

HALESWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE

2021 to 2036

Consultation Statement February 2022



HALESWORTH
TOWN COUNCIL

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Appendix T Representations and responses to Pre-Submission Consultation – local organisation and statutory stakeholders

1. Consultation process

Introduction

1.1 This Consultation Statement has been prepared to fulfil the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended) in respect of the Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan (HNP).

1.2 The legal basis of this Consultation Statement is provided by Section 15(2) of Part 5 of the 2012 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (as amended), which requires that a consultation statement should:

contain details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;

- explain how they were consulted;
- summarise the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
- describe how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.

1.3 The policies and non-policy actions contained in the HNP result from interaction and consultation with residents, community groups, businesses and landowners within the town over a period of more than three years. Consultation methods included public meetings, surveys, events, zoom meetings, webinars, group meetings, attendance at community organisations' meetings and many emails and phone calls. This has been overseen and coordinated by Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (HNPSG), established by Halesworth Town Council. A Consultant was employed to help the Steering Group through the process and to put the Plan together.

1.4 At the start of the process the Waveney District Council's Local Plan (Waveney DC subsequently became part of the new East Suffolk District Council) was being finalised following consultation. The Local Plan was adopted in March 2019. It sets out the housing allocations and community infrastructure investments for Halesworth. Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in an adopted Local Plan and therefore it became the baseline document for the work of the HNPSG. It influenced the focus that emerged for the Plan and resulted in the group not calling for sites for more housing or undertaking specific consultations on infrastructure developments that were identified within the Local Plan, such as a community centre, under-fives provision and securing the future of the Apollo Youth Centre.

1.5 In March 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the work of the HNPSG. Large public consultation meetings came to an end, and it proved difficult to organise many face to face meetings other than small or outdoor events. The group had to rely more on consulting online than might have been the case although the general view of the group was that this led to a broader range of people engaging with the process.

1.6 Views, evidence and interactions from this entire process led to the Vision and Objectives in the HNP, and subsequently therefore form the basis for the key policies set out in the HNP.

1.7 Organisational structure of the HNP

The structure put in place by the Town Council to undertake the work was a Steering Group made up of both residents and councillors. The group reported back to and was overseen by the full council. Terms of Reference were drawn up and agreed with East Suffolk Council at the time the NP area was designated in May 2018. The Steering Group worked closely with Navigus Planning, the consultants appointed by the Town Council, who helped and advised on major points in the process.

1.8 The Steering Group changed somewhat over the period of time it took to complete the HNP. At its first few meetings in early 2018 numbers fluctuated between 10 and 15 with people coming and going as they realised it was 'not for them' or moved away. Only one Councillor (who was the first chair of the HNPSG) attended initially although over the years members of the group became Councillors and two others joined. The first task undertaken by the group was to establish a series of working objectives for the HNP. Each working objective was allocated to one lead and one assistant member to gather the evidence needed to finalise/refine the objective and subsequently to develop the associated policies. The Steering Group met monthly from December 2017 and the minutes formed the

basis of feedback to the Town Council’s monthly meetings. All the Steering Group’s minutes, commissioned documents, terms of reference, conflicts of interest can be found on the Town Council website.

<https://halesworthtowncouncil.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan-steering-group/>

1.9 Prior to the HNP area designation by the former Waveney District Council, a meeting was held with a representative of Holton Parish Council to discuss the possibility of them making it a joint Halesworth and Holton Neighbourhood Plan. The two parishes are combined in the Local Plan and the east of Halesworth physically merges into Holton with two major developments bringing them even closer. Regrettably Holton Parish Council did not think they could provide the input needed and so declined the invitation. The area designation was accordingly limited to the parish boundary of Halesworth.

1.10 As the consultations progressed it became apparent that the Town Centre as a specific area needed special attention. Its importance to the economic, social and cultural future of the town was highlighted in the early consultations. The Town Council therefore agreed to commission architects to undertake a study on how to better promote the many assets of the town and better connect them to each other. The ‘We Made That’ architectural practice was appointed in October 2020 and issued their final report in July 2021. A grant to the HNPSG enabled their work to be expanded to produce a connectivity masterplan in addition to the detailed proposals made for areas of the Town Centre. Although a standalone report which the Town Council will be considering in the coming months, the work of We Made That and the consultations they undertook (with involvement from the HNPSG) have contributed to the Plan and therefore the results of these consultations are included in this Consultation Statement.

1.11 Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan TIMELINE

From the beginning the NPSG kept a running chronology of activity.

The Forming of the Steering Group and Area Designation

Date	Details
8 May 2017	Halesworth Town Council (HTC) set up a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to consider whether to progress a Neighbourhood Plan for the town
14 September 2017	At the Town Forum meeting HTC proposed that a NP should be developed for the town. Planning officers from East Suffolk Council also presented. Of 25 responses 22 residents were in favour of developing a Plan and 14 volunteered to be involved.
6 November 2017	HTC RESOLVED that the Council approved the proposal to proceed with instigating a Neighbourhood Plan
20 December 2017	The first Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (HNPSG) was held at Halesworth Town Council offices and met monthly after that date.
19.04.18	HTC submitted their request for the town parish boundary to be designated the NP area.
31.05.18	Waveney District Council approved the area designation
14.08.18	A Memorandum of Agreement was signed between HTC and WDC

