

Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan

Witton Gilbert 2017 - 2032

Our vision for Witton Gilbert 2017 - 2032 is of a vibrant and sustainable community which has retained all of the important assets identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.

November 2017 Witton Gilbert Parish Council (Pre-submission draft: November 2017)

FOREWORD

The Localism Act, which received Royal Assent on November 5th 2011, introduced new rights to allow local communities to shape new development by coming together to prepare neighbourhood plans.

Neighbourhood planning can be undertaken by two types of body; town and parish councils or neighbourhood forums in areas without a parish council.

In an important change to the planning system, communities can use neighbourhood planning to influence the development they want to see.

Neighbourhood development plans or orders do not take effect unless there is majority support in a referendum of the neighbourhood.

Following on from the production of the Witton Gilbert Parish Plan in 2012, the Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by a steering group made up of Parish Council members and volunteer residents, guided by a chartered town planning consultants.

The plan will form the strong foundation upon which we can deliver our community's aspirations. It reflects community-wide comments, observations and concerns and our aim is to bring these

together in a coherent and positive strategy for our community which will assist Witton Gilbert to 2032 and beyond.

The process has involved many public consultation events and several meetings with residents, landowners and stakeholders focusing on areas such as housing, transport, sustainability, heritage, green spaces, village centre and village identity.

Research work with various departments within Durham County Council has been carried out and joint meetings have been held. The quarterly parish newsletter has been used to keep residents up to date.

Once completed and following a favourable referendum, the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Durham County Council Development Plan, the starting point for deciding where development should take place and the type and quality of that development. It will also determine which places we wish to preserve for our heritage and which green spaces should be kept free from development to ensure our community enjoyment into the future.

Fraser Reynolds
Witton Gilbert Parish Council.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A steering group was formed by the Parish Council in 2013 to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the Parish of Witton Gilbert (the Plan area).

The Parish Council was designated as a qualifying body entitled to prepare a neighbourhood plan for the area. Durham County Council formally designated the whole of the Witton Gilbert Parish area as a Neighbourhood Plan area in November 2013 in accordance with the relevant legislation. The plan has been prepared by a steering group supported by neighbourhood representatives, with advice from our planning consultants and Durham County Council. The plan has been drawn up following an extensive public consultation process carried out over the intervening 4 years which was developed into the community vision for Witton Gilbert together with the plan objectives and the policy areas. The neighbourhood plan period is 15 years from August 2017 to 2032. It is important that the plan document is read in its entirety during the planning decision making process to ensure a full understanding of the community's intent.

1.2 Why do we need a plan for Witton Gilbert?

The community in the Parish of Witton Gilbert want to see the right kind of development happen in the village. Much work went into producing the Parish Plan for Witton Gilbert in February 2012, and many of the aspirations that were raised in the Parish Plan will be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.

People in Witton Gilbert Parish want to see developments that reflect the aspirations of the local community and highlight what is special and important about the area. The Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Development Plan (hereafter referred to as "the Plan") will provide locally specific planning policies which will offer clear guidance as to what kind of development will and will not be allowed. It will also define a settlement boundary for Witton Gilbert; provide guidance as to the type of new housing considered suitable in appropriate locations, and sites for protected local green space.

This means that, for the first time the local population can have a say in how the Parish develops as a living, working, sustainable community. The Plan will also contain a series of 'Community Actions' which cover other issues that have been raised locally. Many of these community projects have already been identified in the Witton Gilbert Parish Plan (2012). One of these is the Village Centre Project, the first phase of which has now been completed. Other projects have also been included within the Plan, and will be implemented over its lifetime.

1.3 What evidence are we using to prepare the plan?

First of all, we asked you, the community, what you wanted in the plan. We have commissioned urban design consultants to carry out a site assessment on potential housing sites, so we can see how development in Witton Gilbert could help re-generate the village. A design brief for the Historic Zone of the village has been prepared to clearly describe the concerns and aspirations for this important area. We have used advice from statutory agencies, and other advice as well as evidence produced by the County Council in the

production of the Durham Plan. All our evidence documents will be included in the evidence base for the Plan.

1.4 What consultation has taken place?

The Steering Group has engaged throughout the process with the local community, through direct consultation and newsletters. We have created a website www.witton-gilbert.org.uk which has been regularly updated. More detail is provided in the Community Consultation Statement which will be submitted with the Neighbourhood Plan for examination.

1.5 What happens next?

This is a pre-submission draft Plan. We will analyse the responses we get from the community, and other consultees, and amend the Plan accordingly. Once we have done this, the Plan will be submitted to Durham County Council, where there will be another 6 week consultation stage. After this, the Plan will be examined by an independent examiner. If the Plan passes the examination, it

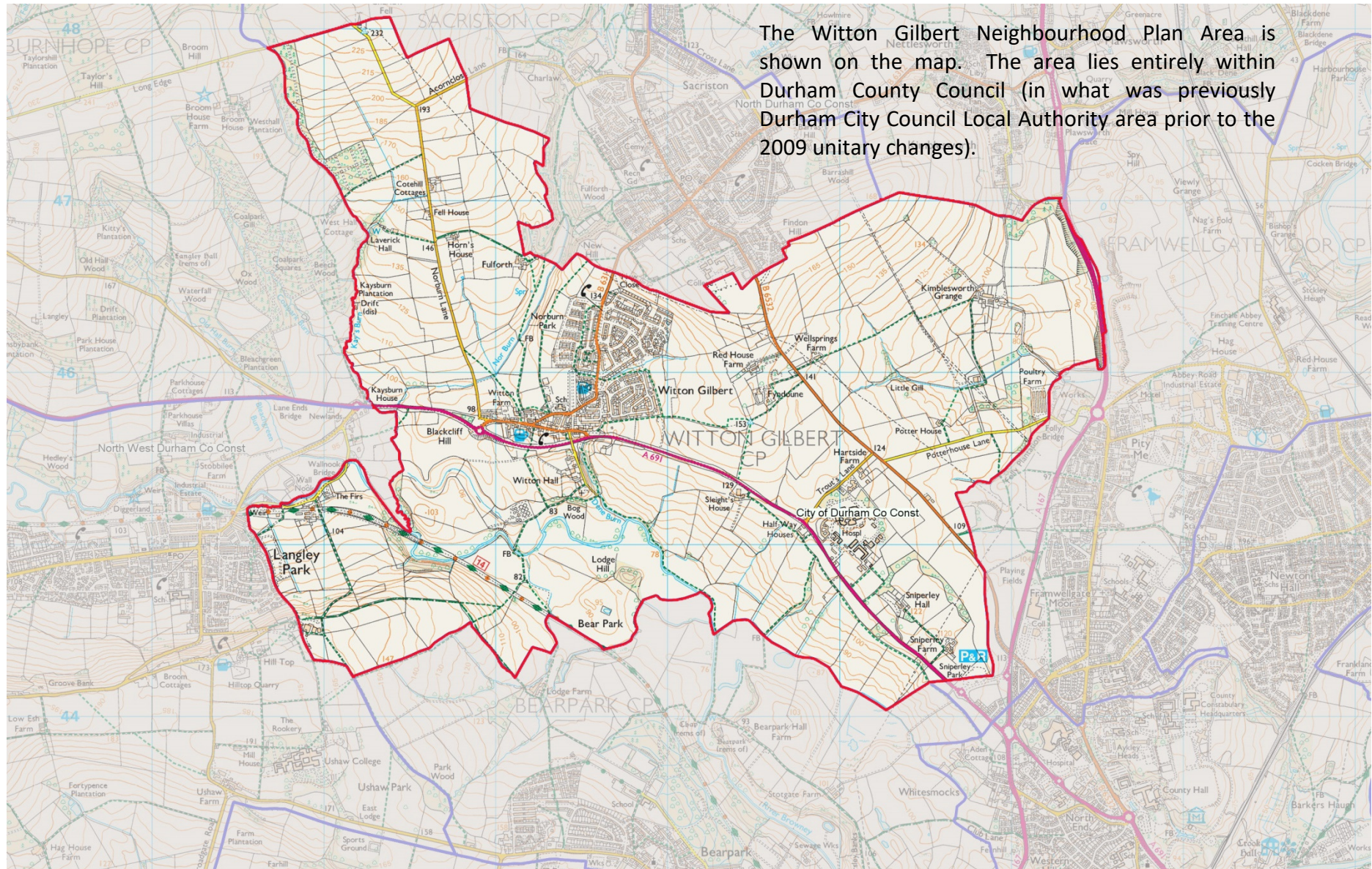
will then go to referendum and everyone living in the Parish will have the opportunity to vote on whether or not they support the Plan.

The plan and supporting documents will be available online at <http://witton-gilbert.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan/policy-areas/> and printed copies of the Neighbourhood Plan will be available for inspection at –

- Village Hall; Witton Gilbert Community Association: Sacriston Lane, Witton Gilbert, DH7 6TF
- Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UQ
- Sacriston Library: Plawsworth Road, Sacriston, DH7 6HU
- Langley Park Library: Old Co-operative Buildings, Front Street, Langley Park, DH7 9XE
- St Michael & All Angels : Coach Lane, Witton Gilbert, DH7 6SX

WITTON GILBERT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2017 - 2032

2.0 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA



3.0 WITTON GILBERT TODAY

3.1 People and Population

Between 2001 and 2011 census data shows the total population has grown from 2,272 to 2,419, an increase of 6.5%. The percentage change within the inter census period among the age groups 19 to 60 has fallen with the increase occurring in the 0-9 age group and those over 60 suggesting an ageing population but also a rise in families with young children.

9.7% of the parish population in 2001 was made up of 0-9 year olds. In 2011 this percentage had increased to 10.2%.

The over 60 age groups have increased from 22.3% in 2001 to 28.4% in 2011. The over 60s population is projected to increase by 48% by 2030 (source: Durham Local Plan Strategic Housing Assessment 2013). Using the same organic growth rate as seen in Witton Gilbert over the last 15 years, the population is likely to grow to approximately 2,646; an increase of 182.

The emerging picture is of a steadily increasing population with most of that increase being among the younger and older age groups. This suggests the need for more housing to accommodate both younger families and older people.

3.2 Housing

The village of Witton Gilbert has 0.48% of the County's total housing stock. In the last 10 years 39 new dwellings have been built in the village. The vast majority of homes in Witton Gilbert were built before 1980 and a large proportion of those are pre-1940s houses.

The average household size in the UK is 2.37 persons per house. Using the UK average household size to accommodate the expected increase of 182 persons, we would need an additional 76 new homes, equating to 5 new houses per year over the next 15 years. Based on past building rates and projected population growth over the last 10 years, and to provide scope for flexibility and change in local circumstances, an assessment of the potential housing sites in and around the village has been carried out. The Settlement Boundary has been redrawn to ensure sufficient land is available to accommodate the projected population increase.

Regeneration and new development can help make a neighbourhood a sustainable place. New housing in suitable numbers and types for the population mix will sustain our village into the future while at the same time ensuring the countryside and heritage is protected and enhanced.

The predominant house type is semi-detached, forming 63% of the housing stock with terraced houses next at 19%, with 17% of houses being detached.

There are 162 bungalows, 92 of which are social rented and 70 privately owned. There is no current imbalance of supply for any particular types of housing in the housing market area, although the ageing population means that potentially more adaptable housing will be needed to provide for the elderly.

There is a growing trend because of this demographic change to look to providing lifetime homes which will provide for changing and flexible needs. The over-55s' housing market is dominated by a few specialist providers, usually catering for the elderly and/or infirm and there are not many alternatives for those in good health

but looking for more convenient, smaller accommodation than the family home. The Government has been trying to encourage downsizing to free up family homes but progress has been slow due to a lack of appealing alternatives for the over-55s. The Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity for us to encourage developers to fill a potential need and look to providing for our ageing population as well as supplying more family homes.

3.4 Education within the Parish

In the 2016/17 session, 189 children attended the local primary school, which has a total capacity of 203 and a 30 per annum admission limit. Witton Gilbert primary school is well subscribed and a popular local choice, however the move to secondary education from here is a complex decision for parents. Pupils leaving Witton Gilbert Primary School and moving into secondary education have several choices, the closest being Sacriston. This year, the majority of pupils will be moving to Framwellgate School, a few to Durham Johnston or even The Hermitage School in Chester le Street. However these schools are often oversubscribed. Those who want a Roman Catholic school may opt for either St Leonard's Durham or St Bede's Lanchester. Parental choice may, in some circumstances, leave those who opt for oversubscribed schools having to attend a secondary school not of their choice. (Source: Witton Gilbert Primary School November 2017)

3.5 The Evolution of Witton Gilbert

Witton Gilbert is a rural village, its character and layout evolving in response to local and county-wide issues. It has a long history, with much evidence of Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze age, Romano-British and medieval settlement. The present village is of Anglo-Saxon origin, the name suggesting a community involved in the processing of wood and timber. The manorial suffix 'Gilbert' is attributed to the Norman land-holder Gilbert de la Laye from which the soft 'G' pronunciation is derived. A good deal of the village was defined by the enclosure of the Prior's park in the Browney valley. A corn mill was situated by the river on the western boundary at Wall Nook, whilst the main village developed on the northern slope above the park.

The parish church was built about 1170 on a promontory above the Browney and the remains of an adjacent hospital of the same date can still be seen in the wall of Witton Hall farm. The bulk of the village grew along the line of the present Front Street with the entrances to two farms, a market area (the Fold) and houses mainly for agricultural workers and coal miners employed in bell pits and drifts from the fourteenth century.

The village saw little expansion until the nineteenth century when it grew to accommodate workers in the developing collieries in adjacent villages. By this time, on Front Street, there were traditional village shops, a school, a Methodist church, many public houses and the imposing Witton Gilbert Hotel.

