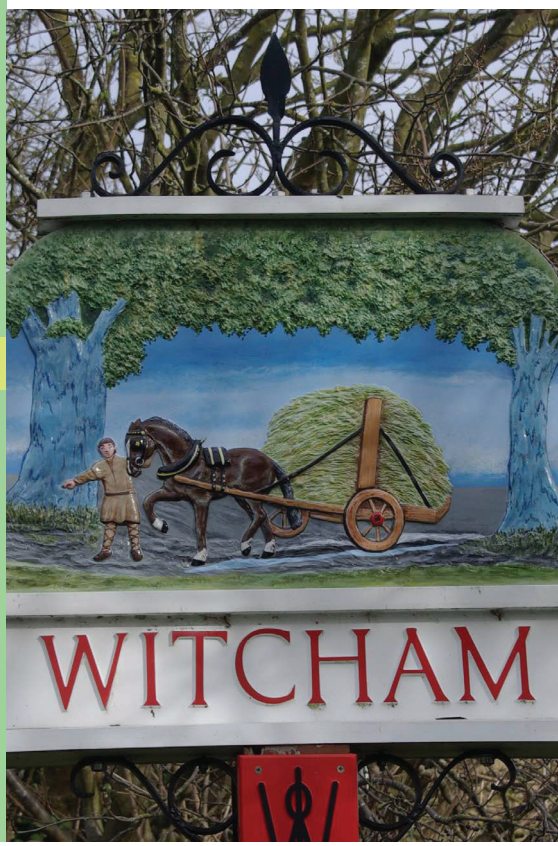
WITCHAM

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2024 – 2036

Made Plan
February 2026





Witcham Parish Council

Neighbourhood planning in a nutshell

The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to prepare neighbourhood plans, which establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in the neighbourhood. These Plans, when properly "made" become part of the legal planning framework for the designated area.

A neighbourhood plan is, therefore, a community-led plan for guiding decisions on future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. It concentrates on the use and development of land and can contain planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, and the allocation of sites for specific kinds of development.

Parish councils are encouraged to produce their own neighbourhood plans, enabling local people to have a say as to how their neighbourhood grows and develops. In a designated neighbourhood area, which contains all or part of the administrative area of a parish council, that council is responsible for the preparation of the Plan. Neighbourhood plans cannot contradict the main government planning policies or the strategic policies in the Local Plan for the area. For example, they cannot propose less development than is planned for in the adopted Local Plan.

Before a neighbourhood plan can be brought into force it needs to complete the following stages:

1 "Pre-submission" consultation on the Draft Plan by Parish Council

This was carried out between December 2024 and February 2025. The Plan was widely consulted on in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, allowing residents, businesses, landowners and a range of government bodies and service providers the opportunity comment on the Draft Plan.

2 Submission of Draft Plan to the District Council

All comments received at the "pre-submission" consultation were considered and reviewed and any necessary amendments to the Plan made. The Plan, together with supporting documents was then submitted to the District Council.

3 "Submission" consultation on the Draft Plan by the District Council

The District Council consulted on the submission version of the neighbourhood plan between Thursday 17 July and Tuesday 2 September 2025. It provided a further opportunity to comment.

4 Independent examination of Draft Plan

Following the submission consultation, the plan was examined by an independent Neighbourhood Plan Examiner.

5 Parish Referendum

The Neighbourhood Plan Examiner determined that the Plan, subject to necessary amendments, could go forward to a Parish Referendum, which was held on 12 February 2026. All those living in the Parish entitled to vote at elections were able to vote on whether the Plan should be used by the District Council when making decisions on planning applications. 91% of those that voted cast their vote in favour of the Plan.

6 Adoption by the District Council

Following the "yes" vote, the Plan was "made" (adopted) by East Cambridgeshire District Council on 24 February 2026.

Prepared by Witcham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group for Witcham Parish Council and supported by Places4People Planning Consultancy

PLACES4PEOPLE PLANNING CONSULTANCY P4P

Cover photograph by Helen Calver.
Further photographs in this Plan taken by residents and AECOM Urban Design consultants

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1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

1.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to prepare neighbourhood plans, which establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood plans, when properly "made", become part of the legal planning framework for the designated area.

1.2 A neighbourhood plan is a community-led plan that guides decisions on future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. It concentrates on providing a framework for the sustainable use and development of land, containing planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, and the allocation of sites for specific kinds of development.

1.3 Parish councils are encouraged to produce their own neighbourhood plans, enabling local people to have a say as to how their neighbourhood grows and develops. In a designated neighbourhood area, which contains all or part of the administrative area of a parish council, that council is responsible for the preparation of the Plan. Neighbourhood plans cannot contradict the main government planning policies or the strategic policies in the Local Plan for the area. For example, they cannot propose less development than is planned for in the adopted Local Plan.

Background to Witcham Neighbourhood Plan

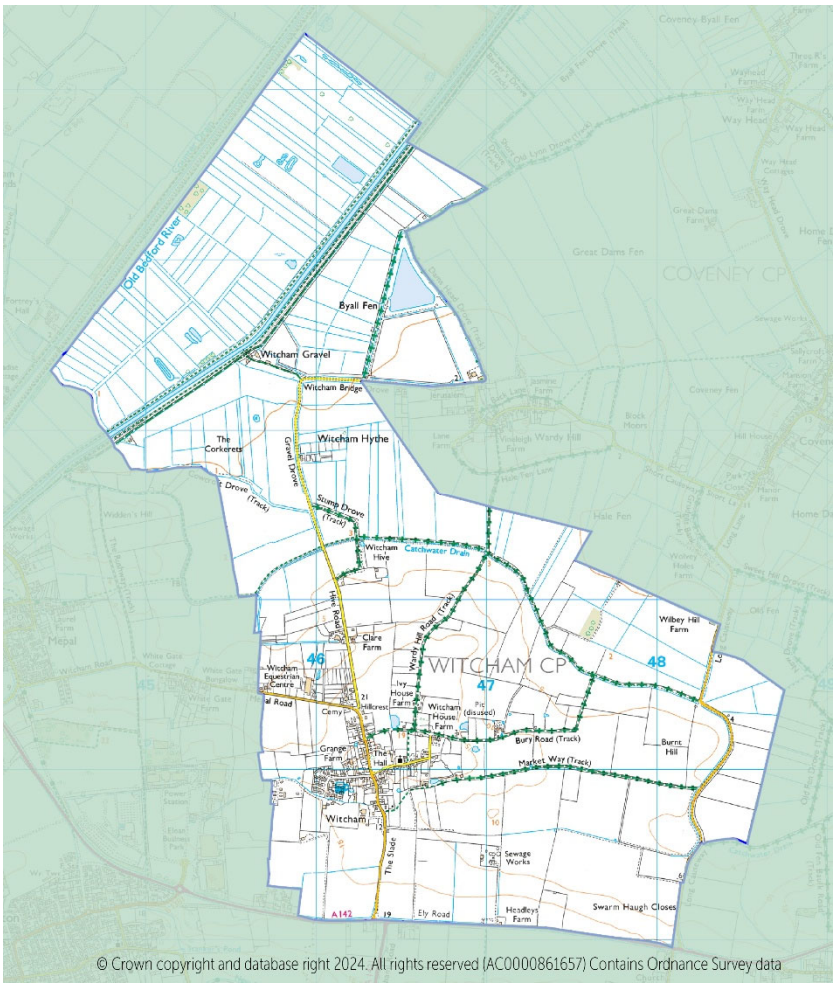
1.4 In Summer 2022 a group of volunteers and Parish Councillors commenced investigations as to whether there was sufficient interest in the community to prepare a neighbourhood plan for Witcham. Later in the year the Parish Council agreed to establish a Working Group and retain planning consultants to prepare the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan. In January 2023 an application was made to East Cambridgeshire District Council to designate the whole parish, as illustrated on **Map 1**, as the "Neighbourhood Area". The District Council confirmed that designation on 9th January 2023.

1.5 Since the area was designated, work has been carried out to gather information and evidence to support the content of the Plan and, in particular, its planning policies. This includes:

- An adult and separate youth residents' survey in Autumn 2023
- Design Guidance prepared by AECOM as part of the Government's Neighbourhood Planning support package – March 2024

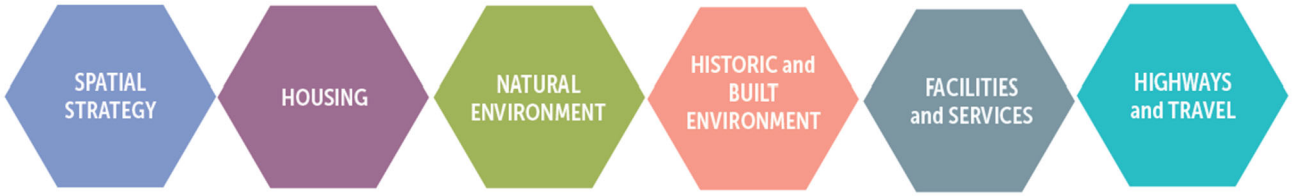
A feedback event to illustrate the key messages from the survey and the content of the Design Guidance was held at the Village Hall on 24 March 2024.

1.6 A total of 98 responses were received from households to the survey and 9 responses were from 10-18 year olds to the youth survey. The outcomes of the survey are referred to under specific sections of the Plan. Likewise, the Design Guidance plays a key role in supporting the policies of the Plan.



Map 1 - Witcham Parish Neighbourhood Area

1.7 This is the "Made" (adopted) Neighbourhood Plan which attracted a majority "yes" vote at a Parish Referendum on 12 February 2026 and was subsequently "made" (adopted) by East Cambridgeshire District Council on 24 February 2026. The Plan covers the period 2024 to 2036 and focuses on six distinct themes, namely:



How the Plan is used

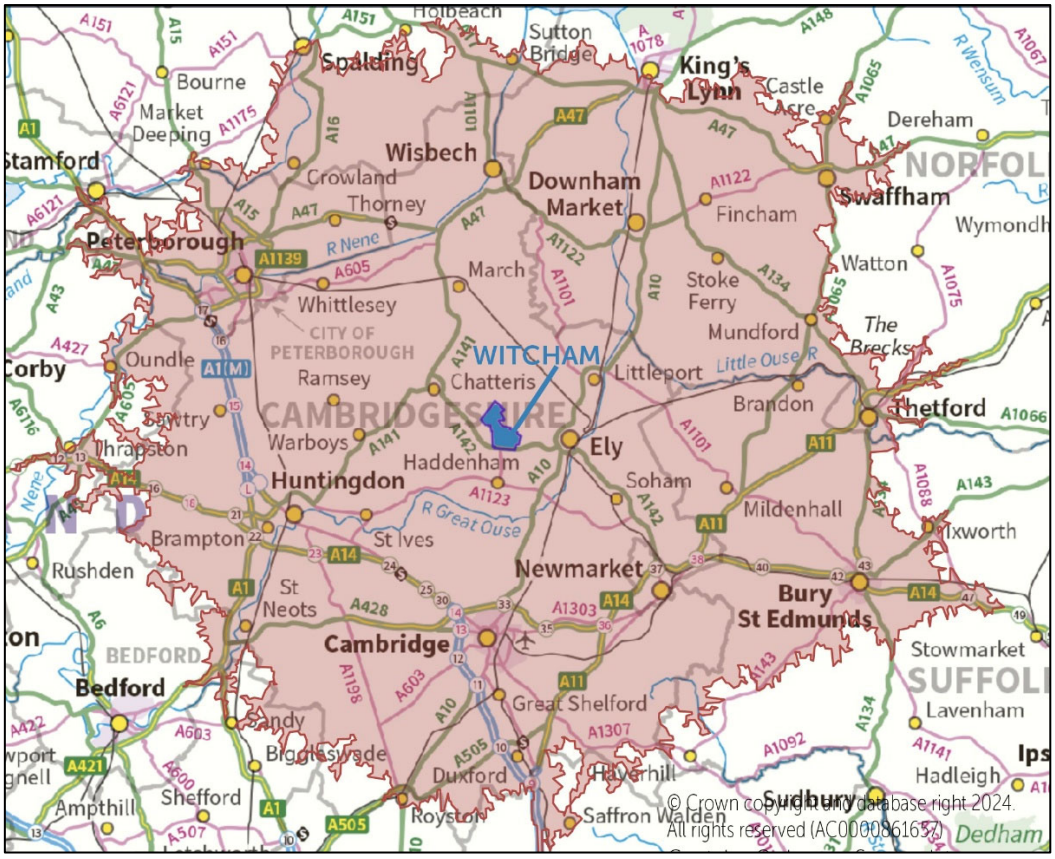
1.8 The Neighbourhood Plan provides a framework of planning policies that will supplement, rather than repeat, the planning policies in the adopted East Cambridgeshire Local Plan which was adopted by the District Council. The planning policies can only be applied to matters that require planning permission. The preparation of the Plan does not change the role of the Parish Council in considering planning applications. We remain a consultee on applications and the District or, occasionally, the County Council remains the decision making body. When considering planning applications, the Plan is taken as a whole and the policies that are appropriate to the site and/or proposal will be taken into account. Because of this it is not necessary, for example, for every planning policy to refer to the design of any development as this is dealt with in specific policies. The policies in the Plan are distinctly identified in coloured boxes with a prefix of WHM for Witcham in order that references to policies in planning decisions are clear as to the source.

1.9 In addition to planning policies, the Neighbourhood Plan contains "community actions" that, although they do not form part of the development plan, identify local initiatives that address issues and concerns raised during the community engagement. The community actions are identified differently from the planning policies to avoid confusion.

2. WITCHAM PAST AND PRESENT

Location

2.1 The parish has an area of just over 10 square kilometres or 4 square miles. The centre of the village is just north of the A142, 6 miles west of Ely, and approximately 20 miles north of Cambridge. A number of larger centres are within a one hour drive time from the village, as illustrated on **Map 2**.



Map 2 – One-hour drive time from Witcham

Early times

2.2 The earliest known activity in the Witcham area dates from the Mesolithic period (between 10-4,000 BC) but this was on the gravel north of the village towards Wardy Hill. The earliest artefacts near the village itself date from the Neolithic, or New Stone Age (4,000 BC onwards) and these therefore represent the first farming communities in Witcham. Later, in the early centuries of the first millennium AD, the Romans had a presence on the Isle and the famous bronze helmet found at Witcham Gravel, now on show at the British Museum, has ensured Witcham's place in history.



The Witcham Helmet

2.3 The name Witcham has attracted various suggestions as to its origins, and associations with wych elms and witchcraft are popular theories. However, the numerous and different spellings (including Wichamme and Wiccham) in early documents give cause for doubt.

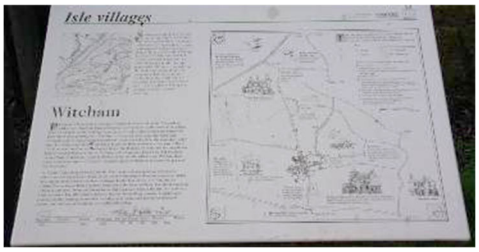
The Middle Ages and later

2.4 Our first written records, concerning Witcham, come from the Middle Ages and at these times, the manor provided the organisational basis for every community with villagers gaining access to land for farming by providing their labour or goods. The Manor of Witcham belonged to the church at Ely from early times (certainly before Doomesday, 1086) and there are many surviving records in the form of the Ely Dean and Chapter archives, which are now located at the Cambridge University Library.

2.5 Tenancy of land was protected by custom so families had the right to pass on their rented holdings to offspring, normally the eldest son. Witnessed by other tenants, these transactions were recorded as proceedings of the 'Court Baron' while misdemeanours might be dealt with at a 'Court Leet'. If a villager tried to encroach on a neighbouring field and appropriate a few extra feet for crops, he could be brought to justice at the Court of the Manor of Witcham. Witcham had only one manor and the Lordship was a title held by successive bishops of Ely and later by the Dean and Chapter, who held numerous other manors on the Isle. As there was no aristocratic Lord of the Manor in residence here, it is possible that in early times the manor house provided a home and manorial office for a reeve (an estate manager - as in The Reeve's Tale from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales) whose presence would ensure the people of Witcham paid their proper dues for any lands they farmed. From the 16th century, the estate lands, Manor House and farm buildings began to be let out for rental income, the Lessee (who was not always local) then subletting the fields and homesteads to villagers at a profit. Maps and plans were uncommon so holdings were described in documents either by their traditional field names (e.g. Cuckoo Close, Penny Pingle, Swarm Haugh) or their position in relation to neighbours routes (Market Way, Wardy Way, etc). Knowing where a plot lay was therefore totally dependent on local knowledge, which would pass down through the generations. The village's layout of High Street, Back Lane and Silver Street is typically medieval, as is the name Slade which was originally Le Slade. The name Martin's Lane most likely originates from the Martin family who owned land either side of it.

Allocation of land

2.6 The formal enclosure of open fields took place gradually over several centuries and in this area much of it took place on the fen and marshland reclaimed by drainage. The Act of Enclosure was resented by many and seen as an opportunity for already wealthy people to take possession of commons and other land which was not theirs. Those in favour claimed it made better use of land and improved productivity (and thus wealth). Whichever their view, the villagers of Witcham saw their surrounding fields finally enclosed in 1838 when every plot of land was finally numbered and allocated to people who are actually named on the Enclosure Maps, with much held by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (the church).



Witcham Village Information Board

Education

2.7 As early as 1582 the village had a licensed schoolmaster and by 1799 there were two schools, one Anglican and another Non-Conformist. However, facilities for schooling fluctuated dramatically in the following decades until, in 1873, a grant enabled the construction of a school building in High Street along with a house for the schoolmaster. Only a century later the school faced closure. The proposal was resisted fiercely by villagers, as documented in news cuttings of the time. The battle was ultimately lost and since 1982 children have travelled to other villages for schooling.


