



WITCHFORD Neighbourhood Plan

Witchford Neighbourhood Plan 2019 – 2031 (as modified March 2025)

Witchford Neighbourhood Plan

Foreword

Witchford Neighbourhood Plan – what is it, and why have we spent three years developing it?

It is a land-use plan that fits into the East Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan, but it is focussed on the priorities of our community.

Witchford has changed massively over the last fifty years, from a community that needed Rackham School to accommodate sixty pupils to one that must now educate three hundred plus. The village doubled its population in the 1990s as new housing built to the north and south of Main Street was occupied. Witchford is facing massive unexpected and unplanned change following the failure of the District Council to allocate enough land to meet government housing targets. A Neighbourhood Plan can influence the type and location of new housing and will ensure that more of the money raised from development will be available to the parish rather than being spent across the district.

The changes to the village have had positive as well as negative impacts. The new population has brought a diversity of employment and much greater educational opportunities. New development need not be feared if it meets local needs. The reasonable fear of change, which we cannot prevent, can be tempered by obtaining the benefits from new development for our community, for example more affordable housing or potentially assistance with village hall improvements.

The Plan seeks to robustly defend undeveloped green spaces that are particularly special to the community, while agreeing to the development of others that would have less negative impact. All the priorities of the Plan have been selected following analysis of the consultation questionnaires and feedback from issues raised at stalls run by volunteers at village events. We have tried to get responses from all sections of the community, young and old, those working here and elsewhere and also local employers. We have benefitted from professional assistance in landscape appraisal and in structuring and writing the document.

We have received many comments on issues that cannot be addressed through this land-use based process. These include health provision, educational facilities, retail expansion and some transport issues. All the responses will provide an evidence base for further work by the Parish Council.

The Neighbourhood Plan will provide reassurance that all planning applications will have to take into account the policies and priorities of the Plan. In addition to the East Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan will have independent legal status as a planning document.

The Plan aims to give greater certainty over development and seeks to anticipate change that is likely in the period to 2031. I hope it meets with your approval and support.

Ian Allen Chairman Neighbourhood Plan Committee

Climate Change Single-Issue Review

The Climate Change Single-Issue Review (SIR) of the Neighbourhood Plan, undertaken between September 2022 – March 2025, reflects the effects of climate change on Witchford. It demonstrates both the actions that can be taken to reduce the contribution to climate change by the village of Witchford and the wider parish area and the actions Witchford can take to increase its resilience to the impacts of climate change. The SIR results in additional content incorporated in the Introduction (see 'About the Climate Change Single Issue Review'), the Key

Issues Chapter (see 'Addressing the climate change emergency in Witchford') and in the Vision Chapter (minor amendment to vision statement, together with insertion of a new objective). The SIR has also resulted in additional planning policies, and these are set out in a new section, Chapter 5.11. These planning policies are supported by four additional appendices. The SIR does otherwise change the original Neighbourhood Plan and the planning policies adopted in May 2020 are not affected by this SIR.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Witchford Neighbourhood Plan was commissioned by the Parish Council in 2016, who then created a Steering Group

The Steering Group comprised: Councillor Ian Allen (Chairman), Cllr Rose Lacey, Mrs Jo Forrest, Mrs Jane Heath, Mr Kenneth Lee and Mrs Shelagh Monteith, with professional planning support from Modicum Planning.

Funding was provided by the Parish Council and Locality Grant funding.

Invaluable guidance on drafting the Plan was provided by Rachel Hogger working with Cambridgeshire ACRE, who also provided advice and data on demography, housing, economic activity, deprivation etc.

Advice and feedback were provided by the Strategic Planning Officer at East Cambridgeshire District Council

The Witchford Neighbourhood Plan Landscape appraisal was undertaken by Alison Farmer of Alison Farmer Associates

On behalf of the Parish Council and personally, I thank all who have contributed to bringing the plan to fruition not least the whole community of Witchford for participation in the creation of this important document

Ian Allen

Chair

Witchford Neighbourhood Plan Committee

Further acknowledgements 2024.

Witchford Parish Council wishes to thank the Witchford Climate Action Group for its central role in bringing the Climate Change Single Issue Review forward and for its significant contribution to drafting the new policies in Chapter 5.11. The Witchford Climate Action Group formed the core of the Climate Change SIR Working Group set up by the Parish Council to oversee the production of the Reviewed version of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council also thanks Rachel Hogger, working with Cambridgeshire ACRE, for her invaluable support and guidance. Funding for this Review was provided by the Parish Council and Locality Grant funding.

Rose Lacey

Chair

Witchford Parish Council

Fig. 1 - Witchford Neighbourhood Plan Process



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- Appendix 2 List of projects to assist climate change mitigation and resilience
- Appendix 3 Witchford's ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change: An assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
- Appendix 4 Top 20 Biodiversity areas in Witchford
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In Chapter 3 'The Key Issues Facing Witchford', quotes shown in blocks are comments *in their own words* taken directly from the Witchford residents' Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire February 2018.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document is the made Witchford Neighbourhood Plan of March 2025, which comprises the original made plan of May 2020 together with the agreed modifications made in March 2025.

About Neighbourhood Plans

- 1.2 The Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 gave local communities new powers to directly influence how the places they live in will develop in the future by producing Neighbourhood Development Plans. This is reinforced by the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 which states *“Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.”* (para.29). Witchford’s Neighbourhood Plan has been produced under these powers.
- 1.3 When adopted, the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan will have the same status as the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, becoming part of the ‘development plan’. Decisions on planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material conditions indicate otherwise. As such this Neighbourhood Plan will provide an important framework for how Witchford will develop in the coming years.
- 1.4 The Local Planning Authority covering the Neighbourhood Area is East Cambridgeshire District Council. The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for its area and must have regard to national policy and advice. The Local Plan currently in force is the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan adopted 21st April 2015

About the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.5 This Neighbourhood Development Plan (called the ‘Witchford Neighbourhood Plan’ in the rest of this document) covers the period 2019 – 2031, mirroring the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan which covers the period 2011-2031.
- 1.6 The purpose of the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan is to allow the community to form a vision for the future of Witchford, and to produce a range of planning policies that will ensure future development is sustainable and in sympathy with that vision.

The Vision Statement that underpins this Neighbourhood Plan is:

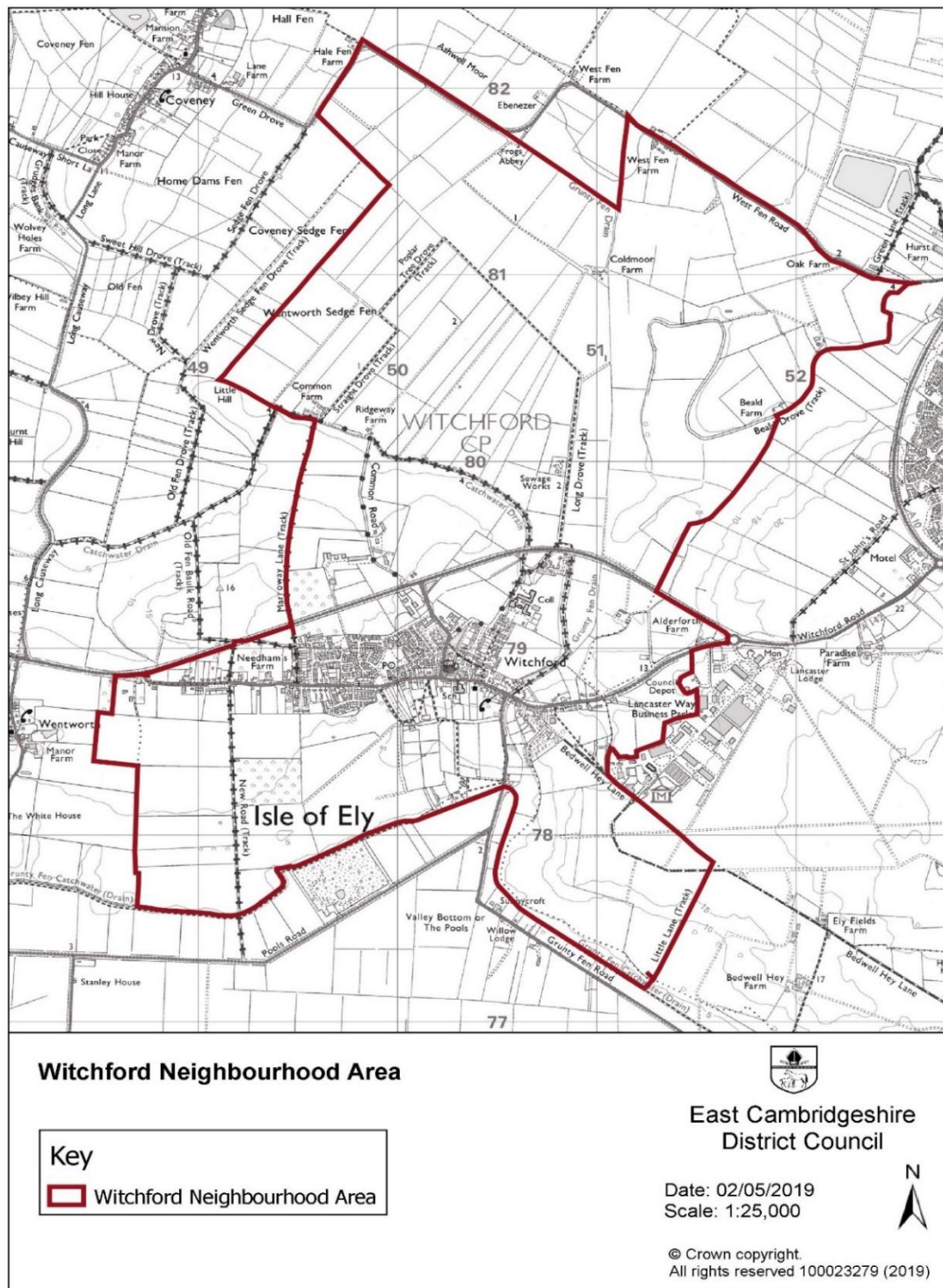
‘To value and protect the rural character and community spirit of Witchford, ensuring that future development is sustainable and meets local needs’¹

Through this Neighbourhood Plan, Witchford will be able to ensure that its vision of a distinct, thriving community sits firmly within the local planning framework.

- 1.7 The Witchford Neighbourhood Plan Area covers the whole of the administrative parish of Witchford. Neighbourhood Area designation was confirmed by East Cambridgeshire District Council on 26th August 2016. The Witchford parish boundary was altered by means of the East Cambridgeshire District Council (Reorganisation of Community

¹ The underlined text is the amendment to the Vision Statement agreed by Witchford Parish Council on 1st March 2023 following consultation with Witchford residents and on the recommendation of the SIR Working Group. The Vision in the original Witchford Neighbourhood Plan adopted May 2020 was ‘To value and protect the rural character and community spirit of Witchford, ensuring that future development meets local needs’

Governance) Order 2018 and the Neighbourhood Plan Area was amended accordingly on 6th February 2019.



Map 1: Witchford Neighbourhood Plan Area

About the 2023 Climate Change Single-Issue Review

- 1.8 The original Neighbourhood Plan did not incorporate measures specifically to address the climate change emergency. This update has therefore introduced an additional theme related directly to climate change. The new theme does not change the fundamentals of the original Plan, such as land use, but seeks to add mitigation and resilience measures to address the effects of climate change. Changes from the original Plan are clearly set out.

2. About the Witchford Neighbourhood Area

2.1 About Witchford

Witchford is a parish within the Local Authority area of East Cambridgeshire District Council. The heart of the village lies about three miles south west of Ely city centre. The village itself lies to the south of the A142. However, the parish boundary takes in a much larger, mainly rural, hinterland which extends both southwards and northwards from the village. The village is situated in the Isle of Ely, one of the larger islands of higher ground which prior to the drainage of the Fens in the seventeenth century remained dry and habitable when the low-lying fens were flooded. Archaeology indicates that the area was settled from Roman times, and the village is mentioned in Domesday Book. Economic activity was mainly agricultural; by the early-twentieth century Witchford had also developed as a major horse-trading centre. In 1942 Witchford RAF Station was built on land east of the village, remaining operational until the end of the Second World War. Its location now forms the core of Lancaster Way Business Park. Witchford developed as a linear settlement along the main road west of Ely; this is the Main Street of the village where all the older housing is situated. The A142 bypass to the north of the village was constructed in 1989 and housing development followed, with two large estates built to the north of Main Street in the 1990s.

2.2 Settlement form and character

The Witchford Landscape Appraisal (WLA) identifies three distinct built forms:

- The historic core, a concentration of historic buildings (including St Andrew's Church, the telephone kiosk and five houses along Main Street) built in traditional yellow brick and local vernacular styles reflecting rural cottages and farmhouses. Buildings often sit at the edge of the pavement along Main Street, and are predominately one plot deep, creating a clearly defined streetscape;
- An area of linear development along Sutton Road comprising a dispersed pattern of historic farm buildings/rural cottages separated by more recent infill dwellings and notable areas of open space/agricultural land. Dwellings are often set back from the road with front garden plots and the character of Sutton Road is rural with grass verges, hedges and trees; and
- An area of infill estate development which has established in the second half of the 20th century to the north of Main Street. In these areas houses have a visual uniformity and are arranged in cul-de-sac road layouts.

The Witchford Landscape Appraisal describes Witchford as *"a typical fenland settlement in that it is primarily located on the south facing slopes of a low hill surrounded by open fenland farmland and has historically comprised a linear arrangement of dwellings and farms along the road which connected Ely to March. At right angles to this route are 'drove roads' and lanes which connected the settlement to the wider fen/common. The village is unusual for two reasons, firstly in its proximity to Ely and secondly its historic focus on a shallow valley which separates the wider Isle of Ely from the lower, smaller island on which the village sits. The subtle changes in topography and arrangement/hierarchy of linear routes has shaped the form and feel of the village and*

also affects the gateways. The A142 has had a relatively small influence on settlement gateways and continues to be perceived as separate from the village."

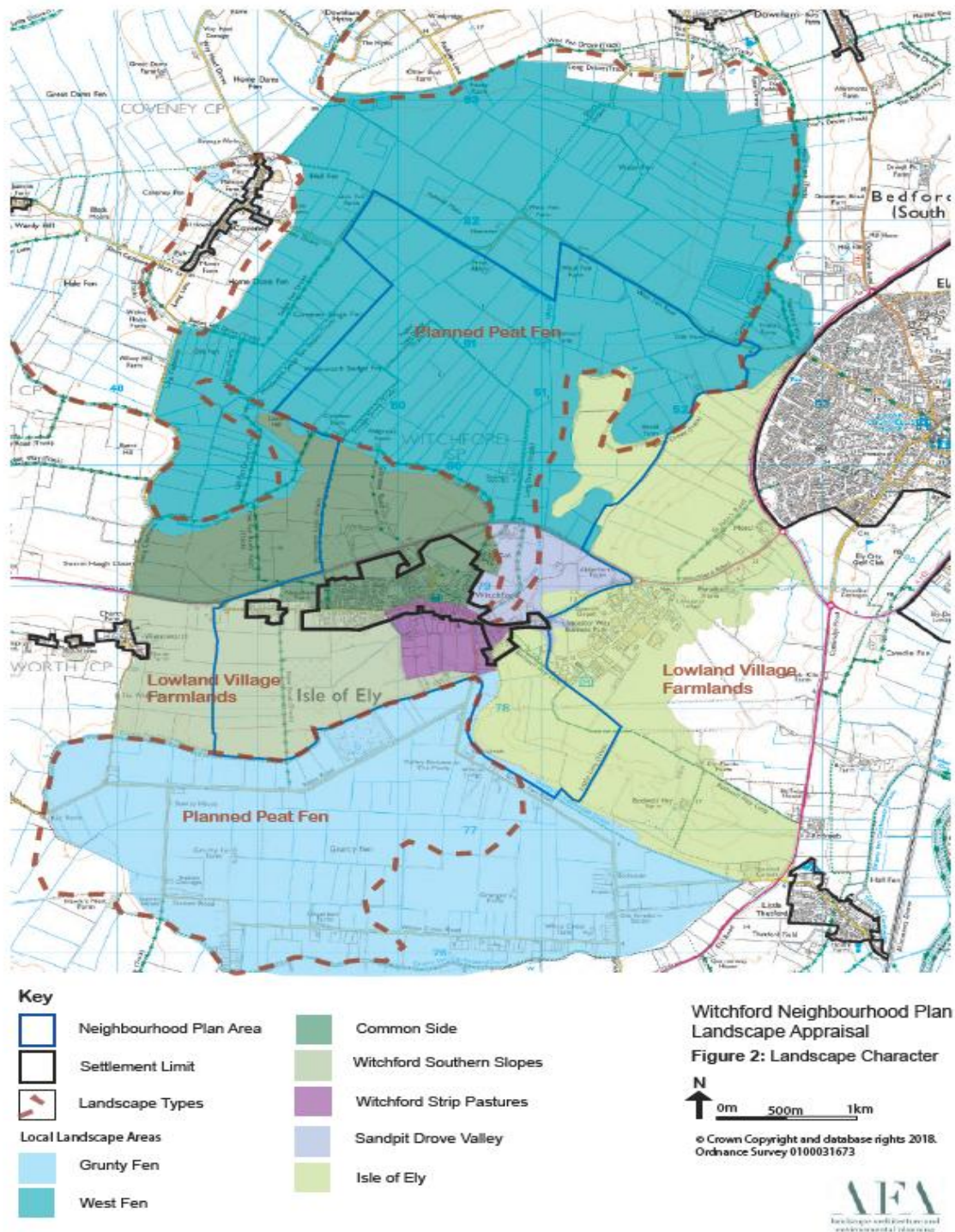
2.3 Landscape

National Character Area Profiles, produced by Natural England, are broad divisions of landscape forming the basic units of cohesive countryside character. Witchford falls within National Character Area 46 The Fens, described as *"a distinctive, historic and human influenced wetland landscape which formerly constituted the largest wetland area in England. The area is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. The level, open topography shapes the impression of huge skies which convey a strong sense of place, tranquility and inspiration."*

The East of England Landscape Typology defines two landscape character types in the Witchford plan area: Lowland Village Farmland and Planned Peat Fen (shown on Map 2).

The Witchford Landscape Appraisal supplements the Landscape Typology and draws out local variations in character. The assessment defines a further seven local character areas which are geographically specific and unique. The settlement character and landscape context are described for each character area. The assessment illustrates the variety of character in the plan area and helps with understanding sense of place in Witchford and the wider parish. The character areas help to describe the variety of character found within the Neighbourhood Plan area and local sense of place. These areas are:

- Grunty Fen
- West Fen
- Common Side
- Witchford Southern Slopes
- Witchford Historic Core and Strip Pastures
- Sandpit Drove Valley
- Island of Ely



Map 2: Extract from the Witchford Landscape Appraisal

2.4 The residents of Witchford

Witchford's population stood at 2,360 in 2015. Witchford experienced significant growth during the 1990s but has been much more stable recently. The population grew from 1,440 in 1991 to 2,270 in 2001, and has grown much more slowly since. Witchford is a popular village for families. There are high levels of family households and school age children. In contrast, there is a very low proportion of people in their 20s.

Economic activity rates are high in Witchford. This is heavily influenced by high levels of part-time working among women. There are relatively few people employed in professional roles. Witchford employed residents are more likely to be employed in 'intermediate' occupations such as administration and sales. This is related to qualification levels. Relatively few people in Witchford are qualified to Higher Education level (see Demographic and Socio-Economic report (DSER), 2017).

Witchford experiences relatively little deprivation. The main issues are access to services and housing affordability. The DSER finds that the number of working age benefit claimants in Witchford fell by a third during the five-year period 2012-2017. Most benefit claims are related to unemployment. However, caring responsibilities and disability are also factors.

2.5 Employment and services

The largest employment sectors in Witchford are education and 'administrative & support service activities'. A significant amount of employment in manufacturing, retail, construction, transport and storage is provided by the Lancaster Way Business Park (an Enterprise Zone comprising 175 acres). Although not in Witchford parish, the business park impacts directly upon Witchford from the point of view of employment, landscape and traffic generation. The smaller Sedgeway Business Park and Greenham Park, north and south of the A142 respectively, provide a similar range of jobs, as well as some flexible office space.

Most employed residents in Witchford commute relatively short distances. About half either work from home or commute within East Cambridgeshire. About a quarter commute to Cambridge City or South Cambridgeshire, with a smaller number commuting to London via Ely railway station.

Witchford benefits from pre-school, primary school and secondary school facilities. The Rackham CoFE Primary School 2018-19 PAN (Published Admission Number) is 315, Witchford Village College's 2018-19 PAN is 900 (but the number of pupils on roll in January 2019 is 800) and there is current capacity for early years provision (provided by Witchford Rackham Pre-School and Lancaster Lodge Childcare) for 98 places.

As at July 2019, there are no capacity issues for early years provision, primary school provision and secondary school provision. With regard to primary-aged children there were 246 children aged 4-10 living in the catchment and this total is expected to fall to 180 by 2025/26. With regard to secondary school-aged children in January 2018, there were 875 children aged 11 – 15 living in the catchment area and this is anticipated to increase to 979 by 2022/23.

However, the County Council has articulated as part of responses to planning applications that increases in the catchment population, together with increases triggered by approved development, mean that there is a certain need to increase secondary school places at Witchford Village College at some point during the plan period and the County Council has costed a project for this to take place.

The County Council also anticipates a potential shortfall in primary school places and early years if development is built out on sites put forward through planning applications, but not included as part of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. This can be seen for

example from viewing the County Council response to a planning application for land at 27-39 Sutton Road (19/00966/OUM) prepared in July 2019. Here, they anticipate that the development pipeline could increase the primary-aged population by a further 168 pupils (168 plus 180 (as at 2025/26) takes the overall demand to 348 which exceeds the current capacity of 315 at Rackham primary school). In their calculations, the County Council has taken into account development coming forward on permitted sites as well as development on three sites (not anticipated as part of this Neighbourhood Plan) pending appeal and consent.

The County Council's position in July 2019 can be established by reviewing their response to a recent planning application for land at 27-39 Sutton Road (19/00966/OUM). This can be found at www.eastcambs.gov.uk and is also provided in the evidence base supporting this plan.

There is a much-valued post office and general store, but this is open only during the day so shopping at the evening and weekends (particularly for commuting families) depends on supermarkets in Ely. There is a Chinese take-away in the village, one pub, a hairdressing salon and veterinary surgery. A mobile library visits Witchford fortnightly. The nearest petrol station is on the A10 Ely bypass, although there are two car repair garages in the village. There are no GP, dentist or nurse practitioner facilities in Witchford.



Fig 2. Witchford take-away and Post Office. Photo taken February 2019

Three play areas cater for children up to the age of 14, but there are no facilities for teenagers. Access to leisure facilities in Ely (including the Ely Leisure Park and The Hive Leisure Centre) is car-dependant because of the lack of a safe pedestrian/cycle crossing at the A10/A142 junction.