Industrial development brought the need for more homes and at the turn of the twentieth century Consett Iron Company built terraced houses, East Block and West Block, for miners working at Langley Park colliery. As neighbouring mines were established, more housing was required and in the 1920s Hillside, Fair View and

Chester Gardens were built on fields to the North of the village. These were some of the first council houses in the country.

After the Second World War the emerging industrial-based economy saw a boom in the construction industry and the area known as 'the Leas' (Green Lea Briar Lea etc.) was developed to accommodate workers in nearby factories and miners in the expanding collieries. In 1968 the National Savings headquarters relocated to Milburngate House in Durham City bringing some 4000 jobs. People from various parts of the country moved into the area and were given priority housing under the 'key worker' scheme. Findon Avenue in the village housed many of them as council tenants.

Whitehouse Farm Estate was built in the 1960s to provide houses in the private sector attracting many people working at National Savings, the newly built prison and the rapidly expanding University. The 1970s saw the emergence of Norburn Park, the last of the estates to be built in Witton Gilbert. These housing projects were developed where land became available and designs were typical of housing estates throughout the country. Recent developments have largely been on small scale infill sites

3.6 Community Facilities

The nearby larger settlements of Sacriston and Langley Park provide most of the facilities that Witton Gilbert lacks, such as health care facilities, dentists, and a larger selection of local shops. Witton Gilbert does have two convenience stores, a Post Office, two public houses, a licenced club, a beauty salon and a take-away restaurant, as well as other non-profit community facilities.

The Village Hall is now owned and run by the community and hosts a wide variety of events, meetings and classes not only attended by

parishioners but also those from the wider neighbourhood. The Village Hall is adjacent to a public playing field, bowling green and enclosed multi-use games area.

There are two well-tended allotment areas in the centre of the village. Children's play areas have been located close to each of the larger housing estates and there are a number of open spaces for younger members of the community to enjoy.

There are extensive opportunities to walk, run, cycle, horse-ride and take part in other rural activities. Local footpaths and bridleways link into an extensive county wide network, which connect the surrounding settlements and places of interest.

Witton Dene is an area of semi-natural woodland about five minutes' walk from the village centre. It is recognised as a local nature reserve (NLR) and is managed by a group of volunteers, 'Friends of Witton Dene' Because of its location it is extensively used for leisure and educational purposes.

The parish is served by St Michael & All Angels Parish Church and the Methodist Chapel. Both venues cater for a wide range of occasions and community events. St Michael & All Angels church has recently been sensitively adapted to address the needs of our changing society and is now also the home of the Breathing Space project which provides a tranquil setting for a wide variety of groups. The Village Hall, shops and other services are not centrally located, and unlike our neighbouring towns we no longer have a "high street" which concentrates pedestrian flow and allows for day to day social interaction. The Neighbourhood Plan hopes to

address this with the Village Centre Project by using land at the geographical centre of the village to encourage the development of a social space and community facilities in a central location bringing people together to allow those personal interactions which bind a community together.

3.7 Local Economy

The parish is home to a wide range of business and services; the large scale concerns being Lanchester Road Hospital, Nelsons Removals, the Fire Station, primary school and the larger farms. The majority of businesses are small in scale and have few employees. There is no industrial estate or business park within the parish and there are very few business premises or workshops. Those that did exist have for the most part been converted to residential properties.

There are exceptions, as our amenities section demonstrates, but for a community of 2400 people, there are remarkably few work spaces available. It is very difficult to quantify the growing micro-business community as the opportunities afforded by digital communication have allowed people to work more easily from home and develop significant businesses.

We recognise the challenge for small communities to encourage entrepreneurial spirit and provide space for these small businesses to expand and capture the potential jobs they will create, while protecting the character of the community. There are many examples of successful business ideas that have developed in rural locations.

3.8 Local landscape

Although this section is concentrating on the village it should not be forgotten that this is a **Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Witton Gilbert** and that the majority of the plan area is outside the village settlement boundary. The parish is predominantly agricultural in nature and Witton Gilbert village enjoys its current relationship with the surrounding countryside, benefiting from expansive views of open country side, and a mixture of arable, pasture and woodland.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

4.1 National and Local Planning Policy Context:

The Plan must be in general conformity with strategic policies contained in other relevant planning documents. Further details of relevant policies are provided in Chapter 7 (Policies).

The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) (NPPF) provides the most up to date advice from Central Government on Planning Policy. The NPPF supersedes policy contained in some of the local planning documents.

Sustainable development is at the heart of planning, and should be a 'golden thread' running through all planning documents. Sustainable development is also at the heart of the community aspirations in Witton Gilbert.

The NPPF states that Neighbourhood Plans should: "provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency". The NPPF also advises that local plans should give "a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal"¹¹.

This plan seeks to give clarity to developers and to the local community, about what kind of development is encouraged.

¹¹ NPPF Paragraphs 17 and 154

4.2 Local Planning Policy

The current adopted local plan for the area is the Durham City Local Plan (2004). The County Durham Plan is also important, but at the present time does not carry weight in planning terms, because it has been 'withdrawn' and is expected to go through another consultation stage before going to examination. The expected date for submission of the amended plan is December 2017.

Saved policies in the Durham City Local Plan are therefore the strategic policies with which the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan must comply, but careful attention will also be paid to the aims of the emerging County Durham Plan.

5.0 ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY PEOPLE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND THROUGH THE WITTON GILBERT PARISH PLAN

As a result of detailed consultation with the local community, the following general areas emerged as being important. Many of these issues have been identified in the Parish Plan for Witton Gilbert (2012).

5.1 Natural Environment

The natural environment around Witton Gilbert is highly valued by residents in the Parish. To the South of the village, a number of steep, wooded denes run towards the river of which Witton Dene, extending from the village is the largest and publicly accessible. The river, once heavily polluted by local mining industries is now a key asset to the local environment and supports a good variety of wildlife.

Witton Gilbert is bounded to the east by green belt, the purpose of which is to maintain the sense of separation between the village and the larger conurbation of Durham City. Consultation revealed that the majority (97.2%) of respondents had emphasised the importance of the local natural environment and its support to wildlife. However litter and the state of the Dene Burn were also identified as being in need of attention.

5.2 Housing

The Parish of Witton Gilbert may need to accommodate a large number of new homes if the proposed urban extension of Sniperley remains as part of the emerging County Plan. This means that the Parish will receive a housing allocation significantly higher than similar rural parishes. But such a large development is unlikely to respond to the strategic needs of the village or wider parish as it will effectively become a self-contained settlement on the edge of Durham city.

The people of Witton Gilbert were consulted about their housing needs during the production of the Parish Plan, and during the consultation stages of the Neighbourhood Plan. The consensus was that housing was needed, but not at the expense of the local environment, and that there should not be a high number of new houses within the village.

5.3 Historic Environment

Witton Gilbert Parish Plan states: 'The history of Witton is written in the layout of our streets, the surrounding fields and woodland. Each building and site tells a story....'

The community felt it essential to protect historic features of interest and it is apparent that a number of historic features that are not listed in their own right should be considered carefully during the planning application process.

5.4 Recreation and Leisure

The consultation on the Parish Plan revealed that there was a desire for more to be done to make Witton Gilbert more accessible not only to residents but visitors as well. It was felt that much could be done to improve cycle routes and pathways and more could be done to provide information on wildlife and heritage within the Parish. New leisure facilities or an improvement to existing facilities were also identified as being important.

5.5 Energy Conservation

Energy Conservation was an important consideration to people in Witton Gilbert, and it was felt that it was desirable to encourage small scale renewables on new and existing buildings. When asked whether they felt that the Parish should take a more active role in promoting sustainable developments and projects to improve the sustainability of the village, there was a 67% favourable response. There appears to be considerable support for community energy generation projects although there was a clear negative response with regard to new wind farms within, or visible from, the Parish.

5.6 Design and Location of Development

The design and location of development were felt to be important. In particular, the community wishes to preserve the village as a separate settlement, distinct from surrounding settlements. Hence, 65% of respondents felt it was essential to maintain an identifiable separation from Sacriston. The role of the green belt is vital in this, but other policies in the plan may also be relevant. Green spaces

within the built environment were also considered to be very important, with 97% support when surveyed for the Parish Plan. The proposed settlement boundary for Witton Gilbert will ensure that development is focused within the village, particularly on brownfield sites, and will offer the opportunity for regeneration.

5.7 Local Economy

A lack of adequate broadband is seen as the main constraint on local business, and there is an acceptance that Witton Gilbert is, at present, largely a commuter settlement. There is a desire to promote more business in the area.

5.8 Young People

The Parish Plan identified the provision of safe, appropriately designed play areas as a priority. The potential need for more facilities for older children was also identified.

5.9 Traffic

Traffic was a key issue identified during consultation. In particular, “rat-running” along Front Street when the bypass is busy, and parking issues in certain parts of the village. The speed of traffic through the village is also a significant problem.

5.10 Village Centre

The need for a recognisable village centre was identified in 2012 during the Parish Plan consultation and has been addressed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process. The project is to provide a point of focus for the community where commercial and public spaces combine to bring people together to allow those personal interactions which help bind a community together. The White Tun was identified as the preferred site as it is located in the geographical centre of the village, is adjacent to other businesses and the White Tun Pub itself was rundown, failing commercially and in danger of closing. The White Tun building has now been purchased and converted by McColls Retail which has relocated from its former premises into an improved local shop. The Parish Council now hold a 99 year lease on the land around the site and plans are well advanced in re-landscaping the area as the first phase of the village Centre Project



Village centre 2016



Village Centre June 2017 Phase one

6.0 Witton Gilbert 2032 Vision statement

Our vision for Witton Gilbert in 2032 is of a **vibrant and sustainable community** which has **retained all of the important assets** identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The planned population increase will have been accommodated in **well-designed and energy efficient homes** on sites which make a positive contribution to the character and cohesiveness of the village.

The **Historic Zone** of our village will have been protected and revitalised with sensitive development and improvements in the streetscape.

Witton Gilbert will have a **thriving small business** community who are able to take advantage of high quality internet connections in both village and rural locations, providing an economic stimulus and increasing the supply of locally available jobs.

The **local road network** will be better suited to the needs of the 21st century, the local residents and our visitors, allowing us to safely enjoy the benefits of our rural location and **promoting a healthy and active lifestyle**.

The Village Centre will have changed the priority given to motorists, towards a more resident centred approach, making their safety and wellbeing a priority. This will make walking and cycling a more attractive and healthier mode of transport, while also providing a focus for social encounters and a communication hub for the village.

Our important **Local Green Spaces** will have been preserved for all to enjoy free from the danger of development. The new **Village Centre** and village square will be complete and **existing home owners and landlords** will have taken advantage of new technologies and incentives to **improve energy performance** and help reduce Witton's overall energy consumption and improve the wellbeing and health of all residents.

We will have strengthened the institutions and groups within the parish to promote a **strong sense of community**, a willingness to help our fellow residents and to work towards a society which encourages and suits all members of the community regardless of age, sex, race, disability or prosperity.

7.0 OUR POLICIES

Land use planning policies centre on the general principles of new development and the spatial strategy for the plan area. These policies focus on areas that are considered important to the local community, such as the location and design of development, development in the historic context, and landscape and the local economy

Where issues have been raised that are not land-use planning issues, community actions have been proposed for taking these particular areas forward.

This chapter is sub-divided into sections which cover different policy areas. Each policy is accompanied by a summary of the policy intention, a justification statement to explain the policy as well as an overview of how the policy is intended to meet the identified objectives in the Plan.

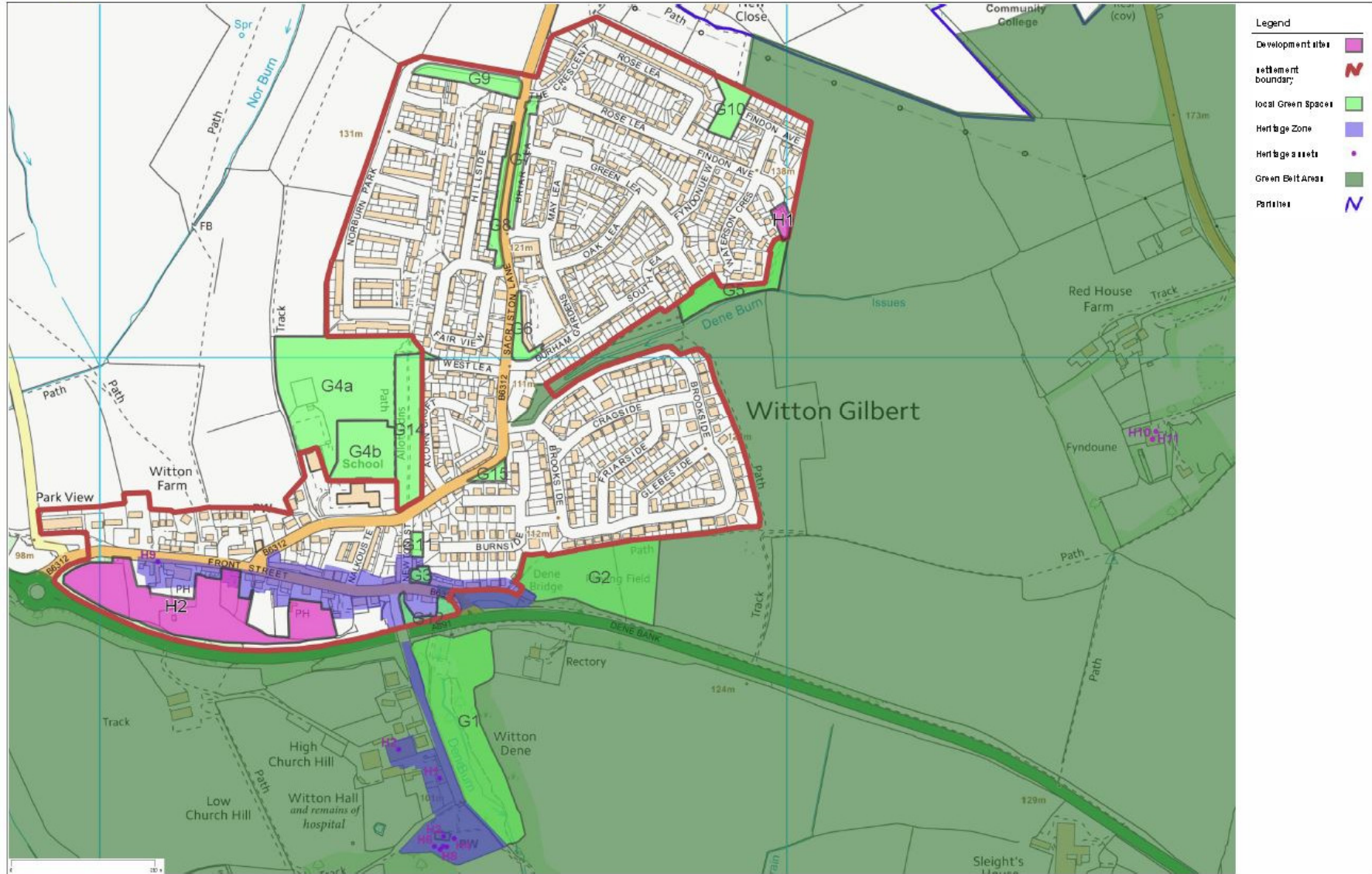
The following **Policies Map** is referred to in the policies text. As the Neighbourhood Plan Area is extensive the Policies map has been reproduced at two scales: Map 1 (at 1:5000) and Map2 (at 1:20000). Extracts of the Policies Map have been used to illustrate individual policies to clearly identify the relevant areas at a more readable scale and without overlapping zones.

