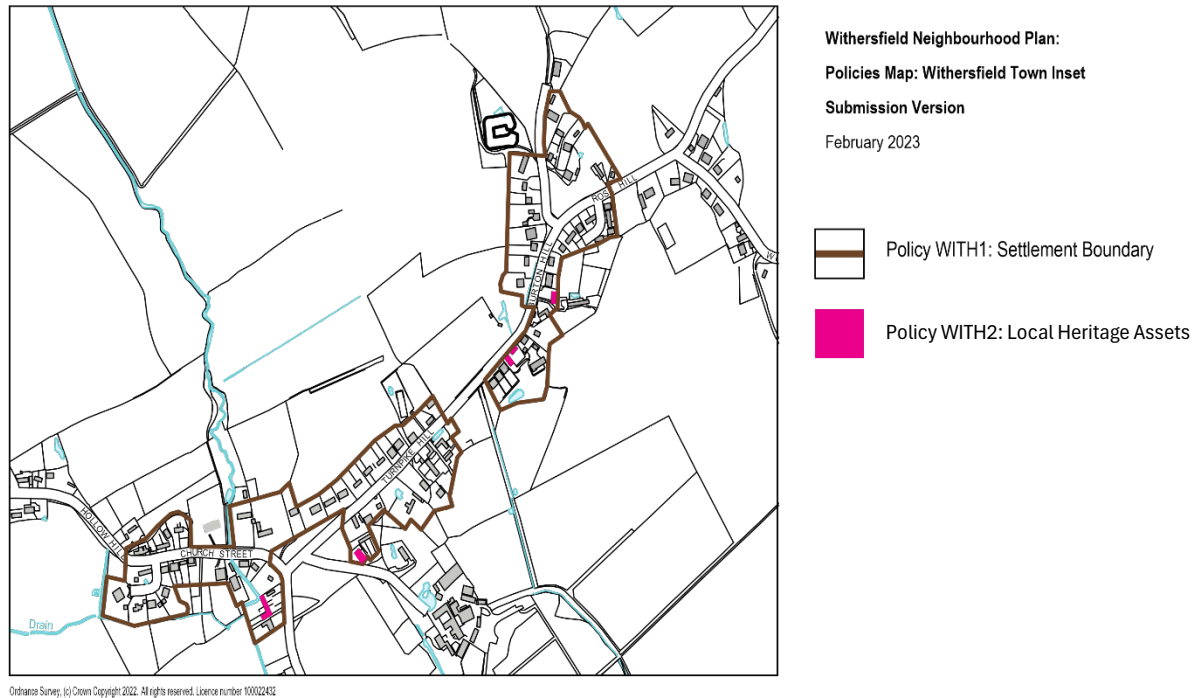
5.2 West Suffolk Council (WSC) will use a combination of the local plan and neighbourhood plan policies to inform and determine its planning application decisions. The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications made in the Parish and it will be made aware of any future planning applications or alterations to those applications by WSC in the normal way. It will monitor WSC officer reports and decisions in seeking to ensure that the neighbourhood plan policies have been properly identified and correctly applied. This monitoring will inform any future review of the neighbourhood plan.

Local Infrastructure Improvements

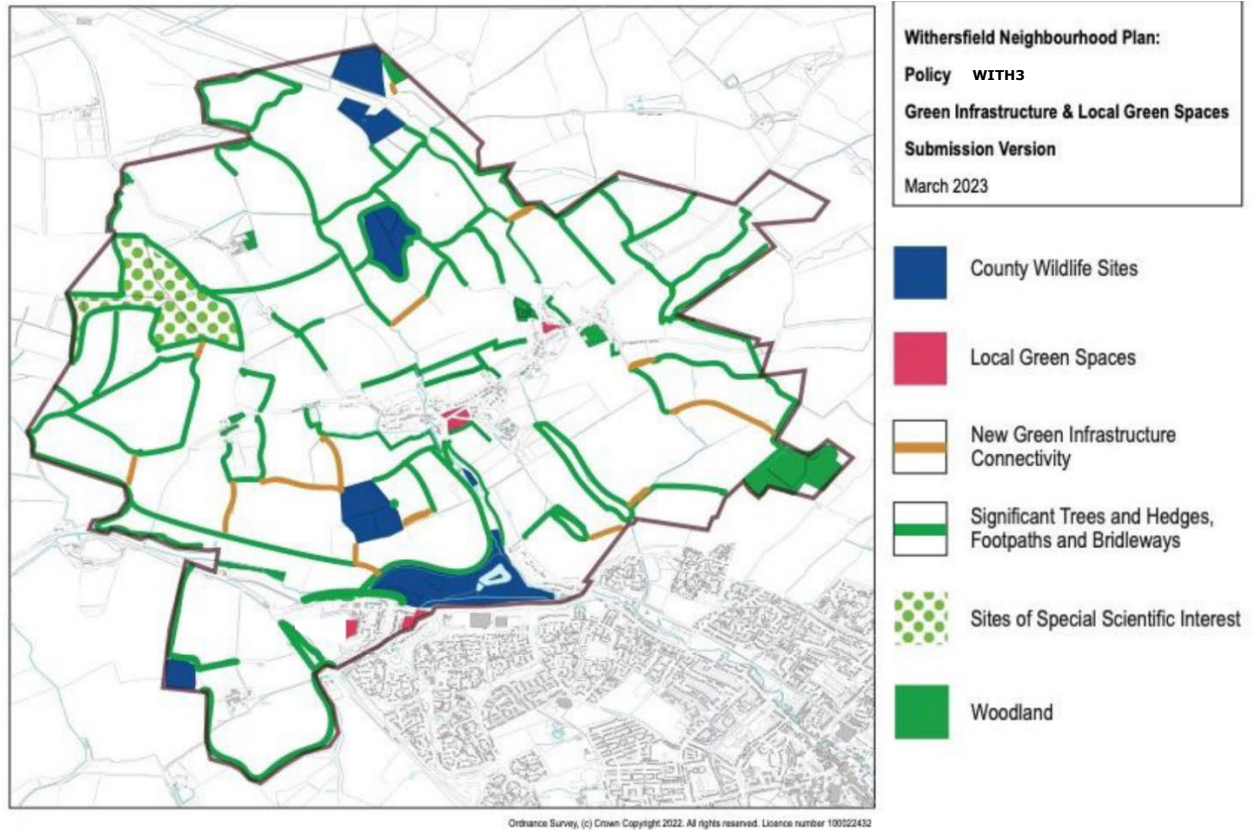
5.3 Although the scale of development likely to be consented in the parish during the plan period is likely to be very limited, there may be opportunities through S106 agreements to secure financial contributions to invest in improving local infrastructure. Should an opportunity arise, the parish council will review the evidence base and community consultations for the neighbourhood plan to inform its view in liaising with WSC, while recognising that Suffolk County Council and WSC have guidance on the apportionment of section 106 funds.