St Martin's Church

The Church

2.8 St Martin's Church is the oldest and most significant building, both architecturally and historically. Begun in the 13th century, the building was altered and extended in the following centuries. Unfortunately, its tower did not have the staying power of the main building and after partial collapse had to be rebuilt in the late 1600s. In medieval times, the internal walls were highly decorated and the pale dots still visible on the arches are witness to the building's colourfully-painted past.

2.9 While many early churches were victims of over-zealous restoration and repair in Victorian times, St Martin's escaped this fate. However, it did not escape another form of vandalism: 17th century graffiti on the stone pulpit! This pulpit, along with the very early carved stone font, are just two of the church's architectural treasures.



Yew Tree House



View along Martins Lane

Domestic buildings

2.10 Despite its modest size, Witcham has several buildings which have been considered of sufficient architectural and historical merit to make them worthy of 'listing'. All except one of the historic houses lie along the main east-west axis of the village. The Old Crown, a former ale house, in High Street, now a private house, is described as dating from the 18th century while Glebe Lodge is 18th century at the front with a large rear 'extension' dating from the first half of the 19th century. Originally a private house, Glebe Lodge later served as a vicarage when the Parish had a resident vicar and is now back as a private house.

2.11 On the opposite side of High Street, Witcham Hall, is a farmhouse believed to date from the reign of Queen Anne (c1700). It acquired its castellations and flamboyant chimneys in the 19th century when it was altered to the more fashionable 'Gothic' style which enjoyed popularity in Victorian times. The farm's timber frame barn, of the same period as the original house, is likewise 'listed'.

2.12 At the crossroads, Yew Tree House is thought to date from around 1600. The building was not affected by later architectural fashions and consequently its form remains essentially as it was when built - at the time when East Anglia led the way in both the manufacture and use of bricks and when the Isle of Ely played a significant part in the process.

2.13 Hill House in Martins' Lane is a later building but in an older tradition, timber framing. There are also several buildings in the village which are considerably older than their later exteriors suggest. Manor Farmhouse is an example of this, its Georgian exterior concealing a timber frame and medieval joists thought to date from the 1400's.

2.14 Many villagers recall the numerous homesteads and farm buildings, which have been demolished in recent times: Witcham, like many places, lost them before their historic value was recognised. An old dovecote of timber, once situated behind houses on The Slade, provided a climbing frame for village children. The doveholes making perfect footrests for little feet!

Recent times

2.15 The village took a leap forward when it received mains water in 1921; the electricity supply came as late as 1954 and mains sewerage later still - in the late 1950's. The Second World War had led to considerable numbers of new neighbours with RAF operations in both Sutton and Witchford. The camp beside The Slade housed Land Army girls and then refugees from Poland and provided the village with some additional facilities including hairdressing and a cinema.

2.16 In 1962, the Parish Council acquired land (named on old maps as 'Greaves Close Orchard') for a new recreation ground. For some years, volunteers had the onerous task of transporting the school piano to a local barn for village celebrations so it was no doubt a relief to many when the Village Hall was opened in 1969. The hall has been a great success and was refurbished in 2013. The community started to grow with small housing developments at The Orchards and Westway Place (named after an old track or drove where it is located). To commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee the village received a gift from Witcham's branch of the Women's Institute: a sign illustrating the old fire engine. The fire engine currently resides with the Peterborough Volunteer Fire Brigade Fleet Team in Peterborough.

2.17 The renowned World Pea Shooting Championship was started as an imaginative fund-raising venture but its popularity has ensured its continuity as an annual event receiving media coverage from local and national press as hi-tech lasers vie with traditional shooters.

2.18 In 1638 there had been a 'great riot at Wickham' - a demonstration against the draining of the fens with the consequent loss of pike, eel and duck for the table. In 1997 villagers continued their tradition of opposing what they felt was inappropriate for their community, albeit in a less riotous fashion: the proposal to construct what would be the largest bio-mass power station in Europe close to the village created wholesale resistance. As with the earlier fights against the draining of the fens and the closure of the school, the people of the small village of Witcham lost the battle. But never for want of trying.

Witcham today

2.19 Witcham is one of the smallest settlements in East Cambridgeshire district. At the time of the 2021 Census, there were 189 dwellings in the Parish, an increase of 15 since 2001. However, over the same period the population only grew by 9 people. The village centre represents just 3% of the area of the Parish, demonstrating the rural nature of Witcham.

2.20 Over the last twenty years there have been some significant changes in the age profile of residents, as illustrated in **Figure 1**. The proportion of people aged 60 and over has increased by one half and the number of children aged under 15 has reduced by one third.

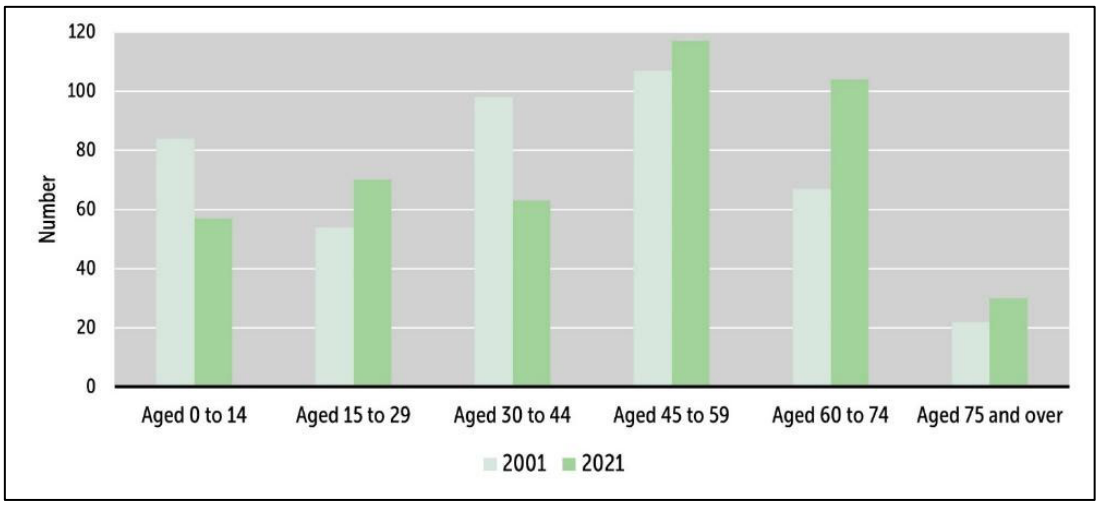


Figure 1: Witcham Age Comparison 2001 and 2021 (source Office for National Statistics)

2.21 In terms of facilities available to residents, there is only the White Horse Inn, the Village Hall and Recreation Ground, St Martin's Church and the Cemetery. There is a petrol filling station and shop on the A142 at Witcham Toll, albeit outside the parish boundary, while the nearest primary school is at Mepal and shops providing day-to-day needs are at Sutton and Mepal. The Recreation Ground is home to the Annual World Pea Shooting Competition, which was begun as an imaginative fundraising event in 1971 to support the refurbishment of the Village Hall which is run by a separate management team.

2.22 There are no significant employment sites in the Parish, the nearest being located at the Elean Business Park at Sutton and Lancaster Way Business Park on the eastern outskirts of Witchford. Within the Parish there are a range of small businesses including farms, equestrian uses, small workshops and studios and leisure related business. The 2021 Census identified that 63% of residents over the age of 15 were in employment, compared with 61.5% across East Cambridgeshire.

2.23 The High Street and part of Silver Street are designated as a Conservation Area and the Ouse Washes to the north-west of the Parish are of international wildlife significance, designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area and a Ramsar site (after the 1971 Ramsar convention).

Further Historical Information about Witcham can be found on the following links:
https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/cambs/vol4/pp172-175
https://www.archiuk.com/cgi-bin/archi_new_search_engine.pl?search_location=Witcham&search_range=10000&pwd=&SearchType=freesearch
https://maps.nls.uk/
https://witcham.ccan.co.uk/content/catalogue_item/witcham-fire-engine-featured-in-ely-museum

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan must:

- have appropriate regard to national planning policy; and
- be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area and contribute to sustainable development.

National Planning Policy

3.2 In December 2024 the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states:

"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:

a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;

b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:

   i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or

   ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."

3.3 For communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans the NPPF acknowledges that neighbourhood plans can "shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development" but that they "Should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies."

Local Planning Policy

3.4 At a more local level, the relevant Local Plan is the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan adopted in 2015 (as amended 2023). The Local Plan focuses most growth on Ely, Littleport and Soham. For Witcham it states:

"Witcham is likely to continue to grow at a slow rate, with new housing being built on suitable 'infill' sites within the village. No new housing allocation sites are proposed on the edge of Witcham. A 'development envelope' has been drawn around Witcham to define the built-up part of the village where infill development may be permitted. The purpose is to prevent sprawl into the open countryside. Development on infill sites will need to be in line with Policy GROWTH 2."

"Outside the development envelope, housing will not normally be permitted – unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as essential dwellings for rural workers, or affordable housing."

3.5 On 19 October 2023 the District Council adopted a revision to its Local Plan. It addressed Policy GROWTH 1 and its associated supporting text and updated the housing requirement figure for East Cambridgeshire as a whole. The revision does not impact the Neighbourhood Plan in terms of future housing development in the parish.

3.6 In October 2024 the District Council took the decision to prepare a new Local Plan for the district. The published "Local Development Scheme" (October 2024) stated that the initial consultation on the options for the Local Plan would be carried out by the District Council in the period June to September 2025. However, In February 2025 the District Council voted to rescind its original decision to prepare a Local Plan in the light of Government proposals for local government reorganisation.

3.7 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan was jointly prepared and adopted by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council in July 2021. It identifies some areas to the north of the Parish as 'minerals safeguarding areas' in order that "known locations of specific mineral resources of local and/or national importance are not needlessly sterilised by non-mineral development." Developers should refer to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan prior to submitting planning applications to ensure that its provisions are taken into account.

4. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 The Vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan have been prepared taking into consideration the outcomes of the community engagement referred to earlier, as well as the evidence collected from published data, surveys and assessments. They also take account of the need to prepare a neighbourhood plan that conforms with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.

4.2 The Vision sets out the over-arching approach as to how development in Witcham will be delivered through the Neighbourhood Plan in the period to 2036. This is refined through the Objectives established for each of the topic areas which, in turn, have guided the identification of the planning policies contained in the Plan. The planning policies do not repeat the policies in the Local Plan or the NPPF but supplement them by adding local detail or addressing locally specific matters. In some instances, the Objectives will be delivered through Community Actions.

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.

OBJECTIVES

Future Development Locations

1. Ensure that new development is located where it will protect the historic character of Witcham and minimise impact on the natural environment.

Housing

2. To meet the housing needs of current and future residents and those with a connection to the Parish.

Natural Environment

3. Identify, protect and enhance the landscape character of Witcham including green spaces, hedgerows, woodland and watercourses.
4. Protect important views and links to the wider countryside.
5. Deliver net gains to the extent and quality of natural habitats and biodiversity.

Historic and Built Environment

6. Conserve and enhance the village's heritage assets.
7. Ensure that new development is designed in a way that reflects local character.
8. Through the incorporation of energy saving measures, minimise the environmental impact of new development.

Services and Facilities

9. Minimise the impact of development on the capacity of essential infrastructure and services and seek to improve them.
10. Protect and improve the range of existing community facilities and services.

Highways and Travel

11. Protect, maintain and improve the Public Rights of Way network.
12. Ensure that new development minimises impact on the existing road network.
13. Support proposals that deliver improvements to identified dangerous road junctions and address issues relating to the speed of traffic.
14. To support and identify ways to improve connectivity between villages for safe and easy travel by cycle or foot.

5. SPATIAL STRATEGY

Objective

1. **Ensure that new development is located where it will protect the historic character of Witcham and minimise impact on the natural environment.**

Context

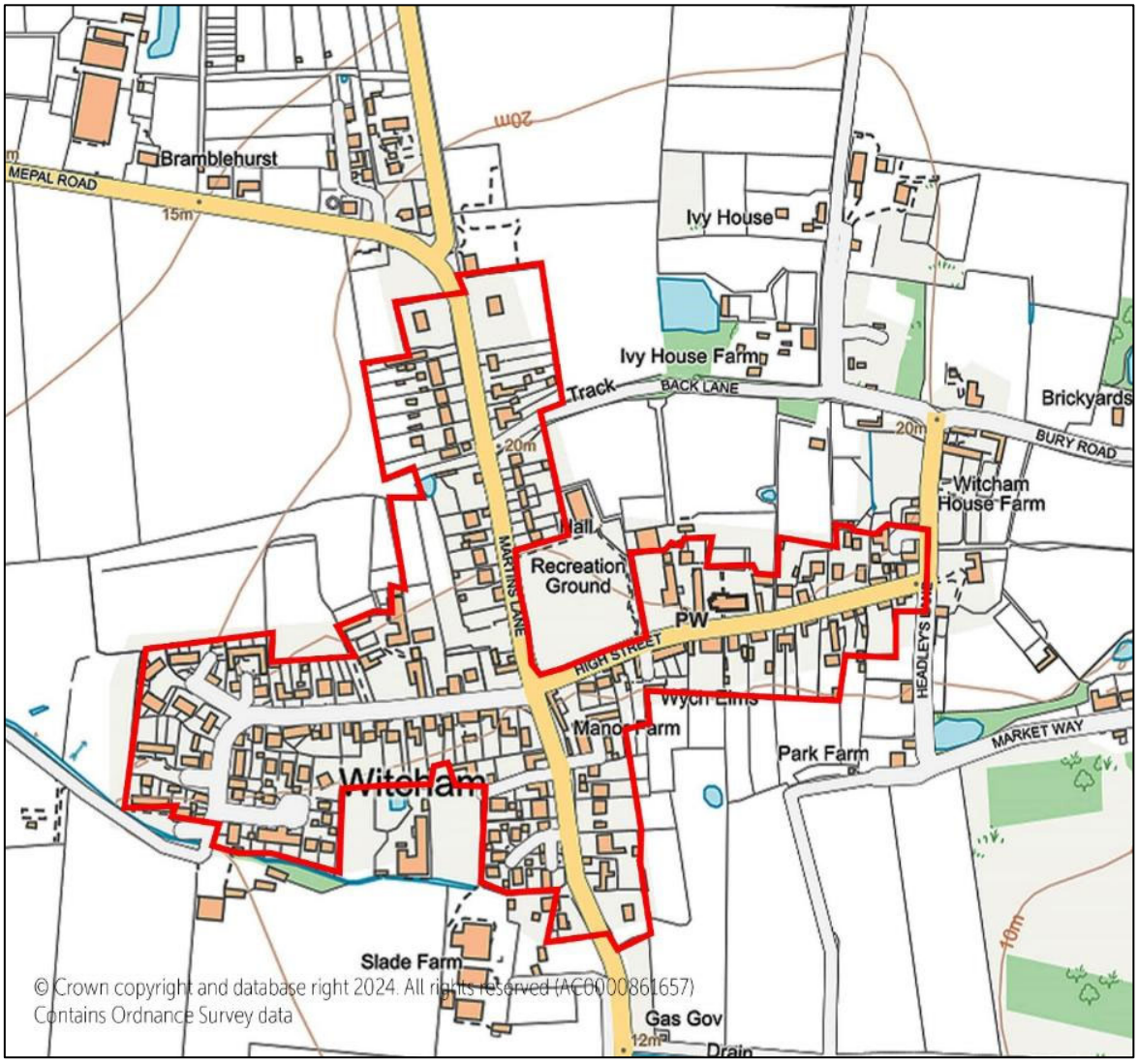
5.1 Witcham's lack of services and facilities contribute to making it an unsustainable location for any significant level of population growth. This is reflected by the local plan strategy for only limited development in the form of infill plots within the Development Envelope. Outside the existing built-up area, the further expansion of the village could have significant impacts on the surrounding countryside.

Local Plan

5.2 As noted in the previous section, the Local Plan has identified a Development Envelope for the main built-up area of the village. Within the Development Envelope proposals for housing, employment and other development "to meet local needs" will normally be permitted provided there is no significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area.

5.3 Local Plan Policy GROWTH 2: Locational Strategy, states that "Outside the development envelope development will be strictly controlled, having regard to the need to protect the countryside and the setting of towns and villages." An exception to this would be for community-based development referred to in Policy GROWTH 6 which may include affordable housing, small business units and renewable energy schemes.

5.4 The adopted Local Plan Development Envelope is illustrated on **Map 3**.



Map 3 - Adopted Local Plan Development Envelope



A recently constructed low energy sustainable home

Location of new development

5.5 Preparing a neighbourhood plan enables communities such as Witcham to review the Development Envelope within the context of the overall development strategy for East Cambridgeshire. In line with Policy GROWTH 2 of the Local Plan, there has been little in the way of development in or adjoining the Development Envelope since the adoption of the Local Plan. As such, the Neighbourhood Plan does not amend the Development Envelope.

5.6 The Neighbourhood Plan supports limited growth in the Parish, with such development being focused within the Development Envelope in order to prevent uncontrolled sprawl into the countryside. Any development must not have a detrimental impact on:

- the setting of historic assets,
- landscape features and the natural environment,
- the amenity of residents in terms of noise, smell, vibration, overlooking, overshadowing, loss of light, other pollution (including light pollution),
- access to the countryside, and
- existing highway networks.

5.7 There may be situations where it is necessary for development to take place outside the Development Envelope. Any such proposals will be considered as an exception in the context of the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted Local Plan, in particular Policy GROWTH 2 of the Local Plan. Such instances might include those where agricultural related development requires planning permission, the provision of community services for residents where suitable sites are not available within the Development Envelope and additional outdoor recreation facilities.

