



Neighbourhood Planning in Northhill Parish Villages

FINAL REFERENDUM VERSION

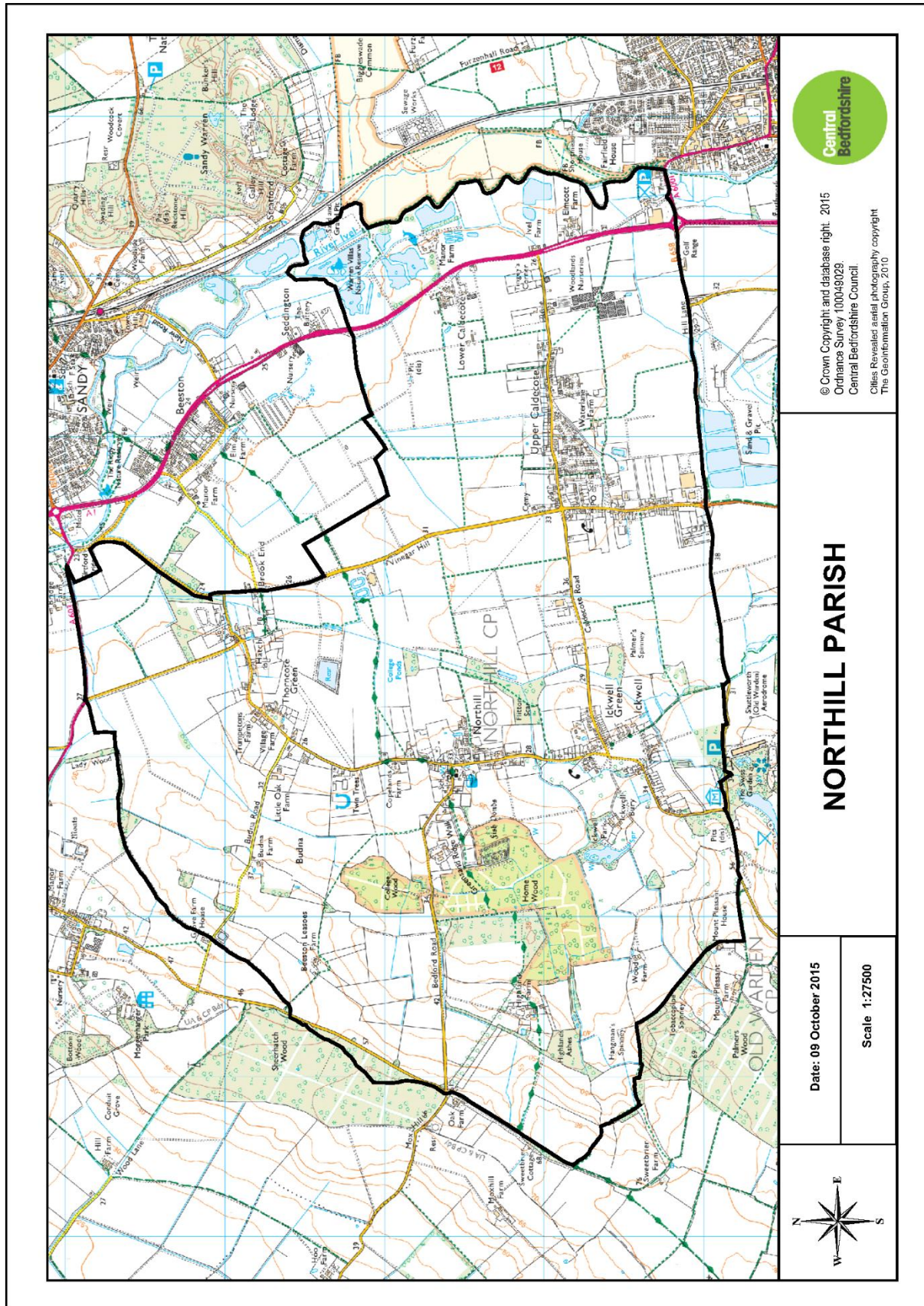
Northhill Parish Neighbourhood Plan

2019 - 2031



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NORTHILL PARISH

Date: 09 October 2015

Scale 1:27500



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Glossary

AECOM	Government-commissioned organisation researching wider housing needs
Basic Conditions Statement	Accompanying document that demonstrates that the Neighbourhood Plan conforms to specific European and British laws
BBC	Bedford Borough Council
BRCC	Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
BREEAM	British sustainability assessment method which rates development on a criteria-referenced scale, 'excellent' being the highest standard
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBC 2035	The Central Bedfordshire Pre-Submission Local Plan
Census 2011	The current government analysis of parish residents published by the Office for National Statistics. This allows comparison of the profile of the parish with Central Bedfordshire and England
Community-Led Projects	Actions identified through public consultation and research conducted by the parishioner Working Groups that are outside the remit of a Neighbourhood Plan. These suggested projects will be considered by an Implementation Group should the plan be accepted at referendum
CSDMP	The Core Strategy & Development Management Policies, a Plan drawn up by CBC in 2009 and the currently adopted Local Plan to which the Neighbourhood Plan must conform
Consultation Statement	The document accompanying the Neighbourhood Plan outlining the consultation process, the responses received, and the action taken
CSS	Country Stewardship Scheme. This is a DEfRA initiative funded by the EU for farmers & landowners to deliver environmental benefits over a 10-year period
DEfRA	Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
EnerPHit	Certification criteria for refurbished buildings
GIP	Green Infrastructure Plan. The Northhill Parish GIP was published and adopted by Northhill Parish Council in September 2016
Historic England	The body responsible for listing important historic buildings and other historic features for the purpose of protection

HNS 2015	Housing Needs Survey 2015 undertaken by BRCC
IDB	The Bedfordshire Group of Internal Drainage Boards
LA	Local Authority
LLFA	Lead Local Flood Authority charged by the government to produce a Flood Risk Management Strategy
Localism Act 2011	The law which sets out the conditions and regulations for Neighbourhood Plans
Local Plan	Each Local Authority in the UK has to produce a Local Plan specifying how it will meet NPPF requirements and plan for the protection, enhancement and growth of its area over a long-term period, usually 20 years
MBC 2004/2005	Conservation guidelines from Mid Bedfordshire District Council for Northill and Ickwell Conservation Areas
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NP	Neighbourhood Plan
NPNP	Northill Parish Neighbourhood Plan
NPC	Northill Parish Council
NPAA	Northill Parish Allotments Association
P3	People, Projects & Partnership – a parish group reporting to NPC and CBC about the management and maintenance of parish footpaths
RES	Rural Exception Site
ROSPA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
ROW	Rights of Way
SEA/HRA	Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitats Regulations Assessment
SG	The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
SUDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
THINC	The 2009 Parish Plan (Thornhill, Hatch, Ickwell, Northill, Caldecote)
TOR	Terms of Reference – the brief and operating procedures given to the Steering Group by Northill Parish Council

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Northhill Parish Neighbourhood Plan is to establish a framework from which to influence developments within the Parish and to give guidance in the planning process.

This is the result of the Government's policy to devolve decision-making on local developments and as such should reflect the views of the parishioners. It must also, however, be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local planning policy - established by Central Bedfordshire Council.

To ensure that the Plan reflected views of the community, considerable effort was made, through public workshops and household questionnaires, to assess the opinions of the local parishioners. The Plan is divided into seven sections covering the key topics. These are summarised below.

HOUSING (SECTION 4)

Feedback from the local consultation process clearly indicated particular concerns that young people, especially those with local connections, were being priced out of the housing market. In addition, there were concerns over excess new house building and that new housing should be sympathetic to the nature of the Parish.

These views have to be considered against the background of government demands to rapidly increase housing stock and a strong demand for new houses from outside the community.

Thus, on the one hand, a preference to build no more than 40 new houses in the Parish by 2031 (the end date of the Plan) was evidenced from the public consultations, but an independent report from AECOM took account of wider issues and suggested a higher total.

The Plan sets out clear policy objectives for new housing (*Policies NP1 and NP3*), the key aspects of which are:

- An additional two sites allocated by CBC in their emerging local plan;
- Small scale residential development within the settlement envelopes will be supported;
- Planning permission will be supported for 40 dwellings on rural exception sites to meet identified local housing need, subject to certain criteria.

Further policies are included on housing mix, infill, back-land development, density and design.

WATER MANAGEMENT (SECTION 5)

The public consultation process highlighted two main concerns regarding water management namely: mitigating the threat of flooding and ensuring that maintaining effective sewage infrastructure was not compromised by increased housing.

Parts of the parish lie within relatively high flood risk areas, arising from overflowing rivers, excess groundwater or inadequate drainage. In addition, there have also been several occurrences of sewer flooding, where ground water has infiltrated the sewage system and overloaded it.

This indicates that the parish drainage and sewage system are near capacity. The Plan therefore emphasises the existing Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and that Drainage Guidelines should be diligently applied. Developers need to be fully aware of the likely impact on flooding, drainage and sewer capacity issues of future development.

As a result, the Plan has adopted several items within Policy NP8 relating to new housing. These require developers to ensure appropriate drainage systems prioritising the use of SUDS; avoid the loss of open water courses and floodplain; ensure adequate capacity of receiving downstream networks; minimise / prevent an increase in flood risk. Additionally, where possible, improve existing drainage and sewer problems through appropriate design and liaison with the relevant drainage authorities (Anglian Water, The Lead Local Flood Authority, Internal Drainage Board, Environment Agency, Highway Authority) and ensure no additional flood risk to the area.

ENVIRONMENT (SECTION 6)

Public consultations revealed a strong desire to preserve the parish's green spaces, improve the green environment and support conservation of both the landscape and the wildlife.

In order to help preserve some of the green spaces of significance and/or community value, the Plan has selected several sites with a view to designating them as official "Local Green Spaces" (*Policy NP9*). This should protect them against new development and ensure they remain available for the parishioners to enjoy. These include the four village greens, plus Caldecote Playing Fields and Hatch Common.

Emphasis has also been put on policies aimed at conserving and improving the local environment (*Policy NP10*) which aim to extend existing examples of good environmental management practice such as those already being implemented in parts of the Parish to encourage the bird population. In addition, protection and preservation of the ancient woodlands of Home and College woods are specifically covered in the Plan (*Policy NP11*), whilst the protection of natural habitats (*Policy NP12*), is aimed at ensuring developments do not lead to the degradation or loss of existing natural habitats and/or part of the green infrastructure.

The Plan additionally establishes the objective (*Policy NP13*) of helping to improve the expansion of green infrastructure within the parish by identifying specific sites (Northill

Green Infrastructure Plan) where there are opportunities to enhance the existing biodiversity and make the wildlife populations more sustainable.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING (SECTION 7)

This covers a wide range of issues relating to encouraging a healthy lifestyle within the parish. The Plan subdivides these into two categories: community facilities and outdoor routes for walkers, horse riders and cyclists.

Under the first of these the Plan notes that although there are several outdoor sporting facilities, there is a paucity of children's play equipment, no adapted outdoor equipment for disabled people nor any facilities for structured outdoor exercise. The Plan thus sets out (*Policy NP14*) to support proposals for the provision of additional play and leisure facilities.

This section also covers the perceived need, identified by the community consultations and local businesses, for additional catering facilities, in particular a family-orientated, cafeteria type venue and the Plan commits to supporting such a development (*Policy NP15*).

Other issues addressed within this section include:

- A policy to support the establishment of allotments (*Policy NP16*);
- Helping to facilitate the protection and enhancement of public rights of way by ensuring the maintenance and improvement of existing footpaths and bridleways;
- Identifying priority new routes for footways within the parish;
- Resisting the loss of existing footpaths, cycleways and bridle ways (*Policy NP17*)

VALUING OUR LOCAL HERITAGE (SECTION 8)

Northill Parish enjoys a rich historical heritage and the protection of these assets ranked high in public consultation responses. Many assets are protected by being Listed with Historic England but others, including 'street furniture', fishponds, locally significant buildings and remnants of industrial heritage are not. The Plan thus identifies 23 specific buildings and artefacts of sufficient community interest/historical significance to warrant conservation.

If these are not eligible for official Listing, they will be considered for inclusion on a 'Local List' which should provide some protection through local planning controls. Specific restriction on developments which would impact on these heritage assets are set out in the Plan (*Policy NP18*).

This section also addresses issues relating to Conservation Areas, preservation of which also generated strong support in the public consultations. A specific policy is thus included in the Plan which is aimed at protecting the appearance of dwellings within and adjacent to the Conservation Areas (*Policy NP19*).

GENERATING AND CONSERVING ENERGY (SECTION 9)

Environmental concerns and support for renewable energy forms were evident from the consultation process and as a result, the Plan addresses the issue of community energy policies.

National government support, including grants, are available for developing rural energy schemes and the Plan provides a commitment to support renewable energy generation schemes (*Policy NP20*).

Considerations are also given to smaller scale generating capabilities of new houses which will, under the right circumstances, also be supported (*Policy NP21*).

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES (SECTION 10)

Apart from the established businesses, mainly comprising agriculture, market gardening, nurseries and related activities, there is a relatively high number of sole traders and small entrepreneurial enterprises operating in the parish.

The NPPF specifies that neighbourhood planning should encourage local economic growth but the feedback from local consultations provided a mixed response with some concern over further development of businesses but at the same time there was recognition that local employment opportunities needed to be encouraged. The Plan therefore proposes encouraging the development of small scale new businesses, preferably on brownfield sites with low environmental impact. Limited expansion of existing businesses will also be supported.

Other related issues covered in the Plan include:

- Ensuring new business developments are not out of scale with their setting and do not lead to an unacceptable impact on local infrastructure (*Policy NP22*);
- The need to improve available broadband speeds by stipulating that new developments should, wherever possible, provide linkage to superfast broadband via fibre optic connections (*Policy NP23*).

1. A Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Northill

1.1 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

- 1.1.1** The Northill Parish Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) is a new type of planning document. It is a key part of the Government's policy to give local people more say about what developments they want to see happening in their parish, what they should look like and where they should be located. It also provides the opportunity to raise awareness of the potential fragility of the local environment and create the opportunity for stewardship of heritage and ecology.
- 1.1.2** During the production of this plan, issues relating to the East/West corridor & A1 have become more prominent. The implications for the parish were therefore not widely appreciated at the consultations.
- 1.1.3** All communities need to prepare for the future. The Neighbourhood Planning process places the views and aspirations of the people who live, work and have an interest in our parish at the heart of this future.
- 1.1.4** A Neighbourhood Plan gathers the many views of the community together to formulate a vision of what they think this future should be like and from the community vision, planning policies are forged through which it can be achieved.
- 1.1.5** Present and future land use, planning and development in our parish is at the centre of Neighbourhood Planning.
- 1.1.6** If and when it comes into force, the plan will become a legal planning document that stands alongside the National Planning Framework and Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC) Local Plan.
- 1.1.7** The purpose of the plan is to influence development within the parish and to give guidance to any interested parties wishing to submit a planning application.
- 1.1.8** When planning applications are made, the policies the plan contains will take precedence over existing "non-strategic" policies of the CBC Local Plan where they are in conflict. So, our Neighbourhood Plan will become a significant tool for shaping future development in our community. If the Plan is endorsed by the majority of parishioners taking part in a referendum, then it will be in force from 2019 – 2031.

1.2 Why is Northill Parish preparing a Neighbourhood Plan?

- 1.2.1** During the late summer and autumn of 2014, Northill Parish Council (NPC) held a series of public meetings to discuss whether a Neighbourhood Plan would be appropriate for the parish of Northill.
- 1.2.2** In October 2014, a Steering Group (SG) consisting of local community volunteers and parish councillors was formed to deliver the plan. Community volunteers were in the majority which gave a signal to the community that the Neighbourhood Plan was primarily a community enterprise. Throughout this document the SG may also be referred to as “we”. The SG put together a plan to cover the launch, research, public consultation, community engagement and policy writing required. Terms of reference were drawn up by NPC and an application made to CBC to designate Northill Parish as a neighbourhood planning area which was achieved in February 2015.

1.3 Legal Requirements and how we are meeting them

- 1.3.1** The neighbourhood planning process is set out in the ‘Localism Act’ that came into force in April 2011 and this plan has been prepared in accordance with its requirements.
- 1.3.2** Although the government’s intention is to give local people the opportunity to make decisions about the development of their community, the Localism Act sets out some important legal requirements. One of these is that all Neighbourhood Plans must conform to the framework set out in higher level legal planning policies.
- 1.3.3** This means that the Northill Neighbourhood Plan must be in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and with local planning policy. In our case the current local planning document is the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy & Development Management Policies (CSDMP), adopted 2009. The SG has also taken note of the direction of the policies in CBC’s emerging Local Plan (CBC, 2035) which is scheduled for adoption in 2020.
- 1.3.4** Each policy statement conforms and does not conflict with the strategic elements of these documents and is referenced to the legal framework statements to which they relate.
- 1.3.5** Neighbourhood Plans must be in line with European Regulations on the assessment of the impacts of certain plans and programmes on the environment. Accordingly, we sought advice from CBC about whether a SEA or a HRA was needed, and they confirmed that neither was required.
- 1.3.6** We have also observed the regulations laid down under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2015.

