

# SOHAM AND BARWAY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## Consultation Statement

Draft Version 5.0

26<sup>th</sup> March 2024

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## 1. Introduction

This consultation statement has been produced by Soham Town Council to accompany the submission draft of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan (NP). The consultation statement is required under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

Part 5, Section 15(2) of the Regulations sets out that a Consultation Statement should:

1. Contain details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan.
2. Explain how they were consulted.
3. Summarise the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
4. Describe how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

This consultation statement sets out an overview of the activity which took place. The appendices include details of the consultation activity undertaken during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The key points to note are:

- a. Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led document for guiding the future development of the parish. It is the first of its kind for Soham and Barway and a part of the Government's current approach to planning. It has been undertaken with extensive community engagement, consultation and communication.
- b. The Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken following a decision taken by the Town Council at their meeting in March 2019 to proceed with making a Neighbourhood Plan and a working group was set up.
- c. The Consultation Statement is designed to meet the requirements set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 for Consultation Statements. This document sets out the consultation process employed in the production of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan. It also demonstrates how the requirements of Regulation 14 and 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 have been satisfied.

The Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan Working Group has endeavoured to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan reflects the desires of the local community and key stakeholders, who have been engaged from the outset of developing the Plan. This has been achieved through the collection of qualitative and quantitative data.

A group of local councillors spent some time consulting with the residents in 2008 and 2009. The Town Council produced a Final Soham Masterplan which was published in 2010. However, within a very short time in 2011, Government had revised the planning process by introducing a new system of involving local people

by setting up the Neighbourhood Planning system. It also chose to discount any Masterplans already prepared. The Town Council were very dismayed having spent time and money on preparing their document which was now no longer acceptable or able to influence planning decisions.

In 2019 Soham Town Council decided that because of the scale of the additional housing proposed for the town and the concerns this raised within the existing community, the council decided to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. As a result of this decision, a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NWG) was set up comprising town councillors, district councillors and residents from the local community.

It was decided that the designated area should be the whole parish of Soham, which includes the hamlet of Barway. Soham Town Council made an application to East Cambridgeshire District Council for the designation as a Neighbourhood Area based on the parish of Soham. East Cambridgeshire District Council designated the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019. (Map below).