Policy WHM 1 – Spatial Strategy

A Development Envelope is defined on the Policies Map. Sustainable development proposals within the Development Envelope will be supported in principle, subject to being of an appropriate scale and not having an unacceptable impact on:

i. the amenity of residents;
ii. the historic and natural environment;
iii. the provision of services and facilities; and
iv. the highway network.

Land outside the Development Envelope is defined as countryside where development will normally only be allowed for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, community services and facilities, outdoor recreation, proposals in accordance with Policy WHM 2, and other uses which can demonstrate a need to be located in the countryside.

Proposals for new buildings outside the Development Envelope will be required to be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, or other appropriate and proportionate evidence, that demonstrates how the proposal:

a. can be accommodated in the countryside without having a significant detrimental impact, by reason of the building's scale, materials and location, on the character and appearance of the countryside and its distinction from the main built-up areas as identified by the Development Envelope; and
b. conserves and enhances the unique landscape and scenic beauty within the Parish.

6. HOUSING

Objective

2. To meet the housing needs of current and future residents and those with a connection to the Parish.

Context

6.1 As identified in Section 2 of the Plan, there has been very little housing growth in the Parish since 2001. Given the lack of services and facilities, the Local Plan limits the development of new housing to infill plots within the Development Envelope.

6.2 When compared with East Cambridgeshire district as a whole, the Parish has a high proportion of four-bedroomed homes as illustrated in **Figure 2**.

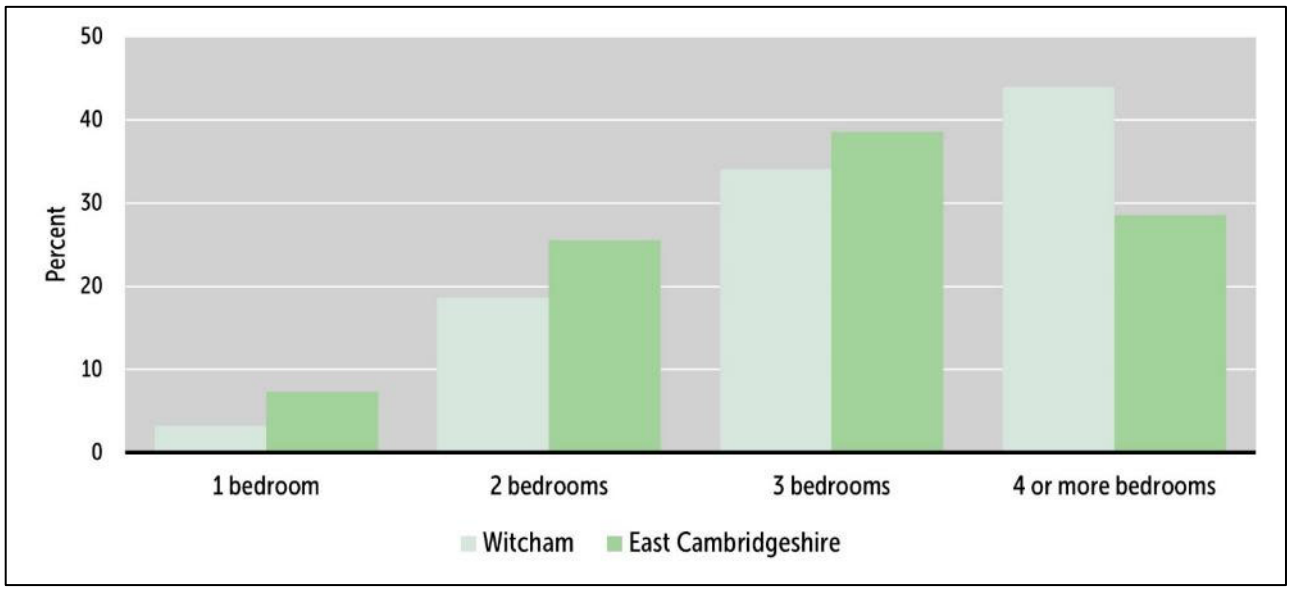


Figure 2: Dwelling Sizes (source 2021 Census)

6.3 In terms of housing tenure, 80% of homes in the Parish are owner occupied compared with 68% across East Cambridgeshire while levels of social or privately rented homes are well below the district figure. House prices can be a key determinant whether people can afford to live in the village. Land Registry data reveals that between 1 January 2023 and 30 September 2024 there were 13 dwellings sold in Witcham in a range of £265,000 to £580,000, with an average of £394,611. Given that the government published median incomes across East Cambridgeshire of £36,754 in 2023, it would take over 10 times the median income to afford the average dwelling in the village.

6.4 The results of the Residents' Survey indicated that 60% of respondents thought that the number of houses in Witcham was about right while 35% thought a few more were needed. In terms of the type of housing needed, 72% of respondents considered there was a moderate or strong need for affordable housing and 76% a moderate or strong need for family homes.

National and Local Planning Policy

6.5 Neighbourhood plans are encouraged to make provision for housing growth in their areas to meet identified needs. Paragraph 69 of the NPPF states that strategic policies in local plans should set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflect the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development in the district. In East Cambridgeshire's case, the adopted Local Plan does not do this for Witcham but the Local Plan spatial strategy and housing distribution does not anticipate any housing growth in the Parish other than for 'windfall' permissions on infill plots. As such, there is no need to allocate new sites for housing development in the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.6 Other local plan housing policies contained in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and of relevance to Witcham are:

- Policy HOU 1: Housing Mix
- Policy HOU 3: Affordable Housing Provision
- Policy HOU 4: Affordable Housing Exception Sites

Neighbourhood Plan approach to housing

6.7 As noted above, the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for housing. This approach is justified by the stance of the Local Plan that only supports infill development and the feedback from the Residents' Survey to housing growth.

6.8 Housing affordability is an issue for the Parish, as highlighted in the Residents' Survey. National planning policy enables an alternative mechanism for meeting locally identified housing needs through small scale (under 10 dwellings) "rural exception sites" located outside but adjoining the Development Envelope where housing would not normally be permitted. This has the benefit of being on land where there is no "market" development value, thereby reducing the land value and enabling a viable affordable housing scheme. On occasions the cost of delivering affordable housing, even with discounted land costs, can exceed the grant money that is available to construct such schemes. In such instances, government policy allows consideration of providing the bare minimum market housing on the site to make the development viable. It must be stressed that market housing would only be considered when there are viability issues for the deliverability of the affordable housing, and this would need to be proven through assessment by the District Council when considering the planning application.

6.9 To deliver affordable housing through the "exception sites" approach, the following steps need to be satisfied:

- A local need has to be established, usually through a detailed parish housing needs survey carried out on behalf of the Parish Council.
- A willing landowner prepared to sell land at a price significantly below the market value for housing land.
- A registered social landlord (housing association) willing to work with the Parish Council and District Council to fund and manage a scheme.

6.10 The Neighbourhood Plan provides an enabling policy for the provision of an exception site should a local need be identified during the period up to 2036.

Policy WHM 2 – Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites

Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes of under 10 dwellings, including affordable rent, community-led housing and affordable home ownership products, on rural exception sites outside but closely related to the Development Envelope, where housing would not normally be permitted, will be supported, where there is a proven local need and that the housing:

i. remains affordable in perpetuity, and
ii. is for people in housing need because they are unable to buy or rent properties in the parish at open-market prices, and
iii. is offered in the first instance to applicants with a connection to the village, including current and previous residents in the parish, a family connection or employment connection.

These restrictions should be secured through an appropriate legal agreement.

Proposals should be supported by an up-to-date detailed housing needs assessment and the accommodation proposed in terms of size and tenure should contribute to the identified need.

Proposals should also take into consideration other policies in this Plan, in terms of any impact on character and appearance, residential amenity and highway safety.

In exceptional circumstances a small number of market homes will be supported, where it can be demonstrated:

a. that no other means of funding the affordable housing is available
b. that the market housing is subsidiary to the affordable housing element of the proposal and this is supported by a viability assessment to identify the minimum number of market homes required to deliver the affordable housing.

Where sites incorporate a small element of market housing, both housing tenures should be built to the same design standards and make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

7. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

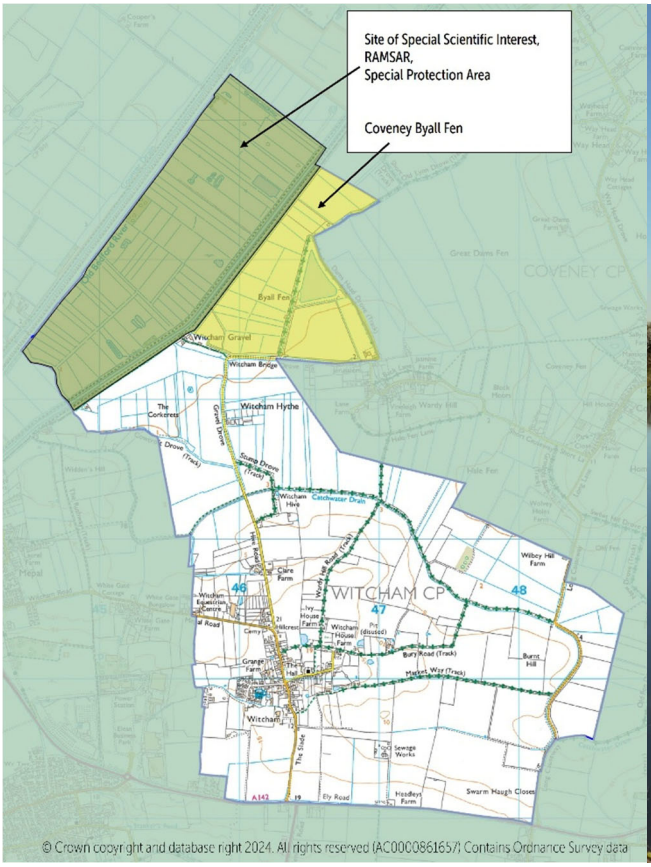
Objectives

3. **Identify, protect and enhance the landscape character of Witcham including green spaces, hedgerows, woodland and watercourses.**
4. **Protect important views and links to the wider countryside.**
5. **Deliver net gains to the extent and quality of natural habitats and biodiversity**

Context

7.1 The Parish includes part of some of the most important wetland habitats in the UK at Ouse Washes. Created over 300 years ago, the parallel rivers, ditches and banks form a distinctive feature in the fen landscape. They were created to retain winter flood water from the River Great Ouse and prevent it from flooding the valuable surrounding farmland, still performing this function today. The Ouse Washes are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area, Ramsar (after the 1971 Ramsar convention) and, although not within Witcham Parish, a Special Area of Conservation. The extent of the area in the Parish covered by these designations is illustrated on **Map 4**. This ongoing protection and management is of the highest priority when considering the scale and location of future development in the Neighbourhood Area.

7.2 In the last ten years the Environment Agency has created a wet grassland habitat site in the north of the Parish adjoining the Ouse Washes. Known as Coveney Byall Fen, the purpose of the project was to contribute towards the creation of 500 hectares of new wet grassland habitat to help the UK Government meet legal obligations under the European Union Birds and Habitats Directives by addressing a decline in bird numbers using the Ouse Washes. The site does not have a statutory status in planning terms.





Map 4 - Ouse Washes Ouse Washes

7.3 The entirety of the parish (where it is not within the SSSI itself) falls within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the Ouse Washes SSSI, which means Natural England should be consulted for proposals that meet certain criteria. In addition, the parish is on the periphery of the Goose and Swan Functional Land Impact Risk Zone (FLIRZ), which is an area identified as providing important functional habitat for qualifying bird species. The FLIRZ covers a large area of land in the northern part of East Cambridgeshire District including the very northern part of Witcham parish.

7.4 Biodiversity is described as the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet. Across the parish there are many locally important features that play a significant role in providing habitats for flora and fauna. These include individual trees and tree belts, hedgerows, grassland and streams, ditches and ponds.

7.5 The Residents' Survey asked for opinions on the natural environment and green spaces. There was a high level of support for protecting and improving elements of the natural environment, as illustrated in **Figure 3.**

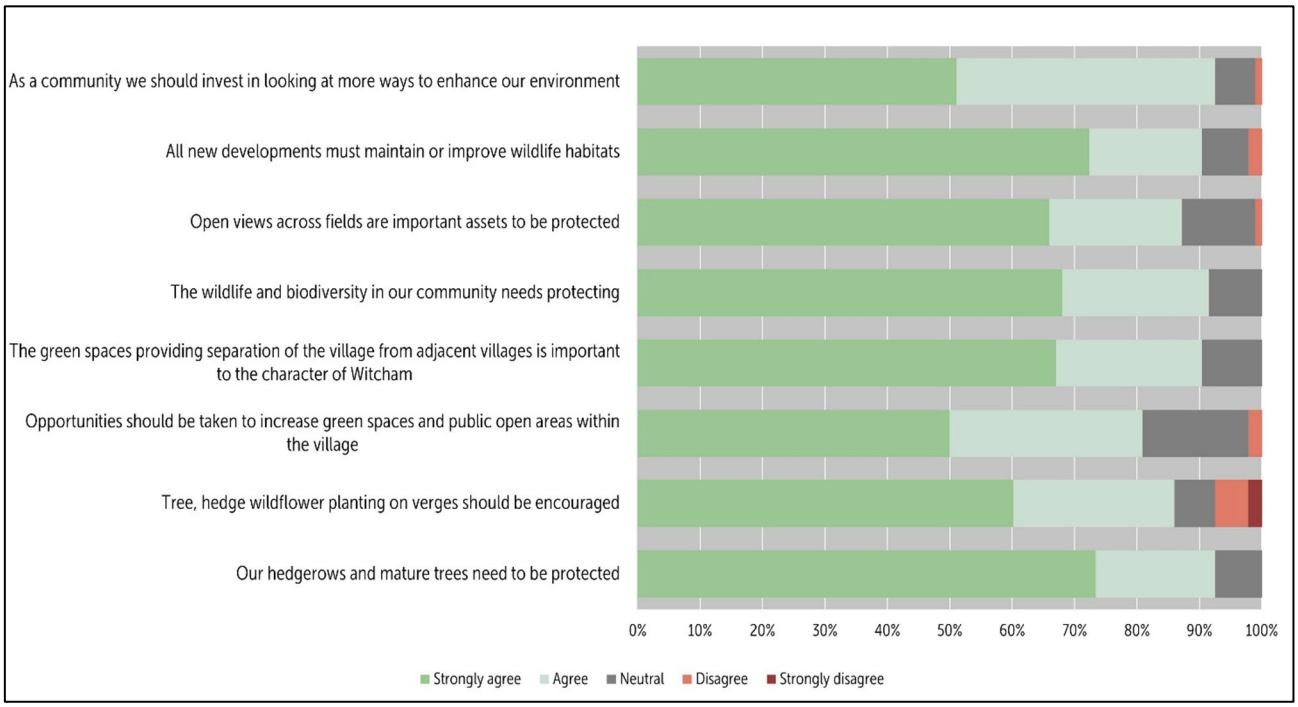


Figure 3: Opinion on the environment and green spaces

7.6 There are many smaller areas in the Parish that are of biodiversity significance. Appendix 1 provides an example of two areas, the meadows south of the High Street and east of The Slade, and Market Way. In addition, a number of trees and woods in the Parish are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). Within the Conservation Area, all trees with a trunk diameter of 75mm are subject to protection and people need to notify the East Cambridgeshire Planning Department six weeks before carrying out certain work. This notice period gives the District Council an opportunity to consider whether to make a TPO on the trees.

7.7 Protecting habitats and enhancing them should be given the highest priority when proposing new development. The Environment Act 2021 requires development to deliver a minimum 10 per cent biodiversity net gain unless it meets exemptions set out in the Act, such as small projects like home extensions, conservatories or loft conversions. In August 2021 a British Standard for Biodiversity Net Gain was published (BS8683) to provide a standard for designing and implementing such requirements and in February 2024 the Government published Biodiversity Metric Tools which allow the calculation of biodiversity value for the purpose of delivering Biodiversity Net Gain.

Neighbourhood Plan approach to the natural environment

7.8 In respect of internationally protected sites, Policy ENV7 of the adopted Local Plan, states "Proposals which have an adverse impact on a site of international importance will not normally be permitted unless there are exceptional overriding reasons of public interest (human health, public safety or environmental benefit)." The District Council admits that Policy ENV7 is somewhat dated and does not accurately reflect the latest international law and provides some doubt through the use of the phrase 'not normally'. The NPPF provides a more up to date policy framework for considering such sites. Whilst the thrust of the NPPF is that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development, at paragraph 195 it clarifies that such a presumption does not apply to internationally protected sites (referred to as a 'habitats site'): "The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site."

7.9 ` Having taken account of the above, the District Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) "Natural Environment", adopted in September 2020, sets out a detailed supporting policy in respect of considering development proposals that might affect internationally designated sites in the district. However, the SPD is not part of the development plan for the area and therefore has only limited weight in the decision making process. In the absence of an up-to-date policy being set out in a Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan has included the SPD Policy as a formal planning policy which will ensure that it carries more weight in the decision-making process.

Policy WHM 3 – Conserving and Enhancing Internationally Designated Sites

The highest level of protection will be afforded to international sites designated for their nature conservation importance. Proposals having an adverse impact on the integrity of such sites, either alone or in combination, that cannot be avoided or adequately mitigated to remove any adverse effect, will not be supported other than in exceptional circumstances. These circumstances will only apply where a Habitats Regulations Assessment has been undertaken and it has not been possible to conclude no adverse effect on integrity (either alone or in combination) and:

(a) there are no suitable alternatives;
(b) there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest; and
(c) necessary compensatory provision can be secured.

