

# Wells Town Council

## Neighbourhood Plan Working Party Reports – February 2022

The Plan covers a wide range of land uses in the town and its environs intending to produce Policies for the direction of developments. These Policies have to be based on evidence some of which has been supplied by specialist organisations, some through our consultants. As such it should provide a reference for future decisions. Among the documents produced which provide the background to the Policies was the draft **Data File** which has provides us with Demographic Data and other background information produced by our consultants and the **Housing Needs Assessment** produced for the Town Council and Holkham Estates.

The latest reports are now being presented to the Council for the approval. They are the **Design Code**, the **Site Options and Assessment Report** and the documents on **Local Green Spaces** and **Non-Designated Heritage Assets**. *(Electronic versions of these reports in full have been sent as email attachments.)*

### Design Code

This adds another layer of guidance for the Planning Committee. It will inform developers, architects and residents, who wish to build, extend or modify their properties. It provides guidance as to the appropriateness of any development in each of the so-called **Character Areas** of the town:

**the town core, the wider central areas, east, south, west, southwest, southeast and beach areas.**

**Each is described in considerable detail describing land use and lay out, highways, topography (the lay of the land), open spaces buildings, landmarks, green spaces and views.**

**It then offers guidance as to what kind of development is appropriate.**

It deals with layout, access, relationship with the street, shop fronts, developments affecting heritage assets, architectural styles, open space, and design.

**As such it is a guide to the Planning Committee's decisions in relation to planning applications. Being a guide it does not consist of requirements but will help to guide decisions.**

## Site Options and Assessment Report – AECOM

November 2021

The report is an assessment of all the sites for possible building development including both those put forward when the Local Plan process was begun in 2019 and those offered as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process in 2021. It was produced by AECOM as an independent assessment carried out by independent consultants using the government methodology for site assessment. It is a supporting piece of work that the Working Party will use as much or as little as they see fit to help them prepare the Plan.

It classifies the sites offered as Red, Amber and Green, in each case qualifying the designation with observations.

### National and District Context

The process emanates from the **National Policy Planning Framework**, a regularly updated central government document which offers guidelines under the general heading of **sustainable development**. Such development should meet the developmental needs of the area; align growth and infrastructure; secure protection and improvement the environment, and mitigate climate change.

Each local authority, in our case **NNDC**, is required to produce proposals as to how this should operate within its area in what is called a **Core Strategy**, identifying where, when, how much and how and how new developments should take place. In the current cycle, a **Local Plan** was produced first in 2019 and now in a revised version this year (January 2022) to be submitted for examination and approval by government.

### Wells-next-the-Sea

The Local Plan identifies **Wells as a Small Growth Town** within which land use as allocated will be permitted, and outside which, only very small developments can take place. This is in the context of the existence of the **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** designation around the town. Major developments outside the town's **settlement boundary** will be allowed only in exceptional circumstances (as below). A number of policies cover the area: the protection and enhancement of landscape, the settlement character, heritage assets, the undeveloped nature of the coast, housing targets for market and affordable homes, and also the need for affordable housing in the countryside (what are known as **exceptions sites**).

The **Local Plan** has provided a growth figure of 190 houses between 2016 and 2036, 70 of which now remain to be built (the rest having been built since 2016 or whose planning application has been approved).

The **Local Plan** has identified two sites for this growth, one at the top of Market Lane (20 houses), the second adjacent to Holkham Road for 50 dwellings. Of these 35% (24 houses) would be recommended for affordable housing either for sale or rent.

The Site Options in the Neighbourhood Plan would be additional to this and would be guided by the conclusions of the AECOM report and also any other available information which in this case includes the **Housing Needs Assessment** carried out on behalf of the Town Council and Holkham Estates and information as to housing needs by **Homes for Wells**.

Those regarded as potentially suitable were **Mill Road North** (20-30 houses) , **Holkham Road south**, (50-60 houses) **Land off Warham Road (part)** (up to 40 houses) , **land adjacent to old rectory** (1-2 houses) , **land north of Field View, adjacent to Stiffkey Road** (up to 5 houses) but see below – **recommendations**.

Of the larger sites, two would encompass Mill Farm itself, additional to the site allocated in the Local Plan. The Warham Road site was considered suitable for a smaller development – not defined – adjacent to the farm buildings, *‘subject to detailed viability analysis, upgrades to the highway to facilitate access, including junction capacity and footpath provision’*.

Those not regarded as suitable included **Mill Road paddocks, Land at East Quay, Old Coal Yard, Land at Cadamy’s Yard, land west of Polka Road, and land south of former railway Two Furlong Hill**. All but the first were very small.

**Mill Road paddocks**, submitted by WTC was rejected because they were *‘not currently suitable for development due to a restrictive covenant, a draft Local Plan policy designating the site as green space and a number of other issues including access, landscape and heritage impact on the North Norfolk AONB. If there was evidence to show the issues could be resolved or mitigated through design, the site would be potentially suitable for affordable housing.’*

**The next Steps advised, should the Town Council decide to allocate a site or sites would be to select sites based on:**

- a) The findings of the site assessment;
- b) An assessment of viability;
- c) Community consultation and consultation with landowners/covenant holders;
- d) Discussions with NNDC
- e) Any other relevant evidence that becomes available;
- f) Other considerations such as the appropriate density to reflect local character

**Appendix A Individual Site Assessments** This comprises detailed examination of each site

**The recommendations discount all of the larger sites from further consideration.** (In each case however there are qualifications (as for instance above.))

## **Local Green Spaces**

*(To be included in an appendix to the plan)*

This list will be an appendix too the Plan report identifying spaces which, in the opinion of the Working Party need to be noted and, where possible, protected from development. *(The electronic version of the report already sent gives details of and explanation for each inclusion. )*

They include

The Buttlands,  
The Churchyard and old cemetery,  
Market Lane cemetery,  
Homepiece open spaces,  
Mill Road allotment gardens,  
Mill Farm meadow,  
and the turning circle at Bluebell gardens.

## **Justification for Non-Designated Heritage Assets**

*(To be included in an appendix to the plan)*

**Background** The town has many listed buildings of various grades development of which is already constrained. The list has statutory status and is held by Historic England, a government agency. The full list for Wells is to be found in the draft **Data Profile**, already produced by our consultants last year. *(This will be updated in time for the publication of the plan).* The general principles of listing are that all buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are likely to be listed, as are most buildings built between 1700 and 1850. Buildings less than 30 years old are not normally considered to be of special architectural or historic interest because they have yet to stand the test of time. This list below is of buildings not listed but which the Working Party thought appropriate to be protected. *(The electronic version of the report already sent gives details of and explanation for each inclusion. )*

The buildings identified as heritage asset were:

the water tower off Warham Road,  
California Terrace,  
the town sign and Arch House,  
Mill Farm,  
the Community Hospital,  
the Whelk Sheds,  
the Mill at Maryland,  
the Old Boat Yard,  
the old Railway station booking hall  
and Manor Farm.