

# HALESWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE

2021 to 2036

Submission Stage (Regulation 16) Version



HALESWORTH  
TOWN COUNCIL

## **CONTENTS**

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>LOCAL CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>VISION AND OBJECTIVES.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENT .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>HOUSING.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>DESIGN AND HERITAGE .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>MOVEMENT AND TRANSPORT.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>HALESWORTH TOWN CENTRE .....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>POLICIES MAP .....</b>	<b>121</b>

<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>Proposed new north-south route including National Cycle Network Route 1</b>
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## List of policies

- Policy HAL.ENV1: Local green spaces
- Policy HAL.ENV2: Protection of open spaces
- Policy HAL.ENV3: New nature reserve
- Policy HAL.ENV4: Verges
- Policy HAL.ENV5: Heritage trees
- Policy HAL.HSG1: Provision of large family housing
- Policy HAL.HSG2: Small housing sites
- Policy HAL.HSG3: Low energy and energy efficient housing design
- Policy HAL.ED1: Small-scale commercial workspaces and micro employment areas
- Policy HAL.ED2: Tourism and creative industries
- Policy HAL.ED3: Major development opportunities
- Policy HAL.COM1: Play facilities
- Policy HAL.DH1: Design
- Policy HAL.DH2: Views and gateways into and out of Halesworth town
- Policy HAL.DH3: Non-designated heritage assets
- Policy HAL.TM1: Key movement routes
- Policy HAL.TM2: Cycle parking
- Policy HAL.TM3: Residential electric car charging
- Policy HAL.TC1: Enhancing Halesworth town centre

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **Purpose of the plan**

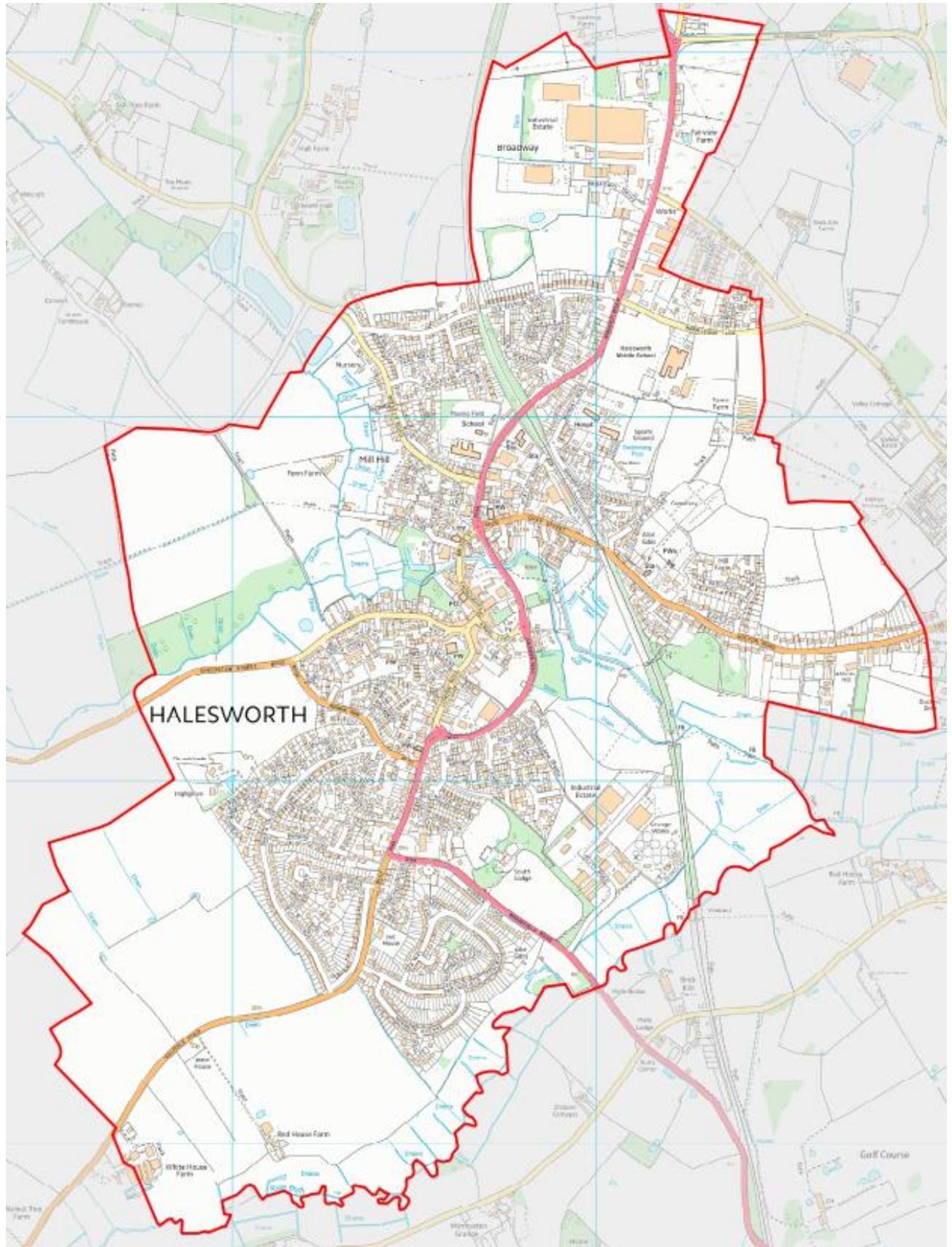
- 1.1 This document represents the Neighbourhood Plan for the town of Halesworth for the period 2021 to 2036. The Plan contains a vision for the future of Halesworth and sets out clear planning policies to realise this vision.
- 1.2 The principal purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development within the town. It also provides guidance to anyone wishing to submit a planning application for development within the town. The process of producing a plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible. The different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to Halesworth, its residents, businesses and community groups. It should be noted that planning applications are submitted to and determined by East Suffolk Council. However, the Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the development plan and therefore is given equal weight to the relevant Local Plan in the decision-making process.
- 1.3 Some of the Neighbourhood Plan policies are general and apply throughout the Plan area, whilst others are site or area-specific and apply only to the appropriate areas illustrated on the relevant map. Nevertheless, in considering proposals for development, East Suffolk Council will apply all relevant policies of the Plan. It is therefore assumed that the Plan will be read as a whole, although some cross-referencing between Plan policies has been provided.
- 1.4 The process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan has identified a number of actions which have not been included in the policies' sections. This is because these are not specifically related to land use matters and therefore sit outside the jurisdiction of a Neighbourhood Plan. These actions will be addressed by the Town Council outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

## **Policy context**

- 1.5 Along with national planning policy, the Neighbourhood Plan represents one part of the development plan for the neighbourhood area over the period 2021 to 2036, the other part being the Waveney Local Plan (2019).



**Figure 1.1: Halesworth neighbourhood plan area**



- 1.6 East Suffolk Council, as the relevant local planning authority, designated the Halesworth Neighbourhood Area in May 2018 to enable Halesworth Town Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been prepared by the community through the Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) Steering Group.
- 1.7 The HNP has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). The HNP Steering Group has prepared the plan to establish a vision for the future of the town and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning and controlling land use and development change over the plan period.
- 1.8 The map in Figure 1.1 shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area, which is the same as the administrative boundary of Halesworth parish.
- 1.9 The Vision in the Waveney Local Plan, which allocates a significant proportion of growth in the area, has informed the Neighbourhood Plan and aligns with many of its objectives. In particular it envisages Halesworth playing a more significant role as a service centre to the surrounding villages. Its vision is that the town centre will be vibrant and will have been supported by new housing and retail development. The town will have enhanced sports and leisure facilities following the completion of the Halesworth Campus and improved facilities at Dairy Hill together with additional health facilities and an enhanced employment offer. This will have helped attract younger people and families to the town. The separate identities of Halesworth and Holton and the sensitive landscape surrounding them will have been respected.
- 1.10 The strategy for Halesworth and Holton is for a total of approximately 762 new dwellings over the period 2014 to 2036. In particular, this is to be delivered through the allocation of the Halesworth and Holton Healthy Neighbourhood for 215 dwellings along with a residential care facility and retirement apartments offering extra care, sports facilities (including a full size pitch and all weather 3G pitch outside as well as indoor sports facilities), replacement of the Apollo Youth Club and retention of North Suffolk Skills Centre for education, voluntary and community purposes. Alongside this, there is a requirement to retain the existing sports and play facilities at Dairy Hill. As of the beginning of 2021, the eastern part of the site has outline planning permission to deliver the housing requirements of the allocation. Planning applications have been submitted for the outside sports facilities and for the residential care home. Planning applications for the apartments and the indoor sports facilities are expected later in the year.
- 1.11 Along with the Healthy Neighbourhood, the following sites are allocated in the Local Plan (housing numbers are approximate):
- 200 dwellings on land adjacent to Chediston Street (which, as of late-2020, has outline planning permission). This includes provision of a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) which is a play facility aimed at the needs of older children.
  - 40 dwellings along with a community centre and pre-school on land at Dairy Farm, Saxons Way.
  - 10 dwellings on land north of Old Station Road (which now has full planning permission for 15 dwellings).
- 1.12 In neighbouring Holton, immediately adjacent to the northern boundary of the Neighbourhood Area, 2.64 hectares of land is allocated for employment development.
- 1.13 The Local Plan identifies a number of community infrastructure needs, including library improvements, extension/improvements to Cutlers Hill Surgery, expansion of primary education provision and a new pre-school (on the Dairy Farm site), a new community centre (on the Dairy

Farm site), various types of sports provision (on the Healthy Neighbourhood), a natural play area on Millennium Green and new parks and play spaces on all development allocations.

## **Developing the Neighbourhood Plan**

- 1.14 A Neighbourhood Plan for Halesworth was proposed in September 2017 at a community meeting. Those present agreed that having a Plan would be beneficial for the town. A Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) was established in late-2017 which included councillors and local residents and monthly meetings were established.



***First public meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018***

- 1.15 Activities undertaken to gather evidence include:
- An Open Evening in September 2018 to establish the issues, opportunities, weaknesses and strengths of Halesworth.
  - A questionnaire to understand more about specific issues.
  - A session with primary school children in years 5 and 6.
  - A youth consultation
  - Interviews with a wide range of local businesses and voluntary groups.
  - A feedback form on the draft vision and objectives of the plan.
- 1.16 The Coronavirus pandemic greatly restricted the range of in-person consultations but the community has been regularly updated through the local Community News, Town Council meetings and the Facebook Community Forum.





***cancelling the consultation on the Vision and Objectives because of lockdown, March 2020***

## **Monitoring the Plan**

- 1.17 As the responsible body for preparing a neighbourhood plan covering the parish of Halesworth, it will fall to Halesworth Town Council to monitor progress against the Neighbourhood Plan's objectives and to ensure that it remains relevant.



## 2 LOCAL CONTEXT

### History of Halesworth

- 2.1 The beginnings of the town of Halesworth are considered most likely to date from the Middle Saxon period, with a small number of buildings being situated on the side of the ridge close to the town river. The Late Saxon name for Halesworth was 'Halesuworde' a word probably derived from the Saxon word 'Healsword' meaning a corner of land with water on two sides. It is assumed that a village grew around a river crossing; a Saxon causeway was found in excavations near the White Hart.
- 2.2 The transition to a town began with the creation of a yearly fair and weekly market founded by crusading lord of the manor Sir Richard de Argentein in 1223. The Market concentrated on butchery but other industries also developed, especially metalworking, leather goods, agricultural produce, brewing and spinning and weaving, and other trades associated with the wool trade.
- 2.3 The town's growing prosperity is evidenced from the fact that many of the town's buildings in the Thoroughfare and Market Place area date from the 15th to 18th centuries, many having later Georgian or Victorian fronts. There was a growth in the flax and hemp industry during this time, and the spinning and weaving of linen products became an increasingly important part of Halesworth's economy, along with the traditional agriculture, and food and drink related trades. The Norton family, for example, who built the magnificent Gothic House in the Town, made their money by selling food provisions to the military.



***Gothic House 16<sup>th</sup> Century Grade II\* listed***



***St Mary's Church 15<sup>th</sup> Century Grade II\* listed***

- 2.4 The Agricultural and Industrial Revolution slowly began to impact on the population and economy of Halesworth from the late 18th century onwards, gathering pace in the 19th century.
- 2.5 The coming of the railway in 1854 led to further growth and by the end of the 19th century the town's key industries, in addition to those mentioned above, were printing, ironworking/agricultural engineering, livestock, brick making, coach making, leatherworking and a growing retail sector serving the town and the surrounding villages.
- 2.6 Despite the early 20th century being a period of rapid social change, the important industries in Halesworth changed little, but some became casualties of uncertain economic times, competition, or overtaken by technological change, such as the Coachworks, Ironworks, and the Southwold Railway. The population slowly declined from its then peak of around 2,700 people in the 1850s.

- 2.7 There was a period of considerable expansion in the 1960s with the population of the Town doubling by 1981. The Urban District Council pursued a policy of attracting industry to the town coupled with house building. A new secondary school was built in 1958. Major employers such as agricultural engineers Howard Rotavators, brought over 600 jobs to Halesworth, as did the Bernard Matthews food processing plant in nearby Holton. The town became the fastest-growing town in East Suffolk except for Felixstowe, with new retail and catering and other service industry establishments meeting the demands of the increased population. Paradoxically it was during this period that the majority of maltings, the driving force behind 19th century expansion of the town, closed.



***Maltings on Quay Street now converted to flats***

- 2.8 The boom time was over by the mid-1980s and like many other rural market towns, Halesworth adapted to a mixture of the traditional and the new. For example, the old-world charm of its independent shops in the Thoroughfare, contrasts with a diversity of new small industries on its industrial estates. A new library and supermarket were built in the 1990s, the Thoroughfare was largely pedestrianised, and a bypass was built around it. In the last twenty years, the loss of amenities such as its hospital, middle/secondary school and an outdoor swimming pool have been keenly felt.

## **Halesworth Today**

- 2.9 In 2020 Halesworth won the Stars of Norfolk and Waveney Village/Town of the year award. The judges were impressed with the way people in Halesworth came together during the Covid crisis to “provide comprehensive support for vulnerable people in the town, bringing together individual volunteers, community groups, the church, local businesses and the town council..... a result of a long-standing community spirit in the town.”
- 2.10 Responses to the first consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan demonstrated that this view of the town is shared by many residents. They like the town, they like living in it, they like their fellow residents and some do not want to see it change. The Waveney Local Plan 2019 (now part of the East Suffolk Local Plan) however will bring changes and with several major developments in the offing, others see it as ‘a chance in a lifetime opportunity’ for the town.

- 2.11 Policies in the Local Plan, such as an extension to the primary school, a new community centre and under-5's provision, do address some of the infrastructure concerns that people have identified. It also proposes a high number of new homes with a consequent increase in population. A major worry is that the infrastructure will not keep pace with this growth, or cannot be delivered at all, putting yet more pressure on over stretched services. How to incorporate these changes and potential improvements in ways that are sympathetic to Halesworth's history, respectful of its environment, and which brings opportunities to residents and businesses without losing what people love about the town is the challenge for the future. The Neighbourhood Plan Group has been very conscious of these dilemmas when trying to weigh up competing views of the present and the future.
- 2.12 Halesworth shares many of the characteristics of other market towns in Suffolk. However, it also has some unique qualities that reflect its strengths and weaknesses, creating specific challenges and opportunities which the Neighbourhood Plan tries to address.
- 2.13 The town's housing stock is generally good with high levels of home ownership. Prices have steadily increased by 34% over the last two decades<sup>1</sup>, a low increase when compared to the rest of Suffolk but higher than national averages. An increase of private renting, including shared ownership, supports an assessment that low-income families are being priced out of home ownership. The population is demographically skewed, more than the average in Suffolk or nationally, towards the elderly groups and this is reflected in high numbers of single households. 91% of properties are medium sized houses or bungalows, the latter being in great demand. The disparity between incomes, house prices and market rents indicate that more affordable and social rented properties and shared ownership are needed. Private demand, however, indicates a shortage of larger detached properties.



***Variety of housing from across the centuries***

<sup>1</sup> Source: Land Registry, via [www.home.co.uk](http://www.home.co.uk)



- 2.14 Saxons Way bypass, completed in 1989, enabled Halesworth's historic high street (The Thoroughfare) to become semi-pedestrianised in 1991, unlike other local towns where cars are much more dominant. The Thoroughfare has many independent niche shops and cafes, an interesting and pleasing range of shop fronts and street furniture and is enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Empty shops do not remain so for long. The Market Place, situated in the oldest part of town has some fine buildings and a small market once a week, but is rather cut off from the Thoroughfare. A Town Centre Connectivity consultation was commissioned to find ways of resolving this so the whole town centre can be better connected.



***Thoroughfare in the early morning***



***Market Place on market day***

- 2.15 The Neighbourhood Plan consultations indicated support for a second supermarket, and the Town Council gave it a cautious although much caveated welcome. A previous application for a second supermarket in the town attracted a large number of supportive representations from residents.
- 2.16 Saxons Way, with a pedestrian crossing only at one end, acts as a barrier to another unique aspect of Halesworth - the Millennium Green to the east, the largest such green in England at 20+ hectares. Managed by volunteers, it offers the town large stretches of biodiverse, naturally managed, open space and waterways. With National Cycle Route 1 meandering through the Green, people can walk and cycle at any time of year.



***Peace and tranquillity of the Millennium Green***

- 2.17 Another voluntary organisation, Halesworth in Bloom, has shown the way in using planting to improve the look and biodiversity of the town. Environmental protection, rewilding, increased



natural habitats are issues that local children reported to us as important to them and want to see more of. Other environmental issues however cause concern. The Town River, a tributary of the River Blyth, runs through the town under the Thoroughfare. The big flood of 1993 is still remembered, and the last few years have seen the water rising to levels which seriously affect and endanger businesses and homes. Changing agricultural methods, too little maintenance work and unclear accountabilities have all contributed to neglect of the river. A strategic, collaborative plan of action is needed to resolve the problems and the Neighbourhood Plan Group is working with the Town Council and relevant organisations to address them.



***Halesworth in Bloom brightening up the Town Park entrance and roundabouts***

- 2.18 A lack of sports facilities has been recognised in the Local Plan, through proposals to develop a 'Healthy Neighbourhood' area, (see below). Plans for the Campus sports centre and outside facilities were submitted in 2021 with, subject to planning permission, an expected operational date in 2023. Together with the sports clubs located on land and buildings owned by Halesworth Community Sport and Leisure, this will bring much improvement although the planned for and much desired swimming pool needs more resources to deliver.
- 2.19 The need for improved facilities for young people were highlighted in the Neighbourhood Plan Group's consultations. Young people "hanging around" are sometimes seen as a problem. The popular skateboarding park needs significant improvement or replacement, and the building currently being used for the town's only youth club, entirely voluntary run, will need to be demolished if the sports centre is built. Formal youth organisations are present in the town but, with the low numbers of young people, do struggle. The time is right for the Town Council to lead a group of agencies and young people to devise a plan for sustainable youth activities for the future.
- 2.20 Younger children are better catered for with above average numbers of play spaces across the town, but the quality of the spaces and equipment is very varied. East Suffolk Council has undertaken a strategic review of provision and the investment required which should assist in deciding which spaces can and should be brought up to modern standards.
- 2.21 The closure of the middle school in 2012 is still a source of regret in the town and leaves a gap in educational provision. Under 5's provision and the primary school are to be extended to take account of the growth in population and the Skills Centre, for post 16's, has reopened but older children must travel to neighbouring towns for their education. The low numbers of younger families in the town may reflect this gap in school provision but the result is a loss of the vitality young people bring, the focus on learning and achievement to which a secondary school contributes, and the potential for young people developing strong community ties. Furthermore,

the education needs of any new families coming to live in the housing developments envisaged in the Local Plan could not be locally met. The Neighbourhood Plan Group is exploring the possibilities of reversing this trend, in conjunction with relevant bodies.

- 2.22 The declining health and social care infrastructure is of great concern particularly in the light of an aging population. Halesworth is said to be the furthest away from a District General Hospital of any town in the country. The local Patrick Stead hospital beds, which catered for elderly people, have closed but not been replaced with any locally based intensive home care service. The hospital had also provided a minor injuries clinic and some outpatient services but all of these, bar blood testing, have closed. An NHS day centre service for elderly and severely disabled people has also closed.
- 2.23 A planned extension to the GP surgery is not seen as resolving the problem of the reduced numbers of GPs although new ways of working, post Covid, may help. Halesworth falls within the Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group which is responsible for GP and health provision. Suffolk County Council is the Social Care authority and has a public health role throughout the county.
- 2.24 The gaps in health provision are filled to some extent by a wide range of voluntary organisations providing home care, end of life care, day care and transport along with small entrepreneurial private enterprises serving meals and care.



***A small selection of voluntary organisations in the town***

- 2.25 Halesworth's rich and varied civil society is not limited to health. There are many societies, clubs, a museum and various organisations offering opportunities to meet others, develop hobbies and take part in activities. The Library is now run by Suffolk Libraries which is an independent charity. They all enrich the culture and environment of the town and provide many essential services. However, there is no community centre to act as a focal meeting point but the Local Plan designates land and requires developer contributions (through the Community Infrastructure Levy) for a new Centre. Plans setting out what such a facility would provide and how to make it financially viable are yet to emerge.

- 2.26 Other spaces are available for people to meet in a wide range of places from the Rifle Hall, The Cut Arts Centre, Chinnys Sports Bar, Churches, and the Library.
- 2.27 The A12, the trunk road which cuts through the county from North to South, five miles to the east helps define Halesworth economically. Larger firms have not been attracted to the town in recent years because of the poor road infrastructure but there has been a trend towards small and medium sized enterprises thriving alongside the activities of service, retail, and agriculture. Having a train service with a promised through train to London may make the town a good base for home workers and entrepreneurs. If the new power station at Sizewell is built there is potential for skilled employment and training opportunities coming to the area. There is a thriving creative industries culture and infrastructure, with an above average number of people recorded as working in these disciplines. The development of The Cut Arts centre in 2003, in a former Maltings building has attracted and encouraged this and together with other artistic initiatives being planned, such as that on the Healthy Neighbourhood site (see below), it is seen as having potential to create jobs, encourage more visitors to come to the town and therefore, generate a higher level of economic activity. Tourists using Halesworth as both a base to explore the coast and the countryside and a place to visit for day trips are also important for the town's economic future.



***The Cut Arts Centre***



***Halesworth Railway Station***

- 2.28 It is expected that reliance on the car will continue for some years although there is much support to improve connectivity around town by improving and extending cycling and walking routes. The motor trades have left their mark on the town as it became a district centre for all the major car dealerships. This is beginning to change as dealerships centralise in the larger towns, sales go online, and electric vehicles increase. This is likely to result in further change to the pattern of employment in Halesworth.

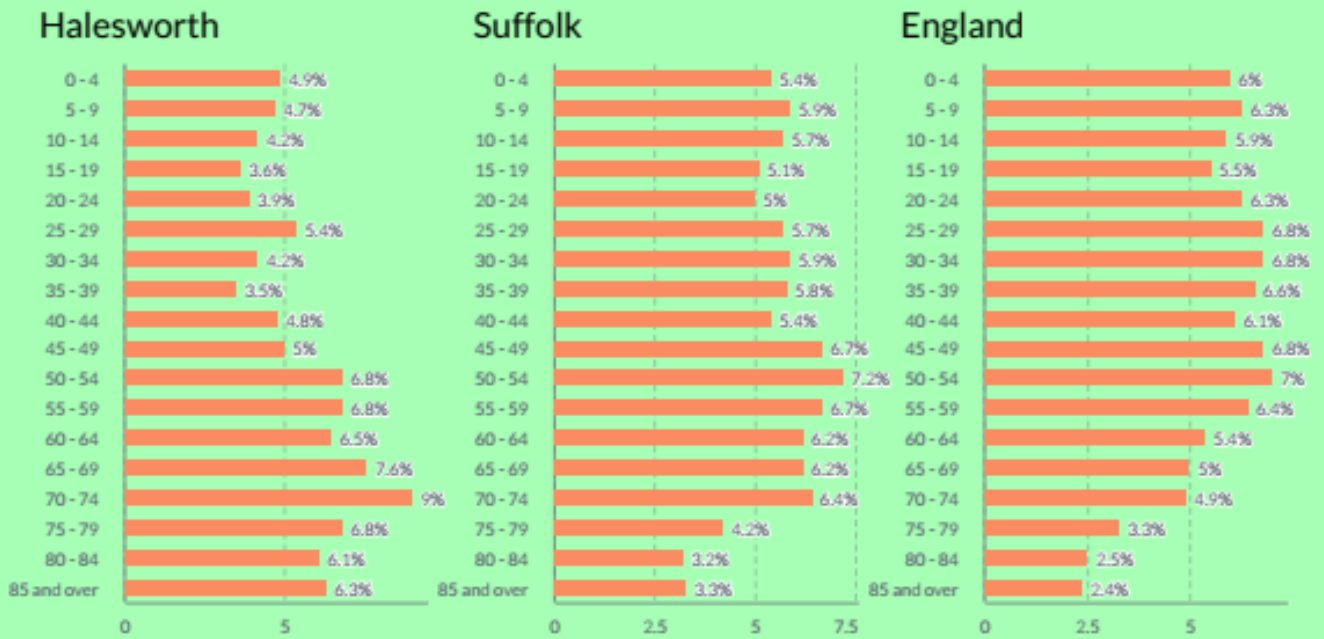
### **Halesworth's socio-economic profile**

- 2.29 Unless stated otherwise, the figures in this section of the Plan come from the 2011 Census.
- 2.30 In 2018, the population of Halesworth was estimated to be 4,942 people (source: Office for National Statistics). This represented an increase of 4.6% since 2011. When compared with Suffolk and England, it has a much higher proportion of people of retirement age and a corresponding lower proportion of both children and adults of working age.
- 2.31 By far the most common type of household is 1- and 2-person households where the Household Reference Person (or HRP, formerly known as the 'head of household') is of retirement age (44% of households in 2011). Only 12% of households in Halesworth in 2011 fitted the common 'family' profile of a 35-54-year-old HRP in a household with dependent children (in Suffolk this is 19% and in England, 20%).