Development will only be supported where the local planning authority is satisfied that any necessary avoidance and / or mitigation measures are included to ensure there are no adverse effects on integrity either alone or in combination.

Development proposals that are likely to, or have the potential to, have an adverse effect, either alone or in combination, on European designated sites must satisfy the requirements of the Habitats Regulations (or any superseding similar UK legislation, post the UK leaving the EU), determining site specific impacts (which could be off-site as well as on-site) and avoiding or mitigating against impacts where identified. Mitigation may involve providing or contributing towards a combination of the following measures:

i. access and visitor management measures within the designated site;
ii. improvement of existing greenspace and recreational routes;
iii. provision of alternative natural greenspace and recreational routes;
iv. monitoring of the impacts of new development on European designated sites to inform the necessary mitigation requirements and future refinement of any mitigation measures;
v. other potential mitigation measures to address air pollution impacts e.g. emission reduction measures, on site management measures.

Where avoidance or mitigation measures are necessary, planning conditions will be attached to a permission to require monitoring of the effectiveness of such measures to inform the necessary mitigation requirements and any future refinements.

7.10 The minimum requirements for biodiversity net gain required by the Environment Act are outside planning policy requirements. In addition to national legislation, within the neighbourhood area, residents and developers are encouraged to deliver a measurable net gain in biodiversity as part of planning proposals. Cambridgeshire County Council has produced a Biodiversity Checklist and Biodiversity Guidance Notes which provides more information on habitats for developers and in addition, are in the process of preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy at the time of preparing this Plan. When complete, it will set priorities for nature recovery in the county and be a vital element of delivering biodiversity net gain. At a more local level, the District Council's "Natural Environment" Supplementary Planning Document provides a



framework for the consideration of proposals. Given that the Supplementary Planning Document has gone through a consultation process ahead of it being adopted, Policy WHM 4 is included in the Plan to ensure it is given greater weight when determining planning applications. It has been carefully designed to complement national legislation. It also applies to householder proposals and to proposals which create new or enhanced access points. In preparing the neighbourhood plan, examples of local areas of distinct habitat richness have been identified. Their details are included as Appendix 1 of the plan.

Policy WHM 4 – Biodiversity Enhancements

For developments exempt from the mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements of the Environment Act 2021, proposals that, as appropriate to the development, deliver biodiversity gain, such as bird boxes, insect 'hotels', bee blocks, bat boxes, swift bricks, and/or hibernation holes will be supported.

Where a new access is created, or an existing access is widened through an existing hedgerow, a new hedgerow of native species shall be planted on the splay returns into the site to maintain the appearance and continuity of hedgerows in the vicinity.

7.11 The Residents' Survey indicated the high level of support for the natural environment and, with this in mind, a Wildlife and Nature Conservation Group has been established and the Parish Council will continue to support the growth of the Group and its work.

Community Action 1– Wildlife and Nature Conservation Group

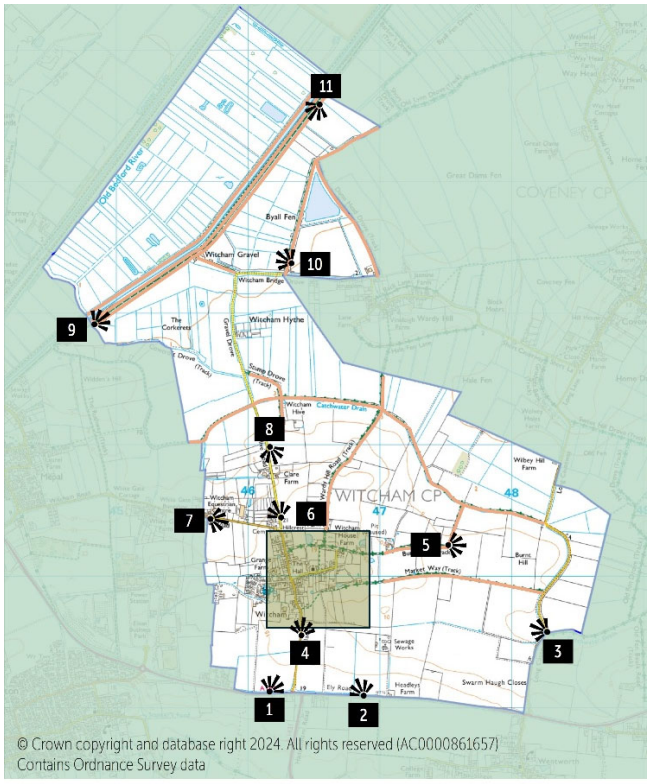
The Parish Council will support the work of the Witcham Wildlife and Nature Conservation Group.

Important Views

7.12 Despite the flat nature of the landscape, there are surprisingly few long distance views from publicly accessible points that include key and distinct features. The Witcham Design Guidance prepared by AECOM has identified some important views and these and others from publicly accessible locations are assessed in detail in the Witcham Important Views Assessment, available to view and download on the Neighbourhood Plan pages of Parish Council website. Each is selected and assessed for its visual interest, its beauty and/ or as it holds another value for the locality such as containing important landmarks or historical features. The location of each view is identified on **Maps 5 and 6**, where the numbers relate back to the Assessment.

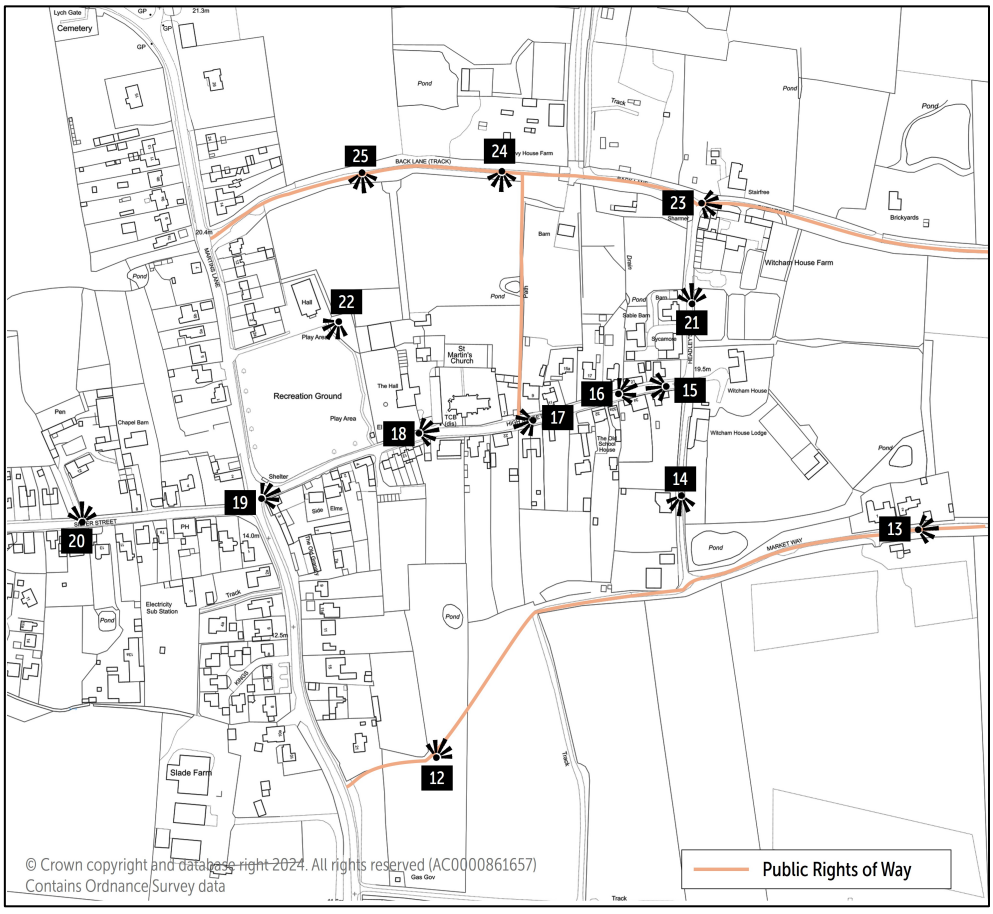
7.13 Proposals for development should be considered in the context of these recognised views and determined to avoid any significant detrimental impact on the key points identified in the views.







Map 5: Important Views in wider Parish



Map 6: Important Views in village centre

Policy WHM 5 - Locally Important Views

Important views from public vantage points either within the built-up area or into or out of the surrounding countryside, are identified in the Witcham Important Views Assessment and on Maps 5 and 6 and the Policies Map.

Any proposed development should not detract from the key landscape features of these views.

8. HISTORIC AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Objectives

6. **Conserve and enhance the village's heritage assets.**
7. **Ensure that new development is designed in a way that reflects local character.**
8. **Through the incorporation of energy saving measures, minimise the environmental impact of new development.**

Context

8.1 As noted in Section 2, evidence of settlement in the Parish has been traced back to the Mesolithic period. Today, the main village centre has a Conservation Area and there are currently 10 Listed Buildings in the Parish, as identified in Appendix 3, as well as Buildings of Local Interest that have been identified by the District Council, the details of which are contained in Appendix 4.

8.2 The Residents' Survey asked for opinions on various matters relating to the historic and built environment, asking whether people agreed with statements. The response is illustrated in **Figure 4**.

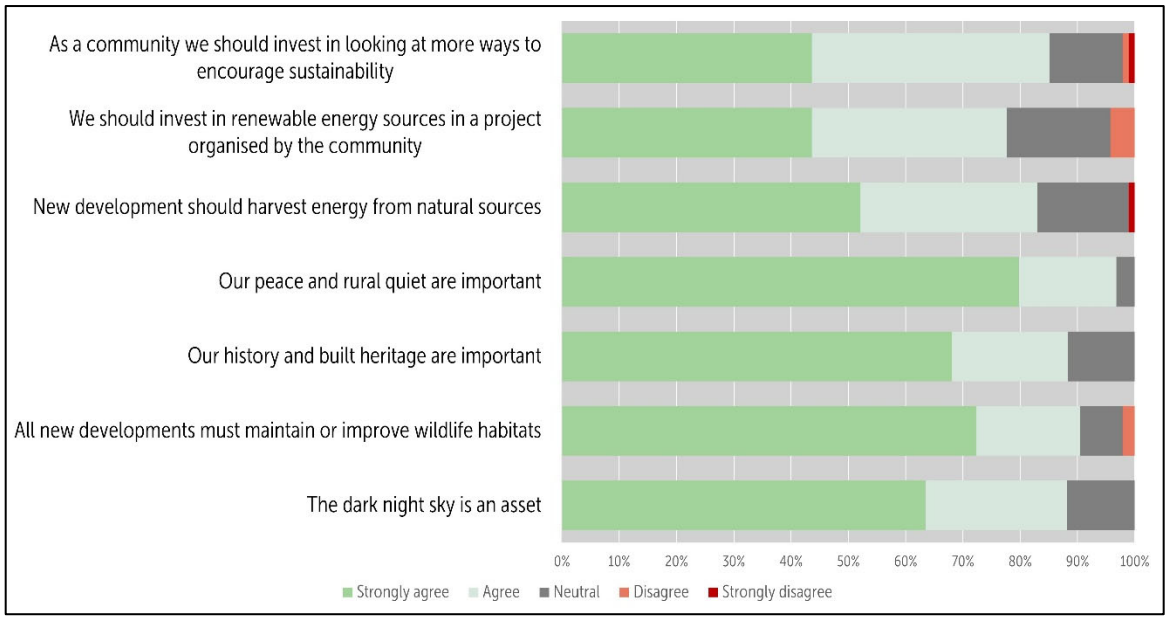
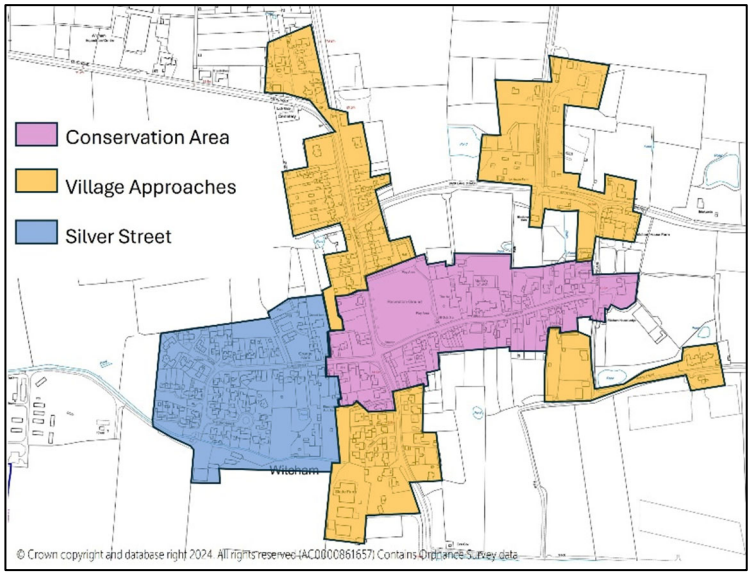


Figure 4: Residents' opinions on historic and built environment

Neighbourhood Plan approach to the natural environment

8.3 In support of the preparation of the new Neighbourhood Plan, the Witcham Design Guidelines and Codes was prepared by consultants AECOM as part of the Government's Neighbourhood Plan support programme. It has been produced to inform new development proposed in the area. It presents a summary of the key characteristics of the Neighbourhood Area and has been used to inform specific design guidelines to promote sustainable development.

8.4 The Design Guidance and Codes identifies three character areas covering the centre of the village, as illustrated in **Map 7** plus the remainder of the Parish as a separate character area. For each character area the Design Guidance and Codes defines the characteristics and identifies what improvements should be sought.



Map 7: Village Centre Character Areas

Conservation Area

EXISTING CHARACTER

- Mainly low density residential use with some community features (church and recreation ground);
- An open linear streetscape with properties lining either side of the road facing each other breaking down at the edges where it turns into Headleys Lane on the eastern edge;
- Generally detached houses with a variety of setbacks from the street. Predominantly with varying heights of boundary walls;
- Footpath provision is on either side of the road and narrow in places. These finish at the High Street junction with Headleys Lane;
- The village recreation ground is the focal point where there is the village hall and the village's bus stop which creates an emphasis on the surrounding greenness;
- Views towards significant buildings such as the Church of St Martin and Witcham House are preserved along the High Street;
- Views between properties to the rear gardens and beyond;
- Detached houses with generous set backs are a feature in this village; and
- Trees, soft landscaping and open spaces are an important visual aspect.

PROPOSED CHARACTER

- Protect the local character and retain the history of properties through similar use of materials and colour palette. Use the array of gault brick, old Cambridge brick, red brick, painted render, grey slates, clay tiles, clay pantiles. The use of just one material should be avoided if possible;
- Protecting the landscape features such as the village recreation ground, overhanging trees and other green spaces to preserve the natural character of The Conservation Area;
- Provision of the same boundary treatments such as hedges and verges. A variety of wall heights is acceptable when used in conjunction with green features;
- Protect views down the High Street and Back Lane towards significant buildings such as the Church of St Martin and between properties;
- Future developments should not exceed two storeys.

Village Approaches

EXISTING CHARACTER

- Multiple uses such as low density residential, agricultural and light industrial;
- The landscaping surrounding Witcham creates a green barrier that shields the village from the outside when approaching the village from the A142, along The Slade, views are of St Martins Church above a tree canopy with glimpses of residential roofs;
- Sections of continuous frontages along a linear road pattern (The Slade and Martins Lane);
- Pavements on both or one side of the road;
- Low density throughout most of the settlement, although the new development on The Slade is slightly higher density;
- The majority of properties are detached with generous front gardens and open space facing rear gardens with gaps of varying widths between buildings allowing views through. The overall impression is of open green space.

PROPOSED CHARACTER

- Protect the local character such as the views towards the tree belts and hedgerows surrounding the village that hide Witcham from the outside;
- Respect the existing building line;
- Properties should face onto the roads providing a natural surveillance;
- On-street car parking should be discouraged;
- Future development should not exceed two storeys in height;
- The roofs should be built in gabled or hipped roof styles; and
- Density of development existing in the village should be respected by any new development.

Silver Street

EXISTING CHARACTER

- The character area runs down Silver Street with small cul-de-sacs branching off. This and the nature of Silver Street creates less of a linear feel compared to the rest of Witcham;
- Tree lined streets and large front gardens create a leafy and open feel to the area.
- Detached houses and bungalows are the main typology;
- Spacious front and back gardens with big plot sizes;
- Silver Street narrows the further you move away from the cross roads;
- There are gaps between buildings providing views towards the countryside, adding to the rural feel of the area; and
- There are several instances of on street car parking and parking courts.

PROPOSED CHARACTER

- Retain and enhance the rural character and pattern of development, most importantly in the areas that fall within the Conservation Area where the character of Witcham is heavily protected by policy;
- New developments should incorporate gaps between properties that provide views towards the countryside, maintaining the rural feel of the area;
- Establish a consistent boundary treatment such as low and well-manicured hedgerows. These provide a degree of privacy and visual interest; and
- Look to prevent inappropriate development in the surrounding countryside.

Countryside

EXISTING CHARACTER

- Predominantly arable farm fields with small farmsteads scattered throughout the countryside area;
- Long distance views towards Witcham, surrounding settlements and the countryside;
- Narrow rural lanes with grass verges on either side; and
- Spacious front and back gardens with big plot sizes;
- The Ouse Washes SSSI is located in the north of the area and is a defining element of the area's character.

PROPOSED CHARACTER

- Retain and enhance the rural character and spaced out pattern of development;
- Protect the tree belt surrounding Witcham so that it can retain its character as a settlement from the outside;
- New development should not obstruct existing key views both towards and outwards from Witcham;
- Establish a vegetated boundary treatment such as hedgerows. These provide space for biodiversity to flourish and retain the rural character of the area; and
- Look to prevent inappropriate development in the surrounding countryside.