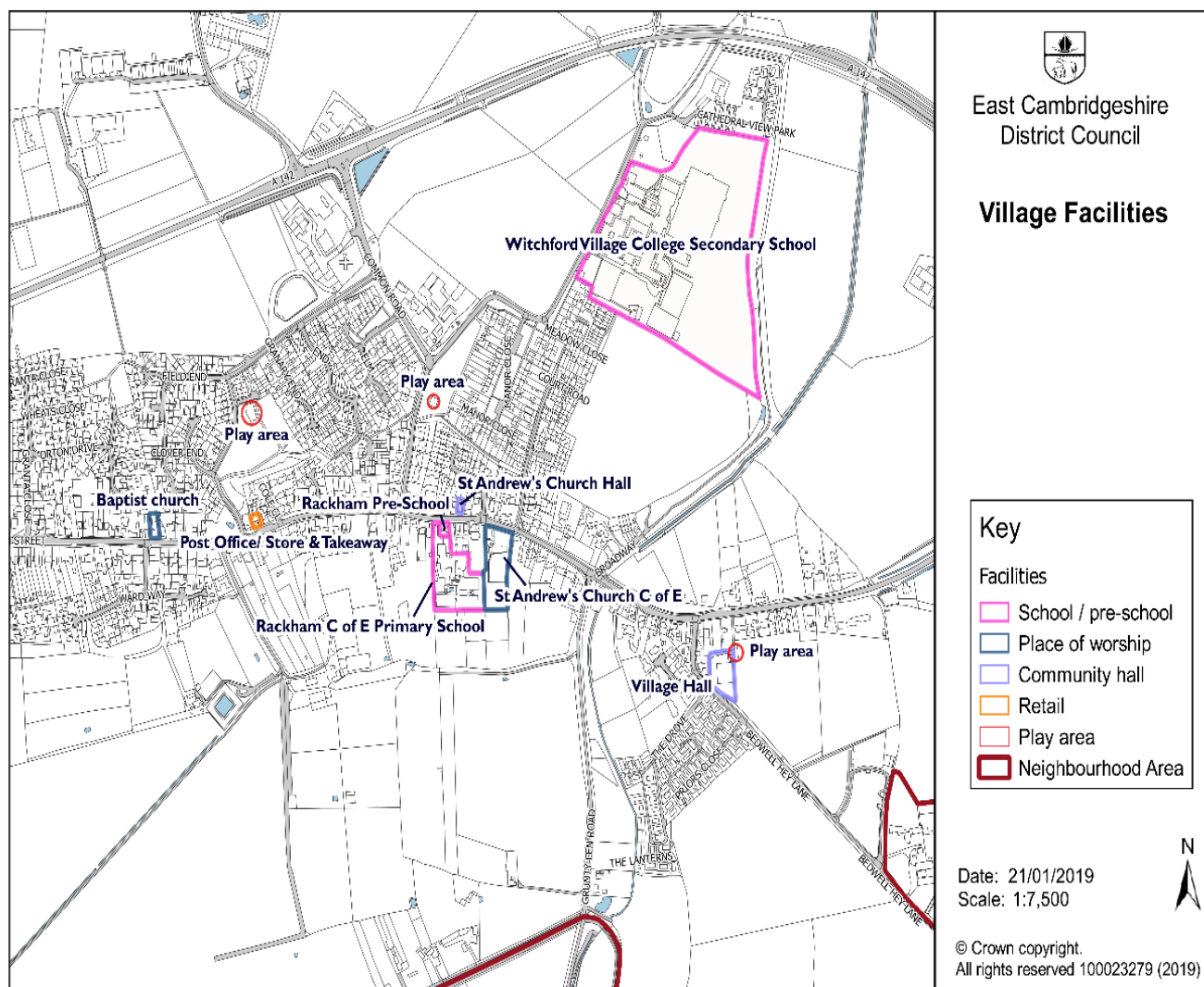
Fig 3. Common Road play area. Photo taken February 2019

2.6 **Community**

Witchford has a range of community facilities. Sport is mainly centred on football with a number of teams using the playing field attached to the village hall. Astro-turf pitches are available to hire at Witchford Village College, and gym facilities at the College are open to the public. Evening classes are also held at the College. A riding stables offers a range of equestrian services and the network of droves north of the village provide good off-road horse-riding and cycling opportunities.

The village hall, built in 1990, is in need of refurbishment and modernisation. The hall is run by the Witchford Playing Field Association, which is developing plans and a funding strategy for the required improvements.

Community groups include drama, choral singing, two sets of allotments, conservation volunteers, WI, Rainbows, Brownies and Scouts. Witchford is served by a Parish Church and a Baptist Church.



Map 3: Community Facilities, Employment Centres and Services

2.7 Housing

As noted in the Demographic and Socio-Economic report supporting this plan (2017), the number of dwellings grew from 590 in 1991 to 920 in 2001 before slowing down to 960 in 2011. In 2015 the dwelling stock stood at 970. However, planning permissions granted during 2016-19 suggest that Witchford is about to enter into another period of significant growth, which could see the village grow by about 40 per cent.

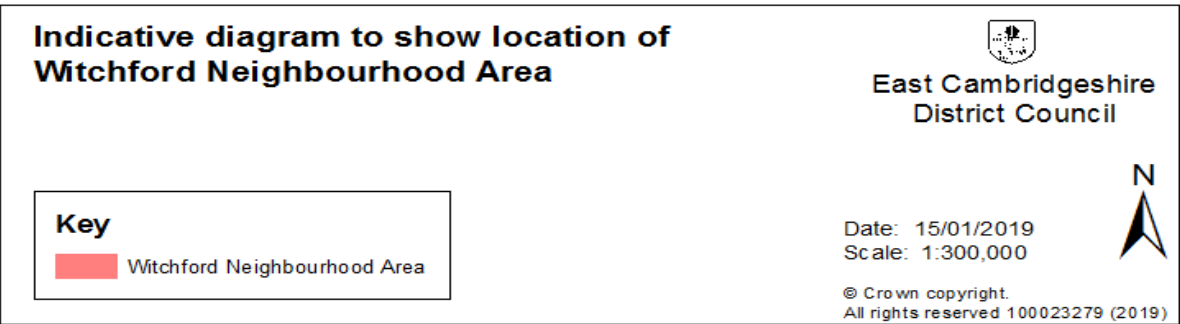
Witchford's housing stock is dominated by owner occupation. There is relatively little rented property whether affordable or market. The majority of housing is detached or semi-detached. There are two mobile home parks. In general, house prices are well above the average for East Cambridgeshire. There is a particularly high premium for larger properties which is consistent with a high demand from families. However, house prices and rental costs for all property sizes in Witchford are challenging for low income families. The number of households with a Witchford connection on the district's housing register was 38 as at September 2019.

2.8 Transport

Witchford village is situated approximately 1 mile west of the A10 Ely bypass and immediately south of the A142 Witchford bypass. The village is therefore sandwiched between the two main arterial routes in East Cambridgeshire District: the A142 carrying traffic between the main Fenland towns of Wisbech, March and Chatteris to Ely and on to Newmarket and the A14 Trunk Road, and the A10 carrying traffic from Kings Lynn south to Cambridge and on to London. A minor road leading south from the village (Gruntty Fen Road) links directly to the A10. At peak times, congestion on the A142 and issues of traffic speed and volume from commuting traffic, school traffic and 'rat-running' cause intense pressure on the main road through Witchford. Other problems are parking and traffic speed/volume from in-village car journeys (exacerbated by the elongated layout of the village).

A bus service runs every two hours between Witchford and Ely. The railway station at Ely (3 miles away) has very regular services but there is no direct public transport service from Witchford to the station.

A pedestrian/cyclepath runs alongside the A142 between Sutton (5 miles west of Witchford) to the A142/A10 junction. However, access to the services in Ely is hampered by the lack of a safe pedestrian/cycle crossing over the A10 at that junction.



Map 4: Transport Links

3. The Key Issues facing Witchford

Keeping the village moving with the modern world and expanding doesn't mean it has to lose its charm.

- 3.1 The key issues facing Witchford have been identified from the documentary evidence base and the responses to consultations with the Witchford community (see Consultation Statement and Appendix 1). It is these key issues which form the basis of the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.2 Some of the priorities which are important for residents are not achievable through land-based planning policies, or are not directly within the remit of the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan. Witchford Parish Council aims to address these wider priorities as free-standing projects, separate to but informed by the Neighbourhood Plan. These are outlined in section 6.

3.3 Landscape and character

Retaining the character of Witchford as a discrete rural community – separate from Ely – is a key issue arising from all the consultation undertaken with residents. This can be addressed by ensuring an undeveloped area of land is retained between Witchford and Ely and between Witchford and the Lancaster Way Business Park. The distinctiveness of Witchford can be protected by paying particular attention to views to and from Witchford over the surrounding countryside, and by defining a characteristic village edge.

I love Witchford. It's a lovely village and a village it should remain!

3.4 Green infrastructure

Listing, designating and protecting existing green infrastructure has emerged as a key issue for residents, along with enhancing opportunities for enjoying the Witchford countryside (including wild play).

One of the most wonderful things about living in Witchford is the fantastic green areas/ walks and open spaces.

3.5 Housing

Key issues that have been identified relating to housing are the need for smaller housing units to enable young people to stay in Witchford (a notable feature of the demographic make-up of Witchford is the low proportion of people in their 20s), for affordable housing units for single-person households and families, and for bungalows or adaptable housing units to allow older residents to downsize from family homes to free these up.

We need to build affordable accommodation that allows our children to afford to live here and be part of the community where they grew up.

3.6 Infrastructure

Key issues that have been identified relating to infrastructure are the need for the provision of facilities to keep pace with housing supply, facilities for teenagers, expanded shopping facilities, the provision of health services in Witchford and the refurbishment of the village hall.

‘Development is inevitable but should be proportionate and go hand in hand with infrastructure improvements and increased facilities’.

3.7 Traffic

Key issues that have been identified relating to traffic in Witchford village are the need to address the volume and speed of traffic on Main Street (both from in-village traffic and ‘rat-running’), the difficulty of leaving the village at the Common Road/A142 junction, congestion at the Lancaster Way Business Park roundabout leaving Witchford village, parking and congestion issues on Main Street (including those related to the primary school) and on Manor Road near the Village College.

‘Road safety has to be a priority’

3.8 Witchford and Ely connectivity

Being able to access the services at Ely and Cambridge/London (via Ely railway station) is a key issue for residents. This includes access for both road users and pedestrians and cyclists. Road improvements and the enhancement of links for pedestrians and cyclists (which could have the additional effect of reducing pressure on the roads) are needed. Measures include improvements to the A142 and A10, a pedestrian/cycle crossing over the A10 into Ely from Witchford and a more regular bus service to Ely.

‘Any additional developments within the village must be preceded by better road provision. The current traffic system from Witchford to Ely cannot cope with current, let alone future, demands’

3.9 Supporting Witchford’s micro-economy

The Demographic and Socio-Economic report which supports this plan finds that most employed residents in Witchford commute relatively short distances. About half either work from home or commute within East Cambridgeshire. A further 10 per cent have ‘no fixed workplace’. This could include, for example, construction workers who will work on different sites. About a quarter commute to Cambridge City or South Cambridgeshire. Fewer than 30 employed residents commute to London and there are similar numbers commuting to Fenland and Huntingdonshire. The parish itself also includes a number of employers including businesses at Sedgeway Business Park, Greenham Park, Witchford Village College and Witchford Primary School.

On the face of it therefore, Witchford would appear to be sustainable in terms of local economic opportunities.

However, due to the significant road congestion issues on the A142 (alongside the difficulty of crossing the A10/A142 for those without a vehicle) the need to travel any distance outside of the parish presents challenges to residents. Simply providing more

job opportunities on existing employment sites within or around the parish will not necessarily address these challenges since local job opportunities will not necessarily attract or be suitable for Witchford based residents.

Instead this plan recognises the level of current parish-based employment activity maintained by parish residents (e.g. home workers and local businesses). Parish based employment activity helps to limit the amount of daily out and in commuting. It is also important for the purpose of maintaining a lively village atmosphere through different times of the day.

A key priority here is therefore to implement and encourage measures which will contribute to Witchford's micro-economy.

'I would support more industry and business around Witchford'

3.10 Addressing the Climate Change Emergency in Witchford

The UK Government has a legally binding target to bring greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. The strategy for reaching the target is set out in the 2021 government report "Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener". This explains the target will be met through decarbonising all of the UK economy, together with measures to remove greenhouse gases, through trees, carbon capture and storage technology. Meanwhile, East Cambridgeshire District Council declared a climate emergency in Autumn 2019. Its Environment and Climate Change Strategy set out a vision that by 2040 or earlier the Council's operations will reach net zero carbon emissions and, in partnership with all stakeholders, for East Cambridgeshire as a whole, with clear demonstrable progress towards the target year-on-year.

In order to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions, action is required at all levels of government and society. This Plan is therefore focused on what can be done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and remove greenhouse gas emissions (tree planting and other carbon storage methods) at this parish level and in terms of land use planning.

Meanwhile, Witchford faces negative impacts from the effects of climate change. These include increased flood risk with drainage infrastructure not designed to cope with higher intensity storms; water stress from decreased rainfall combined with greater demand from increased population; negative health impacts from particulates and CO₂ emissions from increased traffic in the village and on the A142; rising energy costs and concerns about security of supply. Higher Summer and Winter temperatures and dry Summers may also have a negative impact on biodiversity

This Plan has been prepared to focus at the parish level on measures to:

- manage and reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions linked to the daily lifestyles in our parish (climate change mitigation measures)
- ensure the parish is resilient as climate change occurs (climate change adaptation measures).

4. Witchford Neighbourhood Plan Vision and Objectives

- 4.1 The overall vision for the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan was developed during the initial consultations with residents, and was tested in February 2018 in a village-wide survey (with a 40% response rate), when 97.94% of respondents agreed that this wording should be adopted as the Vision Statement for the Plan. Following a village-wide survey in January 2023, in which Witchford residents were asked to comment on the Vision in

the then emerging SIR, the Vision has been amended from the original 2020 version to as follows (new additional text underlined):

'To value and protect the rural character and community spirit of Witchford, ensuring that future development is sustainable and meets local needs'

- 4.2 Seven objectives have been formulated through consultation and engagement with the community, addressing the key issues facing Witchford during the life of the Neighbourhood Plan. Individual policies have then been developed within the framework of these objectives.
- 4.3 The seven objectives set out below are in no order of priority:
- i. Landscape and character: To maintain the rural fenland character of Witchford. To protect the open space between Witchford and Ely, so that the village remains a distinct and separate community.
 - ii. Green infrastructure: To identify, protect and enhance the green infrastructure, open spaces and valued views of Witchford and the opportunities to enjoy the Witchford countryside.
 - iii. Housing: To maintain a thriving community through the provision of housing to meet the range of needs of current and future residents of Witchford.
 - iv. Infrastructure: To encourage and promote the provision of sufficient infrastructure, amenities and services to allow Witchford to retain its character as a self-sustaining, thriving community.
 - v. Traffic in Witchford: To address issues relating to the speed and volume of traffic through the village, and to create attractive and usable opportunities for pedestrian and cycle access within Witchford with the aim of reducing in-village car use.
 - vi. Witchford to Ely connectivity: To support proposals to improve infrastructure for safe and easy travel by cycle, on foot and by public transport to Ely and to Ely train station.
 - vii. Supporting Witchford's micro-economy: To support existing local businesses and to encourage increased economic activity appropriate to the rural nature of the parish.
- 4.4 As part of the Climate Change SIR, the following objective has been added:
- Climate Change: actively identify and promote climate change mitigation and climate change resilience measures
- 4.5 This framework of vision, objectives and policies was underpinned by the results of village-wide questionnaires and a range of other consultation opportunities, both during the original Plan production and as part of the SIR consultations. Full details of the community consultations can be found in the separate Consultation Statements for the original Neighbourhood Plan and the SIR
- 4.6 A wide range of documentary evidence on all the policy areas was used in drafting this Neighbourhood Plan and the SIR. A full list of all the documentary evidence is included in Appendix 1. Copies of all the documentary evidence or relevant weblinks are all available via the Parish Council website <https://witchfordparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

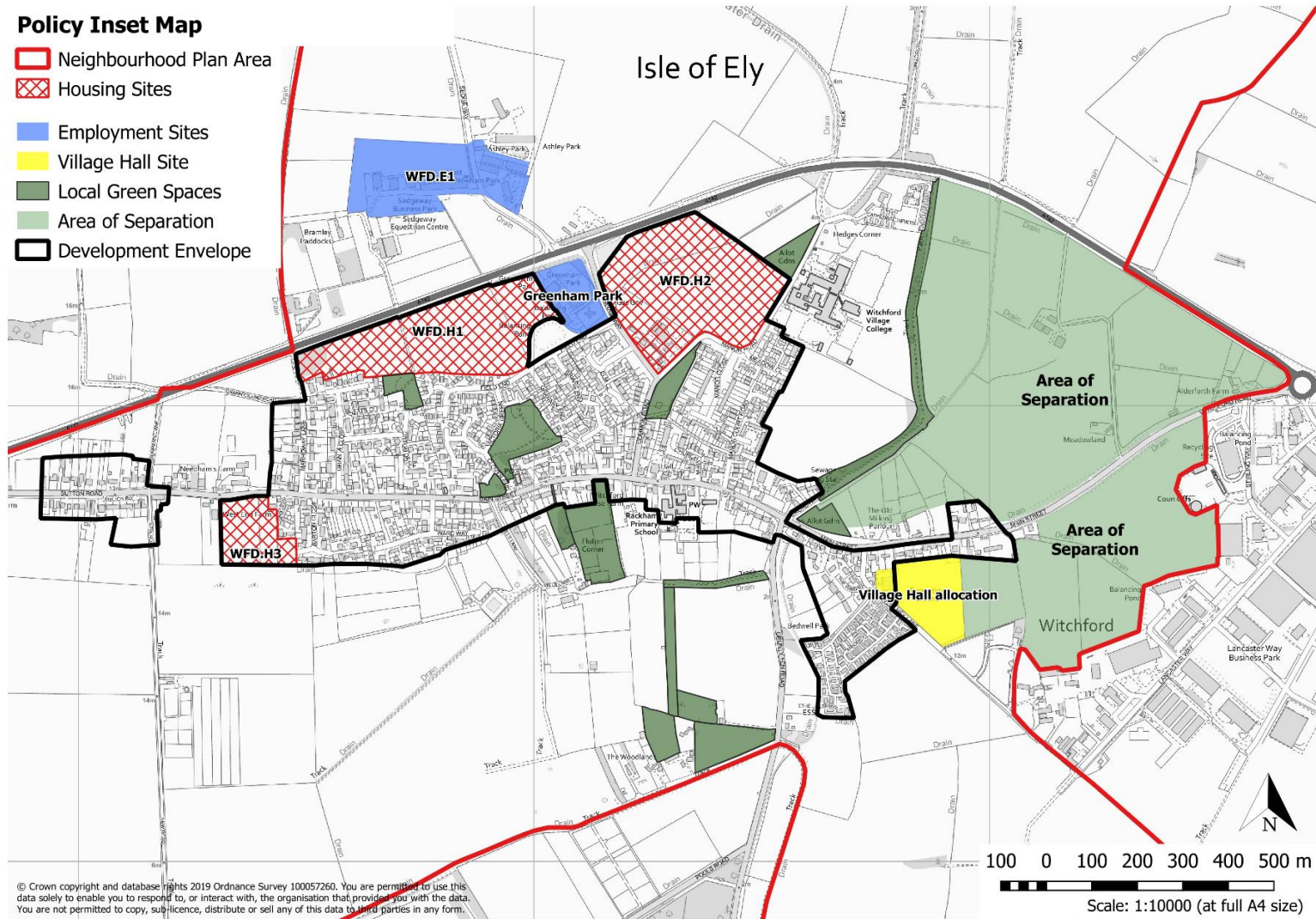
5. Policies

This part of the Neighbourhood Plan addresses the following policy areas:

- Location of new development: A spatial strategy for Witchford
- Landscape and character
- Green infrastructure
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Village traffic
- Witchford to Ely connectivity
- Supporting Witchford's micro-economy
- Climate change effects and resilience

Policy Inset Map

-  Neighbourhood Plan Area
-  Housing Sites
-  Employment Sites
-  Village Hall Site
-  Local Green Spaces
-  Area of Separation
-  Development Envelope



Map 5: Inset Map of Policy Allocations

5.1 Location of new development: A spatial strategy for Witchford

Policy WNP SS1 A spatial strategy for Witchford

Development proposals which accord with the site allocations WNP H1, WNP H2 and WNP H3 shown on Map 5 will be supported. In addition, other proposals within Witchford's development envelope, which is defined on Policy Map 6 will be supported provided they accord with other provisions in the Development Plan.

Outside the development envelope, development will be restricted to:

- rural exception housing on the edge of the village where such schemes accord with Policy WNP H2 of this plan;
- appropriate employment development at the Sedgeway Business Park where such schemes accord with Policy WNP – E2 of this plan; and
- development for agriculture, horticulture, outdoor recreation, essential educational infrastructure and other uses that need to be located in the countryside.

The allocated sites will deliver approximately 330 homes during the plan period 2019 to 2031.

5.1.1 Intent

To provide a strategic overview and clarity of the future direction of development in the Plan area. For avoidance of doubt, the development envelope shown on Policy Map 6 supersedes the development envelope provided in the 2015 Local Plan.

5.1.2 Context and reasoned justification

This is an overarching policy for the Neighbourhood Plan that provides the context for all the other planning policies.

The development envelope is defined on Policy Map 6. Development proposals coming forward outside the development envelope will be regarded as countryside locations, whereas the principle of development within the development envelope is generally accepted.

In the last plan period, parcels of land outside the Local Plan development envelope were given permission for housing development. These were permitted on appeal (after East Cambridgeshire District Council had recommended refusal) on the basis that the district could not demonstrate a sufficient supply of housing (referred to as a sufficient 5-year land supply²). Development, including these 5-year land supply sites, has resulted in schemes coming forward without due regard to the context, character and sensitivities of Witchford's setting and wider landscape character. Notwithstanding this, it is important that the spatial strategy for the parish is one which takes into account existing commitments (planning permissions) and uses this as a starting position from which to plan ahead.

Witchford Housing Requirement

The adopted Local Plan for East Cambridgeshire District Council does not allocate any housing sites in the parish. It does define a development envelope tightly around the

² A 5 year land supply is a supply of specific deliverable sites that can provide 5 years' worth of housing against a housing requirement agreed as part of a Local Plan or against a local housing need

built-up part of the village and supports in principle infill development within these boundaries. The Local Plan allows in principle for rural exceptions housing to come forward on the edge of the development envelope and anticipates that approximately 37 new dwellings will be built on infill sites in the village during the period 2013 to 2031.

Since June 2015, the policies specific to housing delivery in the Local Plan have been found to be out of date (when the planning inspectorate approved an appeal for development of up to 128 homes outside Witchford's village envelope on a site referred to as Land off Field Road. The inspector found that the district did not have a 5-year land supply³ and because of this, the balance was tipped in favour of that particular development).

To inform the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan, East Cambridgeshire District Council have provided the parish with an updated housing requirement figure to be met during the period 2018 to 2031. This figure is 252 dwellings, or 19.4 dwellings per annum in the period 01 April 2018 to 31 March 2031. This figure has been provided in line with paragraph 66 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states the housing requirement figure for a neighbourhood plan should take into account the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood plan area and the most recently available planning strategy of the local planning authority.

The purpose of providing a new housing requirement figure for the Neighbourhood Plan (an updated figure to the one provided in the adopted Local Plan) is to make sure that once the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan is made (adopted), it can be considered to be up to date in the decision-making process.

In considering the overall housing requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan, the district council has taken into account the following:

- In the period 01 April 2011 to 31 March 2018, there were 24 net dwelling completions;
- At 01 April 2018, Witchford parish had 'net commitment' from sites with planning permission for 252 dwellings;
- Past completions and future supply from committed sites could therefore deliver 276 dwellings in the period 2011 -2031.

To ensure the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan is prepared in a positive way, which complements the district's approach in delivering required housing growth whilst also protecting the parish from further unplanned speculative development, the Neighbourhood Plan should not depart from the up to date growth assumptions adopted by the District. The Neighbourhood Plan has a role to play in planning for this growth in a sustainable way.

The Neighbourhood Plan therefore includes allocations for the following sites:


Land north of Field End	168 homes
Land at Common Road	116 homes
Land to south of Main Street	46 homes

The principle for development on the three above sites has been accepted through existing planning consents. From this perspective, it is possible, they could come forward without the Plan being in place. However, planning permissions elapse after

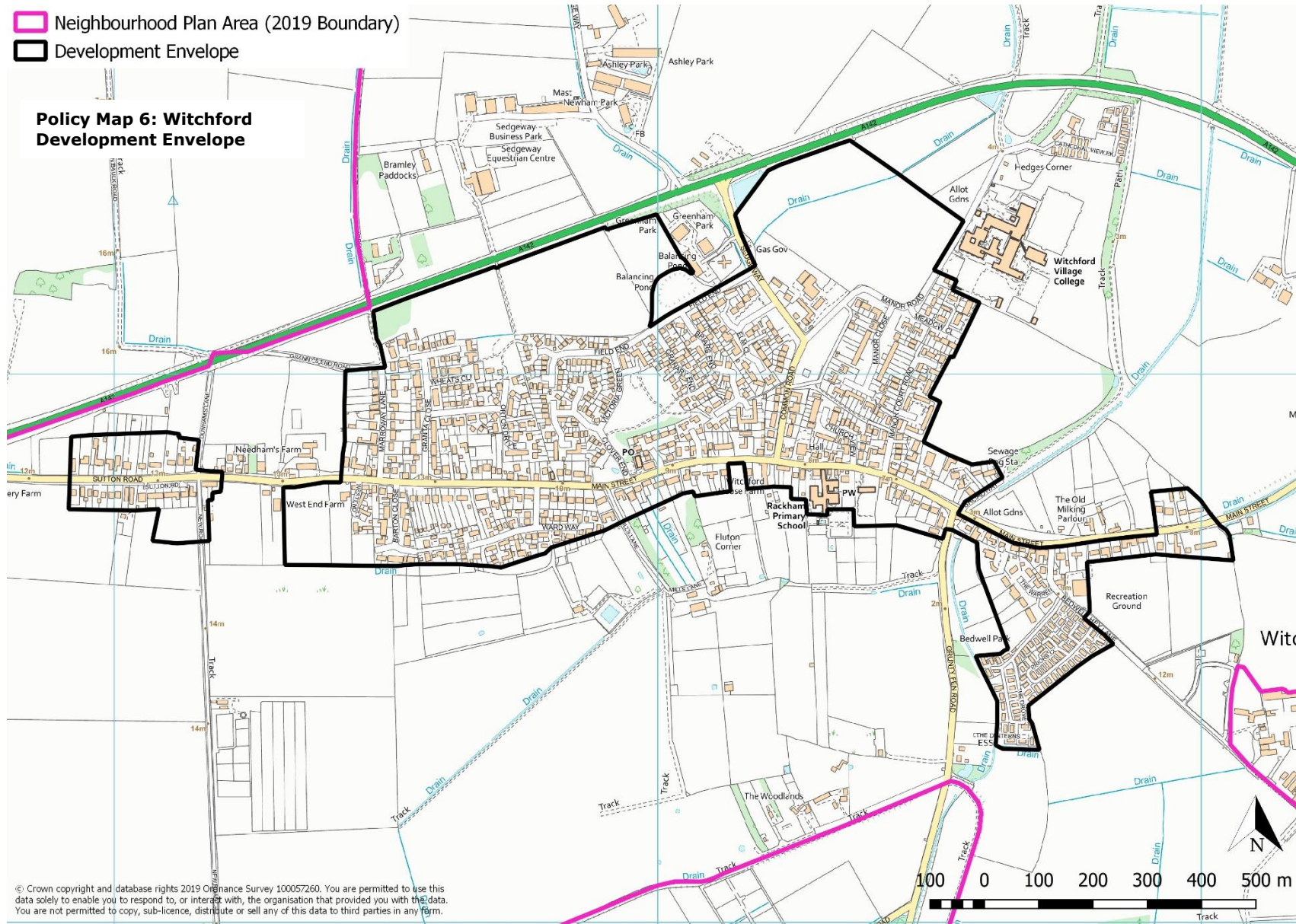
³ A 5-year land supply is a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of housing against a housing requirement set out in an adopted Local Plan, or against a local housing need

two years and the site allocation policies in this Plan will ensure development comes forward according to key principles established in this neighbourhood plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan assumes that from 2018 through to 2031 there will be a delivery of a minimum of 330 homes in Witchford Village. In 2011, Witchford had 960 homes (Census 2011). Since then there have been 24 net dwelling completions. Growth of 330 homes therefore represents a 33% increase during the period 2018 to 2031. These will be delivered in line with the site allocations in this plan. In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan allows for further dwellings to be delivered via appropriate policy compliant infill within the Witchford development envelope.

