



Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan



This is a summary leaflet giving an outline of the whole plan. It contains all the key points. The full document is available in the Health Centre, Institute, Village Hall and Elm Tree Gallery in the village, also on our website www.woolpit.org/WNP/plan.pdf.

Please read it and give us your views before we submit the document. There is a 7 week consultation period between 1st March and 19th April.

There will be a meeting in the Institute on **Saturday 23rd March 2019** for everyone to discuss the issues and to express their views. We also invite you to put your views on line via our email address available from our website

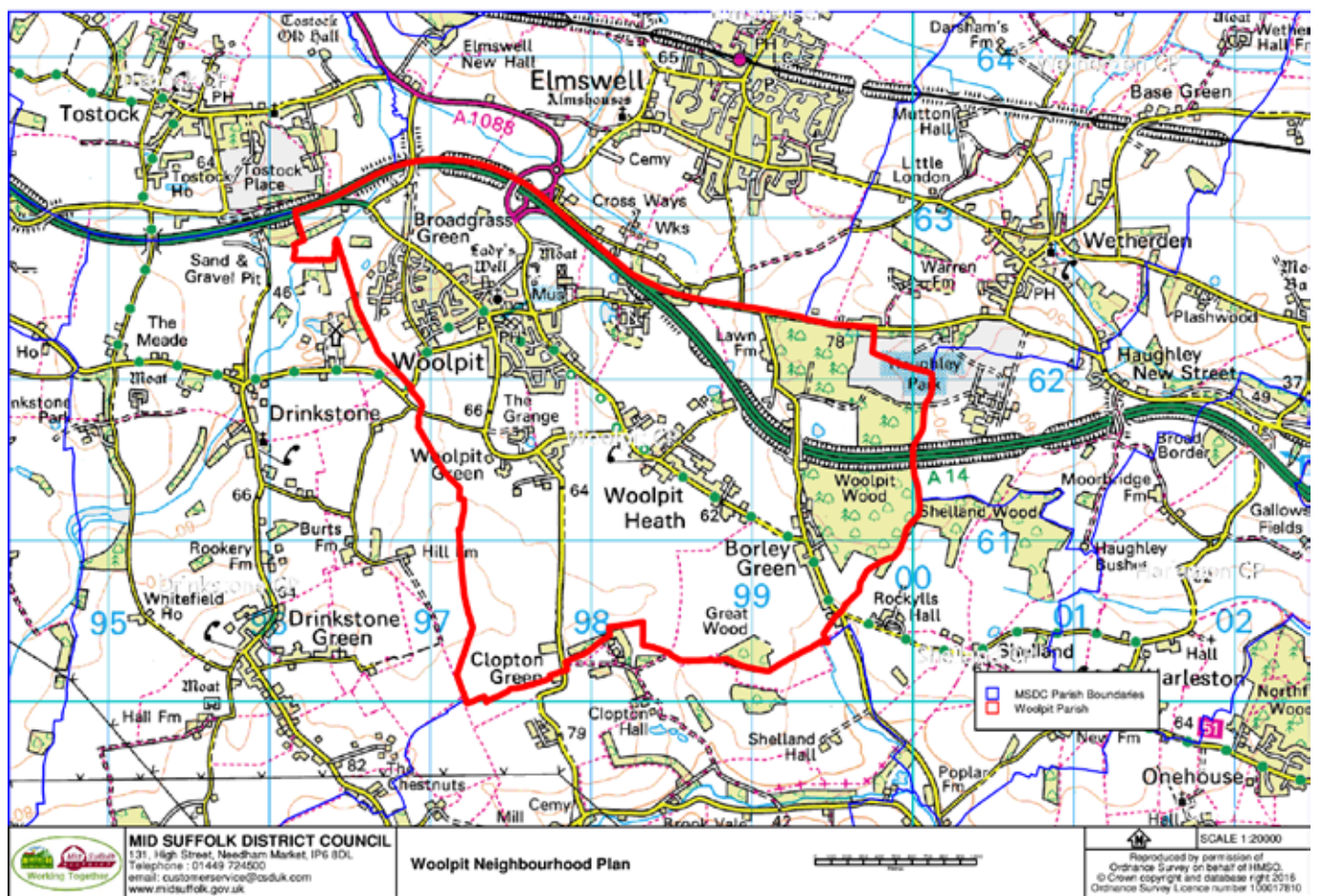
1. Introduction

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan sets out the planning policies decided on for future development in our village. Once the Plan has been adopted, it will be incorporated into Mid Suffolk District Council's development plans, and will have legal standing in determining planning applications.