Public Right of Way

8.5 The Design Guidance and Codes include general 'design principles' to be applied to proposals for development, depending upon the nature and scale of the development. Proposals should have regard to the principles, as specified in Policy WHM 6.

Design Principles

1. Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity;
2. Reinforce or enhance the established settlement character of streets, green spaces, and other spaces;
3. Harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form, architecture and land use;
4. Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long-distance views;
5. Reflect, respect, and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness;
6. Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development;
7. Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;
8. Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details;
9. Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality;
10. Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features;
11. Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other;
12. Positively integrate energy efficient technologies;
13. Make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation, and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours;
14. Ensure that places are designed with management, maintenance and the upkeep of utilities in mind; and
15. Seek to implement passive environmental design principles by, firstly, considering how the site layout can optimise beneficial solar gain and reduce energy demands (e.g. insulation), before specification of energy efficient building services and finally incorporate renewable energy sources.

Policy WHM 6 – Design Considerations

Proposals for new development should positively contribute to the individual characteristics of the Neighbourhood Area through the provision of high quality, safe and sustainable development and respond positively to the Design Principles set out in the Witcham Design Guidance and Codes.

Planning applications should, as appropriate to the proposal, demonstrate how they satisfy the requirements of the Witcham Design Guidance and Codes and the Development Design Checklist in Appendix 2 of this Plan.

In addition, proposals will be supported where, as appropriate to their scale, nature, and location, they:

a. recognise and address key features and characteristics, reflecting local distinctiveness, and the special qualities of the area;
b. maintain the locality's sense of place as defined in the Witcham Design Guidance and Codes;
c. do not involve the loss of gardens, open, green or landscaped areas, which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the locality or Parish as a whole;
d. taking mitigation measures into account, do not affect adversely:
   i. important landscape characteristics including trees, ancient hedgerows, green edges and other prominent topographical features identified in the Design Code document;
   ii. identified important views into, out of, or within the settlements as identified on the Policies Map;
   iii. sites, habitats, species and features of ecological interest;
   iv. the amenities of adjacent areas by reason of noise, smell, vibration, overlooking, overshadowing, loss of light, other pollution (including light pollution), or volume or type of vehicular activity generated; and/or residential amenity;
e. produce designs that respect the character, scale and density of the locality;
f. produce designs, in accordance with standards, that maintain or enhance the safety of the highway network ensuring that all vehicle parking is provided in accordance with adopted guidance and designed to be integrated into the development without creating an environment dominated by vehicles, avoid parking in tandem within plots and seek always to ensure satisfactory permeability through new housing areas, connecting any new development into the heart of the existing settlement;
g. wherever practicable ensure that development faces on to existing roads and
h. where appropriate, make adequate provision for the covered storage of all wheelie bins and, in accordance with adopted cycle parking standards, cycle storage.

Dark Skies

8.6 Paragraph 198 (c) of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should "limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation". Artificial lighting of development, including uplighting and floodlighting, while increasing a sense of security, can also impact upon residential amenity, the character and appearance of an area (particularly rural locations) and the environment. Aspects such as poor design, location or the expulsion of unnecessarily high levels of light can also have a harmful impact. It is recognised that the dark skies environment needs to be balanced with the safety of individual properties and the wider highways network.

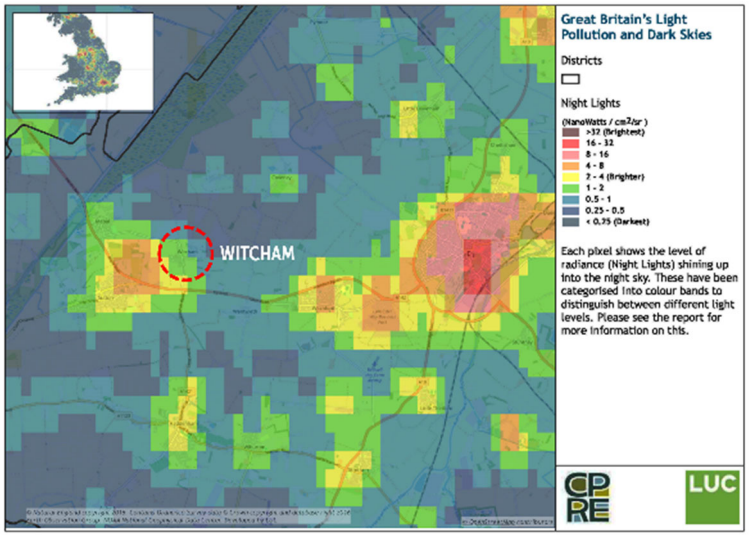


Illustration of light pollution levels in Witcham area. (source: CPRE light pollution and dark skies map)

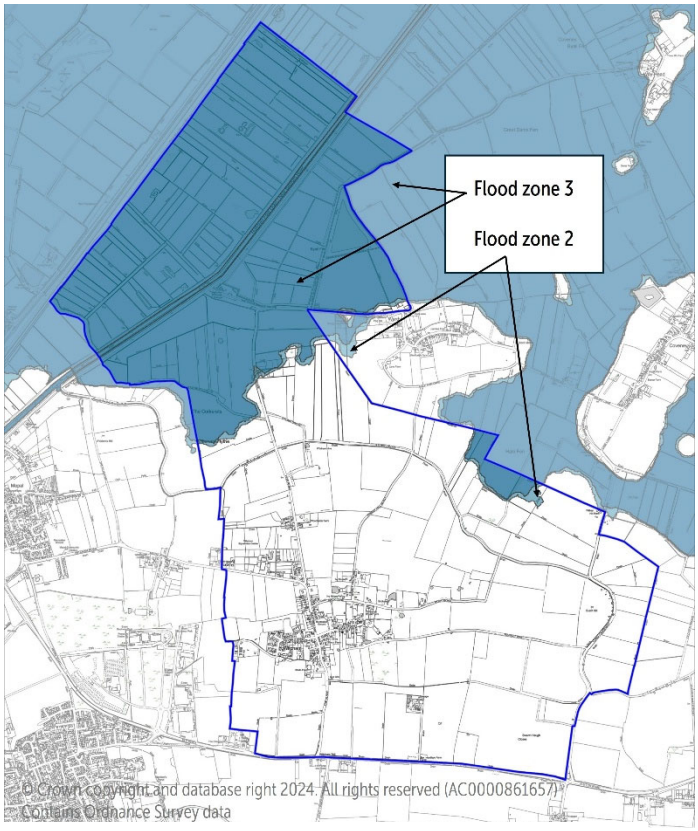
Policy WHM 7 – Dark Skies

Wherever practicable, development proposals should respond positively to the dark sky environment of the Parish and avoid the use of streetlights. Any outdoor lighting schemes should have a minimum impact on the environment and wildlife, whilst taking account of highway safety and the security of the development concerned. In addition, outdoor lighting schemes should reduce the consumption of energy by promoting efficient technologies which reduce glare.

Flooding

8.7 Unsurprisingly, given the location of the Parish in the Fens, much of Neighbourhood Area is subject to both river and surface water flooding. **Map 8** illustrates the areas subject to river flooding across the Parish, while **Map 9** illustrates the areas prone to surface water flooding in the main built-up area of the Parish.

8.8 It is essential that development proposals across the parish do not add to this risk through creating surfaces where rainwater can run-off into the highway or neighbouring sites and create new or exacerbate existing surface water flooding problems. New development will be required, where appropriate, to make provision for the attenuation and recycling of surface water and rainwater through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) that might include on-site rainwater and storm water harvesting and grey water recycling, and the management of run-off in order to reduce the potential for making the situation worse. The Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD) is adopted by East Cambridgeshire in support of Local Plan Policy ENV 8 and promotes the use of SuDS to mimic natural drainage within new developments. Cambridgeshire County Council's Surface Water Planning Guidance also provides technical guidance for developers.



Map 8: Areas prone to flooding - Source: Environment Agency May 2025 (up-to-date flood risk mapping data can be accessed online at https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk)



Map 9: Areas prone to surface water flooding in village centre - Source: Environment Agency May 2025 (up-to-date flood risk mapping data can be accessed online at https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk)

Policy WHM 8 - Flooding and Sustainable Drainage

Proposals for all new development will be required to submit schemes appropriate to the scale of the proposal detailing how on-site drainage and water resources will be managed so as not to cause or exacerbate surface water and fluvial flooding elsewhere.

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should include the use of above-ground open Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). These could include:

- wetland and other water features, which can help reduce flood risk whilst offering other benefits including water quality, amenity/ recreational areas, and biodiversity benefits; and
- rainwater and storm water harvesting and recycling; and other natural drainage systems where easily accessible maintenance can be achieved.

Energy Consumption

8.9 The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), has developed a community carbon calculator in response to a demand from smaller settlements to have robust and accurate data on their carbon footprint, so that they can best direct their efforts to tackle the climate emergency. For Witcham, as illustrated in **Figure 5**, it identifies that housing is the biggest source of CO2 followed by consumption of goods and services, with travel in third place. The CO2 produced by housing is much higher than for East Cambridgeshire as a whole.

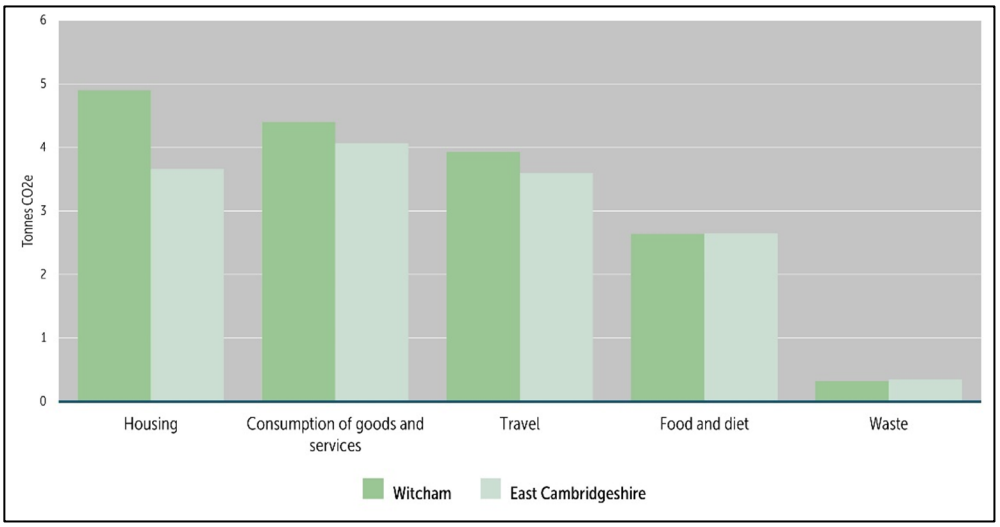


Figure 5: Comparison of Carbon Dioxide generation per household for Witcham and East Cambridgeshire

8.10 Energy consumption and the demand for energy is a major determinant of climate change. Many energy-saving initiatives can be installed on homes within permitted development rights (when full planning permission is not required) but there may be occasions where schemes that do require planning permission could have a potential adverse impact on the character of the area and the amenity of nearby residents.

8.11 Energy use in the construction and operation of development is currently a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Minimising energy demands from development and increasing the generation of energy from renewable sources can make a significant contribution to reducing carbon emissions. The starting point for minimising energy use is to maximise energy efficiency, both in new developments and through the retrofitting of existing buildings. This can have a direct economic benefit in terms of significantly lowering the running costs of new and existing buildings, helping to address fuel poverty, as well as tackling the climate crisis. The Building Regulations set minimum energy efficiency requirements for new development but exceeding the minimum requirements will be necessary if emission reduction targets are to be met.

8.12 Where energy use is necessary, priority should be given to utilising the most sustainable sources. There may be occasions where schemes that do require planning permission could have a potential adverse impact on the character of the area and the amenity of nearby residents. The Neighbourhood Plan has limited powers to require developments to meet energy saving standards, especially in the construction of new homes. However, that does not stop the encouragement of the incorporation of measures in development that meet the energy hierarchy (in order of preference) of:

1. minimising energy demand;
2. maximising energy efficiency;
3. utilising renewable energy;
4. utilising low carbon energy; and
5. utilising other energy sources, such as fossil fuels.

Policy WHM 9 - Sustainable Building Practices

Unless it can be adequately demonstrated to be impracticable, development proposals should incorporate best practice in energy conservation and are designed for the maximum achievable energy efficiency. Such measures should be incorporated so that they are integral to the building design and its curtilage and minimise any impacts on the building or its surroundings.

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should demonstrate how they:

a. maximise the benefits of solar gain in site layouts and orientation of buildings with consideration of methods of preventing overheating;
b. incorporate best practice in energy conservation and be designed to achieve maximum achievable energy efficiency;
c. avoid fossil fuel-based heating systems;
d. incorporate current sustainable design and construction measures and renewable energy measures, such as, where feasible, ground/air source heat pumps, solar panels, thermal and pV systems; and
e. make provision for grey water/rainwater, and/or surface water harvesting and recycling and/or Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

Water consumption in residential developments will be limited to 110 litres per person per day, (including external water use) using efficient water fittings and appropriate technology such as smart meters, (in line with the government's intention set out in the Plan for Water published in 2023). Proposals that can achieve higher water efficiency (for example 100 litres per person per day) will be encouraged and supported.

8.13 In June 2019, the government committed to a legally binding target requiring the country to be net zero carbon by 2050. The NPPF requires plans to develop a positive strategy to promote energy generation from renewable and low carbon sources and encourages plans to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development, whilst ensuring that adverse impacts are

addressed. It further states that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

8.14 In Autumn 2019, East Cambridgeshire District Council declared a climate emergency. In doing so, they agreed to explore a wide range of actions to improve their local environment and help mitigate climate change, but without careful consideration, renewable energy developments can have adverse impacts on the natural and built environment, as well as residential amenity. A balanced approach will therefore be needed when considering proposals for renewable energy in the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Proposals for wind turbines are unlikely to be supported given the presence of the Ouse Washes SSSI and the need to protect the functional habitats of geese and swans in the associated impact zone which covers the majority of the Parish.

Policy WHM 10 – Renewable Energy

Renewable energy generation schemes, including those that form part of wider development proposals, will be supported where their scale, siting and cumulative effects would not have an unacceptable impact on:

i. neighbouring uses or amenity;
ii. visual amenity, particularly from sensitive viewpoints;
iii. environmental and heritage assets;
iv. the best and most versatile agricultural land; and
v. highway safety.

Where development is permitted, mitigation measures, such as landscaping, may be required to minimise any potential negative visual amenity and/or highway impacts.

8.15 A reliance un unsustainable fuel sources for heating can lead to fuel poverty, the condition of being unable to afford to keep one's home adequately heated. In recent years worldwide circumstances have led to a significant increase on the costs of fossil fuels that impacts on poorer homes in particular.

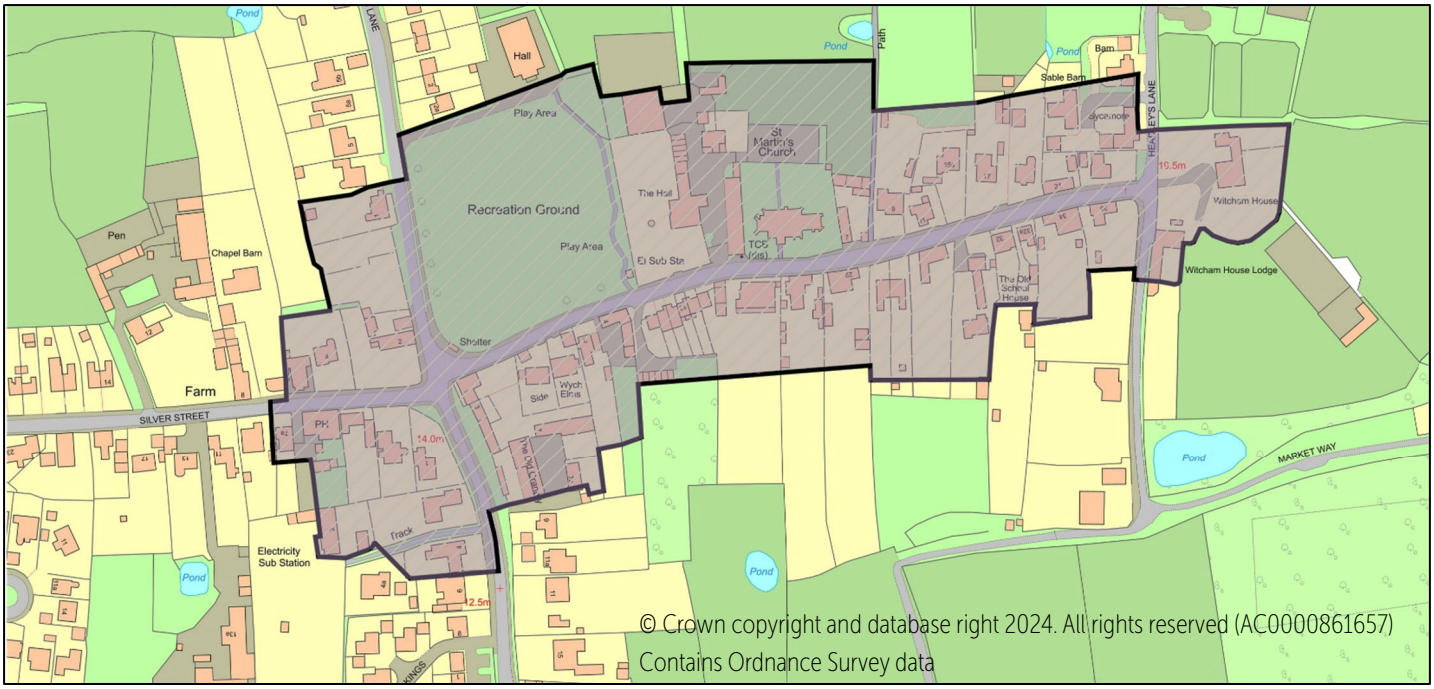
8.16 A recent initiative at Swaffham Prior has seen the implementation of a rural heat network, a mix of air and ground source heat pumps that has the capacity to heat 300 homes in the village. Supported by the County Council, the Swaffham Prior Community Land Trust has received significant grant funding to implement the project. Given the success of the initiative at Swaffham Prior, it may be viable for a similar scheme to be implemented in Witcham.