WITTON GILBERT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2017 - 2032



Policies Map 1
Central Area Extract A3 scale 1:5000

Witton Gilbert CP



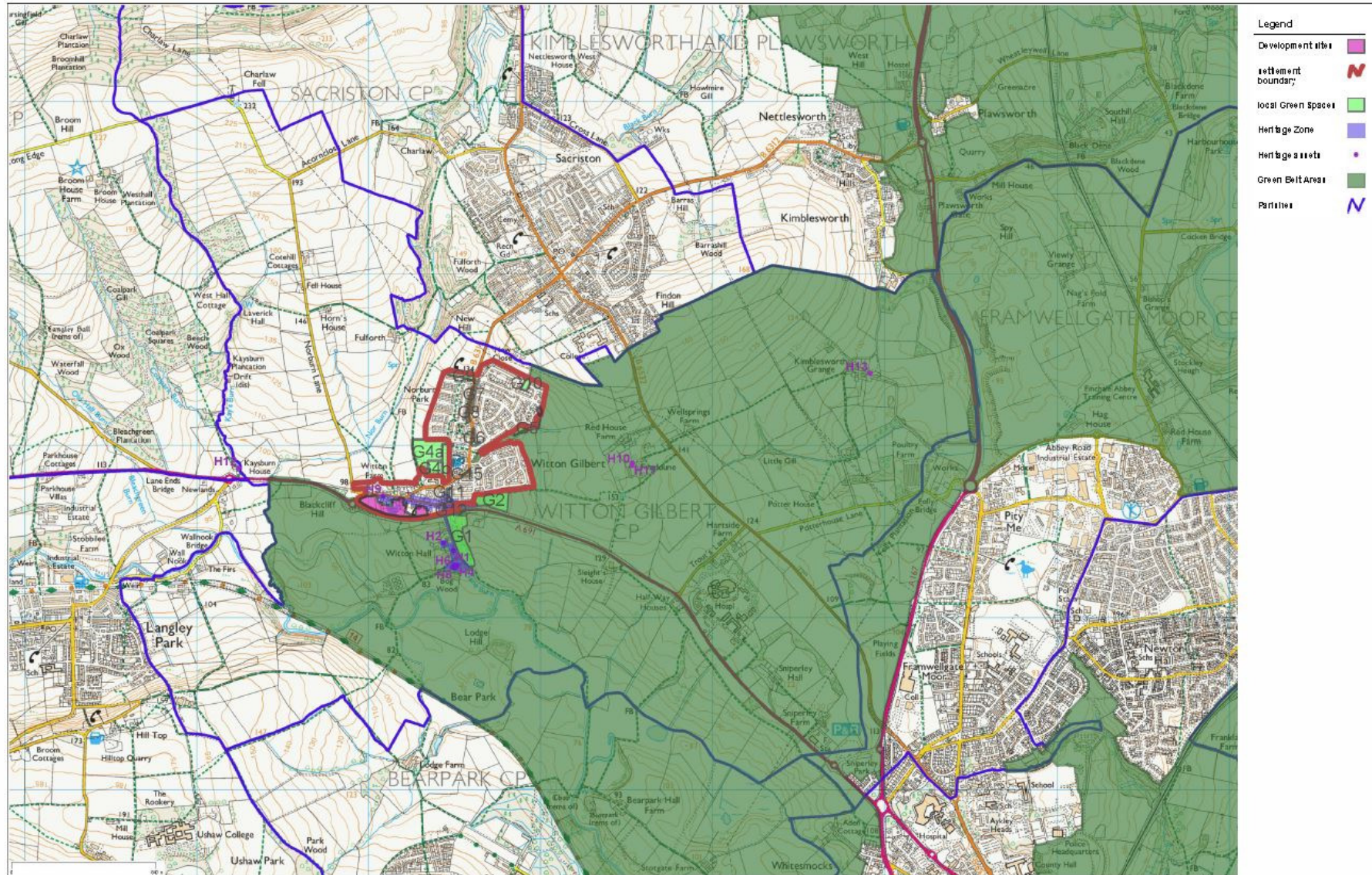
Date Created: 20-1-2017 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing): 423759 / 545880 | Scale: 1:5000 | © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100059678) 2017 © Cox & Dalrymple Stroney Data : Crown copyright and database right 2017

WITTON GILBERT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2017 - 2032



Policies Map 2
 Planning Area Policies Map A3: scale 1:20000

Witton Gilbert CP



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7.1 SUSTAINABLE FRAMEWORK FOR WITTON GILBERT

7.1.1 Sustainable development:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (As defined by the UN Sustainable Development Commission 2011)

A sustainability framework has been developed, against which the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan policies and community proposals have been developed or appraised. There are three inter-linking areas that we wish to focus on in the context of sustainable development in Witton Gilbert. These are **social**, **environmental** and **economic** sustainability.

The following components relate to all development proposals:

Social

- foster the social and economic well-being of the local community
- ensure provision of affordable housing
- increase public involvement in decision making
- promote good and safe accessibility for jobs, facilities, and services in the region
- reduce crime and the fear of crime
- maintain community facilities

Environmental

- reduce flood risk to people and property

- protect the special qualities of the Parish from unsuitable development
- promote good local air quality, energy efficiency and reduce the causes of climate change
- create, protect and enhance the quality and diversity of the landscape
- protect and enhance a landscape rich in biodiversity and geo-diversity.
- protect and enhance biodiversity and other protected features
- protect and enhance the quality of the Parish's ground and river waters
- support the enjoyment of the countryside and the health benefits to be gained from it
- establish, with partners, ways to reduce the impact of traffic and other intrusive activities
- reduce the amount of waste produced and increase the amount recycled
- protect and enhance the cultural heritage of the Parish including settings and diversity

Economic

- encourage sustainable farm business in the Plan area
- support and create local jobs within the community to support sustainable levels of local economic growth
- support sustainable tourism and leisure consistent with protection of the environment

The sustainability framework recognises that sustainable development seeks to balance environmental, social and economic needs as identified in the components above both for the present and the future. We need to build sustainability into all policies in our Neighbourhood Plan.

7.1.2 Social Sustainability

The Taylor Review of 2010 suggests that lack of housing, particularly affordable housing, is one of the single largest contributors to unsustainable communities in rural areas. Our plan therefore seeks to ensure that a suitable mix, type and tenure of housing, including affordable housing, are provided in the plan area.

Other policies in the plan relate to the retention and improvement of community assets and facilities and local green spaces and will also seek to secure the future of our sustainable community, making Witton Gilbert a place that is enjoyed by all ages.

7.1.3 Environmental sustainability

The impacts of climate change, energy use and energy generation are key considerations in the context of the local and wider environment.

Community energy generation schemes could secure the production of heat or power on a very small scale, when compared to the outputs of a typical fossil-fueled power station. Unlike these large power stations which are often located hundreds of miles from where the power is needed, micro-generation systems use the

power where it is made. This means they are much more efficient as transmission and distribution losses are virtually eliminated.

There are a number of different micro-generation technologies. As micro-generation technologies harness the power of the sun, the wind and natural river flow, all of which are freely available, they can reduce overall energy costs in a typical application. Micro-generation also has a role to play in promoting energy diversity and alleviating concerns relating to security of supply, energy shortages and power cuts.

The plan will seek to encourage the development of appropriate micro-generation schemes and the take-up of new technologies and incentives to improve the energy performance of existing homes to help reduce Witton Gilbert's overall energy consumption and improve the wellbeing and health of all residents.

Policies seek to conserve biodiversity; to ensure a net gain for biodiversity over the Plan period, as well as protect local green spaces, encourage SUDs schemes and sustainable design in all new development.

7.1.4 Economic sustainability

Our policies to promote local business opportunities seek to ensure the economic sustainability of our community, as well as our policies on the protection of community assets, some of which are also local businesses. We have policies to improve broadband and communications infrastructure to allow new businesses to thrive.

We propose an overarching 'sustainable development' policy for the Plan area, and then have more specific policies on sustainable design, community regeneration projects, and other cross-cutting

policies across the plan. All seek to deliver the sustainability objectives identified.

7.2 THE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY

POLICY 1: Settlement Boundary of Witton Gilbert

New development proposed in the village of Witton Gilbert will only be permitted within the settlement boundary defined on the Policies Map.

Exceptions to this are:

- a) development outside the settlement boundary which relate to affordable housing; or**
- b) small scale local employment development; or**
- c) other development which requires a countryside location and complies with the NPPF; or**
- d) where these proposals do not conflict with the purposes of the green belt.**

7.2.1 Policy Intention: To focus new development within the settlement boundary of Witton Gilbert to secure the sustainable, managed regeneration of the village and protect its countryside setting.

7.2.2 Policy Justification: A Settlement Boundary¹ was the planning tool selected to achieve the communities aims of providing development opportunities within a well-defined settlement area based on clear geographical boundaries and ensure that the village

maintains its rural character by retaining its connection to the open countryside, much of which is designated Green Belt, which currently surrounds it. It is also to prevent development which will erode the sense of separation between Witton Gilbert and our neighbouring settlement of Sacriston.

To accommodate new developments required over the plan period a number of potential sites have been assessed within and adjoining the existing settlement boundary of the village.

The Housing Topic paper and the Witton Gilbert Settlement Boundary paper provide the background to the current housing context in Witton Gilbert.¹

A Settlement Boundary for Witton Gilbert is based on the existing settlement boundary as defined in the City of Durham Local Plan (2004) and amended to incorporate land to the rear of Front Street and is defined on the Policies Map. The area enclosed by the settlement boundary includes the existing development land and the land incorporated into the extended settlement boundary which will allow for the anticipated expansion of Witton Gilbert over the plan term and is in line with the regeneration and sustainability objectives of the Plan.

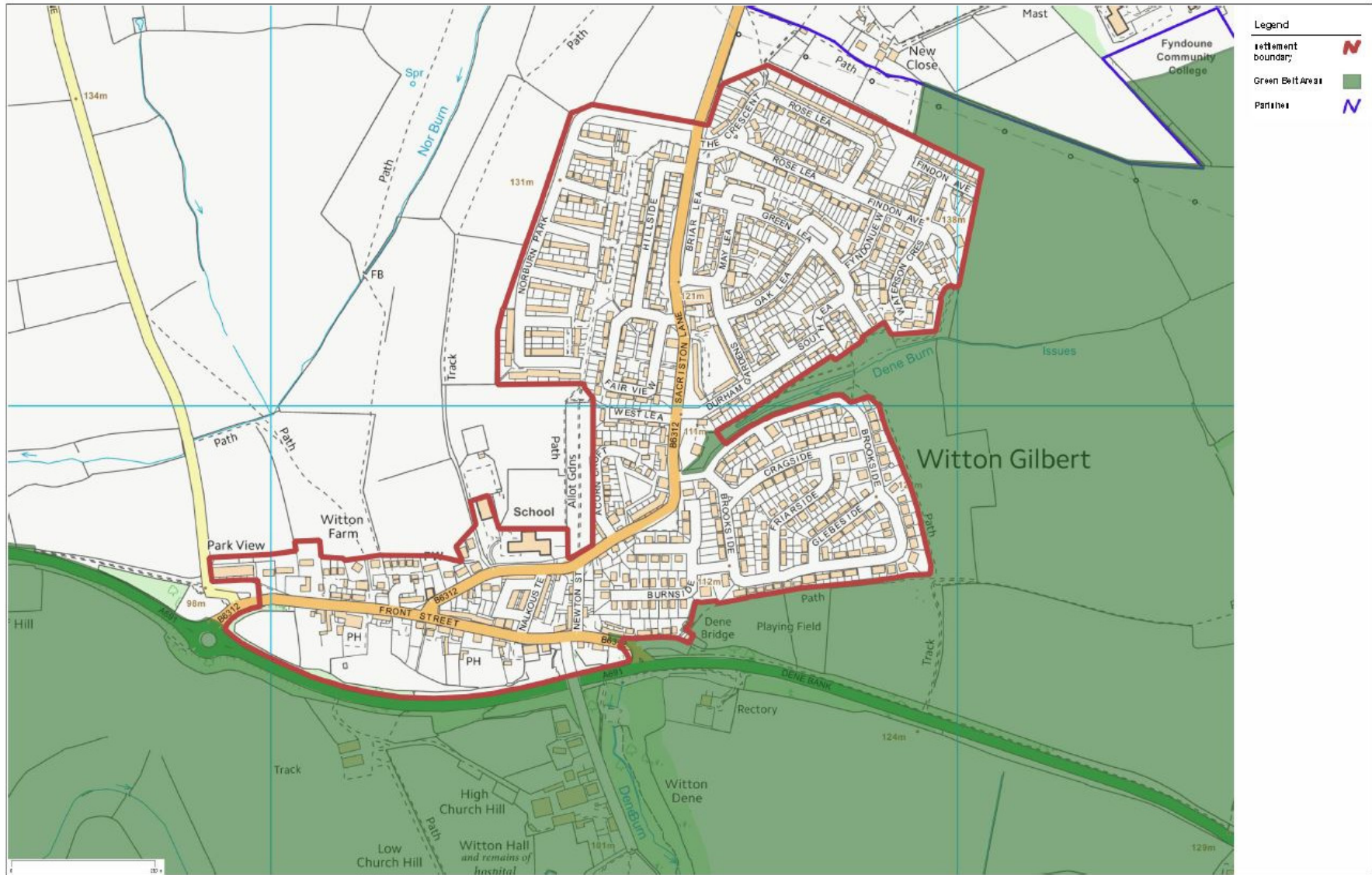
¹ See Settlement Boundary paper produced by WGNPSG (Jan 2017) and Housing topic paper Witton Gilbert (Jan 2017)