Consultations leading to the Vision and Objectives

8/9 September 2018	HNPSG leafletted every household and business. The leaflet explained what a NP could and could not do and invited people to a first town consultation event. See Appendix A
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27 September 2018	Public meeting / consultation at Edgar Sewter Primary school. 70+ residents attended. The event was structured around open-ended questions as to what residents liked about the town, their concerns and what they would like to see happen in town in the next decade. The event gathered lots of qualitative data obtained through a workshop style session with facilitated discussion and lots of post it notes
From October to December 2018	<p>To consult with people who were not able to attend the meeting and to widen the range of people engaged with there was a follow up town consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an online survey (Survey Monkey) • paper questionnaires at the library, many local shops, local pubs, sports bar, GP surgery and Pharmacy, Churches. • distribution at the town Produce Market 8 Dec 18. <p>The online and paper questionnaire asked the same questions as at the public event. See Appendix B</p>
February 2019	Collation and analysis of all the data from the questionnaires and from the public event. This gave the HNPSG direction as to where the communities' concerns were, what they wanted to see improved, and the areas that needed further focus and consultation. See Appendix C
February 2019	<p>HNPSG commissioned AECOM to carry out 2 pieces of work to provide expert evidence on areas of concern raised in the consultations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Needs Assessment (reported November 2019) • Design Codes report (reported January 20)
February to October 2019	<p>To follow up on the initial consultation a range of engagements were held with local businesses, clubs, organisations and specific groups, using the original three questions as the basis of engagement where appropriate. We specifically reached out to those groups underrepresented in the consultations. These included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 July 2019 A session was held with the year's 5 & 6 at Edgar Sewter Primary school to ensure the children's opinions were heard. A questionnaire was completed and inputted to Survey Monkey for analysis. See Appendix F • Bungay High School (as part of a meeting on volunteering) • Businesses – Halesworth Women in Business Group (5 June 2019), individual Thoroughfare traders, Halesworth Business Connections Group (30 October 2019) , individual business/site owners, social club. A questionnaire was completed by Women in Business and another sent to the Business Connections Group after the meeting. See Appendix G • Meetings with voluntary organisations including: Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Halesworth in Bloom, Millennium Green Trust, the Halesworth Volunteer Centre, Halesworth Tourism Group, Museum. • Local employment site owners. Station Yard and Quay Street • 13 August 2019 Young people participated in a consultation session at the Apollo Youth Centre as an extension of summer activities. See Appendix E • Consultation with various local authority bodies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at the People and Places consultation. (P&P is an East Suffolk Council economic development team initiative. They had produced data relating to the economic health of the town) • Economic development team • Suffolk County Council education planners
November 2019 – January 2020	The HNPSG collated and analysed all the data from the above consultations to draft the Objectives for the NP and the Vision of what Halesworth could look like in 15 years' time. These would form the backbone of the NP.

Consultation on the Vision and Objectives

March 2020	<p>Preparation for the community consultation on the Vision and Objectives asking people whether their views were represented correctly, had we focussed on the things that concerned them, did they want to make changes and to vote on whether they agreed with the Vision and Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 March – Royal Mail distribution of a leaflet to every address inviting people to complete an online survey and/or come to the planned events • Banners and posters distributed around town • 18th March a pop-up event at the library with explanatory posters • 25th March public meeting at Edgar Sewter Primary School. <p>See Appendix D</p>
23 March 2020	WORLDWIDE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. The country was placed in lockdown which posed a significant challenge for the HNPSG. The public events were cancelled. All activity went online.
From March 2020 to October 2020	<p>During lockdowns the HNPSG continued consultations with individuals and groups building evidence on how the objectives, if approved, could be expressed as NP policies and actions. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 20 – A Site Options and Assessment report commissioned from AECOM. Included a walkabout during the Summer. Reported in October. • 12 August – first meeting of the expert cycle group • October – We Made That, architects, appointed to conduct a Town Centre Connectivity study requiring extensive consultation with stakeholders and residents • June, July & August – further meetings with car showroom site and workshop owners (Economic Development officers attended one) • 20 August – interview with chartered surveyor/estate agent • 8 September contact with The Art Station in Saxmundham • September – letter sent to disability groups asking specific questions on accessibility. One used the questions to survey customers. See Appendix L • October – questionnaire interviews with 3 estate agents. (Follow up conversations in April and June 21) See Appendix J • 28 October – completed questionnaire from Housing Association. Appendix K

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These consultations led to a revision of the Objectives, reducing the number to 7.
October 2020 to January 2021	<p>Delayed Consultation on the Vision and Objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial ideas for a stall in the Thoroughfare for 21-24 October cancelled because of covid. • w/b 9 November 20 Royal Mail leafleted the whole town (all homes and businesses) with HNPSG updates including the V&O's and a questionnaire (paper and online). • Posters put up in Library and Thoroughfare notice board • 16 December closing date for online and paper survey <p>See Appendix H</p>