- 2.32 As a result of the high proportion of retirees, Halesworth has a low rate of economic activity. In 2011 only 66% of those aged 16-74 were either working, unemployed or a full-time student; in Suffolk the equivalent figure was 71%.
- 2.33 Of the Halesworth residents that are working, this is predominantly in either low skilled occupations (e.g. retail, which accounts for 18% of jobs) or occupations at a mid-skill level (caring, leisure and other service occupations and skilled trades occupations). The workforce is poorly represented by those in higher skilled occupations. The level of qualifications attained are similarly below average.
- 2.34 This feeds through to the levels of employment deprivation in Halesworth. The central area of Halesworth is in the top-20% most deprived areas for employment in the country.



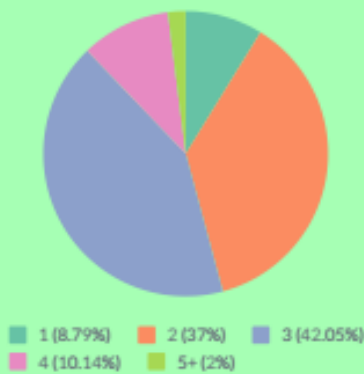
## Age Structure



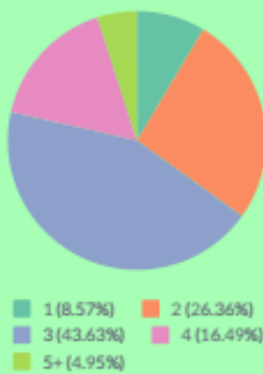
Large proportion of retirees compared with Suffolk and England

## Dwelling Size (Number of Bedrooms)

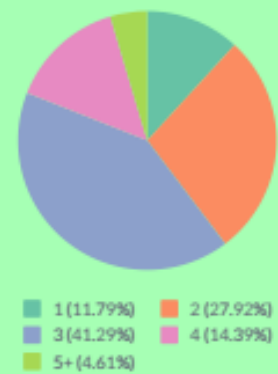
### Halesworth



### Suffolk



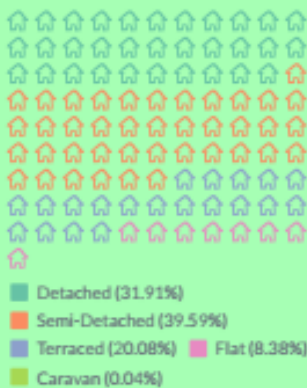
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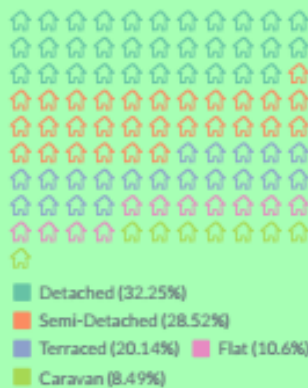
Large proportion of 2 bedroom properties compared with Suffolk and England

## Property Type

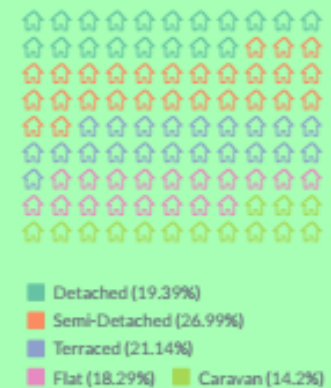
### Halesworth



### Suffolk



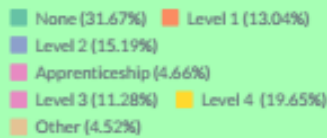
### England



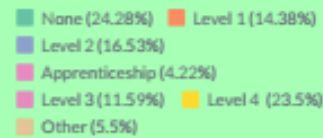
Large proportion of semi-detached houses compared with Suffolk and England

## Qualifications

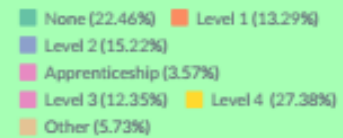
### Halesworth



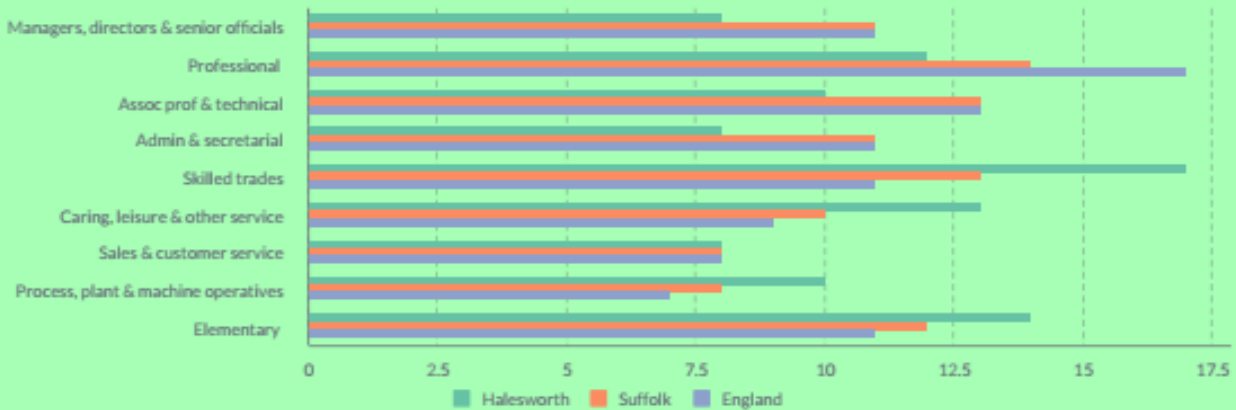
### Suffolk



### England

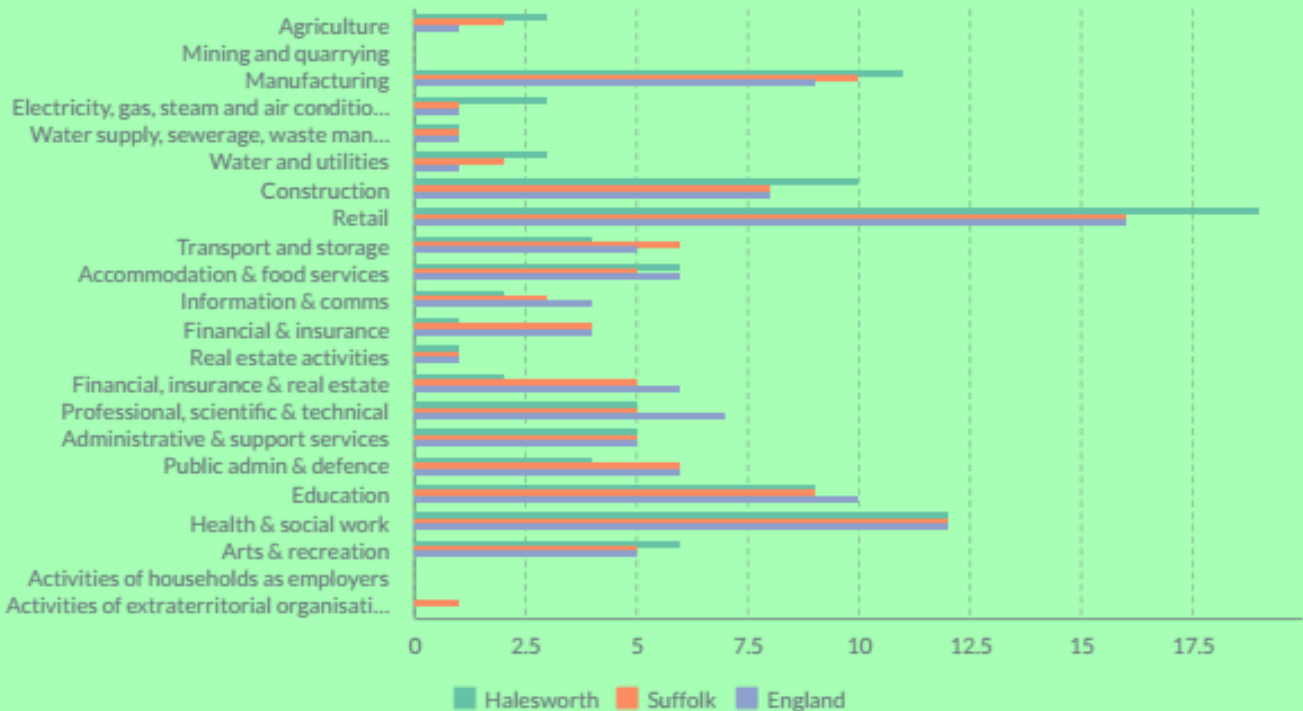


## Occupations/Skills (%)



High proportion with low qualifications working in lower skilled occupations compared with Suffolk and England

## Industry (%)



Retail is dominant; higher value sectors such as finance and IT services are poor

## Deprivation



The central area of Halesworth is in the top-20% most deprived areas for employment in the country

## Car Ownership (Average per Household)



Halesworth

Broadly in line with the average

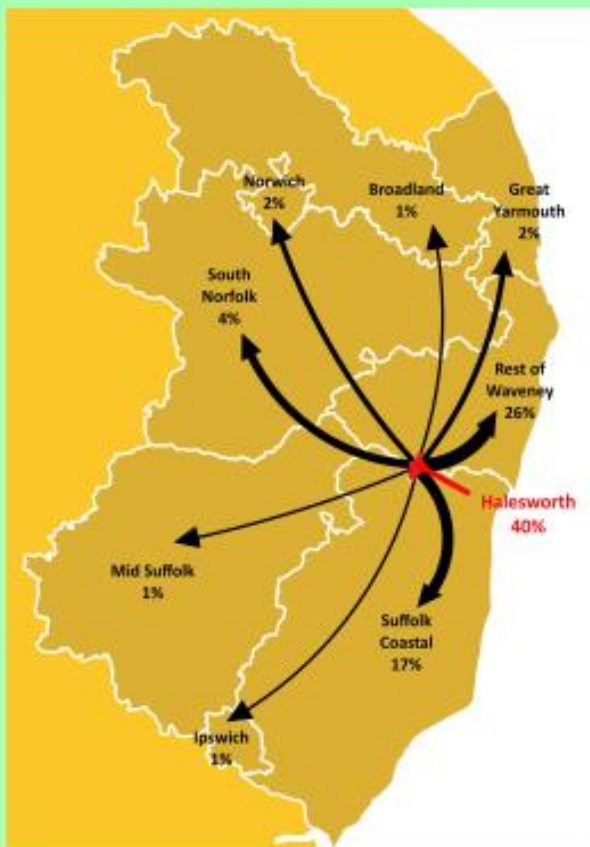


Suffolk



England

## Travel to Work



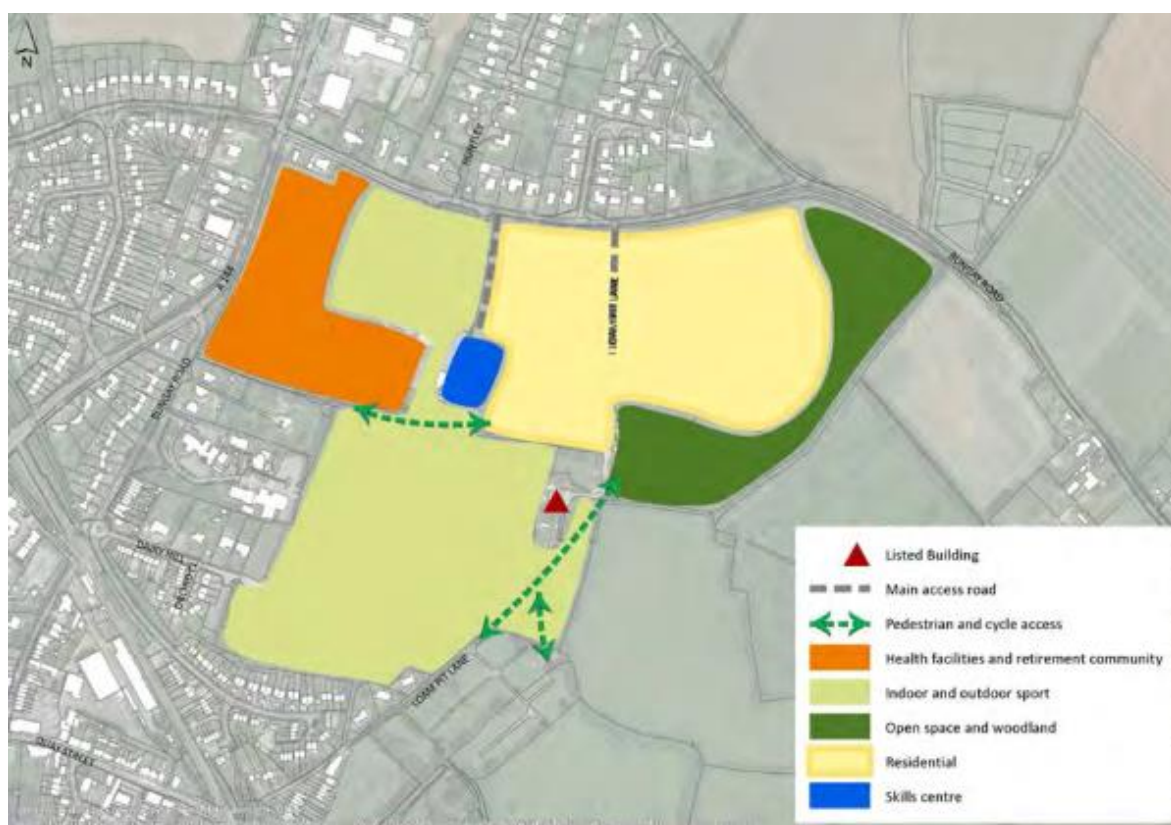
Work journeys largely local

A significantly higher number of people come to Halesworth each day to work than leave to work elsewhere

### The Halesworth and Holton Healthy Neighbourhood

- 2.35 The Waveney Local Plan allocates a significant area of land (over 22 hectares) in the north west of Halesworth for the 'Halesworth and Holton Healthy Neighbourhood'. This is expected to provide a mix of residential, health care, retirement, sports, education and training uses. Figure 2.1 shows the indicative masterplan that is presented in the Local Plan. Alongside the new dwellings (which have outline planning permission) will be new and improved grass sports fields, a 3G all-weather pitch and an indoor sports complex. Halesworth Community, Sport and Leisure, (formerly Halesworth Playing Fields Association) will also implement its own plans to retain and improve the existing sports facilities at Dairy Hill, which will contribute towards the Halesworth Healthy Neighbourhood.
- 2.36 Alongside the sports facilities will be high quality care and accommodation for elderly residents as well as additional GP health facilities for the community.
- 2.37 The Apollo Youth Club is located on the site of the former middle school and provides a valuable facility for children and teenagers from Halesworth and the surrounding area. A replacement for the Apollo Youth Club can be catered for as part of the development, if funding can be found.
- 2.38 The North Suffolk Skills Centre has been retained on the site and reopened primarily for vocational education provided by Suffolk New College - on the Coast.

**Figure 2.1: Halesworth and Holton Healthy Neighbourhood indicative masterplan**



Source: Waveney Local Plan, Figure 15



### **3 VISION AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **Challenges for Halesworth**

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address, as far as is possible, the challenges that face the community of Halesworth. These challenges have been derived from consultation with the community as well as other sources of information and evidence. In summary these challenges are:

##### **Environment**

- Poor quality environment around the town's waterways.
- Green spaces that are important and should be protected and improved.
- The need as a town to address the climate and environmental crisis.

##### **Housing**

- A shortage of affordable and rented housing for young people and families, and of accommodation for the elderly.
- The need for new housing to be designed to meet people's needs as they change and to be built to the best possible environmental standards.

##### **Employment**

- Lack of local job opportunities which is in part a function of a lack of suitable employment spaces for start-ups, micro-businesses and small businesses and low educational attainment.

##### **Infrastructure**

- Lack of access to community, sporting and leisure facilities.
- Poorly maintained outdoor play facilities and open spaces.
- Pressure on medical and educational facilities.

##### **Heritage and design**

- The need to recognise and celebrate Halesworth's heritage.
- 'Identikit' new development that is out of keeping with the character of Halesworth.

##### **Movement**

- A lack of infrastructure to encourage increased walking and cycling which would help to alleviate traffic-related issues, particularly around the town centre.
- Poor quality public transport services.

##### **Town Centre**

- The town centre's potential as a shopping and social destination is constrained by a lack of integration of its distinct parts.

#### **Vision and Neighbourhood Plan Objectives for Halesworth**

- 3.2 In consultation with the community, the established vision for Halesworth and the objectives to deliver the vision are as follows:

## OUR VISION



Imagine Halesworth in 15 years' time. It has become a larger more vibrant town offering an excellent range of services and facilities, making it an even more attractive place to live, work and visit. It is widely recognised as a centre for the arts, the Millennium Green is seen as an ecological asset and the town is used more as a tourist base from which to explore both coastal and inland areas assisted by the through trains to London.

Local businesses have benefitted, families have been attracted to settle by the availability of new **homes** and employment opportunities and there are better facilities to support older residents. New building has encouraged contemporary design whilst retaining the character and **heritage** of the built environment and landscape.

Better community and play facilities serve the town's needs and the **sports facilities** at the Halesworth Healthy Neighbourhood development are accessible to everyone, no matter their age or ability. The new health and social care facilities offer elderly people accommodation better suited to their needs. Residents are enjoying their new community centre and Halesworth's greener feel with its expanded open spaces, newly planted trees and flowers and better access to its waterways.

More people make short journeys around town on foot and bike thanks to improvements to the network of **footpaths and cycle tracks**. The roads are less congested but for those who still need to drive and use the car parks, spaces are available and provide electric charging points. There are buses and trains for those travelling further afield.

Halesworth town centre has become a busier and more integrated place. The Thoroughfare, long term car park and Market Place are now clearly linked, providing a wide range of

independent shops, cafes and restaurants, complemented by the Library and other community activities. With better **connections** to the Park and Millennium Green the overall Town Centre experience is broadened making it an increasingly popular place for people - including more tourists - to spend their time.

Not only are Halesworth's shops prospering but the town has attracted new businesses thanks to the creation of high-quality **business spaces**. Creative and internet-based enterprises have been attracted by Halesworth's status as a centre for the arts and biodiversity, its growing population and its accessibility, seeing the town as somewhere they can flourish.

Halesworth's **greener environment** has led to a lower carbon footprint, enabled by the effective use of planning, design and technical innovation.



What people valued in Halesworth in 2020 remains, yet forward thinking has created a greener, more resilient and sustainable community, a healthier and happier town, of which everyone is proud.

# OUR OBJECTIVES



1. Make Halesworth an environmentally friendly town: revitalising the waterways, enhancing biodiversity and protecting, improving and expanding our green spaces.



2. Ensure that new housing is appropriate for the needs and incomes of all generations, particularly those working and on low incomes and is sustainable for future generations through the adoption of green building and design principles.



3. Develop a range of spaces on both existing and new sites which attract businesses and create employment opportunities, particularly in skilled and creative industries and in tourism.



4. Provide a wider range of better-quality community, sport / leisure and education facilities for all ages.



5. Maintain and enhance the character and heritage of Halesworth's built environment and landscape whilst encouraging sympathetic contemporary design.



6. Promote a transport infrastructure which connects different parts of the town and enables people to move about easily, safely, and enjoyably whether on foot, bicycle, mobility vehicle or public transport.



7. Better integrate the distinct parts of the Town Centre and make it a place where more people want to come and spend their time and support the local economy.



## Addressing climate change

- 3.3 Many residents identified the need to do as much as possible to address climate change over the lifetime of the Plan. The importance of this issue is recognised and the Plan addresses a number of matters of relevance, including protecting green spaces, creating a nature reserve and encouraging the development of energy efficient housing. However, many matters raised by residents are either already addressed in the Waveney Local Plan or are restricted by national policy. In particular, Local Plan policy already addresses the following matters:
- Flood risk: Policy WLP8.24 explicitly requires development to take into account climate change when assessing flood risk. Proposals must provide sustainability benefits that outweigh flood risk. They should use sustainable drainage systems to drain surface water and should deliver water quality and aquatic biodiversity improvements where possible.
  - Renewable and low carbon energy: Policy WLP8.27 supports the development of renewable and low carbon energy schemes.
  - Sustainable construction: Policy WLP8.28 requires development of 10 or more houses and commercial schemes of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or more to submit a sustainability statement which shows how, where possible, they have incorporated efficient heating, cooling and lighting, sustainable water management measures (including water efficiency in terms of use per person) and used locally sourced and recycled materials.
- 3.4 National policy limits what both local and neighbourhood plans can *require* of development as this is addressed through Building Regulations. Despite this, a number of the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan will contribute towards minimising and mitigating the impact of climate change. These include:
- The protection of two Local Green Spaces, three open spaces and roadside verges from development.
  - Support for the creation of a new nature reserve.
  - Protection of heritage trees.
  - A policy encouraging low energy and energy efficient housing design.
  - The identification of key movement routes to increase levels of walking and cycling.
  - A requirement for electric car charging points.
- 3.5 The message is clear that the community wants these matters to be addressed as far as possible and the Neighbourhood Plan therefore supports activities and actions in Halesworth that contribute towards this goal.

## 4 ENVIRONMENT

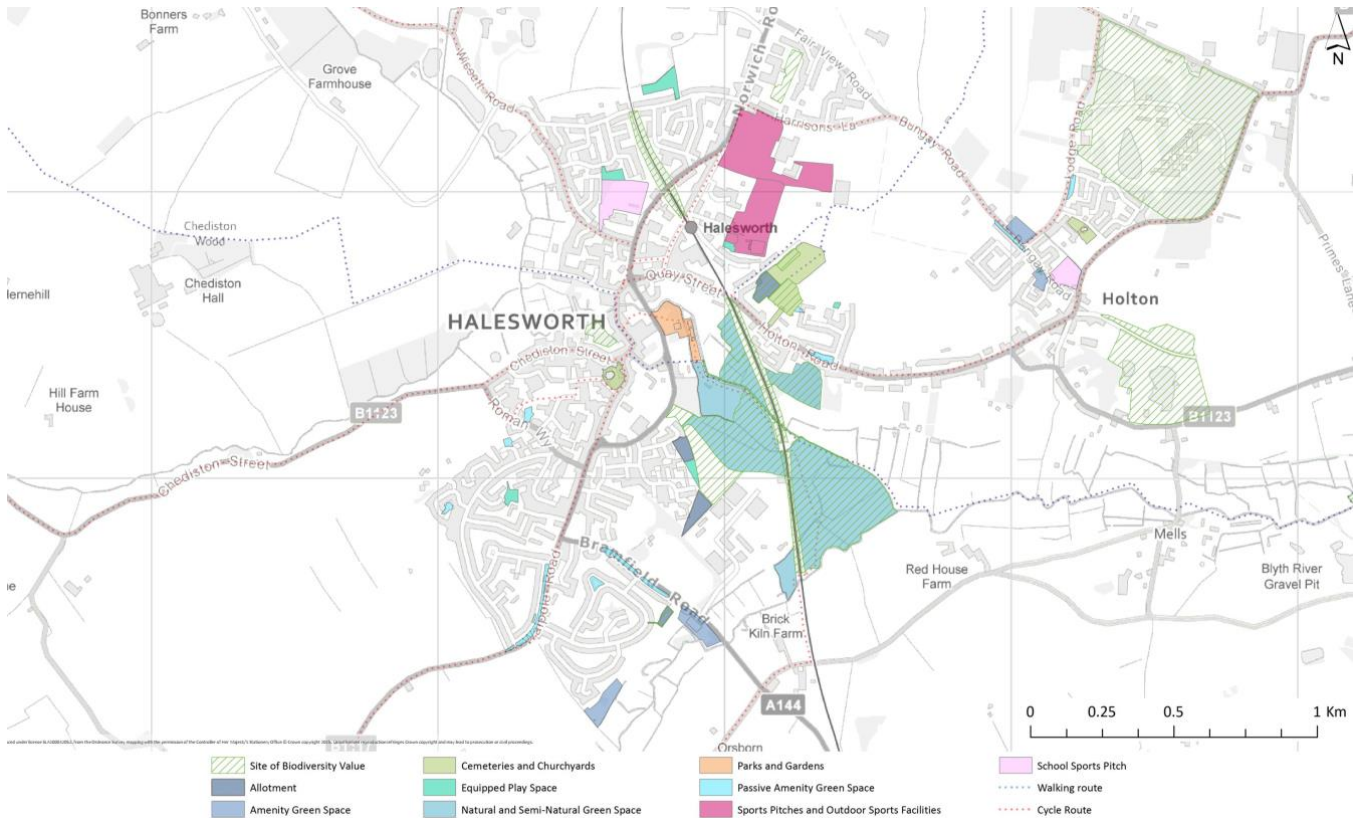
4.1 The environment was a concern frequently raised by Halesworth residents when asked about their priorities for the town. The NPSG therefore set out to address this. The following objective was consulted upon and received community approval:

***To make Halesworth an environmentally friendly town: revitalising the waterways, enhancing biodiversity and protecting, improving and expanding our green spaces***

4.2 One of the major initiatives that the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to deliver is a nature reserve in the south of the town. This is addressed in more detail in this section of the plan. Its role in enhancing the environment of Halesworth is significant, including its role in increasing green space, biodiversity and providing greater resilience against the possible effects of climate change.