Policies Map and Insets

Withersfield Policies Map: Policy WITH1 and WITH2. Settlement Boundary and Local Heritage Assets



Withersfield Policies Map: Policy WITH3: Green infrastructure and local green spaces



Appendix A: Withersfield Parish Design Code

The Withersfield Parish Council Design Code is accessible here:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:e4ed813f-53fd-3c7c-9634-3cbfedfc79f9>

Appendix B: Buildings of Local Importance (Policy WITH2)

The Fox PH (now 'Fox House'), Burton Hill

Social value – former public house, now private dwelling. Late 19th Century. Pub sign on gable. Open front garden allowing view of building and sign.



The Fox PH

Vendore House, Thurlow Road

Social value – former commercial building in a variety of uses serving the village, as well as dwelling, which is its current use. 19th Century with single storey shop addition.



Vendore House

Former Methodist Chapel, Thurlow Road

Social value – former religious use. 19th Century. Architectural value - distinct chapel appearance with small porch and two founding stones on front elevation. Original arched windows and glazing bars on each elevation have survived. Decorative finial on porch and main building ridges.



Former Methodist Chapel

Village Hall (former Withersfield School)

Social present village hall and former school building. Architectural value - 1865 by Clarke and Holland value –Architects of Newmarket. Enlarged 1908. Red brick, with depressed-pointed windows and castellated porches.



Village Hall

2-6 Queen's Street (including former Forge)

Social value – included former Post Office and Smithy uses of different properties. Architectural value - Mid 19th century. Group value of vernacular red brick, single slate roof range covering all terrace, with porches at either

end. Joined to double fronted clay tile roof with two gable dormers, painted render, and large porch.



Queen Street

Surridge's Farmhouse

Historic value. Together with the Grade II listed Hanchett End Farmhouse and Cottage the last surviving building of the hamlet of Hanchett End on the lane from Haverhill and Withersfield to Hanchett Hall. The building is in residential use but was part of a larger complex of farm buildings and land redeveloped in the 1990s, although smaller than Hanchett End Farm. Much altered but has retained a distinct historic form – notably in its variety of roof forms – as well as the name of the farm in its address.



Surridge's Farmhouse

Appendix C: Local Green Space Survey (Policy WITH3)

Barsey Green

This public open space, although privately owned, was laid out as part of the Barsey Close housing scheme in the early 1990s. It lies in close proximity to the Hanchett End community and is not an extensive tract of land. It is cherished as the only open space in Hanchett End in what is now part of a much larger urban area. It is occasionally used by the local community for informal recreation and, although open in character, it is enjoyed as a pleasant tranquil space.



Two pictures of Barsey Green

Three Counties Way

This new landscaped corridor and sequence of publicly accessible spaces was created as part of the adjoining Arboretum housing scheme and will be enhanced as part of its second phase to be delivered shortly. It comprises footpaths, a pond, and areas for informal recreation. It is already enjoyed by the local community as a precious, tranquil place to walk around and enjoy and will become more so as the local population doubles over the next few years.

Town Green

The lower remaining part of the historic village green (see 1783 map) this space plays an essential role in shaping the character and identity of the village, lying at its heart. It is not an extensive tract of land and is well enclosed on all sides, but it is open in character, allowing views out of the village to the surrounding countryside to the west and east. It is very much appreciated by the community as a social space, with its historic village sign, the village hall in one corner and the war memorial in another.



Picture of Town Green Local Green Space

Burton Green

Also a surviving remnant of the historic village green towards its upper end, 'Button Green' as it was formerly known lies at the heart of the Burton Green and Rose Hill part of the village. It is well enclosed as a public space that is not an extensive tract of land, and it forms the setting to a number of listed buildings around its edge. Although the main road on one side can be busy it is a tranquil space occasionally used for informal recreation, as well as to visit the bus stop 'community centre'.



Two pictures of Burton Green