1.4 Public Consultations

- 1.4.1** The most important and recurring factor in drawing up our Plan has been ongoing public consultation. To create a Neighbourhood Plan which has genuine community ownership we have adopted a policy of wide public consultation as described in our Consultation Statement. We have taken specific steps to engage the interests and opinions of young people as the plan represents their futures, perhaps even more so than the adult community.
- 1.4.2** We also ensured that events were held in each of our three main settlements in turn to maximise access for our whole community.
- 1.4.3** The launch was conducted at a series of Neighbourhood Plan and Green Infrastructure Plan workshops in the summer of 2015 which identified issues important to local people which were then assessed further in a parish-wide questionnaire.



Workshop at Sand Lane Church Rooms, Northill

Photo: P Sandell

- 1.4.4** Working Groups (WGs) in Housing, Water Management, Heritage, Environment, Community Facilities, Getting About, Business Opportunities and Community Energy were set up to further analyse the results and to recommend policies to the SG.
- 1.4.5** The WGs also identified non-policy actions ('projects') seen to be important, to show that all parishioner suggestions had been considered.
- 1.4.6** The workshops also identified a number of possible sites throughout the parish thought to be possible for future housing development.
- 1.4.7** Sites offered to the CBC 2015 & 2016 'Call for Sites' process were added as were sites offered by landowners in a local 'Call for Sites'. Over 60 sites were identified by this process and analysed in detail, as described in the Site Assessment Report.

1.5 How the Plan is set out

- 1.5.1** Section 2 lays out a profile of the Parish; Section 3 describes the challenges that face the parish of Northill and sets out the vision statement and objectives which follow from it. Section 4 onwards lays out the policies under each theme that emerged from public consultation and justifies why the policy has been chosen.
- 1.5.2** Examples of typical parishioner comments from our consultations are interspersed throughout the text in “speech bubbles”. Appendices referred to in the text are set out in a separate document.
- 1.5.3** Please note that it has not been possible to include every single issue and aspiration put forward in the consultation process, but they have all been considered in drawing up the policies and identifying the community-led projects presented in a separate document.
- 1.5.4** All policies have been checked for compliance with NPPF (2012) and the current CSDMP (2009). Compliance references can be found under each policy statement. NPPF (2018) has also been considered.
- 1.5.5** The Draft Consultation of CBC Local Plan (2035) is taking place alongside the drafting of this document. The contents of CBC (2035) have been taken into account in defining the policies within this document, although it is recognised that CBC 2035 has reduced weight until approved by the Secretary of State.
- 1.5.6** All policies within this Plan are interlinked and should be considered in relation to each other.

1.6 Monitoring & Review

- 1.6.1** Continual plan review is a fundamental element of the planning system. It is important to check that the plan is being implemented correctly and ensure that outcomes match objectives.
- 1.6.2** The Parish Council, as the Neighbourhood Plan authority, will become responsible for maintaining the Plan as a living document that will be reviewed periodically.

2. Characteristics of the Parish of Northill

2.1 Parish Past and Present

2.1.1 Northill is first recorded as Northgivel and Nortgible in the 1086 Domesday Book. Early forms of the name make it clear the meaning is not 'north hill' but 'north Ivel' the river's name

2.1.2 Northill is a rural parish of some 1680 hectares and includes the village settlements of Northill, Ickwell and Upper Caldecote and the smaller hamlets of Budna, Hatch, Lower Caldecote, Thorncote Green and Bells Brook which abuts the town boundary of Biggleswade. The parish has a long history and each of its main settlements has evolved with their own distinctive character and heritage.



Northill Village Green

Photo: P Sandell



Elizabeth Harvey Almshouses, Upper Caldecote

Photo: P Sandell

- 2.1.3** The parish contains feeder streams to the River Ivel, which forms the eastern boundary of the parish. A busy arterial road, the A1, isolates the far east of the parish, Bells Brook, and Lower Caldecote from the remainder. In the south of the parish the land is low lying, only 62m above sea level at its highest point (in the west) dropping to a low point of 22m in the north. The soil is clay and gravel, typical of a community in the vicinity of a river.
- 2.1.4** The parish adjoins the town boundaries of Biggleswade, a rapidly growing market town to the east and Sandy, another rapidly growing market town to the north east. To the west is the parish of Old Warden which contains the Shuttleworth Collection of Vintage Aircraft and to the north west, the parish of Moggerhanger.
- 2.1.5** 80% of the parish is greenfield, the majority of which is designated as high-grade agricultural land. Of the remaining land 10% is woodland and only 4% currently developed for housing. Brownfield sites (areas that have previously been built on e.g. farms, nurseries, other large buildings) make up 3% of the parish.
- 2.1.6** Northhill Parish is rich in heritage assets, many of which are already registered with Historic England. There are many valued green spaces including four village greens and Hatch Common, ancient woodlands and recreational spaces. The parish has two conservation areas, one around Ickwell Green and one in Northhill.

2.2 Parish Profile

- 2.2.1** The 2011 Census (1) indicates that the Northhill parish has 2,270 residents, 920 households and 950 dwellings. There was an increase of 35 households and 12 dwellings between 2001 and 2011.

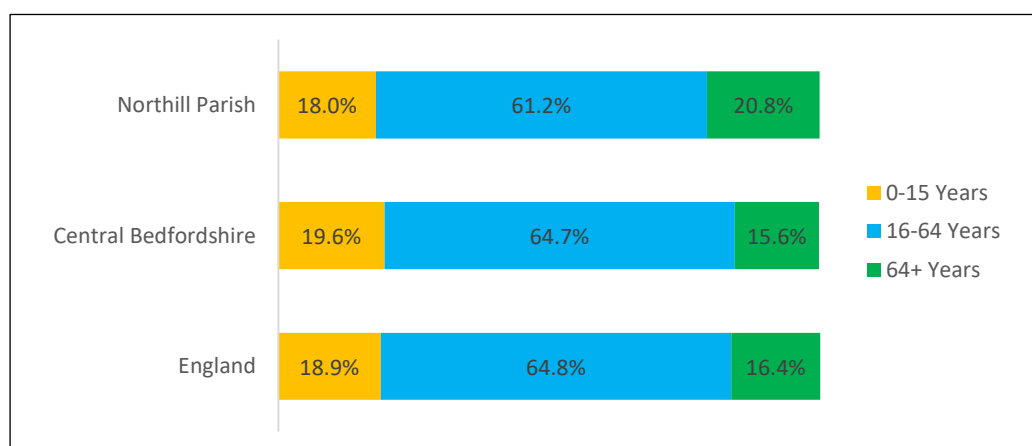


Figure 1: Population by age group (2011)

Source: http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/northill_tcm3-13813.pdf

2.2.2 2011 census data indicate a greater percentage of residents 64-years and older than the percentage for both Central Bedfordshire and nationally. However, there is a smaller percentage of the under-15 and 16-64 age groups. Hence the parish has an older age profile than Central Bedfordshire and England.

2.2.3 The parish is less diverse than Central Bedfordshire, with ethnic group figures almost identical to Northill Ward (composed of Northill and some surrounding parishes). The latter saw an increase in the proportion of people from ethnic groups other than White British, from 4.0% in 2001 to 7.0% in 2011. However, the individual groups remain small, with no group comprising more than 2% of the population in 2011.

2.2.4 The proportion of economically active people in Northill Parish was less than CBC but more than England. Among the economically inactive, the proportion of retired people was greater than both CBC and England.

Table 1: Economically Active Population, all people, aged 16 and over (2011 Census)

Activity level	% Northill	% CBC	% England
Economically Active	71.2	74.7	69.9
Economically Inactive	28.8	25.3	30.1

2.2.5 There was a higher rate of part time employees and self-employed people in Northill parish compared to Central Bedfordshire and England and a lower rate of full-time employees, unemployed and full-time students

2.2.6 Northill parish residents who work are more likely to be in managerial/professional employment, to be small employers, to work from home and to travel to work by car than is the case in Central Bedfordshire or England. Most households in Northill Parish have ‘a larger proportion’ of 2 or more cars when compared to both the Central Bedfordshire and England percentages.

Table 2: Northill Residents Work Profile & Car Ownership

Sector	% Northill	% CBC	% England
Management	71.2	74.7	69.9
Small Employer	28.8	25.3	30.1
Lower Supervisor/ Technical	6.5	7.2	6.9
Work at home	11	6	5.4
Travel to work by car	77.4	74.3	
Car ownership of 2+ cars/vans	63	47	32

2.2.7 There is limited employment in the parish (some small retail outlets, agriculture and horticulture, a garage) and therefore out-commuting is high

with good links to surrounding towns via major highways (A1) and rail links to both London and the North.

- 2.2.8** The Community Facilities report lists the range of local services, amenities and organisations in the parish for all age groups. Examples of these are: six retail outlets; several sports facilities; three churches and five church/village halls all but one of which are in good condition and well used. However, all have some spare capacity for activities which would preclude the necessity for further such buildings. The parish has two lower schools (5-9 years), one pre-school (3-5 years) and two toddler groups. Both lower schools currently have spare capacity and encourage pupils from outside the parish to attend. Education facilities are seen as vital to encouraging new families to move here to sustain the future of the local ageing community.

3. Vision & Objectives

3.1 Challenges for the Parish of Northhill

3.1.1 Extensive engagement with the community has revealed a number of pertinent issues when considering the future of Northhill Parish:

- There is strong local feeling that house prices are such that young people with local connections and those starting out on the housing ladder are finding it increasingly difficult to afford a home of their own in their community. Landowners are responding to government demands to rapidly increase housing stock, but while market values and demand from outside the community remain high it is felt that truly affordable houses for local people are not likely to be built.
- Some local-based businesses feel compromised by the lack of high speed broadband and wi-fi connectivity in certain parts of the parish.
- There are concerns about the ability of local infrastructure (e.g. electricity, roads, sewerage and land drainage) to cope with new developments.
- There is a strong feeling that the rural nature of the parish should be maintained and reflected in the positioning, design, scale and scope of new housing development which should also respect the character of local communities.
- The importance of protecting the impressive array of heritage sites in the community and ensuring that information and access is available for future generations rates high on the local agenda.
- Local Green Spaces should be protected for the enjoyment of the community so that access to the countryside is enhanced.
- Sufficient play and recreation areas should be available for young people of all ages near to where they live.

3.1.2 The policies in this Neighbourhood Plan take account of the challenges faced by the parish during the lifetime of the plan and beyond.

3.2 A Vision for Northhill Parish

Northhill Parish strives to be a thriving, safe rural community in which people are happy to live, work and relax, both now and in the future.

The community values the differing needs of existing and future residents and their opinions in determining what is needed to enable them to benefit from living here.

The community aims to act to protect its heritage, environmental assets and unique character whilst considering opportunities for reasonable growth to meet demonstrated local needs.

Our vision for Northhill Parish is based on extensive public engagement and reflects the views and wishes of our local community.

We have set out below the principles which will be applied in managing the land use, planning and development in our parish for the twelve-year period ending in 2031.

Our vision is articulated in the principles below which in turn shape the objectives in our Neighbourhood Plan determining our policies and community-led projects.

- **Housing stock will be limited to proportionate increase across the parish and new developments will be on appropriate suitable land.**
- **Our diverse natural environments, rural settlements, historic sites and buildings will be cared for, protected and preserved for future generations.**
- **Infrastructure embracing technological changes will develop to meet future needs.**
- **New housing representing a proportionate increase will be supported across the Parish on identified appropriate sites.**
- **Health and wellbeing will be enhanced through the provision of additional community facilities for parishioners of all ages.**
- **There will be easy movement across and around the parish by foot, cycle and horse.**
- **Business activity will grow to enable sustainable local economic growth.**
- **Current and future flooding, sewerage and drainage issues will be alleviated.**

3.3 Objectives arising from the Vision Statement

Housing	
Objective 1	A mix of housing, both in size and tenure, will be delivered that caters for the full range of local housing needs in the parish
Objective 2	Affordable homes will be provided with an emphasis on helping those people with a local connection and need for accommodation
Objective 3	New infill development will be situated within and adjacent to existing settlements and delivered on sites preferred by the local community
Objective 4	Development which risks merging two settlements will be resisted unless significant community benefit can be demonstrated and development to the rear of existing dwellings will be strongly resisted
Objective 5	New development will have specifications with an emphasis on sustainability, including high quality design and build, good insulation and the capacity to generate electricity

Water Management	
Objective 6	Any new development will seek to reduce flood risk and should not adversely affect drainage, sewerage or flooding in Northill parish
Heritage	
Objective 7	Assets of historic merit are protected from detrimental development or inappropriate modification
Environment	
Objective 8	The green infrastructure of the parish in terms of wildlife, woodlands, river banks, streams and parkland will be conserved including areas of green/open space of local importance
Community Health & Wellbeing	
Objective 9	The sustainability of community facilities will be achieved through wider use and registration as ‘community assets’
Objective 10	Provision of an additional catering outlet for the community and visitors will be supported
Objective 11	Provision of play and leisure equipment, dependent on age-appropriateness and suitable locations, will be supported
Objective 12	Allotments and a community orchard will be available for parishioners who wish to use them
Objective 13	Improvements in access to the countryside for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, including disabled users, will be supported both within the parish and when linking to networks beyond it
Provide Support for Community Energy Schemes	
Objective 14	Community energy will be generated
Business Opportunities	
Objective 15	Existing business will be supported to expand, through planning and infrastructure improvement, where it does not overtly impact on the rural character of the parish
Objective 16	Good internet connections will be established for existing and new residents

4. Housing Policies

4.1 The Local Strategic Context

4.1.1 Currently the CBC Local Plan consists of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, adopted in 2009, which provide high level planning policies and general spatial principles for growth. The Draft Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2035), once adopted, replaces these documents and the majority of the remaining policies within the Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan (2005) to create a new Development Plan for Central Bedfordshire. The emerging Local Plan will allocate sites across the whole of Central Bedfordshire at a range of locations and scales, including some smaller sites in some villages. It is acknowledged that neighbourhood plans will also make provision for new housing locally.

4.2 Introduction to the Policies

4.2.1 Local engagement indicated substantial concern about conserving the rural and historic character of the parish and the need for truly affordable housing for people with a local connection. These areas are covered within the NPPF and the emerging CBC 2035 Local Plan. The provision of sufficient numbers of dwellings, of the right mix, design, and density, is an important consideration for the Neighbourhood Plan and one that arose frequently in local engagement. Notwithstanding the fact that parishioners requested no more than 40 houses within the plan period, (66% of respondents to the Household Survey specified 40 or less houses in total), the SG accepts that the parish may, in addition, need to contribute towards CBC land supply numbers. The NP has therefore based its expected growth on a variety of sources of data including a Local Housing Needs Survey (Appendix 1); a more general AECOM Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix 2); a parish wide questionnaire; granted planning applications not built by April 2016; planning applications approved since April 2016 and awaiting construction and CBC existing and emerging policy.

“Do not fill every gap available”

“Not building or extending between settlements as the unique character of parish will suffer”

“Small housing developments should be divided between all parts of the parish”

4.3 Housing Requirements

- 4.3.1** One of the fundamental functions of the Neighbourhood Plan is to state what level of housing growth should be accommodated within Northhill parish. The NPPF guidance on this topic recognises that the forecasting of future housing need is not an exact science and that no single approach will establish a precise requirement. A neighbourhood must be assessed in its wider context.
- 4.3.2** The challenge of forecasting housing need at the parish level is particularly difficult without the strategic overview of an up-to-date Local Plan, although the basic conditions of neighbourhood planning (specifically, Basic Condition E) gives, for the purposes of neighbourhood planning, significant weight to any adopted Core Strategy/Local Plan, even if adopted pre-NPPF.
- 4.3.3** For the reasons mentioned above, a wider Housing Needs Assessment Report was commissioned from AECOM Ltd. The aim was to clarify, amongst other things, the type, tenure and quantity of housing needed to inform our Neighbourhood Plan Policies, using robust, objectively assessed housing data and the Planning Practice Guidance approach where relevant (AECOM. 2017 Appendix 2).