4.3 Figure 4.1 shows that Halesworth has a wide range of green, open and leisure spaces.

**Figure 4.1: Existing green spaces in Halesworth**



Source: Waveney District Council (2015) *Waveney Green Infrastructure Strategy*

## Local Green Spaces

4.4 Under the NPPF, Neighbourhood Plans have the opportunity to designate Local Green Spaces which are of particular importance to them. This will afford protection from development other than in very special circumstances. Paragraph 102 of the NPPF says that the Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

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

4.5 Two spaces are considered to fulfil all of the criteria of the NPPF:

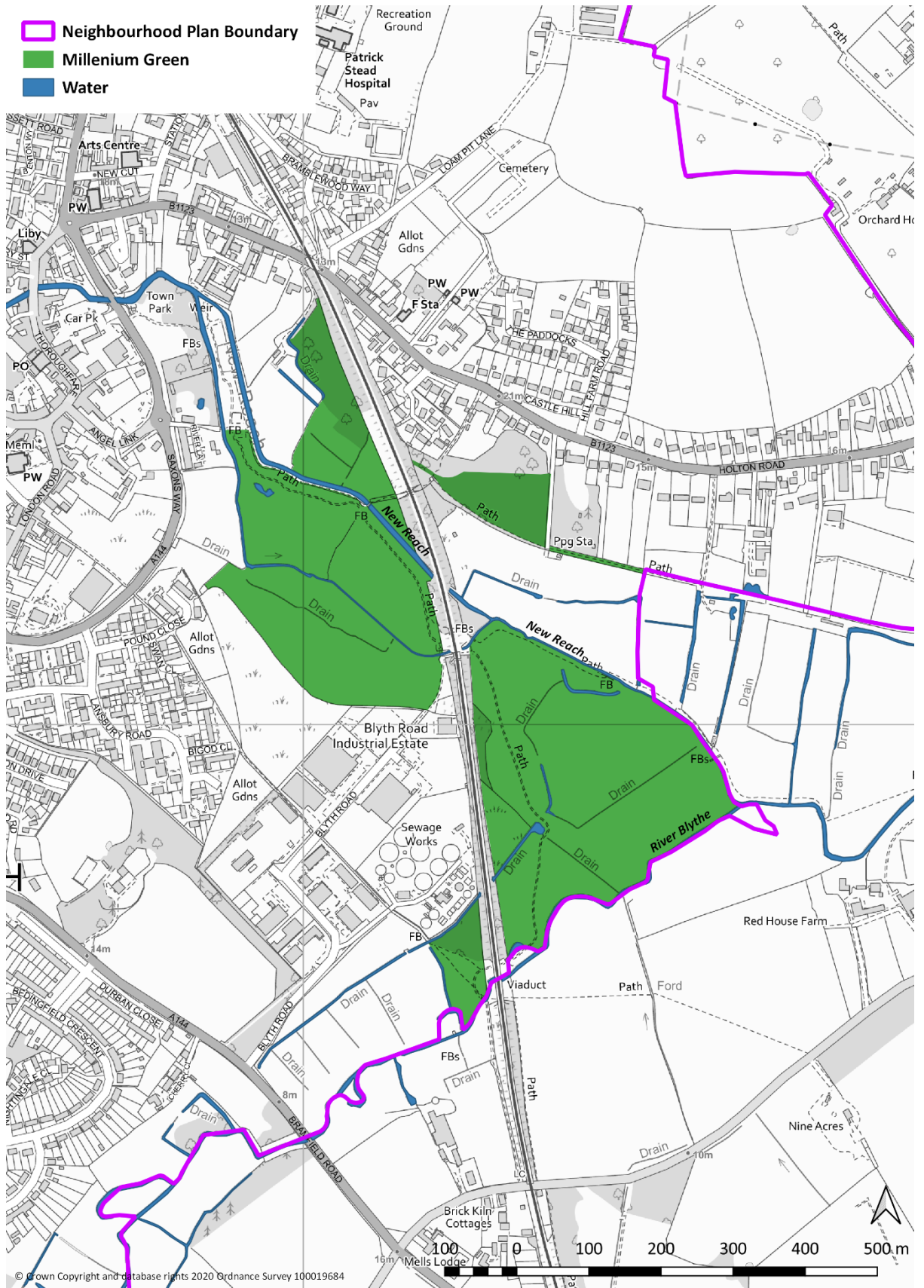
- The Millennium Green
- The Town Park

### Millennium Green



*Millennium Green*

**Figure 4.2: Millennium Green**





- 4.6 The Halesworth Millennium Green is the largest of its kind in England, totalling just under 21 hectares. It was created in 2000 with further areas subsequently added. It has a range of meadows, woodlands, rivers, ponds, heathland and orchard, following the historic route of the old railway and the even older navigation. As well as its history, the Green is rich in wildlife and geology. As well as providing a place for the community to walk, cycle and spend time in nature (with guided walks offered by the Millennium Green Trust) It is used for a range of local activities such as fairs and festivals.
- 4.7 The Green is managed by the Millennium Green Trust, a registered charity run by volunteer trustees. The NPSG consulted the Millennium Green Trust and carried out a survey to speak to users of the Green. The users were asked if they thought the green was demonstrably special, and if so why. The vast majority of those surveyed said that the Green was special because of its wildlife, history, community events and the opportunity it provides for people to spend time in nature. Similarly, most agreed with the idea of obtaining local green space designation as a means of safeguarding the green for the future.
- 4.8 A small part of the Millennium Green extends outside the Neighbourhood Plan area. Whilst this is still part of the Green, it is not possible to designate it as a Local Green Space in the Plan. It will however still be managed by the Millennium Green Trust.

### **Town Park**



***Town Park***

Figure 4.3: Town Park



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- 4.9 The Town Park was originally created by Donald Newby, Chairman of Halesworth Urban Development Corporation (UDC) (1970-1971) and with the help of Lady Rugby who donated some of the land. It totals 0.86 hectares and now provides open space and activities for toddlers through to teenagers in the form of children's play areas, a skateboard park and a half basketball court .
- 4.10 A large proportion of the park is maintained to maximise wildlife and biodiversity. There is an abundance of wildflowers, bulbs and mature trees, which make this park extremely attractive. The river also runs around the Town Park and on into the beautiful Millennium Green.
- 4.11 There are a number of paths through the park providing access to the old navigation canal and the old Halesworth to Southwold railway line. In addition, the town centre and Millennium Green are both within easy reach.
- 4.12 The Town Park is currently owned and managed by ESC but discussions are being held as to whether it should be transferred to Halesworth Town Council.
- 4.13 The NPSG carried out two separate surveys with the school children at Edgar Sewter Community Primary, in 2019 and 2021. This was to consult with them on what they liked about Halesworth, what they didn't like and what they wanted to see in 10 years' time. Over half of the children asked said they liked the Town Park. The first community consultation event held in 2018 also highlighted the Town Park as something the community very much liked and valued.

**POLICY HAL.ENV1: LOCAL GREEN SPACES**

**The following sites, as shown on Figures 4.1 and 4.2 and on the Policies Map, are designated as a Local Green Spaces**

- **The Millennium Green**
- **The Town Park**

## Open spaces

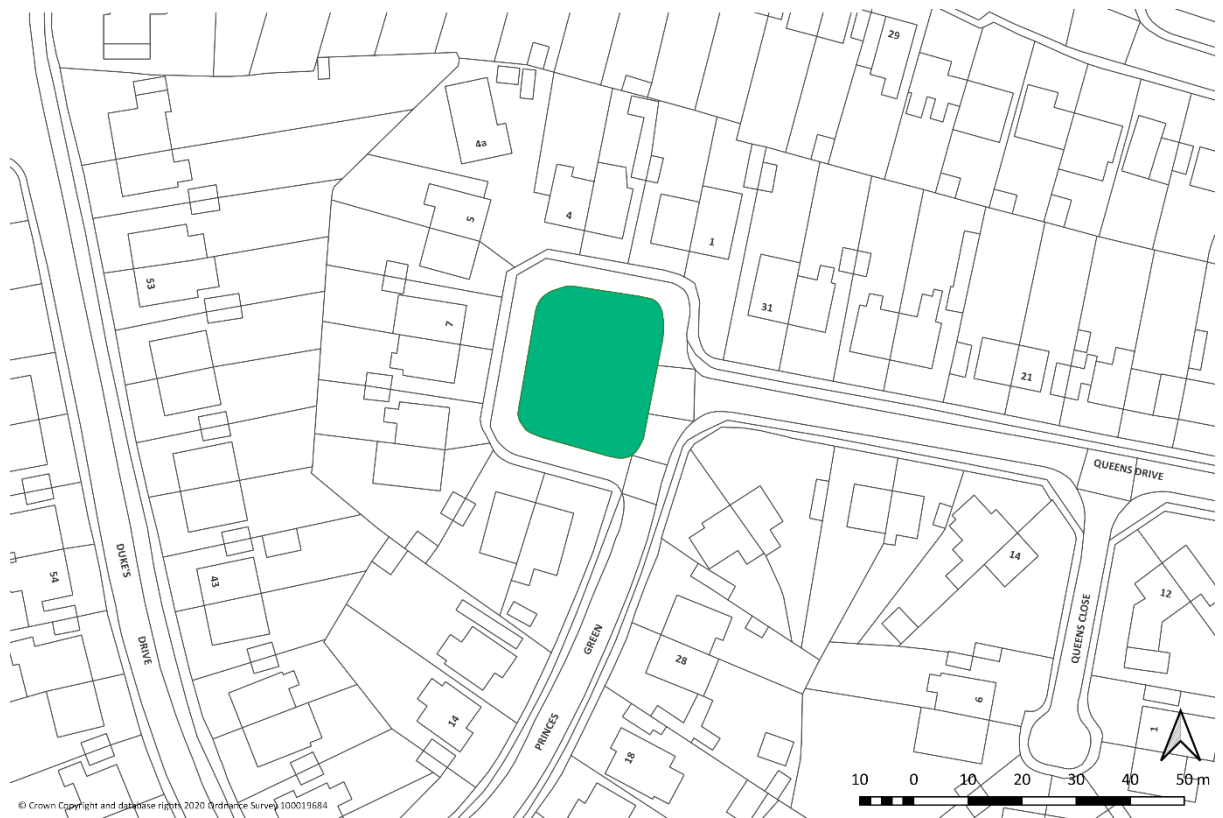
- 4.14 Halesworth has a small number of green spaces that are used for recreational activities. The main spaces are the town park and the Millennium Green. There are a number of other green spaces which, by virtue of their size or layout, do not lend themselves to such active use. However, the community considered that these spaces were nevertheless important, particularly to the immediate parts of the community that they serve. This may only be in providing an attractive backdrop but nevertheless, this was cited as important by people in connecting them with nature within their town. In this regard, it helps to enhance mental health and wellbeing.
- 4.15 The Waveney Green Infrastructure Strategy<sup>2</sup> identifies a number of the open spaces across Halesworth. Local Plan Policy WLP8.23 (Protection of Open Space) provides protection for these spaces, only allowing their development for other uses in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated to be surplus to requirements and it can be replaced elsewhere.
- 4.16 Three potential open spaces were identified by the NPSG that had not been included in the Green Infrastructure Strategy. As such, they are currently not protected as green spaces by Local Plan Policy WLP8.23. It is considered that, whilst they offer limited opportunities for informal activities because of their size, they make an important contribution to the green aspect of Halesworth's townscape and openness of its built-up area. In this regard they are considered to meet the Green Infrastructure Strategy definition of 'passive amenity green spaces' and therefore are protected in the same way that other such spaces are by the Local Plan (such as the green open space at Allington Road and Barley Meadow).
- 4.17 The three spaces, as shown in Figures 4.4 to 4.6, are:
- Princes Green
  - Aldergrove Close
  - Rectory Green

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<sup>2</sup> Waveney District Council (2015) *Waveney Green Infrastructure Strategy*



**Figures 4.4: Princes Green open space**

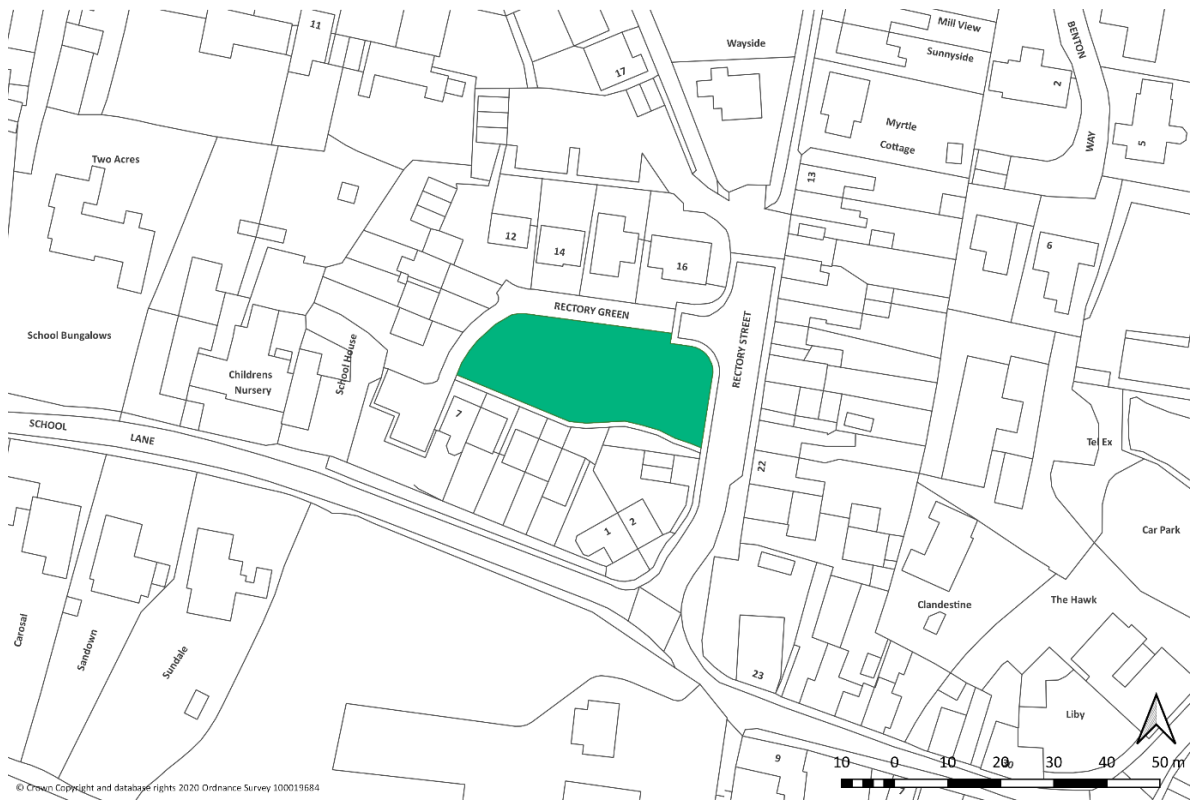


**Figures 4.5: Aldergrove Close open space**





**Figures 4.6: Rectory Green open space**



**POLICY HAL.ENV2: PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACES**

The green spaces at Princes Green, Aldergrove Close and Rectory Green, as shown in Figures 4.4-4.6 and on the Policies Map, are designated open spaces. Any proposals for development of these spaces will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and must meet the requirements of Local Plan Policy WLP8.23 (Protection of Open Space).



## Nature reserve

- 4.18 In the south of the town, a unique area of land has been identified within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary (see Figure 4.7) which has significant potential to further enhance biodiversity<sup>3</sup> due to its excellent nature-enhancing properties. The land, south of Kennedy Close and adjacent to an area of public open space, is in flood zone 3 and it unsuitable for built development or arable activity. It also likely includes remains of historic water meadows associated with the River Blyth. However, the fact that it retains water means that it is a very attractive habitat for wetland species. Discussions and a viewing from the land boundary with the Environment Agency has confirmed these possibilities. To date, no opportunities have been taken to enhance the capacity of the land to support a greater variety of flora and fauna or to increase their population, but this could be achieved with careful and sensitive management. No similar parcels of land like this are found within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary. It also has the advantage of being identified as a key element to the creation of a circular path around the town's edge, linking with existing routes to the Millennium Green. This latter proposal would enable a satisfying leisure/educational experience for local people and visitors.



***Views of proposed nature reserve***

- 4.19 The nature reserve demarcated in Figure 4.7 could provide access for walkers as part of a proposed town perimeter walk between Kennedy Close and Bramfield Road, following the course of the River Blyth. Access to the reserve is feasible from the south via an existing local authority-owned public open space adjacent to Kennedy Close and from the north via the Basley open space and outdoor gym (adjacent to Bramfield Road). The latter is owned by Halesworth Community Sports and Leisure, a charitable organisation.
- 4.20 The NPSG has engaged positively with expert organisations including the Environment Agency, which has established the potential for such a proposal. It has also sought to engage positively with the landowners. Whilst landowner support has not been secured, it is hoped that over the

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<sup>3</sup> This requires formal confirmation through an ecological survey



lifetime of the plan issues can be resolved and the potential to deliver the nature reserve can be realised.

- 4.21 A small part of the proposed Nature Reserve extends outside the Neighbourhood Plan area. Whilst this is still part of the proposed area, it is not possible to designate it in the Plan.

**Figure 4.7: Area of proposed nature reserve**



**POLICY HAL.ENV3: NEW NATURE RESERVE**

**Proposals to deliver a nature reserve to the south of the town (as shown in Figure 4.7 and on the Policies Map) will be supported.**

**NON-POLICY ACTION: NEW NATURE RESERVE**

**Halesworth Town Council will continue to seek engagement with all landowner interests in order to secure the necessary agreements to deliver the new Nature Reserve.**

## Verges

- 4.22 Generous grass verges are a key characteristic of Halesworth. In built-up areas, the value of green verges to biodiversity is significant. Equally, such verges can be lost to parking, particularly where there are wide verges and cars can park entirely off-road. This results in significant degradation of the verge, loss of wildlife or loss of the opportunity for species-rich planting.



***Roman Road verges***

- 4.23 Particular examples of grass verges providing a positive impact on biodiversity are along Roman Way and Holton Road. The verges are managed to allow grass and wildflowers to grow which encourages wildlife, with some grass cutting to the road edges to maintain a tidy border. At key entrances and exits to the town these borders are planted with spring flowering bulbs (by Halesworth in Bloom) and also contain native trees. They should be protected to enable such opportunities to plant them and allow re-wilding. New development in Halesworth should also look to create similar opportunities along main routes, thereby maximising biodiversity and visual appeal as much as possible. In addition to the biodiversity gains the wide grass verges are pleasing to residents and visitors moving in and around the town.





*Holton Road verges*

**POLICY HAL.ENV4: VERGES**

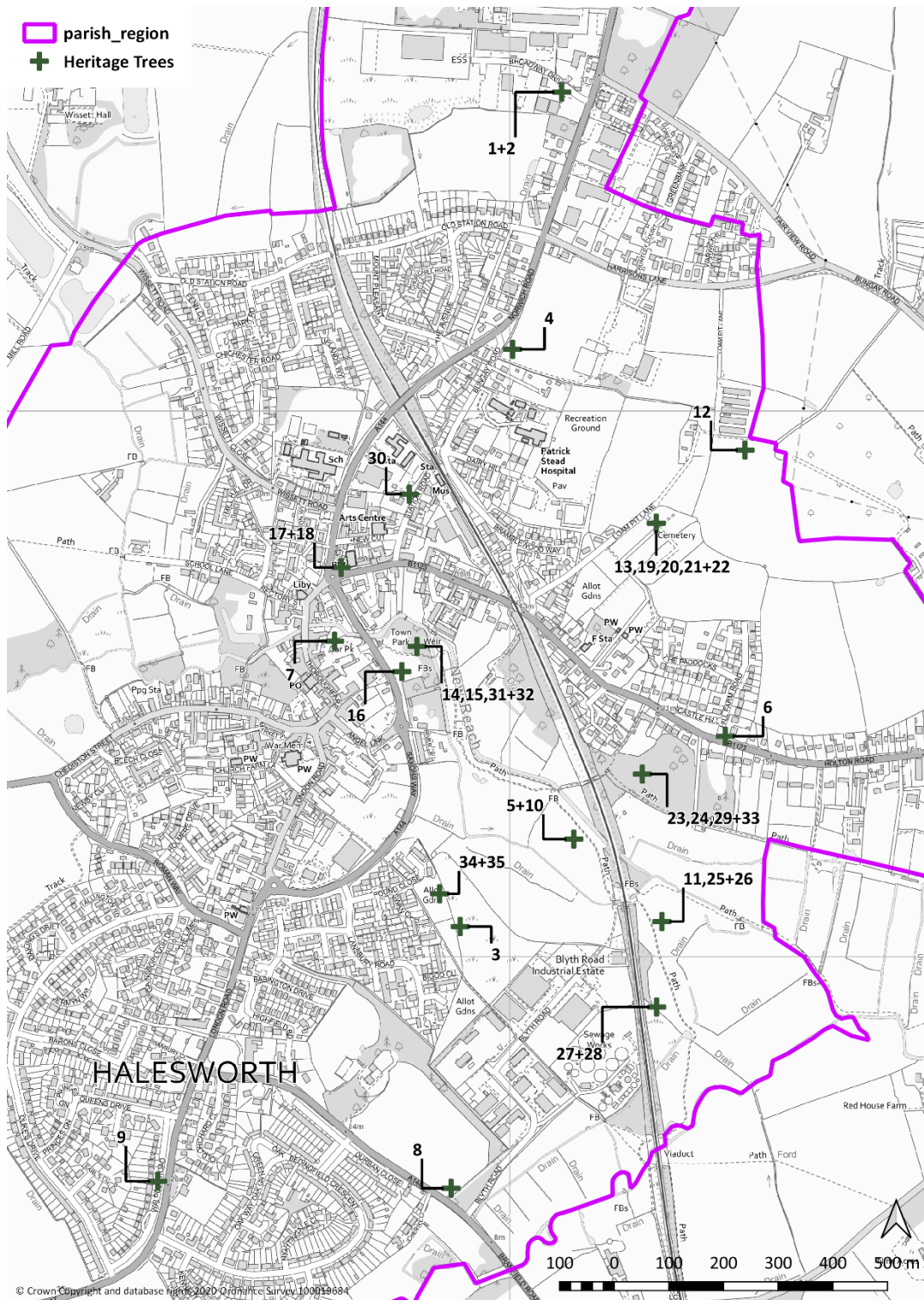
- A. Existing green verges along roadways should be retained and should only be removed if it is clearly demonstrated to be part of necessary highway improvements, including for walking and cycling. Any such improvements should maximise opportunities for planting around the existing verges.**
- B. Major development (as defined in the NPPF) must maximise the provision of green verges along main roadways and must demonstrate that these are designed so that vehicles are not able to use them for parking or be degraded by day-to-day activity.**
- C. On roadways outside of main routes, the design of roadways and verges to maximise biodiversity value will be supported. This could include enabling the planting of street trees or wildflower meadows or the creation of community gardens.**
- D. Proposals to enhance the biodiversity value of verges will be strongly supported.**



## Heritage trees

4.24 The NPPF states in paragraph 131 that trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. It also rightly requires that planning policies should seek to ensure that existing trees are retained wherever possible.

**Figure 4.8: Location of heritage trees**



- 4.25 Whilst not having the national recognition and protection of ancient woodland or veteran trees, heritage trees are considered important in the local context for a variety of reasons.
- 4.26 In Halesworth, 34 'heritage' trees have been identified by Halesworth in Bloom. A heritage tree is typically a large, individual tree with unique value, which is considered irreplaceable. The main criteria for a heritage tree are age, rarity and size, as well as aesthetic, botanical, ecological, and historical value. Trees identified by Halesworth in Bloom Tree Wardens have been important landscape features for many generations. Others may not be old but have been planted to commemorate a person or significant anniversary of events, or people locally. Anyone can put forward a tree for consideration to become a heritage tree in Halesworth. The register is intended to record these trees so that they can be protected.
- 4.27 Figure 4.8 shows the location of the heritage trees in Halesworth. Policy HAL.ENV5 seeks to protect them from being removed or from development immediately adjacent to them potentially affecting their roots as they grow.

#### **POLICY HAL.ENV5: HERITAGE TREES**

**Halesworth's heritage trees are shown in Figure 4.8 and on the Policies Map. Proposals for development of land on or immediately adjacent to a heritage tree are encouraged to preserve the tree and avoid damage to its root structure.**

### **Actions to 'green' Halesworth**

- 4.28 Through the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, a number of actions and projects were identified that will assist in achieving the overall objective of making Halesworth a greener town. The suggested environmental actions below should be worked on by Halesworth Town Council as part of the green agenda the community wished to prioritise. These are:
- Establish a recycling hub in the town centre to allow residents to recycle items that are not currently permitted in the blue bins for residential bi-weekly collection.
  - Engage with local businesses to encourage the use of recyclable or reusable products and to establish the wider use of "plastic free" products and other "environmental schemes" locally.
  - To liaise with local landowners, District and County Councils to identify any possible sites for green energy solutions such as wind turbines and solar farms for the future. This is dependent on any grants or schemes available for construction of such infrastructure, and suitability of any potential sites

#### **River and flooding**

- 4.29 Community consultation highlighted the concern of the community about flooding, the river and water quality. The Neighbourhood plan steering group worked with both Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) and the Environment Agency (EA) to obtain up to date information for residents about the current flood risk in town and river management. This coincided with the EA's own river assessments and the subsequent publication of their "Halesworth Flooding factsheet". The finalised factsheet will be available on the Town Council's website and a summarised version will be posted to the homes and businesses at greatest risk of flooding. The factsheet details planned annual

river maintenance, flooding advice, flood risk and important contact details for the Environment Agency.