Why do we need a Neighbourhood plan?

Mid Suffolk District Council has identified Woolpit as a village which has the location, existing facilities and potential to accept many new houses, some of which are already in the pipeline. Speculative development proposals are also being put forward - which could add up to a total of 800 new houses being built over the next 15 years.



Although it is generally accepted that new development, and change, can be a good thing, Woolpit is a village with a very special character, and people are worried that too much, or too rapid, development in the wrong places could result in lasting damage to the village. The Neighbourhood Plan will allow us to have more of a say in how Woolpit will grow in the future and where that growth will take place.

The decision to proceed with the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan was taken at the Parish Council meeting on 1 February 2016, in response to strong support from the local community. A Steering Group was set up to work on developing the Plan which covers the whole parish.

2. About Woolpit

Woolpit Past and Present

Woolpit is a thriving community with good facilities which not only serve Woolpit but the surrounding villages as well. It has a long history with 61 listed buildings, a 13th Century Grade I listed church and a 13th Century Pilgrimage site, Our Lady's Well. The brickworks produced the famous Suffolk whites from the 17th century to the 1940's. The triangular village centre gives a traditional feel to the village and is the centre of a "conservation area".



The **population** of Woolpit is approximately 2000. Over the last 10 years or so the proportion of over 65's living in the village has risen so Woolpit now has an ageing profile.

There are about 900 houses in the village and compared to the rest of Mid-Suffolk, a higher than average proportion of these have 4 or more bedrooms; and there are fewer than average houses with 1 or 2 bedrooms. The **average house price** was £269,000 in 2015 which is higher than

the norm for the area. Nearly 80% of houses are owner-occupied and 6% are privately rented. There is a higher than average proportion of social housing compared with the rest of Suffolk.

3. Consultations

Several consultations were carried out to find out what the residents thought were the most important issues. **The Community Consultation Summary Report (Jan 2017)** showed many residents are concerned for road safety, with the congestion in the village centre and the lack of parking seen as particular problems. There was a clear demand for more footpaths and cycleways, especially to Elmswell. The housing problems already noted were also an issue but the scale of proposed housing development was the main concern for many. **The Report on Woolpit Business (March 2017)** echoed all those concerns. The needs for better transport and more affordable housing were particularly highlighted. The lack of space for business expansion was also a concern for people working in Woolpit businesses.

The **household questionnaire (June-August 2017)** which resulted in 637 responses from a total of 900 households added 2 more areas of concern (a) the need to preserve the village character - its rural setting and historic centre and the nearby farmland, hedgerows and wildlife and (b) the lack of play facilities for young children, the lack of sports facilities (apart from excellent cricket and tennis) and the need for more and better equipped recreational space for teenagers.

So What are the Key Issues?

- We do not want development in Woolpit to distort the character of our community by having large scale housing projects or too rapid development. Our Plan aims to ensure that development in the village meets the needs of the present and future generations.

- We want to encourage younger people to stay in the village or come to live here and to play their part in developing our community; our policy is for future developments to include houses cheap enough for them to buy or rent
- We want to help residents who want to downsize; our policy is that new development should include houses suitable for that purpose
- We do not want development to overstretch our services and facilities; our policy is that new developments should include provision to increase the capacity of those services and facilities, or provide new capacity, including footpaths, parking or green spaces; development should not cause harm by increasing traffic congestion, or damage to the historic centre the natural environment and our surroundings.

The responses from residents and businesses have been turned into specific policies designed to make our shared vision for the future of Woolpit a reality.

Further consultation with residents about the draft plan is now taking place. After this the draft plan will be submitted to “the Examiner” appointed by Mid-Suffolk Council. Once it has been approved there will be a Referendum to show acceptance by the village.

4. Housing Policies

We agreed a number of policies arising from the issues raised by the parishioners and the fact that we will have an allocation of at least 250 new homes in line with the Mid Suffolk Local Plan in the period up to 2036:

Spatial Strategy (1): Development will be focused within the “Settlement Boundaries” as identified on the map on the inside back page. Woolpit should remain a village, and to preserve its village character, large developments must be divided up and landscaped.

Allocation of Sites: WPT2 (Old Stowmarket Road) and WPT3 (Green Road) are allocated against Woolpit’s housing target; these two sites have already received planning consent. Additionally, the site WPT4 behind the school is to be allocated; a planning application for this has not yet been submitted, but is expected very soon. It is anticipated that these three sites will deliver 205 homes all together.