-  Neighbourhood Plan Area (2019 Boundary)
-  Development Envelope

Policy Map 6: Witchford Development Envelope



5.2 Landscape and character policies

The objective for landscape protection within the parish in the Plan period is:

'To maintain the rural fenland character of Witchford. To protect the open space between Witchford and Ely, so that the village remains a distinct and separate community'.

Policy WNP LC 1 – Landscape and Settlement Character

All development proposals shall be sensitive to the distinctive landscape and settlement character, as described in the Witchford Landscape Appraisal.

Specifically:

- locations defined on Map 8 where the landscape extends into the village shall be protected from development where this would result in undermining a strong connection between settlement and countryside;
- development proposals shall respect and not adversely impact upon the key views from the edge of Witchford village out into the countryside and the views from the countryside into the Witchford village – as identified on Map 8;
- Witchford's historic core and its valued setting shall be conserved and where possible enhanced;
- Witchford shall remain an island settlement; the northern slopes and the low-lying landscapes which surround Witchford shall remain open; and
- the sense of arrival and distinctiveness at existing settlement gateways shall remain intact or be strengthened.

Where potential impacts on Witchford's distinctive landscape and settlement character are identified, applicants will be expected to demonstrate accordance with these principles through the provision of an assessment of landscape and visual impacts (proportionate to the scheme proposed) and drawing, in this process, on guidance and recommendations in the Witchford Landscape Appraisal.

5.2.1 Intent

To ensure that the character of Witchford's setting and landscape is protected or enhanced through: the protection of key views, keeping the land to the south of Witchford's historic core open, retaining or reinforcing the four identified areas of landscape which currently penetrate into the settlement, and avoiding development which undermines Witchford's distinctive island settlement character.

5.2.2 Policy context and reasoned justification

The National Planning Policy Framework 2018 states that planning policies and decisions should be *"sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting..(para 127)*. It also states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, inter alia, *"protecting and enhancing valued landscapes..."*

Policy WNP – LC 1 complements the national and local policy context by providing locally specific detail and criteria to guide development. The policy is underpinned by the documentary evidence included in Appendix 1 and particularly by the evidence set out in the Witchford Landscape Appraisal (WLA) adopted by the Parish Council in January 2019. The WLA provides an understanding of the sensitivity and capacity of the Parish to accommodate new growth; it identifies special qualities to be conserved and enhanced; and includes a detailed settlement and landscape analysis which is useful in informing an appropriate approach to take in the Neighbourhood Plan.

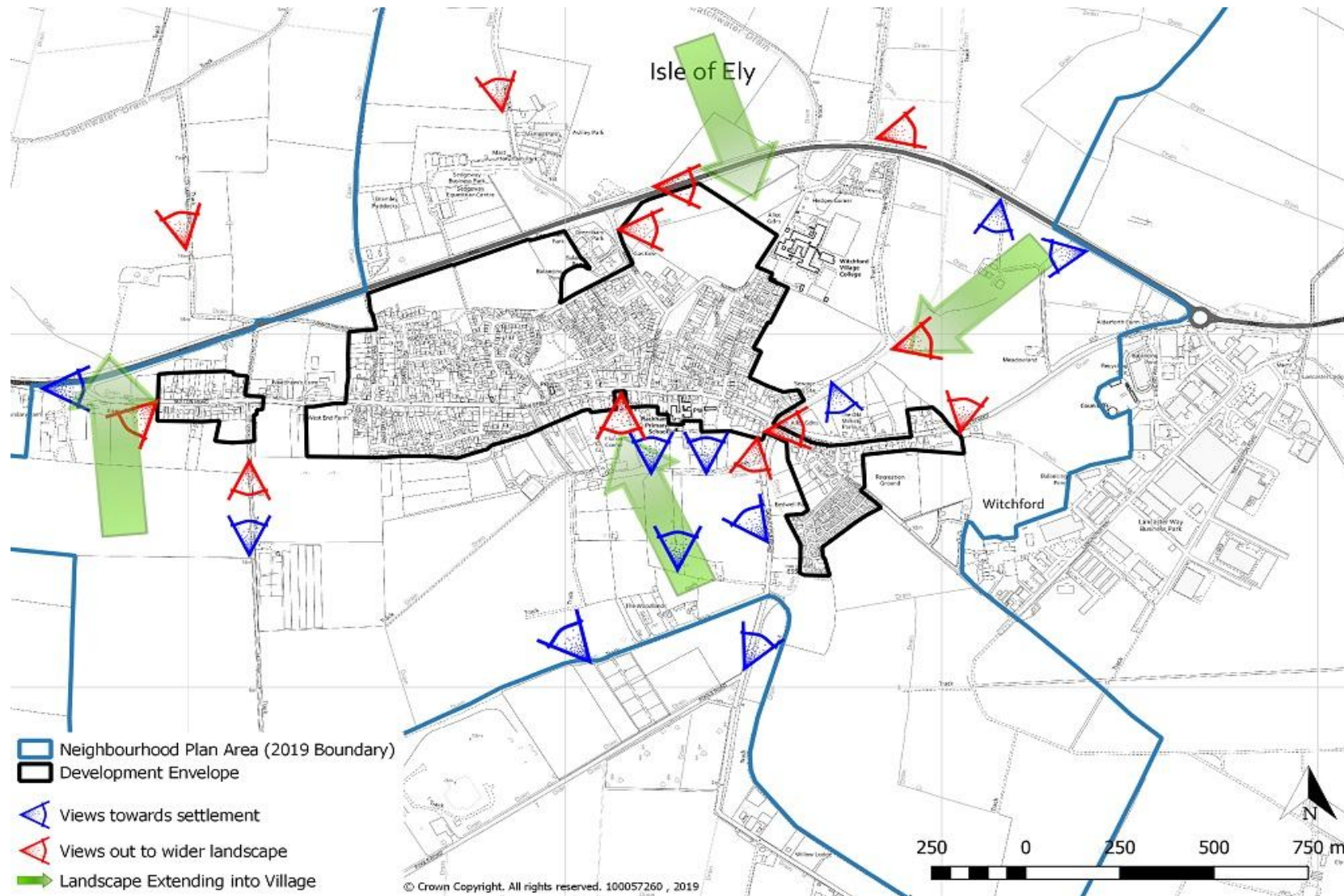
Witchford parish falls within two landscape types identified in the East of England Landscape Typology; Lowland Village Farmland and Planned Peat Fen. The WLA breaks these down further and identifies seven local landscape areas specific to the parish. These are:

- Grunty Fen – lies to the south of the village and predominantly outside the neighbourhood plan area with small section in the north extending into the plan area.
- West Fen – lies to the north of the village with half of the area extending beyond the neighbourhood plan area.
- Common Side – includes the highest land in Witchford and provides the northern setting to the village.
- Witchford Southern Slopes – forms the south facing slopes to the south of the village.
- Witchford Historic Core and Strip Pastures – include the historic or core of the built-up environment and the areas immediately south on the south facing slopes
- Sandpit Drove Valley – lies to the northeast of the historic core of the village and is associated with a small valley between Witchford island and the main island of Ely.
- Island of Ely – lies to the east of Witchford and extends outside of the neighbourhood plan area to the rising land of the wider Isle of Ely.

The WLA includes a map showing the full extent of these local landscape areas, together with a detailed assessment of the areas. Map 7 focuses in on the areas in and around the village.



Policy Map 8: Views and Landscape extending into the village



Landscape areas extending into the village-

The four areas of landscape extending into the village shown on Map 8 are particularly valuable for helping to reinforce the small scale, rural character and location of the village and its historic origins as an agricultural settlement.

Views

The protection of key views in and around the parish will help maintain a sense of place and local distinctiveness during the plan period. The position of the village on the south facing slopes means that from the settlement views outwards are primarily to the south, with the exception of those around Sandpit Drove. Similarly views towards the settlement from the wider landscape are mainly from the south (including from the proposed Local Green Space south of Main Street – see separate Local Green Space Report for detailed discussion) or from the A142. The descriptions of the views given below are extracts from the Witchford Landscape Appraisal:

Views from the edge of the village looking south: These views are from elevated positions looking out across the wider fen landscape to the south. Views are often vistas from within the built form or from public rights of way which run close to the existing urban edge. These views reinforce the rural context and origins of the settlement and connect it to the fen landscape which forms its wider setting. Close to the historic core these views may be intermittent and channelled by vegetation due to the smaller scale field enclosure pattern which is typical of the immediate setting of the village. In contrast views from the settlement edge in the west are more open giving rise to wider panoramas.

Views from the edge of the village looking north and east: These views occur from the junction of the A142 and Sutton Road and are towards the rising land and highest point of the island on which Witchford sits (Little Hill). In these views the rising land forms an important landscape backdrop to the village. Further east the views from the A142 are in a northeasterly direction towards Ely Cathedral and the rising slopes of the main Isle of Ely. These views are memorable and noted as quintessential views and approaches to Ely. Beyond the A142 there are views from the north facing slopes looking northwards towards West Fen and Coveney.

Views towards the village from the south: From the wider landscape there are views back to the village from Grunty Fen Road and Pools Road as well as from public rights of way e.g. New Road (track). These views are from areas of lower elevation. The built edge is not prominent in these views, although housing along Ward Way is most visually prominent due to its elevated position on the edge of sloping land and use of white render. Elsewhere development is either set back away from the main slopes or filtered from view due to intervening vegetation.

Views towards the village from the north: There are no views of the village from the north and from West Fen. This is because the village is located on the south facing slopes to the south of the A142. There are however wide-ranging views of Sedgeway Business Park and Ashley Park. Whilst the single-storey buildings are not especially noticeable taller buildings stand out and appear large in scale. Their light colour material also increases visibility.

Witchford's historic core and setting

Here, buildings are predominantly historic, five of which are Grade II listed and one Grade II* listed (St Andrew's Church seen clearly from the south in Fig. 4). Settlement character here is linear but one plot deep (unlike the area to the west which comprises cul-de-sac

development) and comprises terraces of cottages fronting directly onto the pavement with no front garden plot, and large-scale housing or former farm houses set within larger plots. The WLA describes the historic core as having a “*distinctive sinuous character descending down the hill towards the former ford crossing before rising again onto the Witchford island.*” The WLA also states:

“To the south the land slopes down from Main Street to the wider fen landscape forming the southern slopes of the island on which the village sits. The enclosure pattern on these slopes reflects the small-scale strip field enclosures associated with the rear of properties. These enclosures do not survive elsewhere in the setting of the village and in the context of the Parish are rare. They are of historical interest forming a distinctive setting to the settlement and reinforce the distinction between the character of the island and wider fen landscape.”

Due to the historic interest of the small-scale strip field enclosures associated with the rear of properties on Main Street, it is important that they are retained and the Parish Council will work with landowners to encourage this. The Policy WNP LC1 – Landscape and Settlement Character specifies the setting of the historic core to be conserved and, where possible, enhanced. The Neighbourhood Plan as a whole directs development away from this area since it lies outside the development envelope and is on low lying land outside the village.

There is an important gap within the built-up boundary which affords highly valued views from Main Street southwards towards the wider fen across a paddock known as ‘the Horsefield’.

This landscape character area is identified in the WLA as highly sensitive to new development:

“Development in this area is likely to alter the relationship between the historic core of the village and its landscape setting and the small scale linear pastures which are a key characteristic immediately adjacent to the settlement edge. These qualities are tangible and easily appreciated through views from Main Street across The Horsefield and also from the public rights of way to the south of the village.”



Fig 4. View of St Andrew's Church (part of Witchford's historic core) from Edna's Wood in the south, Photo taken December 2018

Witchford's character as an island settlement

The WLA describes Witchford village as unusual for two reasons. Firstly, its proximity to Ely and secondly, its historic focus on a shallow valley which separates the wider Isle of Ely from the lower, smaller island on which the village sits. The report emphasises the importance of retaining Witchford as an island settlement and avoiding development to the north, in the Sandpit Drove Valley landscape character area or on the lower slopes as key to keeping or reinforcing local character.

5.3 Witchford Area of Separation

WNP LC 2 –Witchford Area of Separation

Development will be directed in a way that respects and retains the open and undeveloped nature of the distinctive valley topography that separates Witchford village from Lancaster Way Business Park and separates Witchford village from Ely.

Development proposals may only be supported in the Witchford Area of Separation (as shown on Map 9) where it can be demonstrated that proposals:

- Would not reduce the physical and / or visual separation between Witchford village and Lancaster Way Business Park;
- Would not reduce the physical and / or visual separation Witchford village and Ely; and
- Would maintain or enhance the enjoyment of the Public Rights of Way network and links to the countryside.

To demonstrate the visual impact of a proposal applicants will be required to provide a landscape and visual impact appraisal.

5.3.1 To maintain this important open rural landscape between Ely and Witchford and to provide a visual and physical separation between Lancaster Way Business Park and Witchford village and Ely and Witchford village.

5.3.2 Context and reasoned justification

Keeping Witchford's identity separate from the settlement of Ely and separate from the Lancaster Way Business Park is an essential part of maintaining sense of place and rural character in Witchford. This is a priority articulated clearly by the residents during the preparation of the neighbourhood plan.

Despite the proximity of Witchford village to the neighbouring city of Ely and the Lancaster Way Business Park and despite the fact the A142 creates a link between the village with these two destinations, Witchford village has an identity distinctly separate to that of the larger settlement of Ely. The gateway into the historic core of Witchford is on Ely Road and the A142 does not feel part of the village.

The Witchford Area of Separation covers two local landscape character areas (see Maps 2 and 7 to see the locations of the local landscape character areas). It includes part of the Sandpit Drove Valley landscape character area where this falls to the east of Sandpit Drove and between the A142 and Main Street/Ely Road. It also includes parts of the Island of Ely local landscape character area where this abuts the Lancaster Way Business Park and reaches west towards the Witchford Recreation Ground on Bedwell Hey Lane. This local landscape character area also includes a section of land on the north side of Main Street (the higher parts of land on this side of the road).



Fig. 5 Gateway to Witchford village on Ely Road, photo taken February 2019

The defined Area of Separation reinforces sense of place and separate rural identity in Witchford in three key ways:

1. Providing a physical and visual gap between the urbanised area around Lancaster Way Roundabout and Witchford village.

2. Providing a strong rural and characterful setting to the eastern edge of the village along Sandpit Drove Local Green space
3. Reinforcing Witchford's status as an island settlement as distinct from the island settlement of Ely.

1. Providing a physical and visual gap between the urbanised area around Lancaster Way Roundabout and Witchford village

The Witchford Parish boundary starts at the western side of the Lancaster Way Roundabout. This roundabout is busy at most times of the day. It provides access to the very visible collection of buildings and industrial estate which makes up the Lancaster Way Business Park and the Witchford Recycling Centre. When travelling west from Ely, the second exit of the roundabout is Ely Road/Main Street. The eastern gateway to the village of Witchford is situated further down along this road. The third and last exit is the continuation of the very busy A142 towards Chatteris.

Between the Lancaster Way Roundabout and Witchford village there is an important gap of open countryside. This gap is located in two distinct areas. One is the triangle of land created by the A142, Ely Road/Main Street and Sandpit Drove and the second is the area of open countryside between Lancaster Way Business Park and the village edge at Witchford Recreation Ground.

The first of these is readily and visually perceived from the point of the Lancaster Way Roundabout. Here there is an open view towards the west and looking downwards and west into the settlement edge of Witchford across agricultural fields and horse paddocks. Were this gap not here, Witchford would, at this point, be perceived as continuation of the urbanised feel at Lancaster Way Business Park. The higher level ground at Lancaster Way Roundabout means that this area of open land is particularly visible. For example, the tall buildings of Witchford Village College can be seen clearly from a point further east (on higher level ground towards Ely) when looking west across to Witchford.

The physical gap of open countryside between Lancaster Way Roundabout and Witchford village is also a key contributor to sense of place and rural character when travelling from the roundabout towards the eastern village gateway along Ely Road/Main Street. If travelling by car, a rural setting is provided by the established hedgerows but also the views, provided by gaps in the hedgerows of the open landscape (comprising horse paddocks and agricultural fields) towards the north. If travelling by foot or bike along the segregated footpath and cycle way, the perception of a rural backdrop and separation between the village ahead and the urban feel of both the City of Ely and the Lancaster Way Business Park behind is stronger due to the increased opportunities for views through the trees into the countryside but also due to the contrast in levels of traffic-generated noise between Lancaster Way Roundabout and the village gateway. By the time the village gateway is reached, the traffic from the A142 is considerably quieter and the traffic along Main Street reduces its speed considerably to meet the 30mph speed limit. Along the section of Main Street which falls within the Island of Ely local landscape character area (where the land is higher), there are no views and instead the high verges of trees and hedgerows provide enclosure before opening up again at the point of the village gateway.



Fig. 6: View from Lancaster Way Roundabout looking west and downwards towards Witchford. The A142 can be seen on the right and the tall structures of Witchford Village College on the horizon.

To the south of Ely Road/Main Street the Island of Ely local landscape character area is on higher ground but the gap of open land between the Waste Recycling Centre and the village gateway is nevertheless important to reinforcing the sense of arrival at the village edge. From the village edge at Witchford Recreation Ground (off Bedwell Hey Lane), both the Witchford Recycling Centre and Lancaster Way Business Park are visible in the distance beyond the trees (perhaps made more visible due to the fact they are located on higher level ground than the Recreation Ground). The area of open land defined here is essential in preventing further erosion in the sense of separateness between Witchford Village and Lancaster Way Business Park.

2. Providing a strong rural and characterful setting to the eastern edge of the village along Sandpit Drove Local Green space

The valley landscape in the Sandpit Drove local landscape character area provides a strong rural and characterful setting to the Sandpit Drove Local Green Space and the Broadway Allotments Local Green Space. These are popular and well managed open spaces providing visual, biodiversity and recreational value and interest. The Sandpit Drove Local Green Space is connected through safe paths along the southern perimeter of the A142 to other parts of the village including Witchford Village College and Manor Road allotments.

This rural setting to Witchford is experienced by users of the Local Green Space as well as people using the Broadway Allotments. But it is also perceived from the A142 (travelling east to west).

3. Reinforcing Witchford's status as an island settlement as distinct from the island settlement of Ely.

From various points along the Sandpit Drove Local Green Space there are impressive, long distance views, across an open valley landscape, of Ely Cathedral, identified in the Local Plan as quintessential views. These views provide a sense of intervisibility between the two settlements, reinforcing their long-standing identity as two distinct island settlements. The open valley landscape contributes considerably to the setting of these views.



Fig. 7: A long distance view from Sandpit Drove Local Green Space across the Sandpit Drove valley landscape character area towards Ely Cathedral. Vehicles travelling along the A142 can also be seen.

The sensitivities of the valley landscape in this part of the plan area are described in more detail in the WLA – see assessment for both Sandpit Drove Valley local landscape character area and Isle of Ely local landscape character area.

The results of the Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 demonstrated that there is overwhelming support among Witchford residents for retaining the physical separation of the village from Ely, as follows:

Question	Strongly agree %	Slightly agree %
The land between Witchford, the bypass and Lancaster Way business park should remain free from development	68.87	15.93

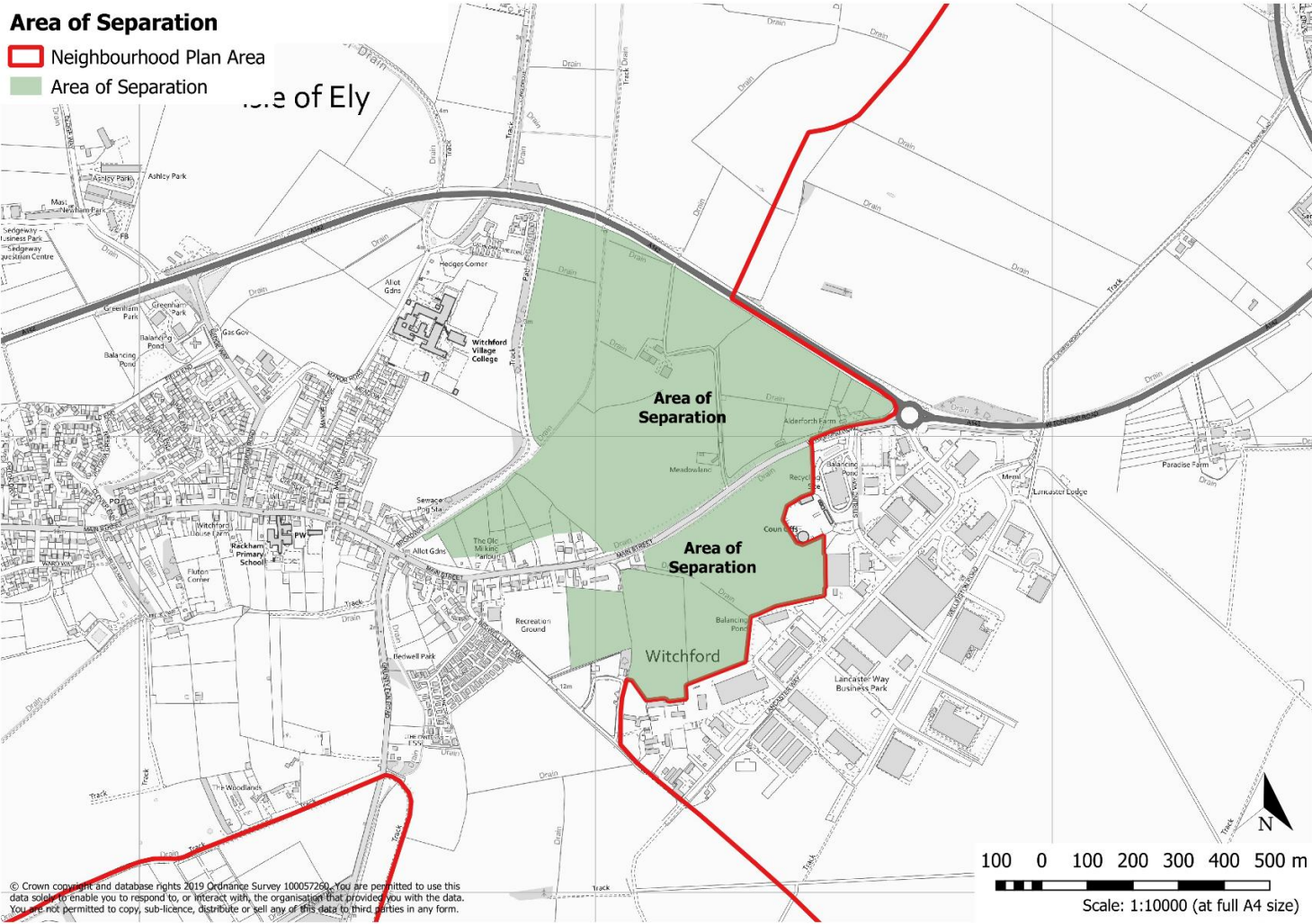
Comments from questionnaire respondents also illustrate the support for retaining Witchford's separation and distinctiveness:

'Particularly unhappy with proposal to develop between Witchford, the bypass and Lancaster Way'

'Witchford is a rural village and residents in the village on the whole want to keep it this way and not an extension of Ely making it built up'

'Keep the village as a village and not a suburb of Ely'

'Don't turn it into Ely overspill'



Policy Map 9: Witchford Area of Separation

5.4 Green infrastructure

The objective for green infrastructure within the parish in the Plan period is:

'To identify, protect and enhance the green infrastructure, open spaces and valued views of Witchford and the opportunities to enjoy the Witchford countryside'.