*High river water levels to the town park (left) and flooding to the underpass (right)*

#### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: RIVERS AND WATERWAYS 1**

**Halesworth Town Council will support the Environment Agency and Suffolk Wildlife Trust to ensure that the town's rivers and waterways are managed in ways that bring better water quality, greater biodiversity and improved habitats for wildlife. It will:**

- i. seek to collaborate with work on biodiversity improvement projects and riparian tree planting schemes along the River Blyth and its tributaries;**
- ii. seek to collaborate with the Environment Agency to better understand flood risks and local floodplains and to ensure they are professionally managed, so contributing to increased biodiversity and improved habitats; and**
- iii. collaborate with the Environment Agency to provide up-to-date information to residents on flood risk and river maintenance programmes.**

#### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: RIVERS AND WATERWAYS 2**

**Halesworth Town Council will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the management and maintenance of green spaces, including grass verges, is done in ways that support biodiversity and wildlife.**



## 5 HOUSING

5.1 The need for 'affordable housing' (to buy and to rent), especially for young families, was mentioned by a significant number of respondents in the initial consultations. There was equal concern about the number of new houses that were planned in the town following the adoption of the Waveney Local Plan and whether these would 'overwhelm' the town.

5.2 In March 2020, following preparation of a Halesworth Housing Needs Assessment and further understanding of the present housing provision, the NPSG went out to consultation on the following objective:

***Ensure that new housing is appropriate for the needs and incomes of all generations, particularly those working and on low incomes and is sustainable for future generations through the adoption of green building and design principles.***

5.3 The Waveney Local Plan allocates sites for significant new housing developments that will deliver 465 new dwellings in Halesworth (numbers are approximate):

- WLP4.1 - Halesworth and Holton Healthy Neighbourhood - 215 dwellings
- WLP4.2 Chediston Street - 200 dwellings
- WLP4.3 Land north of Old Station Road - 10 dwellings (subsequent planning application was submitted for 20 dwellings)
- WLP4.5 - Dairy Farm, Saxons Way - 40 dwellings.



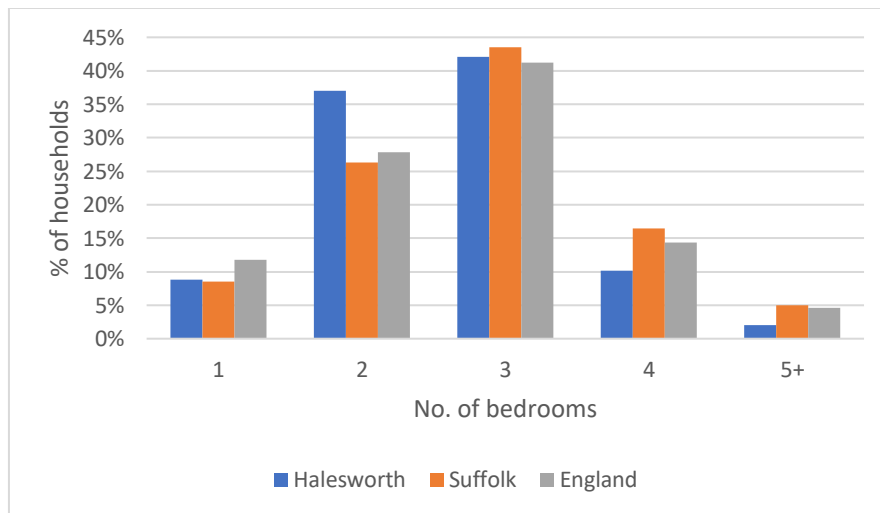
***Housing built since 2019***

- 5.4 With these developments alone, Halesworth will experience significant growth in housing over the plan period to 2036. Whilst it is expected that these allocations will address many of Halesworth's housing needs, it is important that the Neighbourhood Plan makes clear what these needs are. Moreover, it is recognised that these allocations do not represent a ceiling on growth; there will be further growth elsewhere within the town and it is important that the particular needs of the community are signposted so that opportunities to address them are taken wherever possible.

### Profile of Halesworth's housing stock<sup>4</sup>

- 5.5 A significant proportion of Halesworth's dwelling stock are smaller properties, with 88% of properties being 3-bed or less. In particular, the 37% that are 2-bed properties is very high when compared with Suffolk and the average for England. By contrast, it is proportionately under-represented for larger properties (4-bed or more). The availability of housing stock may potentially be one reason why there are fewer families in Halesworth and high levels of older people. This is shown in Figure 5.1.

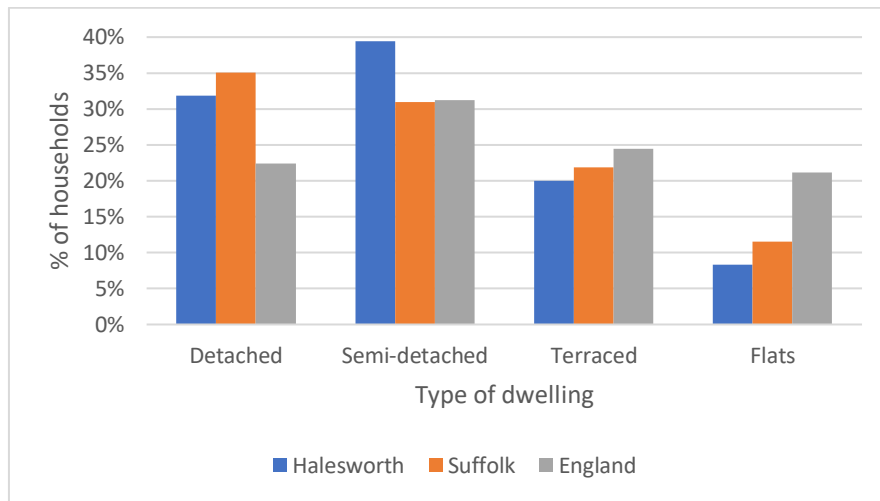
**Figure 5.1: No. of bedrooms of dwelling stock, 2011**



- 5.6 The size of dwellings largely feeds through to the type as well. Figure 5.2 shows that nearly 40% of Halesworth's properties are semi-detached, which fits with a picture of a large number of 2- and 3-bed dwellings. Nevertheless, there are still a significant number of detached dwellings (which includes bungalows).

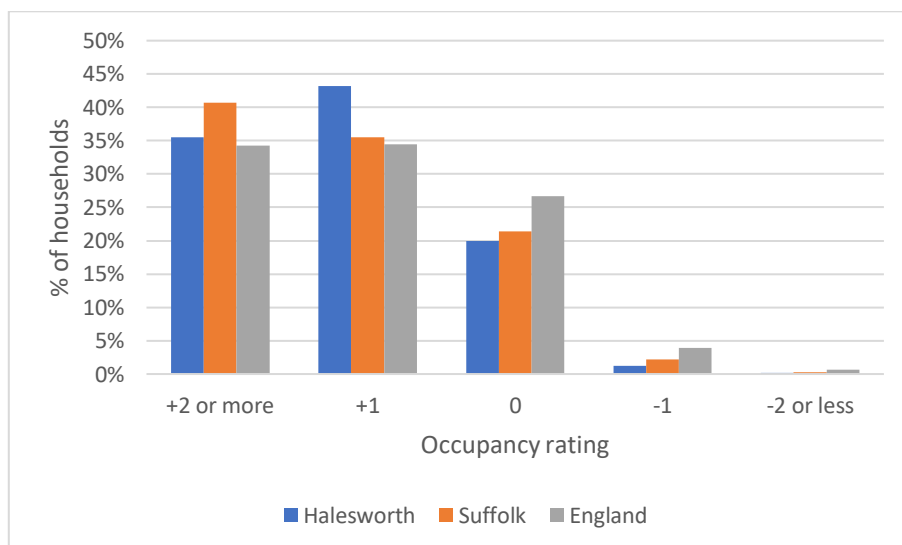
<sup>4</sup> All data in this section is from the 2011 Census, unless stated otherwise

**Figure 5.2: Type of dwelling, 2011**



5.7 Figure 5.3 shows the occupancy rates of housing. Halesworth is below average for significant under-occupation (2+ means having 2 or more bedrooms spare, based on the number of people in the household). It does have a lot of households that have one spare bedroom (+1 occupancy rating) but this is a common phenomenon in rural areas. This suggests that the predominance of smaller properties – particularly 2- and 3-bed properties – fits the needs of the local community.

**Figure 5.3: Occupancy rating of dwellings, 2011**



5.8 Over the 10-year period from December 2010 to December 2020, average house prices in the Halesworth area increased by 55% from £170,600 to £263,500<sup>5</sup>. This compares with an average increase also of 55% to £306,300 across Suffolk as a whole. In December 2020, the average price of a semi-detached property in Halesworth was £249,500, compared with £266,500 in Suffolk. So whilst Halesworth is below the Suffolk average house price, it has seen similar strong growth in

<sup>5</sup> All figures are from [www.home.co.uk](http://www.home.co.uk)



house prices. As with most places in the east of England, this has a significant impact on affordability.

- 5.9 Interviews with local estate agents and developers identified the following trends in Halesworth:
- The main demand is for 3-bed properties, followed by 4-bed properties. The demand for larger houses is growing as Halesworth becomes increasingly attractive to families and there is limited evidence of a wish to 'downsize' by existing older residents.
  - Bungalows are in high demand from the older population but there is a shortage.
  - First-time buyer interest in properties is strong in Halesworth.
  - Rental property is in very short supply.
  - An increasing demand for second homes.

## **Existing housing policy and opportunities for the Neighbourhood Plan**

- 5.10 The adopted Waveney Local Plan provides a number of strategic housing policies that seek to address housing need. The Neighbourhood Plan cannot duplicate these policies:

### **Policy WLP8.1 - Housing Mix**

- 5.11 At least 35% of new houses must be 1- or 2-bed, meaning that up to 65% of provision can be of the larger house sizes sought in Halesworth<sup>6</sup>.
- 5.12 Neighbourhood Plans are able to set out a more detailed approach to housing type and mix which reflects local circumstances and is supported by evidence. The evidence gathered through the Halesworth Housing Needs Assessment and interviews with local estate agents and developers identified two particular issues that are addressed by Policies HAL.HSG1 and HAL.HSG2 below.
- 5.13 Evidence from housebuilders suggests that they are less keen to provide 4-bed properties, so this could result in a disproportionate amount of 3-bed properties. This is despite the proportionately low amount of 4-bed properties, as shown in Figure 5.1. Moreover, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment covering the Waveney Housing Market Area identifies that there is a need for 27% of all owner-occupied housing over the period to 2040 to be 4-bed properties or larger<sup>7</sup>. Whilst there is a high proportion of retirees in Halesworth, it is important for the vibrancy of the town to attract more families, and this requires a range of family-sized housing. Four-bed units will provide spare bedrooms for most families that can be used as office spaces, which is a growing need as more people work regularly from home (including multiple workers in a single household). Policy HAL.HSG1 helps to achieve this by requiring at least 15% of all properties in a development to be 4-bed. The figure of 15% ensures that a reasonable minimum proportion of large properties on a site are provided, thereby avoiding delivery of an excess of 3-bed units.

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<sup>6</sup> The policy also states that this figure could be higher if it is demonstrably unfeasible to deliver 35% 1- and 2-bed properties

<sup>7</sup> HDH Planning and Development (2017) *Ipswich and Waveney Housing Market Areas Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Volume 2*, for Suffolk Coastal District Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Waveney District Council – Table 4.4b

**POLICY HAL.HSG1: PROVISION OF LARGE FAMILY HOUSING**

**In meeting the requirements of Waveney Local Plan Policy WLP8.1 (Housing mix), development must provide a mix of larger properties (3-bed properties or larger) and, in particular, must provide at least 15% as 4-bed properties.**

- 5.14 Second, there is a demand for bungalows, although their land-hungry nature can impact on viability. The evidence base underpinning the Neighbourhood Plan suggests that there will be sufficient provision of housing for older people in Halesworth once the Local Plan allocations – and in particular the specialist provision at the Halesworth Healthy Neighbourhood – have been delivered. Moreover, Local Plan Policy WLP8.31 (Lifetime Design) already requires provision to meet the needs of older people.

**Policy WLP8.2 - Affordable Housing**

- 5.15 On sites of 11+ dwellings, at least 30% of new houses should be provided as affordable housing. Of these, 50% should be for 'affordable rent'.
- 5.16 Neighbourhood Plans can set out higher requirements for affordable housing provision and split of affordable housing by type where local evidence of need and viability support this. The Neighbourhood Plan considered whether there was sufficient evidence to justify a higher affordable housing requirement or a higher proportion of affordable housing for rent in Halesworth. The Housing Need Assessment supplied evidence of need but the viability assessment did not support any increase and therefore the Neighbourhood Plan concluded that there was no evidence to support this. However, it is considered vital that affordable housing need is delivered in full on the Local Plan allocations and where possible, a higher proportion should be provided as affordable rented properties.
- 5.17 The Neighbourhood Plan has identified other actions and mechanisms which have the potential to support local housing need over the plan period (see below).

**Windfall sites**

- 5.18 Sites that are not allocated ('windfall sites') within the settlement boundary will continue to come forward over the plan period. Many will come forward for housing-led development. The Neighbourhood Plan supports such small housing or mixed-use developments on sites that become available where such development enables the other objectives of the Plan to be delivered. For example, development may enhance the conservation area; a mixed use development may help retain employment; it may enable the provision of green spaces that are rich in biodiversity.

**POLICY HAL.HSG2: SMALL HOUSING SITES**

**Proposals for small housing sites (10 dwellings or less) within the settlement boundary that demonstrate how they will actively address the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan will be strongly supported. In particular these objectives include:**

- a. Retaining or providing employment (as part of a mixed use development).**
- b. Provision of biodiversity-rich space.**
- c. Enhancing the conservation area.**

## Neighbourhood Plan actions to help address housing need

- 5.19 Whilst there may be insufficient evidence for the Neighbourhood Plan to justify policies, in addition to those in the Local Plan, that direct provision of new housing to meet particular needs, there are certain actions that can be undertaken to put in place other mechanisms to do so.

### Community Led Housing

- 5.20 The local community, and Halesworth Town Council as its key representative body, would have a greater influence over the occupiers of properties if they had control of the land on which they were built. Community Led Housing (CLH) is a way that this influence can be exerted on behalf of the community of Halesworth. CLH can take many forms, including Community Land Trusts, cooperatives, self-help housing, co-housing and community self-build. A CLH scheme can gain access to the Government's Community Housing Fund if it meets three criteria:
- There is meaningful community engagement and community consent occurs throughout the development process.
  - The local community group or organisation (which doesn't have to be the Town Council) manages or stewards the homes. This may be done through a mutually supported arrangement with a Registered Provider that owns the freehold or leasehold for the property.
  - The benefits to the local area or community must be clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity.
- 5.21 An important action will be to scope out the opportunities for a CLH scheme, both in terms of the structure and any potential sites which can deliver such development. This will help to secure homes for local people, to be provided in an appropriate way, most likely to rent. Importantly, these homes will be provided in perpetuity so when a tenant moves out, a new local tenant in need can be housed.

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: COMMUNITY LED HOUSING**

**Halesworth Town Council will explore the potential for Community Led Housing schemes in Halesworth.**

### Local Lettings Policy

- 5.22 Another option explored by the Neighbourhood Plan for increasing the supply of rented properties for local people is for there to be a 'Local Lettings Policy' (LLP). Unlike the coastal communities nearby (particularly Southwold and Reydon) that are faced with large numbers of second homes and holiday lets, it is not open to Halesworth to have a permanent LLP applied to new affordable rental properties.
- 5.23 However other avenues are open that can be negotiated by Halesworth Town Council when planning applications come before them. Specifically, a request could be made for LLP to be applied to all or some of the rental properties that form part of planning application, subject to Section 106 considerations.
- 5.24 The evidence gathered to date about need in Halesworth provides a good base and if this can be further supplemented over time, then there is a strong case to push for local people being given more opportunity to access these properties.



**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY**

**Halesworth Town Council will:**

- i. seek a Local Lettings Policy when residential planning applications, subject to Section 106 considerations, come before them for their consideration;**
- ii. continue to gather evidence on local need in order to justify inclusion of a Local Lettings Policy;**
- iii. Work with East Suffolk Council Housing Department to explore opportunities for expanding the provision of local lettings.**

**Building greener housing**

- 5.25 The need to improve the energy efficiency of the stock of residential properties is a nationwide issue as well as one in Halesworth. Building Regulations established minimum standards for the energy efficiency of properties yet, if the UK is to reduce the significant amount of energy used in construction and operation of its stock of buildings, more energy efficient buildings are required. Development to Passivhaus or equivalent widely-recognised standards will also serve to reduce (or even eliminate) energy bills for occupiers. This would represent a significant social benefit, particularly for those on low incomes in Halesworth.
- 5.26 Waveney Local Plan Policy WLP8.28 requires major development (defined as 10 residential properties or more or at least 1,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial floorspace) to submit a sustainability statement to demonstrate that development has maximised energy efficiency, used locally sourced materials, incorporates sustainable water management measures and minimises construction waste. However, a significant number of new properties in Halesworth will be on sites of less than 10 dwellings. In addition, many properties will be renovated, either to upgrade poor quality stock or to provide enlarged properties. Whilst development must remain deliverable (and improving energy efficiency as part of some minor renovation proposals which require consent in the Conservation Area may be impractical), such smaller developments should also seek to put in place measures which demonstrably maximise the efficiency of the built form. All development will be expected to comply with any uplift in Building Regulation standards that may be introduced during the plan period.

**POLICY HAL.HSG3: LOW ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENT HOUSING DESIGN**

**Residential developments of less than 10 dwellings must be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement that demonstrates where possible that the following measures have been incorporated:**

- a. measures to actively minimise/improve energy efficiency relating to the heating, cooling, lighting and waste management of the buildings.**
- b. sustainable design and construction measures including, where feasible, ground/air source heat pumps, solar panels and grey/rainwater harvesting solutions.**

## 6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 The availability of jobs for residents and the economic sustainability of the town were important to large numbers of residents in the first consultation sessions. The NPSG set out to address this. The following objective was consulted upon and received community approval.

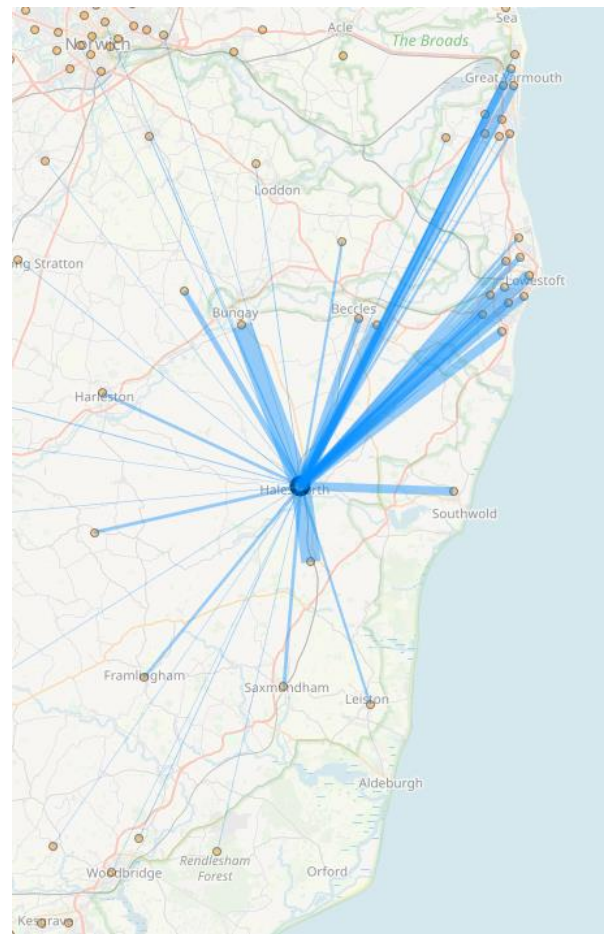
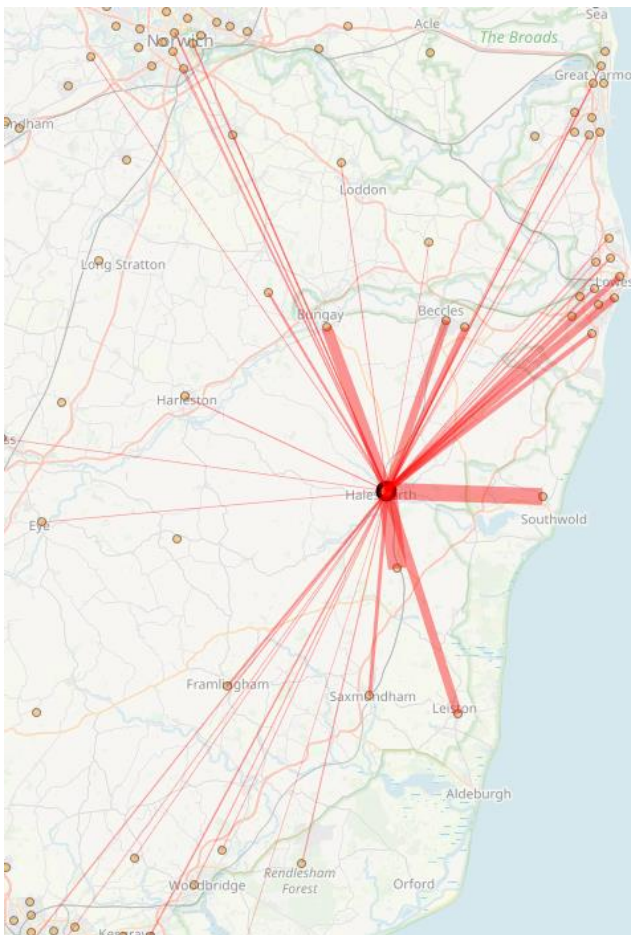
***To identify a range of spaces on both existing and new sites which attract businesses and create employment opportunities, particularly in skilled and creative industries and in tourism***

- 6.2 Halesworth is an employment hub for the surrounding area, bringing more people into the town to work each day than residents leaving to work in other places. The town has a high proportion of lower skilled jobs than the average for the rest of Suffolk and comparatively few professional and administrative jobs, reflecting the dominance of retail and construction employment. High numbers of those leaving for work go to Reydon and Southwold (to jobs at Adnams Brewery and more generally in tourism) and to Leiston (to jobs at Sizewell nuclear power station). This is shown in Figure 6.1.

**Figure 6.1: Location of employment and workers, 2011**

**Destination of workers from Halesworth**

**Origin of people working in Halesworth**



Source: Datashine

- 6.3 There are few large companies in Halesworth, with Bernard Mathews and Spectra Packaging being exceptions, and both being located in Holton outside the neighbourhood area boundary. Most of the employment is offered by small and medium sized firms (SMEs) and increasingly in micro

businesses and small start-up firms. The SMEs are mainly located on the industrial estates (at Norwich Road and Blyth Road) which offer a good range of spaces which are in high demand, and in the retail sites in the town centre. The Waveney Local Plan allocates a 2.64-hectare site for economic development adjacent to an existing industrial location on Norwich Road, just outside the neighbourhood area. This could be a logical extension of the spaces for SME development. However, office and light industrial units are increasingly in short supply, despite the continuing demand.



***Norwich Road Industrial Estate – one of three industrial estates on the edge of Halesworth***

- 6.4 The town centre in Halesworth has a good range of shops and is a valued part of what makes Halesworth an attractive place to live and visit. Like many other centres across the country, the changing ways we shop and the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on its vitality. There is a need to support the shops in the town – many of which are local independents – and to take all opportunities to improve the experience of coming to the town centre. The need to improve connectivity through the town centre and the Thoroughfare in particular is addressed elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.5 Within Halesworth town, a notable commercial land use is the presence of a number of car showrooms. This highlights one aspect of the mix of Halesworth's economy which is expected to change over the plan period. As the motor trade adapts to new demands and requirements, it is expected that they will rely on fewer showrooms focused in larger centres than Halesworth. Such sites will create opportunities to address needs and provide new opportunities in certain circumstances to deliver the types of commercial space that are likely to increase in demand in the town.

### **Small-scale workspaces and employment areas**

- 6.6 For a town such as Halesworth, economic growth is expected to come from micro-businesses<sup>8</sup>, start-ups and SMEs. Over the last few years there has been local growth in these types of businesses, particularly start-ups and micro-businesses. Estate agents reported that the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in an increasing number of people moving into Halesworth, seeking properties that would allow them to continue working from home or to work flexibly. With train services providing relatively easy access to London and the major towns on the route, this makes

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<sup>8</sup> Micro-businesses are those employing 10 employees or less



such an approach more feasible. Flexible networking/shared workspaces are needed to support this changed employment pattern.

- 6.7 The growth of these types of businesses requires suitable premises – small, flexible spaces, including those that can be shared or used for networking that are well-located in the town. Whilst the ESC Economic Growth Plan<sup>9</sup> states the importance of supporting entrepreneurs, encouraging existing businesses to grow, and attracting businesses to the area, there is growing pressure to development commercial uses into residential. Waveney Local Plan Policy WLP8.12 (Existing Employment Areas) protects the two main employment areas and only allows development for alternative uses if it can be demonstrated, through active marketing, that there is no demand for them. However, smaller scale spaces that are not in designated employment areas have less protection. Often, in terms of the land and space occupied, these are on a very small scale. Miles Ward Court is one such example, accommodating six small business enterprises but recently having been under threat of redevelopment to housing. The space it provides is invaluable and whilst it continues to provide space for these businesses at the current time, its loss would result in a number of businesses having to relocate, potentially away from Halesworth.