Table 3: Housing projection for Northhill Parish until 2031

Rationale	Total dwellings required
AECOM recommended total housing projection to 2035 (end of CBC 2035 Plan)	218 or 12 dwellings per year
Reduction of 48 dwellings (4 x 12 in line with NPNP to 2031)	170
Reduction of further 81 dwellings incorporating a) Outstanding approvals to build up to April 2016 b) Planning applications awaiting construction April 2016 – December 31 st 2017	89
AECOM amended total housing projection to 2031	89

- 4.3.4** As Table 3 illustrates, the AECOM report recommends a total housing projection for Northhill Parish of 218 dwellings (12 dwellings per year) over the CBC Draft Local Plan period until 2035. This would equate to 170 dwellings until 2031 when our Neighbourhood Plan finishes.
- 4.3.5** However this number excludes both granted planning applications not built by April 2016 and planning applications for additional housing development awaiting construction and approved since April 2016 (81 in total). As at December 2017, this leaves 89 dwellings in total required by 2031. Any further planning approvals will reduce this number accordingly¹.

¹ An additional 46 market dwellings have been approved between Dec 2017 – June 2018

4.3.6 56% (207) respondents in a parish wide questionnaire wanted development to be spread across the parish. AECOM (2017) has divided their total housing projection between the villages and other settlements within the parish (table 4). From this it is possible to calculate the fair share housing target for each section of the parish until 2031.

Table 4: Fair Share Housing Target for Northhill Parish to 2031 by Settlement Area

	Upper Caldecote	Ickwell	Northhill	Other Settlements	Totals
Fair share housing target to 2035 (AECOM)	118	28	33	39	218
Deduct 4 years (2031-2035 @ 12 houses per year)	-26	-6	-7	-9	-48
Planning applications approved but not yet built	-51	-2	-23	-5	-81
Fair share housing target to Dec 2031	41	20	3	25	89

However, these figures do not take account of local factors including current size and character of settlements, access to facilities or transport links. In addition, CSDMP 2009 & CBC 2035 do not support developments in the countryside outside the settlement envelope. This effectively excludes the hamlets from development as they have no settlement envelope. To preserve the rural nature of Central Bedfordshire, development of 2000 dwellings spread across large villages to 2035 is proposed by CBC. Northhill Parish's proposed quota is 21 for Northhill and 33 for Upper Caldecote (CBC Local Plan).

4.3.7 During the development of this NP the housing allocations for the parish were published in CBC (2035). Site 25 (Land at Thorncote Road, Northhill - Close Field, NLP 207) and Site 11 (Land North West of Caldecote crossroads at junction of Ickwell Road, NLP 478) were selected, amounting to an additional 54 dwellings. The sites satisfied CBC and NP sustainability criteria. In addition, they would contribute to CBC's housing targets and be able to be built adjacent to the settlement envelopes concerned (CBC 2035). Development of these two sites, together with developments approved since December 2017, provide for the development needs of the Parish during the first part of the Plan period.

4.3.8 The NP will be monitored and reviewed where necessary during the first five years of its lifetime, for example to take account of the emerging Local Plan, changes to the NPPF, implementation of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and monitoring trends in factors summarised within the AECOM report.

Policy NP1: Housing Requirement

- 1. Development of the following allocations for housing purposes will be supported:**
 - a. Land at Thorncote Road (Close Field), Northhill amounting to 0.86ha for a total of 21 dwellings;**
 - b. The Pound, Upper Caldecote amounting to 1.74ha for a total of 33 dwellings**
- 2. Proposals for the development of these sites should include a proportion of affordable housing in line with CBC policies, subject to a viability assessment**
- 3. Support will also be given for the development of up to 40 dwellings within the Plan period on Rural Exception Sites to meet identified local housing need, subject to meeting the requirements of Policy NP3**
- 4. In addition to the allocated sites, and to provide an element of flexibility, residential development within settlement envelopes will be supported provided the following criteria are met:**
 - a. The site is small in scale – up to 10 dwellings;**
 - b. The site is not within flood zones 3a or 3b as shown on the Environment Agency’s flood maps;**
 - c. The proposal is not for back-land development as defined by Policy NP5;**
 - d. The development would not lead to coalescence between settlements**
- 5. Any development should comply with all the policies within the Neighbourhood Plan**
- 6. Any development should be able to contribute towards and not conflict with any aspiration in the Northhill Parish Neighbourhood Plan or Green Infrastructure Plan**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 10, 17, 47, 48, 49, 50, 54, 57, 58. CSDMP 2009: CS1, CS5, CS7, CS8, DM4, DM10

4.4 Housing Mix

“There should be a sufficient range of houses to suit the needs of different sized families”

“New builds depend on how many young people, older people, families want to live here – need a mixture for parish to flourish”

“2 & 3-bedroom properties required in parish”

“Existing parishioners have made lower cost houses dearer by extending them. There is less need for larger/5 bed houses”

4.4.1 The chart below shows that the mix of Council Tax Bands in Northhill Parish is weighted strongly towards high end, larger properties.

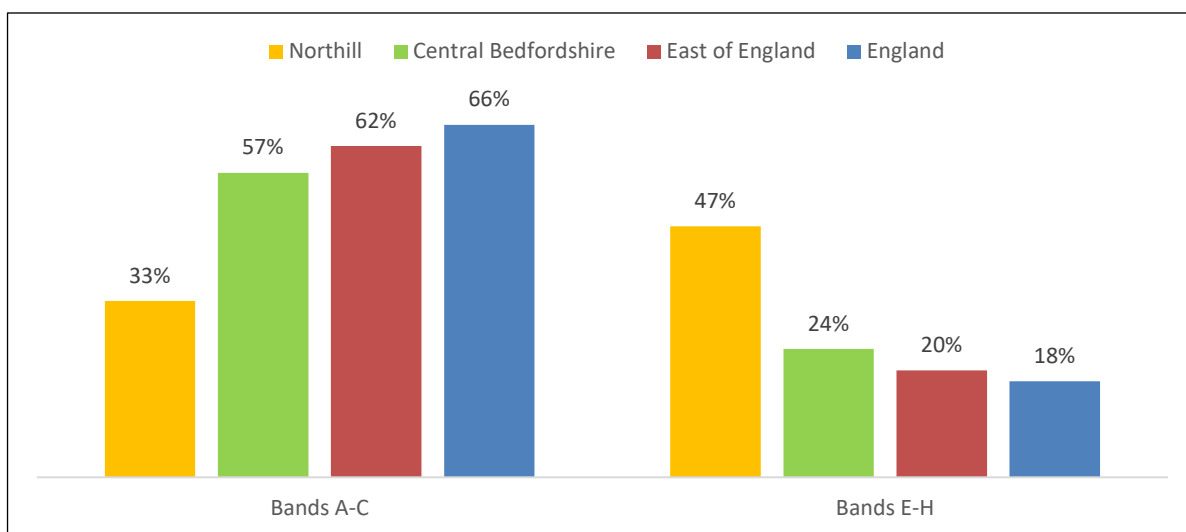


Figure 2: Council Tax Bands (2011 Census)

4.4.2 The data in Figure 3 illustrates that overall, dwellings in the parish have higher than average numbers of bedrooms when compared to the district and rest of the country. There are significantly fewer properties of 1 and 2 bedrooms. This suggests that there is a potential lack of smaller properties and certainly there is evidence locally of smaller housing being redeveloped into larger housing, contributing to the erosion of that part of the housing mix.

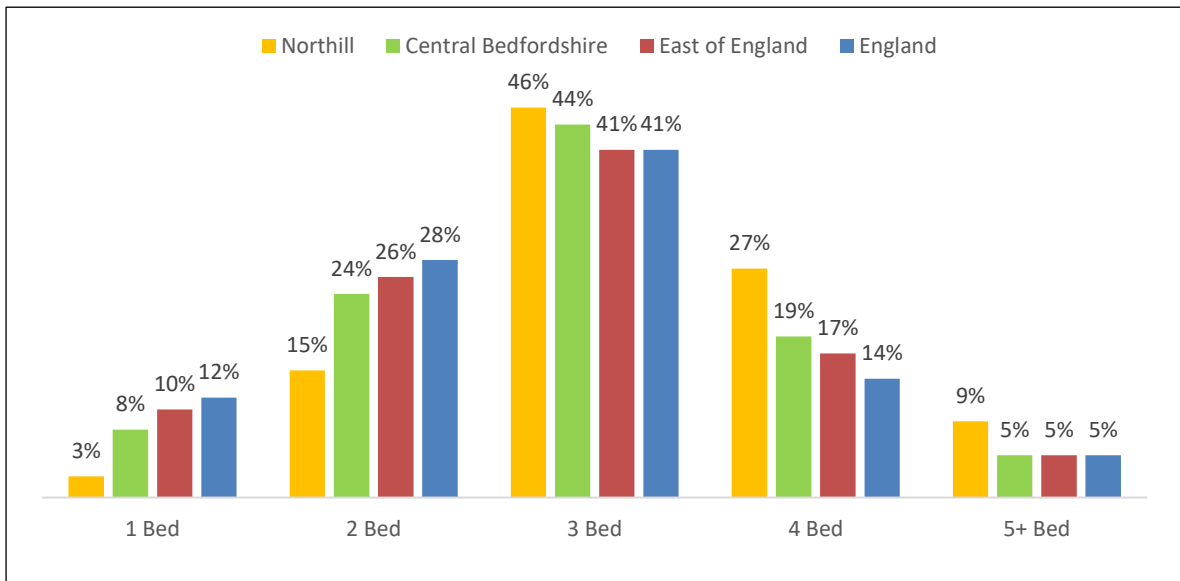


Figure 3: Bedrooms per Household (2011 Census)

4.4.3 Figure 4 reveals that just over half of the parish’s housing stock comprises detached properties which is 22.7% higher than Central Bedfordshire as a whole and almost double the other areas of the country. Meanwhile the proportion of semi-detached and terraced properties are lower than the rest of the country.

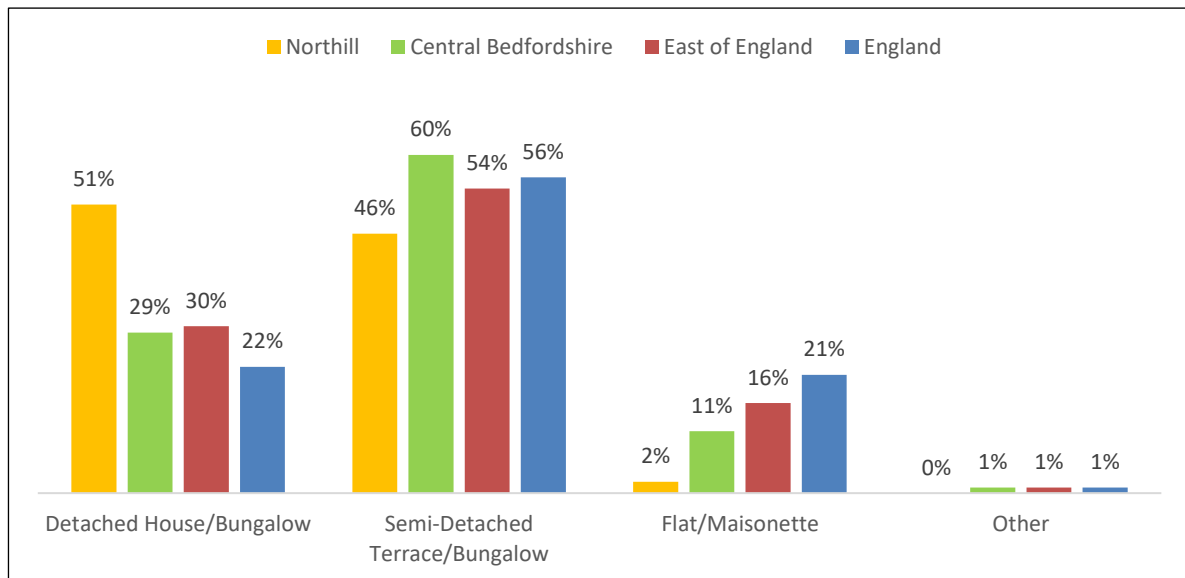


Figure 4: Dwelling Type (2011 Census)

4.4.4 The tenure data in Figure 5 shows that there are relatively few rental properties available in the parish when compared to the wider region, which points to a lack of affordable options for those unable or not wishing to step onto the home ownership ladder.

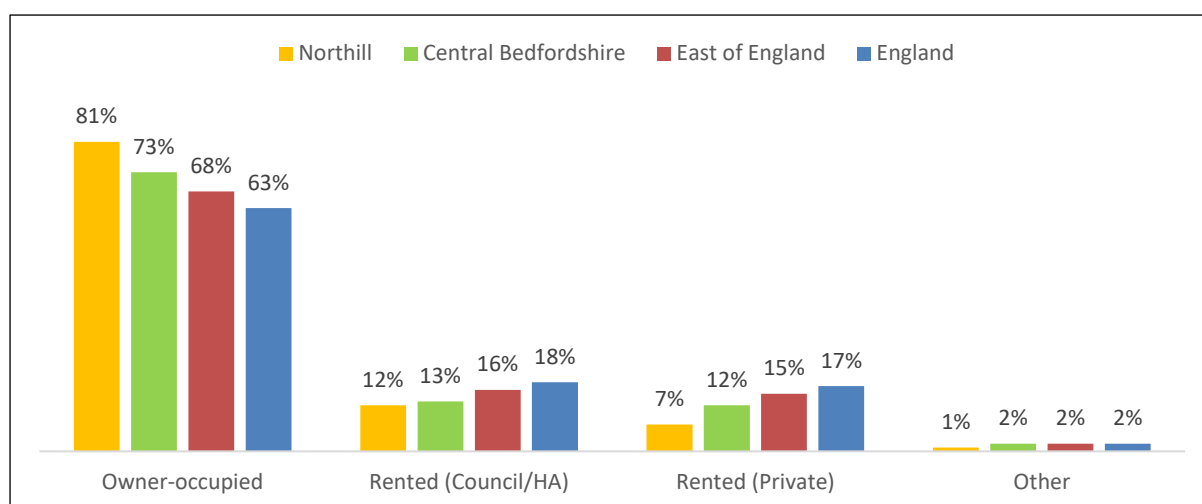


Figure 5: Tenure (2011 Census)

4.4.5 The parishioner questionnaire revealed that 57% (209) of respondents considered that there is a need for a greater number of smaller properties in Northhill. 34% (126) of respondents felt purpose-built retirement housing was required. 54% (199) favoured mixed housing style. 50% (182) felt that bungalows were best suited to the parish. 62% (228) cited a need for starter homes. However, the AECOM report (2017) states that starter homes do not offer a realistic means of those on incomes below the mean accessing the property market and advises against including them with affordable tenures. If suitable smaller properties were more widely available, this would be likely to address under-occupation and free up larger houses for growing families to purchase as they work their way up the housing ladder.

4.4.6 The data presented in this section, thus far, gives an indication of the housing stock in Northhill Parish at the time of the 2011 Census. It provides clear evidence that there are a large number of 3-bedroom, and particularly 4- and 5-bedroom, homes currently in the parish equating to 81.9%. Over a third of homes have 4+ bedrooms. The information reveals a distinct lack of smaller – 1 to 2-bedroom properties – and rented accommodation. Further provision of this could help balance the housing available in Northhill Parish.

4.4.7 The AECOM report cites evidence of a clear requirement for smaller dwellings to address the imbalance of larger homes within the parish and bring housing stock into greater alignment with market segments and promote affordability. This stance is particularly justified to prevent the unsustainable loss of younger people from the neighbourhood.

Policy NP2: Housing Mix

- 1. All new housing developments must include a mix of housing types and sizes to meet the needs of the local community as identified by up-to-date evidence. This should include a range of smaller houses and bungalows and, where appropriate, those suitable for older residents, the disabled and those with reduced mobility**

4.5 Local Affordable Housing

“Affordable housing is needed, especially for younger people. Good quality and well insulated buildings – eco-friendly, good landscaping”

“Affordable or low-cost housing required for young and small bungalows for elderly in small developments throughout the parish”

“Affordable housing needs to be affordable”

“Small development of affordable housing along roadside only (frontage development)”

- 4.5.1** Affordability is a serious problem for the parish and this issue was frequently raised during the engagement process. The average house prices² in the neighbourhood area illustrate the vast difference in prices within the parish in comparison to the area as a whole, and neighbouring Bedford, as an illustration (See Table 5). AECOM 2017 provides evidence to justify a robust application by the Neighbourhood Plan for the Local Plan’s affordable housing quotas

Table 5: Average House Prices (March 2017)

Village	% higher than Bedfordshire	% higher than Bedford
Ickwell	140%	126%
Northhill	78%	68%
Upper Caldecote	26%	18%

- 4.5.2** According to CBC 2035, all qualifying sites of 11 or more units or sites of 10 or less units which have a combined gross internal floor space in excess of 1,000 square metres will provide 30% affordable housing. Qualifying sites will be expected to provide 73% affordable rent and 27% intermediate tenure (shared ownership). These numbers may be subject to NPPF and SHMA future revisions.