WITTON GILBERT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2017 - 2032



Settlement Boundary WP NP 02C
Settlement Boundary and Green Belt updated June 2017

Witton Gilbert CP



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7.3 HOUSING



7.3.1 To achieve a balanced and sustainable community and maintain our essential assets, the plan will focus on regeneration and renewal. This plan will seek to provide a choice of high quality, energy efficient and well-designed new homes to meet the existing and future needs of our community, young and old, over the plan period

7.3.2 It is critical that new development proposals in Witton Gilbert must maintain the character of the village. Our aspiration is to ensure we maintain Witton Gilbert as a unique and distinctive place and take opportunities to improve its character and appearance, to make Witton Gilbert a place where people continue to choose to live and work and enjoy a high quality lifestyle.

One of the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan is to set out in detail housing policies that respond to the needs and ambitions of our residents and businesses to maintain and enhance Witton Gilbert as a thriving and vibrant community.

To achieve our vision the community must be dynamic and receptive to positive change. Growth is vital and needs to be planned. Sustainable patterns of living can be achieved through delivering new housing with high standards of design in locations which are accessible to services and facilities.

The plan can help achieve sustainability by ensuring we get the right development in the right place at the right time. We need to plan positively for new homes. They need to be well planned to promote community cohesion and reflect and enhance the character and natural environment of our community.

POLICY 2: Housing development in Witton Gilbert village

Proposals for new housing development will be permitted within the settlement boundary of Witton Gilbert shown on the Policies Map, providing they;

- a) employ high quality design that respects the scale, architecture, rhythm, height and character of existing established development and building arrangements including materials, boundary types, arrangement of front gardens and landscaping; and**
- b) provide high quality and sustainable design as outlined in Building for Life 12; and**
- c) Incorporate measures to protect the amenity for existing and future residents; and**
- d) provide a range of housing choices in terms of size and type, taking into account local housing needs; and**
- e) include an element of affordable housing, where viable, as specified in the most up to date Development Plan and ensure that affordable housing is indistinguishable from other housing on the site; and**
- f) ensure safe access to and from the site by all modes of transport including pedestrian and cycle routes.**

7.3.3 Policy Intention: To deliver an appropriate amount of high quality housing, both in design and sustainability, to support the continued vitality of Witton Gilbert village and incorporate the Building for Life 12 principles into planning policy.

7.3.4 Policy Justification: The policy seeks to provide a positive approach to new sustainable housing development.

The opportunity for new development to contribute positively to character and regeneration in the village is supported, with an emphasis being on good design. Witton Gilbert has a variety of observable design styles comprising buildings with render, brick and stone facades. Schemes which are informed by the historic context of the village (see Policy 5) are likely to be most appropriate. There will be opportunities for innovative design.

There is an emphasis on sustainability; with criterion b) requiring schemes to be informed by Building for Life 12.

7.3.5 Housing Choice

Between 2001 and 2011 there was a reduction in affordable housing, due to the purchase of units under “Government Right to Buy Scheme”. At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of private rented units²

The most up to date Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for County Durham was completed in 2013. It identifies a shortage of detached houses, terraced houses, and flats in the Central Durham delivery area, and a shortage of two bed houses, and four bed houses.

¹ *Affordable Housing may be re-defined in the proposed Housing Act (currently Housing White Paper 2017).*

² See Housing Topic Paper produced by WGNPSG(Jan 2017)

The SHMA also identifies the lack of affordable housing¹ in the Central Durham delivery area (which Witton Gilbert is within). This area includes the whole of the City of Durham, as well as a number of other larger settlements and because of this it is difficult to use this information at a parish level in terms of how this should affect the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan. However, the Neighbourhood Plan steering group's further analysis² indicates that there is currently demand for starter homes and homes for the over 65 age range.

It is clear from consultation that the community want affordable housing² to be provided in mixed developments to create an integrated cohesive community. Although the Plan does not allocate sites, our assessment of available sites within the settlement boundary indicated that there is support for an affordable or social housing scheme on the H1 site.

Sustainable development includes ensuring that sites are accessible by a number of modes of transport to a range of services and facilities. The policy seeks to ensure that good pedestrian and cycle access is incorporated into all new development.

Given the ageing population in the area, it is considered necessary to incorporate 'Lifetime Homes' standard into new development, where viable.

¹ *Affordable Housing may be re-defined in the proposed Housing Act (currently Housing White Paper 2017).*

¹ *See Housing Topic Paper produced by WGNPSG(Jan 2017)*

POLICY 3: Older People's homes

To contribute towards meeting the need of the parish's ageing population we will require 10% of private and intermediate housing on sites of 10 units or more which, in relation to design and house type, increase the housing options of older people. Appropriate house types considered to meet this requirement include:

- level access flats;
- bungalows;
- sheltered Housing or Extra Care Schemes; or Specialist Housing

In meeting this requirement we encourage developers to build suitable properties to Building Regulations Requirement M4 (2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings).

Where it can be demonstrated that the requirement of this policy would undermine viability, either in terms of financial viability or lack of market demand, we encourage developers, as an alternative, to ensure that at least 10% of units within the site are built to Building Regulations Requirement m4(2)

The plan will support the provision of housing for vulnerable people and specialist housing provision, including nursing homes and residential and extra care facilities, in appropriate locations and where there is an identified need.

7.3.6 Policy Intention: To deliver an appropriate amount of high quality housing, both in design and adaptability, provide housing

choice for the older people of Witton Gilbert to ensure the continued vitality and viability of Witton Gilbert village.

7.3.7 Policy Justification:

The policy seeks to improve the balance of the residential offer across the plan area, to meet people's current and future aspirations; to promote a lifetime neighbourhood with a good range and choice of homes with a flexible approach on a site by site basis.

Within County Durham, the over 60 population is projected to increase by 48% by 2030 (*source: Durham Local Plan Strategic Housing Assessment 2013*). There is a growing trend because of this demographic change to look to providing homes which will allow for changing and flexible needs. The older people's housing market is dominated by a few specialist providers, usually catering for the elderly and/or infirm and there are not many alternatives for those in good health but looking for more convenient accommodation than the family home. There are 162 bungalows in the village, 14.6% of the total stock, 92 of which are social rented and 70 privately owned. The County Durham SHMA (part 1)2016 supports the need for the provision of housing for older people. Table 5.8 of this assessment establishes that 15% of households moving within the open market in County Durham expect to move to a bungalow. Table 5.9 shows there are insufficient bungalows to meet these expectations. Consultation with local estate agents suggest there is no current shortage of supply for any particular types of housing in the local housing market area: However due to the quality and design of the current stock, adaptation for disabled access cannot reasonably be achieved. Household tenure information shows that 69% of households in Witton Gilbert are owner occupiers. Added to

this, the most recent English Household Survey 2015/16 shows that those aged 55 and over are more likely to own their own home than any other age group, together suggests the vast majority of older people are likely to be owner occupiers. The statistics, together with an ageing population mean that there will be potentially more demand for adaptable housing.

The Government has been trying to encourage downsizing to free up family homes but progress has been slow due to a lack of appealing alternatives. The Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity for us to encourage developers to provide suitable housing for our ageing population as well as building family homes.

Older people can bring stability and resources (both time and financial) into a community and have a key role in helping achieve a sustainable and thriving community. The community recognises the limitations of the existing housing stock to provide a suitable housing mix that can support the long term need for adaptable housing.

Current government policy does not allow neighbourhood plans to require new development to be built to optional Building Regulations Requirement M4(2). The standard is aimed at ensuring that new housing is accessible to older people and the disabled, or can be adapted to their needs in the future. Under these circumstances the neighbourhood plan strongly encourages developers to build to this standard.

Policy key outcomes:

- To create mixed developments to help challenge social isolation
- To strengthen ways older people can remain in their home and community for as long as they want to
- To promote older people friendly communities
- To contribute to achieving the best possible quality of life



POLICY 4: Development in or adjacent to the Historic Zone and associated site H2

Development proposals will be permitted where they comply with the following criteria;

- a) development of or within H2 should use a comprehensive design approach as outlined in Appendix A;**
- b) development within the Historic Zone must follow the principles set out in Appendix A;**
- c) ensure suitable safe access points to allow for connections to be made within the site, including for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists and also ensure the retention and, where possible, enhancement of the public footpaths; and**
- d) where required, the incorporation of noise attenuation measures and the retention of landscaping along the southern boundary to mitigate the impacts of noise on future residents and to retain biodiversity and visual setting of the site; and**
- e) proposals which would prejudice other parts of the H2 site coming forward for development by way of cutting off access points will not be permitted.**
- f) proposals for demolition will be permitted where the buildings or other element to be demolished does not make a positive contribution to the character, appearance or special interest of the area.**

7.3.8 Policy Intention: To ensure that new development at Front Street contributes to local regeneration through the principles of the Front Street Regeneration Design Brief (Appendix A) and in particular that future schemes for site H2 ensure the site can be delivered as a whole, and that the amenity of future residents is ensured through good access and the inclusion of noise attenuation measures.

7.3.9 Policy Justification:

Site H2 is of strategic importance. Encouraging development here will help regenerate the historic centre of Witton Gilbert. A comprehensive design brief was commissioned by the Parish Council, to examine how the site could be developed, to contribute to the regeneration of the area. This design brief examined the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats for the area and should inform any future development on the site (see Appendix A).

There are currently gaps along Front Street, which could be in-filled as part of any development to the rear. These proposals should reflect the existing vernacular and build on local character in line with the policy on the Historic Zone (Policy 5).

Due to the proximity of the A691, noise attenuation measures will need to be incorporated into any future scheme depending on the outcome of noise assessments. The retention of the existing mature hedgerow will go some way to mitigating this, will maintain biodiversity benefits of the site and will also sustain the existing setting of the village.

The preference is for the South of Front Street site to be developed comprehensively, not only from a viability perspective, but also to

ensure a cohesive scheme comes forward which avoids random and arbitrary development.

Where agreement with landowners cannot be achieved, a scheme involving part of the total available area will be supported but this must not compromise the delivery of the rest of the site.

Consultation with the local community is important for such a large and important site, and it is expected that any developer would submit a community consultation statement as part of any planning application.



7.4 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT



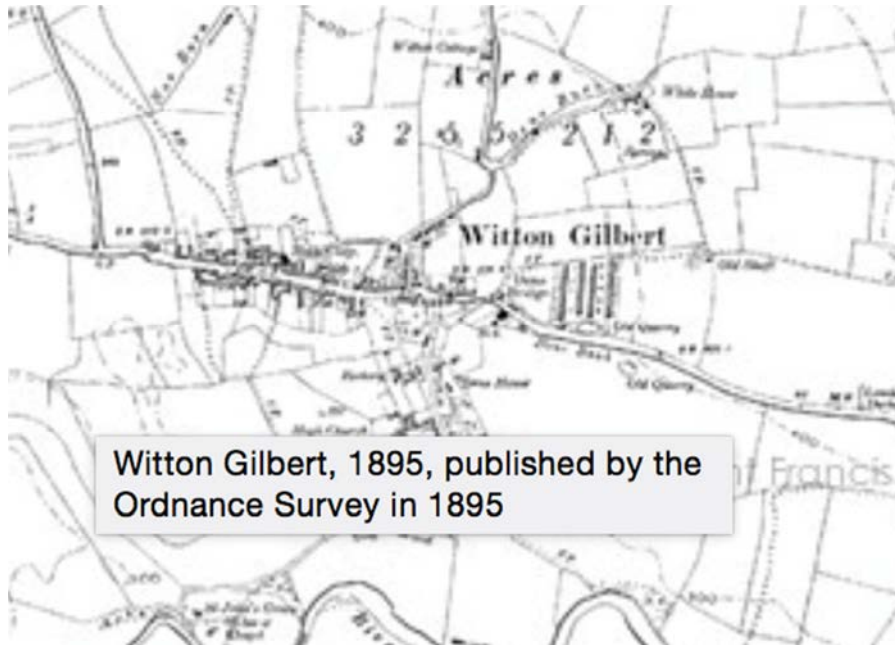
7.4.1 The objective of this policy is to preserve and enhance the features of historic interest within the parish to improve the availability of information and access to sites of historic interest for residents and visitors and to strengthen the value of our local heritage to ensure it has a key role in creating a sense of place for Witton Gilbert.

7.4.2 The parish of Witton Gilbert is mainly rural in nature and provides an attractive residential and working environment. Despite considerable growth during the last century it retains many features of its earlier history.