***Miles Ward Court – small enterprise spaces in a listed courtyard***

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Business/East-Suffolk-Growth-Plan.pdf>

Miles Ward Court

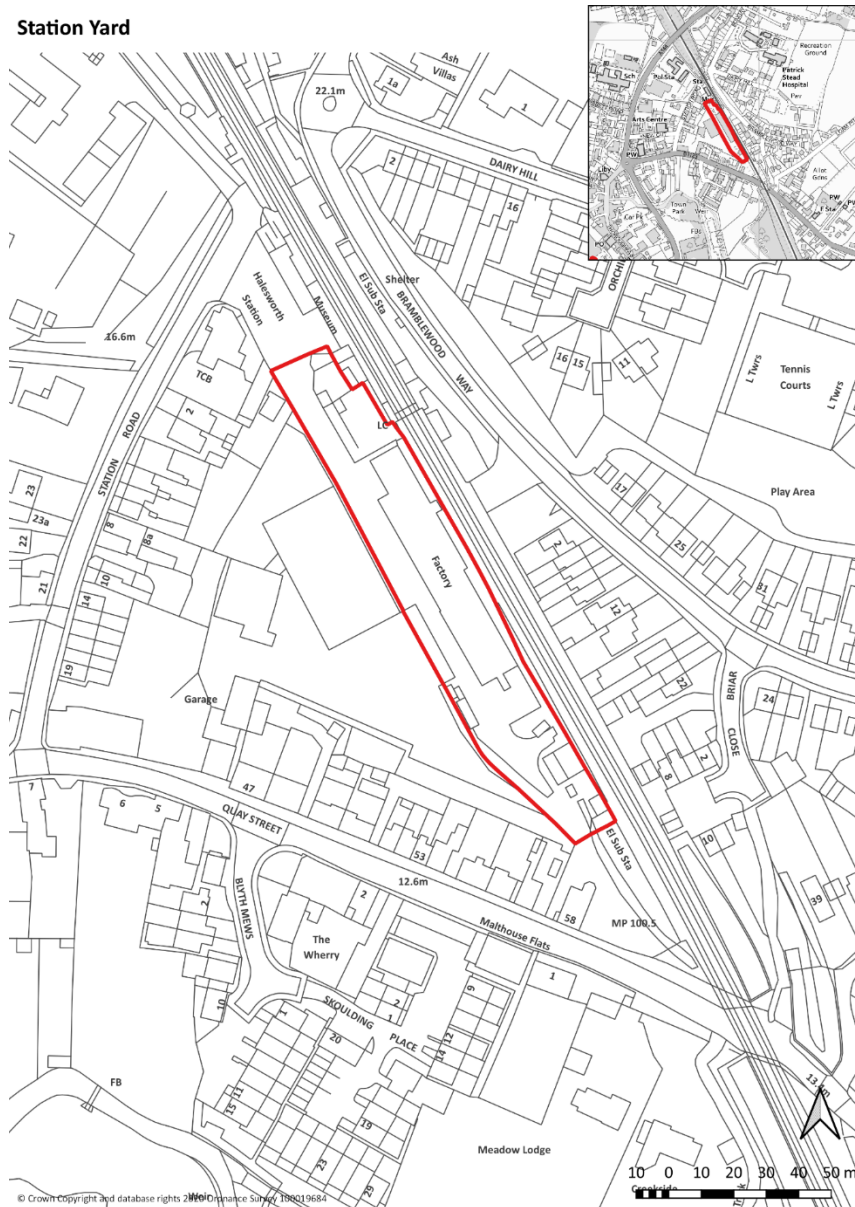


- 6.8 Similarly the Station Yard workshops provide valuable business workspace on a small scale that is considered to merit protection.



***Workshops at Station yard with a Maltings building opposite***

Station Yard



- 6.9 For the purposes of applying the policy, a Small Scale Employment Area is defined as a site covering an area of 5,000m<sup>2</sup> or less (0.5 hectares) or floorspace of 4,000m<sup>2</sup> or less.
- 6.10 Along with small-scale spaces, growing businesses have a need to move into larger premises. For those small businesses that started in micro-scale spaces, they are looking for 'move-on' space – space of the same type but more suited to the needs of a larger business. This is typically dedicated floorspace of between 200m<sup>2</sup> and 1,000m<sup>2</sup> but depends on the type of business; micro businesses will typically be looking at the lower end of that range and early-stage SMEs at the upper end.

**POLICY HAL.ED1: SMALL-SCALE COMMERCIAL WORKSPACES AND EMPLOYMENT AREAS**

- A. Within the settlement boundary of Halesworth the provision of small-scale offices/workspaces on flexible terms that would encourage the creation and growth of start-up and micro-businesses is supported. Where necessary, such provision can be made as part of a mix of uses. Such a mix of uses can include residential but only where this is necessary to make the overall scheme viable and only where the residential floorspace is less than 25% of the overall total floorspace delivered. Proposals involving residential use must demonstrate that they will minimise the impact of employment use on residential amenity without restricting the ability of the occupiers of the employment premises to carry out their business activities.**
- B. The provision of 'move-on' employment space to serve the needs of existing and growing businesses in Halesworth is encouraged on existing employment sites, where this is likely to support the floorspace needs of growing micro and SME businesses.**
- C. The following locations shown on the Policies Map are identified as Small Scale Employment Areas:**
- a. Miles Ward Court**
  - b. Station Yard**
- D. Within the Small Scale Employment Areas identified in clause C, proposals involving the loss of existing office, research and development or light industrial employment premises will only be permitted where all of the following criteria have been met:**
- 1. marketing evidence is provided which demonstrates the premises have been marketed for a sustained period of 12 months in accordance with the requirements set out in Appendix 4 of the Waveney Local Plan; and**
  - 2. the proposed use is compatible with the surrounding uses in terms of car parking, access, noise, odour and other amenity concerns.**

## **Tourism and creative industries**

- 6.11 With the 'staycation' movement, interest in arts and culture, wildlife and biodiversity and activities such as walking and cycling, Halesworth has a lot to offer. Being near but not on the coast is an advantage for these 'softer' tourist pursuits. Tourism boosts the service industries that underpin it, such as restaurants, galleries, antiques and shopping. For tourism to grow and for Halesworth to become a place more tourists want to stay, there needs to be an increase in accommodation (currently there is one small hotel and one restaurant with guest rooms in the town), better connectivity to and from the Thoroughfare - the shopping, eating and cultural heart of the town - and better signage to make it easier for people to take advantage of what is on offer. Evidence gathered from interviews with existing shop owners attests to this.





***A selection of antique shops, cafes, restaurants and hotels that serves the tourism industry***

- 6.12 Whilst no specific sites are available for allocation to deliver such uses, there are a number of large sites within the town that could, if they come forward during the plan period, support such opportunities. This is addressed under 'Major development opportunities'.
- 6.13 Along with these opportunities, there is a need to provide improved connectivity and signage, both within and to the town. This is addressed in more detail in the section on the Town Centre.
- 6.14 Data from the 2011 Census indicates that Halesworth has a higher proportion of people working in the creative, art and leisure sectors than in the rest of the Suffolk. The town is a part of a

recognised artistic East Suffolk community. The Cut Arts Centre, the Halesworth Gallery, small commercial galleries and art shops create an art infrastructure that attracts visitors and contributes to the local economy. The Halesworth Healthy Neighbourhood plans incorporate art and performance on the site. A report by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)<sup>10</sup> highlights the importance of culture and art for economic growth in the area. With support and recognition this sector could be expanded which would offer more jobs and encourage further tourism.



***A pottery shop on Bridge Street and Halesworth Art Gallery in 16th Century Almshouses***

- 6.15 A small survey of those in the sector for the Neighbourhood Plan identified a need for studio/workshop spaces and places to show and sell. Such spaces should be encouraged on mixed use development sites in the town. This could follow the example of the Art Station on the High Street in Saxmundham, which has recently created work studios, networking spaces, a dance studio and exhibition space.

#### **POLICY HAL.ED2: TOURISM AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

- A. Within the settlement boundary, proposals to improve and enhance the tourism offer and the creative industries sector in Halesworth are encouraged. In particular, proposals to deliver studio/workshop/gallery space will be strongly supported.**
- B. Proposals for hotel accommodation should be located within Halesworth town centre. Only if it can be demonstrated that no other suitable sites are available within the town centre should alternative locations be proposed within the settlement boundary.**

<sup>10</sup> New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (2016) *Culture Drives Growth: The East's Cultural Strategy: 2016-2022*

## Major development opportunities

- 6.16 The development of the Neighbourhood Plan has involved extensive engagement with a wide variety of owners of major sites in Halesworth. The Site Options Appraisal report that informed the plan assessed a number of sites identified by the Neighbourhood Plan Group. These sites were all considered as being suitable or potentially suitable for mixed use development with housing included in order to enhance site viability. At the present time few of these sites are explicitly available for mixed use development within the town. However, over the lifetime of the plan, it is likely that a number of these sites could come forward for development. This could be for a variety of reasons including changes in commercial markets or opportunities to make more efficient use of land close to the centre of Halesworth. Certainly if Halesworth's offer allows it to thrive, then its attractiveness to commercial businesses and residents (to spend money in the town) will increase which could increase financial incentives to bring land forward for development.
- 6.17 In this regard, it is important that growth and change of Halesworth provides an appropriate balance of uses and activities. The Waveney Local Plan allocates sufficient sites to deliver one of the primary needs in the area, housing. However to allow a community to thrive, this must be complemented by a range of other uses. Within the settlement boundary, this should include commercial, leisure-related and community activities as well as housing. This is particularly the case on sites where there were previously commercial activities as this will ensure that the commercial base of the town is maintained and potentially enhanced. Moreover, whilst the base of community facilities in Halesworth is already strong and varied, with further provision proposed on the sites allocated in the Local Plan, large sites within the settlement boundary offer potentially one-time opportunities for step-change improvements. One such example that has been considered through the Neighbourhood Plan is the creation of some form of secondary education which the town lacks.
- 6.18 Major development is defined in the NPPF as (i) housing development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more; or (ii) non-residential development that creates additional floorspace of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or more, or the site has an area of 1 hectare or more. Proposals for major development of sites that come forward within the settlement boundary and are not allocated for residential or employment use in the Waveney Local Plan are expected to consider a mix of uses on the site. Given the importance of commercial employment identified in the plan, this should consider the provision of employment space (particularly which meets the need of the start-up/micro-business sector), but should also consider, as appropriate, uses including retail, creative, community, leisure and tourism. Where these sites are within or immediately adjacent to the town centre boundary, they should also consider the provision of public space and the need for linkages through the town centre (this is addressed in more detail in the Halesworth Town Centre chapter).
- 6.19 It is acknowledged that in many cases, residential uses are needed to ensure the viability of a mixed use scheme. Proposals that include residential uses are therefore encouraged, provided that this does not dominate the scheme and limit the potential for the other uses in the mix to prosper by virtue of their limited scale.

**POLICY HALE.D3: MAJOR DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

- A. Within the settlement boundary of Halesworth, major development proposals (as defined in the NPPF) on sites not allocated in the Waveney Local Plan for residential or employment uses will be supported where they deliver a mix of the uses identified below:**
- 1. small scale commercial workshops and workspaces, with associated meeting space**
  - 2. community uses**
  - 3. housing, included live-work units and/or supported housing**
  - 4. education uses**
  - 5. tourism activities**
  - 6. studio/workshop/gallery space**
  - 7. cultural and creative activities**
- B. Where a major development proposal is within or adjacent to the town centre boundary of Halesworth, as shown on the Policies Map, the proposal should demonstrate how it has considered incorporating the following:**
- 1. Public open space**
  - 2. Improved pedestrian linkages into the Primary Shopping Area**
- C. Proposals should seek to ensure that no particular use dominates the scheme mix such that it is likely to limit the potential for the other uses in the mix to prosper by virtue of their limited scale.**



### Long term car park site



- 6.20 A significant proportion of the community has identified that a need for Halesworth is a new supermarket. The Waveney Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment 2016<sup>11</sup> assessed that Halesworth did have a need for 126m<sup>2</sup> of convenience retail (i.e. food store) floorspace. The current long term car park site in the town centre (accessed off Saxons Way) is seen as providing an opportunity to deliver such a requirement. Outline planning permission was granted for a retail foodstore on the site in 2002 but was not taken further. The Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment identified the long term car park site as a significant opportunity to provide new retail and/or leisure-led development. There is, at the present time, interest by a supermarket operator, and a planning application is expected in 2022.
- 6.21 For such an important location within the town centre, the site provides an opportunity to deliver this but it should not only provide a supermarket and parking. It provides an opportunity, through good design, to deliver a wider range of uses (including further retail space, workshops, housing and community uses), improved connectivity to the town centre and a high quality public open space.
- 6.22 The Neighbourhood Plan has maintained ongoing dialogue with the developer in respect of these proposals, with the intention of pushing to ensure that any scheme maximises the potential to contribute towards the objectives of the Plan. Given the advanced nature of proposals, it is not appropriate to have a site-specific policy about this in the Plan. However, the Town Council will continue to engage with the developer to secure the most beneficial outcome.

**NON-POLICY ACTION: LONG TERM CAR PARK SITE**

**Halesworth Town Council will engage with the landowner/promoter of development of the long term car park site in Halesworth town centre to ensure that development proposals address the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan.**

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<sup>11</sup> Carter Jonas (2017) *Waveney Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment*, for Waveney District Council (now East Suffolk Council)

## 7 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- 7.1 The Neighbourhood Plan community consultations showed residents greatly value Halesworth's community infrastructure as part of what makes the town such an attractive place to live. The growth in population will create a need to improve and expand the community infrastructure offer. The objective therefore is:

***Provide a wider range of better-quality community, sport / leisure and education facilities for all ages***

### **Play spaces**

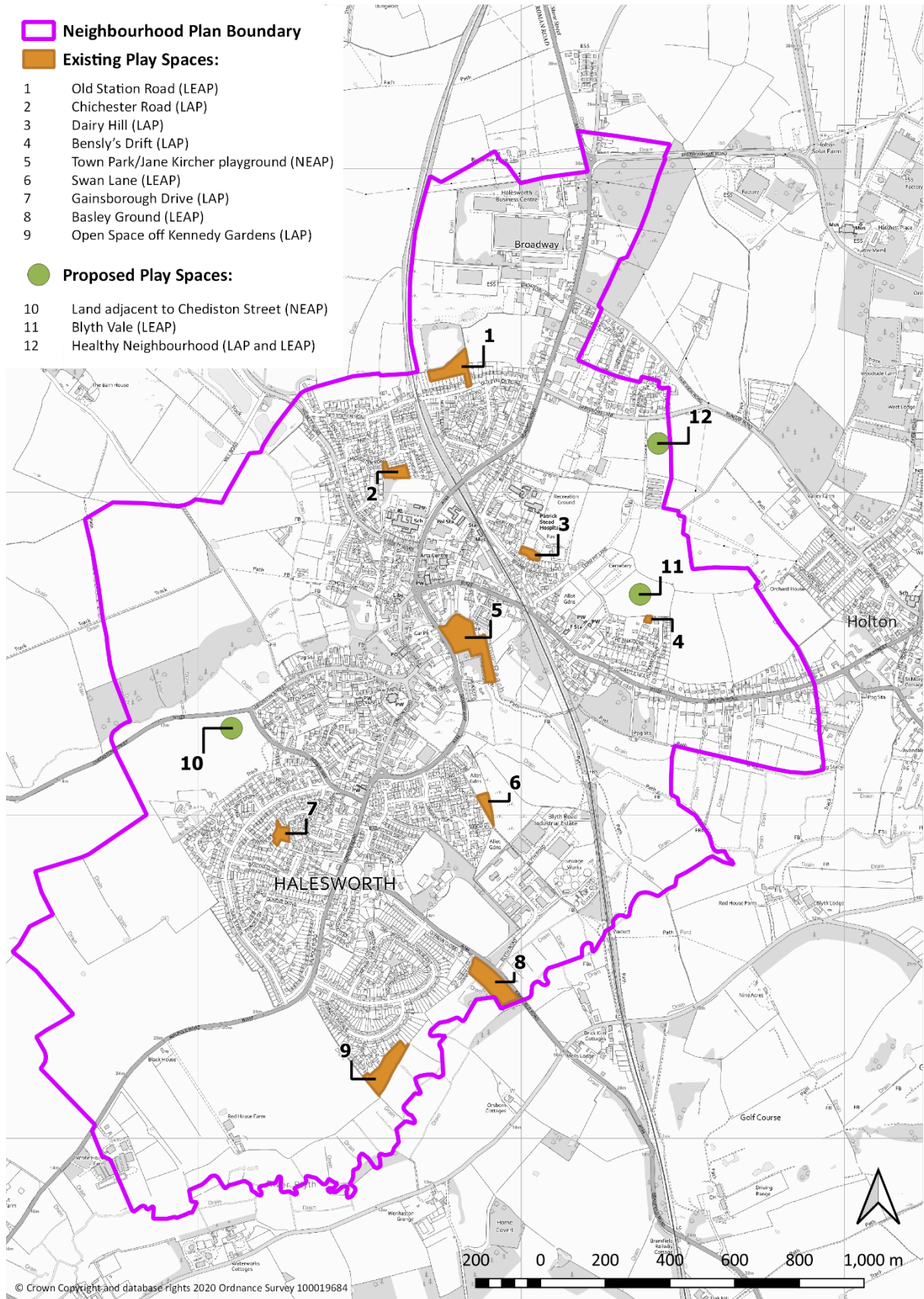
- 7.2 Coupled with the objective to enhance Halesworth's green spaces so that it can become a greener town with a higher quality natural environment, it is important that the public spaces in the town provide quality facilities that will make people want to come and use them.
- 7.3 The current and proposed play areas are shown in Figure 7.1. The Waveney Open Space Needs Assessment 2015<sup>12</sup> noted that provision was above the recommended standard, based on the population at the time although equipment was only of medium or low quality. The Local Plan site allocations will increase provision: a new Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) at Chediston Street in the southwest of the town, aimed at older children is to be provided; Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP), catering for children up to 8, are planned at Blyth View/Hill Farm Road in the east and in the Halesworth and Holton Healthy Neighbourhood/Harrisons Lane in the north. The latter will also provide a Local Area for Play (LAP).
- 7.4 A number of these existing play spaces are considered by the community to be of poor quality, either due to being in a poor state of repair or having a limited range of play equipment. This assessment was supported by a 2017 report undertaken for Waveney District Council<sup>13</sup>. Since that time there have been no improvements in the quality of existing provision, except for the Swan Lane LEAP, which has been improved through some basic maintenance and tree planting.
- 7.5 Consultation with children aged 10 and 11 highlighted the lack of spaces and equipment geared towards the older age group. The one NEAP in the Town Park, which has a skate park and half basketball court, is popular but needs much improvement. The children were clear as to what they wanted - zip wires, climbing frames / walls / adventure course, slides and swings (differing sizes for different age groups).
- 7.6 In light of the growth proposed in the Waveney Local Plan and the desire by the community to have a wider range of good quality play facilities in easily accessible locations across Halesworth, the approach in the Neighbourhood Plan is to develop three existing play spaces in strategically geographical located areas as NEAPs. These are:
- Old Station Road (north) – at present a LEAP
  - Town Park & 'Jane Kircher' (central) - at present a NEAP but the equipment for the older age group is inadequate
  - Chediston Street (south west) – the proposed NEAP but issues of connectivity and accessibility need to be addressed.

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<sup>12</sup> Waveney District Council (2015) *Waveney Open Space Needs Assessment*

<sup>13</sup> Sentinel Leisure Trust (2017) *Play Space Evaluation Report and Action Plan*, for Waveney District Council

**Figure 7.1: Location of existing play areas serving Halesworth**





- The two existing sites need investment in new equipment suited to the target age group. The proposed space on the Chediston development could offer good facilities but will be limited in its appeal and usefulness to a wider group of children unless two issues of connectivity are properly addressed: Firstly, it should cater for the wider community and specifically, existing housing in and around the Dukes Drive area. This need was identified in the Waveney Council Open Space Needs Assessment (2015) report and the Local Plan Policy WLP 4.2 (and paragraph 4.20). To achieve this objective, consideration would need to be given to creating a connecting route, for pedestrians and cyclist, through either Barley Meadow or Allington Road open space. Both are feasible. From Dukes Drive near to the Barley Meadow turning the distance to the proposed playground via Dukes Drive and Roman Way would be a 1km journey. With the proposed path via Barley meadow this is reduced to 0.38km making it much more accessible for local children. Without these access improvements parents may be inclined to drive to the Town Park.
- Secondly, its location on the other side of the busy Roman Way makes it potentially unsafe and inaccessible for many older children. A form of controlled crossing should be provided at an appropriate place on Roman Way, to enable pedestrians, cyclists and car drivers to be aware of each other's presence

7.7 The remaining play areas in the town should all be maintained as Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) or Local Areas for Play (LAPs) The possible exception is Bensly's Drift which has very limited, poor quality provision and will, in effect, be replaced by the new play area located in the new Blyth View housing development. The Local Plan Policy WLP8.23 (Protection of open space) which has a presumption against the loss of any open space or community sport and recreation facilities other than where an assessment demonstrates that the open space is no longer needed or where the space will be replaced by an equivalent in a location equally accessible to the community.

7.8 Local play spaces can also act as open-air places where adults, including parents, can gather and walk. The Kennedy Close/Avenue LAP is located where the Neighbourhood Plan proposes an option for access to the proposed nature reserve, and the linking piece of land between the LAPs in Gainsborough Drive and Jermyn Way allow good connectivity in that part of town. The town council has undergone a survey of residents near to all open spaces, including those with play equipment, asking what they would like to see in the local space near to them, whether bird boxes, trees, benches, wildflowers, dog bins and better equipment. A costed plan for these improvements has been produced.

7.9 Proposals that help this strategy for improving play provision and improves facilities for adults to enjoy the open spaces will be supported. On sites where East Suffolk Council retains ownership, the Town Council will work with ESC to secure agreement to such improvements. Community Infrastructure Levy funds could be called upon.

#### **POLICY HAL.COM1: PLAY FACILITIES**

**Proposals to expand and/or improve existing play facilities to a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) standard will be supported in the following locations:**

- 1. Old Station Road**
- 2. Town Park & 'Jane Kircher'**
- 3. Chediston Street (Local Plan Policy WLP4.2))**

**NON-POLICY ACTION: FUNDING IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING PLAY FACILITIES**

**Halesworth Town Council will use Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to improve the quality of existing Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and Local Areas for Play (LAPs) in Halesworth.**

## Education

- 7.10 Access to education is an issue of particular significance in Halesworth. The town does not have a secondary school, the nearest being in Bungay and Beccles. As a result, many children have to get the bus to school; in 2021/22, it will cost Suffolk County Council over £900 per pupil per year to provide school bus transport (source: Suffolk County Council). As of June 2019, 88% of secondary school pupils from Halesworth attended Bungay High School.
- 7.11 Whilst it is acknowledged that the provision of secondary education is a strategic matter and therefore not an issue that the Neighbourhood Plan can necessarily directly address, the need for local secondary education provision increases and likely to continue to do so over the lifetime of the plan. As noted in Section 2, Halesworth has low levels of educational attainment and a high proportion of unskilled or low skilled workers. Central Halesworth is one of the 20% most deprived areas for employment in the country. It is recognised that, whilst not the determining factor in this, secondary education is likely to be a major contributing factor as to why this is the case.
- 7.12 The Neighbourhood Plan does not look to allocate a site for a new school. However, it does look to promote and support the principal of a new secondary school in Halesworth. In the current English education system, there is the potential for a free school which would be delivered and run outside of education authority control. With this in mind, the NPSG initially engaged with SCC and thereafter, the Seckford Education Trust (SET), to establish the potential to deliver a free school in Halesworth. SET is an academy that runs four schools in Suffolk, including SET Beccles School, and was established to set up and run free schools in Suffolk. At a later point, discussions were widened to include Asset Education, the academy which manages the Edgar Sewter Primary School, The proposal to develop a new school would, by its nature, be a long term project but meanwhile, it is important that the strategy for education in Suffolk meets the needs of the community of Halesworth as much as any other part of the county. Adding to the case for local provision, the Neighbourhood Plan supports SCC in its role as education authority to develop an education strategy which ensures that children have to travel as little as possible to go to school.
- 7.13 The complexities of education provision means that a range of partners need to be involved to consider major projects such as a new school. These include the statutory authority (SCC), the planning authority (ESC) and the local school providers. As discussions were progressing it became apparent that neither SCC or ESC could support a new school given their school number projections and the planning requirements and on the basis of this SET decided to withdraw from the discussions. The focus has now shifted to looking at how current provision could be better tailored to better meet the needs of Halesworth's young people. To this effect, a working party is proposed which will involve key stakeholders.
- 7.14 The Local Plan recognises the need for under-fives pre-school provision (Policy WLP4.5) and the possibility of it being located on the same site as the community centre on the Dairy Farm site (see paragraph 7.15 below). The Neighbourhood Plan strongly supports such provision and stresses the need for close and cooperative working between Halesworth Town Council and Suffolk County Council if the two resources are to be provided in the same building.