Consultations to build evidence

November 2020 to August 2021	<p>Continuing consultation and the building of evidence on how the Objectives could be expressed as NP policies and actions.</p> <p>This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 November first meeting of the expert walking group • 17 Dec 20, 3 March 21, 15 July 21 Meetings with the Environment Agency (EA) on flooding and the environment • 12 Nov 20, 21 April 21, 6 Sept 21 (and follow up on 10 January 22) Meetings with local education providers for discussions on a secondary school in Halesworth. • 18 November 20 Meeting and walkabout with Halesworth Tree Warden • 11 November 20 Contact with Halesworth in Bloom • Consultations on the We Made That Connectivity project. See Appendix P <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 22 April 2021 – with ESC, HNPSG and WMT architects. Discussed the major developments proposed in the town over the coming years to enable WMT to adequately assemble their ideas and strategy. ○ 26 April – zoom with key stakeholders e.g. Museum, Thoroughfare Traders ○ 10 May public Webinar with follow up survey ○ 2 June a further public zoom consultation ○ 5 June Walkabout for the public • 7 January – Meeting with the Chair of Halesworth to Southwold railway organisation on tourism possibilities. • Consultation with 'creatives' for Economic Development Objective • 7 January 21. Email sent to known artists seeking views • 14 January. Zoom Meeting with the editor of the Waveney & Blyth arts newsletter. • February – survey in two newsletters directed at cultural industries See Appendix O • Meeting with a member of the ESC Economic development team, to consider cultural industry needs and growth.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 January 21. Meeting with SCC planners responsible for the Edgar Sewter Community Primary expansion. A particular focus on our findings for safety and connectivity. • 16 February 21 Meeting with Sustran’s regarding cycling route proposals including rerouting NCR1. • February 21 – interviews with three local house builders based on a questionnaire. See Appendix I • 19 March email and 6 May zoom meeting with ESC Housing Enabling Manager to look at affordable housing and community housing options. • 12 April – play space questionnaire sent to children. See Appendix M • 12 – 31 August – Millennium Green survey undertaken See Appendix L • 29 September 21 Site meeting with a member of HNPSG and Halesworth Community Sports and Leisure walk and talk through the possibility of a permissive footpath on the edge of their land. • And many more phone calls and emails with individuals and organisations
23 March 2021	HNPSG Introductory section consulted upon with HTC. Changes made.
28 July 2021.	HNPSG consulted with HTC on two plan sections: Movement & Transport and Heritage & Design. Changes made to draft sections
1 September 2021	HNPSG consulted with HTC on two plan sections: Environment & Community Infrastructure. Changes made to draft sections

Consultation on Full Draft Plan

4 October 2021	Full presentation of the complete draft NP to HTC.
October/ November 2021	<p>Full page in Halesworth Community News advertising a public consultation event on 6 and 7 November</p> <p>This became Reg 14 consultation because of the timing of the HCN adoption of the draft plan</p> <p>Further advertising with banners, posters and Facebook.</p> <p>See Appendix Q</p>
1 November 2021.	Halesworth Town Council voted to approve the NP and to initiate the Regulation 14 consultation process.
2 November to 17 December 2021	<p>Regulation 14 Consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2, 3, 4 November – HNPSG leafletted the whole town including homes and businesses with a leaflet detailing the weekend consultation sessions and directing people to online version of the Plan and feedback forms. • 6 November – exhibition in the Church with each section of the plan summarised on large boards. • 7 November – live streamed Q&A session in the Church • Reg 14 feedback forms available • 8 November – Presentation boards and forms put into the library until the end of the consultation period.

- 25 November – Zoom meeting for the Business Group
- Reminders to give responses put out on Facebook and to parents via the school email system.
- Online survey opens from 5 November to 17 December

See Appendix R

1.12 Alongside the above consultation activity, the following communications were a regular part of the process throughout.

- Reports and updates and notification of events appeared most months in Halesworth Community News, which goes to every household once a month.
- Reports, updates and notifications appeared in the Neighbourhood Plan section of the Town Council website and Facebook page. The latter, with followers numbering 759, always gets picked up by the Halesworth Community Forum Facebook group. This has in total 5686 members of whom 2661 live in Halesworth. The highest represented age group is 25-34 with high numbers also in the 35 – 54 age brackets.
- Well-designed posters and banners notifying people of meetings and events put up on the Town Council notice board in the middle of the shopping street, in the library, and at the entrance/exit to the main car park and to the supermarket for all events.
- Four separate leafletting of the whole town.
- Email updates and notifications to the 38 people who signed up to this at the first public consultation event.
- The primary school’s email list to all parents was used three times to reach out and inform parents and children. This reaches c300 families.
- Updates at every Full Council Meeting and HNPSG Minutes published online
- Public events and other consultation activities

1.13 Following on from the timeline given above, these are the main surveys and consultation activities undertaken:



- Open Public Meeting September 2018
- Questionnaires distributed around the town, online survey October – December 2018

- Questionnaires to Businesses Groups November 2019
- Consultation events with children and young people July 2019
- Leafletting of the town with invites to public events March 2020 – CANCELLED
- Leafletting of the town with online questionnaire to consult on the Vision and Objectives November 2020



- Questionnaire with estate agents and Housing Association October 2020
- Questionnaire with builders February 2021
- Questionnaire with those in the creative industries February 2021
- Consultation on the Millennium Green designation as a Local Green Space. August 2021
- Consultation event with children September 2021
- Weekend open session consultation and streamed Q&A November 2021.



1.14 Stakeholder consultations

Throughout the process the HNPSG worked with East Suffolk Council (ESC)

Meetings were held with officers from ESC to seek information and advice on a range of issues relating to the objectives in the NP – Housing, Economic Development, Cycling and Walking Strategy, Planning as well as with the Senior Planners responsible for neighbourhood planning.

Other consultees that the HNPSG engaged with included:

- Suffolk County Council Highways Department, Education Planning, Public Rights of Way, Community Transport
- Local landowners and developers
- Owners of local businesses and shops
- Edgar Sewter Primary School

1.15 Engaging with hard-to-reach groups

Throughout the process, HNPSG was aware that certain groups of residents would be harder to engage or less inclined to engage with either public events or online. This could be to do with hours of work, having young children, not having or not feeling comfortable with internet access, being elderly or disabled, children or young people. The pandemic and lockdowns made this more acute with the large number of elderly people in the town less inclined to be 'out and about' and activities such as day centres being closed. We ensured questionnaires/surveys were available both in paper and online form and that paper copies of reports were made available in the Library, at HTC officers or provided on request. In the first consultation several shops, the GP surgery, pubs and clubs hosted our questionnaires and collection boxes. Certain groups were reached out to with special events e.g. children and young people. Meetings were timed to suit the group being consulted with.