The village of Witton Gilbert is the main settlement, which gives its name to the parish. However, the parish also contains small hamlets at Kimblesworth Grange and Wallnook, as well as some isolated farms and residential properties such as Sniperley Hall and Findon Mews. Many of the farms and dispersed properties are of historic interest and retain buildings or features that date from the seventeenth century or earlier.

There are a number of designated heritage assets in the Parish (shown on Heritage Assets Map WG NP 06A) and these are already protected through existing legislation and the Neighbourhood Plan does not therefore seek to repeat national policy or legislation on this matter.

However, the plan does aim to identify additional protection for non-designated heritage assets which are of local significance (see Historic Environment Background paper). In undertaking the process, it became evident that, although there are not individual buildings that are necessarily of sufficient quality to be listed formally, there are groups of buildings which retain their historic context where together, give character to Witton Gilbert. It is this group which comprises the Historic Zone of Witton Gilbert village (*The Historic Zone is shown on Policies Map*), and it is important that any development within this zone will be carried out sensitively and should contribute to the regeneration and enhancement of the historic zone.



POLICY 5: Historic Zone of Witton Gilbert

All proposals within or affecting the setting of the Historic Zone of Witton Gilbert should:

- a) demonstrate how it seeks to reflect the special local historic character of the area in terms of scale, form, massing, architectural design and materials; and
- b) sustain and where possible enhance local character and the distinctiveness of the Historic Zone and its setting; and
- c) ensure that new development responds positively to the historic pattern of development preserving features of historic interest that contribute to the areas special interest.

7.4.3 Policy Intention: To ensure that development that takes place in or adjacent to the Historic Zone of Witton Gilbert as identified on the Policies Map has special regard to the historic context of that area, and builds on its interest.

7.4.4 Policy Justification:

The centre of the village was originally located around Front Street where the majority of the houses were stone built cottages, pre-industrial shops and farmsteads.

Brick terrace homes adjacent to the Front Street were constructed in the nineteenth century to house mining families from nearby villages although Witton Gilbert has itself little mining heritage.

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Recent major developments have taken place to the north of the village; the construction of a bypass in 1996 has significantly reduced traffic on Front Street helping to restore the character of the old village where the housing scene has remained relatively unchanged. There is still a strong visual integrity to the original 'Front Street', and other older buildings of the village which add to the historic interest and appearance of Witton Gilbert.

Despite some recent development, the earliest part of the village on Coach Lane preserves its character with the parish church built around 1170, and Witton Hall farm retaining masonry and buildings from a hospital of the same period. Coach Lane is bounded to the East by Witton Dene which is a managed nature reserve serving as a considerable local recreational and educational asset.

The older street pattern, alleyways and footpath network reflect the routes and ownership boundaries of the 18th and 19th centuries and it is important to retain these features.

It is often the small details in our streetscapes which help to create an individual identity. The design of railings, street lighting and furniture, paving materials, signage, landscaping to public spaces

and trees all make a significant contribution to the sense of place and uniqueness.



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Witton Gilbert Heritage Zone

Dwg. No. WIG NP DTG showing Heritage zone and Settlement Boundary

Witton Gilbert CP 



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7.5 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN FOR WITTON GILBERT

POLICY 6: Sustainable Design

Development should be designed to achieve the highest possible energy efficiency standards. Design should contribute positively to place-making and be developed in response to a robust analysis of local character. This must be shown in a Design and Access Statement where required. It must;

- a) respond to the character of the local environment, taking advantage of opportunities to reinforce local distinctiveness
- b) demonstrate a commitment to sustainable design and achieve high levels of energy efficiency by incorporating passive design measures to improve the efficiency of heating, cooling, ventilation and lighting
- c) incorporate small-scale renewable and low carbon energy generation into the design of new development where viable,
- d) any development proposals should make adequate provision to provide green open space.

7.5.1 Policy Intention: To provide a policy to seek a positive contribution to the character of the area, sustainable design measures and where possible embedded renewables into new developments

7.5.2 Policy Justification:

Sustainable design is not just about renewable energy. It is also about place-making and creating or renewing high quality places for local communities to flourish. This policy therefore seeks to address all aspects of 'sustainable design' and how this should be manifested in new development in Witton Gilbert.



7.6 THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

7.6.1 The objective of these policies is to ensure that the natural environment and biodiversity in Witton Gilbert is protected and enhanced, so that the countryside and green spaces continue to be enjoyed by residents and visitors.

7.6.2 Biodiversity and Landscape

The Government National Ecosystem Assessment illustrated the importance of nature in stating “the enormous value of inland wetlands to water quality, the value of pollination to agriculture, the health benefits of experiencing nature and, not least, how nature and wildlife enrich all our lives”. The Government Policy Paper also underlines that contact with nature is good for our physical and mental health.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. A key purpose of this duty is to embed consideration of biodiversity as an integral part of policy and decision making. The government set out its commitment to biodiversity in the *'Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services'*.

As a predominantly agricultural community bordered by scattered woodland and a river valley to the south, the parish supports a rich and varied wildlife. Despite much intensive farming, there are a

number of fields marked by ridge and furrow suggesting a relative lack of significant recent disturbance.

The overall structure of the landscape offers many wildlife corridors along the stretch of the Browney valley and extending throughout the parish. Locally volunteer managed woodland at Witton Dene has provided the means to develop a wildlife strategy together with educational and social resources. Records for this and adjacent areas furnish the opportunity to monitor future changes in the local animal and plant communities. Additionally, approximately half a hectare of experimental flower meadow has been developed by the County Council on the Clink field (which is identified as a Local Green Space, for its biodiversity value).

POLICY 7: Biodiversity in the Parish of Witton Gilbert

Proposals for new development and conversions of existing buildings should integrate biodiversity into new development where possible. Existing features which support biodiversity, such as watercourses, hedgerows, walls and trees should be retained and where possible enhanced as part of the development. If their loss is unavoidable, then replacements or provision of alternative habitats or refuges for wildlife must be provided within or close to the development site, resulting in a net benefit for biodiversity.

7.6.3 Policy Intention: To ensure that new development proposals do not result in the net loss of biodiversity in the parish and ideally achieve a net gain. Any loss resulting from proposals to

be replaced by equivalent or better provision, in terms of quantity and quality, in a suitable location.

7.6.4 Policy Justification:

Paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that the meaning of 'sustainable development' includes moving from a 'net loss' of biodiversity, to achieving 'net gains', and that a core principle for planning is conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

POLICY 8: Witton Dene Local Nature Reserve

Proposals which improve access to Witton Dene Nature Reserve and for new facilities to enhance the educational and recreational opportunities at the site will be supported where they do not impact on the nature conservation value of the site, or on the purposes of the Green Belt.

Opportunities will be taken to maximize the nature conservation value of the Local Nature Reserve and link it to other wildlife corridors as well as raising awareness and understanding of the reserve.

7.6.5 Policy Intention: To preserve and enhance Witton Dene Local Nature Reserve, promote access to the reserve, and promote its use for education and leisure benefits.

7.6.6 Policy Justification:

Witton Dene is highly valued by the local community (Marked G1 on the Policies Map). This policy seeks to build on this value, while ensuring that the special nature conservation features that have made it worthy of designation are protected.

The site is already located in the Durham Green Belt, so development on this site will only be permitted in very special circumstances.

There are exceptions identified in paragraph 89 of the NPPF, one of which is the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

7.6.7 COMMUNITY ACTIONS

The following Community Actions have been identified in relation to biodiversity:

- Continue to increase awareness and understanding of local biodiversity by developing managed areas for educational and leisure use
- Attract and engage more people in active conservation work
- Develop wild flower and insect friendly planting to encourage pollinators
- Provide information on the local environment through the village website
- Provide relevant information on published walks through the parish.

7.7 LOCAL GREEN SPACES

7.7.1 The objective of the policy is to designate local green spaces that have been identified as important by the local community to protect them for current and future generations.

7.7.2 The protection of valued green spaces is an essential dimension of planning for a sustainable village. Green infrastructure contributes to the quality and distinctiveness of the local environment. It is diverse by nature and can include formal gardens, informal grassed areas, linear paths and any other landscaped area.

Green spaces provide a range of social, economic and environmental benefits. In addition to the protection of existing green spaces, the consideration of new green space provision is part of ensuring any new development is sustainable, one of the basic conditions of a neighbourhood plan.

Paragraph 76 of the NPPF states:

'Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances.

Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated

when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.'

Proposal, investigation and community consultation have resulted in a number of local green spaces identified in Witton Gilbert as important and worthy of protection. Some are outside the settlement boundary, but are demonstrably special to the local community.

Whilst existing planning policy should afford the necessary protection for the sites listed below, an explicit policy for protecting these sites, together with the necessary supporting evidence, would provide robust safeguarding of green spaces considered by the community as worthy of protection from development.

Streetscape is an important part of community open space and deserves similar protection to recreation space. As such, 4 narrow green ribbons have been identified as being an integral part of the green infrastructure network and equally worthy of protection. These are referenced below as G6, G7, G8 and G9

Grassed areas within and at the entrance to housing estates, along with the narrow nature strips give the village a distinctive and characteristic open feel and promote a village, rather than an urban environment.

The local green spaces are identified on the Policies Map and Local Green Space Map WG NP 03 F.

A number of Local Green Spaces have been identified in the public consultations are located on the Green Space Map and have been assessed using the NPPF criteria. Some of these spaces are outside

the settlement boundary, but are demonstrably special to the local community.

Site G4b is held by Durham County Council under the Education Act and has protected status as a school playing field. Should this site no longer be needed for educational purposes consent is required from the Secretary of State for this use to end.



POLICY 9: Protection of Local Green Spaces

The following areas are designated as Local Green Space and shown on the Proposals Map: They include informal green spaces, allotments and recreation spaces.

- G1 Witton Dene**
- G2 Clink Bank Field**
- G3 Newton Street**
- G4a Fulforth Park Recreation Ground**
- G4b Witton Gilbert Primary School playing field**
- G5 White House Farm Dene & Millennium Wood**
- G6 Sacriston Lane/Durham Gardens, Anchor Homes**
- G7 Sacriston Lane War Memorial**
- G8 Sacriston Lane Hillside**
- G9 Sacriston Lane Norburn Park**
- G10 Rose Lea Recreation Field**
- G11 Newton Street Allotments**
- G12 Front Street Coach Lane**
- G14 Sacriston Lane Allotments**
- G15 Sacriston Lane / Louisa Terrace Corner**

Development that results in the loss or partial loss of a Local Green Space will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, such as: where the community would gain equivalent benefit from the provision of suitable replacement green space; or in the case where there is partial loss it can be demonstrated that the proposal will result in the enhanced quality of the role and function of that Local Green Space.

7.7.3 Policy Intention: To ensure that green spaces that are of local importance are protected from development and their continued use as local green spaces is maintained and enhanced.

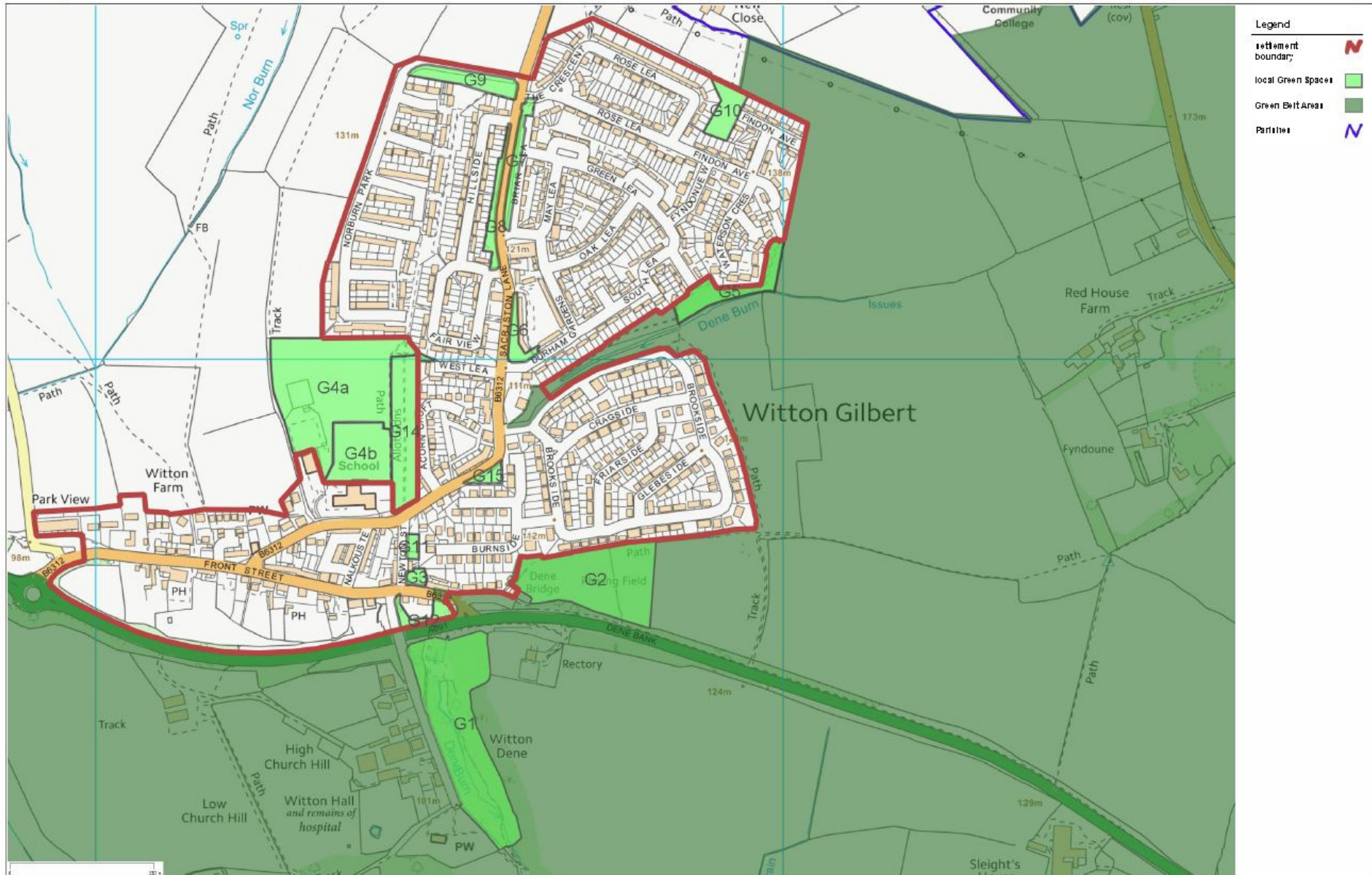
To ensure the character of existing green spaces is protected.