- 4.5.3** The 2015 Housing Needs Survey Report (Appendix 1) which had a response rate of 34% (331/975), identified a need for affordable housing within Northhill Parish from household’s resident in, or with strong links to, the parish. The need generally comes from: young adults/couples who want to move out of the family home and/or get on the housing ladder; older people wanting housing more suitable for their changing needs; and families.

² Source: www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices

- 4.5.4** However the housing needs of people with a local connection are unlikely to be met by affordable housing on normal market housing developments as they would be allocated through CBC's allocation policy to eligible applicants on the Council's waiting list.
- 4.5.5** The report concluded that affordable rented and shared ownership housing for local people in Northill Parish could be most helpfully provided by including a rural exception site policy within the Neighbourhood Plan, which would provide affordable housing for which households with a local connection would take priority (Policy NP 3).
- 4.5.6** 'Rural Exception' means sites outside of the settlement envelope which would not normally be considered acceptable for new open market housing. This means that the current market land value is reduced so that affordable housing can be provided on these sites, usually a mix of rented and shared ownership to give local people the opportunity to live in the community which they otherwise would not be able to afford to do. Rural exception sites will provide affordable housing in perpetuity and be evidence-based through meeting the needs revealed in an up-to-date Housing Needs Survey.
- 4.5.7** Rural Exception Sites are not usually allocated. The Steering Group supports parishioners' wishes, expressed in the parish-wide questionnaire and consultation events, for affordable housing at locations spread across the parish and retaining availability for households with a local connection.
- 4.5.8** Both NPPF (2012) & CBC (2035) support development of rural exception affordable homes, designed to meet local housing needs, adjacent to defined settlement envelopes. In addition, para 54 of the NPPF supports the use of market housing to facilitate affordable housing provision on such sites.
- 4.5.9** In order to satisfy the future market housing needs in the parish and increase the viability of rural exception site development, the Neighbourhood Plan intends to adopt CBC 2035 Draft Policy H5. Support will be given for 20% market housing on developments recommended for Rural Exception Sites, only if viability issues are justified and demonstrated through a full financial viability assessment submitted to and agreed by CBC. The sites will be outside the settlement boundary and be required to relate well to the existing settlement.
- 4.5.10** Any market housing should not be built until the affordable housing is complete and should be for 2 and 3-bedroom dwellings including bungalows (BRCC 2015 Appendix 1, AECOM 2017 Appendix 2).
- 4.5.11** Recent exception site development has satisfied current local demand for affordable housing. Future development of affordable housing for people with a local connection should be in line with but not exceed local demand.
- 4.5.12** It is not therefore expected that sites for rural exception affordable homes will come forward immediately. Support will only be given to the

development of one site at a time. The type and tenure of rural exception affordable homes until 2031 should reflect the identified affordable housing needs from the most current Housing Needs Survey (presently BRCC 2015 Appendix 1, AECOM 2017 Appendix 2).

Policy NP3: Rural Exception Sites

Proposals for the development of Rural Exception Sites outside of but adjacent to the identified settlement envelopes for a total of up to 40 dwellings will be supported provided the following criteria are met:

- 1. The site is small in scale – no more than 10 dwellings – and in a sustainable location well related to an existing settlement;**
- 2. Meet an identified local affordable housing need, identified through a housing needs survey or by the CBC Housing Register;**
- 3. Should remain affordable in perpetuity through a Section 106 legal agreement or Unilateral Undertaking;**
- 4. The design should respect the character of its surroundings;**
- 5. The development may include a small proportion of market housing, subject to site specific viability testing**

Compliance refs - NPPF 7, 17, 47, 50, 53, 54, 55, 58. CSDMP 2009: CS14, DM3, DM4, DM10

4.6 Local Market Housing Need

- 4.6.1** The BRCC Housing Needs Survey Report (2015) (Appendix 1) and AECOM 2017 (Appendix 2) suggests that there is a need for 2 and 3 bed bungalows or retirement properties (e.g. houses built to Lifetime Homes criteria) if Northill Parish is to meet the identified current and future needs of existing owner occupier residents wishing to stay in the parish.

“Small, cheaper houses should be built for first time buyers and to enable young people who grow up in the village to continue to live here as they grow up”

“For new housing to be smaller properties - e.g. 2/3 bed houses for residents to buy”

- 4.6.2** In 2015, amendments were made to Building Regulations to ensure that new properties are appropriate for older persons’ needs whilst still retaining suitability for other types of occupiers such as first-time buyers. What this means in practice is that ‘general needs’ housing should be designed to provide, either from the outset or through simple and cost-effective adaptation, design solutions that meet the changing needs of households over time³. Examples include doorways wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or stairways that enable the fitting of a stair lift.
- 4.6.3** However, given the average house price in the parish, any market home is likely to remain out of reach for many of those seeking to live in the area. Self-build is viewed as one way of encouraging home ownership as such dwellings are often cheaper, greener, more affordable and more innovatively designed than standard market housing. AECOM (2017) identifies a need for 7 plots as a starting point from which to build a complete picture of need. Further research is required into the options of self-build/community self-build/community land trusts and modular housing as a means of access to truly affordable market housing locally. This proposal is included within the set of community- led projects.
- 4.6.4** For development that is not within rural exception sites, both CSDMP (2009) and CBC (2035) state that new housing development should be within the existing settlement envelopes unless the development provides dwelling for the essential needs of agricultural or forestry workers, reuses/replaces an existing property or (in the case of CBC, 2035) has been allocated by CBC in its Call for Site process. No land within the settlement areas of Northill parish has been offered to the NPSG for development.

³ This was previously addressed by Lifetime Homes standards which were not mandatory

4.6.5 Further allocation of market housing within the parish may be required. However, this would have to be sited outside the settlement envelope, contravening CSDMP (2009). It remains for CBC to decide from their Call for Sites process if and where this market housing could be allocated. Any allocation should comply with the policies within this plan.

4.7 Infill

4.7.1 Infill involves the development of a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage. It usually consists of a frontage plot only and often comprises the side gardens of existing houses.

“Housing development to be infill only”

“For housing to be developed in between singular plots of land”

“Prefer filling in gaps for housing rather than larger developments”

“Infill between houses at the front by road ok, not large developments”

4.7.2 The current CSDMP (2009) and CBC (2035) propose that within settlement envelopes in large villages, small-scale housing and employment uses, together with new retail and service facilities to serve the village and its catchment, will be permitted.

4.7.3 Within settlement envelopes in small villages, development will be limited to infill residential development and small-scale employment uses.

4.7.4 Beyond settlement envelopes, limited extensions to gardens will be permitted providing they do not harm the character of the area. They must be suitably landscaped or screened from the surrounding countryside and buildings may not be erected on the extended garden area.

4.7.5 Local engagement revealed that infill was viewed as an acceptable form of development on a small-scale so long as it was in keeping with the existing character and context of the parish.

Policy NP4: Residential Infill

- 1. Within the settlement envelope boundaries of the parish, planning permission for residential development proposals on infill sites will be supported subject to the following criteria:**
 - a. Plot Width - plots must be of sufficient width to allow a building(s) to be sited with adequate separation between dwellings. The width of the remaining and the new plot should be similar to that prevailing in the immediate area;**
 - b. Building Line – where the prevailing depth of existing dwellings is a feature of the area, new development should respect that building line;**
 - c. Visual Separation – new dwellings must have similar spacing between buildings to that commonly found on the street frontage. Where houses are terraced the new development should normally adjoin the adjacent property(s);**
 - d. Building Height – New buildings should reflect the height of original, existing buildings. Where existing buildings are of a uniform height, new buildings should respect that height;**
 - e. Daylight & Sunlight – new buildings should not adversely affect neighbouring properties by seriously reducing the amount of daylight available through windows. Blocking direct sunlight from reaching neighbouring properties can cause overshadowing and is not acceptable;**
 - f. Development must not unacceptably reduce the level of private amenity space provision for existing residential properties; and**
 - g. Development should not adversely affect the significant heritage assets, including the special interest, character and appearance of the Conservation Area**

- 2. For the purposes of this policy, infilling development is defined as the development of a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage for no more than two dwellings**

4.8 Back-Land & Garden Development

4.8.1 Back-land development refers to the development of land which sits behind the existing building line with little or no frontage onto the public highway, for example residential gardens (CBC, 2035).

“Do not eat into land behind houses”

“Use infill to the side of properties rather than behind existing gardens or on agricultural land – less impact on environment and residents”

“Build along roadsides i.e. frontage development”

“No back-land development behind houses”

4.8.2 There was a particular desire amongst parishioners to refrain from back-land development. This was felt to lead to cramming of sites with the associated adverse impacts. These included: loss of amenity; overshadowing and overlooking; loss of sunlight/daylight; noise; loss of green links/trees/hedgerows/vegetation; visual intrusion; loss of space between buildings; difficulties of recycling and waste collections/bin storage.

4.8.3 The largely linear development lines of Northhill Parish settlements are mainly medieval in origin displaying classic characteristics of layout and form (CSDMP, 2009). This layout, together with its mixture of settlement size, means that local people have and value a close connection to the surrounding countryside at the rear of existing properties outside the settlement envelope.

4.8.4 In addition a Parish Wide Questionnaire showed 84% of parishioners felt garden infill development to be inappropriate.

4.8.5 Northhill Parish Neighbourhood Plan proposes that any development must enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local area, including woodland and rural dimensions. Therefore back-land development within or outside of the settlement envelope in Northhill Parish is considered to be against the existing pattern of development and to have a detrimental impact on the landscape, historic environment, character of the area and existing pattern of development (CBC 2035, Policy HQ8).

Policy NP5: Back-Land & Garden Development

- 1. Proposals for development of back-land sites, including residential garden land within settlement envelopes, will not be supported where it would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the local area**
- 2. Back-land sites include residential garden land and any land which sits behind the existing development with little or no frontage onto a public highway**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 9, 17, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 63, 64. CSDMP 2009: DM3, DM16

4.9 Residential Design

- 4.9.1** Excellence in design is important, especially where it helps to establish a strong sense of place and create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.
- 4.9.2** There is already a wide variety of architectural styles in Northill Parish ranging from traditional thatched cottages to Victorian/Edwardian detached houses and rendered council houses to small housing estates of red and yellow/grey brick. The form of properties is generally quite mixed within streets thus avoiding a bland identikit character. Local people would like to see new development blending with the surrounding properties rather than detracting from them.
- 4.9.3** Local character is rural with a strong agricultural emphasis. Trees are prevalent and often hedging provides plot enclosures, which together with well planted front and rear gardens, support the wider environment and add to the rural feel.

“Well-built houses that are well-designed, cheap to run, easy to maintain and incorporate communal facilities should be considered”

“Quality of build is very important – low energy, good insulation, parking for cars”

“Sustainable and long-lasting. Design relevant and sympathetic”

“New builds should not adversely affect who and what is already existing”

Policy NP6: Residential Design

- 1. Proposals for residential development, including redevelopments, will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria are met:**
 - a. They contribute positively to the existing character of the village, responding where appropriate to the prevailing size, height, scale and mass, materials, layout, density and access of the surrounding area;**
 - b. Innovative proposals will be considered on their own merits;**
 - c. They provide adequate off-street parking for residents and visitors. Recreational space and parking areas with no organisation responsible for maintenance and repair, within or alongside development will not be supported;**
 - d. Proposals are accompanied by a scheme to provide hard and soft landscaping, including the treatment of all boundaries, appropriate to the development and its setting;**
 - e. They are well connected to the local pedestrian network linking to local amenities and the wider countryside;**
 - f. They provide adequate storage for bins and recycling, incorporated into the scheme to minimise visual impact; and**
 - g. They do not result in any loss of amenity for neighbouring houses through the loss of privacy, loss of light or visual intrusion**

- 2. Designs that incorporate the use of sustainable energy will be supported providing the above criteria are met**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 7, 17, 47, 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 63, 64. CSDMP 2009: CS1, CS8, DM4, DM10

4.10 Local Housing Density

- 4.10.1** The density of a development is an important consideration in place making. The NPPF states that local planning authorities should set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances. While CSDMP (2009) and CBC (2035) do not set density requirements within policy, the CBC Design Guide (2014) suggests that densities below 25 dwelling units per hectare net are appropriate toward the edges of development or in rural locations and small villages.

“Appreciate the rural aspect of our environment and want to preserve it”

“Developers should ensure that new houses fit in with existing surrounding buildings”

“For farming culture and land to be preserved in and around the parish”

“Would not want a huge estate”

Policy NP7: Housing Density

- 1. The density of any new development should be in keeping with the immediate local context respecting the rural nature of the parish, whilst ensuring the efficient use of land and meeting identified local housing needs**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 17, 50, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64. CSDMP 2009: CS4, CS14, DM2, DM3, DM10, DM13

Conclusion

The policies defined in this section have considered parishioners’ views about important aspects of their living environment. They support development which is mixed in size and tenure, catering for the full range of housing needs. New developments will have specifications which emphasise sustainability, including high quality design and build, good insulation and the capacity to generate electricity. The plan recognises the need for our community to play its part in the national, regional and local demands for increased housing stock. Recent development is satisfying national and regional requirements. Local demand is primarily enabled in the manner parishioners desired by providing affordable housing for people with a local connection across the villages and hamlets of the parish. Both back-land development and over development within sites is resisted. Taken together, this suite of policies meets Objectives 1-5 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Water Management

5.1 Introduction to Policies

- 5.1.1** Water is an important issue for Northill parishioners and at the parish-wide workshops, concern was expressed over the historic and current flooding problems and potential ability of the water infrastructure to cater for additional development. The rivers, watercourses, sewers and ground conditions throughout Northill Parish have varying amounts of capacity and this will limit the flow that can be received from new developments.
- 5.1.2** The community-wide questionnaire included a single question as to whether alleviating flooding and sewage problems should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan delivered a clear 67% response in favour representing 12% of the parish population.
- 5.1.3** The majority of Northill parish is located within Flood Zone 1 but there are significant areas lying within Zones 2 and 3. (Figure 6)

“Issues, flooding Warden Road, Ickwell/Northill near pumping station”

“U/C Pumping station across A1 (Tingey’s Corner) breaks down in prolonged wet weather – needs replacing or upgrading”

“Sewerage issues a concern – smells at Caldecote Crossroads and Biggleswade Road ”

“Floods between Ickwell and Northill”

5.2 Fluvial Flooding (Rivers & Watercourses)

- 5.2.1** Fluvial flooding occurs when rivers and channels overflow and overtop and this type of flooding is often referred to as fluvial flooding.
- 5.2.2** This caused flooding throughout the parish on 21/10/87 with Hatch and an area between Ickwell and Northill affected. Water Lane Farm in Upper Caldecote was also severely affected on that date.

5.3 Surface Water (Overland Flow & Surface Runoff)

5.3.1 Anglian Water is responsible for managing the risk of foul or combined sewer systems within the Parish. Public sewers are designed to protect properties from the risk of flooding in normal wet weather conditions and Anglian Water take action to ensure that they are used correctly in order to increase their resilience and effectiveness. Anglian Water encourage their customers to report any incidents relating to the local sewerage network so that these can be investigated further. Anglian Water would clear blockages within the network to ensure the sewer is operating correctly. They are also actively working with customers to avoid sewer blockages wherever possible by ensuring unflushable items do not enter the sewer network.

5.3.2 Surface water flooding occurs when heavy rainfall exceeds the capacity of local drainage networks and water flows across the ground or rainfall creates ponds in low lying areas or localised depressions. The parish suffers from surface water flooding particularly in Upper Caldecote. Occurrences on land opposite GM Growers in Hitchin Road that affects neighbouring properties from 01/02/2014 to 03/03/2014), the Green together with Dove Cottage (03/05/12, 23/12/12, 08/01/14, 08/02/14 & 02/04/18), Ashby Drive (24/06/16 & before), & the Cemetery (24/12/11). See locations on Figure 7.