2. Key responses from consultation

Public Meeting September 2018 and Questionnaire

2.1 An early decision by the Steering Group was to not make assumptions on the issues that people were concerned about or interested in and to go out to the public with very open-ended questions.

70+ people attended the public meeting. From an analysis of the post-it notes and feedback from the facilitator's themes emerged around the answers to the questions as to what people liked about the town and the things that concerned them. These were sorted in to an initial four broad headings – Built Environment, Natural Environment, Community and Economic Development. What people valued about the town were The Thoroughfare, Millennium Green, The Cut and the art galleries, Town Park, Library, Historic buildings, the shops, pubs and restaurants, Voluntary groups, the school, the train service. Living in Halesworth!

2.2 People's concerns focused on questions such as will the town be able to cope with the planned new houses and are there enough affordable homes, will the current infrastructure support them – roads and car parking and buses, will there be enough employment? The community and leisure facilities were seen as needing improvement, walking and cycling needed to be made easier and safer and the heritage and sensitive landscapes of the town needed protecting. A big question was 'Are we ready for the Green Revolution – flooding, electric cars, sustainable development'?

2.4 Supplementary to the public meeting and to reach those who could not come to the meeting was a questionnaire online and in paper format asking the same questions as at the public meeting. The analysis of this showed the themes on what was liked, and the concerns were very similar. The analysis therefore focused on the answers to the question '*What are the 3 things you would like to see in the town in the next few years?*' In total there 350 people responded. The themes identified were used to categorise responses – Economic Development, Transport, Housing, Design and Heritage, Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainability. In total, there were 812 responses that were capable of being categorised and only those identified in 10 or more responses were seen as significant.

See Appendix C for the detailed analysis report. Key Findings included:

- Economic Development – 249 identified shops. Of those 114 wanted to see a second supermarket, 35 a bank, 33 a cash machine (the last bank had recently closed) and 60 said local shops (interpreted as support for the kinds of independent shops found in the Thoroughfare)
- Housing – only 24 responses and of those 20 mentioned the need for affordable homes. Perhaps a reflection of the anxiety caused by recent announcements of the high number of houses planned to be built.
- Transport – 40 mentioned parking with 30 wanting the free hour to continue in the main car park (the parking system was undergoing change); on public transport 16 out of 22 mentioned the need for better bus routes; 18 responses called for better walking and cycling.
- Infrastructure – 51 respondents mentioned a community centre type facility being needed in the town, 146 mentioned new sport and leisure facilities (82 for a sports centre, 64 swimming pool). 39 mentioned better play facilities, 30 education and 112 health facilities (despite the NP's lack of power to do anything to improve health provision having been explained).
- Environment – In total, 12 responses cited the need to improve the quality and quantity of green spaces, including the need for more tree planting and a wild meadow.

2.5 The open nature of the questions posed difficulties of analysis but gave the HNPSG a rich and varied picture of people's concerns and aspirations. It pointed to the need to reach out to underrepresented groups. We concluded that our initial categorisation remained valid.

Follow up questionnaires with targeted Groups

2.6 Children – Years 5&6 at Edgar Sewter Primary School

In July 2019 72 10/11 year olds were consulted. An afternoon lesson time was made available. They were asked to complete the same questionnaire as adults. (see appendix B). These were collected, entered into survey monkey and analysed. The total number of people completing the questionnaire therefore rose to 422.

Results:

- ‘What do you most like about living in Halesworth?’ – 34 said parks and green spaces; 20 the shops in town; 9 the Apollo Youth Club; 7 the Library.
- ‘What could be improved?’ – many multiple answers with the most common at 19 responses saying improvement to the shops with more variety; 13 wanting improvements to the park with the toilets getting a strong mention; 10 mentioned the skatepark; 9 better sports facilities; 6 road safety.
- ‘What are the 3 things you would like to see in the town in the next few years?’ – the top number one with 23 responses was for a swimming pool and a further 22 giving that as 2nd or 3rd choice; better shops including fast food outlets and 8 wanting a supermarket; the majority of the remaining choices related to Q2 answers – safer streets for walking, better sports facilities, better parks; a small but significant number mentioned environmental themes such as more trees and less plastic.

2.7 Young People

On the 13 August 2019 as part of the summer activities taking place at the local youth club, young people were invited to a consultation session. Pizza and fun were the order of the day! See Appendix E for methods and full results.

- 18 young people between the ages of 7 and 12 (3 girls) attended and responded in creative ways to the questions: What do you like about Halesworth? – youth centre, town park and skatepark, shops
- What don’t you like? – not enough sports, shops catering for them, generally not enough to do, concern for the youth centre
- What would need to change in 10 years? – better facilities e.g. swimming pool, more parks and play areas, more shops, plastic free.
- What needs to change now? – more for us to do/more choices, safer streets, some environmental concerns

2.8 Business Groups

There are three business groups in Halesworth. Business Connections with businesses from all over the town including the larger employers, Women in Business and Halesworth Business Group which focuses on the town centre businesses and shops. The latter came to the fore during and post pandemic, after the first round of consultations. Their email list was made available for consultations during the later stages of evidence building.