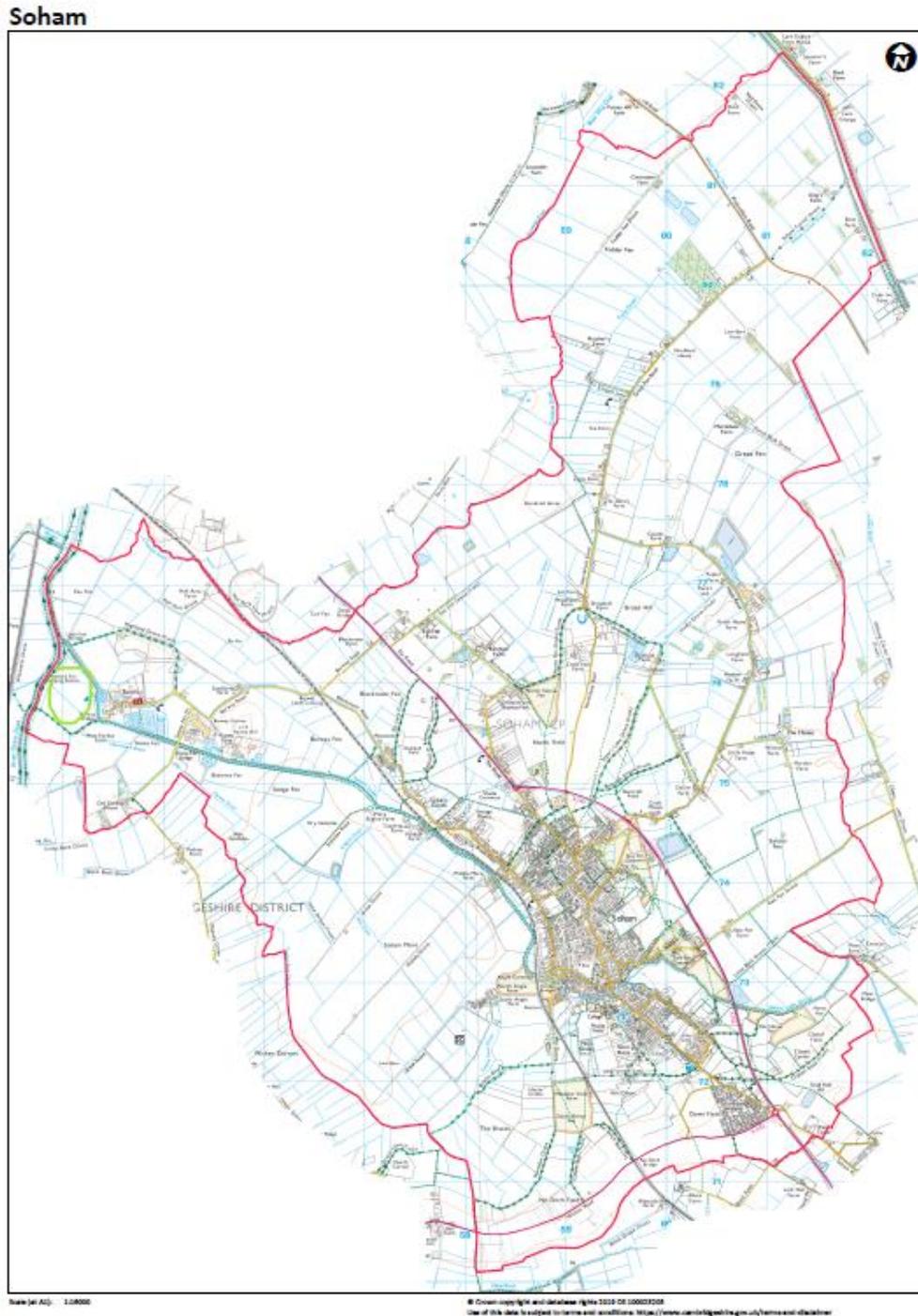
## 2. Community engagement stages

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group agreed a Communication and Community Engagement approach. It was agreed engagement needed to be effective from the beginning of the process and would result in a well-informed plan and a sense of local ownership. The aim of the Communication and Community Engagement process was to inform and involve the Soham and Barway communities throughout the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Good communication has been key to residents and businesses feeling informed and involved in the production of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan. A full consultation log is included at the end of this report. Central to the Neighbourhood Plan process, was:

- Public Events and Forums to enable residents to discuss the development of the plan with members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.
- Leaflets and notices distributed to every household in the parish.
- All major documents were linked to the community and Parish Council facebook and website pages. It contained all Neighbourhood Plan documents, amendments to the Plan and contact information. Updates have been provided through these media channels.
- Bespoke meetings with businesses, and young people to ensure that different parts of the community and hard to reach groups had the opportunity to input to the development of the plan.
- Attendance and promotion at town events including the Carnival, Pumpkin Fair and Town Council meetings.

- Notices published throughout the community and banners placed in two locations in the town. This included updates on the Neighbourhood Plan highlighting opportunities to feedback on documents
- Engagement with key stakeholders and landowners on theme based issues



**Map of Designated Area accepted by East Cambridgeshire District Council.**

### 3. Initial Consultation 2019

Over the initial few months following the designation of the Neighbourhood Plan area, the working group met to decide on a consultation strategy. Initially, it completed a public consultation of the whole parish. A paper questionnaire was delivered to every household (6,000) in the area in November 2019. (See copy of the questionnaire in Appendix 1).

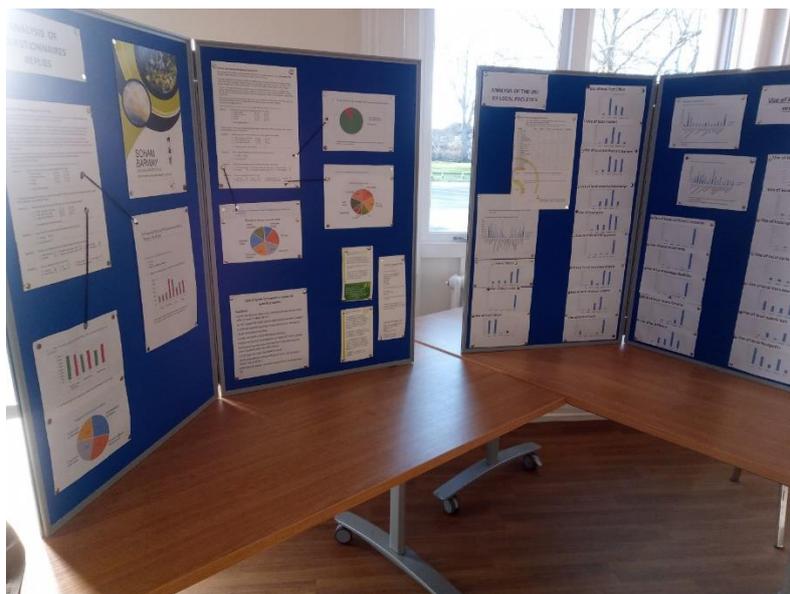
- This survey sought to determine the attitude of the community to housing in the parish, the local appetite for more homes in the parish, their size and type, and their preferred location. It also questioned the attitude towards local facilities and how much each of them is used and how regularly. There were 208 responses. The analysis of the responses is shown in Appendix 2. The key responses are: 46% respondents thought we need more family homes and 31% wanted more rental homes.
- 36% wanted most new homes within the town
- 81% recognised that we need more employment opportunities in the town.
- 61% work out of Soham but 18% work here in town or from home.
- In the transport section the biggest score was for parking issues but speeding, safe cycle routes and frequency of local buses came in a close second.
- 91% said we needed a better more varied offer of retail shops

22% mentioned the need for an updated/new medical centre. In January 2020 the NWG held a public forum advertised by posters around the town and in social media. The Neighbourhood Plan Working Plan had collated the responses into key issues and opportunities that the Neighbourhood Plan could address and presented these in 6 themes:

- Heritage and Built Environment
- Local Facilities
- Natural Environment and Open Spaces
- Connectivity
- Business and Employment
- Future Proofing

The key opportunities and issues by theme are shown in Appendix 3 and were presented at a Public Forum 2020. 55 people attended.

The forum asked visitors to comment on housing and the built environment, local facilities, heritage and conservation, natural environment and open spaces, connectivity and transport, business and employment and future proofing. The comments made at the Forum are included in Appendix 4. The appendix includes a photograph of how we collected comments for each of the topics. Visitors were asked to choose Post-it notes coloured according to their age group.