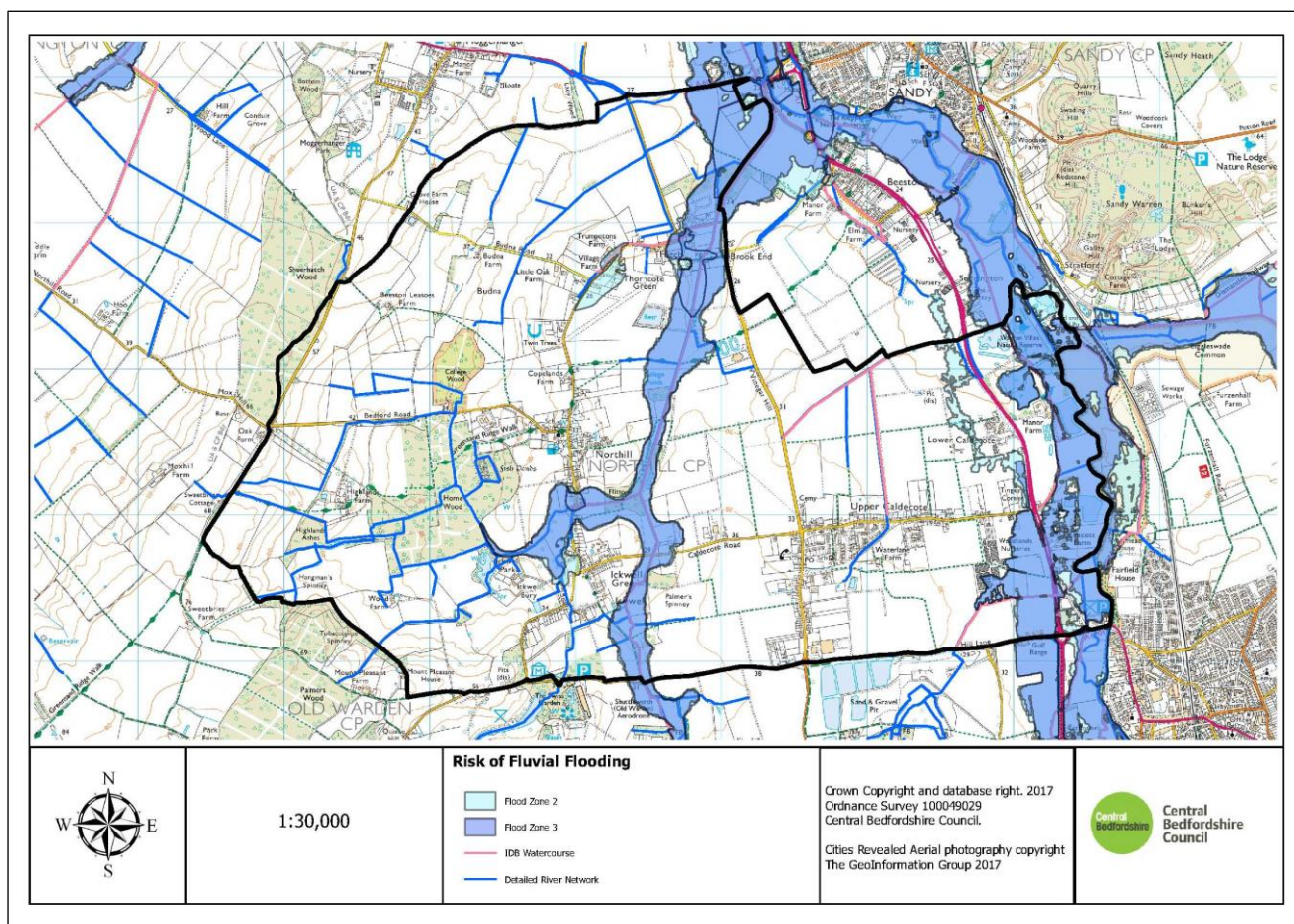


Figure 6: Flood Zone Map

5.4 Groundwater

5.4.1 Groundwater flooding occurs as a result of water rising up from the underlying aquifer from water flowing from ephemeral springs. This tends to occur following periods of prolonged wet weather when the water table is high, and the areas at most risk are often low-lying where the water table is more likely to be at shallow depth. The characteristics of the surface water flooding mentioned above match and may also be attributable (in part) to groundwater. The Upper River Great Ouse Tri LLFA Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment in CBC's Sustainable Drainage Guidelines 2014/15 describes and illustrates this northern part of Central Bedfordshire administration as susceptible to both types of flood risk. (<http://www.bedford.gov.uk/PDF/PFRA.pdf>).

5.4.2 Infiltration of groundwater into main public sewers occurs between Ickwell and Northill in the area of the watercourse, noticeable in severe conditions when discharge from sewer manholes is observed. This occurred several years ago estimated between 2004 and 2007 when the resultant high flows surcharged the sewer and overloaded the pumping station adjacent to the watercourse. Requests made to Anglian Water for details of these incidents have not been answered. Rectification of this problem was apparently carried out and the solution would seem to have resulted in raised pumping flows to Upper Caldecote causing surcharge in the Biggleswade Road sewer in adverse conditions.

5.5 Public Sewer Network

5.5.1 Sewer flooding occurs when the volume of water entering the sewer network exceeds the capacity of the sewer drainage network to cope.

5.5.2 In the parish, this has caused problems with foul sewage escape from manholes in Water Lane, toilets backing up at Swallowfields (11/02/09, 28/02/10, 04/05/12), A1 pumping station failures as identified with the issues at Swallowfields, and sewage smells along Biggleswade Road (5/10/16 and previously). A sewage escape at Upper Caldecote cross roads occurred on 27/05/2017 attended promptly by Anglian Water. See Figure 7 above.

5.5.3 These issues identified suggest that the system is under strain, particularly the outfall along Biggleswade Road. The incremental connection of a number of small developments to the system, as it currently stands, is likely to cause sewer overload in the medium to longer term. The housing assessment plans for around 90 houses to 2031, distributed around the parish. To add to this load CBC has given approval (21/6/2017) to a 40 dwelling development draining to the sewer in Biggleswade Road subject to, amongst other requirements: "no development shall take place until a foul water strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning

Authority. Unless works will be carried out in accordance with the approved details subsequently approved”.

5.5.4 The Parish sewers collect sewage from Hatch, Thorncote Green, Northill, Ickwell and Upper Caldecote, where the main outfall is down Biggleswade Road to the A1 pumping station. Reference on this should also be made to Anglian Water’s adopted Surface Water Drainage Policy at: <http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/developers/surface-water-policy.aspx>. See Figure 7.

5.5.5 Anglian Water has provided preliminary graded information on sites subject to housing assessment and provided notes to confirm that each site will be looked at specifically when approached by a developer. Foul water infrastructure requirements will be dependent on location, size and phasing of the development. All developments are to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) and disposal of surface water to the public foul sewerage network or to a combined sewer is not permitted.

5.6 Flood Risk Management

5.6.1 Central Bedfordshire Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), have produced both a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Central Bedfordshire, and the Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Drainage Guidelines available at: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/flood>. These documents are for the use of developers and communities for advice on flooding, SUDS, and water issues. The LLFA has identified Northill Parish as an area of medium risk with an historic flood risk record of 9 events. To the north and east of the parish, however, the boundary is with Sandy, a parish recorded as high risk when it comes to flooding, and this is reflected in the Flood Zone map at Figure 6. Reference should be made to SUDS Manual C753 (CIRIA 2016) DEFRA, and DEFRA’s Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (DEFRA 2015).

5.6.2 To ensure that flooding and drainage matters are not made worse in the future, it is essential that any new development fully takes into account its possible impact on these, not only within the site itself, but its off-site effects within the parish and surrounding areas.

5.6.3 It is considered appropriate that new built developments properly address the threat of flood risk and ensure through good design, that they are capable of contributing towards reduction of overall flood risk and can adapt to the challenges posed by climate change. This can be done in a variety of ways, including the use of SUDS but also measures to retain water on site (both rain and grey water) to allow its reuse or subsequent release when peak flows diminish.

5.6.4 Good design should incorporate such systems into new development. New developments should, for example, maximise the potential to use water efficiently, in line with national and local standards, and follow the ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’ hierarchy in their design to reduce demand for mains water and relieve pressure on available supplies. For example, rainwater will be collected from roofs for reuse in flushing toilets or watering plants and landscaped areas, rainwater collected in permeable paving can also be reused in these ways. This approach also reduces the risk of flooding and pollution as less rainwater will be discharged to drains and sewers and, ultimately, to local watercourses. It also relieves pressure on drainage systems in times of high flow, which is a known issue in areas of Northill Parish.

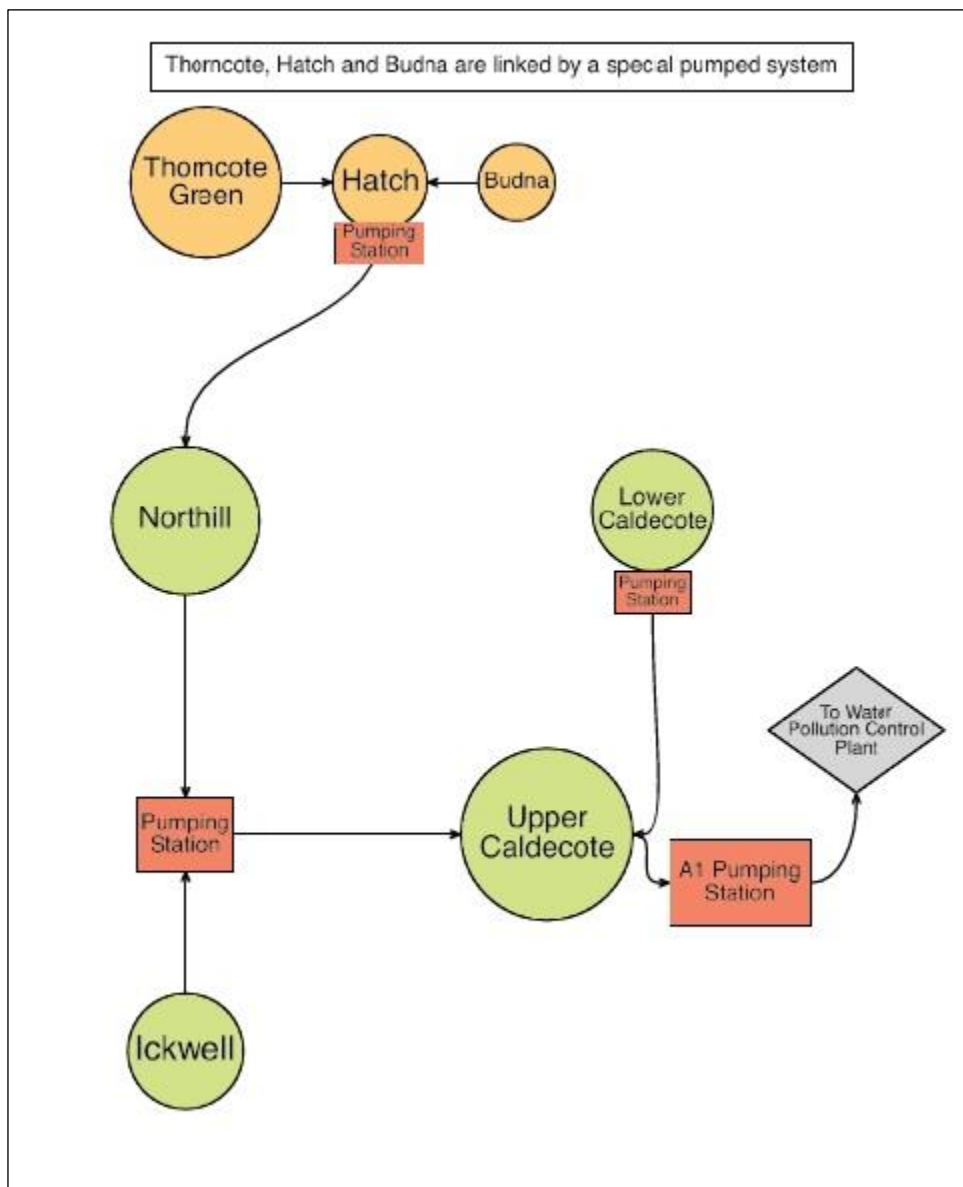


Figure 8: Northill Foul Sewer Layout

Note: All foul sewage is transferred to the pumping station on the eastern side of the A1 for transfer to the Water Pollution Control Plant

Policy NP8: Flood Risk & Drainage Management

- 1. Development proposals will be expected to:**
 - a. Be designed and constructed so that the overall level of flood risk within the parish will not increase;**
 - b. Provide appropriate and effective surface water drainage demonstrating compliance with established guidelines including use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) to ensure no net increase in run off. Surface water discharge to a public surface water sewer is seen as a last resort and if necessary must not exceed the green field rate. SUDS is Anglian Water's preferred method of surface water disposal;**
 - c. Infiltration devices should allow at least 1m freeboard between the bottom of the device and the seasonal groundwater table. Infiltration proposals need to be supported by ground investigation and infiltration rates; and**
 - d. Because of proximity to Flood Zones, the applicant for any development must be required to appraise the risk from these watercourses to demonstrate that the development will be safe from flooding and steered away from parts of the site that are at higher risk of flooding**
- 2. Development will not be permitted in flood attenuation areas where that development would reduce the ability of these areas to alleviate flooding**
- 3. Proposals will need to show that development has avoided the loss of open water courses through culverting with existing culverted sections opened where viable**
- 4. Any new development must have adequate receiving surface water drainage, i.e. drains, culverts and definable water courses, agreed in consultation with Environment Agency and LLFA, Internal Drainage Board, Highways and Water Company**
- 5. In areas with known drainage problems, shown on the Policy Map, developers will be required to demonstrate how they have sought to mitigate against drainage problems through design. Opportunities are to be sought for reduction in flood risk to relieve pressure on the existing drainage networks within Northill parish**
- 6. Developers must ensure that appropriate measures are secured to ensure the adoption and ongoing maintenance of the surface water drainage provisions and flood prevention measures. Maintenance arrangements must avoid excessive burden on home owners**
- 7. Developers must liaise with Anglian Water and prepare a rigorous drainage strategy to demonstrate that the capacity within the local foul sewage network is available or could be made available in time to serve development proposals. The strategy must show the adequacy of the local sewer system and that new connections will not increase the risk of flooding. The discharge of surface water to existing public foul or combined sewers is not permitted**

Compliance refs - NPPF 17, 93, 99, 100, 103,110, 156, 162. CSDMP 2009: CS2, CS13, DM2, DM3. CBC Sustainable Drainage Guidance Adopted April 2014, updated May 2015 (paper document). CBC Local Flood Risk Strategy Feb 2014 (paper document). Upper River Great Ouse Tri LLA Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment in CBC's Sustainable Drainage Guidelines 2014/15 (<http://www.bedford.gov.uk/PDF/PFRA.pdf>). The Non-statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (DEFRA, 2015); the Written Statement - HCWS161 (DCLG, 2014); the Approved Document H of the Building Regulations- Drainage and Waste Disposal (2015 edition).

Conclusion

The rigorous implementation of these policies will apply current best practice to flood alleviation, sewerage and drainage procedures in order to reduce flood risk and not adversely affect local drainage and sewage infrastructure in Northill Parish. These policies serve Objective 6.

6. Caring for Our Natural Environment

6.1 The Local Picture

- 6.1.1 The parish of Northill benefits from a rich and diverse natural environment set within a high-quality landscape. The Greensand Ridge runs through the north of the parish and Ickwell Bury parkland in the west constitutes one of the most significant remaining historical parklands along the length of the Greensand Ridge. Each village and hamlet has its cherished local green spaces and there are areas of land maintained for leisure pursuits and recreation.
- 6.1.2 Landscape surrounding the villages and hamlets is largely agricultural, much of which is designated as high quality and plays an important part in the local economy.
- 6.1.3 There are notable features such as woodland, parkland, ancient trees, hedgerows, field margins, ancient fishponds, streams and historic water courses which provide valuable resources for wildlife and focuses of interest for local residents and visitors. Significant historical importance has been ascribed to some of these features.
- 6.1.4 In most cases the land is well-managed by local landowners and other agencies. An important initiative to preserve species and increase diversity by creating wild areas along field margins has been undertaken by a local farmer. However, there is still much that can be done to improve the quality of the environment, create habitats to support biodiversity and green corridors for wildlife and most importantly, safeguard the environment from exploitation and the threat of degradation from future development.

6.2 Public Support

- 6.2.1 A passionate interest in the care and preservation of the local environment and its wildlife and a will to increase biodiversity has been revealed through the public consultation process.
- 6.2.2 From the parishioner questionnaire, 89% identified the importance of preserving green spaces; 70% wished for improvements to be made to the green environment; 68% supported the conservation and maintenance of the landscape and 69% the management and conservation of wildlife.

“Green spaces surrounding the villages need protecting because they attract tourists, people love walking their dogs and riding there, the wildlife can flourish and be protected”

“All-natural areas, fields and trees in the parish should be preserved”

6.3 Preserving & Protecting Local Green Spaces

6.3.1 Under the NPPF, Neighbourhood Plans have the opportunity to designate Local Green Spaces which are of particular importance to the local community. This will afford protection from development other than in very special circumstances. Para 77 of the NPPF states the conditions for designation are:

- Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves
- Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example, because of its beauty, historic significant, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife
- Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land

6.3.2 These listed areas are not only significant in themselves but provide important opportunities that can enhance the quality of life for local residents and visitors. Appendix 3 demonstrates how each of the listed green spaces meets the criteria specified by the NPPF and a policy map showing the location of Green Spaces is in Appendix 4.