2.8.1 Women in Business

On the 5 June 2019 a member of the HNPSG attended a Women in Business group meeting. The eleven people present represented a wide range – wine producers, plant nursery, childcare trainer, retail, graphic designer, alternative therapies. Following a discussion on neighbourhood planning nine completed the questionnaire.

Results were:

Of the 9, 5 were in the 35-44 age bracket and 4 in the 45-64.

Their likes and concerns about the town raised no new issues. The improvements they wished to see were:

- Help to advertise their businesses within the town. e.g., on the HTC central notice board.
- Improving the PR about the town and its identity
- Improved signage into the town
- Support the Market Place traders by getting it linked to the Thoroughfare
- Car parking – some differences of view as to whether charging in the town centre car park would make that much difference but easier parking administration needed

- Saxon's Way could be improved (not representative of heritage town) to give a better image of the town for those passing through.

2.8.2 Halesworth Business Connections

On the 30 October 2019 a member of the HNPSG attended a meeting of the Halesworth Business Connections. 20 members were present covering a wide range of businesses from IT company, farmer, and car dealership. A presentation was given but as there was little engagement at the meeting a questionnaire, based on the presentation, was sent afterwards. (see Appendix G). Only one was returned. This highlighted the need for skilled employees.

Consultation on the Vision and Objectives (November 2020)

2.9 Plans were in place for full public consultations on the Vision and Objectives for the end of March 2020. See Appendix D for the methods to be used before it had to be cancelled

2.10 Throughout the summer plans kept being pushed back although preparatory work was taking place e.g. appointment of architects to look into Town Centre Connectivity and the commissioning of the Site Options and Assessment report. The opportunity was also taken to refine the objectives and reduce them from 10 to 7. Hoped for face-to-face consultations in the Thoroughfare and other venues in the Autumn had to once again be shelved because of Covid 19 and the decision was taken to consult online.

2.11 In the week beginning the 9 November 2020 the Royal Mail delivered leaflets to every address in the town, setting out the Vision and Objectives and directing people to an online questionnaire, to be completed by 16 December. Posters were put up in the library windows and in the Thoroughfare notice board. See Appendix H.

2.12 Results:

- 104 questionnaires were completed.
- 82.7% agreed they were happy with the draft Vision
- 89.4% agreed the Vision described a place they would still want to live in in 15 years' time
- 86.5% agreed they would recommend Halesworth as a place to live to family and friends
- 80.8% agreed with the Objectives identified

49 people added comments. Some argued for no change and some for modernisation. The lack of infrastructure and sports facilities featured with 8 people mentioning the need for better health facilities. A better range of shops was highlighted by many with 8 mentioning a supermarket. There were suggestions as to changing the wording used and some people wanted more emphasis on certain issues, with the environment and climate change featuring. There was some cynicism about what the neighbourhood plan could achieve and whether anything would be implemented.

2.13 The overall positive responses to the questions led the HNPSG to proceed with the Objectives and move on to consider the policies and actions that could back them up.

Consultations around specific Themes and Objectives

In addition to the commissioned reports (Site Options and Assessment, Housing Needs, Design Codes) and specifically formed expert groups (cycling and walking) evidence was also sought through small surveys and structured interviews. The key ones were as follows.

2.14 Environment

2.14.1 Designation of Local Green Spaces

In early consultations the Millennium Green and the Town Park were seen as two of the major 'green' assets of the town and people wanted them protected. A major feature of the park is the children's playground and skate park both of which were major attractions for children which they wanted to see improved. At a follow up consultation

with children in 2021 the Town Park registered as the thing they liked the best and various aspects of the park registered highly as the things they wished to see in the town in 10 years' time. See Appendix N. This evidence from children supported the designation of the Town Park by Policy Hal. EV 1: *Local Green Space*.

To test people's views as to the designation of the Millennium Green a survey of users was undertaken. See Appendix N

There were 48 respondents recording high frequent usage with walking and exercise being the main activities. A 'word cloud' highlighted Peaceful and Wildlife as being people's experience of the Green. 91.8% supported the designation as a Local Green Space.

2.14.2 Protection of Open Spaces

The Local Plan Policy WLP8.23 went a long way in giving protection to many of the green spaces in the town. However, on studying maps and in walkabouts the HNPSG identified three spaces that did not have protection. Given the many references to people's interest in biodiversity and wish for the town to retain its 'green' aspects the HNPSG proposed Policy HAL.ENV2 *Protection of Open Spaces* giving protection to the remaining three spaces that fit the criteria.

2.14.3 Heritage Trees

Policy HAL.ENV5 *Heritage Trees* builds on the NPPF and is backed by survey work undertaken by Halesworth in Bloom and their tree warden in identifying 34 trees that fit the criteria.

2.14.4 Waterways

The 1993 floods in Halesworth were mentioned in early consultations and 'doing something about flooding' was seen as important. The HNPSG built a constructive relationship with the Environment Agency and Suffolk Wildlife Trust to better understand the complex issues that led to flooding in the town. Use was made of the survey work undertaken by the EA, using hydrology predictors and modelling, which, counter intuitively, reached the conclusion that there was a reduced risk of flooding to properties in the town. The EA recognised the importance of the flood meadows in the Millennium Green which served to manage flooding. It was agreed that a Factsheet and an information campaign was needed and drafts were commented on by the HNPSG. Neighbourhood Plan Actions suggest ways for the town council to work with the relevant agencies to progress this work.

