

# WITCHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

**Your chance to comment on the Draft Plan**



**Consultation Drop-in Event  
at the Village Hall  
Saturday 14 December between  
10.30am and 1.00pm**

**We need your comments by  
Monday 10 February 2025**

**Witcham Parish Council**

Since the end of 2022, the Parish Council has been preparing a neighbourhood plan for Witcham with the help of volunteers and professional support.

A neighbourhood plan is a community-led document for guiding decisions that need planning permission. Once complete it will become part of the legal planning framework for the area, sitting alongside the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan and used when planning applications are decided.



The Neighbourhood Plan covers these key themes:

Each theme is supported by planning policies covering specific matters relevant to Witcham and not covered by other local or national policies. In addition, the Plan contains “community actions” addressing non-planning concerns that have been raised during the preparation of the Plan.

We’ve now reached a major milestone and are commencing consultation on the Draft Plan. Consultation commences on **14 December and lasts until 10 February**, a period of **8 weeks**. It’s your chance to say whether or not you support the content of the Plan or would like to see some changes.

**THE FINAL PAGE OF THIS LEAFLET EXPLAINS HOW YOU CAN COMMENT.**

**It is important that you use this opportunity to have your say, even if you’re fully supportive of the Plan.**

Following this consultation, all comments will be reviewed and necessary changes made before the Plan is submitted to the District Council, who will carry out further consultation and then send the Plan to an Independent Neighbourhood Plan Examiner for review. Those residents of the Parish who are on the Register of Electors will then be given an opportunity to vote at a Parish Referendum whether the Plan should be used by the District Council when deciding planning applications.

**THE PLAN STARTS WITH A VISION:**

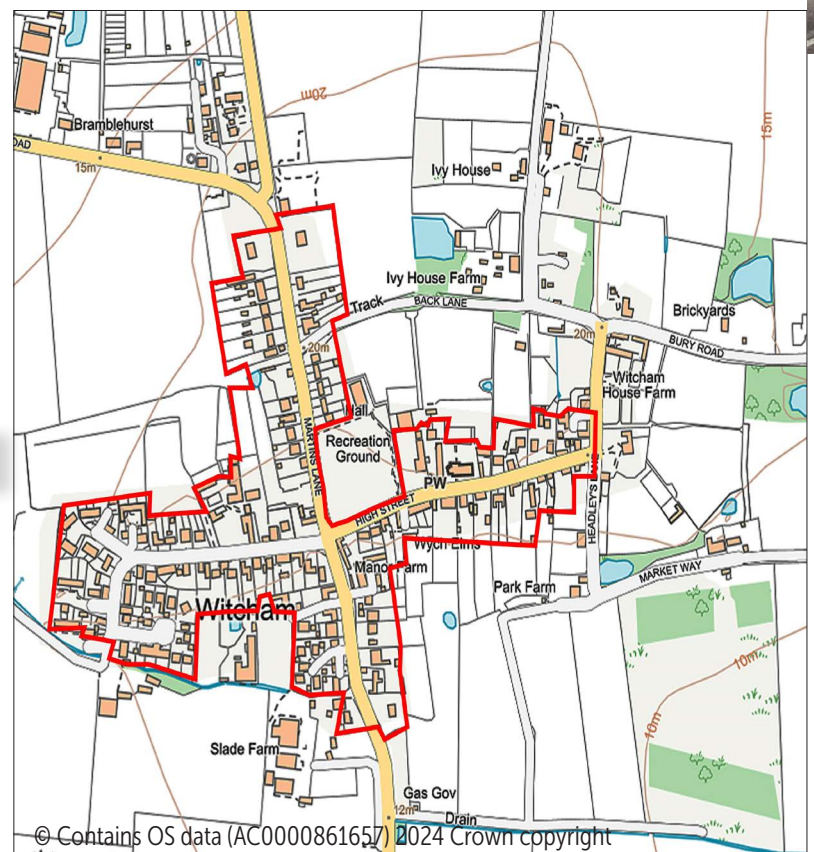
**In 2036 Witcham will remain a small village where any new development has been sympathetic to the important natural and historical characteristics of the Parish and where services and facilities are maintained and enhanced to meet the needs of residents.**

This is followed by theme objectives and planning policies that reflect the Vision.

### PLANNING STRATEGY

The Plan acknowledges the “Development Envelope”, defined in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, and supports development within it where it would not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity, the natural and historic environment, infrastructure and highways.

Outside the Development Envelope, priority will be given to protecting the countryside from inappropriate development. Where proposals do come forward, they will have to demonstrate a need and ensure that there is no detrimental impact on the landscape.



The Development Envelope

## HOUSING

The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any new sites for housing development.

There may be opportunities for infill housing plots within the Development Envelope, subject to impact on the local environment, neighbouring properties and infrastructure.