Policy WNP GI1 – Public Rights of Way

Development proposals that will enhance or extend an existing public right of way or that will deliver a new public right of way in a suitable location will be viewed favourably.

Development proposals shall maintain or enhance the amenity value of a public right of way.

5.4.1 Intent

To maintain the amenity value of the existing network of public rights of way in the parish and to seek improvements to this network.

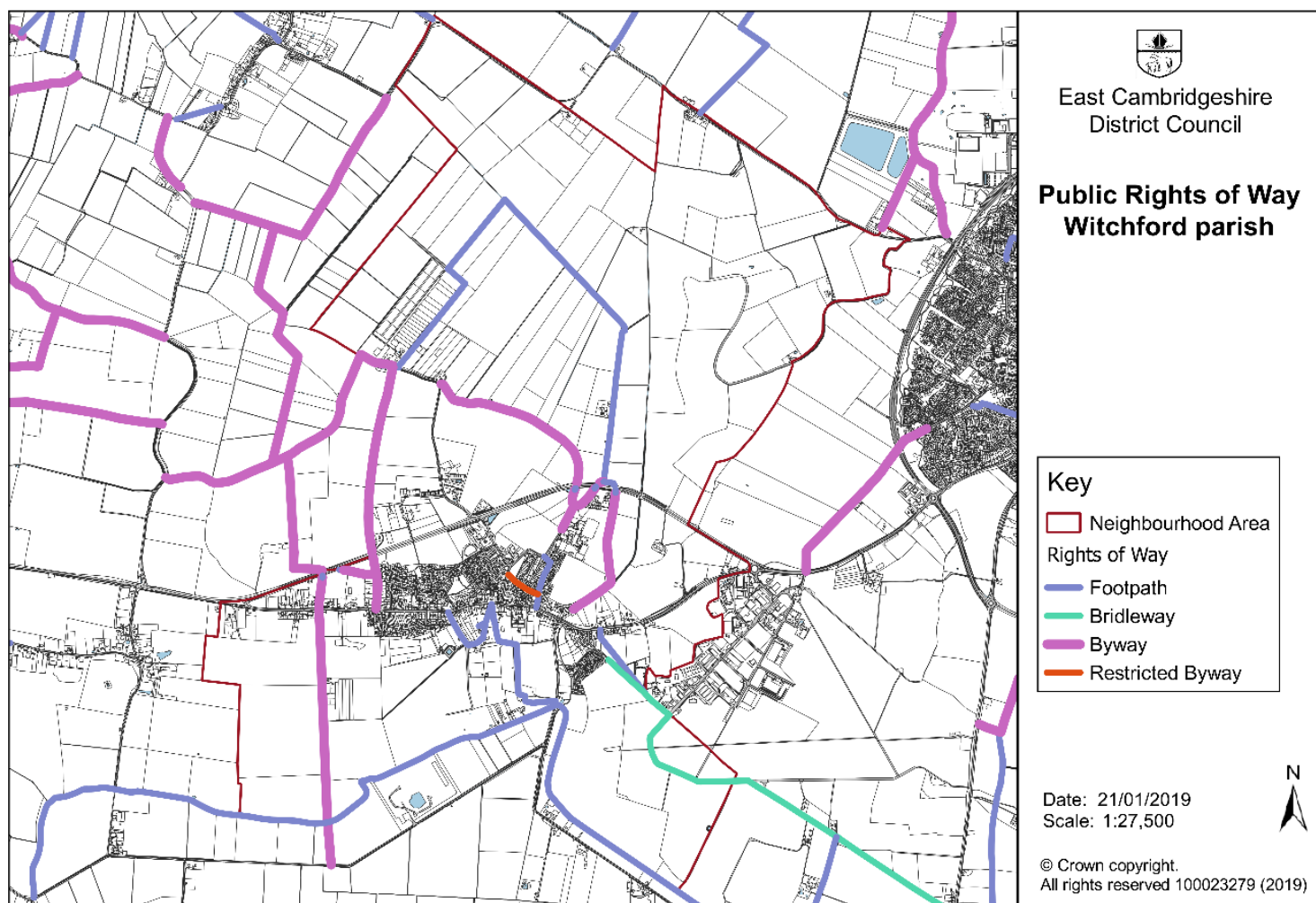
5.4.2 Policy Context and Justification

The network of public rights of way in the parish as shown on Policy Map 10 is highly valued, offering opportunities for outdoor recreation for ramblers, dog walkers, horseriders, cyclists and those simply wishing to get around by foot. The retention of this network is essential for the purpose of maintaining residential amenity. Public footpaths are for pedestrians only, public bridleways for pedestrians, horseriders and cyclists, restricted byways for pedestrians, horseriders, cyclists and user of non-mechanically propelled vehicles and byways open to all traffic for all classes of user.

The amenity value of a public right of way will be considered to be impacted adversely if currently valued views (see Policy Map 8) are obstructed, there is loss of open spaces which contribute to the setting and enjoyment of public rights of way or there is loss or damage to hedgerows, trees and vegetation which provide amenity value through attracting wildlife. Opportunities will be sought for the visual enhancement of the public right of way around the perimeter of the former airfield as identified in the Witchford Landscape Appraisal.

The results of the Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 demonstrated that there is overwhelming support among Witchford residents for the protection of the rural feel of public rights of way, as follows:

Question	Strongly agree %	Slightly agree%
Paths and open green spaces in and around the village should keep their rural character	91.40	6.14



Policy Map 10: Public Rights of Way

Policy WNP – GI2 Local Green Space

The following sites as shown on Map 11 are designated as Local Green Spaces

- Sandpit Drove
- Old Scenes Drove
- Long Meadow
- Edna's Wood
- Fairchild Wood
- Old Recreation Ground and Community Orchard
- Victoria Green
- Millennium Wood
- Manor Road allotments
- The Common, Common Road
- Public Open Space between Orton Drive & Wheats Close
- Broadway allotments
- The 'Horsefield'

Development on these sites will not be acceptable other than in very special circumstances in line with national policy, or where it will enhance the function of the space (e.g. play equipment on Victoria Green) without compromising the primary function of the space as a Local Green Space.

5.4.3 Intent

To recognise the value of these sites to the local community by giving them Local Green Space protection

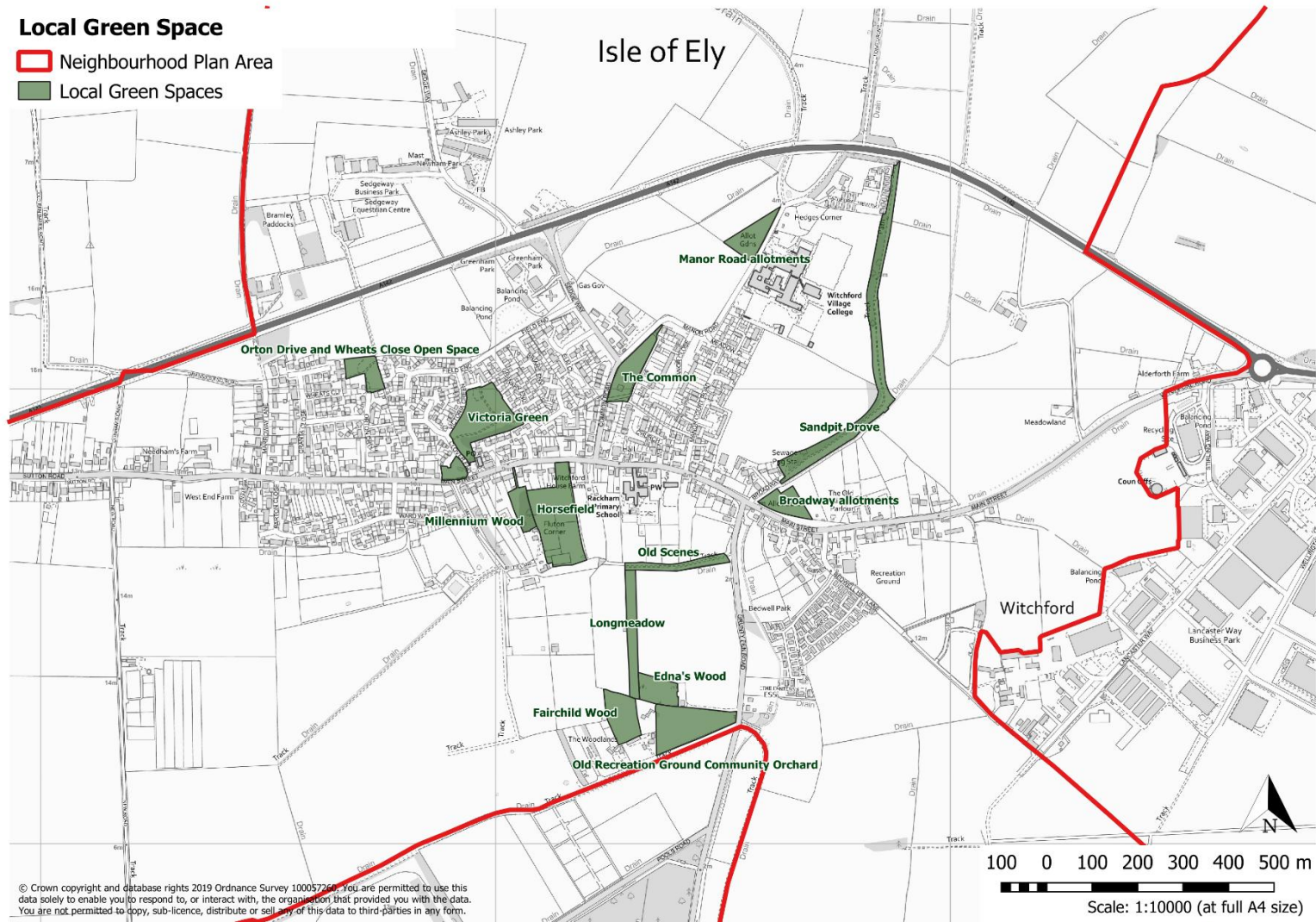
5.4.4 Context and reasoned justification

The criteria for Local Green Space designation are set out in paragraph 100 of the NPPF. This states that Local Green Space should be:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

This policy is underpinned by the documentary evidence included in Appendix 1 and in particular by the Witchford Local Green Spaces Report (May 2019).

The Witchford Local Green Spaces Report (May 2019) contains a detailed assessment of the proposed Local Green Spaces against the NPPF criteria and a full justification for their designation.



Policy Map 11: Local Green Space

Policy WNP – GI3 Development and Biodiversity

Development should avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity by creating, restoring and enhancing habitats for the benefit of species. In doing so, applicants must seek to retain and where possible enhance the network of species and habitats currently present in the parish.

Development proposals are supported where they enhance biodiversity in the parish through designing in green infrastructure measures as part of the design and layout of a scheme. Such measures include:

- Trees, hedgerows, water and other habitats integrated into the development;
- Wildflower verges along roads and formal open spaces;
- Lighting designed to avoid disturbing wildlife;
- Bat roosts and bird boxes;
- Features and corridors to help invertebrates, reptiles, hedgehogs and other mammals.

Development proposals should also include measures to decrease flood risk that are in accordance with Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) principles and which will enhance biodiversity. Such measures include:

- Wildlife-friendly green roofs and walls;
- Permeable driveways;
- Swales and rain gardens enhancing landscape, connectivity and biodiversity; and
- Attenuation ponds suitable for wetland wildlife.

5.4.5 Intent

To complement the policy approach taken in the Local Plan through policy ENV 7: Biodiversity and geology. This policy is intended to complement policy H3 Housing Design.

5.4.6 Context and justification

This policy is underpinned by the documentary evidence included in Appendix 1.

A search using www.magic.gov.uk will reveal the presence of a wide range of birdlife present in the parish including a range of farmland birds, corn bunting, yellow wagtail, turtle dove, tree sparrow, lapwing and grey partridge. The parish is home to a number of local open spaces which are important wildlife habitats. This includes Sandpit Drove, the network of sites to the south of Main Street including Millennium Wood, Edna's Wood, Fairchild Wood, hedgerows (for example, along Long Meadow, Old Scenes Drove) and woodland (for example areas of deciduous woodland to the south of Main Street along Mills Lane). Further information is detailed in the Witchford Local Green Space Supporting Information document and the Witchford Green Spaces Log.

As development proposals come forward, it is appropriate to expect measures to be incorporated which help to maintain and enhance the tapestry of species and habitats in the parish. This could be through retaining or restoring hedgerows and ponds as well as through site drainage features that benefit biodiversity (green roofs and other elements of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)).

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the recommendations set out in The Wildlife Trusts' 2018 publication 'Homes for People and Wildlife'. The measures which new development proposals could incorporate as a means to enhancing biodiversity in the parish are

informed by the recommendations set out in that report. Applicants are also encouraged to refer to this.

The Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 demonstrated that there is overwhelming support among Witchford residents for measures to protect and enhance biodiversity, as follows:

Question	Strongly agree %	Slightly agree%
All new developments must demonstrate that they will maintain or improve wildlife habitats	81.08	14.99

5.5 Housing Policies

The objective for housing development within the parish in the Plan period is:

'To maintain a thriving community through the provision of housing to meet the range of needs of current and future residents of Witchford'.

Policy WNP H1 – Housing Mix

Residential development that contributes to meeting existing and future needs of the village will be supported. A mix in the size and tenure of housing will be required taking into account the needs of young people looking for smaller homes as well as the needs of older residents. Homes should be designed to be suitable for independent living and built to the accessible and adaptable dwellings (M4(2) standard).

5.5.1 Intent

New housing developments coming forward in the parish should be specifically aimed at meeting parish needs and include a range of housing types. This will help enable local people to stay in the parish at different stages of their lifetime.

It is particularly important that the stock of smaller homes is increased in the parish. The provision of housing choice will assist in ensuring a range of needs are met.

Provision of a mix of house sizes will establish successful new neighbourhoods with broad based communities. Provision of housing types for a range of occupiers will encourage activity at different times of the day (for example, retired people and younger families are more likely to enliven a place during the working day). The overconcentration of many larger homes or many smaller homes should therefore be avoided.

5.5.2 Context and reasoned justification

This policy is underpinned by the documentary evidence included in Appendix 1 and in particular by the Demographic and Socio-Economic report for the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan, which finds that Witchford's existing housing stock is limited in terms of choice and range. The housing is dominated by owner occupation and there is little rented property available whether affordable or market. The majority of the housing is detached or semi-detached albeit there are two mobile home parks that offer relatively low-cost accommodation.

Witchford's population has a distinctive age profile, with a high proportion of school age children, above average levels of people aged in their 40s and normal levels of those aged 50+. However, the proportion of people in their 20s is very low, about half the county average.

In general house prices are well above average for East Cambridgeshire and there is a particularly high premium for larger properties which can be explained through a high demand from families in this location. Whilst it is recognised there is a high market demand for larger homes in Witchford village, it is very important that new housing stock also includes smaller homes which can cater for the needs and demands of older members of the community as well as younger adults and younger families.

Evidence of demand for smaller homes and bungalows can be demonstrated from the results of a survey of Ely estate agents carried out in October 2018. Four estate agents responded to the survey (three both sales and lettings, one lettings only). The surveys demonstrate an excess of demand over supply in flats, bedsits, bungalows, detached, shared and affordable housing, and an excess of demand over supply for one and two bedroom properties, in both the sales and lettings sector. Quotes from the Platinum Properties Letting Agency survey response refer to this as a strong trend:

'We have seen demand increase massively over the last 10 years. We have a large number of migrant workers in this locality as well as younger households struggling with the affordability of purchasing'

'Demand for 2 and 3 bedroom homes continues to increase'

'I would suggest there is a shortage of retirement homes'

The Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 asked for detailed responses on housing demand, with the following results:

Type of homes needed	Strongly Agree %	Slightly Agree %
Social housing/housing association (rental)	20.5	37.22
Affordable housing (up to £250,000)	54.29	32.52
Shared ownership housing	23.13	47.19
Flats	9.03	29.91
Bungalows	17.55	52.35
Semi-detached	34.06	55.00
Sheltered	28.17	41.08
Detached	23.27	49.69
Residential/Nursing	30.82	47.48
Park homes	6.25	27.19
Bedsits	3.47	21.77

Comments from questionnaire respondents also illustrate the range of demand:

'More two beds bungalows to be built for downsizing to release 4 bed family homes'

'We have enough expensive detached houses in the village. We need a lot more affordable houses for young people to buy'

'Affordable homes and a variety of types of dwellings need to be built for our young people as well as older generations'

'The focus on housing has to be a complete mixture to meet the diverse needs of the population'

'Starter homes. 3 / 4 bed homes'

Policy WNP H2 Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites

Proposals for small scale affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites for people with a Witchford connection on the edge of the village are supported provided that:

- the proposed development, by virtue of their size, scale and type, will not exceed the identified local needs for affordable housing;
- the types of dwellings proposed meet the needs identified in Witchford as identified in an up to date housing needs survey;
- the homes are located within easy access to Witchford village centre,
- the affordable housing is provided in perpetuity; and
- no significant harm would be caused to the character of the village, its setting or the countryside.

5.5.3 Intent

To adopt a supportive approach to the delivery of additional rural exception sites within the parish where it can be demonstrated that the schemes will meet Witchford's specific needs.

5.5.4 Context and reasoned justification

The Demographic and Socio-Economic Review undertaken to inform this Neighbourhood Plan demonstrates clearly that house prices and rental costs for all property sizes in Witchford are challenging for low income families. The number of households with a Witchford connection on the district's housing register was 38 as at September 2019. This is likely to be an underestimate of the housing needs in the parish.

Some affordable housing units will be provided as part of the permitted and allocated sites in the parish. However, these will not be prioritised for households with a strong connection to the parish. If, however, Witchford's affordable housing need is not fully met through these schemes, it is important that the community take a positive approach towards rural exception sites - but only where it can be demonstrated that the scheme will meet Witchford-specific needs.

Paragraph 77 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs.

Adopted Local Plan policy HOU 4: Affordable Housing Exception Sites provides a district-wide policy approach towards rural exception sites. The policy allows for an element of open market housing (maximum 20%) to be provided as part of such schemes but only

where it is demonstrated through financial appraisal that the open market housing is essential to enable delivery of the site for primarily affordable housing.

It is not considered appropriate for market housing to come forward as part of rural exception schemes in Witchford and the Neighbourhood Plan supports the approach taken in the Local Plan, whereby any market housing must be justified through a robust financial appraisal that demonstrates the market housing as being essential to the overall viability of the scheme.

The Witchford Landscape Appraisal provides guidance regarding edge of settlement locations where there may be capacity for small scale schemes to come forward without causing harm to landscape character or setting of the village.

The Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 showed the following support for affordable housing:

Type of homes needed	Strongly Agree %	Slightly Agree %
Social housing/housing association (rental)	20.5	37.22
Affordable housing (up to £250,000)	54.29	32.52
Shared ownership housing	23.13	47.19

Access to affordable housing featured strongly in the feedback from community consultations throughout the Plan development period, and a report detailing this is included in Appendix 1 as part of the evidence underpinning this policy.

Policy WNP H3 Housing Design

All residential development schemes will be expected to achieve high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and building. Schemes shall complement and enhance local distinctiveness and character by retaining or enhancing the special qualities of Witchford and its setting (as described in the Witchford Landscape Appraisal).

All residential development shall contribute positively to the quality of Witchford as a place. Major development proposals will demonstrate how a scheme does this through a completed Building for Life 12 assessment.

Where affordable housing units are being provided as part of a larger market housing scheme or together with market housing, the affordable housing unit should be designed as integral to the scheme and be generally indistinguishable from open market housing.

5.5.5 Intent

To help build successful neighbourhoods which function well and integrate with the existing village. Planning applicants will be expected to refer to the Witchford Landscape Appraisal to understand the distinguishing qualities for Witchford village and its wider setting within the landscape. This policy is intended to complement policy GI3 Development and Biodiversity. This policy complements the more strategic approach taken in Local Plan policy ENV2 which states that *"Design which fails to have regard to*

local context including architectural traditions and does not take advantage of opportunities to preserve, enhance or enrich the character, appearance and quality of an area will not be acceptable and planning applications will be refused”.

5.5.6 Context and Reasoned Justification

It is clearly evident from the community consultation undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan that many residents are concerned about the scale of the planned housing growth in the village and the impact of the growth on the existing character of Witchford as well as access to amenities. The level of growth expected makes it particularly important that new schemes are well thought through in terms of design and delivery of high-quality places, to ensure a high level of residential amenity but also successful community cohesion over the plan period. It is very important that the design and layout of new development facilitates the creation of cohesive, safe and pleasant neighbourhoods where new occupants feel comfortable integrating with their immediate neighbourhood as well as the village as a whole. In order to achieve this, any affordable housing element of a scheme should be fully integrated and indistinguishable from the development as a whole.

The Witchford Landscape Appraisal (WLA) provides a useful analysis of existing character in both Witchford village and across the wider parish. Applicants will be expected to refer to this work in their own design process. The WLA identifies the following special qualities of Witchford and its setting which are relevant when considering the design and layout of residential development:

- Loose arrangement of dwellings to the west with breaks in the built form, gives rise to a rural character;
- Village edges are predominately indented and organic in character to the south;
- Remnant orchards within and on the margins of the settlement;
- Notable views out of the settlement from Main Street particularly to the south due to the drop in elevation towards Grunty Fen, reinforcing the location of the village and perceptions of a rural community;
- Key built and natural landmarks such as churches/cathedral and fen islands reinforce sense of place and orientation within the wider landscape

The landscape and settlement analysis included in the WLA notes some changes which have resulted in minor loss to the distinctive qualities of the village and identifies changes to avoid. The changes that are relevant when considering the design and layout of residential development are listed below.

Avoid:

- the location of new housing on the southern edge of the village which is visible from surrounding lower land;
- the use of inappropriate building materials and sub-urban building forms;
- high density and abrupt urban edges;
- alterations to the existing settlement gateways which weaken sense of arrival and distinctiveness even if new development is proposed;
- loss of key views to surrounding landmarks;
- loss of visual and physical connectivity between the village and wider landscape
- loss of hedgerows and remnant orchards; and
- loss of meadows/grasslands and ponds.

The WLA also includes the following development guidelines (on page 37) which are applicable when new development is being considered:

- Avoid cul-de-sac developments which do not reflect lane hierarchy and form of the settlement;
- Seek always to ensure permeability through new housing areas, connecting any new development into the heart of the existing settlement;
- Avoid extending gateways into the wider landscape where new development is proposed - avoid the development of roundabouts at the junction of the settlement with major roads which are uncharacteristic and undermine the rural 'village' character of the settlement;
- Avoid cumulative effects of small housing schemes which collectively, over time, extend the urban edge and relate poorly to one another – seek wider masterplans and visions for broader areas linking in aspirations for open space, reinforcement of rural landscape setting, views and vistas, public rights of way/circular countryside walks and recreation;
- Avoid infill development which undermines the rural character of the village or connectivity to the wider landscape setting and which affects key sequential views along Main Street and lanes.

Building for Life 12 is a government endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. The scheme includes twelve criteria that new residential schemes can be assessed against. These are grouped under three headings as follows:

Integrating into the neighbourhood

1. Connections
2. Facilities and Services
3. Public Transport
4. Meeting local housing requirements

Creating a place

5. Character
6. Working with the site and its context
7. Creating well defined streets and spaces
8. Easy to find your way around

Street and home

9. Streets for all
10. Car parking
11. Public and private spaces
12. External storage and amenity space

Further information on Building for Life 12 can be found at www.designcouncil.org.uk

This Neighbourhood Plan also supports The Wildlife Trusts' 'A New Way to Build' approach as detailed in The Wildlife Trusts' paper '*Housing for People and Wildlife*' January 2018 included in Appendix 1.

In this policy, 'major development schemes' includes all schemes of ten or more dwellings.

5.6 Site Specific Allocations

Site Allocation WNP WFDH1

Land is allocated at north of Field End for the development of up to 168 homes. The following site-specific considerations and requirements apply to this site:

- The retention of landscape buffer between the village edge and the A142 as a way of maintaining separation.
- An identified need for streetscape improvements along Field End through tree planting.
- A requirement to set aside land for the delivery of a west-east pedestrian and cycle spine route from Marroway Lane to Common Road through the southern part of the site.
- Incorporation of a surface water drainage scheme for the site based on sustainable drainage principles and which delivers biodiversity benefits.
- Delivery of this section of the west east pedestrian and cycle spine route from Common Road through to Witchford Village College.