2.14.5 Nature Reserve

A very tangible way of enhancing biodiversity – the creation of a nature reserve – remains an aspiration and for future Action by the town as permissions to make use of the land identified has not been forthcoming

2.15 Housing

2.15.1 HNPSG found this Objective the most difficult as our findings showed a complex picture. The Housing Needs Assessment showed a clear unmet housing need for those on low incomes and that the present housing stock comprised a high proportion of small houses. An attempt to increase the percentage of affordable properties provided in large developments was thwarted by the viability assessment which suggested this would put too onerous a financial burden on housing developers. Given we did not call for any sites for more housing than identified in the Local Plan our proposed Policy HAL.HSG2: *Small housing Sites* tries to increase affordable homes on windfall sites that will come forward for development. Two Non-Policy Actions encourage the Town Council to look at Community Led Housing options and local lettings policies as a means of supporting the housing needs of local people on low incomes.

2.15.2 To better understand the local housing market, structured interviews either by phone or email were held with

- two local estate agents in October 20 with follow ups in Spring 21. See Appendix J.
- a Housing Association in October 20. See Appendix K
- three builders/developers in February 21. See Appendix I
- There were two zoom meetings and two email interviews with the Housing Enabling Manager at East Suffolk DC. Questions were asked of Care Home managers, Sheltered Housing managers and others to try and understand how the elderly population was viewing their housing needs.

2.15.3 Towards the end of our consultation period and into 2021 it was obvious that locally the housing market was changing rapidly. There was a higher demand for larger properties (working from home pressures) and for second homes. Larger properties were scarce so potentially preventing families moving into the town. Prices were rising steeply putting more pressure on low-income families already living in the town.

Policy HAL.HSG1: *Provision of large family* housing tries to address the changing family structures and lifestyles including working from home identified by the estate agents and builders and to better balance the housing stock. Given the provision in the Local Plan for a care home and assisted living accommodation, set alongside the existing stock of small properties the HNPSG reached a conclusion that there was no need for further specialist accommodation for the elderly population.

2.15.4 To go some way to responding to people's expressed concerns about climate change and the wish to be more sustainable HNPSG proposes two policies relating to the design of new housing. Policy HAL.HSG3: *Low energy and energy efficient housing design* that will require small developments (under 10 houses) and renovations to produce Sustainability Statements. Policy HAL.TM3: *Residential electric car charging* builds on local policies and guidance, including new building regulations coming into force in June 2022 to explicitly have a minimum of one charging points included in proposals for all residential developments.

2.16 Economic Development

2.16.1 Tourism and Creative Industries

Tourism and the creative industries have been highlighted as a potential growth area in economic assessments undertaken by the Local Economic Partnership. Advice was sought from eight people who work or are connected to the creative industries in the town as to how the Economic Development Objective could be supported. A survey monkey questionnaire was put into two newsletters sent to people in those industries. There were only six responses. This was followed up with further conversations with people who had developed venues and studios. The results of the survey showed:

- 80% thought workshop/maker spaces were the most needed support
- 60% thought studios for individuals were needed.

This survey supported Policies HAL.ED1: *Small Scale commercial workspaces and micro employment areas*, HAL. ED2: *Tourism and Creative Industries* and HAL. ED3: *Major Development Opportunities* which all reference small workspaces and studios. Tourism is supported in the latter two policies, siting hotel accommodation and the Site Options and Assessment report identified some sites where such economic development opportunities could be located.

2.16.2 Small workshops

In researching the availability of workspaces two sites providing much needed small workshop/enterprise spaces were identified. These were not registered as employment areas with ESC. Policy HAL.ED1: *Small Scale commercial workspaces and micro employment areas* proposes the two areas be registered as Micro Economic Areas.

2.17 Community Infrastructure

The Local Plan went a long way in addressing the lack of community infrastructure in the town with proposals and CIL allocations made relating to a Community Centre, Sports Facilities, Youth Club, primary school expansion, pre-school facility, investment in extending the GP surgery and improvement to the local sewerage network. Given this the HNPSG focused on play and education.

2.17.1 Play Space

The early consultation with primary school children showed the aspect of the town they liked the best was its parks and playgrounds with many wanting to see improvements. A Google survey was sent to all families of children at Edgar Sewter to get detailed information about which parks they used and what equipment children wanted to see in them. See Appendix M This evidence built on the survey work of Halesworth Town Council into green spaces.

Results:

- There were 59 responses.

- 70% were in the 2 years to 8 years age groups. 24% were 9 to 12 years.
- Usage of particular play spaces related to nearest to home (45%), best equipment (28%), on the way to and from town (20%).
- 96.6% said they used the Town Park playground, near to the town shopping centre, the best equipped and the only one designated a NEAP.
- Children were very aware of the condition of equipment and had many suggestions for the equipment they wanted to see. A zip wire was mentioned 17 times as a new piece of equipment wanted.

This survey supports the Policy HAL.COM1: *Play Facilities*. The policy proposes a strategic approach to future play space development and refurbishment.

2.17.2 Education

The wish to attract young families to the town was frequently mentioned. However, one of the features of the town is that it does not have a secondary school. We were told by employers that they could not find the skilled workers they needed in the town and the statistics show it to be largely a low skill, low wage economy. This and the expected population expansion in the town led the HNPSG to explore the basis for the present education strategy and to open a dialogue with the key organisations involved with education provision. SCC, as the education authority, have now engaged in that conversation although it remains an aspiration only that a secondary school could be located in Halesworth during the lifetime of the NP. A Non-Policy Action suggests the town council continue to engage in that agenda.