6.3.3 The village greens provide venues for sporting events and traditional occasions such as the May Day celebrations at Ickwell Green. They create broad swathes of grassland which provide relief to housing density and create open windows to the countryside beyond.

6.3.4 Walkers and dog-owners also benefit from the throughways provided across some of the greens. A good example is the Three Greens Walk which links three of the village greens and also passes through an ancient wood, crosses the parish brook twice, and includes meadows and open arable fields with extensive views across the Ivel Valley.

6.3.5 Dedicated recreation areas exist in the villages of Ickwell and Upper Caldecote where cricket, football and a number of other sports take place regularly and are well-supported.

6.3.6 Of particular historical significance are the Medieval Fishponds and the land surrounding them. These are recognised as one of the best-preserved examples in the region of such manorial ponds and warrant both environmental and historical protection.

6.3.7 The Old Walled Garden at The Crown Public House contains one of the last examples of “the Old Warden” pear.



The Medieval Fishponds

Photo: M Lewis

6.3.8 These important features help create richness in the quality of local life and need to be protected in order to secure the distinctiveness of living in Northhill

6.3.9 The following local green spaces have all been identified by the local community

Policy NP9: The Preservation & Protection of Green Spaces

1. The areas below are designated as ‘Local Green Spaces’ because of their local significance or community value. They will be protected from new development and incursion of national infrastructure projects unless exceptional circumstances can be robustly demonstrated and evidenced:

- a. Ickwell Green;**
- b. Caldecote Green;**
- c. Thorncote Green;**
- d. Northhill Green & Village Pond;**
- e. Caldecote Playing Fields;**
- f. Hatch Common**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 7, 9, 17, 37, 70, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 109, 113. CSDMP (2009): CS13, CS16, CS17, DM5, DM14, DM16, DM17

6.4 Conserving & Improving the Local Environment

6.4.1 The next policy draws on examples of good practice in environmental management some of which have already started and need to become more widespread, others which are aspirational but have the possibility of fruition and others which as yet need further investigation. As a set of principles together they describe a future of creating local environmental security and enhancement that future generations can enjoy and take pride in.

6.4.2 Details of vital community actions which identify the principles and practices which will secure the future of the important features of our complex environment and contribute to their maintenance and survival are to be found in the accompanying document to the NP: Community-led Actions.

6.4.3 The distinctive rural nature of the parish is exemplified by reference to specific assets and initiatives needed to preserve them. These are outlined in the following paragraphs.

6.4.4 Wildlife margins at the edges of fields used for cropping are part of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS). This is a DEFRA initiative managed by Natural England aiming to deliver significant environmental benefits throughout the country in priority areas over a ten-year period.

6.4.5 In our parish the scheme operates across large parts of Caldecote House Farm under the stewardship of the farm management team. The team have responded to the decline in bird population and in particular the grey partridge resulting from the intensification of agriculture from the 1970s onwards. Through the CSS the team is managing woodlands, hedgerows and field margins for the wider benefit of wildlife and in particular to create cover for the grey partridge. As a result, the grey partridge has gone from 8 pairs in 2002 to 44 pairs in 2010. From the period 2006 to 2015 farmland bird density is also up by 1200%.



Grey Partridge
Photo: D Appleton

6.4.6 Ickwell Bury is a grade 2 listed Site of Special Interest and a designated “Nature Reserve” within a Conservation Area. The wood pasture and parkland have been chosen as a significant feature of the Greensand Ridge and The Greensand Ridge Partnership Project could be a possible source of funding for planned restoration of this special environment. The 2011 Bedfordshire Parkland Survey revealed that there were 8 remaining veteran trees, 7 of which were native. There were considerably more non-native and ornamental trees. A replanting programme may be needed to restore the native species in the parkland. The parkland also boasts a serpentine lake set in a ‘Capability Brown’ style. For the public to enjoy the parkland, better public access needs to be negotiated.

6.4.7 As well as the streams feeding into the River Ivel there are number of other water bodies located within the parish, the largest of which is the Warren Villas Nature Reserve to the east alongside the River Ivel. The Warren Villas complex of lakes was developed as a result of sand and gravel extraction and was managed for a period of 25 years as a nature reserve creating the thriving wildlife habitat that we see today. The reserve was sold a few years ago to a private owner and is currently used as a commercial fishery. There are some permissive rights of way in place. This complex of water-based habitats is a good contrast to the wooded areas to the west of the parish and the open land in the central belt.



Warren Villas Nature Reserve

Photo: J Thomas

Policy NP10: Conserving & Improving the Environment

- 1. Applications for development contributing to the conservation or enhancement of the rural character of the countryside and creating opportunities for its enjoyment, will be supported**

Compliance Refs - NPPF: 7, 9, 17, 78, 109, 113, 117, 118. CSDMP 2009: CS16, CS17, DM5, DM14, DM15, DM16

6.5 Protecting Ancient Woodland

- 6.5.1** College and Home Woods are designated as County Wildlife Sites. They are among the most fascinating of Bedfordshire woodlands with a complex and varied history. The sites are currently accessed along a footpath from Bedford Road, Northill but once reached private ownership limits further access. It is felt that protection of these valued assets should be secured.

Policy NP11: Ancient Woodlands

- 1. Developments which damage or result in the loss of ancient trees or woodlands, including Home and College Woods, will not be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances and compensatory measures are provided**
- 2. Proposals having a potential impact on ancient woodlands should be accompanied by a tree survey that establishes the health and longevity of any affected tree**

Compliance refs: NPPF: 9, 17, 76, 78, 109, 113, 117. CSDMP 2009: CS13, CS16, CS17, DM14, DM15

6.6 Protecting Natural Habitats

6.6.1 Protected green spaces are ideal locations for further creating biodiversity and important habitats. A good example has been the wildflower bed opposite Northill Village Pond. This is a low cost, easily maintained habitat which has the potential for increasing the diversity of insect life, particularly pollinators. Such plantings could be replicated across other parish green spaces.

Policy NP12: Protecting Natural Habitats

- 1. The distinctive wildlife and habitat features, including designated sites, in the parish will be protected from any harmful impact arising from housing or commercial developments or change in land use**
- 2. Development proposals that would incur the loss or degradation of existing natural habitats will not be permitted unless an ecological survey is undertaken and mitigation measures to ensure that the integrity of the habitat continues after the implementation of the development and appropriate management and aftercare is secured**
- 3. Development proposals should seek to protect, and where practical and viable, improve and enhance the natural environment**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 9, 17, 109, 113, 114, 117, 118 CSDMP 2009: CS3, CS16, CS17, DM14, DM15

6.7 Improving the Green Infrastructure

6.7.1 Green infrastructure across the parish consists of wildlife networks and corridors such as the interconnecting streams which run into the River Ivel and thence onwards to the River Ouse. Hedgerows, woodlands, grassland, parkland and green spaces also contribute to the local green infrastructure. Footpaths, bridleways and outdoor recreation and leisure areas are also part of the green infrastructure.

6.7.2 In 2016 Northill Parish Council adopted a Green Infrastructure Plan for the Parish. The plan contains aspirations for developing the green infrastructure within the parish. Much of what has been prioritised focuses on the improvement of the footpath network across the parish and is dealt with in the Community Health and Wellbeing section of this report.

6.7.3 However there are additional aspirations which we have enshrined in the policy below. These aspirations all have implications for improving and adding to the availability of green infrastructure within the parish.

- 6.7.4** In each case the owner's cooperation and the investigation of possible sources of grant or other financing will be needed before any change in land use can be envisaged.
- 6.7.5** Four County Wildlife Sites lie completely within the Parish boundaries. One further woodland site (Sheerhatch Wood) is partially within the parish on the western boundary; a sixth site along the River Ivel, forms part of the eastern boundary of the Parish.
- 6.7.6** The Green Infrastructure Plan also identifies, in addition to the areas named above, further parts of the parish where opportunities for enhancing biodiversity would be most beneficial. These can be found on the Northill Biodiversity Map (Appendix 5:p.41 of The Northill Parish Green Infrastructure Plan). The aim of doing so is to buffer and link existing wildlife rich areas creating a landscape through which species can move.
- 6.7.7** This policy will also make wildlife populations more sustainable and help them to adjust and survive the inevitable habitat changes that climate change will exacerbate.

Policy NP13: Improving the Green Infrastructure

- 1. Proposals that will contribute to the improvement of the Parish's green infrastructure will be supported**
- 2. Developments will not be supported which would have an adverse impact on the existing green infrastructure or on the implementation of green infrastructure projects identified in the Northill Green Infrastructure Plan**
- 3. Proposals that contribute to the delivery of environmental projects set out in the Community-led Actions will be supported**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 9, 17, 109, 110, 113, 114, 117, 118 CSDMP 2009: CS13, CS17, DM14, DM15, DM16, DM17

Conclusion

Our parish environment is clearly diverse with both historic and more modern aspects and a wide variety of types of environment. There are clearly some well-managed attempts to sustain and improve habitats. However, there are sufficient opportunities through the policies outlined above to build on the successes already achieved and ensure that our diverse environment continues to improve. The awareness of its significance and potential fragility is appreciated together with the means to halt decline. This suite of policies address Objective 8.

7. Community Health & Wellbeing

7.1 What is a healthy community?

7.1.1 “A healthy community is a good place to grow up and grow old in. It is one which supports healthy behaviours and supports reductions in health inequalities. It should enhance the physical and mental health of the community and, where appropriate, encourage:

- Active healthy lifestyles that are made easy through the pattern of development, good urban design, good access to local services and facilities; green open space and safe places for active play and food growing, and is accessible by walking and cycling and public transport;
- The creation of healthy living environments for people of all ages which supports social interaction. It meets the needs of children and young people to grow and develop, as well as being adaptable to the needs of an increasingly elderly population and those with dementia and other sensory or mobility impairments.” (from DCLG Planning Practice Guidance 2014).

7.1.2 In thinking through what policies we need to support the health and wellbeing of our local community now and into the future, we have taken the above Government advice as our starting point. Following the consultation process, we are focusing our policies on two aspects that are of particular concern and interest to parishioners:

- Protecting the current array of community facilities for health, leisure and daily living and improving and adding to them where possible;
- Maintaining and improving the quality of existing routes for walkers, riders and cyclists across the parish and establishing new routes where there is an identified need. Additional policies concerning high quality building, green spaces and access to heritage sites appear in other parts of the plan.

7.2 Outdoor Play & Leisure Facilities

7.2.1 Northhill Parish has wide-ranging facilities for a population of about 2300 which includes in excess of 400 young people under the age of 16 (2011 census). The population continues to grow. Within the parish, by far the largest proportion of young people reside in Upper Caldecote where many of the leisure facilities are situated. The parish has many sports clubs and teams which attract members from all parts of the parish and beyond.

7.2.2 Although the parish is well-provided with sporting facilities for outdoor games, there are no facilities for structured outdoor exercise. Similarly, play equipment for young people is only located in one village and is not suitable for young teenagers. There are no adaptations on outdoor equipment to enable disabled people to participate.

7.2.3 By listening to the views of our young people and families particularly, we have discovered an interest in new or extended facilities of these types being developed over the lifetime of the plan. Locations have been carefully considered to provide easy and safe access for users near where they live.

“An outdoor exercise area for adults should be an additional provision added to existing sport areas”

“Northill and Ickwell should have play areas for children”

“No play equipment for middle school age in Upper Caldecote – need proper swings and frame for 12+ years”

“Facilities could be mixed so parents can watch different age groups in one place”

7.2.4 A neighbouring community, the village of Langford, has established a multi-age outdoor exercise area, and therefore local expertise exists which Northill parish could draw on.



Multi-Gym, Langford
Photo: Langford Parish Clerk

- 7.2.5** Several specific locations for additional play spaces have been put forward by parishioners for consideration. The appropriateness of these sites will need to be assessed against their availability and suitability before any further action can be taken
- 7.2.6** It has been recognised that the range and type of provision in a new facility should be suitable for a wider age group. It is felt that the current public play area situated in land owned and administered by the Caldecote Playing Fields Association has equipment which is suitable for very young children but lacks the diversity and challenge needed for older children to exercise fitfully.
- 7.2.7** In addition the CBC Leisure Strategy (2017 update) recognises that there is a need for play facilities for younger children in Ickwell and Northill villages and additional facilities are needed for young people (aged 12+) in Upper Caldecote.
- 7.2.8** Young people of all ages and abilities should be involved in advising on the suitability and selection of equipment should any project come to fruition.

Policy NP14: Additional Provision of Outdoor Play & Leisure Facilities

- 1. Sustainable proposals to increase provision of additional play and leisure facilities, over and above those that already exist, will be supported**
- 2. In particular the following provision will be actively encouraged:**
 - a. The provision of multi-purpose exercise equipment available for all ages at suitable locations where it could enhance existing provision of sporting and leisure facilities;**
 - b. New play facilities in either Northill or Ickwell village at a suitable location convenient to where families live and also safe for public access; and**
 - c. Enhancement of existing play equipment in Upper Caldecote, to widen the suitability across the age range**
- 3. All new facilities should be designed in accordance with relevant Sport England and national governing body design guidance and consider the impact of amenity (noise etc) on immediate neighbours**

7.3 Additional Catering Outlet

7.3.1 This policy is the result of two sources of evidence. The first comes from consultations with the public and the second from local businesses who have expressed an interest in providing a catering outlet.

“Would like a café either alone or within an existing shop”

“Would like restaurant/café/pub in Upper Caldecote run by village for village”

“A family orientated building, not necessarily licensed, but with games rooms and refreshment facilities. Jordan’s Mill is an excellent example of this”

7.3.2 Since the demise of the local public house, which was demolished to make way for additional housing, Upper Caldecote lacks a dedicated catering outlet. Although there are licensed sports clubs in Caldecote and Ickwell and The Crown public house at Northhill a cafeteria type venue is lacking in any of these locations.

7.3.3 Public comments have emphasised that as all these venues are licensed premises, the parish therefore lacks a family-oriented cafeteria style venue. It is suggested that this could be sited within existing shops or stand-alone. Another suggestion is that it could be run by villagers for villagers.

7.3.4 This additional provision was high on the agendas of younger consultees who also commented that places where they could meet their friends were lacking.

7.3.5 When asked as part of the Business survey, three local businesses expressed an interest in opening a cafeteria style facility on their existing premises which are either retail outlets or leisure facilities.

Policy NP15: Provision of an Additional Catering Outlet

- 1. Setting up of a further Class A3 use (restaurant and café) in the parish to supplement existing provision will be supported**
- 2. Support will be given for the change of use for an existing building to enable delivery of a Class A3 use where:**
 - a. Appropriate levels of parking provision can be demonstrated; and**
 - b. There is no loss of amenity for surrounding users**

7.4 Community Assets

- 7.4.1** From the evidence of public consultations, existing facilities that enable people of all ages to maintain healthy lives, engage in interests and leisure pursuits and safeguard the future of the local communities in the parish, are to be valued and protected.
- 7.4.2** An asset of community value is generally a building which a community group has asked CBC to list as being of value to that community. This is a relatively new legal right, designed to give communities the opportunity to control the assets and facilities that matter to them.
- 7.4.3** If an asset is listed, and comes up for sale, community groups could be given a total of six months to put together a bid to buy it.
- 7.4.4** Unfortunately we are unable to specify a policy to protect these valued assets as such actions are outside the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan. Local listing offers some protection and is one of the proposed projects in the Community Led Projects document and should be regarded as a priority community action. The community assets identified by our parishioners should be forwarded to NPC to request their inclusion in the local list designated by CBC.

7.5 Allotments & Community Growing Spaces

“Land should be made available for Allotments – many requests to NPC”

“We suggest modelling the provision on the Dunton community gardens project. This would entail the provision of both individual plots and community facilities e.g. polytunnels and fruit orchards”

- 7.5.1** Parish Councils are required by law to establish allotments where they consider there to be a demand. In Northill Parish, Neighbourhood Planning and previous consultations (e.g. the THINC Parish Plan 2009) have provided overwhelming evidence that they are a much needed and valued resource for our community.
- 7.5.2** In addition the CBC Leisure Strategy recognises an established need for 15 allotments in Upper Caldecote and the same document sets out quality standards which will be taken into account in the proposed Community Actions associated with this policy.

7.5.3 Community Actions required for the establishment of allotments have been set out in Community-led Projects.

7.5.4 Coupled with the desire to create a community orchard both the allotments and the orchard can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of our community.

Policy NP16: Allotments & Community Growing Spaces

- 1. Proposals for the provision of allotments and/or community growing spaces will be strongly supported**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 7, 9, 17, 37, 69, 70, 73, 114, 171 CSDMP 2009: CS3, CS4, CS13, DM9, DM17

7.6 Rights of Way – Support at National & Local levels

7.6.1 The NPPF gives guidance for the protection and enhancement of public rights of way and access to them. In addition, local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users adding links to existing rights of way networks.