Unfortunately, shortly after the Forum we were subject to national and local lockdowns which prevented us from carrying out public consultations. The results of the survey and the forum helped to determine what the next steps would need to be.

#### 4. Second Consultation – Widening the Scope of Community Engagement

The group wanted to consult with as many different people as possible, including those ‘hard to reach’ groups that had not necessarily participated in the Questionnaires or Forum. It identified that there was a gap in the profile of the response so it was decided that we needed to consult the business sector and young people in particular.

In January 2021, members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group held an on-line meeting with 2 members of staff and 6 senior students at the village college. We discussed how we could consult with the students. After some discussion the students agreed to put together a survey for their peers at the college. They were very keen to help. A list of questions was agreed and the students undertook to consult the student body and send us the results. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix 5.

Using the village college internet, there were 221 responses (1199 students at Village College) from the students who answered questions about transport, future work, local sports facilities, other facilities, and interest in green spaces. It was great to hear the views of our younger people. The students collected the responses and collated them and did the analysis themselves. A summary of the responses is below and the results of the survey are shown in more detail in Appendix 6.

- Just under 50% of the replies were from students who live in Soham.
- Just over 50% said they intended to go on to further education.
- Approximately 20% intend to take up apprenticeships or vocational qualifications.

- Not surprisingly 52% do not know what they want to do post training but sadly only 2% want to stay and work in Soham.
- 78% said they walked and 35% cycle. 35% use buses but only 3% used trains.
- On sports facilities the most popular were an Astroturf pitch, multi-use games area and an outdoor gym area.
- For indoor facilities the most popular was an internet café (70%) and a youth club (40%).
- Interestingly volunteering opportunities and an outdoor stage garnered 30% of the vote.
- Although 70% of the students thought that protecting the environment was important only 30% thought about it much.

In May 2021 we decided that we should consult the business community. We produced a survey (on-line) which asked questions about their businesses, the number of employees and their qualifications, shift patterns, travel to work, challengers to businesses and what they need in the community. This was sent to all businesses where we could find email addresses and cards were delivered to many others. A reminder was sent out a month later. Altogether there were 19 responses. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix 7.

Brief analysis shows that most of our respondents are in small retail in the centre of town. Most of their employees work full time or part time (less than 7.5 hours a week). Most travel by private vehicle to work although up to 5% walk or cycle.

9 of the respondents have a business in the centre of town and 7 were on business/industrial parks. The largest number of businesses were in retail and the next largest were in manufacturing and leisure.

9 of the respondents employ between 1 and 5 employees, 4 employ between 6 and 10 employees. Only one business who responded, employs over 100 people.

Businesses were asked to show the general level of skill which their employees have. 9 out of the respondents said that their staff had trade qualifications or professional qualifications. 5 businesses employ semi-skilled (NVQS or similar) and 4 had degree level employees. Two businesses employ labourers (unskilled) and one mentioned that they have apprentices.

This survey clearly shows that in Soham there is not much shift work as, of the shift patterns asked about, full time or part-time were by far the most commonly worked with no staff working night-time shifts.

Businesses were asked to give an estimate of the percentage of their staff who travel to work by various different methods. It is clear from the responses that private cars or works vehicles are the most popular method of travel to work. There are a significant number who cycle or walk to work or travel by bus (although the bus services in the area are not very regular or frequent). The numbers who ride motorcycles are very low as are the numbers using the train (although this may improve as the new rail station comes into greater use). There are still small

numbers of people working from home. This may be a hangover from lockdowns. A full analysis of the business survey is included as Appendix 8.

Also, during May 2021, we continued to keep the Neighbourhood Plan in front of the community by writing articles for the local papers and parish magazine. Also, an interview on local internet radio was broadcast. In June 2021, an on-line survey of the local green spaces was set up because we realised from the first survey, and from observations during the Covid lockdowns, that the green spaces around the town are very important to the community. We created a survey of our green spaces which includes open spaces, local walks, recreation areas, commons etc.

In June 2021 two surveys were started both on-line and paper copies where requested. The first was about commons and how they are used and other local green spaces. A copy of the Green Space Survey is attached as Appendix 9.

The second was about transport, methods of getting around Soham, parking, internet and use of local public transport. A copy of the Connecting Soham questionnaire is attached as Appendix 12.

In June and July 2021, we held various pop up stalls outside the Co-op and by using local magazine articles to remind people to complete the two surveys. Eventually we had 119 replies to the green spaces survey and 79 replies to the connecting Soham survey.

A full analysis of the responses received to the Green Space Survey are included in Appendices 10 and 11. It is clear that private gardens and open spaces have been critical during lockdowns. Qua Fen Common is the common best known and most often visited. The main reasons for visiting commons and open spaces are for exercise, dog walking and de-stressing. This survey has demonstrated very clearly that local people really value the open spaces, countryside walks and wildlife that surrounds them in Soham and are keen to ensure that no further green spaces are lost to them or to local wildlife.

A full analysis of the responses received to the Connecting Soham Survey are shown in Appendix 12. The availability of parking and safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists were highlighted. More than half of the respondents thought there should be a safe cycleway route between A142 and Barway. The survey also identified a number of safety concerns and congestion points.

At the Pumpkin Show on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021, we had a stand to raise awareness of the Plan. The Pumpkin Show is well known and well attended on the Recreation Ground providing an opportunity to engage families and younger people.