The affordability of housing to enable people to stay in the village was identified as an issue during the preparation of the Plan. A policy is included that would enable affordable housing to be developed on acceptable sites outside but adjoining the Development Envelope under the Government's "exception site" guidelines and which would be for people with a local connection that cannot afford to buy on the open market. The housing would be provided by a housing association and always remain affordable.



## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

We know that the parish is rich in wildlife habitats with the Ouse Washes being of international importance. A policy in the Plan seeks to ensure that development will not have a detrimental impact on these designated sites.

New Government legislation now requires most development to provide measurable biodiversity net gain in their proposals. The Plan supports the delivery of biodiversity enhancements in proposals that are exempt from the legislation, mainly smaller developments.

The landscape of the Parish is such that there are extensive views in and out of the village centre as well as important views within it. The Plan seeks to protect the key features of the identified views.

**Community Action** – to support the work of the Witcham Wildlife and Nature Conservation Group.

## HISTORIC and BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Much of the village centre is covered by a conservation area and there are also ten listed buildings in the Parish, of which the church of St Martin is Grade 1. The District Council has also identified White Horse Inn, Witcham House and Grange Farm as "Buildings of Local Interest".

The design of development was highlighted as an important matter in the Neighbourhood Plan survey. Design Guidance has been prepared for the Parish by consultants and funded by the Government support programme. It provides comprehensive guidance for new developments and the Neighbourhood Plan sets out a number of design criteria that planning applications will have to take into account.

The Plan includes policies on:

- Development design
- Limiting light pollution
- Flooding and sustainable drainage
- Sustainable building practices
- Renewable energy
- Protecting heritage assets, and
- Buildings of local heritage significance

**Community Action** – to explore the viability of facilitating a rural heat network for the village.

## FACILITIES and SERVICES

You told us that our existing facilities and services are valued by residents, especially the Village Hall and Recreation Ground and that you would like additional graveyard and cremation memorial garden space within the village. The Plan seeks to protect such facilities and prevent them from being lost and supports the creation of new facilities that meet the needs of the village.

**Community Action** – to look at ways of supporting the Mepal Youth Club.

**Community Action** – to take opportunities to raise the profile of Neighbourhood Watch within the village community.

**Community Action** – to support the establishment of a community led group tasked with installing green initiatives, such as a community garden, floral displays and wildflower planting along road verges.

**Community Action** – to investigate options for providing additional graveyard and cremation memorial garden space.

## HIGHWAYS and TRAVEL

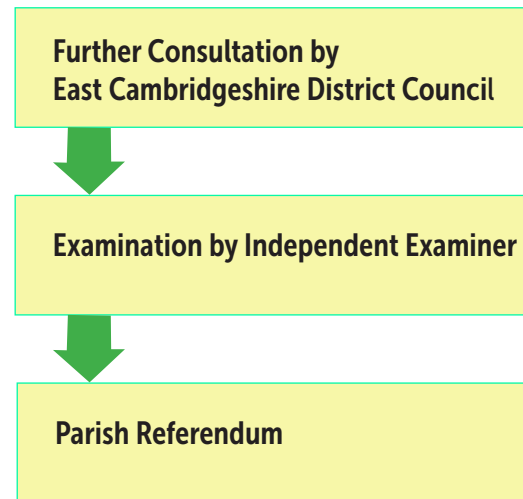
Neighbourhood plans have little power to introduce highway improvements as most schemes will not require planning permission. Parish Councils have a lobbying role in getting improvements. Existing national and local plan policies ensure that development does not have a detrimental impact on the road network.

There is a good level of public rights of way across the Parish, with an unusually high proportion of byways open to all traffic. The residents' survey identified support for more public rights of way across the Parish. The Neighbourhood Plan supports measures to improve and extend the network.

**Community Action** to lobby for the improvement of footpath access between local communities.

**Community Action** to support the Community Speedwatch initiative and other measures to enforce speed restriction.

**What next:** Once the consultation is complete, all comments received will be reviewed and, as necessary, the draft Plan will be amended and updated. It will follow these stages:



The Parish Referendum will ask whether you want the Plan to be used by the District Council when making decisions on planning applications. If the majority of those voting say "yes", the District Council will adopt the Plan.

## HOW TO COMMENT

The full version of the Plan will be available to download at [www.witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk) from 13 December, where an online comments form will also be available to complete. For quick access from a mobile device, you can use the QR code

If you don't have access to the internet, paper copies of the Plan will be available to borrow for a short period from:  
17 The Slade; 11 Silver Street; and The Old School, 30A High Street

### Drop-in Event

We'll be at the Village Hall on Saturday 14 December. Drop in anytime between 10.30am and 1.00pm where you'll be able to find out more about the Plan and talk to members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.

### How to comment

During the consultation period the Neighbourhood Plan website will have an online survey form which you can complete.

You can also collect a paper response form at the Drop-in Event or from the above addresses. The forms explain how you can submit them.

**We want your comments, even if you support everything in the Plan.**

**COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MONDAY 10 FEBRUARY - WE CANNOT ACCEPT COMMENTS AFTER THIS TIME**