7.7.4 Justification:

Consultation with the local community has identified the local green spaces shown on the Policies Map as being particularly important in and around Witton Gilbert and appropriate to be afforded future protection in accordance with NPPF Paras 76 and 77.



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7.8 COMMUNITY ASSETS IN WITTON GILBERT

7.8.1 The objective of this policy is to protect and enhance local community assets for the benefit of current and future generations.

7.8.2 Amenities can be classified in various ways; some are related to buildings, and some to spaces. Green spaces of value to the local community (for example, the nature reserve at Witton Dene) are covered by policies in the plan. This section of the plan refers to community assets, which are facilities which the Parish Council would consider registering under the 'Right to Bid' legislation.

Current social amenities include the parish church and the Methodist chapel together with shops, two public houses, a hairdressers and a take-away. Two farm shops which serve a wide area lie just outside the parish boundary.

A strong desire was identified in the Parish Plan for a village hub or centre where villagers and their friends could meet, such as a coffee shop, an art studio, and similar amenities.

¹ *Public House and shop in this policy should be considered as Class A4 and Class A1 respectively as prescribed in the Town and Country Planning (use classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (use classes) amendment (England) Order 2005*

POLICY 10: Protecting and supporting Community Assets

Proposals that will enhance the viability and/or community value of these assets will be supported, subject to any developments being in accordance with other requirements of the Plan.

Current community assets identified in Witton Gilbert are:

**Witton Gilbert Village Hall (Cooper Hall)
Witton Gilbert Primary School
Glendenning Arms, (Front Street)
Traveller's Rest (Front Street)
Both Village General Stores and Post Office
St. Michaels and All Angels Parish Church
Witton Gilbert Methodist Church
Witton Gilbert Club
Witton Gilbert Allotments**

The change of use of the last public house¹ and last shop in the village will only be permitted where the applicant is able to provide a robust justification to demonstrate:

- a) The land or building is no longer physically suitable for use as a public house and in the case of retail use as a general store and there is no realistic prospect of re-use or development for the respective uses.**
- b) There is documented evidence of unsuccessful active marketing for the respective uses with at least one recognised commercial agent at local rent levels, over a continuous period of at least 12 months;**
- c) It is demonstrated that suitable alternative public houses or shops exist to meet the needs of the local community.**

7.8.3 Policy Intention: To support the potential and ongoing viability of existing community assets and protect those identified from future development which would result in the loss of the asset.

7.8.4 Policy justification:

The community facilities listed in the above policy are highly valued in the village of Witton Gilbert, and are essential to the social well-being of local residents and to the growth of a sustainable community. They are particularly valued by those who depend on those facilities for their day-to-day needs.

There are three public houses in the village, and the policy seeks to provide additional protection to the 'last pub' (use class A4) and shop (use class A1) in the village.

COMMUNITY ACTIONS

- Implementation of the Village Centre Project

7.9 TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC

7.9.1 The objective of the plan is to make the Parish a safer place to walk and cycle, and to reduce the impact of traffic on our local population whilst ensuring that all new development incorporates sustainable transport and travel into its planning, design and build to allow communities opportunities to reduce the need to rely on the car

7.9.2 The main aim of the developing County Durham Plan is to make sure there is an accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system. Good transport is vital in building sustainable communities.

LTP3 is the local transport plan for County Durham. It sets out the aims for strategic transport development from 2011 onwards. It is a *Transport Strategy* looking 10 years ahead at the main issues and a *Delivery Plan* setting out options to achieve objectives and how to manage, maintain and improve transport assets and services.

Witton Gilbert lies within the Central Durham area comprising the city and adjoining settlements with strong links to the city. Durham City itself is the main settlement outside the Tyne and Wear conurbation and is a strategic public transport hub. The position of the village affords direct links with the main transport corridors:

- A691 connecting to Durham City, the A1(M) north and south and the Main East Coast railway
- A167 dual carriageway to Chester-Le-Street connecting to the A1(M)

These transport corridors are vital connections in the strategic transport network.

Good public transport gives access to local education, employment, health facilities and shopping, helping to reduce the number of car journeys.

The health, wellbeing and safety of other road users and pedestrians is also of vital importance when considering the transport and traffic issues. Rural roads are particularly dangerous, with 62% of all fatalities occurring on them.

The NHS published a recent paper¹ highlighting the impact on our health not only due to the fear of road collisions but also as a result of high levels of traffic restricting the opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and reducing quality of life. The consequences of these issues are felt across all age groups. It is therefore essential that a better balance is struck between the needs of road users and those of the community they pass through.

It is important that we integrate road transport with the footpath network, provide safe access for pedestrians, cyclists, walkers and horse riders. We should remember that our rural road network is also a recreational resource for both residents and visitors.

7.9.3 Key Issues

- the effect road traffic has on the health and wellbeing of parish residents
- the need to review, manage and improve local transport networks and maximize the use of public transport and improve road safety for all users.
- the impact of high volumes of traffic through Witton Gilbert on safety and connectivity within the village
- community concerns about speeding through the village leading to the desire for traffic calming measures and 20

mph speed limits to all the residential estates, adjacent to the Primary School and as part of the villages centre improvements.

- the need for safe accessibility to the services at the Village Centre and better crossing points to the School
- The effect of Air Quality/ Pollution on residents health
- Undertake a review of the parish road network to improve safety for all users
- Ensure the needs of disabled people are taken into account, whether as pedestrians, public transport users or motorists.
- Encourage active travel such as walking and cycling
- Promote increased use of **Bikeability** to provide ‘on road’ training to keep cyclists safer and more aware of traffic danger, and be aware of the Highway Code.
- Encourage a community taxi initiative
- Measures to be investigated to reduce “rat-runs” along Front Street
- Where Developer Contribution money is available, a proportion of that money will be directed towards improvement of the local cycle and walking network, and other transport measures identified through the Community Actions which improve the safety of the local environment.

The link with land use planning is paramount to the future of transport, even in a small area like Witton Gilbert. Future changes within and outside the village have the potential to generate more traffic and possibly change existing transport patterns.

POLICY 11: Safety improvements on the road, cycling and walking network.

Proposals to incorporate traffic calming measures, speed reduction measures, and improved safety measures for pedestrians, cyclists and other users of the network where appropriate will be supported.

Developer Contribution money² will be used to implement these measures where feasible and in consultation with the Highways Authority

7.9.4 Policy Intention: To provide a supportive framework for proposals to improve the safety of Witton Gilbert for all users of the road, footpath and bridleway network. To support an active lifestyle, through improvements to the network.

7.9.5 Policy Justification: Safety on the roads in the village has been identified as a particular concern in local consultation.

Any developer contribution money apportioned to the Parish Council will as a priority contribute to road safety and footpath improvements.

7.10 LOCAL ECONOMY

7.10.1 The objective is to plan positively for the growth of local business by seeking improvements in local telecommunications, and having a positive framework for new employment uses.

7.10.2 One of the main objectives of the NPPF is to build a strong, competitive economy. This is also necessary in rural locations like Witton Gilbert. The NPPF states that,

“local and neighbourhood plans should: support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;

- *promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land- based rural businesses;*
- *Support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and*
- *Promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.”[para 28 NPPF]*

¹ “The impact of transport and road traffic speed on health” NHS Health Development Agency.

² Developer Contribution is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area.

There are more than two dozen businesses in Witton Gilbert, but nearly all of them are small and employ few people.

The only large or medium employers are the Lanchester Road hospital, the new fire station, and the village primary school.

Farms which cover a large area of land have plenty of machinery and are largely family run with only one or two regular employees.

Businesses that may attract customers from a wide area include the pubs, a riding school, a removal firm, IT services, and a petrol station incorporating a shop. There are two shops in the village, one a large convenience store and newsagent with integral Post Office situated in the village centre close to the main road through the village. The other is a smaller general dealer within one of the housing estates.

7.10.3 Digital Communication

In order to start, maintain and develop any business enterprise a key component is the access to reliable digital communication. In order for Witton Gilbert to be able to provide opportunities for businesses to develop there is a need to make appropriate small scale accommodation and top class communication systems available within the community.

This means providing high speed broadband connections to both the settlements and the rural homes and businesses spread across the parish.

POLICY 12: Broadband and Telecommunications

All new development should incorporate ducting capable of accepting fibre-optic to enable high speed broadband. Unless it can be demonstrated by means of a viability study submitted by the developer that this requirement would undermine the viability of the scheme, either in terms of financial viability or lack of market demand for these products. The developer will be required to demonstrate, to the Planning Authority's satisfaction that this is the case.

7.10.4 Policy Intention: To ensure that new development is properly serviced with the capability of high speed broadband where possible

7.10.5 Policy Justification:

Lack of suitable broadband is a major deterrent to new business, and for home-working. The Plan seeks to ensure that new developments provide for high speed broadband within new schemes, to make it easier in the future for small businesses to locate within the parish.

7.10.6 COMMUNITY ACTIONS

- **Explore opportunities for establishing high speed broadband access throughout the Plan area.**

POLICY 13: New and expanding business development and farm diversification

Proposals for new business and employment opportunities both within and adjoining the settlement boundary of Witton Gilbert will be supported where the development is on a scale appropriate to the settlement and will not have an adverse impact on the amenity of the local community, local transport and utilities infrastructure, and where the buildings are located as close as is practicable to possible to existing development.

In the open countryside support will be given for economic development proposals, where associated with a farm diversification scheme or an existing employment site of a small scale; and/or where they seek to re-use existing buildings, or are well related to existing buildings. In the green belt, proposals will be assessed in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework.

To ensure a balance between the need to support rural economic development and the protection of the landscape and biodiversity, all development applicable to this policy must be appropriate in scale, character and design to its immediate and wider setting in the parish.

7.10.7 Policy Intention: To provide a positive framework for new small-business development and agricultural diversification.

7.10.8 Policy Justification:

There could be opportunities for small-scale business development on the edge of the settlement of Witton Gilbert, offering potential for local employment. Proposals for developments in the green belt and the countryside away from settlements will need to meet the tests in green belt policy and the NPPF.

Increasingly farms are seeking alternative methods of generating income. The creation of farm shops can serve a double purpose of creating extra local community facilities, as well as helping farms to continue to thrive. This policy supports the development of farms, whilst seeking to ensure this is not at a cost to the best and most versatile agricultural land.

POLICY 14: Home working

Development or change of use proposals will be permitted for the use of part of a dwelling for office and/or light industrial uses, and for small scale free standing buildings within its curtilage, extensions to the dwelling or conversion of outbuildings for those uses provided that;

- a) other than minor ancillary support, servicing and maintenance, all work activities are carried out only by the occupants of the dwelling; and**
- b) demonstrate that there would not be any adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residential properties or other sensitive land uses from noise, fumes, odour, parking, frequency of visitors or other nuisance associated with the work activity; and**
- c) any extension or free standing building shall be designed having regard to policies in this Plan and should not detract from the quality and character of the building to which they are subservient by reason of height, scale, massing, location or the facing materials used in their construction.**

7.10.11 Policy Intention: To provide a positive framework for home-working and small-business in the parish.

7.10.12 Policy Justification:

Home working is becoming increasingly popular with advancements in E-Commerce. This, combined with improved broadband, meets sustainability objectives in terms of reducing the need to travel and creating a more sustainable community. The plan therefore seeks to encourage home working, whilst ensuring that this does not compromise local amenity for residents. The plan would also encourage the development of “live-work” units in either new build developments or conversion of existing commercial and residential properties.

POLICY 15: Community energy generation projects

Community energy generation projects will be supported within the Parish providing:

- a) every effort has been made to prevent the loss of high quality agricultural land; and**
- b) the proposal is sensitive to, and mitigates the impact on the local landscape and biodiversity; and**
- c) the proposal does not cause unacceptable impacts on the highway network or on local residential amenity; and**
- d) the proposal causes minimum visual impact and maintains appropriate screening throughout the lifetime of the project managed through a land management plan.**

7.10.13 Policy Intention: To provide a positive policy framework for the development of community energy generation projects

7.10.14 Policy Justification:

The local community want to plan positively to reduce the carbon footprint of the parish. Proposals such as a solar farm have been (and continue to be) investigated, but there are many ways in which renewable energy projects can be achieved. This policy seeks to provide a positive framework to allow such schemes to come forward.

It is also important that there is meaningful engagement with the community by the developer in advance of submitting a planning application to maintain community support for this type of project.

7.10.15 COMMUNITY ACTION

- Explore feasibility of local energy generation schemes
- Seek to upgrade/insulate properties which are inefficient, through the dissemination of information about grant schemes

8.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

Local authorities are required to produce an annual monitoring report (AMR) to ensure that their development plan policies are being implemented as intended. Neighbourhood plans also need to be monitored and reviewed as part of the overall process. The Neighbourhood Plan area is relatively small so AMRs will not be required. Nevertheless, the process can be used as good practice and the main mechanism by which policies are monitored and assessed.

Policies and projects in the Plan will be monitored to determine their performance and relevance and to review whether or not objectives are being met. The results of the monitoring process will determine where policy review and change are needed.