We had a series of topic boards and we asked members of the public to comment on the topics being raised in the Neighbourhood Plan. 70 people made comments or asked questions. The comments made at the Pumpkin Show and Topic Boards are detailed in Appendices 13 and 14.

Most of the items listed were generally supported by many respondents. However, it is clear that there is no support for deciding on more areas to build houses in addition to those already specified in the Local Plan 2015 and very little support for

identifying more areas for building outside the natural boundary of the town. There was some support for identifying areas suitable for exercising dogs safely.

In November 2021 we delivered forms to 44 households in Barway asking them to complete the forms which asked about living in Barway, development, green spaces and access to the hamlet. 13 people responded. The questionnaire and an analysis of the responses is included in Appendices 15 and 16. The survey highlighted the value residents attach to the peace, tranquility, the rural setting and natural beauty of Barway and highlighted a number of important historical buildings.

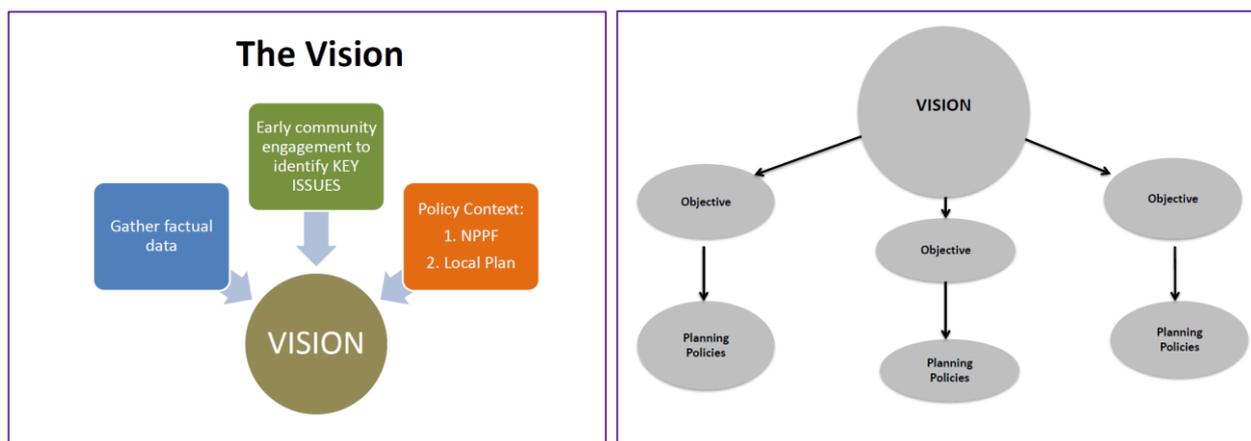
## 5. A Framework for the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group had completed a comprehensive and wide ranging series of events, surveys and engagement with the local community. It had analysed a significant amount of data and comments on issues and opportunities that the Neighbourhood Plan could address.

A workshop with the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group was held in the village hall facilitated by Cambridgeshire Acre on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 to sketch out a framework for the Soham Neighbourhood Plan. The report of the workshop sets out proposed themes, objectives, planning policy ideas, together with either existing evidence supporting this or identified evidence gaps needed to be filled to explore the topic areas further. The purpose of the workshop was:

- To reach a consensus on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities facing the NP area.
- To agree what the NP must cover, to agree what it can't, and to identify what the NP could cover (those grey areas!).
- To discuss approaches on drafting a plan vision, plan themes and theme-based objectives.

From discussions at the workshop on the results of the community and business engagement together with the data observed through the Demographic, Social and Economic Report and the Planning Policy Context Analysis, the Working Group formed a draft vision, aims and a set of objectives for the Plan. This also included a SWOT analysis of the parish. A successful plan seeks to take advantage of the opportunities identified and to address the challenges posed by the threats.



Cambridgeshire ACRE developed a framework for the Neighbourhood Plan. This was discussed and amended and updated after a workshop on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 together with a draft vision and objectives. The issues were reflected in an amended scoping plan.

The workshop generated a set of priorities for the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan. These were:

- Green Spaces to be protected and enhanced for recreation, wildlife, biodiversity (biosphere) and geodiversity
- Improved Transport Connections
- Vision for improved town centre / High Street
- Secure high quality design in all development
- Local opportunities for employment
- New and improved cultural and sports provision
- Improve access to 16+ education
- Soham Gateway to the Fens
- Improve access to affordable housing
- Respond to current and future climate change issues including flooding

The workshop also developed a draft Vision and Objectives which reflected the priorities having considered the community engagement to date.

## 6. Consultation on the Vision and Objectives

The next stage of the Plan's development was to report back to the community on the results of the early engagement work and to seek views on the draft aim and objectives and community input on specific matters. In November 2021 we consulted the community on the Neighbourhood Plan Objectives which we had drafted for the plan following the workshop. 5,500 paper copies of the survey were delivered to every household throughout the plan area. Various locations, including the Pavillion, were set up for collection points for paper copies and an online form was set up.

On Saturday morning 12 March, we set up a stand outside the Co-op to make the public more aware of the Neighbourhood Plan and to encourage them to complete a response to the current survey.

We also held an all day open forum for people to come and discuss them and ask questions on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at the Walter Gidney Pavilion in the heart of the town. A copy of the Survey Form is attached as appendix 17. This was publicised through the questionnaire.