5.6.1 Intent

There are two planning consents applicable to this site. Development is consented for up to 128 new homes in the eastern part of the site. The western part of the site has outline planning consent for the development of 40 new homes. As at July 2019, the site in the eastern part of this site is under construction.

This site allocation is included in the plan to ensure important principles for the development are established and in place ready for the detailed consent application and, in the event of the current permissions expiring, in place ready for future applications. In this particular case, where the eastern part of the site is now under construction, it is important to ensure the delivery of the western part of the site is designed as an integral and logical part of the new neighbourhood.

5.6.2 Context and reasoned justification

A key aspiration of the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan is the creation of a west-east segregated pedestrian and cycle spine route through the north side of the village, from Sutton Road through to Witchford Village College but potentially extending to the Lancaster Way cyclepath. The scheme will maximise travel mode choices for residents wishing to access neighbouring residential areas, Witchford Village College and cycle routes towards Ely. Full details of the route are included in the Witchford Pedestrian and Cycle Spine Route document, adopted as policy by Witchford Parish Council in January 2019.

The WLA recommends improvements in the streetscape along Field End through new tree planting.

This allocated site is located in the Common Side Local Landscape Character Area, as described in the WLA. The WLA advises that new development should not sit close to the A142 and that an open landscape buffer should remain between the A142 and the village edge. In this particular location, the existing gap between the A142 and the village edge is considered to be an important part of how Witchford retains its separate village identity. The WLA states that it is important that an indented village edge and sense of separation from the A142 is retained.

Site Allocation WNP WFDH2

Land is allocated at Common Road for the development of up to 120 homes. The following site-specific considerations and requirements apply to this site:

- The retention of a landscape buffer between the village edge and the A142 as a way of maintaining separation.
- Low lying land to the north of the site including the ditches to be used for land drainage and maximise potential of landscape value through sensitively designed land drainage scheme.
- Setting aside land for a west east pedestrian and cycle spine route from Common Road through to Witchford Village College.
- Incorporation of a surface water drainage scheme for the site based on sustainable drainage principles and which delivers biodiversity benefits.
- Delivery of this section of the west east pedestrian and cycle spine route from Common Road through to Witchford Village College.

5.6.3 Intent

This site is subject to an application for outline planning consent. This site allocation is included in the plan to ensure important principles for the development are established and in place ready for detailed consent application and, in the event of the current permission expiring, in place ready for future decision making.

5.6.4 Context and reasoned justification

A key aspiration of the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan is the creation of a west-east segregated pedestrian and cycle spine route through the north side of the village, from Sutton Road through to Witchford Village College but potentially extending to the Lancaster Way cyclepath. The scheme will maximise travel mode choices for residents wishing to access neighbouring residential areas, Witchford Village College and cycle routes towards Ely. Full details of the route are included in the Witchford Pedestrian and Cycle Spine Route document, adopted as policy by Witchford Parish Council in January 2019.

This allocated site is located in the Common Side Local Landscape Character Area, as described in the WLA. The WLA advises that new development should not sit close to the A142 and that an open landscape buffer should remain between the A142 and the village edge. In this particular location, the existing gap between the A142 and the village edge is considered to be an important part of how Witchford retains its separate village identity. The WLA states that it is important that an indented village edge and sense of separation from the A142 is retained.

Site Allocation WNP WFDH3

Land is allocated at south of Main Street for the development of up to 46 new dwellings. The following site-specific considerations and requirements apply to this site:

- Preparation and submission of a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment to inform a carefully designed scheme sensitive to its settlement edge location.
- Maintaining a vegetated high quality streetscape along Main Street by retaining and protecting existing mature trees on the northern boundary to site (along Main Street).
- Retaining existing features of visual and biodiversity value including hedgerows.
- Retaining and reinforcing planting and hedgerows along the southern, western and eastern boundaries of the site to allow the scheme to interface well with immediate and wider landscape setting.
- Incorporation of a surface water drainage scheme for the site based on sustainable drainage principles and which delivers biodiversity benefit.
- Retention and reinforcement of landscaping and planting on the southern boundary to allow the scheme to integrate well with wider landscape.

5.6.5 Intent

There is an outline planning consent for 46 dwellings on this site, including public open space and landscaping. Construction has not started. This site allocation is included in the plan to ensure important principles for the development are established and in place should the current planning permission expire.

5.6.6 Context and reasoned justification

The site falls within local landscape character area Witchford Southern Slopes in the Witchford Landscape Appraisal. Here, the WLA states "*Beyond the settlement edge to the south the land forms a plateau of elevated land which then drops gently towards the fen beyond the 10m contour*". For the most part, development is set back from the slopes and therefore not visible from the wider countryside to the south. However, the WLA identifies a risk that new housing development in this area could give rise to a more visually evident urban edge when viewed from the south.

This particular site includes some key landscape features that, if retained, will succeed in containing the site and help any scheme integrate gently in the wider landscape. This includes a clear vegetated boundary along the southern eastern and western perimeters of the site. Within the site, there are also existing hedgerows functioning as characteristic field boundaries and providing biodiversity value.

Along Main Street, this site contains some mature trees currently protected through tree preservation orders due to their important visual contribution in the streetscape.

The Witchford Landscape Appraisal identifies valued views from this site into the wider landscape to the south. These views will most likely be impacted adversely by development at this location and from this perspective there is a tension between this site allocation and the recommendations of the WLA. The principle of development at this site however has already been established through the granting of permission on this site. The Neighbourhood Plan cannot change this but it can seek to shape future applications at this site.

5.7 Infrastructure Policies

The objective for infrastructure development within the parish in the Plan period is:

‘To encourage and promote the provision of sufficient infrastructure, amenities and services to allow Witchford to retain its character as a self-sustaining, thriving community’.

Policy WNP IC1 - Witchford Infrastructure and Community Facilities

Provision of new and improved infrastructure in the plan area should be informed by the following two overriding infrastructure priorities identified by the community:

- Improving crossing facilities at A10 to provide greater connectivity between Witchford and Ely
- Traffic management to reduce congestion and deter A142 traffic from using the village as a ‘rat run’

All development proposals in the plan area should consider whether it is appropriate and necessary to contribute towards these items.

5.7.1 Intent

This policy is intended to complement Local Plan Policy GROWTH 3: Infrastructure Priorities. This policy states that “*Development proposals will be expected to provide or contribute towards the cost of providing infrastructure and community facilities made necessary by the development, where this is not provided through the Community Infrastructure Levy. This will be through on or off site provision or through financial payments, and secured via planning conditions or planning obligations (Section 106 agreements)*”. Policy GROWTH 3 is complemented by a vision for Witchford as set out in section 8 of the Local Plan.

Through this Neighbourhood Plan, the Witchford community have identified improvements to crossing facilities at the A10 from Witchford into Ely, alongside the need to invest in traffic management measures which will reduce overall congestion, as a higher priority over other measures.

It is not the intention of this policy to undermine delivery of necessary on-site infrastructure needs that are triggered by a particular scheme, such as on-site play and open space provision. However, where schemes are found to have impacts on village traffic congestion (for example by virtue of their size or occupier type) or where schemes raise questions regarding access to shops and services for those without access to a car, it will be deemed appropriate for such impacts to be mitigated through off-site contributions towards managing traffic congestion in the village and/or improving pedestrian or cycle connectivity between Witchford Village and Ely.

5.7.2 Context and reasoned justification

An assessment of the infrastructure priorities indicated in the Local Plan is provided below.

Local Plan Chapter 8 Priority	NP Update
1. Improvements to pedestrian/cycle routes	This is still the top priority shared by the Witchford community

Local Plan Chapter 8 Priority	NP Update
Suggestions: Foot/cycle bridge to cross A10 from BP garage into Ely. Pedestrian path on Grunty Fen road from Main Street. Increase width of footpath/cycle paths along Ely Road/Main street and Sutton Road	
2. Improvements to sports grounds/open space Suggestions: New netball courts at Bedwell Hey Lane recreation ground. Improvements to Victoria Green Park. Improvements to Common Road play area.	The need for additional netball infrastructure is not something that has been articulated through public consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan to date. Demand for improved play opportunities was expressed in the February 2018 Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire, e.g. for wild play, skate park, updated play equipment at Victoria Green play park, outdoor gym equipment.
3. Improvements to the community/village hall	This is covered in Policy WNP IC2
4. More school places	The provision of education facilities is considered a priority when there is a need. As at spring 2019, there are no known capacity issues at either Rackham Primary School or Witchford college (secondary school). It is also recognised that previous capacity issues (created by out of catchment children coming into Witchford) were alleviated once additional primary schools had been opened in Ely and Littleport (i.e. the Isle of Ely primary school and Littleport and East Cambs Academy).

The results of the Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 showed the following support for provision of facilities for young people:

	Strongly Agree %	Slightly Agree %
Increase facilities for the under-5s	28.17	51.27
Increase facilities for 5 – 11 years children	41.33	44.64
Increase facilities for 11-16 years young people	60.66	32.23
Increase facilities for 17 – 24 years young people	47.45	37.24

Future primary and secondary school expansion

5.7.3

It is acknowledged that the County Council anticipates a future shortfall in secondary school places due to an expected increase in secondary school-aged pupils in the catchment area during the plan period, together with an increase triggered by planned development. There is capacity on the existing Witchford Village College site for any required expansion to take place.

It is also acknowledged that the County Council has identified a potential shortfall in primary school and early years places if additional development (not included as part of the Neighbourhood Plan) comes forward on sites outside the development envelope and as departures from the Neighbourhood Plan/Local Plan. However, primary school-aged pupils in the catchment area are expected to decline from 246 down to 180 by 2025/26. This means that a future deficit will depend on the extent to which planning applications on sites which conflict with the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan are approved.

The County Council has indicated that there is little or no capacity for Rackham Primary School to expand on the existing site. When there is more certainty with regard to actual demand for future primary and early years places (e.g. once the existing planning applications are determined), it will be appropriate for the position regarding capacity to be reviewed. If, at this point, there is an evidenced need for additional primary school space to be provided, then the question of where and how this comes forward can be addressed as part of a review of the Neighbourhood Plan, in consultation with resident and stakeholder involvement. At this point in time, there are two broad areas which the Neighbourhood Plan group consider could be appropriate locations for future primary and secondary school capacity, subject to evidence of need being in place and subject to further consultation on this with the community and key stakeholder. These areas of search are shown on Map 'Areas of Search for Possible Future Education Infrastructure' submitted alongside this Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council will continue to liaise with the County Council, the community and other stakeholders with regard to primary and secondary school provision as the situation evolves (see Chapter 6. Community Projects).

Policy WNP IC2 -Witchford Village Hall and Recreation Ground

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates the village hall and associated recreation ground and open space for the provision of expanded and enhanced village hall facilities. The following criteria apply:

- It must be demonstrated clearly how any proposed new recreation or sports facility benefits local residents (including teenagers and young adults in the parish) and promotes inclusive activities for local people and the wider community.
- The quantity and quality of the open recreation space must be retained or enhanced.
- It must be demonstrated how additional demand for car parking will be accommodated within the allocated land

The provision of serviced office space that could both support the Witchford micro economy and generate rent income for purpose of maintaining village hall facilities will be supported as part of a proposal.

In some development proposals, it may be appropriate to meet open space provision through off-site contributions towards improvements at the recreation ground.

5.7.4 Intent

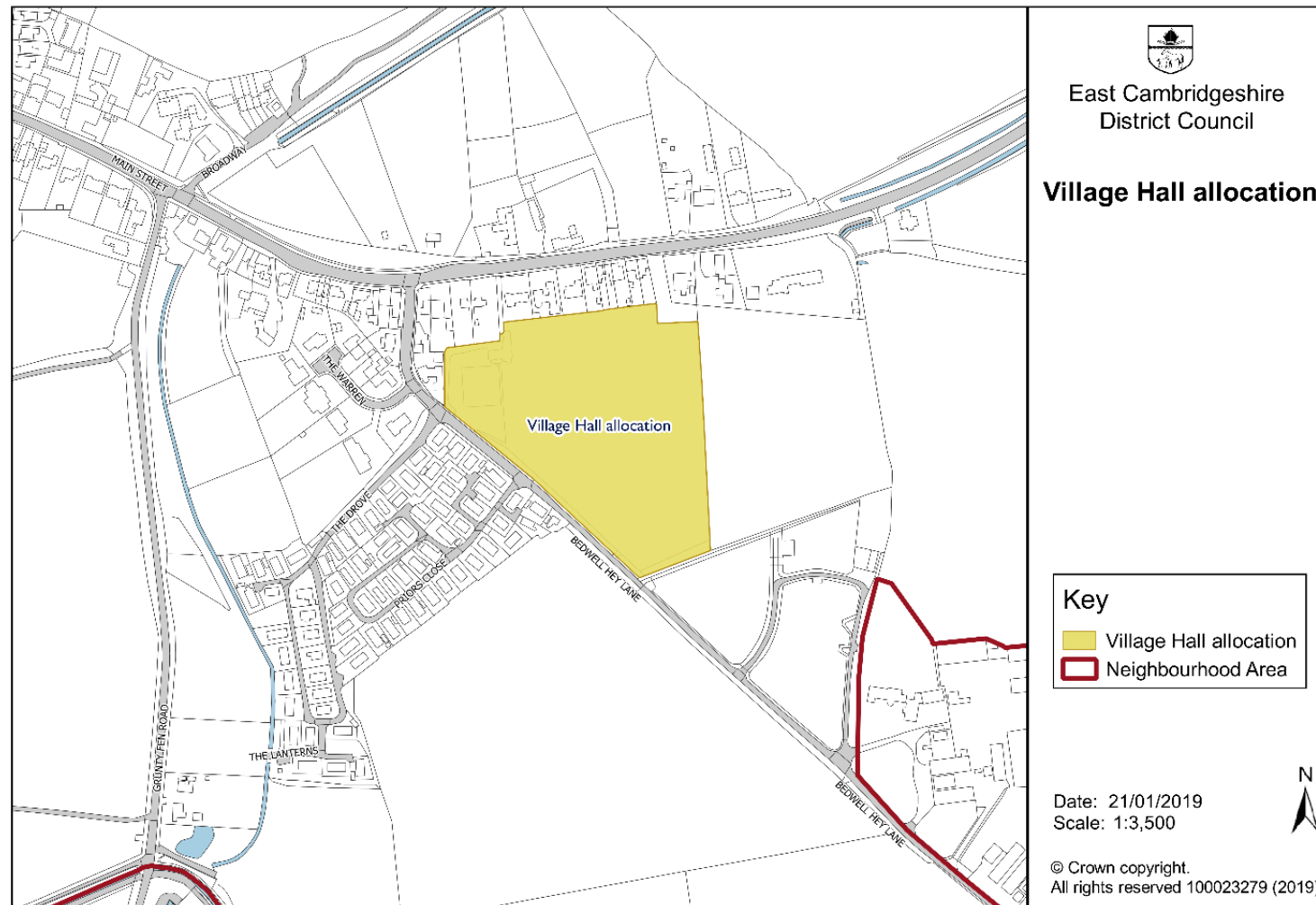
To allow for the redevelopment of the village hall during the plan period in order to create extra car parking space and better access for all users. To move the current changing rooms away from the village hall, to enable new office space to be built, extra meeting room space, and improved internal and external facilities. To enable extra land to be purchased and used to create extra playing areas.

5.7.5 Context and reasoned justification

Current usage of the hall is concentrated at evenings and weekends. It would benefit the community to create a hall which offers more to daytime users like businesses, schools, local childminder groups and the retired to use. Increasing the parking within the grounds will stop the disturbance to local Bedwell Hey Lane residents and secure the safety of users around the entrance.

The results of the Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 showed the following support for measures to redevelop the village hall:

	Strongly Agree %	Slightly Agree %
The village hall should be redeveloped.	40.05	39.30



Policy Map 12: Village Hall Allocation

Policy WNP IC3 Protection of Witchford's Community Facilities

Development proposals should not prejudice the retention of the village pub and post office/shop; rather they should help them prosper, for example through safeguarding associated parking, village centre street scene improvements, or through development of complementary uses that will generate additional footfall.

5.7.6 Intent

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the continued provision of the village shop and pub. Development proposals which will help them thrive will be supported and proposals which undermine or threaten their ability to operate will be resisted.

5.7.7 Context and Reasoned Justification

The proximity of Witchford to Ely means that residents will continue to travel to Ely for the purpose of accessing many community facilities including dentist, doctors and shops. However, the continued provision of a shop, post office and a pub is considered as essential to allow villagers to access vital community facilities without needing to leave the village, and to help maintain a lively daytime community within the village.

All customers at the village shop are important to maintaining a viable business. A proportion of people using the village shop will travel by car and the off-street parking provision to the side of the shop off Victoria Green allows customers to park up easily. This parking amenity is regarded as a complementary use to the shop.

The results of the Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 showed the following support for measures to protect existing village facilities:

	Strongly Agree %	Slightly Agree %
Businesses that are important for the community (e.g. post office/garage) should be protected from a change of use to residential development whilst those businesses remain economically viable.	88.75	6.11

WNP IC4 - Flooding

All development proposals involving new build and situated within those areas in the parish at risk from surface water flooding (as documented in the most up to date Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Management Plan) shall be accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment.

Such development proposals shall:

- be accompanied by a Surface Water Drainage Strategy;
- ensure all surface water is appropriately managed through the use of sustainable drainage systems and include detailed proposals for future maintenance of these; and
- be designed and constructed to reduce the overall level of surface flood risk to the use of the site and elsewhere when compared to the current use;

For all locations, Sustainable Drainage Systems are the preferred method of surface water disposal and should be incorporated unless demonstrably unfeasible to do so; systems that benefit Witchford's biodiversity and wildlife will be preferred over systems that do not.

5.7.8 Intent

This policy is focused on addressing surface water flood risk as opposed to fluvial flood (from rivers) and sea risk. National and local planning policy is considered to adequately address the risks associated from fluvial water flood risk. For example, all residential developments of 10 or more dwellings are required to provide a site-specific flood risk assessment regardless of their flood zone. This policy is intended to complement East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy ENV8 Flood Risk.

Areas of the parish do have specific issues when it comes to surface water flooding and the intention behind this policy is to flag this up as an important policy consideration. New development coming forward in the parish should not lead to additional surface water flooding in the parish and opportunities to reduce overall flood risk in the parish should be realised.

5.7.9 Context and reasoned justification

Parts of the parish, including parts of Witchford village, fall within fluvial flood zone 3. The adopted Local Plan includes policies on development which may impact on fluvial flooding and it is not necessary to include a similar policy in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, parts of the built-up area of the village as well as land adjacent to the village fall within areas that are also susceptible to surface water flooding.

As the Lead Local Flood Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council is responsible for the managing of surface water flooding across the district. In 2014, the County Council commissioned an update to the 2014 county-wide Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP). The SWMP looks in detail at surface water flood events across the district during the period 2011 to 2014 and establishes flood management priorities for the future through reference to the Environment Agency maps which inform the County Council's work in this respect. This risk of surface water flooding should be recognised and development proposals coming forward on affected land should seek to reduce overall risk of surface water flooding to new development as well as properties adjacent or close to the site. The Neighbourhood Plan supports the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems as detailed in the *Sustainable Drainage Systems explanatory note* April 2019 listed in Appendix 1.

East Cambridgeshire District Council have prepared a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) which looks at both fluvial and surface water flood risk for the purpose of informing planning policy in the district. Appendix D to the SFRA report provides maps of the district showing extent of surface water flood risk. Figs. 8 and 9 below are extracts from this document and illustrate well the level of surface water flooding in and around Witchford village.

Fig. 8: Extract from Appendix D of East Cambridgeshire District Council SFRA showing the western extent of Witchford village.

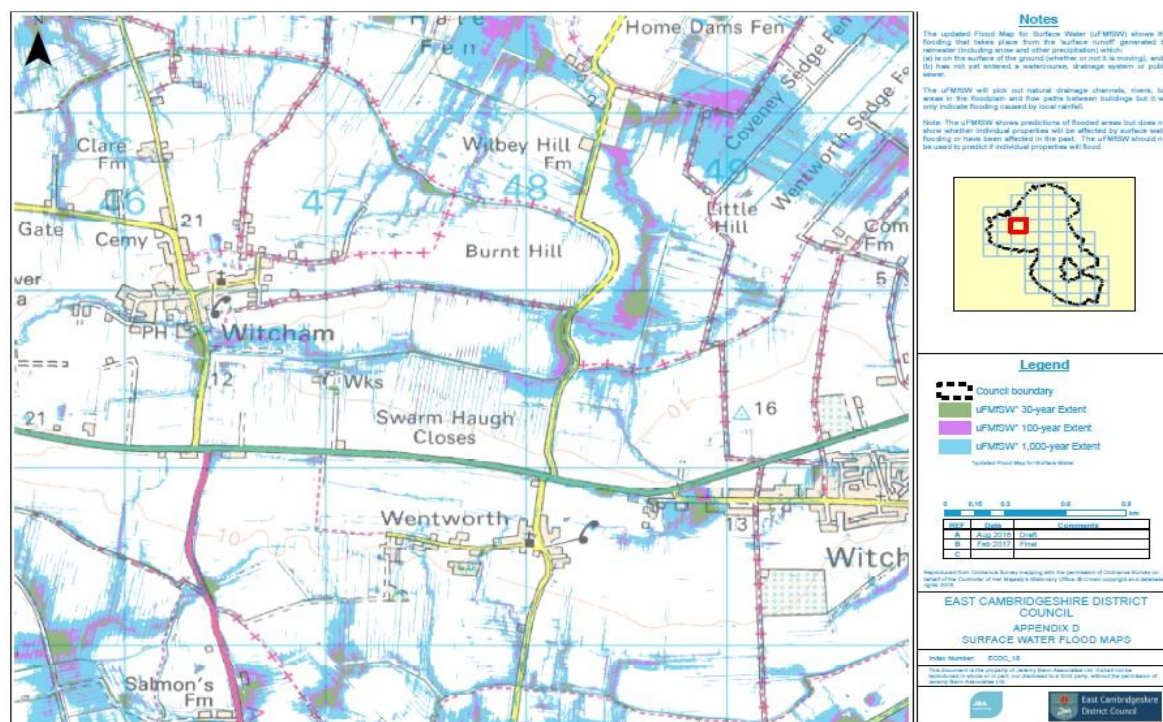
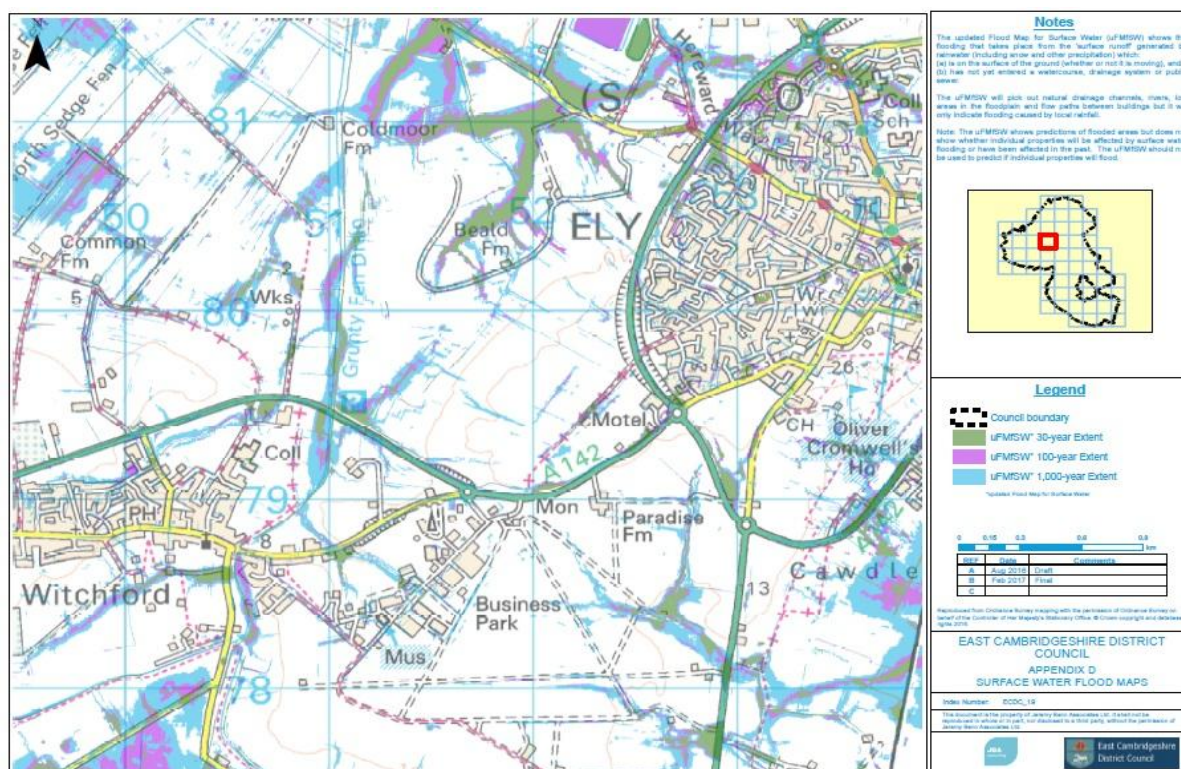


Fig. 9: Extract from Appendix D of East Cambridgeshire District Council SFRA showing the eastern extent of Witchford village.