Should further housing be required, we will aim first to reach a higher target by allowing for infill building over the period to 2036. If it is calculated that this policy will not deliver the required number of homes, then other sites could be reassessed.

Location and scale (2): All new housing development proposals will only be supported if they:

- do not overload the existing infrastructure and roads
- are well connected to the rest of the village
- preserve the Conservation Area
- are not too large to affect the landscape and key views
- preserve the focal points - the village centre and its Conservation Area
- are not too crowded together - in line with the village character and nearby housing.

Housing Type (3): Proposals for housing developments of 10 or more homes will be supported only if they provide a mix of housing. The majority of dwellings should comprise homes with 2 or 3 bedrooms.

Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites (4): Proposals for small scale affordable housing schemes outside the settlement boundary will only be supported if there is a proven local need. Any such housing must remain affordable and should be

- for people who are in need of housing because they are unable to buy or rent properties in the village at open-market prices
- firstly for people with a local connection who have a clear need, then to those with a need in neighbouring villages.

Design and Character (5): all new developments (including industrial units) will be expected to preserve and enhance Woolpit's unique character: in the choice of materials; by preserving green areas including trees and hedges; by providing pathways into the village.

All proposed designs should take into account issues of climate change through sustainable design. Proposals for any major developments (over 10 houses) should consult with the Parish Council.

Housing for the elderly and disabled (6): Proposals are welcomed for development which makes specific provision for these people, which may include:

- Bungalows to accommodate older people as well as those with disabilities
- Sheltered housing for those capable of living independently within a supported setting
- Care home provision for those no longer capable of independent living.

5. Businesses in Woolpit

Businesses in the village centre: Woolpit has a good range of successful retail and catering businesses but recently two significant shops, Addison's grocery and food shop, and the old Post Office have closed and been converted into homes. The Woolpit Questionnaire showed a strong feeling that a separate post office should be re-instated in the village.

Location of business sites (7): makes a number of conditions for any proposals to redevelop brownfield or existing sites for business / industrial use. These include

- traffic using these sites should avoid the village centre
- pedestrian and cycle links must be improved and
- the rural setting of the village will not be affected.

Proposals for new ("greenfield") business sites will be supported only where there is a demonstrated need in Woolpit Parish or in Mid Suffolk District. More particularly new sites must show a benefit to the community.

Sustainability and support for the community (8): The development of employment sites, ie 'business parks' will be supported only where they can clearly show a long term, sustainable management plan, with growth in line with the gradual growth of housing, roads and services in Woolpit.

Retail outlets and small businesses (9): supports the introduction of further businesses in the village centre provided that

- the character and architectural heritage is respected and
- development is sympathetic to neighbouring properties and the street scene.

The policy recommends support for small business development outside the Conservation Area provided (amongst other things) there is access for commercial vehicles without passing through the village centre; also that the Conservation Area, the rural setting of the village and the key views will not be adversely affected.

6. Environmental Policies

The preservation of our green spaces (see map) is a key issue for the Plan. **Our Local Green Spaces Policy (10)** states that development on designated Local Green Space will only be permitted in very special circumstances.

Sports and Recreational Areas (11): The Sports Field, Village Hall Playing Field and Woolpit School playing field are vital to the health and well-being of the community; therefore development on any of these areas will not be permitted unless it can be shown that

- they are no longer used for sport or recreation, or
- a similar or better replacement will be provided in a suitable location, or
- the development will improve the recreational facilities on the site so that benefits clearly outweigh the loss.

Areas of Special Landscape Quality (12): These were assessed by a specialist Landscape Consultant (see map). Development proposals in these areas will only be permitted where they

- protect and enhance the special qualities of the area; and
- are designed and sited so as to harmonise with the landscape setting.

Settlement gaps and key views (13): A survey was conducted to discover which were the most highly valued views by the residents (see map). We wish to protect these views and prevent development encroaching onto the gaps between the main village and Woolpit Heath, Borley Green and Woolpit Green. Development will only be permitted in these places if it keeps the physical and visual separation of these settlements.

Footpaths and cycleways (14): We want to promote walking and cycling and access to the countryside on Public Rights of Way. Larger developments will be required to provide footpath and cycle routes, within Woolpit as well as those which would link Woolpit with neighbouring parishes.

Public charging points for electric vehicles (15): For any car parking spaces for use by the general public, provision of infrastructure for future electric vehicle charging is required for 20% of all spaces, so that they can easily be made fully functional in the future.