Community Action 2 – Rural Heat Network

The Parish Council, working with relevant parties, will take opportunities to raise the profile of Neighbourhood Watch within village community.

Historic Built Environment

8.17 Policies WHM 11 and 12 address heritage assets. Policy WHM11 comments about designated heritage assets, and Policy WHM12 comments about non-designated heritage assets. As noted above, much of the built-up centre of the village is designated as a Conservation Area, as illustrated on **Map 10**. It was designated in 1974 but has yet to have a management plan, as encouraged by Historic England, prepared. The Parish is known to be rich in archaeological finds and records. Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record provides details of finds and the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team should be consulted at the earliest possible stages of preparing a planning application in respect of potential impacts of development proposals that impact known or anticipated, designated or non-designated heritage assets.



Map 10 – Conservation Area

8.18 Careful consideration of proposals that would impact designated heritage assets or their setting will be needed, in accordance with the details in paragraphs 212 to 215 of the NPPF (2024).

Policy WHM 11 – Designated Heritage Assets

To ensure the conservation and enhancement of Witcham's heritage assets, including archaeological records, proposals should:

a. preserve or enhance the significance of the heritage assets of the village, their setting and the wider built environment;
b. retain buildings and spaces, the loss of which would cause harm to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area;
c. contribute to the village's local distinctiveness, built form and scale of its heritage assets through the use of appropriate design and materials;
d. be of an appropriate scale, form, height, massing, alignment and detailed design which respects the area's character, appearance and its setting;
e. demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the asset and of the wider context in which the heritage asset sits, alongside an assessment of the potential impact of the development on the heritage asset and its context; and f. provide clear justification, through the submission of a heritage statement, for any works that could harm a heritage asset yet be of wider substantial public benefit, through detailed analysis of the asset and the proposal.

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Proposals will not be supported where the harm caused as a result of the impact of a proposed scheme is not justified by the public benefits that would be provided.

Where a planning proposal affects a heritage asset, it should be accompanied by a Heritage Statement identifying, as a minimum, the significance of the asset, and an assessment of the impact of the proposal on the heritage asset. The level of detail of the Heritage Statement should be proportionate to the importance of the asset, the works proposed and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance and/or setting of the asset.

Buildings and Features of Local Interest

8.19 In addition to the Listed Buildings in the parish, the District Council has identified five buildings that are of local importance that have been included in its Register of Buildings of Local Interest, last updated in 2025. Appendix 4 of the Neighbourhood Plan contains details of the buildings in Witcham that are on the Register.

8.20 The inclusion of a building or site on a local list means that its conservation as a heritage asset meets the objectives of the NPPF and its significance is a material consideration when determining the outcome of a planning application. A balanced judgement will be needed, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset. However, it does not require additional planning consents to be sought for matters that would not currently require consent.

Policy WHM 12 – Buildings and Features of Local Heritage Significance

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset as identified in the East Cambridgeshire Register of Buildings of Local Interest should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Proposals for any works that would lead to the loss of, or substantial harm to, a building of local significance should be supported by an appropriate analysis of the significance of the asset together with an explanation of the wider public benefits of the proposal.



View north along Martins Lane

9. FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Objective

9. Minimise the impact of development on the capacity of essential infrastructure and services and seek to improve them.

10. Protect and improve the range of existing community facilities and services.

Context

9.1 As noted elsewhere in the Plan, Witcham has only a limited range of facilities and services available and is reliant on travelling to nearby centres for education, health and shopping. The Village Hall provides a well-equipped facility that is extensively used for a number of functions and by many clubs. It was originally built in 1969 and a major refurbishment was completed in 2013 bringing facilities right up-to-date. There is ample car parking on-site and disabled access. A large recreation ground adjoins the Village Hall which has a recently installed children's play area.

9.2 The Residents' Survey asked about the levels of satisfaction with services and facilities in the village. **Figure 6** illustrates the number of response that strongly agreed or agreed with statements on service provision.

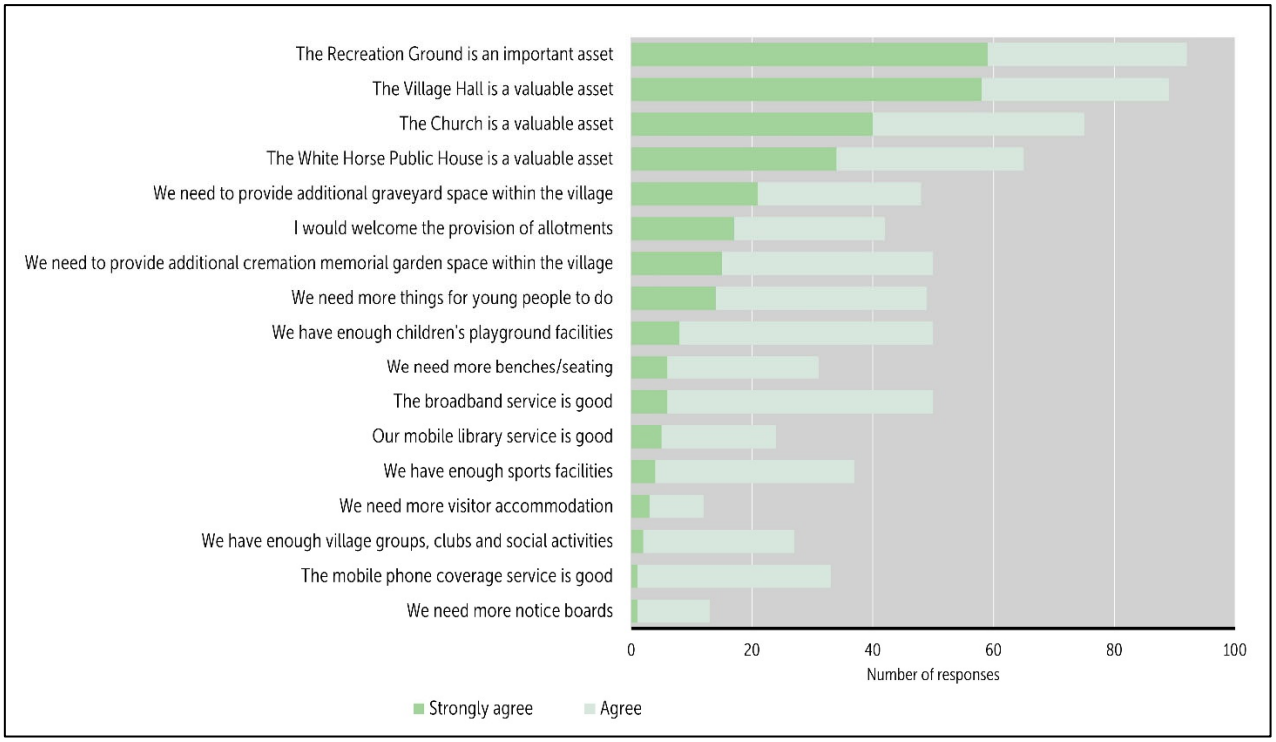


Figure 6: Residents' Survey level of agreement on statements concerning services and facilities

Neighbourhood Plan approach to the provision of services and facilities

9.3 The provision and enhancement of community facilities and services that serve the needs of Witcham's residents will be encouraged where they contribute to the quality of village life and improve the sustainability of the village. However, it is recognised that demands change over time, and it would be unreasonable to require the retention of facilities if there is no longer a proven need or demand for them. In such circumstances it might be appropriate for those uses to be lost where specific criteria can be met. Replacement facilities are acceptable providing that they provide a facility that is of at least equivalent quality and in a location whereby it can be accessed by residents walking, cycling or using public transport.



The Play Area

Policy WHM 13 - Infrastructure and Community Facilities

The provision and enhancement of community facilities and services that serve the needs of Witcham will be supported where they are located in locations accessible on foot and within or in close proximity to the Development Envelope, contribute to the quality of village life and improve the sustainability of the village.

Proposals that would result in the loss of existing facilities or services which support the local community, including the following identified on the Policies Map:

a. Witcham Village Hall;
b. Witcham Recreation Ground;
c. The White Horse Inn;
d. The Cemetery; and
e. St Martin's Church,

will only be supported where:

i. it can be demonstrated that the current use is not economically viable nor likely to become viable. Where appropriate, supporting financial evidence should be provided including any efforts to advertise the premises for sale for a minimum of 6 months; and
ii. it can be demonstrated, through evidenced research, that there is no local demand for the use and that the building/site is not needed for any alternative social, community or leisure use; or
iii. alternative facilities and services are available, or replacement provision is made, of at least equivalent standard, in a location that is accessible to the community it serves with good access by public transport or by cycling or walking.

9.4 There is currently no youth club in Witcham, but that at Mepal is well established and around two miles away. Given the size of Witcham it is considered better to support the Mepal Youth Club rather than establish a separate club in the village.

Community Action 3 – Youth Club

The Parish Council will look at ways of supporting the Mepal Youth Club.

9.5 The Residents' Survey asked about concerns relating to crime and anti-social behaviour. The level of concern was generally low, as identified in **Figure 7**. There is an existing Neighbourhood Watch initiative in the Parish and the Parish Council will seek to work with relevant parties to increase its profile.

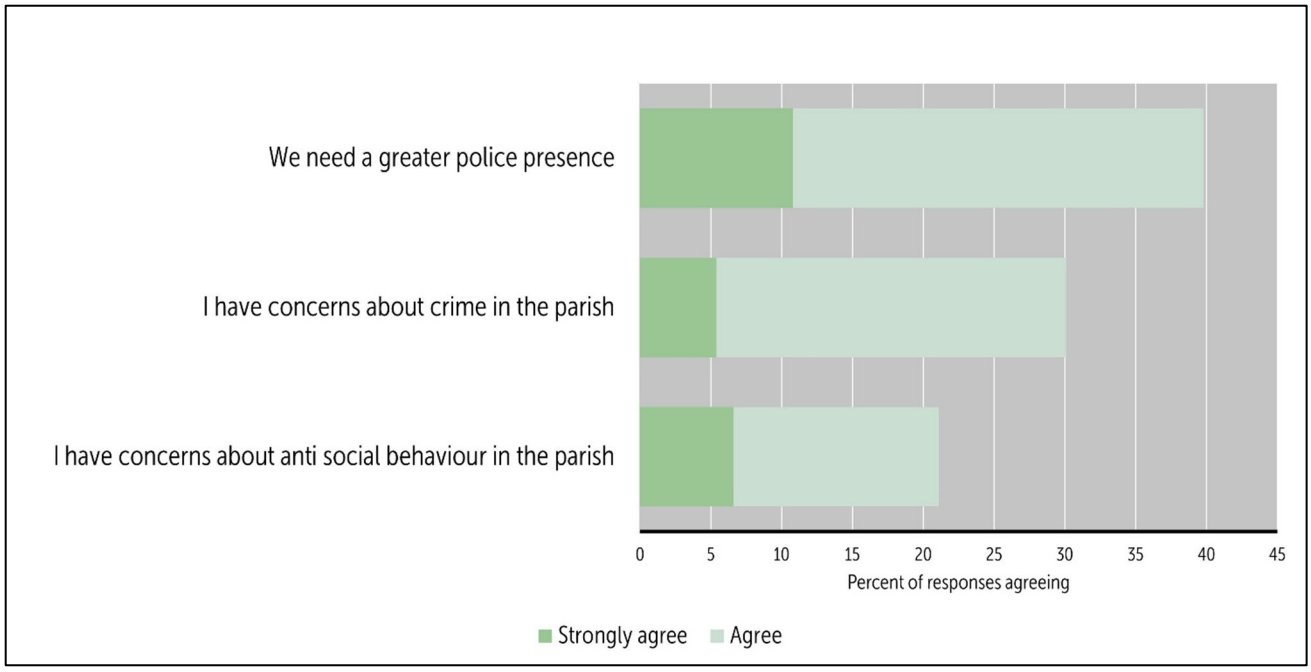


Figure 7: Residents' Survey level of agreement on statements concerning crime and anti-social behaviour

Community Action 4 – Neighbourhood Watch

The Parish Council, working with relevant parties, will take opportunities to raise the profile of Neighbourhood Watch within village community.

9.6 The designation of an area in the village centre as a conservation area is a recognition of Witcham's visual and historic qualities. Creating floral displays, adding wildflowers to road verges and perhaps the creation of a community garden with seating are possible resident led initiatives that would increase the attractiveness and add to the distinct features of the village and improve community cohesion.

Community Action 5 – Greening Witcham

The Parish Council will 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.

9.7 The Resident's Survey identified a high level of support for additional space for burials and support for cremation memorial garden space. The current cemetery on Mepal Road has no available space for burials and only limited cremation memorial garden space.

Community Action 6 – Cemetery Space

The Parish Council will investigate options for providing additional graveyard and cremation memorial garden space within the village.

10 HIGHWAYS AND TRAVEL

Objectives

11. Protect, maintain and improve the Public Rights of Way network.

12. Ensure that new development minimises impact on the existing road network.

13. Support proposals that deliver improvements to identified dangerous road junctions and address issues relating to the speed of traffic.

14 To support and identify ways to improve connectivity between villages for safe and easy travel by cycle or foot.

Context

10.1 Neighbourhood plans have little power to introduce highway improvements as most schemes will not require planning permission. Improvements are therefore reliant on Cambridgeshire County Council, as the highways authority, for investment in projects or improvements required as part of the mitigation of the impact of development proposals.

10.2 The main built-up area of the village is located north of the A142 which is one of the main roads linking the A14 and the east coast port of Felixstowe with the food production areas of the Fens, where some 37% of England's vegetables are grown (https://www.fensforthefuture.org.uk/the-fens/fenland-agriculture). Witcham Toll crossroads on the A142 has witnessed many road vehicle collisions over the years and is particularly difficult for vehicles turning right out of the village. Improvements to the junction and a reduction of the speed limit have been carried out over the years but it remains a dangerous junction.

10.3 The Ely Zipper bus service run by Dews Coaches provides a regular service between the village and Ely, including the station on Mondays to Saturdays.

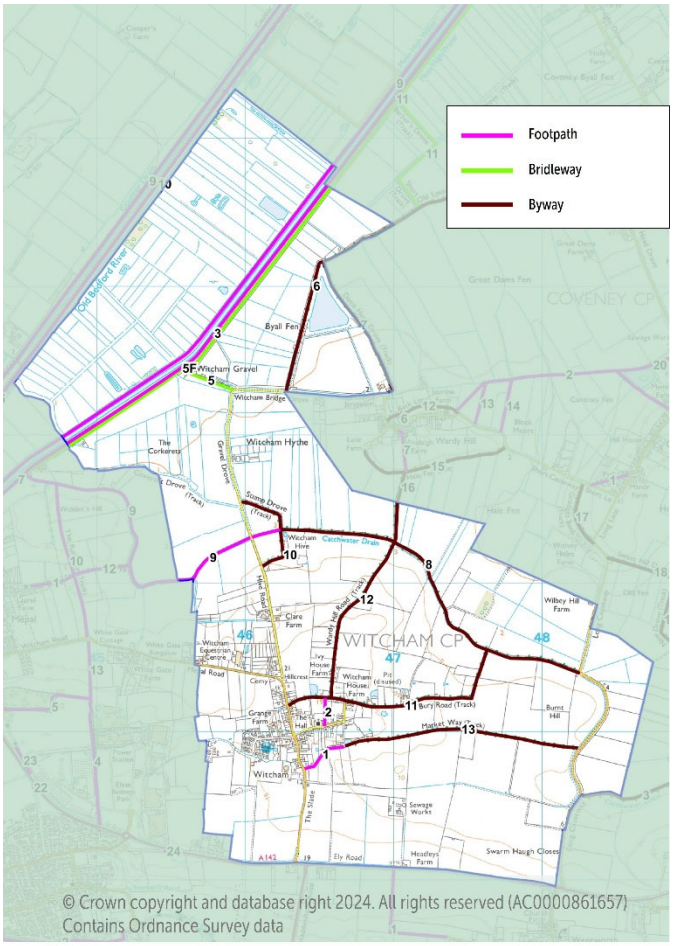
10.4 The Residents' Survey indicated a high level of support for improving cycle paths linking nearby villages, including improving the crossing of the A142 to the Sutton – Ely cycle path.

10.5 There is a good level of public rights of way across the Parish, with an unusually high proportion of byways open to all traffic, as illustrated on Map 11. Just under 50% of those that responded to the Residents' Survey agreed with the statement that "we need more footpaths and bridleways".

Neighbourhood Plan approach to planning for Travel

10.6 Because most road improvements can take place within the highway, they do not require planning permission and, as such, the neighbourhood plan is not an appropriate place to contain policies for their improvement. Likewise, the provision of bus services is a decision made outside the planning system. However, although the Parish Council cannot deliver highway improvements, it does have a lobbying role in delivering such measures.

10.7 Public rights of way provide opportunities for recreational walking, horse riding and cycling. However, public rights of way in the north of the Parish are either in or in close proximity to the Ouse Washes Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area and Ramsar. Increased use of these paths as a result of additional residential development could have a detrimental impact on these habitats. To mitigate this potential impact and, where feasible, improvements to the quality and extent of the public rights of way network in the immediate vicinity of the built-up area of the village that are provided as a result of residential development proposals will be encouraged.