7.6.2 DEFRA also provides guidance on access to the countryside whilst the Environment Agency has responsibilities relating to the protection and enhancement of the environment in England. Natural England is the government advisory body for the natural environment in England with access to the countryside, high on its list of provisions to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy.

7.6.3 The need for Green Infrastructure Plans (GIPs) of which access to the country is an important component has been identified at all levels from central government through to local authorities and local communities. The Mid Bedfordshire GIP was introduced in 2008 and the Northill Parish GIP was approved in September 2016.

7.6.4 CBC has produced documents for use at a local level under their Development Strategy policy (Policy 23 Public Rights of Way).

7.6.5 NPC has a working party P3 (People, Projects and Partnerships) that meets to monitor the state of parish footpaths and their maintenance and liaises with CBC to recommend work to be undertaken.



Parish Signpost

Photo: P Sandell

“Want to walk to Ickwell playgroup from Upper Caldecote. Upgrade footpath via The Sheep Walk or put footway along Caldecote Road. The latter preferred”

“Need to be able to cycle from Upper Caldecote to Northill safely for preschool”

“Need safe access to Biggleswade by foot and cycle (over or underpass)”

“Should be a circular route around the Parish by footpath (cycle, horses, pedestrians/dogs) which joins up existing footpaths”

“Create short footpaths and walks for infirm and invalid carriages”

“Access for all parishioners to walk in woodlands. Children would particularly enjoy collecting conkers, chestnuts etc”

7.7 Local Opinion

- 7.7.1** In public consultation parishioners have taken a great interest in ensuring the maintenance of existing footpaths and other rights of way and establishing new routes to improve lifestyles and access needs.
- 7.7.2** The principal priority identified was improving existing access routes for pedestrians, cyclists and riders to make it safer and easier to get around (68%). The second priority concerned creating new access routes for pedestrians, cyclists and riders (48%).
- 7.7.3** Significantly these returns echo and enhance the NP consultation and GIP workshop aspirations. The aspiration with the greatest support is for establishing a new footway linking Upper Caldecote and Ickwell. This proposal may be constrained by the high costs entailed.
- 7.7.4** Another aspiration given high priority is for improved access to Biggleswade, enabling the A1 to be crossed safely by pedestrians and cyclists. This major highway is however currently being investigated by the government with a view to possible re-routing so until intentions are made known it is difficult to proceed with further plans.
- 7.7.5** Additional aspirations include new rights of way for access to the Medieval Fishponds, a nationally significant heritage site. Furthermore, additional woodland paths and improved linkages to existing footpaths within the parish are deserved.
- 7.7.6** New bridleways and cycle paths also rank high in parishioner aspirations. However, by their very nature these are more challenging to construct requiring considerable work and a long timescale for planning and implementation.
- 7.7.7** The opportunities for improving access to the countryside should be taken when a new development is sited near existing footpaths. This policy supports the linkage of new developments to the local infrastructure for the benefit of residents. Northill Neighbourhood Plan Initial Rights of Way Priorities

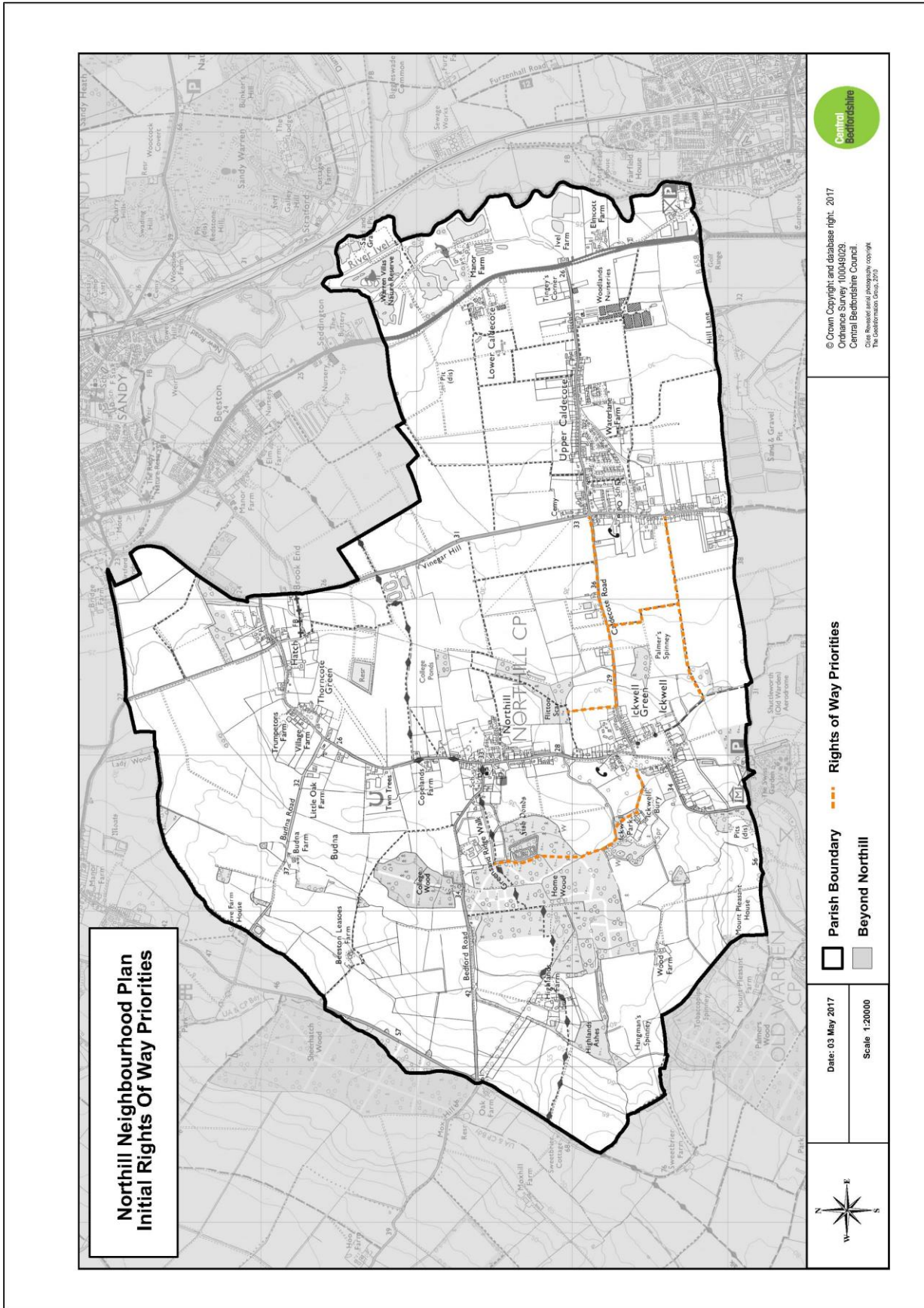


Figure 9: Northhill Rights of Way Priorities

7.8 Increased Opportunities for Creating and Using Rights of Way

- 7.8.1** The provision of new Rights of Way is guided by the potential for greatest benefit, lowest cost and practicality in conjunction with parishioners' aspirations.
- 7.8.2** Provisions for new public access links are major aspirations and concur with national and local policies. Longer term schemes present issues that require special attention, in particular landowner and/or Highways Authority permission.
- 7.8.3** Access to the countryside for wheelchair users and the very young is an important feature of national and local guidance. The provision of a community volunteer group (also Community Led Projects) to undertake adaptation and maintenance work will assist the implementation of the policy and link with the actions of the Green Infrastructure Plan and the findings of P3.
- 7.8.4** The maintenance, improvement and safety of footpaths are frequently expressed parishioner concerns and a major thrust of government and local guidance. In prioritising these policies, we are committing to improving the quality of life for parishioners and visitors now and in the future.
- 7.8.5** The "Getting About" Working Group Report contains a comprehensive survey of all footpaths in the parish and comments on their current states and identifies maintenance needs (Appendix 7). This is a useful starting point for assessing priorities in work to be undertaken in line with the policy below. (Refer to Community Led Projects Document).

Policy NP17: Increasing Opportunities for Walking, Cycling & Horse Riding

- 1. Development proposals which incorporate measures to protect and improve facilities for walking, cycling and horse-riding will be supported. In particular, provision of routes that are physically separated from vehicular traffic and from one another will be strongly supported**
- 2. For walking routes, proposals should ensure that access by disabled users and those with prams, is secured**
- 3. Encouragement will be given to the creation of new rights of way. Priorities for new routes shown on the Policy Map are:**
 - a. A roadside footway between Ickwell and upper Caldecote;**
 - b. New footpath north from Caldecote road to Flitton Scar;**
 - c. New footpath from Ickwell Green to Medieval Fishponds; and**
 - d. Improve and/or upgrade footpath F5 from upper Caldecote to The Sheep Walk linking to Ickwell village**
- 4. Support will be given to proposals that improve and extend the existing path and bridleway network, allowing greater access to new housing , the village centres, Biggleswade, green spaces and open countryside. Proposals should take due consideration of the impact on local ecosystems. Due regard should be given to the rural character of the surrounding environment when constructing any new Rights of Way**
- 5. The loss of existing footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways will be resisted unless rerouted as an improvement or extended to develop the network**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 7, 9, 17, 37, 69, 70, 73, 75, 114, 171 CSDMP 2009: CS3, CS4, CS13, DM9, DM17

Conclusion

The above policies taken together will provide additional opportunities for parishioners to develop healthy lifestyles should they so choose. They promote the creation and maintenance of an environment that supports people of all ages in making healthy choices, help to promote active travel and physical activity and promote access to healthier food, high quality open spaces, green infrastructure and opportunities for play, sport and recreation. In doing so they meet Objectives 10, 11, 12 and 13.

8. Valuing Our Local Heritage

8.1 National & Local Support

- 8.1.1** The (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to set out positive strategies for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.
- 8.1.2** In the current Local Plan, CBC has undertaken to “conserve, enhance, protect and promote the enjoyment of the historic environment”. Specific commitments have been made relating to the conservation, management, interpretation and knowledge-sharing of such heritage assets.

8.2 Our Historic Heritage

- 8.2.1** Northhill Parish has a rich historical heritage which is evident in the local villages and countryside. The parish archaeology is detailed on page 18-19 and page 25 (Historic Environment Map) of the GIP. Many of the historically important buildings also contribute towards the visual attractiveness of the parish settlements and give them their distinctive local character. Parts of Northhill and Ickwell are designated as Conservation Areas, (Appendix 8) where new building and/or modification to existing buildings is restricted. There are also registered parklands and gardens which have some degree of protection.
- 8.2.2** For a small rural parish the size of Northhill, there is evidence of a large number of buildings, sites and artefacts pointing to the rich and diverse cultural, agrarian and economic past. Some relics have both local and national significance which illustrate the changing historical evolution over the centuries of the parish within its wider setting. Of particular note are:
- Several Roman artefacts discovered as well as evidence of Roman roads and habitation;
 - The earliest known settlements in the parish date back to Saxon times. The medieval fishponds are scheduled as comprising a site of national importance, are recognised as being “exceptionally well-preserved”;
 - Numerous historic buildings, mainly of 17th and 18th century origin, which have helped create the attractive villages, hamlets and village greens which make up the parish settlements and give them their distinctive local character;
 - Evidence of movement towards an industrial society can be seen in the 18th century remains of a lock and wharf on the River Ivel illustrating the movement across the country of bulk goods. These are deemed worthy of protection.



The Old Smithy, Ickwell

Photo: Bedfordshire Archives 2011

- 8.2.3** There are 73 entries for Northill Parish reported on the Heritage List for England published by Historic England. Most of these are easily identifiable houses, many in the form of thatched cottages. There are also several farm buildings which are less apparent, and two significant Anglican churches, one of which, St Mary's in Northill, has a Grade I listing and contains some of the finest decorated glass in the county. (Listed entries in Appendix 9).

8.3 Local Concerns

- 8.3.1** Following from parishioners' concerns, 23 other non-listed buildings and industrial sites artefacts have been identified by the plan's Heritage Working Group as being of sufficient community interest and historical significance to warrant conservation and further protection. (Parishioner list in Appendix 10).
- 8.3.2** Protection of these historic assets ranks high on the parishioners' agenda. Many local sites, buildings and open spaces were identified during public consultations and concern expressed for their conservation. When asked whether 'Conservation of Historic Buildings' should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan, 65% responded positively.
- 8.3.3** The policies below recognise that these assets need to be acknowledged, protected and sustained for the benefit of current and future parishioners.

"Need a list of listed and old buildings in the parish. Want to retain and maintain these historic buildings as heritage"

"Listed buildings – protect views"

8.4 Addressing Concerns

- 8.4.1** The first policy will apply to buildings and sites currently listed with Historic England and any successor body dealing with such issues and those that become listed during the lifetime of the plan.
- 8.4.2** It will also apply to any community- identified assets which may become designated for inclusion on a local list in the future.
- 8.4.3** If official listing with Historic England is not possible, non-listed heritage assets will be considered for inclusion on a 'local list' of 'non-designated heritage assets' along with the 'street furniture', fishponds and remnants of the industrial heritage. Whilst local listing does not specifically provide additional planning controls, the fact that a building or site is on a local list means that it has been recognised as an heritage asset and its conservation is an objective of the NPPF and a material consideration when determining the outcome of a planning application (NPPF, paragraph 17). This status is strengthened by the policies outlined here.
- 8.4.4** Investigations of all the historical assets identified through public consultation, have been undertaken by the Heritage Working Group and specific recommendations been made regarding their upkeep and preservation. These assets and the accompanying recommendations can be found in Appendix 10.



Remains of Ivel Navigation Lock

Photo: M Lewis

Home Farm Barns, Ickwell

Photo: M Lewis



- 8.4.5** Where approved, modern replacement and/or alternative building materials should visually compliment the immediate environment and not impact adversely on the historical integrity of existing or neighbouring buildings.
- 8.4.6** Significant features of the environment include ancient trees, hedgerows, wicket fences, iron railings, gardens in the style of the property, wells, barns, outhouses of the period and other features deemed in keeping with the heritage asset.

Policy NP18: Listed Buildings & Buildings, Structures or Sites of Historic Worth

- 1. Planning permission will not be supported for development that would result in the loss of or damage to listed buildings. In respect of any non-designated heritage asset of local importance identified on a local heritage list, account will be taken of the scale of any identified harm and the significance of the asset**
- 2. Development affecting heritage assets must pay particular regard to the need to conserve and/or enhance their settings and any architectural or historic features of significance**
- 3. In respect of all heritage assets, the plan supports the following:**
 - a. Restoration, renovation and repair which restores former function or appearance at a significant point in its lifetime;**
 - b. Enhancement of settings in which assets reside in line with historic conventions; and**
 - c. Presumption against demolition unless it can be proven that the asset cannot be repaired or restored (e.g. in the case of a derelict building deemed beyond repair). In this instance recognition of the significance of the site should be established for public information**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 9, 17, 61, 64, 126, 128, 131-5, 136, 139, 140. CSDMP 2009: CS15, DM1, DM3, DM13

8.5 Conservation Areas

- 8.5.1** Parts of the villages of Northill and Ickwell have been designated as Conservation Areas (Appendix 8). 69% of parishioners who responded to the parish wide Questionnaire supported the conservation and maintenance of the landscape and 65% supported the conservation of historic buildings.
- 8.5.2** Concern was raised about the recent approval for a development of nine dwellings adjacent to the conservation area in Northill, resulting in part-destruction of an ancient hedgerow. The development was felt to urbanise the approach to the conservation area.
- 8.5.3** Currently the CBC 2009 policy says: “Planning applications for development within Conservation Areas will be assessed against the Conservation Area appraisals and inappropriate development will be refused”. CBC Draft Plan 2017 takes this further by, amongst other things, requiring a Built Heritage Statement assessing the level of impact that the development proposal will have on the conservation area and its assets (both designated/undesigned).
- 8.5.4** Policy NP19 protects the appearance of dwellings within and adjacent to the Conservation Area to ensure the valued characteristics are preserved.

Policy NP19: Conservation Areas

- 1. Within and adjacent to the Conservation Areas, defined on the Policy Map, development proposals will be required to preserve or enhance the character of those areas. Development proposals and extensions and alterations to existing buildings and structures will be expected to:**
 - a. Conform to CBC Design Guidance on Historic Buildings;**
 - b. Be suitably designed for the context within which they are set, with no loss or detriment to existing structures and the surrounding environment;**
 - c. Ensure that the scale and massing of buildings relates sympathetically to the surrounding area; and**
 - d. Use traditional and vernacular building materials to respect the context of the development concerned**

Compliance refs - NPPF 9, 17, 61, 63, 64, 126, 128, 131-135, 136, 139, 140. CSDMP 2009: CS15, DM3, DM13

Conclusion

It is recognised that the preservation of our historic assets cannot be taken for granted but the strength of feeling amongst the parishioners, demonstrated during the consultation process, indicates extensive support for the implementation of a rigorous policy of conservation and protection of such assets to ensure they are safeguarded for future generations. These policies meet Objective 7.