Design (16): This policy draws together all the design implications of new developments:

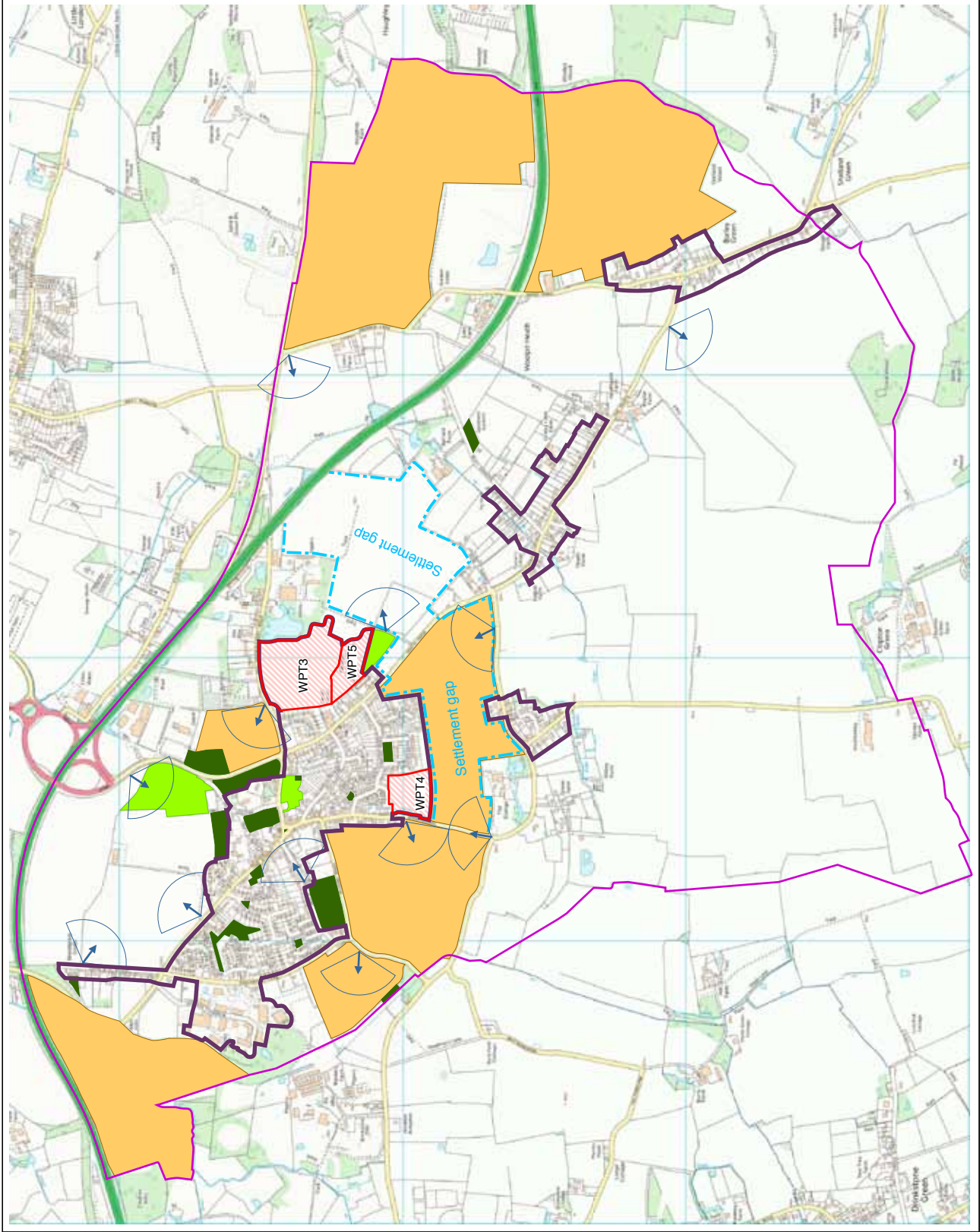
Affordable homes must be integrated with other houses and all houses should have adequate floor space as described by a National Space Standard;



New developments must not cause a nuisance to neighbouring houses;

Larger developments must have a landscaping strategy;

Renewable energy projects will be encouraged and broadband for the future must be provided. However any solar panels, satellite dishes and aerials which affect the roofscape must not harm the Conservation area or important views.



Boundaries

- Plan area
- Settlements

Designations

- Local Green Space
- Sport and Recreational Area
- Area of Special Landscape Quality
- Key view

Allocated site



Inset map