The questionnaire explained the purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan. The analysis of the response to the objectives is included in Appendix 18 and the comments made at the Open Forum are included in Appendix 19.

A total of 177 responses were made to the consultation. The survey demonstrated that there was strong local support for the objectives set out in the Survey. Protecting green spaces, commons, green lanes and footpaths etc was the item with the greatest support at 91%. The next item strongly supported with 84% is the hope that Soham will be resilient in the face of Climate Change especially in relation to flood risk and enable greener living. The topics with the lowest approvals were 'Promote the town, its history, its Lode and its green connections as the Gateway to the Fens and make it a focus for sustainable tourism' at 61.4% and 'Secure growth in line with strategic requirements focused in Soham's development envelope and protecting the countryside status and the views outside of this' with 62.5%.

The table below is an example of how the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group took forward the results of the community engagement and continued to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan policies to fully reflect the community aspirations.

The questionnaire responses were collated, and data used as input to policy development. The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group carefully considered the questionnaire responses and worked to develop draft policies that reflected the

views expressed during the consultation. The responses also informed the need for further evidence and gaps in our intelligence to inform the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Main issues and concerns	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to ensure development is of a higher quality that reflects the character of the town, protecting the Commons, green spaces, countryside status and views.</li> </ul>	<p>Commissioned a Design Guidance and Code with the support of Locality to set out how development in Soham and Barway should better reflect the existing character. This includes design criteria and a development checklist</p> <p>This assessment together with the responses from the Community Engagement has informed policies</p> <p>SBNP 1 – Spatial Strategy SBNP 13 – Landscape Character SBNP 14 – Local Green Spaces</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need low cost and small family homes. Some need for retirement homes. Respondents said there was a need for homes dedicated for local people.</li> </ul>	<p>The comments on the type of homes needed in the parish from the community engagement, together with the evidence available in the Demographic, Economic and Social Report led to the commissioning of a Housing Needs Assessment with the support of Locality.</p> <p>This has directly informed policies on Affordable Housing (SBNP2), Allocation of affordable housing (SBNP3) and Housing Mix and accessible standards (SBNP 4).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern at the speed of, and inappropriate types of traffic through the village, cars parked on roads and cycling to neighbouring villages is dangerous; need better pedestrian crossings</li> </ul>	<p>The Town Council, working with the community, has identified key safety hotspots, which should be addressed, if appropriate, by development proposals. These hotspots are identified in Policy SBNP 22 – Road Safety and Parking, Policy SBNP23 Pedestrian and Cycle Priority Routes and Policy SBNP25 - Connectivity and Permeability.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More focus on sustainable development including zero carbon</li> </ul>	<p>The Town Council has recognised that the Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity to ensure that new development in parish contributes to the moving towards net zero carbon and mitigate the impact of climate change.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies on Policy SBNP18 - Sustainable Buildings Fit For A Net Zero Carbon Future and Water Efficiency (SBNP 20) and Renewable Energy (SBNP19).</p>

Main issues and concerns	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community engagement suggests that high value is placed on protecting and enhancing heritage assets and the Conservation Area.</li> </ul>	<p>The Town Council has identified non designated heritage assets that are not currently recognised in planning policy. Consultation was undertaken with the landowners.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area and to recognise non designated heritage assets. (Policy SBNP15 Soham Conservation Area and Policy SBNP 16 Non – Designated Heritage Assets.</p>

## 7. Developing the Evidence Base and Pre- regulation 14 stakeholder engagement work

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group identified areas of work and evidence that needed to be completed to fully support or develop the policies so that the Neighbourhood Plan would be appropriately justified based upon up to date and relevant information.

The Town Council commissioned a number of technical Studies and undertook assessments, which in part included engagement with key stakeholders and landowners. The Table below sets out the engagement events as part of the development of the Evidence Base.

Evidence Base / Issue	Engagement
Soham and Barway Housing Needs Assessment	Consultation on draft assessment with East Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Policy and Housing Officers to inform the data and policy direction.
Soham Design Guidance and Codes	Soham Town Council received technical support from AECOM via the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities neighbourhood planning support programme that is managed by Locality. In 2023, AECOM prepared an initial draft. This was shared with East Cambridgeshire District Council's Planning Policy Team.
Soham and Barway Local Green Spaces Assessment	<p>Consultation with East Cambridgeshire District Council on criteria for the assessment confirmed the appropriate local interpretation of the national guidance.</p> <p>Each of the landowners of possible Local Green Space sites were notified</p>

	<p>that the Town Council were considering identifying land in which they had an interest as a Local Green Space. The notifications together with a link to the draft assessment were distributed on 12th May 2023</p> <p>The comments received were taken into consideration in developing the final Local Green Space Assessment.</p>
Non- Designated Heritage Assets	<p>Each of the owner / occupiers were notified that the Town Council were considering identifying the property in which they had an interest as a Non Designated Heritage Asset. A letter was delivered to the occupants of the proposed NDHAs giving them details of the designation's implications and inviting them to contact the Town Council for further information.</p> <p>The comments received were taken into consideration in developing the final Non-Designated Heritage Asset list.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>A series of meetings and exchange of emails were held with the Health and Wellbeing Team at Cambridgeshire County Council to understand how the Neighbourhood Plan could improve health and wellbeing in the parish.</p> <p>The discussions were helpful in establishing the policy approach to the town centre and particularly the approach to Hot Food Takeaways.</p> <p>Regular conversations were also held with pastoral leaders at the Village College outreach staff, mental health and well being leaders to understand how the Neighbourhood Plan might respond to the needs of our younger community.</p> <p>The consensus from these groups is that there is a growing need for young people to be able to access mental health support as waiting lists are</p>