2.18 Design and Heritage

The heritage aspects of the town featured strongly as an aspect that people most liked about living in Halesworth and they wanted to see buildings protected. Equally there was concern about poor design of new housing. The rural nature of a market town was also highlighted.

2.18.1 Design

HNPSG commissioned a Design Code report undertaken by AECOM. This led directly to Policy HAL.DH1: *Design* which attempts to give a coherent design framework for any new developments. These aim to respect the historic nature of the present buildings but enable good contemporary design. <https://halesworthtowncouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2020/02/Design-Codes-Report-PDF-Final.pdf>

2.18.2 Views

The Design Codes report suggested the importance of the views of the Church and of the gateways into the town as important means of protecting the rural setting of the town and highlighting the importance of its historic urban development. Policy HAL.DH2: *Views and Gateways into and out of Halesworth* expresses this in planning terms.

2.18.3 Heritage Assets

The town has an extensive Conservation Area which was reviewed and extended by the then Waveney District Council in 2006. The Conservation Area Character Appraisal provided a rich source of information about individual buildings. This, combined with the local knowledge of an architect member of the HNPSG, meant we could identify a few buildings and assets that might be suitable for some protection as Non-Designated Heritage Assets. Historic England's guidance was applied to the ones identified and owners of the buildings were approached to get their support for designation. None objected.

Four buildings were identified and matched against the guidance for designation. The Library is of particular interest given its modern design. This resulted in Policy HAL.DH3: *Non-Designated Heritage Assets*. During Regulation 14 Pre-Submission consultations another asset was suggested - The New Reach, a canalised waterway ending in the Town Park with strong associations with the brewing trade history of the town. Applying the criteria this was added to the Plan as another proposed non-designated heritage asset.

2.19 Movement and Transport

2.19.1 Public Transport and Car Travel

Bus and car travel are the main forms of 'getting about' in Halesworth other than walking and were mentioned by many as needing improvement/support. Neighbourhood Planning has few powers that could impact on them, however. Community Transport already offers the town a very valuable service and could be expanded and therefore a Neighbourhood Plan Action: *Community Transport* is proposed to encourage the town council to work with the community transport provider and the local district and county councils to explore how this might be done.

Strong views about either not enough or too much parking came up at almost every consultation event or survey. For developments and improvements to progress the impact on parking needs to be better understood. ESC has committed to undertaking another survey of car park usage, building on the one done in 2019 which showed adequate parking in the town. A Neighbourhood Plan Action: *Car Parking* proposes that the town council take cognisance of the findings of that survey in future planning.

2.19.2 Elderly and Disabled People

Two voluntary organisations and one commercial company working with elderly and disabled people in the town were asked to respond to questions about experiences of elderly and disabled people when moving around the town. See Appendix L. The commercial company asked a few customers to give their responses.

Key findings were:

- Poor maintenance of footpaths and the unevenness of the Thoroughfare
- Lack of dropped kerbs
- Dangerous junctions – Wisset Road, Roman Way and across Saxons Way
- Distance of disabled parking in the Town Centre car park to the shops
- Lack of seating at stop off points for the Hoppa Bus
- Cyclists in the Thoroughfare.

Along with the findings of the consultation with children these findings fed into the Neighbourhood Plan Action: *Improvements to Safety of Elderly and Disabled People* and Policy HAL.TM1: *Key Movement Routes*

2.19.3 Cycling and Walking

Groups were formed to consider how best to improve both cycling and walking. As well as local expertise the groups were able to draw on ESC and SCC strategies covering these areas. During the time the groups were meeting ESC announced consultation for a new Cycling and Walking Strategy. 54 improvement proposals were registered, the majority from the NP groups. In the draft strategy 6 Halesworth proposals get the highest assessment scores and are linked to development opportunities. In the NP there are three Actions that promote safer routes for children getting to school, better connectivity into the Millennium Green and proposals for rerouting the national cycle route. A further Action: *Improved signage for Cyclists and Pedestrians*, proposes the town council take the lead on devising a signage strategy.

Policy HAL.TM2 supports improved cycle parking based on a subgroup formed to look at this issue.

Policy HAL.TM1 *Key Movement Routes* draws together how new developments can contribute to connectivity between parts of the town, improve the experience of people moving around town and connectivity in the town.

2.20 Town Centre

2.20.1 'We Made That' an architects' practice was commissioned by the Town Council to propose ways to improve connectivity in the town centre A range of consultations were held including with local stakeholders such as town centre businesses, senior officers from the local authorities, a public webinar, a public zoom meeting and a walkabout. Following the Webinar, a public online survey went live from the 10th May to the 7th June 2020.

2.20.2 Appendix Q gives details of the Webinar and survey findings which fed into the final Connectivity report.

The key data from the public survey were:

- 37 attendees at the Webinar.
- 54 completed the online survey

- 55% of respondents agreed with the connectivity objectives (while 19% disagreed). Although key areas of difference emerged through how best to achieve and balance these objectives.
- the proposals all received higher support and agreement than disagreement.
- In total 132 comments and suggestions were made on the survey form

These findings and a detailed response from the Halesworth Business Group were taken into consideration before the final report was issued.

2.20.3 The WMT proposals formed a key part of the Town Centre chapter of the Plan and supported Policy HAL.TC1: *Enhancing Halesworth Town Centre* and Neighbourhood Plan Action: *Signage and Way Finding*. A further action point proposed the Town Council did further work, including more consultations, on the 'We Made That' ideas.

Consultation events November 2021

2.21 Appendix Q shows some of the advertising for a public consultation event on the 6 and 7 November. HNPSG took a calculated risk that the pandemic would be sufficiently under control by then to start the planning for the event in the early summer.