**NON-POLICY ACTION: SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION IN HALESWORTH**

**Halesworth Town Council will support proposals for an education-based working group, hosted by EAST, including relevant stakeholders, to address the needs of Halesworth secondary school aged children, improving their options and opportunities, including the amelioration of travel costs associated with A-level students.**

## **Other leisure opportunities**

- 7.15 Engagement by the NPSG with the community and younger people in particular identified that many people have leisure interests that go beyond the usual sports/leisure considerations. In particular, young people wanted a 'gaming café' in the town centre where they could meet. Changes to the Use Classes Order provides a lot of flexibility as to what shop units can be used for without the need for planning permission. Therefore such a use can occupy a unit in the town centre without restriction.
- 7.16 Local Plan Policy WLP8.22 (Built Community Services and Facilities) supports the provision of new facilities. Moreover, it only allows the loss of an existing built community facility if it is demonstrated that there is no longer a need and its existing use is not viable. Re-provision of an existing facility to an equivalent standard in an alternative location in the vicinity is acceptable.
- 7.17 The Local Plan allocation at the Halesworth and Holton Healthy Neighbourhood proposes a range of new community facilities, replacement of the Apollo Youth Club and retention of existing sports and play facilities at Dairy Hill. In addition, the allocation at Dairy Farm requires land for the provision of a community centre. Therefore whilst the policy requirements to deliver improved and expanded community and leisure facilities are in place, the Neighbourhood Plan wishes to reinforce the following fundamental principles:
- There is strong support for the provision of a new community centre. Paragraph 4.36 of the Local Plan states that housing is allocated on the Dairy Farm site in order to help deliver the community centre and a comprehensive approach for both housing and community facilities should be taken. The community centre is to be funded in full through a combination of district and neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies, with any external funding secured enabling an enhanced level of provision. In order to move the scheme forward, more community consultation is needed to establish what residents and the Town Council would wish to see provided in a new centre. It will be important that the Town Council leads on this community consultation.
  - The Halesworth and Holton Healthy Neighbourhood allocation in the Local Plan is for a mix of housing and other uses, including leisure and sports facilities. To date, a number of planning applications have been submitted but more work is needed to ensure that all the requirements of the local plan allocation are met. For the community of Halesworth, the need to ensure that the community, leisure and sports facilities are delivered in full is of fundamental importance.
  - The Halesworth and Holton Healthy Neighbourhood allocation in the Local Plan is also expected to re-provide a space for the Apollo Youth Club. However, it is not clear how such

provision will be funded. This element has to be considered by Halesworth Town Council, Halesworth Volunteers Centre (HVC), ESC and SCC, with the Town Council having formally resolved to take the lead. However, there is also an issue as to whether a 'bricks and mortar' solution is the right one. There is supposed to be a working group considering these matters. For the purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan, this matter can only be referenced in the strongest terms, to urge this working group to make speedy progress. As part of this process, it is vital that young people in Halesworth are fully consulted.

**NON-POLICY ACTION: COMMUNITY CENTRE REQUIREMENTS**

**Halesworth Town Council will lead on consultation with the local community, including young people in particular, regarding the requirements for a new community centre on the land at Dairy Farm.**



## 8 DESIGN AND HERITAGE

8.1 In the first round of consultations residents were asked 'what do you like most about living in Halesworth?' A high proportion mentioned the historic buildings and the feel of the Thoroughfare and wanted them protected.

8.2 A noted visitor to the town, Simon Knott, writing about Suffolk Churches in 2007 expressed the view of many:

*Halesworth's main street, the Thoroughfare, is one of Suffolk's best-kept secrets. It is the prettiest and most interesting main street of any of East Anglia's smaller towns. An unequalled range of 17th, 18th and 19th century frontages....<sup>14</sup>*

8.3 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has therefore identified the following objective which was supported by a large majority of respondents:

***To maintain and enhance the character and heritage of Halesworth's built environment whilst encouraging sympathetic contemporary design in new developments.***

### Design

8.4 In order to establish the key aspects that the design of new buildings or refurbishments need to take into consideration in order to preserve and enhance the character of Halesworth, a Design Guide Report<sup>15</sup> was commissioned. Its aim is to ensure that new development – particularly housing - in the town reflects its essential character. However, this does not mean that all new developments should copy the design of the past but rather that an appreciation of traditional architecture combined with thoughtful application of modern building techniques and suitable materials should provide the basic inspiration for new developments.

8.5 Modern building can be from one extreme of the very modern employing new materials, technologies and forms through to accurate reproductions. The vast majority of the new estates in the town fall between the two – mainstream traditional - using brick and tile and mass-produced materials. These provide comfortable and affordable homes but can result in a uniformity and a lack of pleasing detail or appreciation of the environment and location.

8.6 The incorporation of traditional local features together with simple but well-established architectural principles of form, scale and detail along with sympathetic materials, varied roofscapes and layouts will help create a more varied and interesting environment.

8.7 An example of how architectural principles can be used to create more varied buildings is the Library. Constructed in the late twentieth century, to the design of the Suffolk County Architect, it is a model for contemporary design in an historic urban environment. It has a strong modern element – the fully glazed elevation – and has been harmoniously combined with a traditional roof form and finish. It follows the street pattern well and the adjoining historic frontages.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.suffolkchurches.co.uk/>

<sup>15</sup> AECOM (2020) *Halesworth Design Guide*, for the Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – <https://halesworthtowncouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2020/02/Design-Codes-Report-PDF-Final.pdf>



***The library***

- 8.8 Below are some examples of houses that could create a more interesting environment in Halesworth than the rather formulaic new-build housing that has predominated over recent years:



***Small house in Halesworth where the varied roof line and use of materials contrasts well but does not compete with or copy the adjoining traditional listed cottage***



***New social housing in Framlingham where the houses sit well on the hill side and use sympathetic brick to good effect***



***Good examples of high quality contemporary design:  
Terraced housing in Southwold***

***Refurbished house in Woodbridge***

- 8.9 Generally, the Design Guide should inform development in Halesworth but more specifically it has been used to develop a series of fundamental design principles that reflect the character of Halesworth. They are important because they will help to create a consistent and high-quality standard of design. This aligns with Waveney Local Plan Policy WLP8.29 (Design) which requires development to demonstrate high quality design which reflects local distinctiveness.
- 8.10 Along with the Design Guide, the Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas<sup>16</sup> provides some useful guidelines on design, despite its age. It is in the process of being superseded by a new Design

<sup>16</sup> Suffolk County Council (2000) *Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas*, supplementary planning guidance adopted by East Suffolk Council (<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/suffolk-design-guide-for-residential-areas/>)



Initiative. The ESC Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document also contains useful advice on many heritage matters<sup>17</sup>.

8.11 The Design Guide has identified specific design matters that are addressed under a number of headings as follows:

**Townscape structure and settlement pattern**

8.12 Recent new development has not followed the historic street pattern, favouring culs-de-sac which lack walkable and cyclable connectivity. Proposals should ensure that:

- the development integrates with and enhances the form of its existing surroundings;
- road patterns should ensure permeability for cyclists and pedestrians;
- streets should curve and bend to provide interest and a sequence of views;
- they are responsive to the historic layout of the town including plot widths, proportions, density, allowing for modern needs such as power charging units for on street parking areas;
- they relate to and where possible enhance the setting and context within which the application site is set. Proposals should complement the local character.



*Culs de sac and examples of better connectivity*

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Local-Plans/Supplementary-documents/Historic-Environment-SPD/Historic-Environment-SPD-reduced.pdf>



### **Pattern and layout of buildings**

8.13 Houses in the central parts of Halesworth have frontages which define the edges of public realm whereas houses further out are set behind front gardens. The intricate network of streets and pedestrian routes within the historic core create interesting views and a varied street scene including houses tucked behind other houses in almost courtyard-type alleyways. Future built form in these areas, if appropriate, should follow the existing pattern of development. A range of densities, house types and plot layouts should be used, mirroring that which exists throughout Halesworth. Proposals should ensure that:

- they meaningfully connect with existing routes, entrances and patterns of movement;
- densities should be similar to those in the surrounding area, generally reducing as one moves from town centre to town centre periphery and then to the outlying residential areas.

### **Building line and boundary treatments**

8.14 Building lines in the centre of town are clearly defined and should be retained in all future development proposals. In contrast, the building lines in residential developments on the periphery of Halesworth are reinforced by boundary treatments such as low walls, railings or hedgerows. The building lines to these buildings are set back from the kerb and contain gardens or driveways. Future development in these areas should continue to provide a mix of boundary treatments in line with the existing character of Halesworth. Proposals should ensure that:

- the ratio of building to garden in proposed development should reflect that of the existing dwelling;
- common boundary treatments are used (including modern and innovative designs) as long as they are complementary to the neighbouring streets and enhance the character of the town, e.g. brick walls rather than close board fencing;
- the materials proposed for new boundary treatment should be of high quality, respond to the character of the buildings in the area and have strong attention to architectural detailing in both modern and traditional materials, e.g. brick 'crinkle crinkle' walls;
- active frontages outside independent shops and cafes along Bridge Street and Thoroughfare are retained and enhanced;
- boundary treatments reinforce the continuity of the building line along a street;
- street furniture enhances the character and complements the existing historic street furniture including the lighting, seating and signage; and
- there is sufficient provision for management of household waste and recycling (including kerbside collection) without adverse impact on the local environment and neighbours.



***Brick and railing frontages along Quay Street***



***Old and new boundary treatments showing minimal use of structural boundaries in the modern developments***

**Building heights and roofline**

8.15 Building heights vary across Halesworth creating a diverse range of roof heights and pitches resulting in a characterful skyline across the town. Future developments should retain and enhance this aspect of Halesworth skyline. Taller buildings are present in the centre of town with none exceeding three storeys and two storey residential developments are typical throughout the rest of Halesworth. Proposals should ensure that:

- building heights should reflect the prevailing height of surrounding buildings unless through assessment it can be demonstrated that taller buildings will preserve or enhance the local character. Any identified impacts to the setting or neighbouring buildings should be mitigated;
- roofs should respect the existing roofscape that consists mostly of pitched and hipped roofs;
- dormers should not be out of proportion with the original building. Materials and architectural detailing should respond to the type and scale of the host building; and
- a diversity of frontage, scale and form of development will be the best way to creating a well-integrated development which fits into the existing urban fabric and compliments the existing character of Halesworth.



***Roofline to buildings along London Road***



***Roof lines in new developments in Halesworth***

### **Materials**

8.16 As with many of the local market towns, the best of Halesworth's buildings have a strong materials palette distinctive to Suffolk. Such a palette should be incorporated into new proposals. Materials need to be of high quality and reflect the vernacular and materials inherent in Halesworth providing an authentic development which would enhance the local character and should look to include modern sustainable materials where possible. Further guidance is provided in the Halesworth Design Guide. The following materials that are commonly found in Halesworth being considered part of the palette of materials, although others may be appropriate if they are part of the local vernacular:

- Roof materials: red clay plain tiles, red clay pantiles, black glazed pantiles with some Welsh slate, red brick chimney stacks, grey-red clay plain tiles, red clay pantiles. Light coloured or brown tiles should be avoided. Guttering and rain water pipes should be round and black.



***Different types of roof tile in Halesworth***

- Building materials: clay bricks (Suffolk whites, soft red), proper brick bond occasionally with feature banding. Painted lime plaster finished in locally prevalent earth colour wash, timber frame.



***Types of building facades in Halesworth***

- Concrete tiles, artificial slates, plastic and aluminium windows or doors should be avoided. Natural materials such as wood and new materials such as zinc and cross-laminated timber could add to the range of materials in use in developments.

### **Public buildings**

- 8.17 Development over the plan period will not only consist of housing. Indeed, the Local plan requirement for a new community centre and pre-school setting at Dairy Farm will mean the delivery of new public buildings. Other buildings may become available for redevelopment. The much-loved Halesworth Library, illustrated above, is an excellent example of contemporary design on a public building. It is important that publicly commissioned buildings look to employ high quality design and materials and are seen as an opportunity for innovative contemporary design.

#### **POLICY HAL.DH1: DESIGN**

**A. Development should demonstrate high quality design and layout which respects the local character of Halesworth identified in the Halesworth Design Guide. This includes the development of public buildings.**

**B. In delivering high quality design, development proposals must demonstrate the appropriate use of design, layout, materials and features. The following principles should be considered as part of design proposals:**

- 1. Development should integrate with and enhance the form of its existing surroundings, with all connections including road patterns ensuring permeability for cyclists and pedestrians.**
- 2. A range of densities, house types (where appropriate) and plot layouts should be used.**
- 3. Building lines in the town centre should be preserved. Elsewhere, boundary treatments such as low walls, railings or hedgerows should be used to define the plot boundaries.**
- 4. Building heights and rooflines should provide diversity of frontage, scale and form, with building heights that reflect the prevailing height of surrounding buildings unless it can be demonstrated that a taller building could complement or enhance the local character.**
- 5. Provision of roof and building materials that reflect the local Suffolk palette. The choice of materials is expected to minimise the carbon footprint of development.**
- 6. Parking to support residential uses should be provided within the development and should include a proportion of well-designed on-street parking provisions, in accordance with Suffolk County Council parking standards.**

**C. All major residential development proposals should include a proportionate statement and illustrations demonstrating how the principles and guidance in the Halesworth Design Guide have been addressed.**



## Views and gateways to Halesworth town



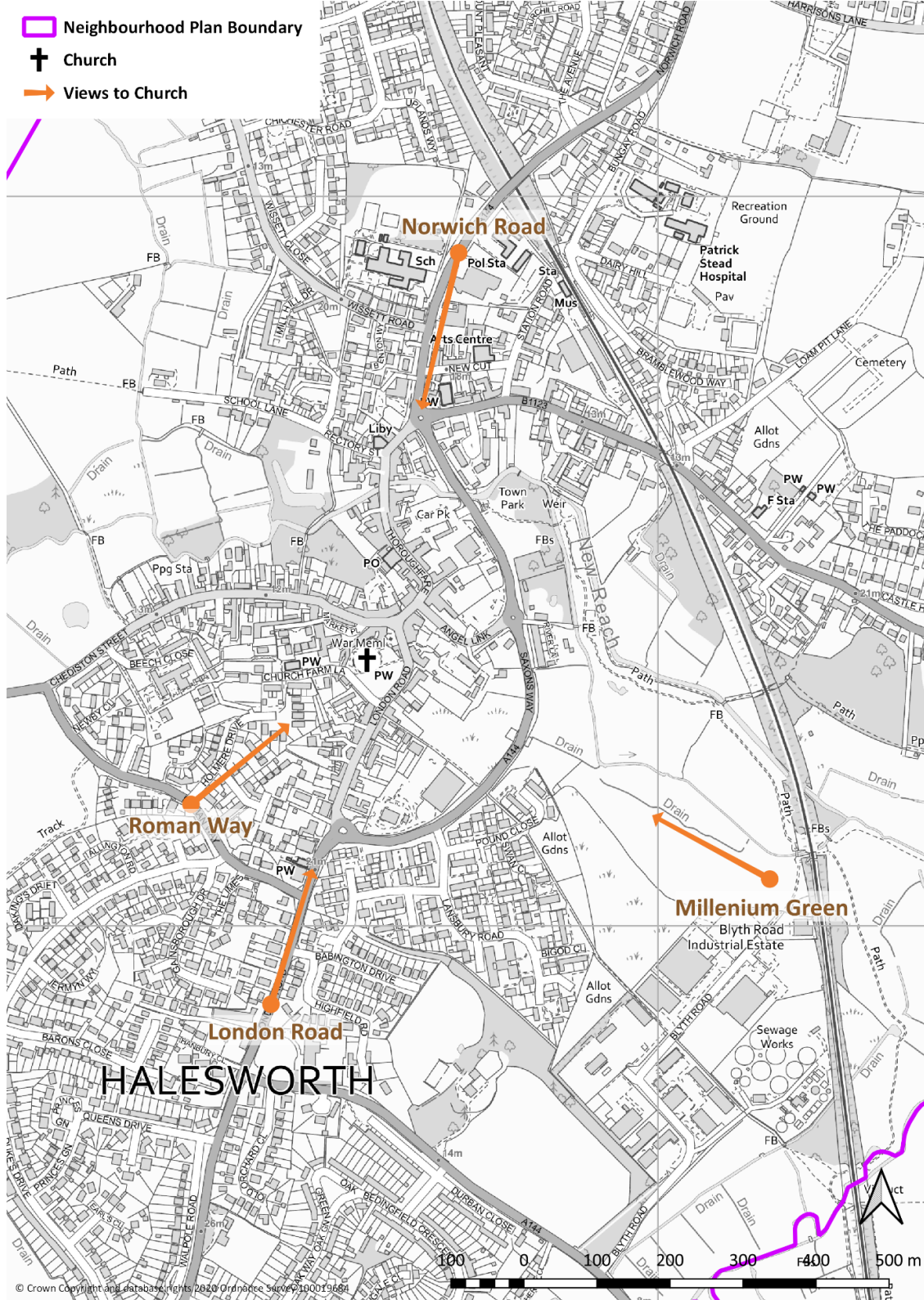
8.18 This aerial view shows how Halesworth nestles around the Church Tower and is exceptionally well contained within the surrounding agricultural countryside and around the watercourses that lead into the Town River bisecting the centre.



***Views of St Mary's Church tower (clockwise from top left): from the Millennium Green in winter, up the hill on Norwich Road, London Road and Roman Way***

8.19 St Mary's Church is the major landmark in the town and it is considered important, in order to preserve the character of Halesworth, to protect the views of the Church Tower as you enter the town. The specific viewpoints are shown in Figure 8.1.

**Figure 8.1: Views of St Mary's Church Tower**





8.20 There are two points of entry into the town at Chediston Road and Walpole Road where there is a sharp change from countryside to urban area creating a pleasing gateway. Other roads into town such as Wissett Road, Holton Road and Harrisons Lane have seen significant new residential developments, as far as the parish boundary, that have a suburban, built-up feel. The overall setting of the town, with an abundance of trees and shrubs, is important for preserving its identity. In this regard, its gateways are key to this. Any development that might occur in the future along the gateway routes into and out of Halesworth therefore needs to ensure that the transition from rural countryside to urban settlement is gradual, avoiding dense, bulky buildings with large, bare walls as the first built development one sees on entering the town. Development can achieve this through effective landscaping buffers along boundaries, including lining the gateway routes with trees, and through ensuring that development avoids creating an overly dense feel close to the gateways.

8.21 The two specific gateways identified are summarised below:



***Chediston Street where it meets Roman Way***



***Chediston Street looking into town***

8.22 On the western edge of Halesworth, along Chediston Street, the landform to the south and hedgerow to the north contribute to the sense of arrival at Halesworth. The junction is at the edge of recent residential development which defines the threshold from urban to rural.



***Walpole Road (looking into town and out of town)***

8.23 Walpole Road, going out of town, crosses rolling agricultural fields with wide open skies towards the southwest. Looking into town there is an abrupt phalanx of the backs of the houses in Dukes

Drive, this is only partly moderated by rather sparse hedgerow trees. In the Movement section of the Plan there is a proposal for a walk around the south and west of the town at the backs of the houses which would enhance the meeting of the rural and urban.

**POLICY HAL.DH2: VIEWS AND GATEWAYS INTO AND OUT OF HALESWORTH TOWN**

- A. Development proposals should preserve the views of St Mary's Church tower, Halesworth, as shown on the Policies Map and in Figure 8.1.**
  
- B. Development adjacent to the gateways into Halesworth town in Chediston Street and Walpole Road must demonstrate how they contribute to creating a gradual transition from rural countryside to urban settlement (and vice versa). Development must avoid creating an overly dense feel and appropriate planting or other natural boundary treatments should be used to mitigate the impact of development and retain the open feel. This should include the use of trees to line the gateway routes.**



## Heritage

8.24 Being a historic market town, Halesworth has a significant heritage. There is an extensive conservation area in the town containing 129 individually listed buildings (see Figures 8.2a and 8.2b).

**Figure 8.2a: Halesworth conservation area and listed buildings (parish)**

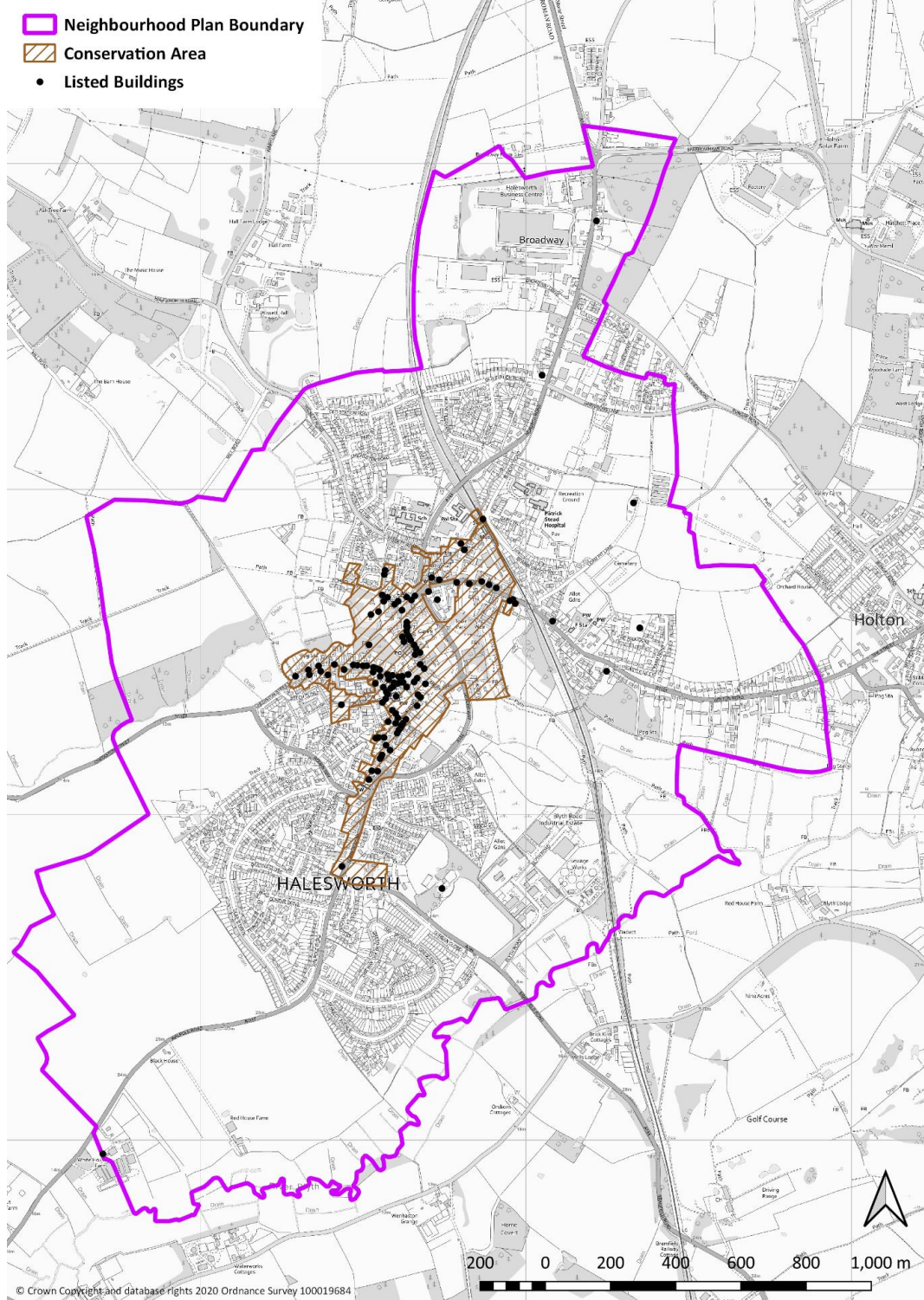
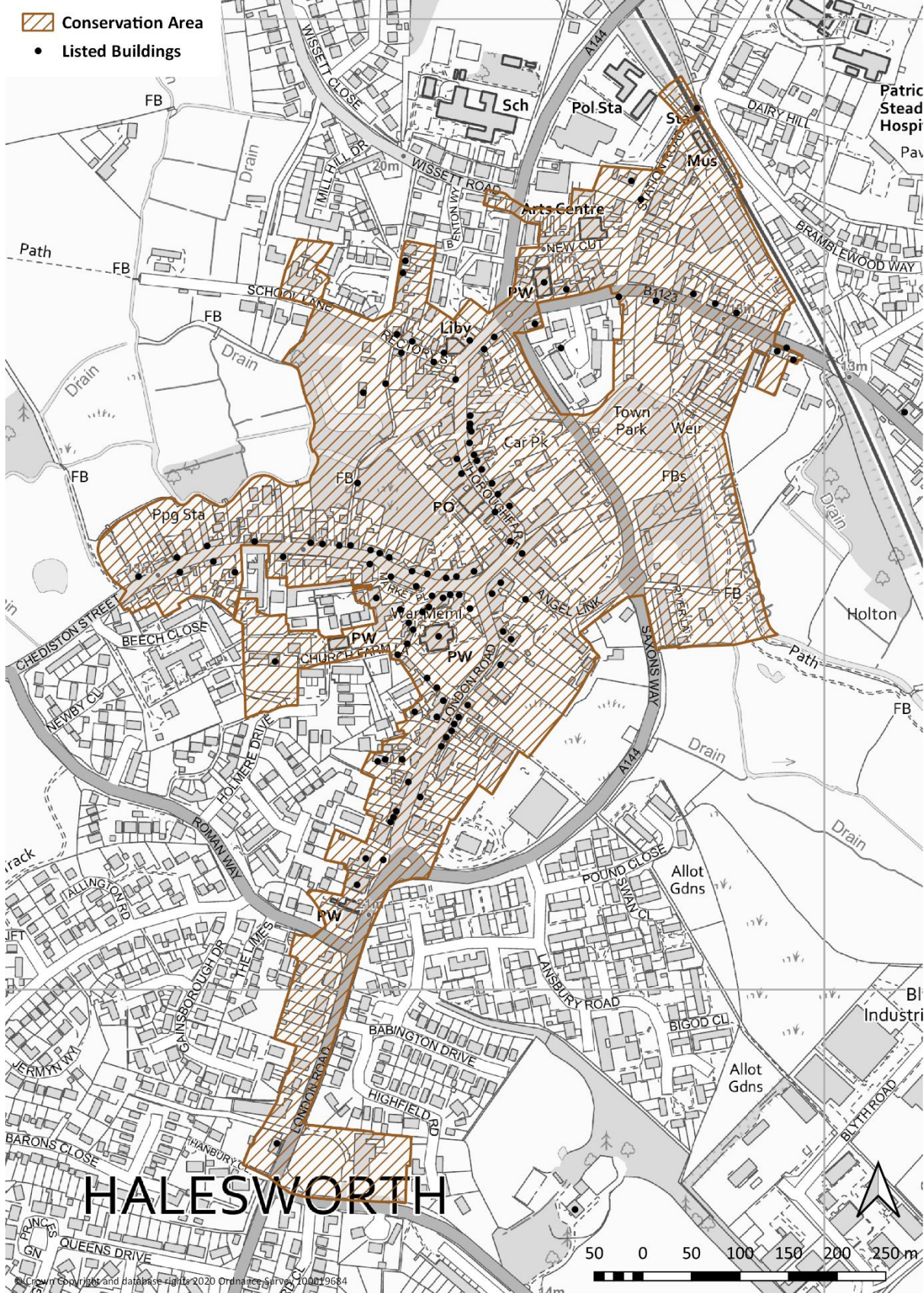




Figure 8.2b: Halesworth conservation area and listed buildings (Halesworth town)



- 8.25 Local Plan Policy WLP8.37 (Historic Environment) provides an appropriate policy framework for listed buildings. Local Plan Policy WLP8.39 (Conservation Areas) requires development within the conservation area to be of a particularly high standard of design and materials in order to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. This policy gives protection to a large section of the Town Centre which is of enormous importance economically as it attracts local people and tourists to spend time and money there. The Town Centre section of this Plan expands on this aspect of the heritage of the town. The Halesworth Conservation Area Appraisal<sup>18</sup> also provides important guidance.