	<p>becoming longer for services and students remain hesitant to go through referral procedures.</p> <p>To counteract this need, it has been suggested by our students that a centrally located venue in Soham where young people could 'drop-in' with friends and potentially spend some time with a person with mental health support training would be very helpful. They also suggested that the venue could have other attractions to encourage them to cross the threshold such as table tennis, pool, vending machines etc.</p> <p>It is also added that if the venue had a small room that could be booked by parents and external agencies so that meetings could be held away from the school, that could also be of use.</p>
Pre-regulation 14 Consultation	<p>Prior to the formal consultation on the Regulation 14 version of Neighbourhood Plan, the Town Council sought informal feedback from East Cambridgeshire District Council on an early draft version. Apart from seeking to maintain a good dialogue with the local planning authority, the purpose of this exercise was to ensure that the Town Council was informed as well as possible on any potential issues contained in the draft plan ahead of formal public and stakeholder engagement work.</p>

## 8. Regulation 14 pre-submission consultation

Pre submission consultation was undertaken on Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan during the period 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 to 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 in line with Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

Following preparation of Regulation 14 pre-submission document a comprehensive consultation process was undertaken comprising:

Paper copies of the pre-submission document were deposited for public consideration at: Soham Library, Soham Co-op, Jak Hibs shop, Millbrook residential home, the Town Council offices at the Pavilion.

- A summary of the pre submission Neighbourhood Plan was prepared and available alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.
- The pre-submission document was available on the Town Council website alongside an online feed-back questionnaire requesting views.
- A leaflet (Appendix 20) was distributed to all households in the parish explaining about the plan and where it can be found, with all its relevant documents. This leaflet directed people to the on-line questionnaire explaining how to view the plan and supporting documents and respond on-line if preferred.to paper copies of the questionnaire
- Various places around the town made the documents available off- line so that everyone had access to it.
- Emails sent to businesses and groups inviting comments on the pre-submission document.
- Where the occupiers would not be notified by the leaflet additional letters were sent to known landowners or site promoters seeking their views on the pre-submission document.
- Five prominent banners were erected promoting the consultation and directing consultees to the Town Council web site.
- Two “drop-in” community consultation events (2<sup>nd</sup> November and 4<sup>th</sup> November) were held at the Walter Gidney Pavilion. These events were attended by residents who were asked to give their views across all chapters of the Plan. These events enabled everyone to view the plan and all the documents, ask questions and complete the response form.
- The drop-in day was promoted via the household leaflets, the Parish Council website and social media.
- All consultation methods made it clear that comments could be submitted in writing to the Town Council within the stipulated time period.

In addition to the Regulation 14 version of Neighbourhood Plan being published at on the Town Council website the following were also published:

- Soham Design Guidance and Code 2022
- Soham Housing Needs Assessment 2023
- Soham Demographic Social and Economic Report 2021

- Soham and Barway Planning Policy Context Analysis 2021
- A Market Town Plan for Soham
- Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan – Summary version
- Topic Paper – Flood Risk
- Topic Paper – Local Green Spaces Assessment
- Topic Paper – Non Designated Heritage Assets
- Topic Paper – Transport
- Topic Paper – Views and Vistas
- Topic Paper – Wildlife Habitats and Biodiversity

Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations stipulates that the qualifying body (in our case Soham Town Council) should consult any consultation body set out in paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 whose interests the qualifying body considers may be affected by the proposals for a development plan.

East Cambridgeshire District Council was formally notified of the consultation in accordance with Regulation 14.

Additionally, East Cambridgeshire District Council was asked for their list of suggested consultees. In accordance with the regulations, the following statutory bodies and local organisations were notified by email of the consultation and were invited to respond to the plan detail:

### **National Planning**

Natural England  
Environment Agency  
Historic England  
Norfolk Environment  
Highways England  
Marine Management  
Anglian Water  
Network Rail  
Mobile Operators Association  
National Grid  
UK Power Networks  
Western Power Distribution  
Open Reach  
Homes England  
The Coal Authority

## **Local Planning and Groups within the Soham Neighbourhood area**

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority  
Fenland District Council  
East Cambridgeshire District Council  
King's Lynn and West Norfolk  
Greater Cambridge Shared Planning  
West Suffolk Council  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Norfolk County Council  
Burwell Parish Council  
Cheveley Parish Council  
Chippenham Parish Council  
City of Ely Council  
Fordham Parish Council  
Isleham Parish Council  
Kennet Parish Council  
Little Downham Parish Council  
Littleport Town Council  
Little Thetford Parish Council  
Wicken Parish Council  
Exning Parish Council  
Newmarket Town Council  
West Row Parish Council  
CPRE  
Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust  
RSPB  
Sport England  
Cambridgeshire County Council (LLFA)  
Ely Drainage Boards  
The British Horse Society  
Health and Wellbeing Cambridgeshire County Council

## **Business Groups**

Cambridgeshire PCT  
NHS Property Services Ltd  
This Land Development Limited  
Persimmon Homes  
Pegasus Group  
Northfield Windmill