2.22 The Church was chosen as the venue as it had Live Streaming capabilities so there could be some engagement for people who did not wish to be out in public and it was large and airy enough to feel reasonably safe.

2.23 When planning started, we were unsure how advanced we would be in completing the writing of the draft Plan although some chapters had already been presented to the Town Council. As the beginning of November approached, we realised that there was a possibility of turning the planned exhibition into the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Consultation. The full-page advert in the local newspaper for the November event mentioned the possibility although the banner does not. Again, we took a risk that it could happen and had leaflets ready to go into people's letterboxes. Following HTC approving the draft Plan on the 1 November the HPNSG and other volunteers leafletted the town advertising the event and the online survey as the opportunity to have their say as part of Regulation 14 Pre-Submission consultation.

2.24 The public event held over the weekend was attended by 130 people. 103 attended the public exhibition on the Saturday and 27 attended the Q and A session on the Sunday. A further 8 people joined via zoom and 13 listened in via Facebook.

3. Regulation 14 pre-submission consultation

3.1 HNPSG finalised the Draft HNP in September 2021. It was presented to Halesworth Town Council in October 2021 and it was formally agreed that it could proceed to Regulation 14 (Pre-Submission) Consultation on November 1 2021. The Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Consultation ran for a six-week period from 5 November to 17 December 2021. The draft Plan and evidence papers were made available in a specifically created prominent place on the HTC website. Paper copies were made available on request and placed at Halesworth Library for inspection. The summary boards used at the public event were placed on the website. A Google Form was created for feedback online and paper copies for responses were available at the public event and at the Library during the consultation period. People could also submit responses by email or by post to the HTC clerk. See Appendix R

3.2 Distribution to statutory and non-statutory consultees

In accordance with requirements of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, relevant statutory consultees were notified of the Pre-Submission consultation. In addition, a range of parties that the Steering Group considered were likely to have an interest in the plan were also written to. All parties were directed to where they could access the Plan. Appendix R includes the email sent to statutory bodies.

3.3 The full list of statutory consultees and local organisation that were written to is as follows:

Statutory	Local Organisations
East Suffolk Council – Senior Policy Planning officer	Friends of Halesworth Community Health and Care
East Suffolk Cllrs for Halesworth	Halesworth Campus
Suffolk County Council	Halesworth in Bloom
Suffolk County Cllr for Halesworth	Halesworth Events Management
Homes England	Halesworth Business Connections
Natural England	Halesworth Business Group
Environment Agency	Halesworth Tourism Group
Historic England	Halesworth Men’s Shed
Network Rail	Halesworth Volunteer Centre
Highways England	Halesworth Dementia Carers Fund
Sport England	Halesworth Community Sport and Leisure
Active Suffolk	The Cut
Norfolk & Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	Halesworth U3A
Cutlers Hill Surgery	Halesworth And District Museum
Anglian Water	Halesworth Scout Group
Essex & Suffolk Water	Friends of Halesworth Library
BT Open Reach	Library Manager
UK Power Networks	Blyth Valley Churches (St Marys)
Cadent Gas	St Edmund Catholic Church
Vodafone (mobile phone masts)	United Reform Church
Suffolk Police	Halesworth Millennium Green
Suffolk Fire & Rescue	The Rifle Hall
Suffolk Preservation Society	Halesworth WI
Suffolk Wildlife Trust	Halesworth Lions
RSPB	Southwold and District Rotary club
First Bus (routes 99a 41)	The Unappropriated Estates – Halesworth
Borderbus (route 521)	Southwold Rugby Club
Abellio Greater Anglia	Guides/Brownies
HACT	Apollo Youth Centre
MP – Therese Coffey	Seckford Trust
MP – Peter Aldous	Asset Education

Edgar Sewter Community Primary School	Sustrans
Holton St Peter Primary School	
Bungay High School	
Holton PC	
Cookley & Walpole PC	
Chediston & Linstead PC	
Wisset PC	
Bramfield PC	

3.4 Issues of data protection were raised when the Evidence Papers were put on the website as part of the Reg 14 consultation. Immediate action to redact names was taken. Two people requested that information be removed and this was done.

3.5 Representations.

The following representations were received:

- 56 responses from residents to the Google Form survey
- 6 paper responses left at the Church and later inputted into the google survey
- 20 letters and emails were received from residents
- 6 Statutory organisations responded
- 4 local organisations responded.

A schedule of all the representations from residents, with the responses from the Responsible Body (HTC) are shown in Appendix S. There were 82 resident representations in total.

The HNPSG is grateful for the many corrections residents highlighted and these will be incorporated into the next draft of the Plan. Two important town locations were suggested as new Non-Designated Heritage Assets and following research into whether they meet the criteria these will be added to the Plan.

The representations from local organisations and statutory bodies are shown in Appendix T.

4.EU Obligations

4.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

HNPSG formally requested that East Suffolk Council (ESC) undertake a Screening Opinion in respect of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan in November 2021. ESC's assessment was that the plan did not require an SEA. It then consulted with the statutory bodies Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency in January 2022. Historic England and Natural England both agreed with this assessment. The Environment Agency did not provide a response. The final Screening Opinion was published in February 2022.

4.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment

HNPSG formally requested that East Suffolk Council (ESC) undertake a Screening Opinion in respect of the need for a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan in November 2021. ESC's assessment was that the plan did not require an HRA (an Appropriate Assessment). It then consulted with the statutory body Natural England which agreed with this assessment. The final Screening Opinion was published in February 2022.