### **Non-designated heritage assets**

- 8.26 There are a number of buildings in the town which have historic or design importance but do not have nationally listed status. Local Plan Policy WLP8.38 (Non-designated heritage assets) supports the neighbourhood planning process in addressing this. It requires that proposals for the re-use of buildings which are on the 'Local List' of Non-Designated Heritage Assets will be supported if compatible with the elements of the fabric and setting of the building which contribute to its significance. Any non-designated heritage assets identified in neighbourhood plans are then considered to have the same status as those on the 'Local List'.
- 8.27 The Waveney Local Plan has a series of criteria for justifying a non-designated heritage asset. This has resulted in the following buildings and structures being identified (with their location shown in Figure 8.3):

#### **1. The Maltings at Station Yard**



A building of historic interest due to its prominent role in the maltings industry and its association with the 19th century industrial development of the town. It is also located at a key entrance to the town for those arriving by train.

***Criteria – locally significant  
historic use, landmark status***



<sup>18</sup> Waveney District Council (2006) *Halesworth Conservation Area Character Appraisal*



## 2. Halesworth Library



This building has landmark status due to it being a model for contemporary design in an historic urban environment and its prominent position in the town at the end of the shopping street. It is also notable for its community associations.

**Criteria –  
architectural  
interest with a  
known architect,**

***strong social and community value, landmark status at the top of the pedestrianised shopping street and aesthetic value in the way it exhibits a positive external appearance in the street scene***

## 3. 18 Thoroughfare/Cross Ram offices



An Italianate-style building of historic interest, remodelled in 1840. It has both external and internal integrity and a prominent position in the Thoroughfare. It is surrounded by listed buildings.

**Criteria –  
Architectural  
integrity and  
landmark status in  
the Thoroughfare**



#### 4. Patrick Stead Hospital



This has historic interest being the first hospital in the town, built by a major Maltings owner. At the time of writing the hospital has been closed for some years. It has been designated as a Community Asset up until May 2023. Notification was given in June 2021 that the NHS were to dispose of the building. The Site Options and Appraisal report commissioned by the NPSG noted that the building could be used for various community activities.

***Criteria – historic interest as the first 19th Century hospital, source of***

***local identity and landmark status within the Halesworth and Holton Healthy Neighbourhood***

#### 5. New Reach



Dug in 1759-1760 as part of the Blyth Navigation (which was subject of an Act of Parliament in 1757), the New Reach provided a direct link between Halesworth and the sea at Southwold Harbour. Over the next 100 years, wherries provided the vital transport link for the industries of Halesworth, importing raw materials and exporting finished goods. This was a major factor for Patrick Stead, one of the town's most important historical figures, basing his maltings business in the town. There is a close connection between this proposal and that concerning the Patrick Stead Hospital in that without the New Reach, it is arguable that the hospital may not have been built. Other maltings businesses also flourished and in this context, the New Reach's heritage also relates to that of the Station Yard Maltings. The Blyth Navigation ceased to be a commercial waterway by the end of the 19th century due to the advent of the railway and ongoing issues with silting in Southwold Harbour.

***Criteria – architectural interest due to its landmark status and historic interest given its rarity, its representativeness and its social and communal value.***

## 6. The Halesworth to Southwold Narrow Gauge Railway (Millennium Green)

The Halesworth to Southwold narrow gauge railway ran between the two towns from 1879 until its closure in 1929 and was just over 14 kilometres long. On 24th July 1876, The Southwold Railway Company obtained an Act of Parliament which enabled the line's construction. This also provided for two branch lines, one of which connected to the Blyth navigation, thus providing a historical link to the New Reach. The other connected to Blackshore Quay, between Southwold and Walberswick. Much of the track bed still remains unencumbered along the route, as well as substantial evidence of related civil engineering. In terms of the latter, three are located in Halesworth's Millennium Green. These are:

The 1879 bridge



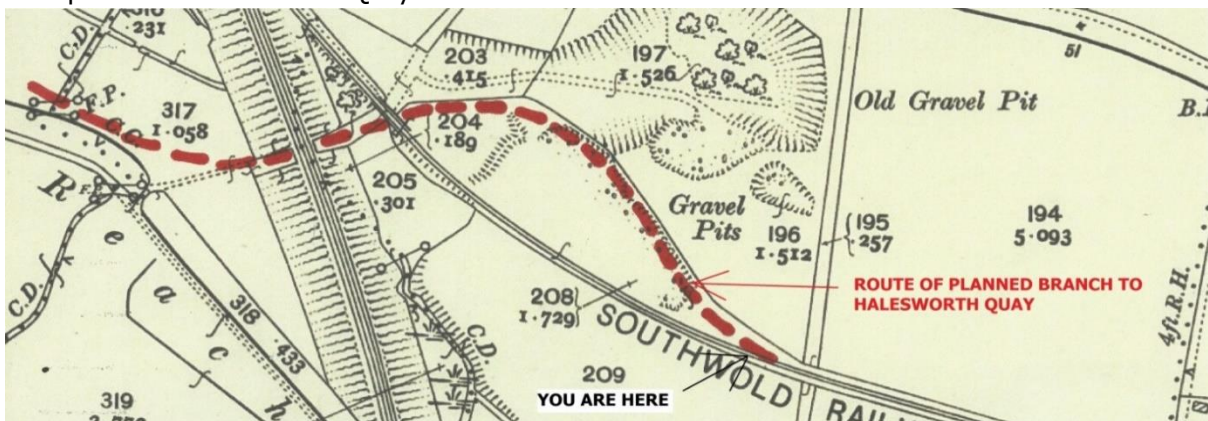
Relaid track over the bridge



Engine sheds at Birds Folly, dating from 1914



The planned for Halesworth Quay branch line





***Criteria – architectural interest due to the landmark status of its bridges and engine sheds, historic interest given its rarity, its representativeness, the association the railway has with local history and its social and communal value.***

**POLICY HAL.DH3: NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS**

**A. The following, as shown on Figure 8.3 and the Policies Map, are identified as non-designated heritage assets:**

- 1. The Maltings at Station Yard**
- 2. Halesworth Library**
- 3. 18 Thoroughfare/Cross Ram offices**
- 4. Patrick Stead Hospital**
- 5. New Reach**
- 6. Halesworth to Southwold Narrow Gauge Railway (Millennium Green)**

**B. Proposals for the re-use of Non-Designated Heritage Assets will be supported if they meet the requirements of Local Plan Policy WLP8.38 (Non-Designated Heritage Assets).**

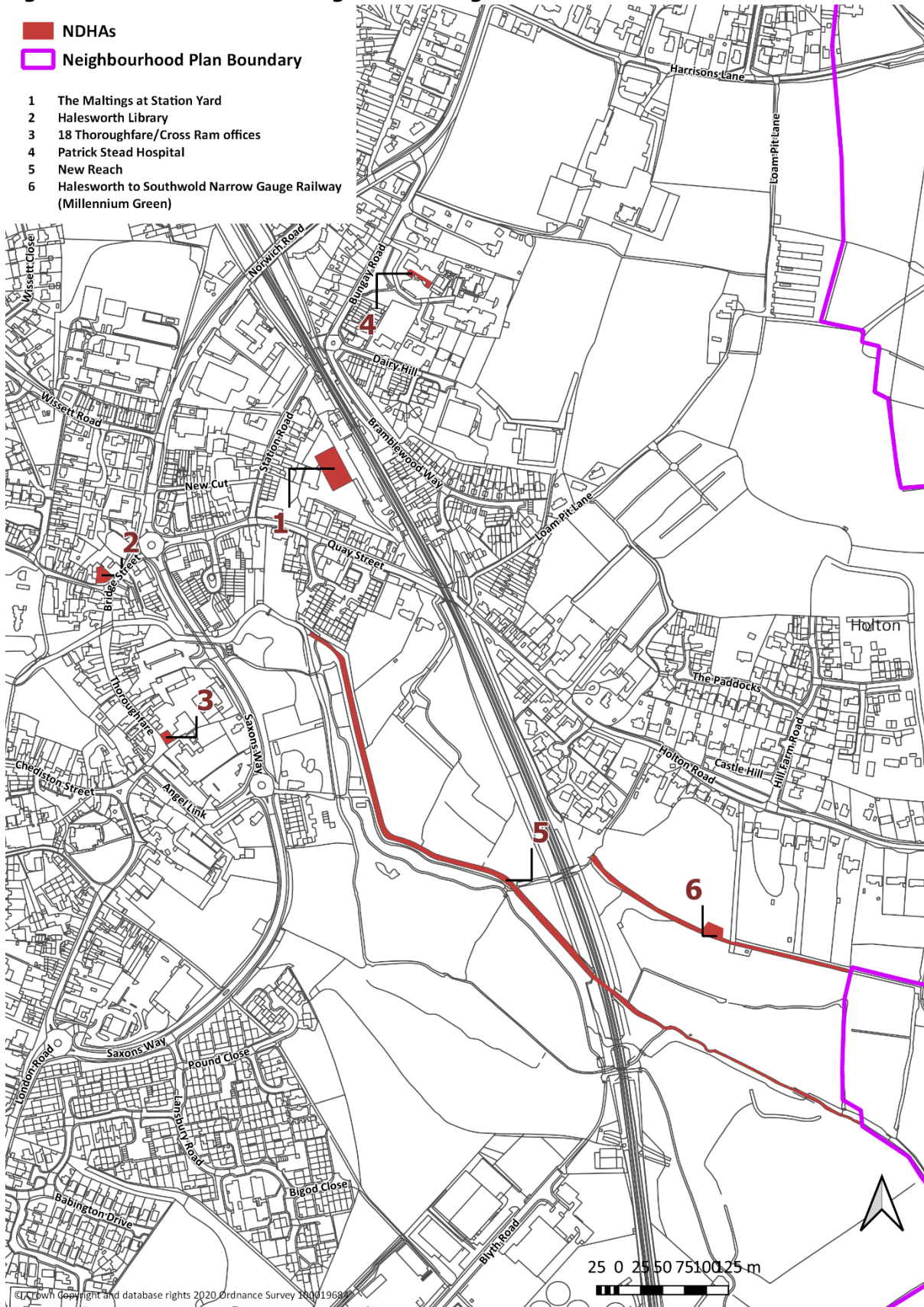
**C. In considering proposals which involve the loss or alteration of a non-designated heritage asset, consideration will be given to:**

- a. Whether the asset is structurally unsound and beyond feasible and viable repair (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect); or**
- b. The extent to which measures to sustain the existing use, or find an alternative use/user, have been investigated.**

**Where a development proposal would result in the loss of, or harm to a non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be made as to the acceptability of the proposal having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.**



**Figure 8.3: Location of non-designated heritage assets**



## 9 MOVEMENT AND TRANSPORT

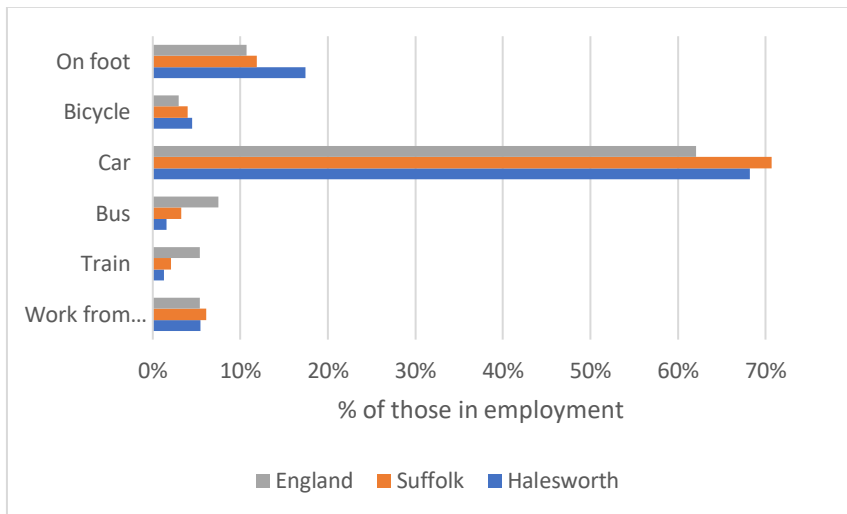
9.1 The volume of cars in and around Halesworth is an issue that the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address. This recognises that the primary opportunity is to improve the potential for walking and cycling for local journeys, particularly those into the town centre and to other key destinations. The following objective was consulted upon and received community approval.

***Promote a transport infrastructure which connects different parts of the town and enables people to move about easily, safely and enjoyably whether on foot, bicycle, mobility vehicle or public transport.***

9.2 Halesworth, originally a medieval market town, has a town centre of narrow streets not designed for cars. Later developments spread out from the centre primarily along a north-south axis either side of the A144. Much of the town's infrastructure is accessed from this main road – the industrial/employment sites, doctor's surgery, Edgar Sewter Primary School and the Thoroughfare, the main shopping street.

9.3 The building of the town centre bypass - Saxons Way - in 1989 brought relief to the Thoroughfare and enabled it to be partially pedestrianised. However, Saxons Way and Angel Link act as barriers for pedestrians and cyclists and cuts the town centre off from the open spaces of the Millennium Green. There is only one pedestrian crossing along the whole route and substantial roundabouts make crossing Saxons Way difficult.

**Figure 9.1: Method of travel to work**



Source: 2011 Census

9.4 Reliance on the car is high for getting to work and for accessing the town centre from outlying areas and nearby villages. Figure 9.1 shows that in 2011 nearly 70% of journeys to work were by car, although there were still a good number of people working locally - nearly 20% of people that travelled to work did so on foot, which was well above the average for Suffolk and for England. Indeed, approximately one-third of journeys to work were less than 2km in 2011. Changing working patterns – due to increased home working - are likely to increase the number of people making short journeys as part of their working day.

9.5 Cycling features in the town as it is on the route of National Cycle Route 1, which brings cycle groups into the cafes in town. Its route is highlighted on Figure 9.3. The NPSG has worked with Sustrans to look at how this can be improved, without losing the benefits, as part of the route

through the town centre and through a car park are assessed as dangerous and inadequate by Sustrans and inhibits the further pedestrianisation of the Thoroughfare which residents say they want to see.

## **Public and community transport**

- 9.6 The railway station with its connections to Lowestoft, Ipswich and onwards to London is important for the town. The proposed through train to London will support the flexible home working economy.
- 9.7 Bus travel to and from Halesworth is limited in both routes and times and became more so when the through bus to Norwich was stopped in 2019. Having to make an unreliable change at Bungay made the bus journey unsuitable for most purposes. A reinstatement of a twice-daily through service in 2021 aimed to make it possible to travel to Norwich for some educational and work-related journeys. The Bus Services Act 2017 gave local transport authorities some powers to take a more strategic view of bus services. In June 2021, Suffolk County Council (SCC) agreed to pursue a plan to overhaul bus services. 'Bus Back Better' involves joint provision by SCC and bus providers with the intention of improving services and extends to the supported community transport sector. This initiative is in the early stages, so it is an opportune time for the Town Council to engage.
- 9.8 Without major national and local investment and a more strategically managed service it is unlikely that commercial bus services will significantly improve to make it a viable option for more people.
- 9.9 Plans for a bus hub at the Angel Link car park were suggested some years ago but were dropped. This re-siting of bus stops and bus termini near to the town centre would have created smoother traffic flow on Saxons Way as traffic would no longer have to stop behind buses as they wait at stops. New plans for the long-term car park site may bring opportunities to resurrect the idea and the NPSG would encourage this to be looked at again.
- 9.10 Halesworth Community Transport (HACT) is a familiar feature in town as it runs a 'Hoppa' bus – a scheduled ticketed route that supports elderly people in accessing the shops, market and doctor's surgery. And the hiring of the HACT community bus has enabled parents to get their children to schools of their choice. Voluntary car services, run by Halesworth Volunteer Centre, act as a lifeline for many who cannot drive.
- 9.11 Encouraging bus travel into the town from outlying estates and from nearby villages, as an alternative to car travel would have many benefits but would need considerable thought and investment. At present the Hoppa bus offers an alternative for areas within Halesworth, and the Connecting Communities scheme can be used for those in neighbouring villages. East Suffolk Council under its Community Partnership initiative is looking at supporting numerous community transport schemes. It could be timely for Halesworth to take a strategic look at its wider transport needs.

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**

**Halesworth Town Council will work with Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Council and other local partners to explore the potential for further community bus services to serve Halesworth and the surrounding villages.**



## Car travel and parking

- 9.12 Car travel is likely to remain the dominant form of transport for some years to come. Well managed parking that encourages people to use the shops and facilities of the town will need to be retained. The view of many residents and business owners is that both more and free car parking is needed. The hard evidence available gives some mixed messages. The free hour parking in one of the car parks was removed in 2016. A subsequent study showed that car park usage, as measured by income to the council, dropped. A study of car park usage undertaken by East Suffolk Council in 2019, as part of the People & Places initiative, showed use never reached full capacity other than in the Town Centre car park where the free hour was available. Footfall in the town centre also indicated that people did not stay beyond the hour, unlike in other towns with different parking arrangements. Since then, all five car parks have had the same pay structure of a free half hour, with a digital payment system giving the ability to top up payments without having to return to your car. There have been many teething problems with the system which need to be rectified by the District Council. A proposed system to show where spaces are available, coupled with better signage to the car parks, would help even out usage.
- 9.13 A number of development opportunities in Halesworth could be seen as putting pressure on parking or requiring some changes to layouts. An updated survey of usage is needed once the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic is at an end so that impacts on parking can be realistically examined and understood. The Town Council and NPSG are members of the People and Places initiative that is looking at improving and marketing the town centre. A further review of the usage of the public car parks has been included in the action plan and will be conducted once it is considered movement of people is back to pre-pandemic levels.
- 9.14 The growing usage of electric cars will be the biggest change in car travel in the next decade. Charging facilities will be needed for visitors and for emergencies. As yet Suffolk County Council has not announced if or how it intends to strategically install charging points. Any changes to car park design that development might bring about needs to factor in charging points. Waveney Local Plan Policy WLP8.21 (Sustainable Transport) encourages the provision of charging facilities for electric vehicles and requires all types of development to meet the standards in the Suffolk County Council Parking Guidance, to provide and maintain points. The Housing chapter of the Plan includes a section on electric charging in new homes.

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: PUBLIC CAR PARKING**

**Halesworth Town Council will consider the findings of the car parking survey and develop an action plan as appropriate.**

## Improving cycling and pedestrian routes

- 9.15 In terms of trying to positively influence future patterns of movement into and around Halesworth, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to focus on making improvements for pedestrians and cyclists in order to encourage more walking and cycling from all the residential areas. Linking the new housing sites, as well as the existing parts of the town, into the network of walkways and safer cycling routes is vital to encourage more walking and cycling and less use of the car. The NPSG is greatly encouraged that East Suffolk Council (ESC) is preparing a Cycling and Walking Strategy

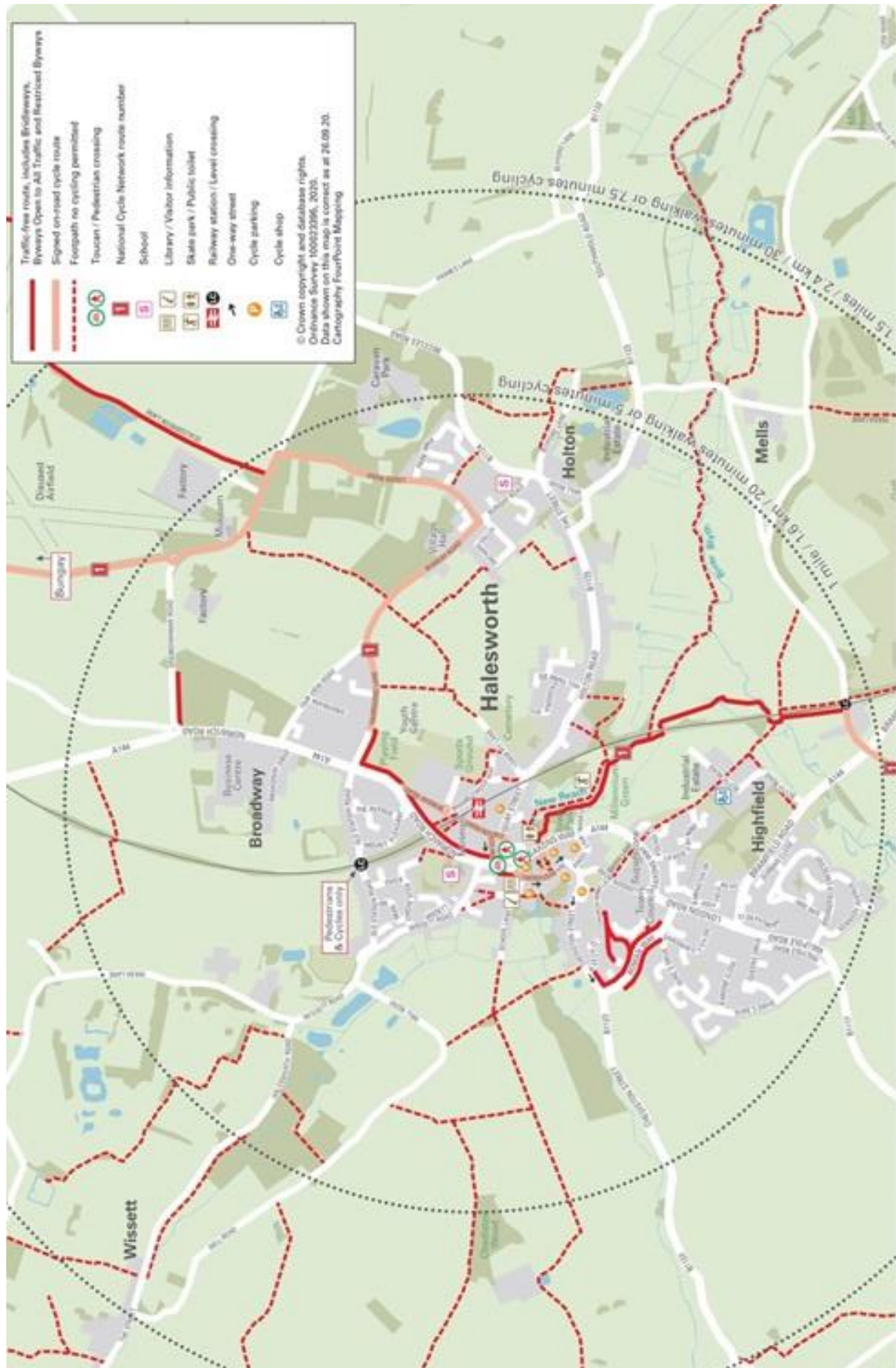
(C&WS), building on the existing Waveney Cycle Strategy (adopted in 2016). The proposals for new and improved cycling and walking opportunities in this section were shared with ESC during the initial engagement period (October-December 2020)<sup>19</sup>. At the time of writing ESC is assessing all of these cycling and walking opportunities (approximately 800) and is preparing a draft C&WS for consultation in autumn 2021.

- 9.16 The amount of proposed development in Halesworth provides an opportunity for cycling and walking to be considered as part of the planning process and ESC has invested Community Infrastructure Levy funding into new routes in the northeast of the town.
- 9.17 However, new national guidance on the creation of effective and safe cycle routes represents a significant challenge for medieval market towns such as Halesworth with their narrow roads.
- 9.18 Cycling and walking are also important aspects of the tourism offer and therefore for the economic development that the town can offer.
- 9.19 Figure 9.2 below illustrates the set of routes that presently exist for cycling and walking.