The scope of this plan relates mainly to issues that will be addressed in the Local Development Plan for the County. The LPA's monitoring activity will be used as a basis to monitor the effectiveness of this Neighbourhood Plan at Parish level.

Key tasks are:

- Review progress on a regular basis
- Assess the extent to which policies are being implemented
- Determine why policies are not being implemented and set out steps to be taken to ensure policies are implemented as intended or whether any need to be amended or replaced
- Identify whether policies need changing to reflect changes in national and local planning policy

9.0 Glossary

Accessible: A location which is relatively easy for people to get to by a choice of means of transport.

Agricultural diversification: is the re-allocation of some of a farm's productive resources, such as land, capital and farm equipment to non-farming activities.

Amenity: A positive element or elements that contribute to the positive character of an area, such as lack of noise and disturbance, openness, landscape, townscape, opportunities for recreation etc.

Affordable Housing: Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Allocation/Allocated Site: Sites which are identified for a specific use e.g. housing on the policies map.

Asset of Community Value: introduced by the Localism Act 2011. Councils must maintain a list of 'community assets', nominated by community groups. If the asset is sold, the group will be given time to bid.

Biodiversity: The number, variety and genetic variation of animals, plants and other organisms in a particular locality.

Brownfield Site: Previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the

developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. Also see 'Previously-Developed Land'.

Building for Life 12: It is the industry standard, endorsed by the Government for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods

Community Facilities: Local services and facilities that benefit the community, such as local meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings and places of worship.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. It came into force on 6 April 2010 through the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. Development may be liable for a charge under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), if your local planning authority has chosen to set a charge in its area.

Countryside: countryside is defined as land lying outside of the settlement boundary and settlement limits.

Decision maker: Person or organisation responsible for interpreting the planning policies and legislation.

Density (of development): The amount of building within an area of land. For housing it is expressed as the number of dwellings per hectare.

Development: Defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as 'the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land.'

Development Plan: The statutory development plan for a particular area comprises the current Local Development Plan and (if relevant) the local Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Deliverable Site: To be considered deliverable, a site should be

- Available now
- Offer a suitable location for development and contribute to the creation of sustainable communities
- Have a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on that site within 5 years

Design Brief: A document providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with good design practice often produced by a local authority with a view to retaining local distinctiveness.

Discount Market Value (DMV) Housing: Discount Market Value housing is housing that is sold on the open market, at a discounted rate (normally 30%) to allow people who are unable to access the open market an opportunity to buy their own home. The discount is maintained in perpetuity, through a S106 agreement.

Extra-care Housing: Extra care housing is primarily housing which has been designed, built or adapted to facilitate the care and support needs that its owners/tenants may have now or in the future, access to care and support twenty four hours a day either on site or by call.

Evidence base: The information and data gathered by local authorities and used to inform policy development. Evidence base data is also gathered to prepare a neighbourhood plan, and is submitted to the Examiner along with the other examination documents.

Geodiversity: The range of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and landforms.

Green Belt: A land designation with the fundamental aim of preventing urban sprawl by keeping the land permanently open. The purposes of the Green Belt as specified in paragraph 80 of the NPPF are: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and assist in urban regeneration, encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Homeworking: is defined by the International Labour Organization as people working from their homes or from other premises of their choosing other than the workplace, these can be employed or self-employed.

Independent Examination: Conducted by an independent planning inspector to test the soundness of local development documents and to determine they are legally compliant and 'sound'.

Infrastructure: The physical entities (for example roads, railways, sewers, pipes, telecommunications lines) that are necessary for communities to function and move around.

Landscape sensitivity: Normally refers to the ability of the landscape to absorb development, in relation to valued aspects of its character.

Listed Buildings: A building that has been placed on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. A listed building may not be demolished, extended or altered without consent from the local planning authority

Lifetime homes: The Lifetime Homes Standard is a series of sixteen design criteria intended to make homes more easily adaptable for lifetime use at minimal cost. The concept was initially developed in 1991 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Habinteg Housing Association

Live/Work Units: Units of living accommodation, which are specifically designed to accommodate work facilities for those residing therein. They are normally a product of the conversion of existing non-residential buildings, but may be new build.

Local Green Space: A designation that provides special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. They can be identified through Local Plans or by communities in Neighbourhood Plans.

Local Plan: The documents and maps that make up the plan for the future development of a local area.

Major Development: For dwellings, a major development is one where the number of residential units to be constructed is 10 or more. Where the number of residential units to be constructed is not given in the application, a site area of 0.5 hectares or more should be used as a definition of a major development. For all other uses, a major development is one where the floor space to be built is 1000 square metres or more, or where the site area is 1 hectare or more.

Material consideration: A matter that should be taken into account in making a planning decision.

Master Plan: A type of planning brief outlining the preferred usage of land and the overall approach to the layout of a development. To provide detailed guidance for subsequent planning applications.

Micro-business/enterprise: For the EU a microenterprise is a business which employs fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover does not exceed 2 million Euros. HMRC defines a micro employer as business with less than 9 employees.

Micro-generation: is the small-scale generation of heat and electric power by individuals, small businesses and communities to meet their own needs, as alternatives or supplements to traditional centralized grid-connected power.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): A Government document that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): The Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012 and the National Planning Practice Guidance in March 2014. Together, the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance set out what the Government expects of local authorities.

Neighbourhood Plan: A plan by a Parish or Town Council - the 'qualifying body' - for a particular neighbourhood area. Once it has been accepted by the local community through a Referendum, the neighbourhood plan will form part of the Development Plan.

Office for National Statistics (ONS): Is the executive office of the UK statistics authority, a non-ministerial department which reports directly to Parliament.

Open Space: All space of public value, including land and areas of water which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

Placemaking: is a term used to describe the process by which an area in the public realm is given a unique and attractive character.

Policies Map: An Ordnance Survey based map which geographically explains the policies contained in the plan including designations and allocations.

Previously Developed Land (PDL) or Brownfield Land: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

Public open space: Urban space, designated by a council, where public access may or may not be formally established, but which fulfils or can fulfil a recreational or non-recreational role (for example, amenity, ecological, educational, social or cultural usages).

Public Realm: Those parts of an area, whether publicly or privately owned, available for anyone to use. This includes streets, squares and parks

Right to buy scheme: Right to Buy allows most council tenants to buy their council home at a discount.

Saved policies: Policies within unitary development plans, local plans and structure plans that are saved for a time period during replacement production of Local Development Documents.

Setting: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Settlement Boundary: is the dividing line, or boundary between areas of built/urban development (the settlement) and non-urban or rural development – the open countryside.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Small Scale Development: is any proposed development where the number of dwellings is between 1 and 5 and/or where the site area is less than 0.25 hectares.

Strategic Cycle Network: Strategic cycle routes are the main cycle links across the plan area.

Strategic Environmental Assessment: European directive 2001/42/EC which requires the formal environmental assessment of plans and programmes which are likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA): Local authority assessment of land available for housing development, the potential of these sites and the likely timeframe of development. This assists with demonstrating a sufficient supply of land for housing to meet the identified need.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA): Local authority assessment of the housing needs and demands for the area and informs the housing mix required over the plan period.

SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems): A sequence of water management practices and facilities designed to drain surface water in a manner that will provide a more sustainable approach than more conventional practices, such as routing run off through a pipe to a watercourse.

Sustainable development: Defined by the World Commission of on Environment and Development in 1987 as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Also defined in the NPPF states in paragraph 7 that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

Sustainable transport modes: Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

Use Classes Order: The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes Order) 1987 and subsequent amendments group a number of land uses into categories or 'use classes'. Changes of use within the same use class or between certain different use classes as set out in

the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) are normally deemed to have consent and do not, in most cases, require specific planning permission.

Wildlife Corridor: Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.

APPENDIX A

Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan



Land South of Front Street and Historic Zone

Draft Design Brief

March 2017

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Introduction

The Government White Paper on housing published February 2017 sets out to strengthen neighbourhood planning and design, giving communities a more direct say over development and to influence the design of new houses in the local area. Several public consultation engagements have shown that local people want new development to be in keeping with the traditional character of the Front Street and the historic zone, whilst at the same time contributing to the continuing evolution of the village.

The NPPF is clear about the importance of good design and to improve the approach to design, the Government proposal to amend the NPPF expects that neighbourhood plans should set out clear design expectations. This will provide greater certainty about the sort of design which will be acceptable.

This design brief is intended to facilitate pre-application discussions as a guide to the aspirations of the local community about the type and design of any development proposal. It is not in any way intended to impose or require a specific or rigid form.

The intention is to provide a more user friendly interpretation of the policies and principles set out within the Neighbourhood Plan and convey in more detail the form of development which the community in Witton Gilbert would like to see come forward in this location.

The design brief has been developed taking into account the objectives and principles of the Neighbourhood Plan as well as the principles set out in Building for Life 12. In developing the following guidance, an assessment of the existing features and characteristics of the site has been used to identify a number of key aspects that any future development within the designated area must take into account. In addition to this, potential options for future site layouts have been outlined to help inform any future proposals for development.

It aims to supplement the provisions set out within Policy 4 (Development in or adjacent to the Historic Zone and associated site H2) Policy 5 (Historic Zone of Witton Gilbert) of the Neighbourhood Plan and build on a range of other policies identified within the Plan that are relevant to any developments to the south of Front Street and within the historic zone.

Policy Context

The following policies of the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan are relevant to the site south of Front Street as well as to development in and around Front Street itself. Policy 6 (Sustainable Design), Policy 2 (Housing Development in Witton Gilbert Village), Policy 4 (Development in or adjacent to the Historic Zone and associated site H2) Policy 5 (Historic Zone of Witton Gilbert) and Policy 3 (Older People's homes) form the basis of this design brief with the diagrams and precedent images set out below taking into account the principles and objectives set out in each. As such any development to the south of Front Street or in the Historic Zone area must be in accordance with these policies.

Building for Life 12

In accordance with criterion (b) of Policy 2 (housing development in Witton Gilbert village) of the Neighbourhood Plan, any proposed housing development on the land to the south of Front Street must provide high quality and sustainable design as outlined in Building for Life 12. Some of the criteria have influenced choice of housing sites, for example, proximity to public transport, availability of local services. It is therefore essential that development schemes for the land to the south of Front Street take into account the Building for Life 12 principles as set out below.

Key Design Factors

Following an assessment of the areas key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, a number of key points to which any future development should pay particular attention have emerged. Care must be taken to ensure these are well considered in any proposed schemes. These design principles build on the policies set out within the Neighbourhood Plan and provide more detailed guidance in terms of what type of development might be appropriate for the site.

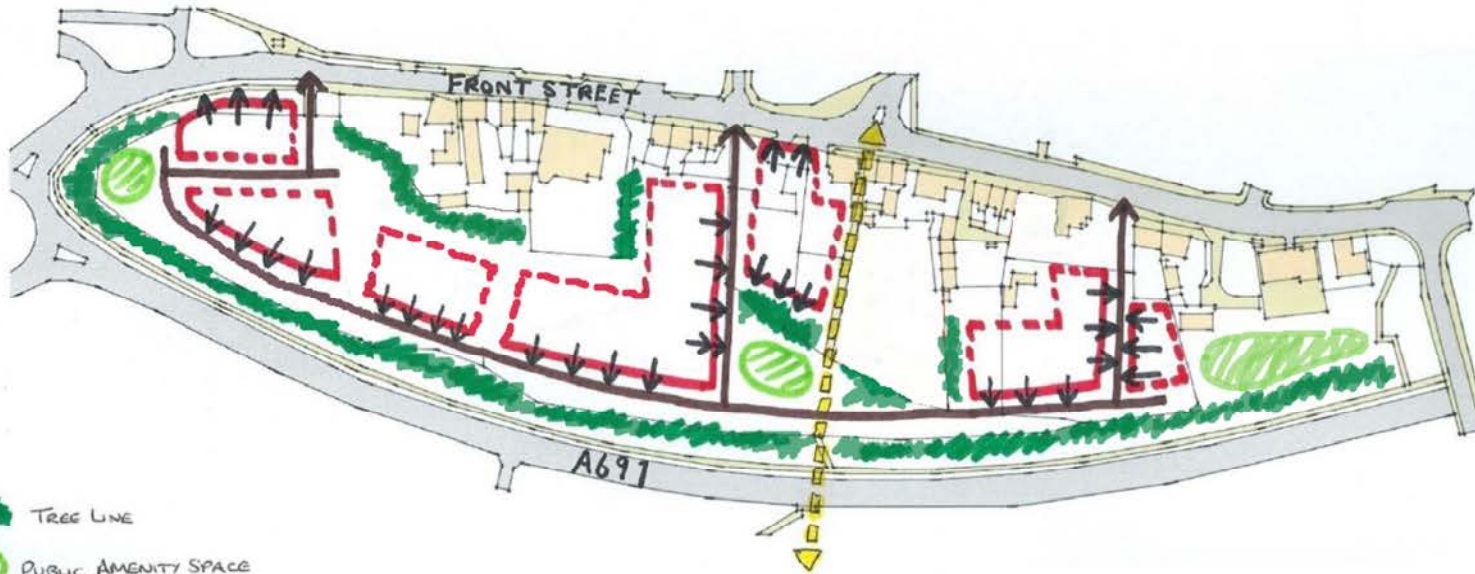
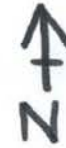
The concepts explored below have also informed the development of an indicative layout for the area that is set out in this section of this design brief. In order to convey the type of approaches that are sought through the neighbourhood plan, a number of diagrams have been prepared and example images from developments that have employed these principles have been identified through a review of housing case studies from the CABI Archive and the Housebuilder Awards 2015.