Map 11: Public Rights of Way (numbers refer to the statutory public right of way reference

Policy WHM 14 – Public Rights of Way

Measures to improve and extend the existing network of public rights of way in the immediate vicinity of the built-up area of the village will be supported where their value as biodiversity corridors is safeguarded and any public right of way extension is fit for purpose. Where practicable, development proposals should incorporate measures to enhance biodiversity within the improved or extended public right of way.

10.8 Safe and convenient routes between the village and neighbouring communities is important if trips are to be made by more sustainable means. There may be opportunities in the future to improve such links or create new routes, especially to nearby Mepal.

Community Action 7 – Improving Footpaths

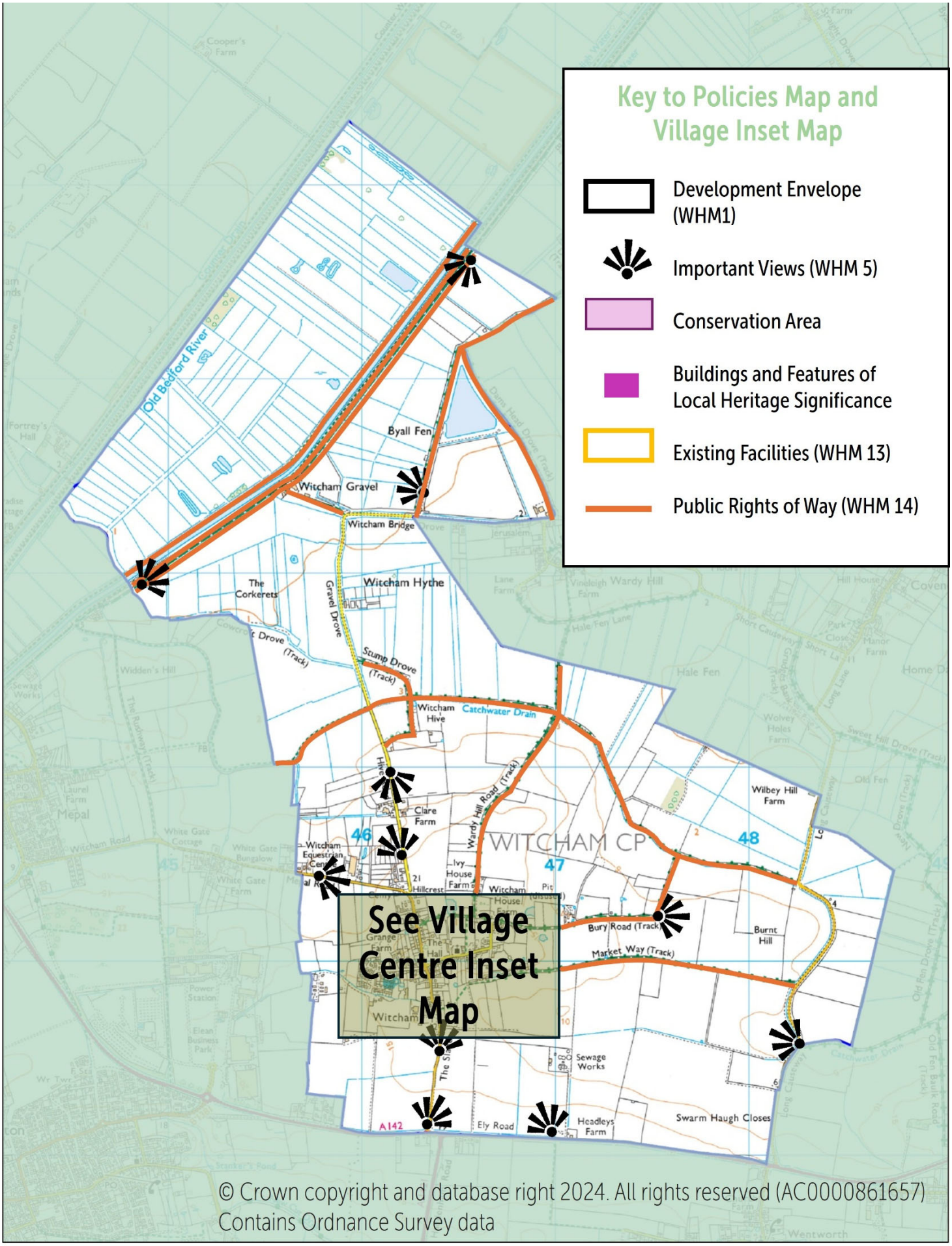
The Parish Council will lobby for the improvement of footpath access between local communities.

10.9 Of those that responded to the Residents' Survey, 55% thought that traffic calming/speed reduction measures should be introduced in the village. While this is the responsibility of the County Highways Department, locally the Community Speedwatch initiative contributes to deterring speeding.

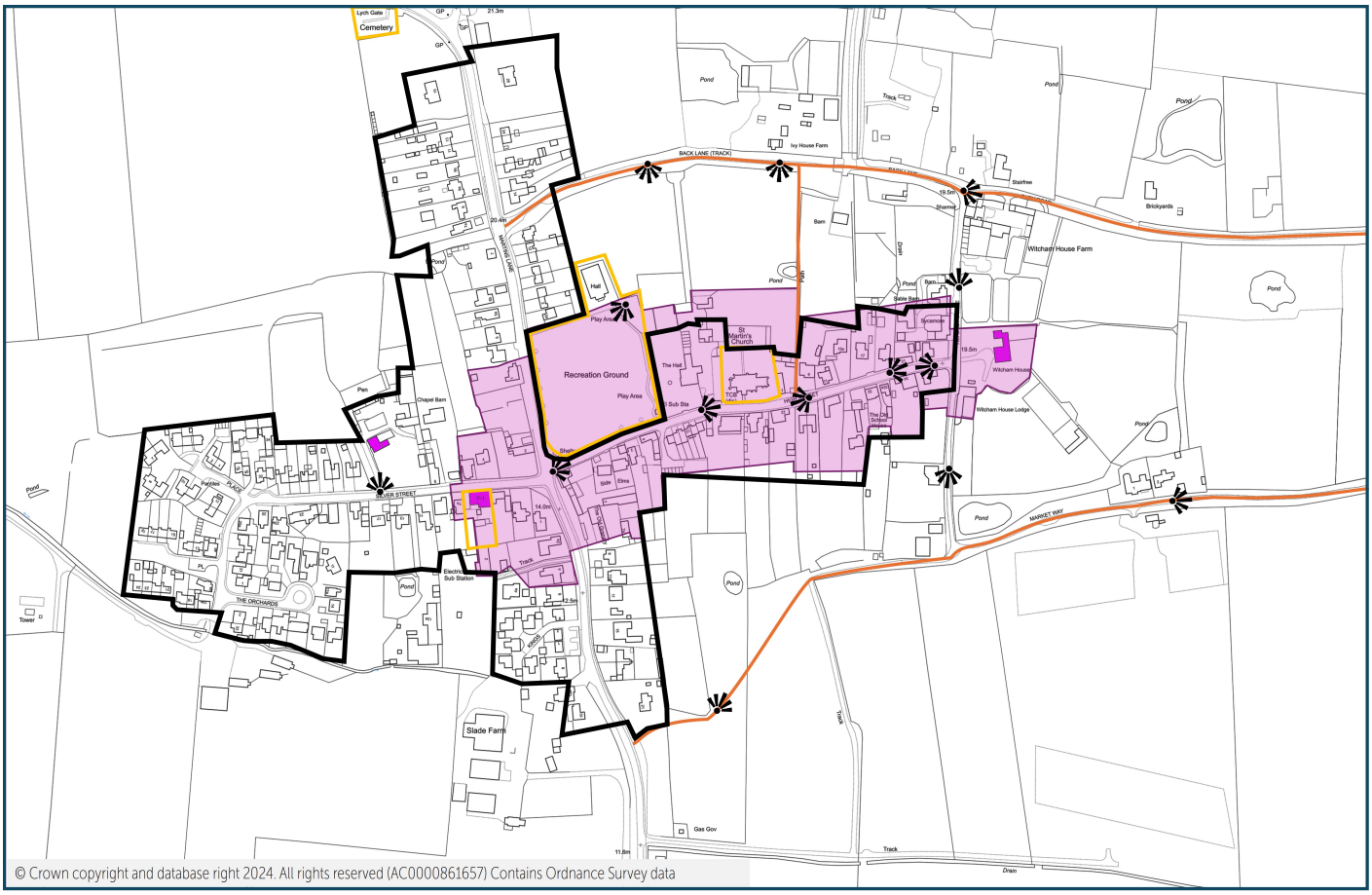
Community Action 8 – Community Speedwatch

The Parish Council will continue to support the Community Speedwatch initiative and other measures to enforce speed restriction.

POLICIES MAP



VILLAGE CENTRE INSET MAP



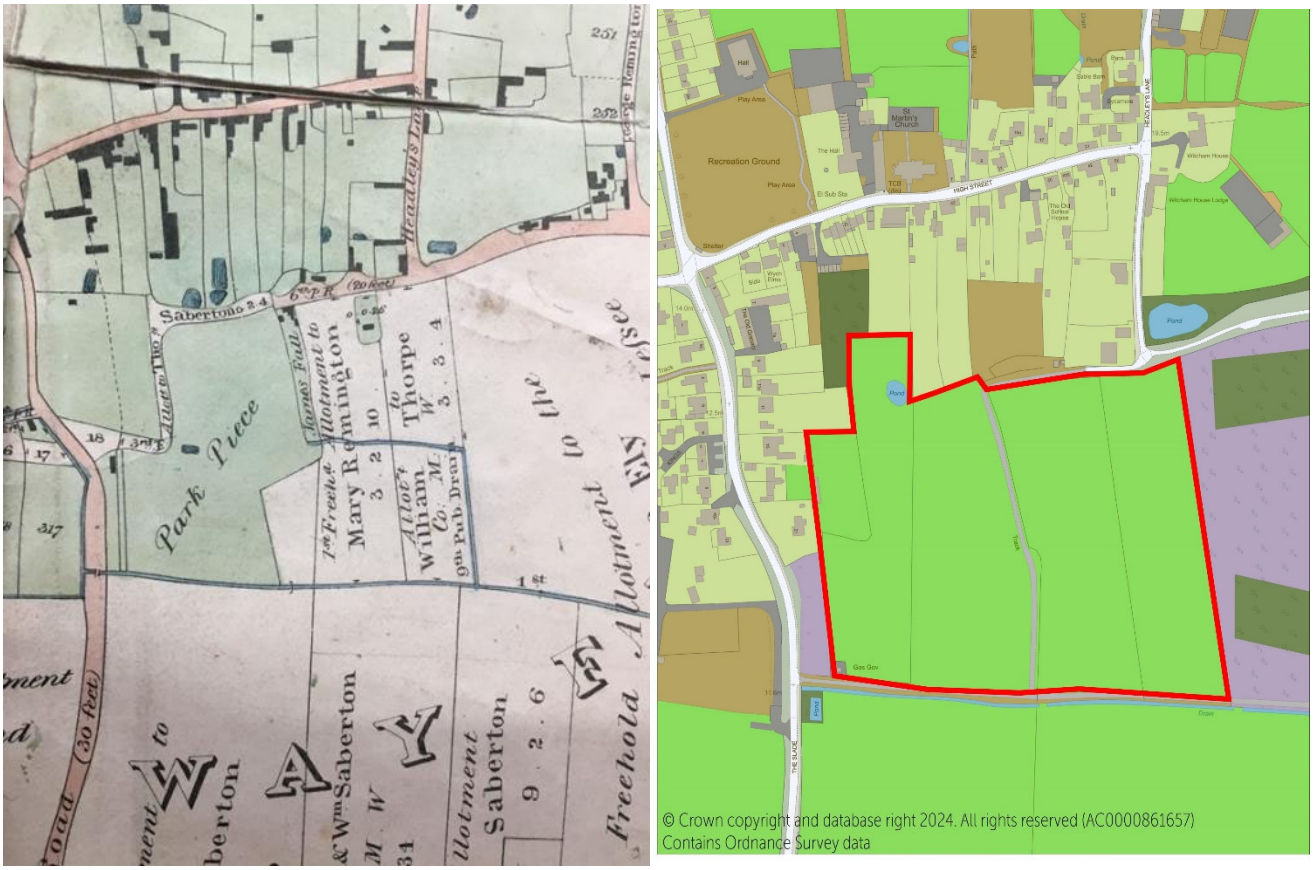
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APPENDIX 1 - EXAMPLE OF HABITAT RICHNESS

Meadows south of the High Street and east of The Slade

There are four meadows located south of the High St. and east of The Slade. The area immediately adjacent to The Slade and the adjoining meadow were formerly known as Park Piece and now known variously as the Church Commissioners' meadows, Roy's meadows, the hay meadows, Polish Resettlement Camp meadows and most recently the 'dog walking' meadows - all reflecting varied community use and history. Park Piece was owned by the Ely Diocese whereas the land to the east was "open fields and commonable meadow and lammas lands and waste lands." which were "divided, allotted or enclosed" following the 1838 Enclosure Act. (Map 12: 1 Enclosure Map 1838)

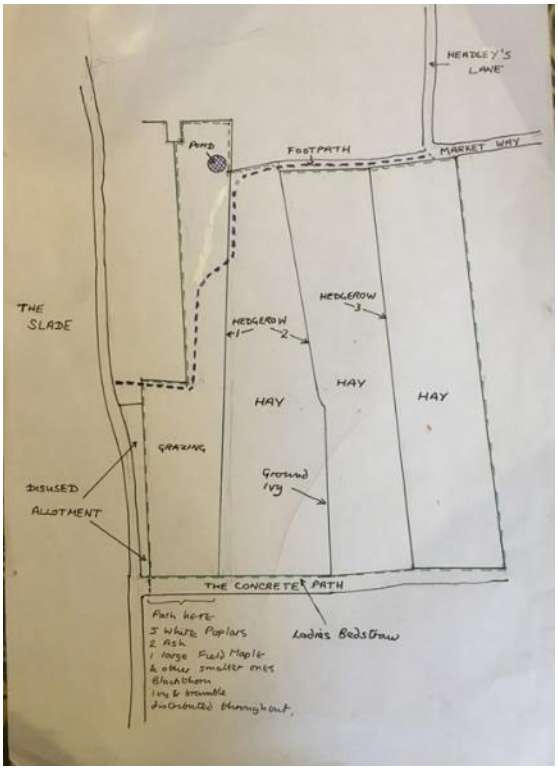
The layout of these fields has remained largely the same to this day (Cambridgeshire Archive document P182/26/1).



Map 12: Meadows located south of the High Street and east of The Slade – Enclosure map of 1838 and current map

The meadows have been used for summer grazing for ponies but in recent years just cut for hay. In extreme wet ridges can be seen, possibly evidence of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.

The perimeter is made up of wildwood type hedges of hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, field rose and dog rose. Grasses include: colts foot, meadow foxtail, Yorkshire fog, perennial rye grass, common couch grass. Obvious flora: creeping thistle, meadow thistle, ragwort, field bindweed, cow parsley and other umbellifers, some buttercups, speedwell etc. Ladies Bedstraw is found intermittently from year to year along the concrete path (southside of meadows).



Map 13: Illustrates the Hedgerows



Hedgerow 1

Originally a concrete post and wire division with some hawthorn, now almost continuous bramble, forming a wildlife corridor and cover for muntjac deer and rabbit. A favourite habitat for linnets in spring and summer - (probably nesting), as well as blackbirds, long tailed tit and song thrush. (Photo 1)

Hedgerow 2

Originally a hedge and ditch boundary, left untended over the years it has now massively encroached the grassland, in some places trebling its width. At its north end there are a number of remains of big elm trees (East Anglian Elm also known as small leave elm) – these were still standing with hollowed out trunks 20 years ago, now fallen and covered with undergrowth. One is still standing and alive albeit somewhat ivy covered. A mass of suckers has now grown from the original trees forming quite a dense barrier. (Photo 2)

Half way down the hedgerow the elm suckers give way to hawthorn and sloe/blackthorn, these encroach the grassland – in some places up to 9/10m wide. Three large ash trees, which have grown up over the past 20 years now form part of the hedge.

Carpets of ground ivy make a fine display of purple under the hawthorns in spring. A walnut tree has grown up on the east side of the hedgerow, near the junction with the footpath (Park Lane).



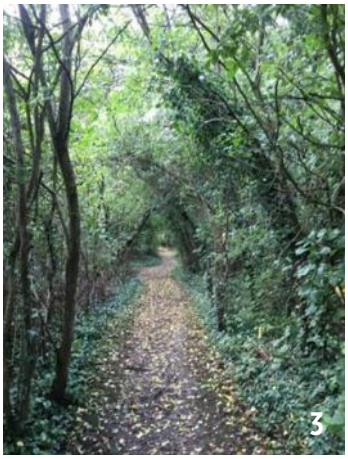
Hedgerow 3

This ditch and hedge boundary is predominantly hawthorn, elder and some sloe/blackthorn growing largely within its bounds due to clipping. Good displays of wild roses, robin's pincushion (a gall caused by a parasitic wasp) present on some briars.

Birdlife

In winter the meadows are a valuable source of food for birds. The abundance of hawthorn and other berries attract fieldfare, redwing, mistlethrush, and blackbirds in particular. Chaffinch, goldfinch, bullfinch and green and spotted woodpeckers also use it as a varied and rich food source in winter (berries, bugs, ants etc). At the north end by the wildwood area adjacent to the foot path wood cock can be found throughout the winter – possibly feeding at night on worms in the meadow grass.

