

Wells-next-the Sea Neighbourhood Plan – 2023-2036

1974 Wells Urban District Council abolished. Planning powers were handed to NNDC

2011 Locality Act created the possibility of Plans for parishes with legal powers

2019 Wells TC agreed to the formation of a Plan Working Party

June Working Party questionnaire on housing in Wells to householders

2020-1 February - Housing needs survey by TC jointly with Holkham Estates (*Housing Needs Assessment*)

December – Agreement to appoint consultants to WP (*paid for by central government*)

2021 February - electronic survey of town assets, needs and opportunities (*Placecheck*)

March - Identification of character of different parts of the town (*Character appraisal*)

April - identify appropriate building design in the town (*Design Code*)

May - *Call for Sites* to landowners. WTC voted to offer part of the ‘Triangle’

October - **Public consultation** on draft policy ideas at Congregational Hall

Draft Plan written

2022 July - **Second Public Consultation** on Draft Plan (July – October)

2022-3 Responses examined over several weeks and addressed towards Revised Plan

2023 Presentation for approval by Town Council

Why a plan

The Neighbourhood Plan confers on the Town Council planning guidance powers in relation to all planning applications. It is part of a ladder of planning policies beginning with the national policy planning framework and the District Council’s Local Plan to which it must conform. It adds to but does not conflict with national and district policy.

Planning is primarily about land use. Landowners can propose developments. The planning process determines whether or not what they propose is permitted according to the policies of the various planning authorities set out in their strategic plans of which the Neighbourhood Plan, if approved, is the most local.

The most important part of the plan is that it enables the building of 45 plus houses for affordable rent for local people in perpetuity on land owned by the Town Council as well as controlling the number of second and holiday homes in the town.,

What it contains

It contains 18 policies covering Housing, Employment, Infrastructure & Access, Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change as they affect Wells. The draft policies were presented at the 2022 consultation.

Draft Plan Policies

- The Plan period runs from 2023 to 2036 although a review 5 years after adoption is recommended.
- The key issue it seeks to address relates to a lack of affordable housing for local people.
- The draft Plan supports Community Led Housing that will provide housing for local people, key workers and those with a connection to the parish.
- The draft Plan recognises it is important that affordable housing remains affordable in perpetuity and is not sold off into the private sector.
- The draft Plan makes a specific allocation on part of Two Furlong Hill for 45 affordable dwellings.
- The draft Plan encourages a mix of types of new housing with an emphasis on 2 and 3 bedroom properties for families based on the Housing Needs Study
- The draft Plan contains a policy that seeks to prevent further rise in second homes by restricting the occupation of new dwellings to 'principal residence'. This has recently been achieved in Blakeney Neighbourhood Plan
- The draft Plan contains a detailed design policy aimed at raising the standard and quality of design based on the Design Code for Wells
- The draft Plan identifies two sites : land south of Maryland and at Freeman Street as in need of redevelopment/environmental enhancement.
- The draft Plan identifies the former Pitch and Put site off Beach Road as a temporary/ seasonal car park for visitors.
- The draft Plan protects the former Walsingham to Wells railway trackbed from development and supports its re-use.
- The draft Plan protects historic buildings and identifies 12 buildings/structures as worth of local protection as non-designated heritage assets.
- The draft Plan protects 7 green spaces (which are additional to those already protected in the Local Plan)
- The draft Plan identifies 9 important public local views that should be protected from inappropriate development.
- The draft plan directs new development away from areas known to flood or are at risk of flooding.
- The draft Plan supports public access to the beach and encourages walking and cycling.
- The draft Plan recognises the important role of the harbour including its historic and employment functions.
- The draft plan contains three major projects to be taken forward by the Town Council
These are 1) resolving drainage and sewerage problems, 2) Working towards net zero carbon 3) Resolving traffic management issues

Amended Neighbourhood Plan

- Following the consultation on the draft Plan the Working Party have reviewed all responses and are recommending amendments to the Plan.
- The Town Council will be asked to agree these amendments and for the Plan to be submitted to NNDC at its meeting on 5th June.
- There is a briefing for Town Councillors on 31st May.
- Following submission of the Plan to NNDC, they will carry out further public consultation on the amended Plan, before it goes to examination.
- After submission, the timetable is in the hands of NNDC.
- The amended Plan has been subject to **Habitats Regulation Assessment** and **Strategic Environmental Assessment** to ensure that its policies do not have detrimental impacts on the important environmental assets of the parish.