Building for Life 12:

- Connections: Does the scheme integrate into surroundings?
- Facilities & Services: Does the scheme provide (or is close to) community facilities?
- Public transport: Does the scheme have good accessibility to public transport?
- Meeting local housing need: Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?
- Character: Does the scheme create a place with locally inspired distinctive character?
- Working with the site and its context: Does the scheme take advantage of site characteristics e.g. Topography. Habitats
- Creating well defined streets and spaces: Do buildings enclose streets and spaces and turn corners well?
- Easy to find your way around: Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?
- Streets for all: Are streets designed to encourage low vehicle speeds?
- Car Parking: Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated?
- Public and private spaces: Will public and private areas be clearly defined?
- External storage and amenity: Is there adequate external storage for bins recycling and cycles?

Emphasis should be placed on ensuring any future development is sympathetic to the character of Front Street and the wider area. In addition, connections within and through the site are particularly important not only for enhancing existing routes but also enabling phased development of the site and ensuring areas can be connected in future. Finally, significant attention should be given to ensuring suitable densities are achieved and overdevelopment of the site is avoided. These key aspects of any future development are explored in more detail below along with their relationship to policies within the emerging neighbourhood plan.

WITTON GILBERT
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



- TREE LINE
- PUBLIC AMENITY SPACE
- PRIMARY FRONTAGES
- PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL
- POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL
- PEDESTRIAN ROUTE
- VEHICULAR ROUTE

LAND SOUTH OF FRONT STREET
- INDICATIVE LAYOUT

Character and Infill Development

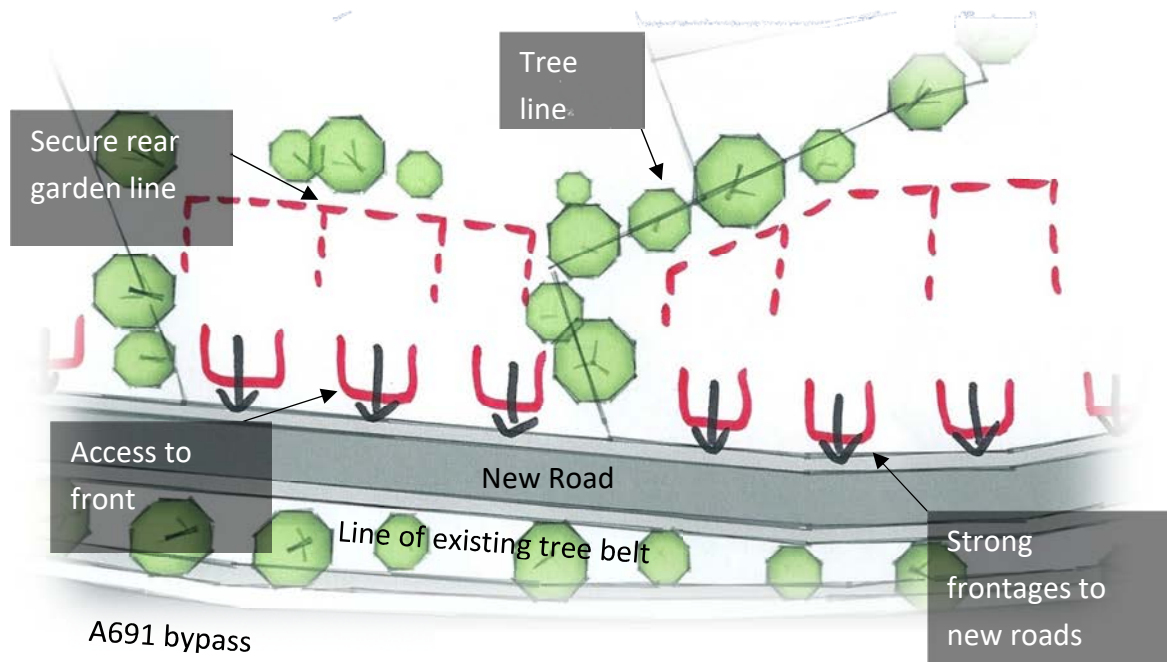
Proposals which seek to repair the urban fabric of the existing frontage along Front Street are to be encouraged. Development should be sympathetic to Front Street's form and its historic character in accordance with Policy 4 (Development in or adjacent to the Historic Zone and associated site H2) of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Development proposals should also present strong frontages to new roads to instil a sense of place and character, enclosing streets and spaces in line with Policy 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan and Building for Life 12 principles. This is particularly important around the edge of the development site where proposals will have the most significant visual impact and have the opportunity to improve entrances and views into Witton Gilbert. Whilst proposals should attempt to ensure safe and secure access arrangements by avoiding areas of parking to the rear of properties, that are often poorly overlooked and can compromise security, in some instances access to the rear may be necessary, for instance, where there is infill development along Front Street, such as in the example above. In these instances, any rear parking should be private access only and should only serve dwellings where front access is not achievable.



Thorley Lane, Bishop Stortford; Example of urban repair

WITTON GILBERT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2017 - 2032



Development should aim to utilise the site's existing assets such as the existing tree lines and the existing pedestrian routes that cross the site. The openness and level of greenery that the site currently benefits from should be reinterpreted through any future development of the site through retaining of existing landscape features that are of significance and through the use of low density development including large private gardens and open green spaces.



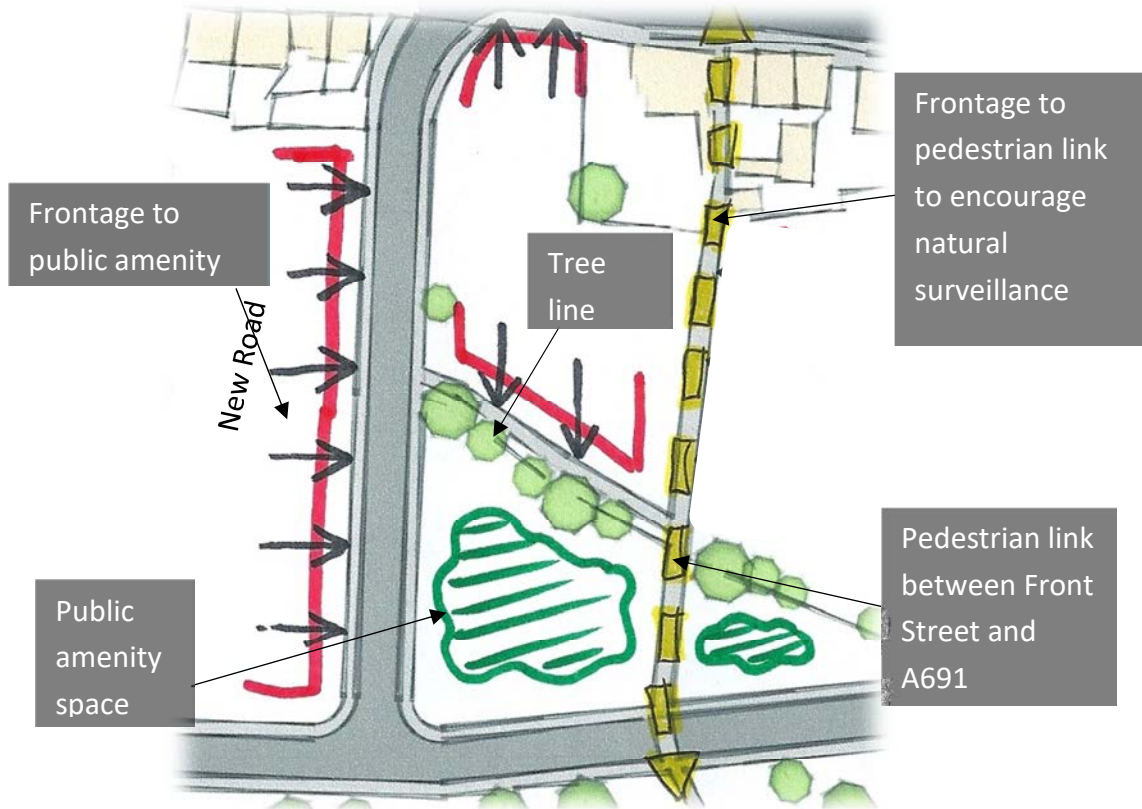
Wickhurst Green, Horsham



Wickhurst Green, Horsham

Examples of public open spaces in new housing development

Connections Through and Within the Site



Connections Through and Within the Site

The diagram on the previous page demonstrates the revitalisation of the existing pedestrian route that traverses the site from north to south and links Front Street with the A691 bypass and beyond, in line with Policy 12 (Improvements to Cycling and Walking Network) and Policy 5 (Historic Zone of Witton Gilbert) of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Development should be encouraged to front onto this pedestrian link to maintain a village scale and character as well as provide natural surveillance of the walkway.

It is also envisaged that this pedestrian link could connect with an area of green space to the south within the site that could be earmarked as public amenity space or for other community uses such as a village green or play area. Again this shall be well overlooked and will create an attractive focal point for any development to the south of Front Street. This area of the site may also facilitate a Sustainable Urban Drainage system in accordance with Policy 6 (Sustainable Design) and Policy 4 (Development in or adjacent to the Historic Zone and associated site H2) of the Neighbourhood Plan.



Housing Type and Density

As previously stated the Neighbourhood plan has identified that between 50 and 70 new houses will be required in the plan area over the next 15-years. However, guidance from the Local Planning Authority on any potential development to the south of Front Street has placed greater emphasis on ensuring the density of the site is appropriate; with an overall low density development recommended in order to allow for larger rear gardens and maintain the greenness, maintain existing habitat and openness of the site.

Development must therefore be sympathetic to the scale and density of the existing village and be in keeping with neighbouring properties. Overdevelopment of the site through the use of high density housing should be avoided. Denser residential development in the form of two storey terraced housing may be appropriate as infill development of the frontage on Front Street, however the density of the site should decrease as development moves away from Front Street with the remainder of the site primarily comprising semi-detached and detached properties in order to create a soft and attractive edge to the village and maintain the landscape character and setting of Witton Gilbert.



Additional Considerations

Creating Well Defined Streets and Spaces

Streets should be defined by the position of buildings rather than the route of the carriageway. Buildings must turn corners well, so that both elevations seen from the street have windows to them, rather than offering blank walls to the street. Consider using windows that wrap around corners to maximise surveillance and bring generous amounts of natural light into people's homes. Using a pattern of road types to create a hierarchy of streets and consider their enclosure, keeping well-proportioned height to width ratios relative to the type of street.

Streets for All

Streets should be designed so vehicle speeds do not exceed 20 mph. It is therefore advised that developers work with the Council's Highways Authority to create an environment where buildings and detailed street design is used to tame vehicle speeds. Sharp or blind corners force drivers to slow when driving around them while buildings that are closer together also make drivers proceed more cautiously. 20mph zones are becoming increasingly popular with local communities and are a cost effective way of changing driver behaviour in residential areas. Think about how streets can be designed as social and play spaces, where the pedestrians and cyclists come first, rather than simply as routes for cars and vehicles to pass through. Hard landscaping should be of the best quality that is viable without cluttering the streets and public spaces. Homes should also be designed to facilitate good natural surveillance opportunities; carefully considering the impact of internal arrangement on the safety and vitality of the street. Consider maximising the amount of glazing to ground floor, street facing rooms to enhance surveillance opportunities and create a stronger relationship between the home and the street. Homes should offer something to the street, therefore detail, craftsmanship and build quality are of paramount importance. Development should afford particular attention to the space between the pavement and front doors. A thoughtful and well-designed entrance area and front door scheme will enhance the kerb appeal of homes

whilst also contributing towards creating a visually interesting street. Changes in level must also be carefully considered, as well as the interface between different materials, finishing quality and the placement of utility boxes.

Clearly Defined Public and Private Spaces

Clearly defining private and public spaces with clear vertical markers, such as railings, walling or robust planting should be provided. Where there is a modest building set back (less than 1m), a simple change in surface materials may suffice. In terms of planting, select species that will form a strong and effective boundary, such as hedge forming shrubs rather than low growing specimens or exotic or ornamental plants. Prospective developers should ensure sufficient budget provision is allocated to ensure a high quality boundary scheme is delivered. Public spaces should be well overlooked by neighbouring properties with plenty of opportunity for residents to see streets and spaces from within their homes. Opportunities should also be provided for direct and oblique views up and down the street by considering the use of bay, oriel and corner windows where appropriate. Designing balconies can further increase opportunities for natural surveillance. Development should also consider how spaces can be designed to be multi-functional, serving as wide an age group as possible and how they could contribute towards enhancing biodiversity. Proposals should also consider where people might want to walk and what routes they might want to take and plan paths accordingly, providing lighting if required. Consider the sun path and shadowing throughout the day and which areas will be in light rather than shade. Areas more likely to benefit from sunshine are often the most popular places for people to gather. Exploring whether local communities would wish to see new facilities created or existing ones upgraded is advised. Think how play can be approached in a holistic manner, for example by distributing play equipment or playable spaces and features across an entire open space. A management and maintenance plan should identify sustainable ways to fund public or shared communal open spaces.

Sufficient and Well Integrated Car Parking

Development must anticipate car parking demand, taking into account the location, availability and frequency of public transport together with local car ownership trends and ensure sufficient parking spaces are provided for visitors. Streets should be designed to accommodate on street parking, but also allow for plenty of trees and planting to balance the visual impact of parked cars and reinforce the spatial enclosure of the street. On street parking has the potential to be both space efficient and help to create a vibrant street where neighbours have more opportunity to see and meet other people. Very regular and formal parking treatments have the potential to reduce anti-social parking. People are less prone to parking in places where they should not be parking, where street design clearly defines other uses, such as pavements or landscape features. It is important to ensure people can see their car from their home or can park it somewhere they know it will be safe. Rear parking courts should be avoided where possible. However a range of parking solutions may be most appropriate to best serve the context and the types of housing proposed. Where parking is positioned to the front of the property at least an equal amount of the frontage should be allocated to an enclosed and landscaped front garden as it is for parking to reduce vehicle domination. Where rows of terraces are proposed, consider positioning parking within the street scene for example, a central reservation of herringbone parking.