5.8 Village Traffic Policies

The objective for traffic management in Witchford within the parish in the Plan period is:

'To address issues relating to the speed and volume of traffic through the village, and create attractive and usable opportunities for pedestrian and cycle access within Witchford with the aim of reducing in-village car use

Policy WNP T1 – Getting around the village

Development proposals which help to create a more walkable neighbourhood in the village will be supported. There should be good permeability through housing areas ensuring they are well connected via walking and cycling routes to neighbouring plots, key services including Witchford Village College, Witchford Primary School and shops and services located on Main Street.

Where applicable to a development proposal, opportunities will be sought to:

- improve existing pavements to make them more accessible for all users including children and the disabled;
- allow for pedestrian and cycle connectivity to neighbouring plots fitting in with existing connections on developed plots and allowing for future connections to undeveloped plots;
- create a pedestrian and cycle spine route stretching from Sutton Road to Marroway Lane, Marroway Lane to Common Road, from Common Road to Witchford Village College and from Witchford Village College to Lancaster Way; and
- implement local transport improvements as required by the Parish Council in its Local Transport Plan.

In some circumstances, where necessary to achieve a good quality and accessible walking and cycling environment to meet the needs of the users of the development, it may be appropriate to secure off-site contributions towards these initiatives.

5.8.1 Intent

To ensure all new development designs in good pedestrian and cycle connectivity so that people are encouraged and able to make village journeys by foot or bicycle instead of the car.

5.8.2 Context and reasoned justification

Pedestrians and cyclists need to be given more priority within the street scene through the installation and improvement of footpaths and cycle routes. The WLA notes that some of the modern housing developments in Witchford are poorly connected with one another reducing permeability. One of the five development guidelines presented in the report is to *Seek always to ensure permeability through new housing areas, connecting any new development into the heart of the existing settlement.*

Pavements within the village require improvements to make them more accessible for all users, including children and the disabled, helping to meet the sustainability aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan vision and objectives. Crossing points at key locations within the village would provide safer routes for residents – particularly the young and the elderly. Funding and delivery of public realm improvements will be achieved by using

contributions from new developments within the Parish as well as utilising other funding streams.

Residents within Witchford are impacted negatively by speeding cars passing regularly through the village. New development will undoubtedly increase traffic flows / congestion through the parish. As such this policy seeks to obtain appropriate contributions towards the delivery of these works where it can be demonstrated this is required. Care must also be taken to ensure that appropriate measures are introduced that do not 'urbanise' the village.

Data from Automated Traffic Counts commissioned by Witchford Parish Council in November 2016 and from regular Speedwatch sessions underpins this policy, as well as regular anecdotal instances raised on the village Facebook page. Appendix 1 contains more information about the evidence base for this policy.

Witchford Parish Council has developed an initiative for the planning and delivery of a west-east Witchford Pedestrian and Cycle Spine Route. The spine route stretches from the north west fringe of residential areas through existing and proposed residential areas, via Witchford Village College and finally to the Lancaster way roundabout to link up with the A142. In recognition of the daily traffic congestion issues experienced by residents and visitors, its aim is to provide a safe route segregated from traffic for pedestrians and people on bikes and mobility scooters.

The results of the Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 demonstrated that there is overwhelming support among Witchford residents for measures to provide alternative means for travelling around the village, as follows:

Question	Strongly agree %	Slightly agree %
Provide an improved network of paths linking existing and new residential areas with village facilities	63.03	30.27

Traffic issues featured strongly in the feedback from community consultations throughout the Plan development period, and a report detailing this is included in Appendix 1 as part of the evidence underpinning this policy.

The Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 showed the following support for measures to address traffic problems in the village:

	Strongly Agree %	Slightly Agree %
Make Main Street safer and less attractive for through traffic.	77.64	13.76

5.9 **Witchford and Ely Connectivity Policies**

The objective for connectivity in the Plan period is:

'To support proposals to improve infrastructure for safe and easy travel by cycle, on foot and by public transport to Ely and to Ely train station.'

Policy WNP C1 – Connecting Witchford and Ely through sustainable and safe cycle and pedestrian routes

The creation of a sustainable and safe segregated cycle and pedestrian crossing route across the A10 from Witchford, which will improve connectivity from Witchford to Ely city centre, Ely train station and Ely Leisure Village is strongly encouraged. It should feature as part of any future upgrade to the A10/A142 highway network.

Where appropriate and necessary to deliver sustainable development, off-site contributions will be secured to achieve improved pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities at the A10 from Witchford into Ely or towards alternative infrastructure which will help in delivering improved connectivity across the A10 from Witchford into Ely.

5.9.1 Intent

The A10 presents a difficult obstacle for those wishing to access Ely city centre, train station or Ely Leisure Village by foot or cycle. Pedestrians and cyclists currently have no choice but to cross the A10/A142 roundabout, which has dropped pavements but no other measures to help cross this busy junction on a road with a 60mph speed limit. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks contributions to be secured towards infrastructure solutions which help to address this connectivity barrier between Ely and Witchford.

It is acknowledged that the A10/A142 roundabout is located outside the plan area but that the policy could be applicable to development proposals that come forward in the plan area.

5.9.2 Context and reasoned justification

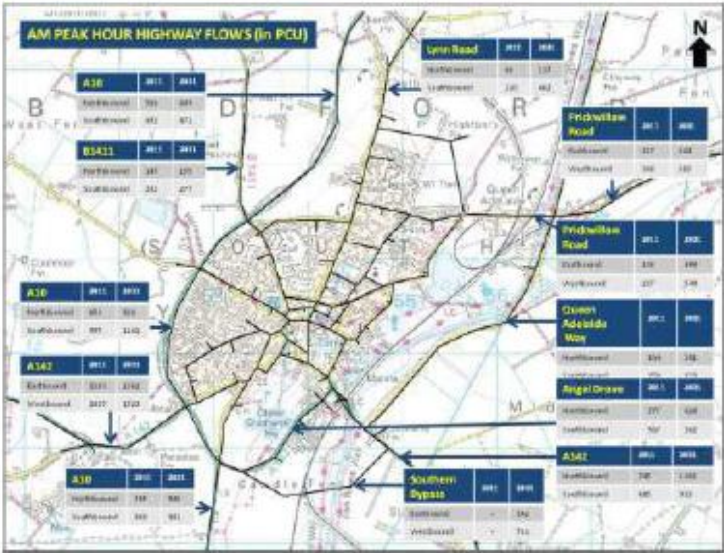
A segregated crossing point over the A10 from Witchford to Ely would be the preferred solution. One option is the location where St Johns Road in the City of Ely emerges onto the A10. This crossing point does not fall within the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan area; however, should this be agreed as a viable option with Cambridgeshire County Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and City of Ely Council, then proposals within Witchford parish should contribute towards the provision of this important piece of infrastructure.

Improving cycle and pedestrian routes is also a key theme in the Ely Masterplan (2010). The map on page 47 of the Masterplan provides a pink arrow indicating an improved cycle link in the location across the A10 which appears to coincide with the St John's Road crossing location discussed above. The Masterplan text identifies a comprehensive programme of improvements to pedestrian and cycle links including between Ely and outlying villages.

A cycle path connecting Lancaster Way Business Park to Ely train station is committed in association with development at Lancaster Way. Whilst this is welcomed it does not address the need for access to Ely city centre and Ely Leisure Village from Witchford. Witchford Parish Council has adopted a policy supporting the provision of a bridge over the A10 into Ely from Witchford *'as it not only meets all of the objectives but also provides a truly attractive and usable route which we feel will encourage more journeys via sustainable modes of transport'*.

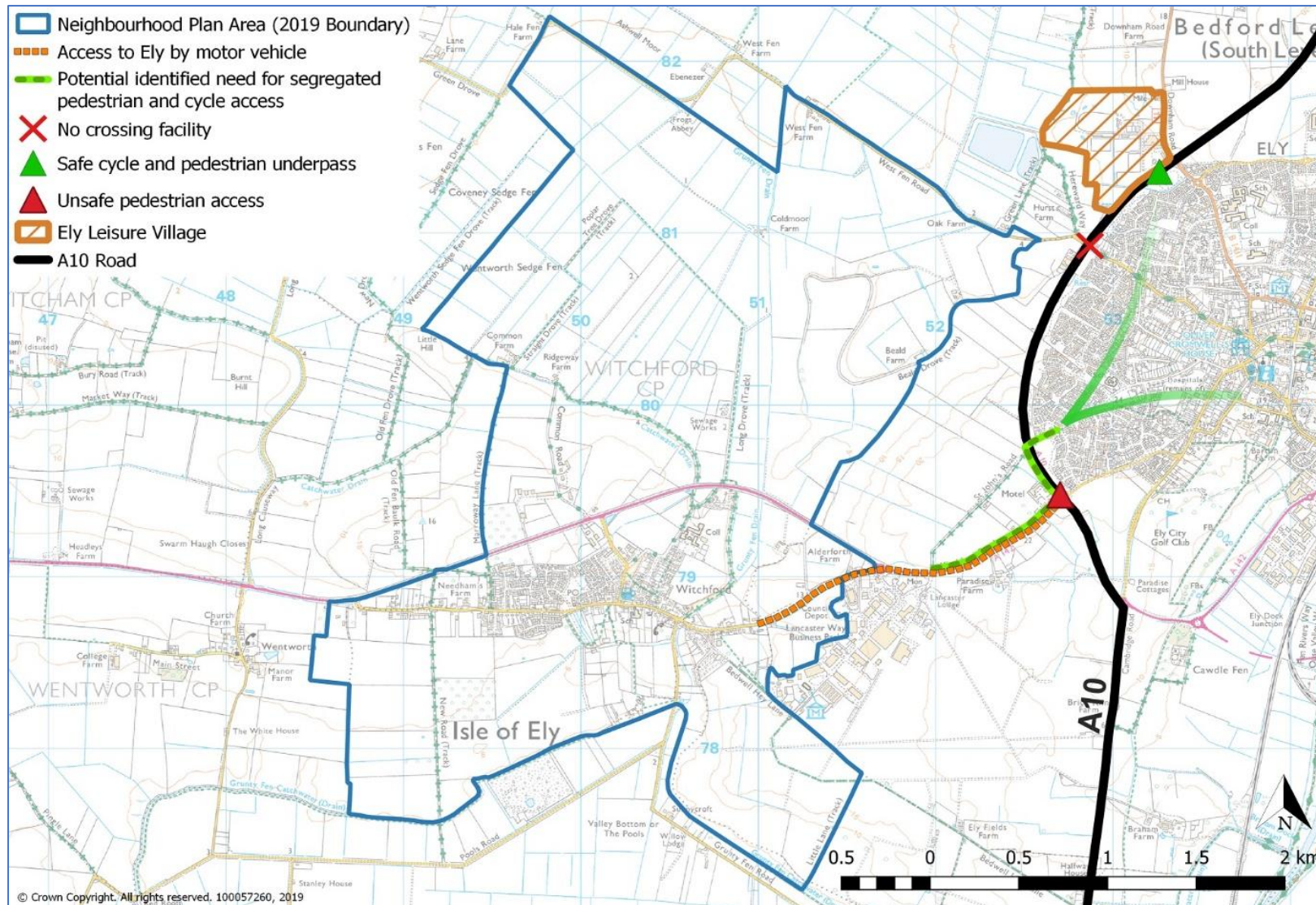
The Transport Strategy for East Cambridgeshire (TSEC) was last published in 2016. This identifies that the A142 between Ely and Witchford will continue to experience increasingly higher levels of congestion (See figure 4 on TSEC page 16 and see figure 10 below). This reinforces the need to supply safe alternatives for cyclists and pedestrians to reduce the reliance on car journeys to Ely and the train station.

Fig. 10 Projected increases in traffic flows 2011 – 2031. Source Transport Strategy for East Cambridgeshire



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Figure 4: Changes in highway link flows in the morning peak between 2011 and 2031. Source: East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Transport Test (October 2012).

Policy Map 13: Connecting Witchford and Ely through sustainable and safe cycle and pedestrian routes



5.10 Supporting Witchford's Micro-economy Policies

The objective for sustainable economic development within the parish in the Plan period is:

'To support existing local businesses and to encourage increased economic activity appropriate to the rural nature of the parish'.

Policy WNP E1 – Support for small business development

Development proposals that help to encourage and support small businesses in the village will be viewed favourably where they are consistent with other priorities in this plan and where they do not trigger or contribute to problems associated with on-street parking. This could include:

- housing design that facilitates home working; and
- new accommodation, including serviced offices, that is suitable for micro businesses

5.10.1 Intent

The focus of this policy is not business development at existing employment areas, such as the Sedgeway Business Park, but is intended to apply to proposals in the village. The policy aims to contribute to sustainable development by:

- encouraging the development of local jobs and reduce outward commuting.
- encouraging the retention and expansion of local service businesses to meet local needs and helping the village centre to thrive.

5.10.2 Context and reasoned justification

The evidence from the Demographic and Socio-Economic Review undertaken to inform this Neighbourhood Plan and the database of Witchford based businesses compiled during the Plan process demonstrate that there is a healthy micro-economy of small-scale employment in Witchford, which this policy seeks to encourage and reinforce. Whilst the largest employment sectors in Witchford are education and 'administrative & support service activities', with Witchford Village College, the Rackham Primary School and Pre-school being major employers, the business database includes a significant proportion small and home-based businesses.

Increasing Witchford based employment will help to reduce the projected increase in traffic volume on the A142 and A10 (see Fig.10) and will help the village retain a sense of community and daytime vitality, in line with the overall Vision for this Plan to 'protect the rural character and community spirit of Witchford'.

The Neighbourhood Plan household questionnaire of February 2018 demonstrated that there is overwhelming support among Witchford residents for measures that promote working from home, as follows:

Question	Strongly agree %	Slightly agree %
Policies that promote working from home should be supported.	58.27	34.81

The questionnaire also demonstrated support among Witchford residents for new

accommodation that is suitable for micro-businesses, as follows:

Question	Strongly agree %	Slightly agree %
Dedicated space for networking, workspace and business development is needed.	26.07	44.11

A survey of Witchford-based businesses was carried out in July 2018. A small majority favoured the provision of more office space and flexi-working space in Witchford.

Policy WNP E2 – Employment and Commercial Development

Development proposals for employment and business uses at the Sedgeway Business Park will be supported where they protect and utilise opportunities to reinforce landscape character. Proposals should have regard to the landscape guidance notes for the Common Side Local Landscape Character Area as provided in the Witchford Landscape Appraisal.

5.10.3 Intent

To ensure commercial development conserves and where possible reinforces landscape character in Witchford Parish

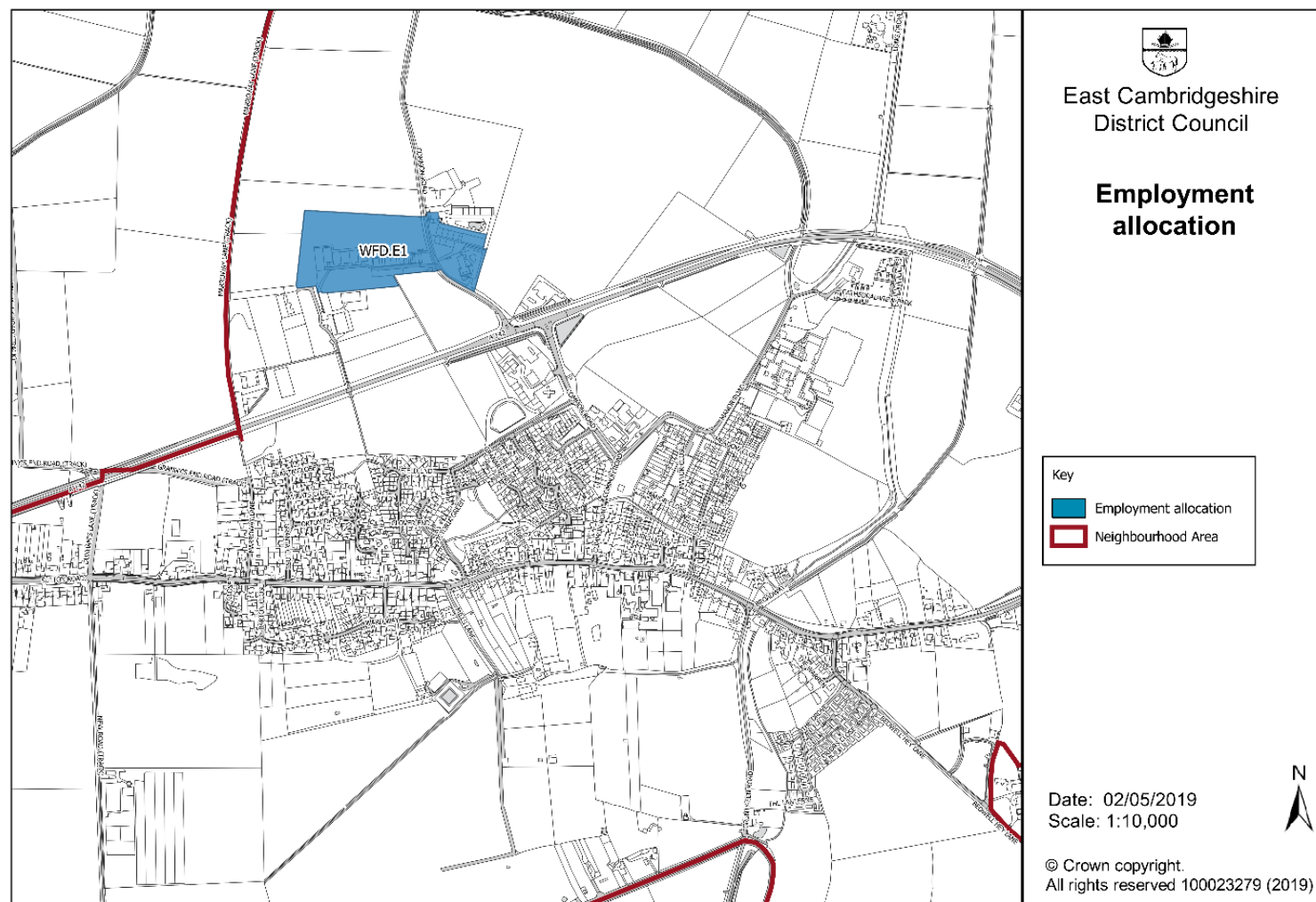
5.10.4 Context and reasoned justification

There is one key area of employment development in the Neighbourhood Plan area; the Sedgeway Business Park north of the A142. This falls in the Common Side Local Landscape Character Area. The WLA states there is limited scope for additional commercial development associated with the existing business parks due to visual sensitivity of the north facing slopes. The WLA provides the following guidance for commercial development:

- ensure new commercial development delivers new hedgerows/tree planting to build up overlapping lines of vegetation on the northern slopes, filtering views to development associated with existing business parks and reinforcing the distinction between island and wider fen.
- seek removal of non-native planting around business parks and replace with native woodland

The Lancaster Way Business Park is a designated Enterprise Zone outside of the Plan area. The WLA describes the Isle of Ely local landscape character area which covers the Lancaster Way Business Park as well as the south eastern part of the Plan area. The WLA states that there is little/no further opportunity for development but does provide guidance for the ongoing development of the Enterprise Zone.

The Witchford Neighbourhood Plan policies do not apply to proposals outside the Plan area but Witchford Parish Council will seek to secure the above guidelines into proposals at the Lancaster Way Business Park.



Policy Map 14: Employment Allocation

5.11 Addressing the Climate Change emergency in Witchford

The objective for addressing the climate change emergency in Witchford is:

‘Actively identify and promote climate change mitigation and resilience measures’.

As set out in Chapter 3 of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Single-Issue Review (SIR) was prepared to focus on measures, at the parish level, to:

- manage and reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions linked to the village infrastructure in our parish (climate change mitigation measures)
- ensure the parish is resilient as climate change occurs (climate change adaptation measures)
- assist the recovery of nature in the parish

To inform the SIR, the Working Group assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing Witchford when it comes to mitigating climate change and adapting to the effects of climate change - see Appendix 3. A range of issues and priorities were highlighted as part of this assessment and some of these were identified as areas that could be addressed through the Neighbourhood Plan.

1. The Neighbourhood Plan has a role in seeking high sustainable design and construction standards from new build proposals that require planning permission. The intent here is to reduce the overall impact of new development on greenhouse gas emissions as well as making buildings more resilient to the extreme weather events resulting from climate change.

- See Policy WNP CC1 (Delivering sustainable buildings fit for a net zero carbon future, which are resilient to the effects of climate change)

2. The Neighbourhood Plan should build on existing Policy GI3 in the Neighbourhood Plan, by providing more detail on sites of biodiversity value. This would be an important climate change adaptation measure, helping to build resilience within the natural environment as the climate changes (hotter summers, longer periods of drought and heavy rainfall events).

- See Policy WNP CC2 (Protecting existing habitats in Witchford and seeking opportunities to strengthen parish-wide ecological networks)
- See Policy WNP CC3 (Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain)

3. Due to their important role in storing carbon, the Neighbourhood Plan should take a strong stance on protecting existing trees and woodland and ensuring opportunities are taken, at the development proposal stage, in planting new trees in the right places.

- See Policy WNP CC4 (Trees, woodland and carbon sequestration implications of proposals)

4. The Neighbourhood Plan has a role in taking a positive stance in supporting stand-alone renewable energy infrastructure.

- See Policy CC5 (Supporting renewable energy infrastructure).

Policy WNP CC1 – Delivering sustainable buildings

As appropriate to its scale and site, new development must be designed to be compatible with a net zero carbon future.

When formulating development proposals, the following design expectations should be considered and in the following order:

1. Orientation of buildings – such as positioning buildings to maximise opportunities for solar gain, and minimise winter cold wind heat loss;
2. Form of buildings – creating buildings that are more efficient to heat and stay warm in colder conditions and stay cool in warmer conditions because of their shape and design;
3. Fabric of buildings – using materials and building techniques that reduce heat and energy needs. Ideally, this could also consider using materials with a lower embodied carbon content and/or high practical recyclable content;
4. Heat supply – ideally achieving net zero carbon content of heat supply (for example, this would mean no connection to the gas network or use of oil or bottled gas);
5. Renewable energy generated – ideally generating enough energy from renewable sources on-site (and preferably on plot) to meet reasonable estimates of total annual energy demand across the year

With respect to residential development proposals, applicants are strongly encouraged to achieve operational targets for new homes set out in best practice guidance such as the 'Net Zero Carbon Toolkit', prepared by Levitt Bernstein, Elemanta, Passivhaus Trust and Etude.

All proposals should be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement that demonstrates:

- How the design expectations listed above have been considered and the degree they have been incorporated into the design.
- How water usage has been considered (including whether, for residential development, the design intends to voluntarily incorporate Part G of the Building Regulations option of estimated water consumption set at no more than 110 litres per person per day, rather than the standard 125 l/p/d stipulated in the 2010 Building Regulations).
- How the choice of building materials is appropriate. In this respect restoration and renovation of existing buildings is preferred over new build. Where new build is involved, materials should be prioritised that are reused, reclaimed or natural from the local area or from sustainable sources and that are durable.
- The adaptability of the proposed buildings and associated spaces as climate continues to change e.g. reducing overheating (e.g. designed-in external shading), introducing more water-efficient fixtures and fittings, greywater recycling, rainwater harvesting and managing surface water run-off in line with Policy IC4, for example use of permeable areas instead of hard standing.

Where a robust Sustainability Statement is not provided, or is provided but demonstrates that reasonable measures to achieve the expectations set out in this policy have not been taken, then the proposal should be refused.

5.11.1 Policy intent

To ensure any development that is approved and built today belongs to a net zero emissions future and is future proofed to be resilient to the effects of climate change in Witchford parish.

5.11.2 Context and reasoned justification

As a matter of principle, development proposals should contribute towards the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. Proposals should, in whatever way they can, contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Through the Climate Change Act 2008, the UK Government is committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels by 2050 and contribute to global emission reductions aimed at limiting global temperature rise to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-industrial areas.

More recently, the UK Government's Sixth Carbon Budget, published in 2020, requires a 78% reduction in UK territorial emissions between 1990 and 2035.

The UK's strategy for achieving net zero is set out in its report Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, published in October 2021.