Owners of Green spaces, commons etc

Owners of possible non-heritage assets

List of businesses who gave contact details on Business survey form

## **Disability Groups**

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust  
NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG  
Age UK Cambridgeshire  
Cambridge Campaign for Better Transport

## **Local Groups**

Baptist church  
Methodist church  
St Andrews church  
Soham Staploe Rotary club  
Possibility  
Scouts and Guides  
Fire station  
Sing together  
SCA  
Tree of life club  
Soham carnival  
STR football  
Soham Staploe Medical centre  
Viva  
vivayouth  
phoenixgroup  
Bowls club  
Boys brigade  
Over 60s  
Gardening club  
knit and natter  
Soham museum  
Pumpkin Fair  
Thrift CLT  
Townsend Manor  
Soham community group  
Soham Community Association  
British Legion Soham  
Ross Peers Sports Centre  
Soham Village College  
Weatheralls school  
St Andrews School  
The Shade School  
Soham Heritage and Tourism

Responses were received from both statutory consultees, local consultees, landowners and residents.

An analysis of the number of representations made and the extent to which they support or do not support each policy is available at appendix 21.

A schedule of the comments received from statutory consultees, other consultees and landowners together with the Town Council's response is attached in Appendix 22

These responses were carefully considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. The Town Council's responses were considered and agreed at the Town Council public meeting in April 2024.

In summary, the comments from Statutory bodies were broadly supportive. Helpful comments have been received relating to specific policy proposals, particularly those from East Cambridgeshire District Council, the County Council and Environment Agency. Many of the comments have been taken on board in finalising the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Comments were received from the wider community via the online questionnaire, paper questionnaire circulated within the parish and comments provided at the drop-in session.

A schedule of the comments received from members of the community together with the Town Council's response is attached in Appendix 23.

These responses were carefully considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. Again, the Town Council's responses were considered and agreed at the Town Council public meeting in April 2024.

The comments are broadly supportive of the Neighbourhood Plan. As you might expect there are specific issues which are important to the respondent and where possible and appropriate these comments have been taken on board in finalising the Neighbourhood Plan.

Some of the comments relate to the complexity, language and length of the Neighbourhood Plan. As a statutory document that will be used in the planning process, the Neighbourhood Plan uses language which can be used to influence planning decisions. The Town Council prepared a summary of the Neighbourhood Plan, alongside the Regulation 14 version to help understand and focus on key areas of the document.

Following consideration of all comments received during the Regulation 14 consultation resultant changes have been made to the Neighbourhood Plan and form the basis for the Submission Version.

## 9. Conclusions

The programme of community engagement and communications carried out during the production of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan was extensive and varied. It reached a wide range of the local population and provided opportunities for many parts of the local community to input and comment on the emerging policies. The response to the Questionnaire, events and presentations is evidence of the success of the approach and techniques used by the Working Group.

The comments received throughout and specifically in response to the consultation on 'pre-submission draft of the Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan' have been addressed, in so far as they are practical, and in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and the current and the emerging Local Plan.

All these consultations have raised various subjects which are very important to the residents of Soham Parish.

- First the commons, green spaces and green lanes and footpaths are very important to the residents and need to be protected from adverse conditions or pressure which could destroy the peace and quiet which is so precious to the residents and the wildlife. The flora and fauna are precious to residents and they do not want to lose it.
- Secondly, there is very little appetite to have more houses in Soham because there has already been a large number built. The population has reluctantly resigned itself to having what has already been agreed but is not happy for any more to be added. Also, there is a perception that despite all these extra houses we have had little benefit from the point of view of additional facilities. In fact, the local facilities have deteriorated over recent years – loss of banks, pressure on sports facilities and on medical centre. Many feel that if we are to have more houses then there should be more affordable housing – not necessarily social housing though.
- Thirdly, transport is a big issue. The bus services are not good enough, not frequent enough, do not run in the evenings or weekends and are too expensive. Although we are justly proud of our new rail station, the trains are too few and far between and it is impossible for people working, or students attending training in Cambridge to get there by train at a reasonable time. Being so flat in this area it is a good place for cycling except that we have very few cycle routes, especially alongside the major roads from Soham to Newmarket and Ely. A cycle route from Soham to Wicken is about to start construction and this will link into Wicken Fen and beyond to Cambridge.
- The state of the roads around the area has been a talking point for a long time as has the problems with parking in the town. We do not have sufficient off-road parking and this results in many roads within the town choked with parked vehicles (particularly outside working hours) making congestion a real problem. Also new developments must be seen to provide sufficient off-street parking for the homes they build, and parking spaces are large enough to accommodate the larger cars being produced these days.
- There is also a real concern about the possibility of local flooding. There is a perception that not enough is done to make certain that new developments particularly on flood plains or close to them, are not checked closely enough to ensure that the proposed drainage systems will be able to cope, and that there will not be adverse effects on adjacent areas. There is also concern about local sewage treatment and provision of drinking water.