9. Generating & Conserving Energy

9.1 Why Support Local Energy Generation?

- 9.1.1** Energy prices are rising far ahead of general inflation, pushing families and businesses into fuel poverty. Increased focus on energy efficiency can reduce these bills, and also reduce the investment needed in new renewable supplies. Both in the UK, and even more elsewhere, both generation and efficiency are increasingly being tackled by community-level energy schemes, which bring ownership of energy to local communities.
- 9.1.2** The government's own statistics show that between 2010 and 2015 domestic energy costs across the UK, increased by 25% whilst in the same period average domestic income had fluctuated and by 2015 had returned to 2008 levels. With increasing pressures on household expenditure, initiatives aimed at reducing electricity costs would seem to make sense.
- 9.1.3** One way for householders and businesses to reduce rising costs in electricity supply is to generate their own electricity from renewable resources within the community. This also contributes to the reduction of dependency on fossil fuels and the government's target to increase the place of renewables in the total energy provision to 15% by 2020.

9.2 Public Support

- 9.2.1** The Neighbourhood Plan consultation workshops revealed some support for community generation of electricity. Solar, wind, hydro and anaerobic digestion were identified as possible sources and care with siting to assure low visibility and low environmental impact were seen as important. The community-wide questionnaire revealed that 51% of respondents were in favour of houses generating their own electricity.

"Wind farms could be good if energy benefited the Parish"

"Wind turbines – reduce energy costs so can improve quality of life"

"Wind power, solar farms, integration of electricity generation into new and existing buildings and anaerobic digester systems should all be considered"

"Encourage and support use of solar panels on industrial and farm buildings"

9.3 The National & Local Context

- 9.3.1** The NPPF supports community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments being taken forward through neighbourhood planning.
- 9.3.2** Policy DM1 of CBC 2009 states that favourable proposals for renewable energy installations will be considered, subject to impact criteria being met. Their subsequent guidance notes, published in March 2016, further re-affirm their commitment to community-led projects and lay out how developers of such schemes are expected to work with communities to ensure impacts are mitigated and direct benefits are understood.

9.4 Environmental Considerations

- 9.4.1** Sensitive siting of community energy generation plants is key to securing public support. Ensuring that sites do not compromise or destroy sensitive habitats or eco-systems will be a crucial factor in considering proposals. Examples could be ensuring streams crossing the parish maintain their biodiversity through uninterrupted flow and field margins under high stewardship are not disturbed. In terms of wind power, non-disruption of the flight paths of migratory birds will be a determining factor. Discrete siting and the provision of suitable screening to maintain the local character of the environment will also be expected.

9.5 Making It Happen

- 9.5.1** The government are currently operating a “Rural Community Energy Fund” which allocates grants and loans to help scope and set up projects which can prove that they are worthwhile to their local community. The grant includes funds to undertake a scoping study with a specialist consultant. This will involve looking at the most economically viable methods, finding suitable sites and calculating the productivity of competing sources of generation needed concomitant with the scale and location of the installation.
- 9.5.2** The buy-in of landowners from the outset followed by a comprehensive community consultation (once the results of the funded scoping study are known) are seen as essential.
- 9.5.3** The Working Group Report explains how CBC guidance can contribute to the evaluation of suitable technologies and evaluates what may be suitable for Northill and financing schemes which could be explored (Appendix 11).
- 9.5.4** The policy below demonstrates a rational approach to supporting community energy generating projects where safeguards have been met.

Policy NP20: Community Energy

- 1. Proposals for community renewable energy generation which serve the electricity usage needs of the parish will be supported where:**
 - a. The location will ensure there will be no unacceptable adverse impact on heritage sites, the character of the landscape, and in terms of noise, pollution or visual and residential amenity. In the case of wind farm developments, they should be located in areas identified as suitable for wind developments; and**
 - b. Environmental sensitivity is a prime consideration**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 17, 49, 95, 110. CSDMP 2000: CS13, DM1

9.6 Efficient Smaller-scale Energy Generation

- 9.6.1** Another aspect of electricity generation, that was highlighted by parishioners during the consultation process, was the importance of the capacity of newly built houses to generate their own electricity.
- 9.6.2** From the household survey, answers to the question as to whether houses should generate their own electricity evoked 51% approval from 184 respondents.
- 9.6.3** A substantial part of the “real affordability” of housing for people trying to get a foot on the ladder is the cost of monthly outgoings. To encourage builders and developers to use proven high rated insulation materials and airtight building methods will reduce costs on power over the lifetime of the property.
- 9.6.4** There are many different ways in which communal energy and heating generation for small developments can be achieved at relatively low outlay. For developers to incorporate the most suitable system or a combination (e.g. ground source and air exchange) would be of great benefit to the outgoings and quality of life of the occupiers.
- 9.6.5** The second policy focuses on electricity generation for new build and energy efficiency measures to support costs.

Policy NP21: Low Carbon Development

- 1. Innovative approaches to the construction of low carbon developments, both commercial and residential which demonstrate sustainable use of resources and high energy efficiency levels and capacity to generate electricity, will be supported. Examples would include, but would not be limited to rammed earth, straw bale, timber frame, modular site- assembled, high insulation construction, constructions to Passivhaus standards, conversion to EnerPHit standards and compliance with BREEAM 'Excellent' sustainability ratings**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 17, 93, 95. CSDMP 2009: CS13, DM1, DM2

Conclusion

The vision of a future environment in the Parish where reliance on high cost externally generated electricity is reduced and homes, businesses and community facilities can benefit from in-house generated energy is both desirable and achievable through the above policies. These policies satisfy Objective 14.

10. Business Opportunities

10.1 The Local Picture

10.1.1 From the evidence gathered, Northill Parish appears to have developed a thriving and healthy economic profile both in the number and diversity of businesses and levels of employment. However, thinking through how to tackle parishioner and business concerns for the future will play an important part in supporting its continuance.

10.1.2 Currently the parish benefits from a mixed economy where local businesses predominate. Agricultural, market gardening, nurseries and related businesses play a substantial role in providing local employment.

10.1.3 There are a very high number of small businesses in relation to the population size. Many of these are entrepreneurial in nature and are either sole traders, family businesses or employ small numbers of staff on a full/part-time basis.

10.1.4 A small number of businesses employ more than 15 people and in some instances their places of work spread beyond the parish boundaries.

10.1.5 Several large businesses including a Sainsbury's Supermarket and Petrol Station and the CBC 'Tidy Tip' Recycling Centre are also located within the parish boundaries although geographically they are situated on the outskirts of Biggleswade on the east of the A1.

10.2 Statutory Planning Policies

10.2.1 The NPPF specifies that local and neighbourhood planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new developments. It suggests that 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.

10.2.2 These themes are further developed in CSDMP (2009) with the addition of:

- safeguarding rural employment sites unless it can clearly be demonstrated that they are unfit for purpose and unable to be redeveloped for employment use;
- providing for new small-scale employment allocations in the rural area where appropriate and there is demand locally.

10.3 Local Opinions

- 10.3.1** Evidence from the Neighbourhood Plan consultation workshops revealed that there was some resistance to any further development of businesses but those in favour saw the importance in supporting the continuation and future development of local employment opportunities as being essential to the maintenance of a thriving community.
- 10.3.2** Small-scale developments and those turning derelict brownfield sites into productive use were favoured. Proximity and easy access to the A1 were considered important as additional traffic build up through the villages on roads not built for heavy vehicles was regarded as undesirable. Future national infrastructure plans to divert the A1 away from the local area may have an impact.
- 10.3.3** An important major constraint to running businesses in the villages of Northill and Ickwell was identified as an absence of high speed broadband and poor Wi-Fi connectivity. This was reinforced by the views of local businesses in these areas.
- 10.3.4** Some local businesses were envisaging limited expansion in the parish and several were hampered by the lack of local people with the necessary skills and lack of housing that was affordable for those who could be recruited from further afield.

“Continue to promote small business”

“New business units with high dependency on transport (heavy goods) need to be situated near A1 to have good transport links and so do not need to travel through the small villages”

“Business units’ location to provide job opportunities”

10.4 Addressing Issues

- 10.4.1** The policies below take a positive look at how the Neighbourhood Plan can best support sustainable businesses growth over the lifetime of the plan taking public opinion and statutory guidance into account.

10.5 Small-scale Development

- 10.5.1** There is currently room for small-scale business growth and development on a site adjacent to the A1 and room for expansion of units in the existing Business Park at Vinegar Hill.
- 10.5.2** Low environmental impact and sustainability of sites and buildings will be expected in new commercial development. Planning for sewage dispersal must be robust and meet the same recommendations for housing.
- 10.5.3** Opportunities to revitalise our local population have featured in other parts of the plan and the creation of new job opportunities will be welcomed.

Policy NP22: Supporting Local Enterprise

Support will be given to small-scale development of new businesses or the extension of existing businesses provided that:

- a. The proposal will be located within or adjacent to a settlement envelope;**
- b. The design and scale of the proposal is appropriate to the location;**
- c. There is no unacceptable impact on local roads;**
- d. Adequate off-street parking is provided;**
- e. There is no unacceptable impact on neighbouring properties or the existing infrastructure;**
- f. There will be the potential for local job opportunities;**
- g. There is no unacceptable loss of amenity to neighbouring occupiers through loss of privacy or visual intrusion**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 7, 9, 10, 17-20, 21. CSDMP 2009: CS9, CS11, CS13, DM2, DM12

10.6 Minimising Community Impact

- 10.6.1** From evidence provided by parishioners it is deemed essential that the impact of any new businesses in terms of increased traffic should be assessed. There are “hotspots” in the villages where roads are quite narrow and ill-equipped and a number of properties including listed buildings that would be negatively impacted by an increase in traffic. These roads are deemed unsuitable for an increased through flow of HGVs.
- 10.6.2** Additional traffic from heavy vehicles on existing village roads therefore will not be supported. New entrance and egress routes on and off the A1 will be supported where this will lead to stability in road usage through the communities’ settlements.

10.7 High-Speed Broadband Connectivity

“Need fast broadband in Northhill and Ickwell for home workers”

“High Speed Broadband throughout parish”

“Parish needs effective broadband and mobile phone connection”

10.7.1 There has been considerable scoping work undertaken by community volunteers to see what options are available for residents of Ickwell and Northhill to secure better wi-fi connectivity and considerably better broadband speeds (see Business WG Report). The conclusion reached by the WG after considering alternative options is to stay with the scheduling of BT high-speed broadband rollout negotiated with CBC despite some delays.

Policy NP23: High-Speed Connectivity in New Development

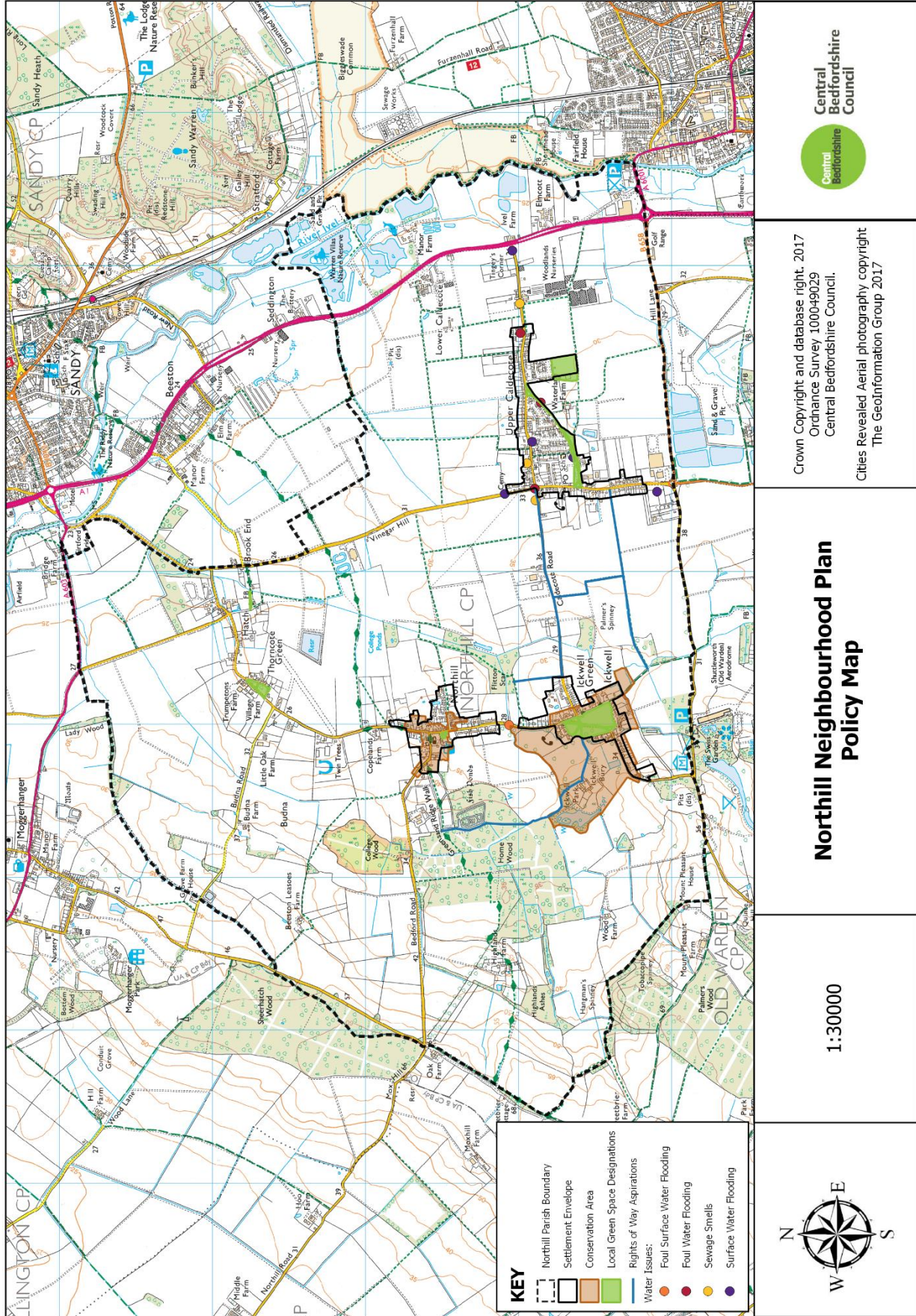
- 1. All new residential, commercial and community premises shall be served, where available, by full-fibre broadband connections. The only exception will be where it can be demonstrated through consultation with Next Generation Access (NGA) providers that this would not be either possible, practicable or economically viable. In such circumstances, sufficient and suitable means should be provided within the site and to the premises to facilitate ease of installation at a future date on an open access basis**

Compliance refs - NPPF: 7, 17, 20, 42, 43. CSDMP 2009: CS2

Conclusion

The above policies support the sustainable growth and effective operation of local businesses as stated in Objectives 15 and 16 in the NP. New employment opportunities within the parish need to be explored with those businesses able to provide them to enable those currently seeking work to become gainfully employed. Broadband and wi-fi inequity is a crucial factor limiting many of the businesses in Northhill and Ickwell and must be resolved by working with CBC and others and considering the solution put forward in the Working Group’s report. Closer working relationships between the parish council and local businesses would advantage the community as a whole in enabling sustainable development to be planned over time.

Policy Map



Acknowledgements

Parishioners

Alan Letford	Luke Sandler
Alan Porter	Mark Lewis
Carolyn Henegan	Mitzi Lewis
David Kaye	Neil Campbell
David Milton	Nita Best
Don Dodkin	Paul Daniels
Graham Hopton	Peggy O'Hare
Helen Papworth	Phil Sandell
Ian Robinson	Richard Cass
June Blanchard	Richard Parrish
Irene Ward	Rowena Wolfe
Jill Parker	Sally Mandley
John Crawley	Shirley Mullen
Jonathan Payne	Stephanie Bennett
Jason Venn	Sue Parrish
Josie Maudlin	Tony Cooke
Lesley Kendrick	Tony Dawson
Linda Nicholas	Wyn Morgan

Additional Support

Jemma McLean (BRCC)	Pritti Meeda (BBC)
Mike Fayers (BRCC)	Kate Lowe (Greensand Graphics)
Sally Chapman (CBC)	Angela Koch (Imagine Places)
Siobhan Vincent (CBC)	Alison Eardley (Navigus Planning)
Stephen Coleman (CBC)	Chris Bowden (Navigus Planning)
Tom Price (CBC)	

Neighbourhood Planning in
Northhill Parish Villages



Northhill Parish Neighbourhood Plan

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