In summer the north end of the meadows, foot path area and ends of the adjacent gardens were until recently a favoured place for turtle doves (probably nesting in the hedgerows), plus the summer visiting chiffchaff and blackcap. (Photo 3) Other summer migrants include the common and lesser whitethroat, found nesting in the scrub hedges at the south end of the meadows, by the concrete path. (Photo 4, view of southern hedgerow from Headley's Lane).


3


4

Insects

Moths - most significant sightings include: Emperor moth (seen once near Park Lane footpath), Poplar Hawkmoth; Oak Eggar, Elephant Hawkmoth (seen most years). Also many, many different, unidentified micro moths present.

Butterflies -those present most summers include: Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Ringlet, Small Skipper, Small Heath. Others found in the immediate neighbourhood include: Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Peacock (including caterpillars on the stinging nettle at the margins of meadows), Brimstone, Orange Tip.

Dragonfly species include: Common Darter; Brown Dragonfly; Emperor; Common Hawker and also common damsel fly. Rare species include: Scarce Chaser and Apparent Willow Emerald.

An early morning visit to the meadows when the grasses are in full flower is quite deafening for the buzz of bees and insects, likewise the sight of moths in a torch beam is not to be missed.

Market Way

Market Way runs from the south end of Headley's Lane to Cuckoo Bridge. Cuckoo Bridge crosses the WItcham catchwater, which at this point lies parallel to the Coveney Rd.

The first section of Market Way from the bottom of Headley's Lane is a concrete road bordered with ash trees and wildwood hedging. Until relatively recently the wide verges were used by the smallholder, living in the now demolished Park Lane Farm to store round straw and hay bales. A plethora of grass snakes could be found under the bales. A large modern house now stands on the site of Park Lane Farm

Beyond the concrete stretch the drove becomes a grass track (largely mud in winter). For the first fifty yards or so the thick hedges contain dead and live elm suckers, hawthorn, bramble, wild rose and ivy, which then give way to blackthorn and ash saplings. The hedge continues for c 200 metres before breaking for two wide field entrances. Views of Bury Lane lie on the left, whilst the A142 runs beyond fields and hedgerows to the right.

For many years these hedges have been a favoured winter roost for redwing, chaffinches, fieldfare, blackbirds and mistle and song thrushes.

Beyond the field entrances the drove is bordered for c. 200 metres by blackthorn on the left hand side and hawthorn on the right. In summer this stretch is a favoured haunt for yellowhammers. Two old ponds can be found on either side and a lone ash tree stands on the left.

Henceforth the drove has a more open aspect (Photo 5) with low scrub hedges of bramble, wild rose and hawthorn. On the right the hedge is punctuated by two big iron gates through which a large meadow is visible. Past the gates and to the right there is a long line of nearly mature ash, oak and white poplar. To the left there is a broken hedge, a single ash tree and two thriving oak trees. The fields are arable on either side at this point. At the end of the righthand side trees there is a curious double hedgerow set at right angles to the drove. This consists of two lines of hawthorn, ten metres apart and between which an impenetrable tangle of bramble and sloe is found.

From this point to the Coveney Rd there are clipped and tended hedges (Photo 6) to the left, and broken hedges with grass banks opening to the fields to the right. The Cuckoo Bridge, (Photo 7), an attractive structure built from local gault bricks and lime mortar,

once had flared parapets. The parapets are now broken and the brickwork almost level with the drove. When, the parapets were intact common lizards could be spotted sunning themselves in the nooks and crannies of the brickwork. Burnt Hill, a mesolithic site for flint working is found to the North West.







APPENDIX 2 - DEVELOPMENT DESIGN CHECKLIST

Source: Witcham Design Guidance and Codes. AECOM 2024

Not all items in the Development Design Checklist will be appropriate to every planning application.

The checklist should therefore be applied accordingly, taking into consideration the proposal, its scale and location.

Street grid and layout:

- Does it favour accessibility and connectivity? If not, why?
- Do the new points of access and street layout have regard for all users of the development; in particular pedestrians, cyclists and those with disabilities?
- What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern; are these reflected in the proposal?
- How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing street arrangement?
- Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
- Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?

Local green spaces, views & character:

- What are the particular characteristics of this area which have been taken into account in the design; i.e. what are the landscape qualities of the area?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance any identified views or views in general?
- How does the proposal affect the trees on or adjacent to the site?
- Can trees be used to provide natural shading from unwanted solar gain? i.e. deciduous trees can limit solar gains in summer, while maximising them in winter.
- Has the proposal been considered within its wider physical context?
- Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken int account?
- Has the impact of the development on the tranquillity of the area been fully considered?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area and how are these views incorporated in the design?
- Can any new views be created?
- Is there adequate amenity space for the development?
- Does the new development respect and enhance existing amenity space?
- Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
- Will any communal amenity space be created? If so, how will this be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?
- Is there opportunity to increase the local area biodiversity?
- Can green space be used for natural flood prevention e.g. permeable landscaping, swales etc.?
- Can water bodies be used to provide evaporative cooling?
- Is there space to consider a ground source heat pump array, either horizontal ground loop or borehole (if excavation is required)?

Gateway and access features:

- What is the arrival point, how is it designed?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing gaps between settlements?
- Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?
- Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?

Buildings layout and grouping:

- What are the typical groupings of buildings?
- How have the existing groupings been reflected in the proposal?
- Are proposed groups of buildings offering variety and texture to the townscape?
- What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
- Does the proposal maintain the character of dwelling clusters stemming from the main road?
- Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens? How is this mitigated?
- Subject to topography and the clustering of existing buildings, are new buildings oriented to incorporate passive solar design principles?
- If any of the buildings were to be heated by an individual air source heat pump (ASHP), is there space to site it within the property boundary without infringing on noise and visual requirements?
- Can buildings with complementary energy profiles be clustered together such that a communal low carbon energy source could be used to supply multiple buildings that might require energy at different times of day or night to reduce peak loads? And/or can waste heat from one building be extracted to provide cooling to that building as well as heat to another building?

Buildings heights and roofline:

- What are the characteristics of the roofline?
- Have the proposals paid careful attention to height, form, massing and scale?
- If a higher than average building(s) is proposed, what would be the reason for making the development higher?
- Will the roof structure be capable of supporting a photovoltaic or solar thermal array either now, or in the future?

- Will the inclusion of roof mounted renewable technologies be an issue from a visual or planning perspective? If so, can they be screened from view, being careful not to cause over shading?

Building line and boundary treatment:

- What are the characteristics of the building line?
- How has the building line been respected in the proposals?
- Has the appropriateness of the boundary treatment been considered in the context of the site?

Household extensions:

- Does the proposed design respect the character of the area and the immediate neighbourhood, and does it have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties in relation to privacy, overbearing or overshadowing impact?
- Is the roof form of the extension appropriate to the original dwelling (considering angle of pitch)?
- Do the proposed materials match those of the existing dwelling?
- In case of side extensions, does it retain important gaps within the street scene and avoid a 'terracing effect'?
- Are there any proposed dormer roof extensions set within the roof slope?
- Does the proposed extension respond to the existing pattern of window and door openings?
- Is the side extension set back from the front of the house?
- Does the extension offer the opportunity to retrofit energy efficiency measures to the existing building?
- Can any materials be re-used in situ to reduce waste and embodied carbon?
- Building materials and surface treatment:
- What is the distinctive material in the area?
- Does the proposed material harmonise with the local materials?
- Does the proposal use high-quality materials?
- Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves and roof details been addressed in the context of the overall design?
- Do the new proposed materials respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?
- Are recycled materials, or those with high recycled content proposed?
- Has the embodied carbon of the materials been considered and are there options which can reduce the embodied carbon of the design? For example, wood structures and concrete alternatives.
- Can the proposed materials be locally and/or responsibly sourced? E.g. FSC timber, or certified under BES 6001, ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems?

Car parking:

- What parking solutions have been considered?
- Are the car spaces located and arranged in a way that is not dominant or detrimental to the sense of place?
- Has planting been considered to soften the presence of cars?
- Does the proposed car parking compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?
- Have the needs of wheelchair users been considered?
- Can electric vehicle charging points be provided?
- Can secure cycle storage be provided at an individual building level or through a central/ communal facility where appropriate?
- If covered car ports or cycle storage is included, can it incorporate roof mounted photovoltaic panels or a biodiverse roof in its design?

Architectural details and design:

- If the proposal is within a conservation area, how are the characteristics reflected in the design?
- Does the proposal harmonise with the adjacent properties? This means that it follows the height massing and general proportions of adjacent buildings and how it takes cues from materials and other physical characteristics.
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing landscape features?
- Has the local architectural character and precedent been demonstrated in the proposals?
- If the proposal is a contemporary design, are the details and materials of a sufficiently high enough quality and does it relate specifically to the architectural characteristics and scale of the site?
- Is it possible to incorporate passive environmental design features such as larger roof overhangs, deeper window reveals and/or external louvres/shutters to provide shading in hotter months?
- Can the building designs utilise thermal mass to minimise heat transfer and provide free cooling?
- Can any external structures such as balconies be fixed to the outside of the building, as opposed to cantilevering through the building fabric to reduce thermal bridge?

APPENDIX 3 – LISTED BUILDINGS

As at October 2024

Source - Historic England's Register of Listed Buildings https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list

The entries below are as they appear in the Historic England list. Where properties are now known by different names from those used in this list, the local names are included in square brackets. Up to date information on listed buildings and other heritage assets should be sought from Historic England or another reliable source.

Grade I

Church of St Martin, High Street

Grade II

The Old Crown House, 28 High Street
Garden Wall, Gate Piers and Gate High Street
Hill House, 1 Martins Lane
Windrush, 22 High Street
Yew Tree House, 2 Silver Street
K6 Telephone Kiosk, High Street
The Hall, High Street
Barn, 20 yards north east of The Hall, High Street
Glebe Lodge, High Street

APPENDIX 4 – BUILDINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST REGISTER

East Cambridgeshire District Council is collaborating with a countywide initiative to prepare local lists of heritage assets that are important to the people living in their communities. As of December 2025, the following buildings and features were included on the Local Heritage List, but reference should be made to https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/cambridgeshire for any additions. The descriptions are reproduced from that website.

The White Horse Public House		
Location /Address	The White Horse, 7 Silver Street,	
Description	Two storeys constructed of gault brick with a slate roof. The property features two end stacks and the front elevation is asymmetrical with modern replacement windows throughout. The rear catslide extension is later in date and is constructed of painted brickwork with a slate roof.	
Date	Mid 19th century	
Type	Building	
Significance	The building is a good example of a simple village public house. Located in a prominent position within the village, the building has an important social function within the settlement as well as making a positive contribution to the character of the area.	

Witcham Village Sign		
Location /Address	The Slade	
Description	1980 pictorial village sign (replaced in 2018), in painted timber showing village fire engine and haywain set in cylindrical brick base. A good contribution to a distinctive, albeit recent, East Anglian tradition, commissioned by Witcham Women's Institute.	
Date	1980	
Type	Landmark	
Significance	Rarity: unique to village, Artistic interest, Historic iterest	

32 High Street		
Location / Address	32 High Street	
Description	Late C19 house. Double-fronted type in gault brick with slate roof, gable stacks, 2:2 sash windows and door with elliptical recessive arch. A well-preserved example of classically-influenced C19 domestic architecture, and a distinct local type (eg examples in Ely, Stretham, Haddenham and Swaffham Bulbeck).	
Date	Late C19	
Type	Building	
Significance	Rarity: well-preserved example. Architectural and artistic interest: Good example of enduring influence of classicism on C19 architecture. Group value: with other historic (including listed) buildings on the High Street within the Witcham conservation area	

Grange Farm, Silver Street		
Location / Address	Grange Farm, Silver Street	
Description	The building is two storeys with a slate roof and end stack. The building features clipped eaves and parapet detail to the gable ends. The front elevation possesses well proportioned traditional (possibly original) timber sashes.	
Date	Pre-1840 (?)	
Type	Building	
Significance	A good example of a more Georgian formal farmhouse that makes a positive contribution to the character of the area.	

Witcham House & boundary wall		
Location / Address	Witcham House, Headley's Lane	
Description	Two storeys with a shallow hipped roof and two tall ridge stacks. The property is constructed of gault brick with a slate roof and the front elevation possesses well-proportioned timber sash windows and a moulded timber door surround. The front garden wall appears to be contemporary with the building and is worthy of note also.	
Date	1841-1914	
Type	Building	
Significance	The building is a good example of a Victorian farmhouse and creates an attractive focal point at the end of the High Street. The property makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.	

GLOSSARY:

Amenity - a general term used to describe the tangible and intangible benefits or features associated with a property or location, that contribute to its character, comfort, convenience or attractiveness.

Biodiversity - a contraction of biological diversity, all species of life on earth including plants and animals and the ecosystem of which we are all part.

Biodiversity Net Gain - an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

Birds and Habitats Directives - European Directives to conserve natural habitats and wild fauna and flora.

Brownfield Land - also known as Previously Developed Land, see NPPF.

Community Facilities - facilities including leisure facilities, libraries, public houses, cultural facilities (such as arts and museum facilities), places of worship and community halls.

Conservation Area - a formally designated area of special historic or architectural interest whose character must be preserved or enhanced.

Development Envelope - a boundary on a map beyond which the local planning authority proposes that a village should not be able to extend.

Development Plan - Includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made and published spatial development strategies. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan

Habitats Regulations Assessment – the identification of any aspects of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan that would have the potential to cause a likely significant effect on Natura 2000 or European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites), (either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects), and to identify appropriate avoidance and mitigation strategies where such effects were identified.

Heritage Asset - A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Infill - the use of vacant land and property within a built-up area for further construction or development (see also "windfall site").

Infrastructure - a collective term which relates to all forms of essential services like electricity, water, and road and rail provision

Listed Building - a building or structure designated by the Secretary of State under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for its special architectural or historic interest, and therefore included in a 'list' of such buildings and structures.

Local Development Scheme: Published by the local planning authority, it is the timetable to produce the Development Plan Documents (DPDs), such as the Local Plan, including key production and public consultation stages.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - the Government's national planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

Open Space - areas of undeveloped or largely undeveloped land for leisure purposes – including village greens, allotments, children's playgrounds, sports pitches and municipal parks.

Policies Map - a map on an Ordnance Survey base which shows where policies in Development Plans apply.

Settlement Hierarchy - settlements are categorised into a hierarchy based on the range of facilities, services and employment opportunities available, plus the ability to access other higher ranking settlements by public transport.

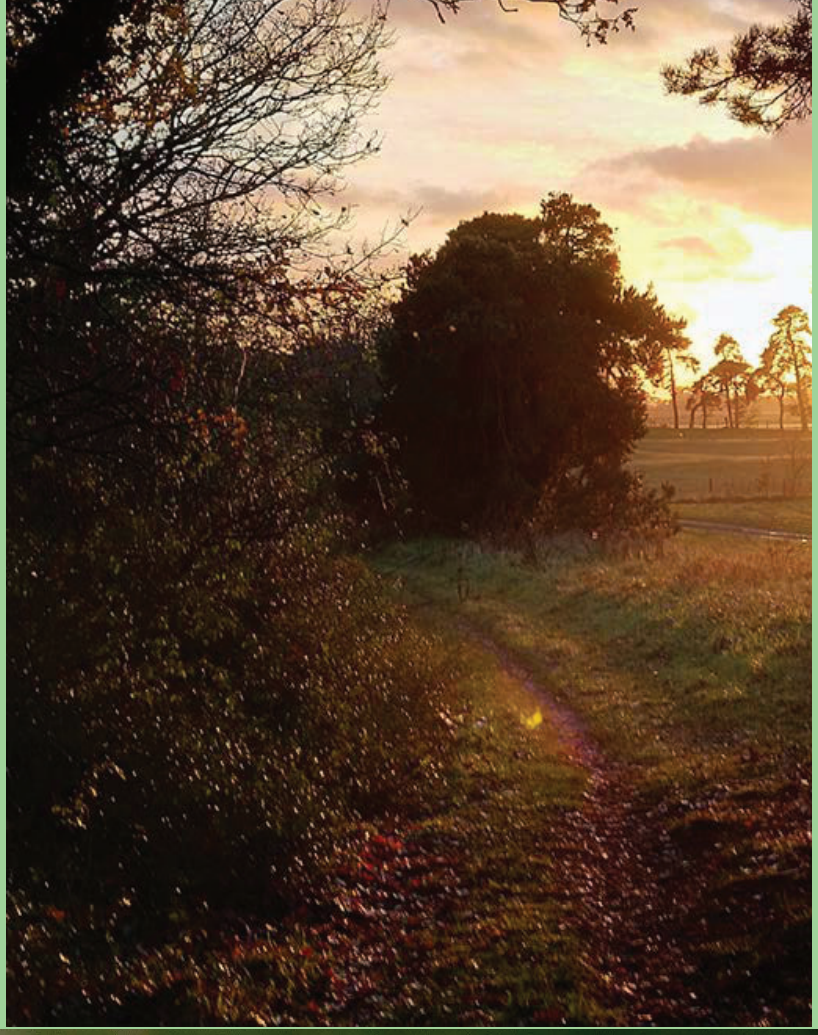
Special Areas of Conservation & Special Protection Areas – designations under the European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

Strategic Environmental Assessment - A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Supplementary Planning Document - Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

Sustainable Development - usually referred to as "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987).

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) - an overall term for systems of surface water drainage management that take into account the quantity and quality of runoff, and the amenity value of surface water in the urban environment. The main focus is on source control and the mimicking of natural processes to enable infiltration and gradual discharge into watercourses.



Made Plan
February 2026



Witcham Parish Council