The NPPF (December 2023), sets out the important role the planning system has in shaping places in a way that contributes to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Our own local authority, East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) declared a Climate Change Emergency in August 2019 and committed to preparing an annual Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plans. The latest Climate Change Strategy was published in June 2024 and is available here:

www.eastcambs.gov.uk/content/environment-policy-and-action-plan

In terms of land use planning, ECDC adopted its Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in February 2021, available here:

www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Climate%20Change%20SPD%20-%20Adoption%20versionAC.pdf

This focuses on providing additional guidance to Policy ENV 4 Energy and water efficiency and renewable energy in construction in the 2015 Local Plan. Policy ENV 4 states that all new development should aim for reduced or zero carbon development in accordance with the zero-carbon hierarchy: first maximising energy efficiency and then incorporating renewable or low carbon energy sources on-site as far as practicable.

Policy WNP CC1 is focused on ensuring the policy and guidance set out in Local Plan Policy ENV 4 and the Climate Change SPD is implemented at the parish level.

Planning and Building Regulations

In 2019, the government announced the Future Homes Standard. It has since implemented an uplift to require significantly lower carbon emissions in buildings compared to those built to 2013 standards. It has also run consultations on its proposals to implement further changes so that all new homes and other buildings are required to be equipped with low carbon heating and be 'zero carbon ready' by 2025. This means no

further work will be needed on these buildings for them to have zero carbon emissions once the electricity grid has fully decarbonised. The government's latest proposals are set out in "The Future Homes and Buildings Standards: 2023 consultation".

The low carbon hierarchy set out Policy WNP CC1 is consistent with the government's proposed Future Homes and Buildings Standards.

Available guidance to assist with implementation of this policy

Residential Development. The Net Zero Carbon Toolkit, was commissioned by West Oxfordshire District Council, in collaboration with Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council. It is aimed at small and medium sized house builders, architects, self-builders and consultants.

It explains that a net zero carbon home in operation is very energy efficient and has an ultra-low level of space heating demand. It does not use any fossil fuels on site and therefore improves air quality. It also generates renewable energy on site and is cheap to run.

The approach taken in the toolkit is that net zero carbon buildings are supported by three core principles:

1. Energy efficiency. Applicable to energy used for heating, hot water, ventilation, lighting, cooking and appliances.
2. Low carbon heating. Low carbon sources of heat are an essential feature. The toolkit states that new buildings should be built with a low carbon heating system and must not connect to the gas network.
3. Renewable energy generation. The toolkit states that renewable energy generation (e.g. through solar photovoltaic (PV) panels) should be at least equal to the energy use of the building).

In addition, the toolkit looks at the embodied carbon in materials used in each development.

People considering new development proposals in the parish are encouraged to use the toolkit. The toolkit also provides guidance and advice to homeowners looking to retrofit or extend their existing property. It includes information on how they can implement energy efficiency measures and begin the process of decarbonising their homes in a more affordable, phased approach.

The toolkit includes a set of energy targets and key performance indicators for both new residential and retrofit schemes. These are as follows:

New Housing	Retrofit	To achieve this target focus on...
Space heating demand 15 kWh/m²/yr	Space heating demand 50 kWh/m²/yr* *on average (range of 20 – 120 kWh/m ² /yr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For new build start with optimum building form and orientation and optimum window placement (smaller windows on north façade and larger windows on south façade) ● Fabric efficiency ● Air tightness. ● Install a Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery unit.
Energy Use Intensity 35 kWh/m²/yr	Energy Use Intensity 50 kWh/m²/yr *on average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low carbon heat source such as a heat pump. Do not install gas boilers.
Electricity generation intensity 120 kWh/m²_{fp}/yr m ² _{fp} = m ² building footprint	Electricity generation intensity 120 kWh/m²_{fp}/yr m ² _{fp} = m ² building footprint	Applicable to installation of renewable energy technologies
Embodied carbon benchmark 500kgCO_{2e}/m²/yr		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refurbishment preferred over new build ● Lean design ● Prioritise materials that are reused, reclaimed or natural from local areas and sustainable sources ● Allow for housing adaptation and flexibility ● Easy access for maintenance ● Consider disassembly to allow for reuse at end of life of building

Please refer to the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit for further guidance, available here:

www.cotswold.gov.uk/netzerocarbondtoolkit

Non-residential development.

Policy ENV 4 in the Local Plan requires all non-domestic developments of 1000 m² or more to meet BREEAM Very Good standard or equivalent. Policy WNP CCI will apply to all non-domestic development, regardless of size. They are all required to follow the energy hierarchy set out in the policy and prepare a Sustainability Statement to accompany their planning application.

Preparing a sustainability statement

In addition to the requirements set out in Policy CC1, it is encouraged that a Sustainability Statement also includes the following so as to get a full picture of the sustainability credentials of the development, which in turn will help demonstrate whether the development proposal is meeting the design expectations of the policy:

- How the energy hierarchy, explained in the policy has been applied in the approach to minimising the overall energy demand of a proposed building.
- The calculated space heating demand expressed through kWh/m²/yr
- The calculated energy use intensity expressed through kWh/m²/yr
- Where renewables are being installed, the electricity generation intensity in terms of kWh/m²fp/yr
- In the case of residential development not achieving the operational targets set out above, an explanation as to the reasons for this.
- The estimated water consumption set at no more than 110 litres per person per day.

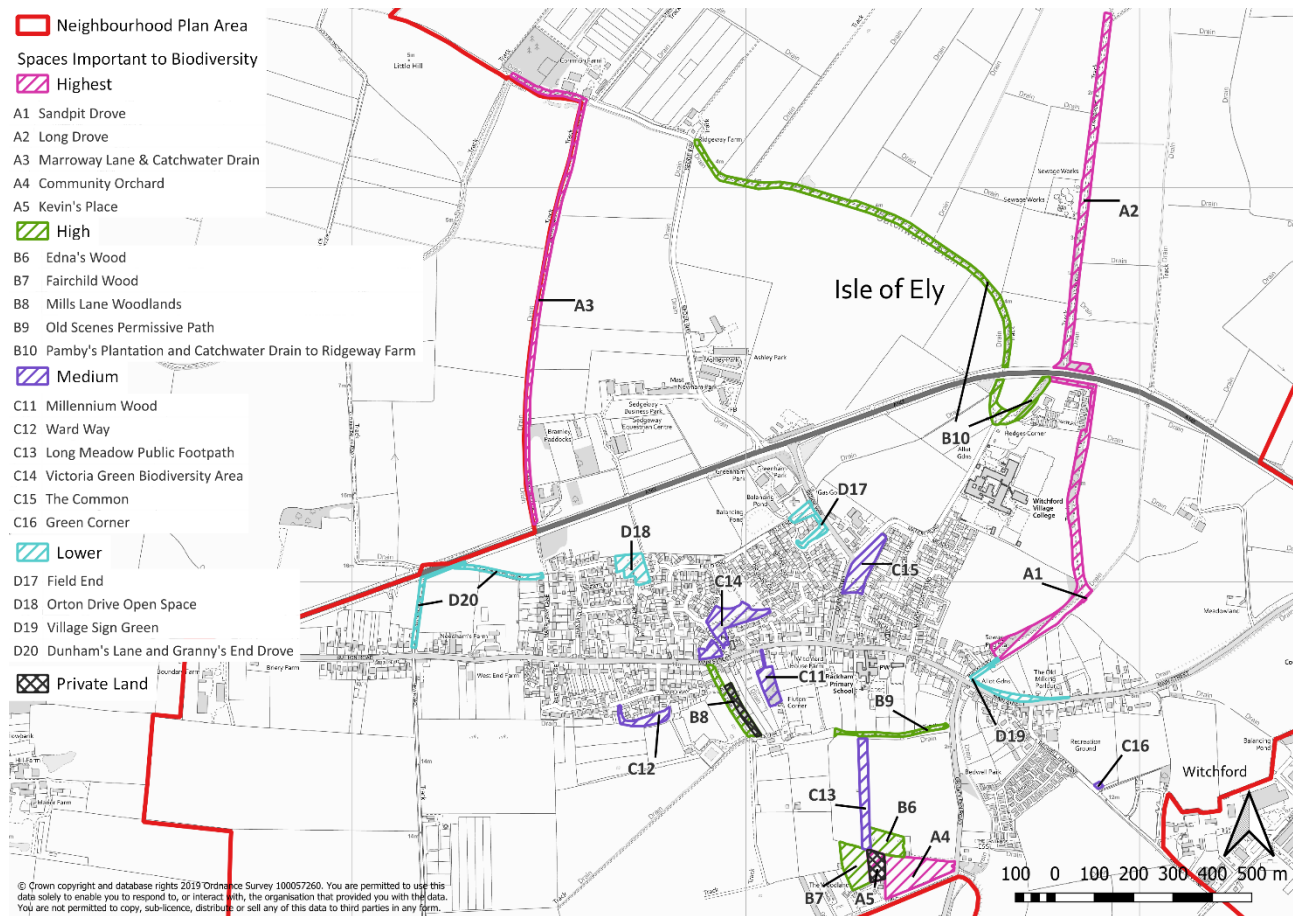
And for major development proposals:

- Information on the embodied carbon emissions of the proposed development. This means the carbon emissions associated with the extraction and processing of materials, energy use in the factories and transport as well as the construction of the building and repair, replacement and maintenance.

WNP CC2 Protecting and enhancing ecological assets

The network of habitats to be protected and enhanced in the parish is shown on Map 15.

Proposals coming forward close to or which could otherwise have an impact on these sites must take full account of their biodiversity value in line with Policy GI3 in this Neighbourhood Plan. Regardless of location, development proposals should also take reasonable opportunities to enhance the networks shown on Map 15. This could be through delivering green infrastructure that enhances the existing habitats and the wildlife that depends upon them, or creates new or improved wildlife corridors to connect to them.



Map 15: Habitats of local biodiversity value in Witchford parish

5.11.3 Policy intent:

To complement Policy WNP GI3 (Development and biodiversity) in this Neighbourhood Plan, together with Policy ENV 7 (Biodiversity and geology) of the Local Plan by providing parish level detail on the known sites of biodiversity value, and the opportunities that exist to protect and enhance them.

5.11.4 Context and reasoned justification

The known existing sites of biodiversity value in the parish are listed below, described in full in Appendix 4 and shown on Map 15.

Table of existing sites of biodiversity value

Name	Area	Biodiversity rating (see appendix 4)	Map ref
Sandpit Drove	Approx. 2 ha	Highest	A1
Long Drove	Approx. 2.4 ha	Highest	A2
Marroway Lane (North of A142) & Catchwater Drain	Approx 1.6 ha	Highest	A3
Community Orchard (aka The Old Rec) & Wildflower Meadow	Approx 1.2 ha	Highest	A4
Kevin's Place	Approx 1.1 ha	Highest	A5
Edna's Wood	Approx 0.5 ha	High	B6
Fairchild Wood	Approx 0.6 ha	High	B7
Mills Lane Woodland	Approx 0.26 ha	High	B8
Old Scenes Permissive Path	Approx 0.4 ha	High	B9
Pamby's Plantation and Catchwater Drain to Ridgeway Farm	Approx 2.4 ha	High	B10
Millennium Wood	Approx 0.3 ha	Medium	C11
Ward Way	Approx	Medium	C12
Long Meadow Public Footpath	Approx 0.62 ha	Medium	C13
Victoria Green	Approx 1.15 ha	Medium	C14
The Common	Approx 0.66 ha	Medium	C15
Green Corner (Playing Fields)	Approx 0.03 ha	Medium	C16
Field End	Approx 0.24 ha	Lower	D17
Orton Drive	Approx 0.4 ha	Lower	D18
Village Sign Green	Approx 0.3 ha	Lower	D19

Name	Area	Biodiversity rating (see appendix 4)	Map ref
Dunhams Lane and Granny's End	Approx 0.5 ha	Lower	D20

Other Opportunity Mapping initiatives

"Mapping natural capital and opportunities for habitat creation in Cambridgeshire", Natural Capital Solutions: In 2019, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership commissioned Natural Capital Solutions to map habitats across Cambridgeshire and create opportunity maps for biodiversity enhancement, showing where new habitats could be created that are most appropriate from an ecological point of view, whilst taking constraints into account. Part 4 of the report includes a series of maps, referred to as opportunity mapping for biodiversity enhancements, setting out opportunities to enhance the following habitats:

- Semi-natural grassland
- Wet grassland and wetlands
- Woodland

Due to the strategic nature of the mapping, it is difficult to apply the mapping to the parish level in Witchford. Nonetheless, it emphasizes the value that is added through local information such as that shown on Map 15.

Natural Cambridgeshire is a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The LNP's vision is to double nature, including land managed for nature, in Cambridgeshire by 2050. The LNP has six key topic areas comprising living landscapes, local food and farming, better places to live, sustainable jobs, healthy communities and heritage, culture and leisure. Each of these are driven by their own vision statement. In terms of landscape, the LNPS vision is for Cambridgeshire to be an exemplar for the landscape scale restoration of the natural environment and that this will be through programmes of habitat and species recovery, wider land stewardship and the safeguarding of existing wildlife sites. The LNP work includes:

- Developing with Nature Toolkit: In its Natural Environment SPD, ECDC recommend this toolkit is used for large scale development proposals (150 dwellings or more or 5 hectares or more).
- A Biosphere for the future project. The LNP received Heritage Lottery Fund to research what is necessary to bring Biosphere Reserve status to the Cambridgeshire Fens. This project may present opportunities for restoration in some parts of Witchford parish. Policy WNP CC2 is in line with these more strategic ambitions and initiatives being driven by Natural Cambridgeshire.
- Local Nature Recovery Toolkit. A toolkit to help support communities incorporate doubling nature in their neighbourhood plans and landscape assessment. It is anticipated the Parish Council will develop a Local Nature Recovery toolkit. In preparation for this, the Witchford Open Spaces group has organised a number of wildlife surveys in 2023, and will continue to do so in 2024 and beyond involving professional biologists as well as knowledgeable amateurs and other volunteers. Results of this work can feed into a Local Nature Recovery Toolkit for Witchford.

WNP CC3 Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain

In addition to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements as established by the Environment Act 2021, these additional requirements should be met:

- (a) For all qualifying developments, applicants will be encouraged to achieve a 20% biodiversity net gain, rather than the national mandatory minimum of 10%; and
- (b) For householder and other proposals that are exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements, an element of biodiversity gain should nevertheless be incorporated into the proposal of a degree proportionate to the scale of the proposal. Measures could include bird boxes, swift bricks, insect 'hotels', bee blocks, bat boxes and/or winter roosts, the creation of new ponds for amphibians and invertebrates, making changes to garden fencing to allow access for small mammals, or other nature-friendly landscaping feature within the householder's garden; and

When a biodiversity net gain proposal is being formulated, the following are encouraged to be considered:

- Creating new wildlife corridors especially where these will help protect or enhance existing corridors in the parish (see Map 15)
- The restoration or creation of new natural habitats especially where these will help protect or enhance existing habitats (see Map 15)
- The planting of additional trees and hedgerows (See Policy WNP CC4)
- Implementing measures set out in Policy WNP GI3 of this plan

5.11.5 Policy intent

To provide a local policy in light of national policy requirements and new legislative requirements to deliver biodiversity net gain.

5.11.6 Context and reasoned justification

Biodiversity net gain is a way of recreating and improving biodiversity by requiring development to have a positive impact (net gain) on biodiversity. In England, biodiversity net gain (BNG) is required under a statutory framework introduced via the Environment Act 2021. This requires that the biodiversity value of the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the site by a minimum of 10%. Biodiversity value is measured using the statutory biodiversity metric

www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides

and the baseline value is calculated from the condition of the site before any intervention has occurred.

The requirement to achieve BNG applies to most types of development. Exemptions include householder development and development consisting exclusively self-build and custom build development less than 10 dwellings with a site area of no more than 0.5 hectares.

How can sites achieve BNG in Witchford?

Appropriate measures will depend on the context of each specific site and surroundings, together with the details of the development proposed. Subject to these details, measures should provide habitats, including ponds, wetlands, meadows, hedgerows and woodland, to support known species in the parish (see Appendix 5 for a list of species recorded in Witchford parish).

The information provided above on known habitats and species in the parish and the opportunities identified so far to improve networks is intended to help and guide applicants in this regard. Existing records of protected and priority species can be obtained through a data search at the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre www.cperc.org.uk/

Householder applications and other exempt proposals

There are a range of small-scale interventions that can make a difference to local wildlife and these should be considered as part of householder applications as well as other proposals that are exempt from the mandatory BNG requirements. Guidance is available at <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions>.

WNP CC4 – Trees, woodland and carbon sequestration implications of proposals

Development proposals should be prepared on the basis that

- Existing tree and woodland cover is maintained and improved
- Opportunities for expanding woodland are actively considered, and implemented where practical and appropriate to do so

Where a development proposal is likely to affect trees or woodland it will be expected to be accompanied by:

- the completion of a British Standard 5837 Tree Survey and, if applicable,
- an Arboricultural Method Statement, Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan.

Aged and veteran trees

Where the proposal will result in the loss or deterioration of aged or veteran trees, permission will be refused, unless, and on a wholly exceptional basis, the need for and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order

Where a proposal will result in the loss or deterioration of a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order, permission will be refused unless:

- There is no net loss of amenity value which arises from the development, or
- the need for, and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweighs the loss.

Woodland

Woodland is protected under Policy CC2

Category A and B trees (BS 5837)

The loss of higher value trees (category A and B) will not normally be supported. Where their loss cannot be avoided and is fully justified, then appropriate mitigation, via compensatory tree planting, will be required. The bigger the tree diameter at 1.5m above the ground, the bigger the required compensation measures will be (in terms of number and type of replacement trees needed).

All new tree planting should take opportunities to meet the six Tree Planting Principles (see supporting text).

New Trees and Woodland

Where appropriate and practical, opportunities for new tree planting should be explored as part of all development proposals (in addition to, if applicable, any necessary compensatory tree provision). Where new trees are proposed, they should be planted on the basis of the six Tree Planting Principles, having regard to areas of peatland in the parish where tree planting would not be supported (see supporting text).

Planting schemes should include provision to replace any plant failures within five years after the date of planting.

Carbon Sequestration Implications of Proposals

Proposals which result in a significant increase in tree cover (and hence make a positive contribution to carbon sequestration) will be strongly supported in principle. Conversely, and depending on the scale of any harm, schemes involving the loss of tree cover (and hence making a negative contribution to carbon sequestration) will not be supported in principle.

5.11.7 Policy intent

To reflect the important role that trees have in both mitigating climate change and adapting to climate change. This policy introduces a Witchford specific planning policy that is based on Policy SPD.NE8 Trees and Woodland in the ECDC Natural Environment SPD. By introducing this policy to the Neighbourhood Plan gives it the weight of a development plan policy (something which an SPD does not have). The policy also takes the opportunity to address a locally specific issue in terms of peatland where tree planting would not be appropriate

5.11.8 Context and reasoned justification

Trees provide a broad range of benefits. In addition to supporting wildlife, trees can help to reduce flood risk and they can 'capture' carbon from the atmosphere. Tree planting however should not take place on peat soils. This is because trees can damage the carbon-rich soil of peat and this can result in the release of more carbon to the atmosphere than it captures.

Current tree canopy cover in the parish is low, reflecting the agricultural nature of its open fen countryside (see Map 2 in this Plan). Tree canopy is higher in and around the village.

The six Tree Planting Principles

The six Tree Planting Principles referred to in the policy are set out below. Where new tree planting is proposed, the quantity, location and species selection will be expected to take available opportunities to meet these principles:

1. Create habitat and, if possible, connect the development site to the existing green infrastructure network in the parish (see Map 15).
2. Assist in reducing or mitigating run-off and flood risk on the development site.
3. Provide shade and shelter to assist with urban cooling, in turn mitigating against the effects of climate change.
4. Create a strong landscaping framework to either
 - enclose or mitigate the visual impact of a development or
 - create new and enhanced landscape.
5. Be of an appropriate species for the site and be a native or climate resilient species that will benefit parish wildlife.
6. Avoid any tree planting where it has the potential to cause harm, such as: harm to existing important habitat; harm to peat soils; or harm to property or infrastructure.

With respect to the sixth Tree Planting Principle, there are areas of Witchford parish where tree planting would not be appropriate. This applies to area of peatland which are located in the north of the parish (see Map 2 in this Plan).

Tree surveys

The British Standards BS 5837 states that trees must be categorised in order that they can be assessed. Different categories are used to rate the quality of trees, tree groups or woodland. Category A is the highest standard and category B the next highest.

WNP CC5 Supporting renewable energy infrastructure

Development proposals involving the creation of renewable energy infrastructure (such as wind turbines (domestic scale only) and solar panels), or low carbon energy infrastructure (e.g. heat pumps, ground source heating) will be supported subject to the following:

Domestic Scale

Where a householder is required to gain planning permission prior to installation of a domestic scale wind turbine, solar panel or low carbon energy infrastructure, the presumption is in favour of such proposals unless harm deriving from consideration of other relevant development plan policies clearly outweighs the scheme's benefits in terms of renewable energy.

Business-Use Scale

Where a business or other non-domestic operation is required to gain planning permission prior to installation of solar panels or low carbon energy infrastructure (with such installations primarily designed to meet the energy demands of that business or other non-domestic operation, rather than primarily designed to export to the national grid), then the presumption is in favour of such proposals unless the harm (visual or otherwise) is so great as to outweigh the significant weight applied to the principle of installing such infrastructure.

Commercial Scale

Excluding wind energy proposals, a proposal for renewable energy infrastructure or low carbon energy infrastructure outside of the above two classes (such as one which is primarily of a scale designed to export to the national grid rather than serve an existing building or operation), is supported in principle, subject to meeting all of the following requirements:

- (a) The impacts (during all phases including construction) of the proposal are acceptable having considered the scale, siting and design, and the consequent impacts on landscape character; visual amenity; biodiversity (see special clause below); geodiversity; flood risk; townscape; heritage assets, their settings and the historic landscape (including Ely Cathedral); and highway safety; and
- (b) The impacts (during all phases including construction) are acceptable on aviation and defence navigation system/communications; and
- (c) The impacts (during all phases including construction) are acceptable on the amenity of sensitive neighbouring uses (including local residents) by virtue of matters such as noise, dust, odour, air quality and traffic;

In order to test compliance with (a)-(c) will require, for relevant proposals, the submission by the applicant of robust evidence.

The establishment of some form of Community Benefit Fund (for spend on local community infrastructure projects) or other in-kind benefits package for the local community (such as discounted energy bills) associated with a commercial-scale renewable energy proposal is encouraged, but, in accordance with Planning Law, will not be a material factor in making a decision on the proposal.

Biodiversity considerations – Habitats Regulation Assessment

The northern part of Witchford parish falls within the 'Swan and Goose' Impact Risk Zone (IRZ), as identified on DEFRA's 'MAGIC' website, this being land which may provide important functional habitat for qualifying bird species associated with the Ouse Washes Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, particularly swans, for foraging and roosting. Since the IRZ area is considered to be potentially functionally linked to the European designated site, development in this area requires appropriate consideration under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

As such, any business-use scale or commercial scale renewable energy proposals within the IRZ must undertake a project-level Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) to demonstrate that proposed development will not have any adverse effect on Ouse Washes functional land in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.

Such a project level HRA should initially commence with a robust HRA Screening, prepared by the applicant, to identify whether the land affected by the proposed development is regularly used by qualifying species (especially foraging and roosting swans) of the Ouse Washes SPA / Ramsar site and whether the proposal will have a likely significant effect. Where this identifies a likely significant effect (or the effect is unknown), applicants will be required to submit sufficient information for a project level Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken by the District Council under the Habitats Regulation Assessment process to ensure there will be no adverse impacts on the Ouse Washes designated site.

5.11.8 Policy intent

To support proposals which deliver renewable or low carbon energy infrastructure that can help Witchford parish reduce its contribution to climate change. In this respect, proposals that provide a source of low carbon or renewable energy that Witchford residents and businesses have the potential to connect with, will be particularly welcomed.

Importantly, other policies such as adopted Policy WNP LC1 (Landscape and Settlement Character) and Policy WNP GI3 (Development and Biodiversity) will apply alongside this policy.

Whilst the Policy has elements covered by existing East Cambridgeshire planning policy, such as ENV6 in the Local Plan and the Renewable Energy (commercial scale) SPD, by introducing this policy to the Neighbourhood Plan gives it the weight of a development plan policy (something which an SPD does not have). The policy also takes the opportunity to address locally specific issues, such as Impact Risk Zones which apply in the parish.

5.11.9 Context and reasoned justification

In the parish-wide survey undertaken in January 2023, and in response to a question asking whether people were in favour of renewable energy technology such as solar power, wind power or air/heat source pumps, 87.9% (of 116 responses) said yes.

When asked whether people would support the provision of small-scale renewable energy scheme in the parish to generate energy specifically for Witchford, nearly 100% said yes to small scale solar array, and over 75% supported a small-scale wind turbine or a community heat pump.