## 10. NP Consultation Log

Date of consultation	People consulted	Numbers consulted	How consultation was done	Numbers responding	Topics covered
Nov/Dec 2019	Households in town	6000	Paper questionnaire hand delivered to all homes	220	Housing types, location in town, use of local facilities
Jan 18 2020	General public	General population	Posters around town and in social media inviting public to public forum	55	Housing types, location in town, use of local facilities and any other comments from public, and other subjects on 6 topics
COVID LOCKDOWNS prevented in person consultation or engagement with the community					
Jan 2021	Village College students	6 and 2 teachers	Using Zoom meeting	6	Discussion of suitable questions
April 2021	Village College students	All students at Secondary school	Using college internet	221	Transport, future work, local sports facilities, other facilities, and interest in green spaces
April/ May 2021	Business owners/managers	Emails sent to 60 businesses and cards delivered to most of the others	Online survey	10+	Questions about their business, size, qualifications of employees, shift patterns, travel to work, challenges to business, what is needed
May 2021	General public	Anyone interested	Articles in local newspapers and local magazine	Not recorded	To improve public knowledge of the existence of the Neighbourhood Plan
May 2021	General public	Anyone interested	Interview on local internet radio station	Not recorded	To improve public knowledge of the existence of the Neighbourhood Plan
June 2021	Businesses	Reminder sent to businesses and more businesses visited personally by members	Online survey	19+	Questions about their business, size, qualifications of employees, shift patterns, travel to work, challenges to business, what is needed

<b>Date of consultation</b>	<b>People consulted</b>	<b>Numbers consulted</b>	<b>How consultation was done</b>	<b>Numbers responding</b>	<b>Topics covered</b>
June 2021	Residents	Online survey of Green Spaces	Online survey but printed copies provided to all who want them online survey	Internet and paper when requested 119 respondents	Questions about the Commons and other green spaces and how they are used
June 2021	Residents	Online survey 'Connecting Soham'	Online survey but printed copies provided to all who want them	Internet and paper when requested 79 respondents	Questions about transport, parking, internet and use of public transport
June 2021	Residents	Reminders to residents in local newspapers, local magazine	Online surveys but printed copies provided to all who want them	All residents	Connecting Soham survey
July 2021	Residents	Pop up stall outside COOP in town centre on 2 Saturdays	Reminders to complete surveys and offers of printed version	Anyone passing	Connecting Soham survey
Sept 25 2021	Attendees at show	Stand at the Pumpkin Show	Asked to support aspects of the plan on topic boards and to ask questions	Anyone interested (approx. 70 respondents)	Improve public awareness of plan
November 2021	Residents of Barway	Paper surveys delivered to every house	Asked to complete survey and deliver to central house in Barway	Forms delivered to 44 households	Questions about Barway housing, roads and how much they travel to Soham
March 2022	All households	Paper surveys delivered to every house in the NP area	Asked to complete and return to various central points or to complete online	Paper forms delivered to 5500 households	Consultation on the Vision and objectives

Date of consultation	People consulted	Numbers consulted	How consultation was done	Numbers responding	Topics covered
12 March 2022	General public	Anyone interested – outside Co-op	Residents approached to encourage them to complete survey	Anyone passing who wants to pose questions about Vision and Objectives	To encourage completion of form and encourage attendance at forum.
19 March 2022	Public forum	All residents invited	Open invitation to residents	Open day at the Pavilion to answer questions about Vision and Objectives	To encourage completion of form and allow questions to be asked and suggestions made.
There were still some restrictions due to Covid but we were able to continue the work by commissioning a <u>Housing Needs Assessment</u> , a <u>call for sites</u> which may be suitable for employment, tourism or leisure use, and a list of <u>sites and species which are important</u> in the environment provided by CPERC. All these documents required analysis.					
March 2023	Village College students			Info provided by outreach staff, pastoral leaders, mental health and wellbeing leaders.	To ascertain what students, want and need outside of school time
September 2023	Consultation with landowners of Local Green Spaces	All landowners with interest	Email	No responses received	To obtain views on the proposed Local Green Spaces
September 2023	Consultation with occupiers / owners of proposed non designated heritage assets	All landowners with interest	Letter	No responses received	To obtain views on the proposed Non Designated Heritage Assets
June 2023	Senior Public Health Manager – Health on All Policies	2	Zoom meeting and email correspondence	2	Information provided on how health and wellbeing issues can be included in the planning process.
May 2023	East Cambridgeshire District Council	1	Email correspondence and meeting	1	To agree Local Green Space Criteria, to consider the initial draft of Pre-

<b>Date of consultation</b>	<b>People consulted</b>	<b>Numbers consulted</b>	<b>How consultation was done</b>	<b>Numbers responding</b>	<b>Topics covered</b>
					submission Neighbourhood Plan; to agree the list of consultees; to consider the Soham Housing Needs Assessment
February 2023	Cambridgeshire Environmental Records Centre	Organisation	Email	Organisation	Full lists of wildlife species recorded in Soham in last 40 years and habitat maps
March 2023	Soham Village College	Teachers, pastoral care and some students	email	Report from Head teacher	Information about the students and their needs outside of school
November 2023	Pre-submission consultation	All households	All residents	Leaflets delivered to all households explaining how to view the plan and supporting documents and respond on-line or on paper if preferred.	To encourage comments on the Neighbourhood Plan
November 2023	Pre-submission consultation	Emails sent to a list of statutory consultees and some local businesses and groups		Email explained how to view the Plan and how to comment	Important to ensure all those businesses and organisations have opportunity to comment.
November 2023	Two opportunities to discuss and question details of pre-submission plan	Public forum	All residents interested	Invitation to all residents on the leaflet delivered to them	Opportunity to question the policies in the plan