ECDC have published the following supplementary planning documents which are applicable to development proposals relating to renewable energy:

- Renewable Energy Development (Commercial Scale) SPD, October 2014 available here:

www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Renewable%20Energy%20SPD%20Final_0.pdf

As well as commercial schemes, this is also applicable to larger scale community led renewable energy schemes which are proposed by local communities and community organisations such as Community Land Trusts.

- District Design Guide SPD (2012) available here:

www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/FINAL%20design%20guide%202012_0.pdf

This contains advice on small scale schemes including turbines, solar panels and photovoltaic cells.

Witchford parish is close to three sites that are recognised nationally for their importance to protected habitats and protected species:

1. The Ouse Washes Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar site. At its closest point, the Ouse Washes is located just 3.5 km away from the northwest edge of the parish. An Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) is defined on land surrounding the Ouse Washes, signifying where certain types of development could have adverse impacts on the Ouse Washes. Witchford is sensitive to new development in this respect. For example, high levels of residential development could lead to disturbance through increased recreational activity and wind and solar energy infrastructure have the potential to undermine conservation objectives at the Ouse Washes.

2. Land beyond the boundary of the Ouse Washes is found to provide important functional habitat for qualifying bird species. For this purpose, the 'Goose and Swan Functional Land Impact Risk Zone (IRZ)' has been defined on areas of land surrounding the Ouse Washes. The northern part of Witchford parish falls within the Goose and Swan Function Land IRZ.

3. Ely Pitts and Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The eastern part of Witchford parish falls into the Impact Risk Zone for this site, indicating the sensitivity of the parish with respect to certain types of development undermining conservation objectives.

Due to the sensitivity of Witchford Parish with respect to protected habitats and protected species, wind energy infrastructure is not specifically supported by Policy CC/5, other than at the domestic scale.

6. Projects

- 6.1 Projects are non-planning-related tasks that complement the planning policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. They will help achieve the overarching Vision of the Plan and SIR:

'To value and protect the rural character and community spirit of Witchford, ensuring that future development is sustainable and meets local needs'

- 6.2 The projects are directly derived from the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaires, which invited respondents to comment and highlight issues that particularly concerned them.
- 6.3 CIL Funded Project List.

There are a range of community amenities and projects that are identified which can be wholly or partly funded by CIL contributions to the Parish. These are outlined below.

- Village environment, e.g. flower displays, seating on footpaths, litter bins. Suggestion for a community garden will be brought to the Parish Council for consideration whether to add to CIL123 projects list.
 - Community facilities e.g. Village Christmas tree, coffee club (assist with capital costs), youth club (assist with capital costs), non-land-use related improvements to village hall
 - Play facilities e.g. skate park, wild play spaces, village trim-trail, orienteering course, football/basketball cage
 - Small scale highways works such as bollards and signage to improve safety at rights of way crossings on A142
- 6.4 Other schemes not deliverable by Witchford Parish Council but which the Parish Council will support or lobby for:
- To improve General Practitioner facilities in the Parish.
 - To improve broadband and mobile phone network coverage in the area through proactive discussions with existing and potential operators.
 - To improve public transport provision in Witchford.
 - Improvements to public rights of way crossings over A142.
- 6.5 The Parish Council will liaise with the County Council, the primary school, stakeholders, landowners and the wider community with regard to future primary and secondary school provision in the plan area. Once it becomes apparent that additional land for new facilities will be required the Parish Council will look to safeguard sites (as part of a revised Neighbourhood Plan) for future provision. Possible sites for future safeguarding include those shown on 'Areas of Search for Possible Future Education Infrastructure', a map submitted alongside this Neighbourhood Plan. Education provision will be considered at the first review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

7. Monitoring and Review

Witchford Parish Council will have responsibility for providing the leadership for the Witchford Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council will closely monitor new development through the planning process to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies are adhered to. Each Annual Meeting of the Parish Council after the Plan's implementation will include a detailed report on the impact of the Neighbourhood Plan on the previous year, and the likely impact of the Plan for the forthcoming year. The Parish Council website www.witchfordpc.org will carry an up to date report on progress with the Plan during its lifetime. The Parish Council intends to hold four-yearly (one Parish Council term) reviews of the effectiveness of this Neighbourhood Plan, to be carried out by community-based

steering groups. These will hold the Parish Council to account for their stewardship of the Neighbourhood Plan, and will consider if there is any need to review or amend the Plan.

Appendix 1

Documentary evidence used in the production of Witchford Neighbourhood Plan

Copies of the documents or the relevant weblinks are on the Witchford Parish Council website www.witchfordpc.org.

1. General Plan production

Witchford Demographic, Social and Economic Review November 2017 CambsACRE
East Cambridgeshire Local Plan April 2015 East Cambridgeshire District Council
Neighbourhood Plan SWOT analysis November 2017 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Witchford Village Plan 2008 Witchford Parish Council
Witchford Village Vision Consultation Responses July 2011 East Cambridgeshire District Council
Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire November 2016 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Report on first village questionnaire January 2017 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire February 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Report on second village questionnaire March 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Report on Neighbourhood Plan drop-in session March 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Witchford Landscape Character Assessment December 2018 Alison Farmer Associates

2. Landscape and Character

Witchford Landscape Character Assessment December 2018 Alison Farmer Associates
National Character Area Profile No46: The Fens Natural England
Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire February 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Report on second village questionnaire March 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Supporting Evidence Paper for Policy WNP LC2 Witchford Area of Separation September 2019 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

3. Green Infrastructure

Witchford Landscape Appraisal December 2018 Alison Farmer Associates
Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire February 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Report on second village questionnaire March 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
CPERC database CPERC
Definitive Map of public rights of way Cambridgeshire County Council
Database of Witchford green infrastructure July 2018 Witchford Parish Council
Witchford Walks leaflet Witchford Parish Council
List of Tree Protection Orders for Witchford East Cambridgeshire District Council
Witchford Local Green Space Report May 2019 Witchford Parish Council
Witchford Local Green Space questionnaires August 2018 Witchford Parish Council
Summary of Witchford Green Spaces Facebook Posts
Witchford Local Greenspace: Supporting Information Open Spaces Group October 2018

4. **Housing**

Witchford Demographic, Social and Economic Review November 2017 CambsACRE
Ely Estate Agents Survey October 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire February 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Report on second village questionnaire March 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Building for Life 12 January 2015 Design Council
A New Way to Build Open Spaces Group April 2017
Housing for People and Wildlife January 2018 Wildlife Trusts
Sustainable Drainage Systems explanatory note April 2019
Witchford Housing Standards Evidence Report East Cambridgeshire District Council September 2019

5. **Infrastructure**

Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire February 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Report on second village questionnaire March 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Community Facilities Audit May 2013 East Cambridgeshire District Council
Play Areas Audit 2013 East Cambridgeshire District Council
0-19 Education Organisation Plan 2018-2019 Cambridgeshire County Council
Cambridgeshire County Council response to planning application for land at 27-39 Sutton Road (19/00966/OUM) July 2019
<https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

6. **Traffic**

East Cambridgeshire Local Transport Strategy December 2016 Cambridgeshire County Council
Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 3 July 2014 Cambridgeshire County Council
Witchford Parish Council Transport Plan September 2018 Witchford Parish Council
Witchford Pedestrian and Cycle Spine Route Policy January 2019 Witchford Parish Council
Witchford Automatic Traffic Count data November 2016 Witchford Parish Council
Witchford Village College Travel Plan March 2017 Witchford Village College
Speedwatch Data 2017 – 2019 Witchford Parish Council
Local Highways Improvement Fund supporting evidence 2017-2018 Witchford Parish Council
Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire February 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Report on second village questionnaire March 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Witchford Landscape Character Assessment December 2018 Alison Farmer Associates

7. **Connectivity**

A10 Pedestrian and Cycle Crossing Policy January 2019 Witchford Parish Council
East Cambridgeshire Local Transport Strategy December 2016 Cambridgeshire County Council
Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 3 July 2014 Cambridgeshire County Council
Ely Masterplan 2010 East Cambridgeshire District Council

8. **Supporting Witchford's Micro Economy**

Witchford Demographic, Social and Economic Review November 2017 CambsACRE
Database of Witchford businesses June 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Witchford business questionnaire July 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire February 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Report on second village questionnaire March 2018 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

9. **Climate Change effects and resilience policies**

Data Search Witchford Parish CPERC March 2023

Neighbourhood Plan Single-Issue Review questionnaire January 2023 Witchford Parish Council

Report on Neighbourhood Plan Single-Issue Review questionnaire January 2023 Witchford Parish Council

Net Zero Carbon Toolkit prepared by Levitt Bernstein, Elemanta, Passivhaus Trust and Etude October 2021

Environment Action Plan East Cambridgeshire District Council June 2023

Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document East Cambridgeshire District Council February 2021

Natural Environment Supplementary Planning Document East Cambridgeshire District Council September 2020

Mapping natural capital and opportunities for habitat creation in Cambridgeshire Natural Capital Solutions May 2019

List of Tree Preservation Orders in Witchford

Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD)

Cambridgeshire County Council's Surface Water Planning Guidance

Appendix 2

List of projects to assist climate change mitigation and resilience

Projects that could be progressed by the Parish Council, possibly also using CIL funding. In some cases (e.g. walking bus) this will be in co-operation with others:

- Community car hire scheme
- Walking bus
- Communal warm space
- Habitat restoration
- Sustainable energy sourcing/use in public buildings
- Community heating system
- Farmers' market
- Provision of resources such as mulch for use by residents to assist with water retention
- Rainwater collection points at allotments
- Tree planting initiatives
- Creation of wildflower meadows
- Running climate change events for the community. E.g. with guest speaker to discuss householder measures such as rewilding your garden or improving home insulation.

Appendix 3

Witchford's ability to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change. An assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Witchford Strengths	Related action for the NP?
Mitigation: ways in which Witchford is good at managing and reducing greenhouse gas emissions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of existing buildings have on-site renewable technology (solar panels) 	n/a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Witchford Village Hall project. A flagship building, which incorporates renewable technology 	Solar panels have been installed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern part of the parish includes land with areas of peatland. Peat is important because it stores carbon. This function should be protected. 	<p>✗ No. The management of peatland is a matter for landowners and farming practices. Other stakeholders have a role such as the Littleport and Downham Internal Drainage Board</p>
Adaptation: ways in which Witchford is resilient to the effects of climate change	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catchwater drains, associated wetland vegetation and ponds are important assets in managing heavy rainfall events 	<p>✗ The NP is unlikely to be an effective tool for ensuring the Catchwater drains continue to function well, largely because planning applications affecting them are not likely to come forward. Catchwater drains are managed by Anglian Water and Littleport and Downham Internal Drainage Board</p> <p>✓ The NP has a role in ensuring wetlands and ponds are protected or enhanced so that habitats and species have a better chance of coping during heavy rainfall events and periods of drought. Wetlands and ponds are also important for providing surface water storage for the attenuation of stormwater. The management of wetland vegetation and ponds is more a matter for landowners and other stakeholders in the land.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent of managed green infrastructure, in particular, accessible open spaces with trees, hedgerows and ponds. Green infrastructure is a crucial part of climate change adaptation in several ways: 	<p>✓ NP has a role in flagging up existing sites of local biodiversity value, to seek their protection and enhancement to ensure better</p>

Witchford Strengths	Related action for the NP?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The wildlife corridors and networks are essential in helping species cope during periods of hot weather and extreme weather events. b) The accessible open spaces provide opportunities for residents to access shaded open spaces within walking distances. All green infrastructure in proximity to the built-up areas will reduce temperatures during periods of hot weather c) Attenuation ponds and other SuDS wetlands may sequester carbon in vegetation and soil 	<p>resilience as the climate continues to change</p> <p>✓ NP has a role in protecting green infrastructure because of its role in capturing carbon and a role in encouraging new green infrastructure, in particular, tree planting.</p>

Witchford Weaknesses	Action through NP?
<p>Mitigation: ways in which Witchford performs poorly at managing and reducing greenhouse gas emissions</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing building stock is thought to be generally poorly insulated, making residents and employees dependent on gas and electricity. Residents are put at risk during cold weather because of high fuel bills for heating, and similarly during hot weather to provide air conditioning for cooling. • 	<p>✗ No. Planning policy cannot influence existing building stock, unless a planning application is involved. The Witchford Climate Action Group have made use of thermal imaging cameras, and a thermal camera has now been purchased by Witchford Parish Council. This helps residents understand heat loss from the existing building stock.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some homes in the village are heated via oil, making their carbon footprint even higher than those on the mains gas network. 	<p>✗ No. Planning policy only comes into force if a planning application is submitted. New technologies now exist (e.g. heat pumps) that could facilitate the decarbonisation of these existing homes. It will only be relevant to the NP if changes involve development that requires a planning application.</p>
<p>Adaptation: ways in which Witchford is vulnerable to the effects of climate change:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is feared some of the existing building stock has water run-off directed into sewers. This puts the village and wider area at risk during periods of heavy rainfall. 	<p>✗ Not a matter for planning policy. It is the responsibility of building owners, although it could be a matter for planning enforcement if there has been a breach of planning consent.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sparse tree coverage and woodland in countryside makes the land less resilient during extreme weather events. 	<p>✓ NP could identify existing areas of tree coverage and woodland for protection due to biodiversity value</p>

Witchford Weaknesses	Action through NP?
	AND role in helping parish resilience in a changing climate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large areas of the parish are close to sea level. This makes the parish vulnerable were there to be very extreme weather events 	✗ No. Planning policy only comes into force if a planning application is submitted. A strategic solution for addressing this issue in the wider area would be appropriate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Witchford experiences frequent power cuts due to issues in the network infrastructure 	✗ A matter for infrastructure providers

Opportunities:	Action through NP?
Mitigation: how could the parish manage and reduce greenhouse gas emissions?	
Reduce parish dependency on fossil fuels through:	✓ NP planning policy can influence new buildings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improving the environmental performance of existing buildings and requiring high standards from new buildings 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Exploring the potential for community-led renewables energy infrastructure 	✓ NP planning policy can take a positive stance towards on-site renewables
Improving options for sustainable travel (cycle ways).	✓ Witchford NP, adopted in 2020, includes Policy WNP C1, which highlights the importance of providing a sustainable and safe cycle and pedestrian route at the A142 junction (lies outside of the plan area) and seeks financial contributions from development towards its delivery.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) E.g. safer crossing at BP roundabout (note: outside parish). Support strategic projects for improving safe cycling routes 	ECDC is currently also prioritising the delivery of the Haddenham to Ely cycle route, which will be directed through Witchford. This will necessitate safety and accessibility improvements in Witchford village
Helping residents lead more sustainable lifestyles:	✓ Witchford NP, adopted in 2020, includes Policy WNP E1 which supports proposals that include design that facilitates home working as well as new accommodation suitable for microbusinesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Providing infrastructure to assist with home working options 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Providing communal charging points for electric vehicles in the village 	✗ It is recommended this is sought by the Parish Council, for example, as part of the Village Hall proposal.

Opportunities:	Action through NP?
c) Disseminating information to existing homeowners how they could improve the environmental performance of existing buildings.	✗ An initiative to be progressed by the Parish Council or the Witchford Climate Change Action Group
Adaptation	
Provision of more green infrastructure/tree planting etc and habitats to promote biodiversity.	✓ Yes. Should be included in new development proposals

Threats	Action through NP?
Mitigation: is there any infrastructure in place which helps manage and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that is under threat?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas of peat in northern part of the parish ceasing to store carbon 	✗ No. Planning applications for development unlikely to come forward on this land as the land is below sea level and used predominantly for farming. The management of peatland is a matter for landowners and farming practices. Stakeholders e.g. Littleport and Downham Internal Drainage Board may also have a role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New build not complying with existing regulations or meeting best practice industry standards, for example, still connecting rainwater run-off into sewers, not managing water run-off sustainably or maintaining culverts and drains as required 	✗ Planning enforcement has a role here. This will be dependent on reporting by Parish Council and residents.
Adaptation: is there any infrastructure in place that helps with climate change adaptation that is under threat	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The erosion of green infrastructure that helps both people and wildlife cope as the climate changes 	✓ NP planning policy has a role in taking a strong stance on the protection of green infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Losing green infrastructure that helps with managing storm water run-off, for example changing permeable surfaces into impermeable surfaces. The loss of front gardens into paved driveways has been flagged up as a concern. 	<p>✓ Existing flood managing policies in the NP, the Local Plan and at the national level has a role in flood risk management.</p> <p>✗ However, a NP planning policy cannot influence where changes occur that do not involve a planning application (for example, paving over front gardens).</p>

Appendix 4

Habitats of local biodiversity value in Witchford parish

Witchford's Top 20 Biodiversity Areas										
Map Ref	Features of area	Trees	Water	Wildflower Meadow	Wildflower Strips / no-mow areas	Hedging / wild boundaries	50yds + from A142 / Main St	Not next to regular traffic	Low Amenity value	Notes/Special features
A1	Sandpit Drove	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	An ecological corridor approximately 2 ha in area containing continuous and established hedgerows with scrub and deciduous trees. While the Northern end of Sandpit Drove is affected by traffic and noise pollution from the A142, along its length, the Drove has a number of varied habitats of high value to biodiversity. It has established areas of native woodland and scrub which support many species including a rookery. The fungus and lichen that thrive on the woodland floor and log piles where a stand of elm continues to survive provides fantastic autumn spectacle. The wildlife meadow which was sown in 2011 is lightly managed to protect biodiversity. This is a popular Witchford walk for residents and particularly for dog walkers but as it occupies a large area, footfall is sustainable.
A2	Long Drove	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	This public footpath leading northwards past the Anglia Water Sewage treatment plant is bounded by scrubby woodland to one side and hedges on the other. The woodland is often waterlogged in the winter months and parts of it have a drain running adjacent to it. A family of foxes, flocks of starlings, owls and other predator species can often be seen, important indicators of thriving biodiversity.

A3	Marroway Lane (North of A142) & Catchwater Drain West	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	An area of low amenity value, this public byway is impassible by motorized vehicles (except tractors) for much of the year. It is used by dogwalkers and pedestrians at more accessible times of year where areas of tree cover, scrub, hedging and ditches are useful for encouraging biodiversity. The Catchwater Drain encourages dragon flies and some water birds although at many times of year it is subjected to high levels of pollution due to runoff from intensively farmed agricultural land with algal blooms often in evidence.
A4	Community Orchard & Wildflower Meadow	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	A large area, lightly managed, with a footpath around its edge which can sustain the amount of footfall it attracts. The Community Orchard (aka The Old Rec) also has the advantage of a pond where frogspawn and newt activity is often seen, a meadow which is only mown once a year once wildflowers have had the opportunity to set their seed, plus a variety of fruit trees which attract a great many pollinators such as moths, hoverflies, bees, wasps etc. Thick hedging is maintained around the perimeter of the land and the other advantage of the Community Orchard is that it is adjacent to Kevin's Place, a privately owned area where a variety of wildlife abounds due to the lack of public access through its grounds.
A5	Kevin's Place	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Privately owned land with no public access, Kevin's Place is a small area managed primarily for the wildlife that lives in and around it. It lies between Fairchild Wood and Edna's Wood, Long Meadow and the Community Orchard, providing one of the most effective wildlife sanctuaries within the Parish of Witchford. The habitat provides ideal environments for barn owls, turtle doves, slow worms, and grass snakes, all of which have been sighted here, as well as the more common species such as rabbits.
B6	Ednas's Wood	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	An area measuring 0.48 hectares of mixed native trees and hedging which is lightly managed and provides a haven for wildlife. There is one path through it which enables the public to enjoy the woodland without straying too much into the undergrowth allowing biodiversity to flourish.
B7	Fairchild Wood	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	An area measuring 0.67 hectares of mixed native trees and hedging which is lightly managed and provides a haven for wildlife. There is one path around its edge which enables the public to enjoy the woodland without straying too much into the undergrowth allowing biodiversity to flourish.
B8	Mills Lane Woodland	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Privately owned, Mills Lane Woodland is the only woodland in the parish which has remained untouched for many years with no vehicular nor public access and has therefore created ideal conditions for biodiversity to flourish. At least 6 of its mature and thriving elm trees have Tree Protection Orders on them and new trees and other vegetation are naturally regenerating on the undisturbed woodland floor.

B9	Old Scenes Permissive Path	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	A popular pathway joining Grunty Fen Road to Long Meadow through wildflower strips, hedging and trees, through to 'Toad Corner' with its wooden bridge next to an area of bullrushes. With a ditch running alongside its edge draining into the main catchwater drain, the close proximity to water at most times of year increases its value to biodiversity.
B10	Pamby's Plantation and Catchwater Drain to Ridgeway Farm	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Although transected by the A142 whose traffic and noise pollution would otherwise reduce the value of this area for biodiversity, this varied area also contains 2 ponds and often has areas of standing water which encourage biodiversity as well as a byway that continues to run North of the A142 along the Catchwater Drain. Much of this byway is fringed with young elm and brambles which together with the water in the Catchwater Drain, support countless species including waterfowl, foxes, dragonflies, bees and butterflies. The byway is impassible by traffic for much of year which makes it particularly valuable as habitat for wildlife.
C11	Milleniumn Wood	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	With recent accelerating population growth in the village and with no new centralized green spaces yet to be provided to compensate for recent housing development, Millenium Wood has become one of Witchford's open spaces of highest amenity value. An increasing number of residents utilize its accessible paths, picnic table, seating and fire pit. A popular amenity for Witchford residents but of reducing value for biodiversity as log piles are disturbed, regular maintenance is required (e.g. path maintenance & litter-picking etc) and dogs and children run free away from the woodchip paths which disturbs wildlife and hampers the regeneration of trees and plants from the woodland floor.
C12	Ward Way	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	A small green bordered by grassland for grazing and hedging to its southern edge and garden hedges to the north, Ward Way provides trees and unmown areas which play their part in supporting biodiversity.
C13	Long Meadow Public Footpath	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	A meadow, measuring 0.62 hectares bounded by continuous and established hedgerows. A public footpath runs along one edge of the meadow and it is a popular dog walking area in the village,
C14	Victoria Green Biodiversity Area	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Although an area of high amenity value accessed by concreted footpaths and much used by children playing, dog walkers and pedestrians, tree cover on Victoria Green has been increased over the 25 years since it was established. This, and leaving some areas of reduced mowing with the recently introduced wildflower strips help to maintain a useful measure of biodiversity. There is also a small pond with reeds and vegetation which, although prone to drying out in the summer, is an added attraction for wildlife.
C15	The Common	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	An area of high amenity value much used by children playing and dogwalkers, the Common has areas of tree cover, scrub and wildflower strips, useful for encouraging biodiversity.

C16	Green Corner (Playing Fields)	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Newly established, the Green Corner of the playing fields has been established primarily as a public amenity for supporters of the junior football matches, however, in time it will become an important open space with wildflowers, hedging and native trees, as well as providing seating and interest for its users.
D17	Field End	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Biodiversity along the eastern end of Field End has been compromised by extensive construction during the building of Pemberton Park. However, 45 m of new hedging and the siting of 2 wildflower strips at the eastern entrance to Field End will not only provide interest and new habitat for biodiversity but in time, will link up with the wild pear trees along Common Road, the trees on the Elm Close Green and hopefully, open spaces on the Bellway development to reestablish wildlife corridors in this part of the village.
D18	Orton Drive Green	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	This small green has mature ash trees at its northern edge which support a rookery. It also has a number of newly planted cherry and hornbeam trees as well as an annual wildflower strip. It is popular with dog walkers and children.
D19	Village Sign Green	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Although this wide wooded verge borders Main Street, (the main access road through Witchford), it is adjacent to an allotments site with hedges and unmown edges, allowing space for biodiversity to flourish at the heart of the village.
D20	Dunham's Lane and Granny's End	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	A much-loved public right of way featuring an avenue of established trees that provide shade and access to Granny's End. Traffic and noise pollution reduce its value for biodiversity to thrive, as does the threat of development on the land adjacent to the avenue.

Cross Hatching = Private Land

KEY to Diversity Value

Highest

High

Medium

Lower

Appendix 5

Species list

Species recorded in Witchford Parish include the following:

Amphibians: common toad, common frog, smooth newt, great crested newt

Birds: common buzzard, kingfisher, barn owl, swift, red kite, house sparrow, tree sparrow, bullfinch, turtle dove, starling, song thrush, lapwing, linnet, yellowhammer, reed bunting, corn bunting, skylark, grey partridge, yellow wagtail, swallow, house martin

Flowering plants: field scabious, birds-foot trefoil, ivy, honeysuckle, dead-nettles, yarrow, knapweeds, bedstraws, valerian, primrose, bramble, common reed, native grasses

Trees and shrubs: elms, birches, willows, poplars, oak, hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, spindle, privet

Insect: (moths) white-spotted pinion, reed leopard. (butterflies) marbled white, green veined white, white-letter hairstreak, wall brown

Reptiles: common lizard, slow worm and grass snake

Terrestrial mammals: hedgehog, badger, brown hare, otter, noctule bat, soprano and common pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat, Natterer's bat, Daubenton's bat