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<sup>19</sup> These can be viewed on this map of East Suffolk:  
<https://eastsuffolk.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=810e5f8977e144509f13120a00a341d6>

Figure 9.2: Current walking and cycling routes



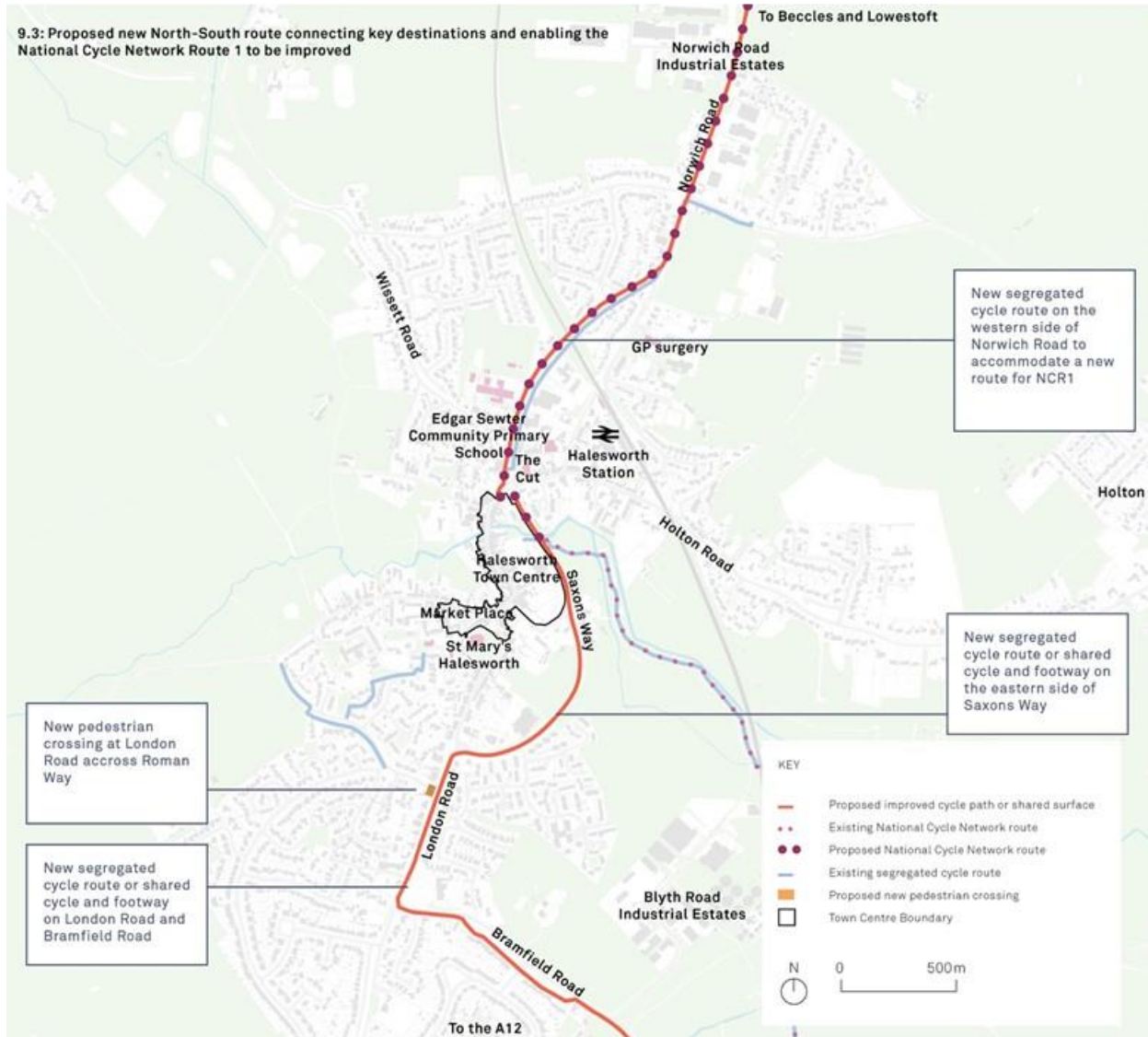


- 9.20 Two 'expert' groups were brought together by the NPSG. One made up of cyclists, included both recreational cyclists and those who use it as a main means of transport, and a walkers group made up of representatives from a number of local walking groups. Using the existing footpath maps, Public Rights of Way, the Halesworth Town Plan and the Waveney Cycling Strategy<sup>20</sup> as guides, the following principles were used to make detailed proposals for how routes can be improved to bring a range of benefits to residents and visitors:
- Provide genuine alternatives to the private car as a means of accessing the town centre, local schools and other community facilities;
  - Provide health benefits through increased walking and cycling;
  - Facilitate less congestion at busy times by encouraging children to walk to and from school and people to walk to the shops rather than 'jumping in the car' for a short journey;
  - Respond to the challenges of climate change;
  - Provide a safer environment for the community of Halesworth, including for vulnerable users.
- 9.21 This is supported by Waveney Local Plan Policy WLP8.21 which requires development to be close to and provide safe pedestrian and cycle access. It encourages the enhancement of existing pedestrian routes and the public rights of way network and also to deliver the identified schemes in the Waveney Cycling Strategy.
- 9.22 The following policies and actions address the principles of improving walking and cycling in Halesworth:
- a. Linking residential areas (including proposed new developments) to the main town destinations***
- 9.23 There are a number of residential development sites which are either under construction or in the planning pipeline. Local Plan Policy WLP8.21 is bringing improvements, with ESC and SCC working on connectivity for the developments in the north and east of the town including enabling children to walk or cycle to school and new routes to the doctor's surgery.
- 9.24 The Neighbourhood Plan has identified other improvements that support connectivity for some of the existing residential areas in the town, including a new major cycle route from the northern edge of the town through to the south and east along the A144. This will enable the National Cycle Route 1 (NCR1), located on the northern and central parts of the new route, to be upgraded as it is deemed unsatisfactory at present. Figures 9.3 and 9.4 show the proposed new route and how it links to the housing in the south and to new developments along the route. A more detailed description and rationale for the proposed route is shown in Appendix 1.

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<sup>20</sup> Waveney District Council (2016) *Waveney Cycling Strategy*

**Figure 9.3: Proposed new North-South route connecting key destinations and enabling the National Cycle Network Route 1 to be improved**

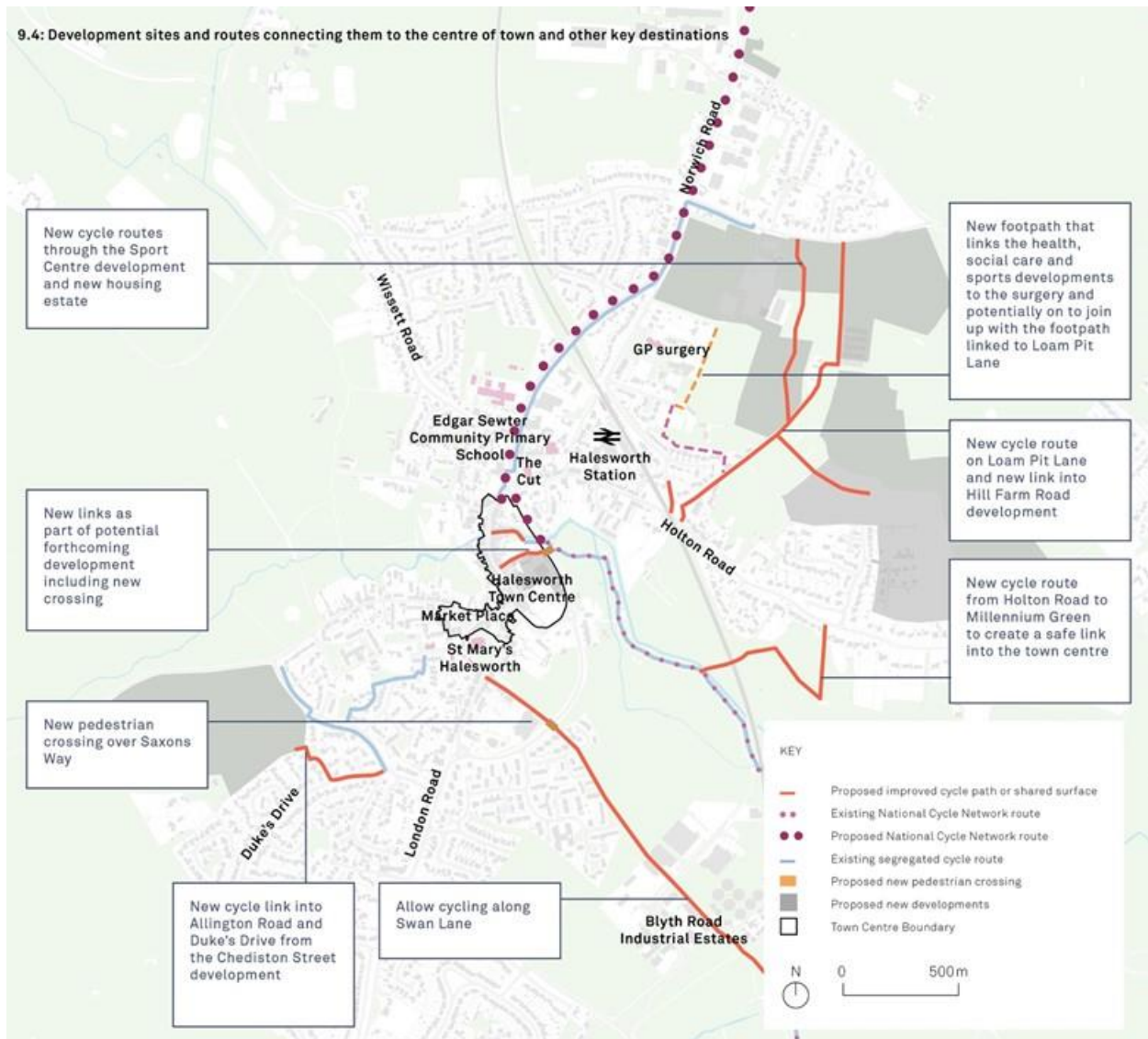


**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: CREATE A KEY MOVEMENT ROUTE NORTH TO SOUTH AND ENABLE THE UPGRADING OF NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK ROUTE 1**

Halesworth Town Council will work with Suffolk County Council, Sustrans and other partners to create a direct and safe cycle route from the northern edge of the town through to the south and east along the A144 (as shown in Figure 9.3). This will enable cycling along the relevant key movement route and will upgrade the National Cycle Route 1 (NCR1).

9.25 Figure 9.4 shows the development sites, the ESC proposed walking and cycling routes and the Neighbourhood Plan proposals.

**Figure 9.4: Development sites and routes connecting them to the centre of town and other key destinations**



9.26 Specifically in the town centre, improving the experience of pedestrians in the Thoroughfare and the wider Town Centre was a key part of the Town Centre Connectivity project commissioned by the Town Council. This was seen as a way of supporting businesses and the health and safety of residents and drew on the earlier survey work of the Town Council's Urban Improvement Working Group. The results of the work of the architects, which was informed by consultation with residents, can be found in the Town Centre section of the Plan. It includes some of the improvements to movement of pedestrians and cyclists found in this section of the plan.

***b. Improve cycling connectivity into the Town Park and the Millennium Green (including to NCR1) and out into the countryside beyond***

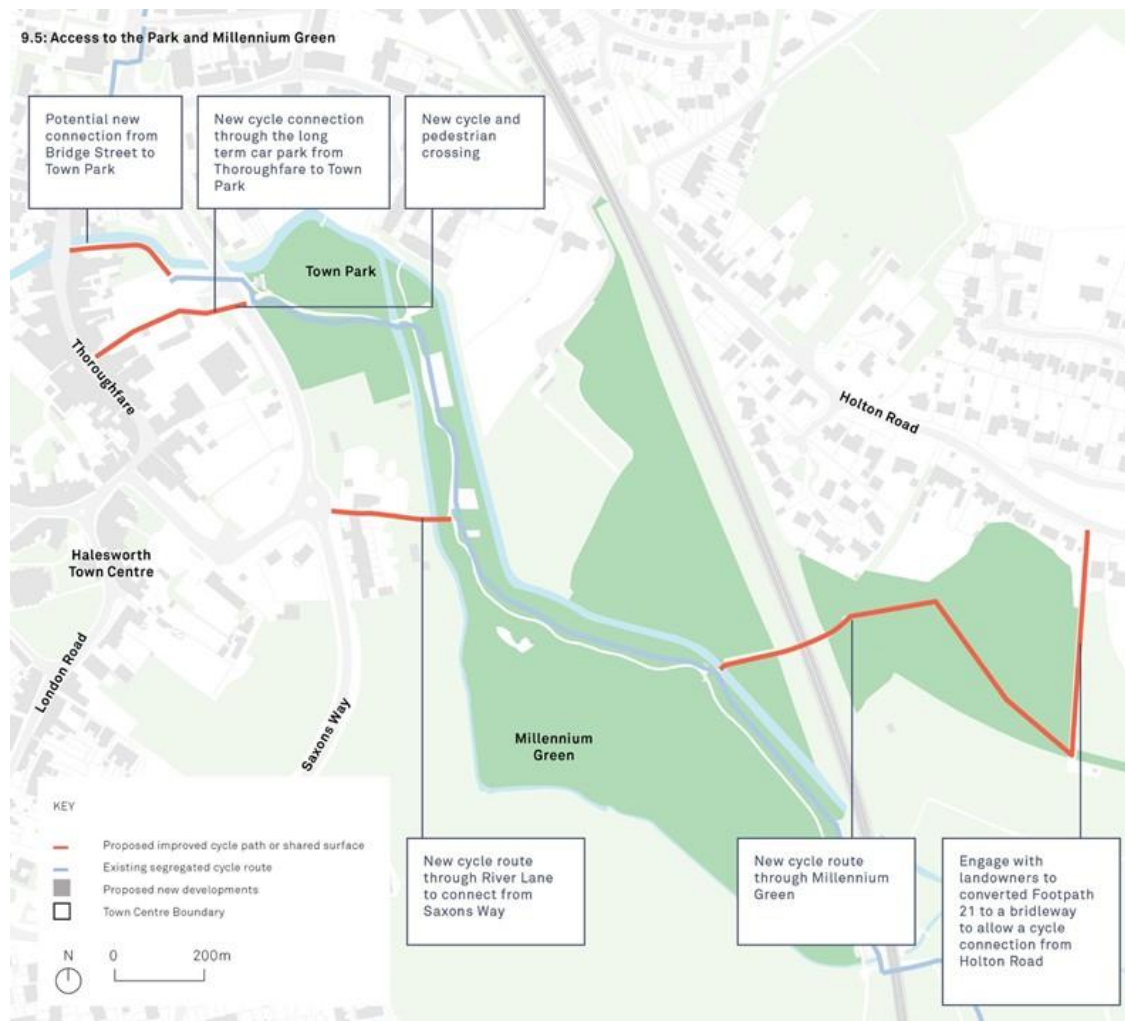
9.27 The Park and the Millennium Green are key destinations especially for families with children, walkers with and without dogs and cyclists. Present access is limited for cyclists and pose some hazards for pedestrians. The Millennium Green trustees are keen to make best use of their land to



support walking and cycling and have devised a new cycle route through part of the Green which would add much to the connectivity of the town. This is shown in Figure 9.5.

- 9.28 The NPSG has worked with landowners and residents to try and enable improvements, and these potential changes, with their required legal changes, will need taking forward in the future. Some entail upgrading footpaths into bridleways, others using bridges not quite wide enough for full shared usage so needing pedestrian priority signalling, while others rely on landowner permissions. If the landowner of Footpath 21 agrees to allowing cycling, the Millennium Green trustees will take the proposal forward.
- 9.29 Figure 9.5 shows the present access routes, how these could be improved for cyclists, and potential new access routes with the necessary legal changes needed.

**Figure 9.5: Access to the Town Park and Millennium Green**



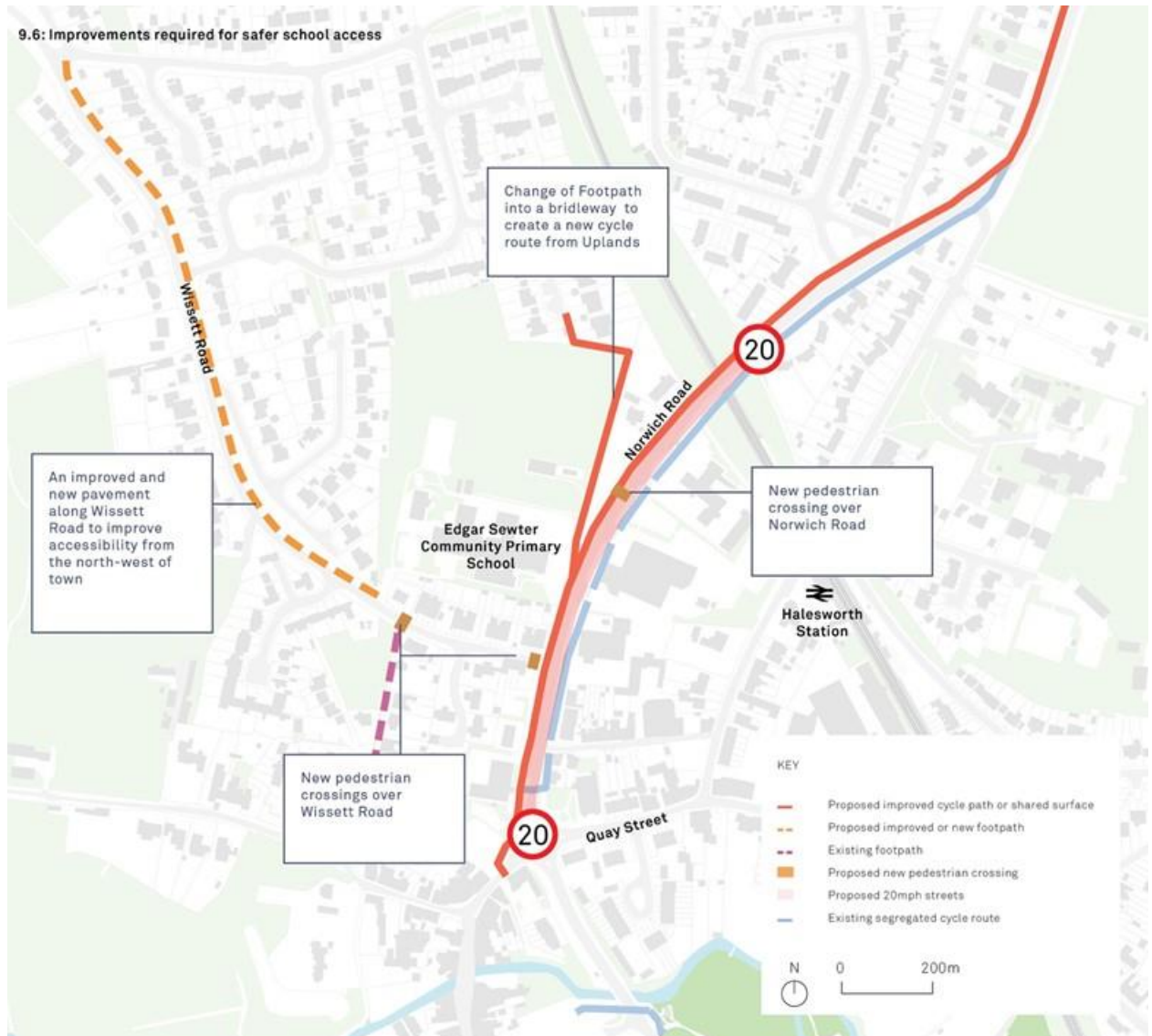
**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: IMPROVING CYCLE CONNECTIVITY INTO THE TOWN PARK AND THE MILLENNIUM GREEN**

**Halesworth Town Council will work with Suffolk County Council, Sustrans and other partners to create safe cycle routes that improve cycle connectivity to the Town Park and Millennium Green (as shown in Figure 9.5).**

***c. Make walking, cycling and scootering to Edgar Sewter Primary School a safe and healthy option for children and parents***

- 9.30 When the NPSG consulted the children at Edgar Sewter Primary School, one of their main concerns was feeling unsafe on their journey to and from school. With the expansion of the school there has been an opportunity to work with SCC and the Asset Academy to look at improvements around the school itself. Figure 9.6 suggests the required improvements that reflect the 'pinch points' identified by the children. Some of these, such as the patrolled crossing at Wissett Road/Norwich Road and the crossing across the Norwich Road, need resources and could be included in CIL bids. Others such as the proposed cycle routes from Uplands need a redesign involving some land from the school playground and the change of Footpath 2 into a bridleway. The 20mph limit outside the school on Norwich Road entails a change of policy by SCC which at present does not support 20mph on A-roads. There have been positive responses to both these suggestions.
- 9.31 Another matter of concern to parents and children is the danger posed by the parking outside the school and the lack of parking for parents needing to drop off and pick up their children by car. SCC will be devising a Travel Plan as a part of the expansion of the school and are in discussion with ESC to enable parents to use the two nearest car parks more easily. Another improvement would be to change the parking regulations for the parking bay outside the school gates to 30-minute parking with no return for 4 hours as a way of stopping all day parking by people working locally and enabling drop off and pick up by parents.

**Figure 9.6: Improvements required for safer school access**



9.32 East Suffolk Council are intending to improve routes for children from the new developments in the north and east of the town. This is shown in Figure 9.4.



**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: IMPROVEMENTS TO ACCESSIBILITY OF EDGAR SEWTER PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Halesworth Town Council will work with Suffolk County Council and other appropriate bodies to address the following matters that will help to improve the safety of children walking and cycling to Edgar Sewter Primary School:**

- i. Patrolled pedestrian crossing at Wissett Road/Norwich Road and further down Wissett Road at the back entrance to the school and Children Centre**
- ii. Safer pedestrian crossing across the Norwich Road**
- iii. 20mph speed limit outside school on Norwich Road**
- iv. Creation of cycle route from Uplands**
- v. Change of Footpath 2 into a bridleway**
- vi. Change of parking regulations for the parking bay on Norwich Road to enable use for drop-off and pick-up of children**

***3. Improve safety for elderly and disabled people moving around the town***

- 9.33 Consultation with elderly and disabled people and with organisations working with them indicated that overall Halesworth catered quite well for movement within the centre of the town although better maintenance of the Thoroughfare was mentioned. Other improvements for pedestrians in the Thoroughfare would be welcomed (see Town Centre section of the Plan).
- 9.34 Lack of dropped kerbs needs investigation and the NPSG would suggest an audit is carried out to see where they are needed.
- 9.35 Policies relating to pedestrian access will greatly improve accessibility in the future. In some parts of town however, pavements do not exist at all with little room to provide any. A new pavement along Wissett Road would improve accessibility from the north-west of town (shown in Figure 9.6).
- 9.36 Three major junctions were identified as needing the installation of a safe crossing:
- Across Roman Way where it joins London Road which is the main route out of town to the A143 and on towards the A14. (Shown in Figure 9.3)
  - Across Saxons Way from the Lansbury Road estate, which includes houses designed for elderly people, at the Swan Lane crossing enabling safer journeys to the Co-op and into town (see Town Centre section of the Neighbourhood Plan which recommends such a crossing) (shown in Figure 9.4).
  - Across Wissett Road where it joins Norwich Road. In discussions with SCC regarding school children, this crossing is seen as too difficult to install a permanent safe crossing system. A school patrol could provide for children but would not resolve the issue for elderly people. (This is referenced in Figure 9.6 - highway planners at SCC do not think a permanent pedestrian crossing is possible because of the narrowness of the road.)

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: IMPROVEMENTS TO SAFETY OF ELDERLY AND DISABLED PEOPLE**

**Halesworth Town Council will work with Suffolk County Council and other appropriate bodies to address the following matters that will help to improve the safety of elderly and disabled people in Halesworth:**

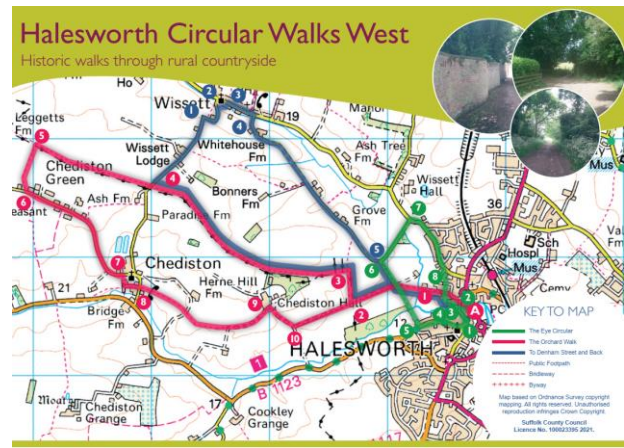
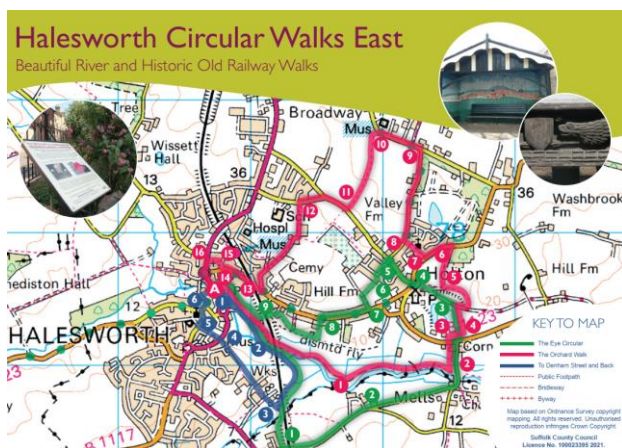
- i. an audit of dropped kerbs**
- ii. a new pavement along Wissett Road down to Old Station Road**
- iii. safer crossings across Roman Way where it joins London Road, across Saxons Way from the Lansbury Road estate and across Wissett Road where it joins Norwich Road.**

**4. Improve walking routes from and around town and out into nearby countryside**

9.37 Walking is an important part of 'softer' tourism whether for walking in and around the town and viewing its historic gems or walking out into the Suffolk countryside.

9.38 The walking group set up a subgroup to look at these in more detail and some initiatives have been achieved or are in the process:

- Two new leaflets (digital and print) containing three newly devised walks each will be published. They all start in town and spread-out eastwards or westwards using existing footpaths and public rights of way. Historical information has been written by the Museum and the 'Welcome to Halesworth' information by the Tourism Group. Published by SCC, a local councillor and the Town Council have contributed to their costs. Print copies will be distributed to tourist destinations and accommodation.

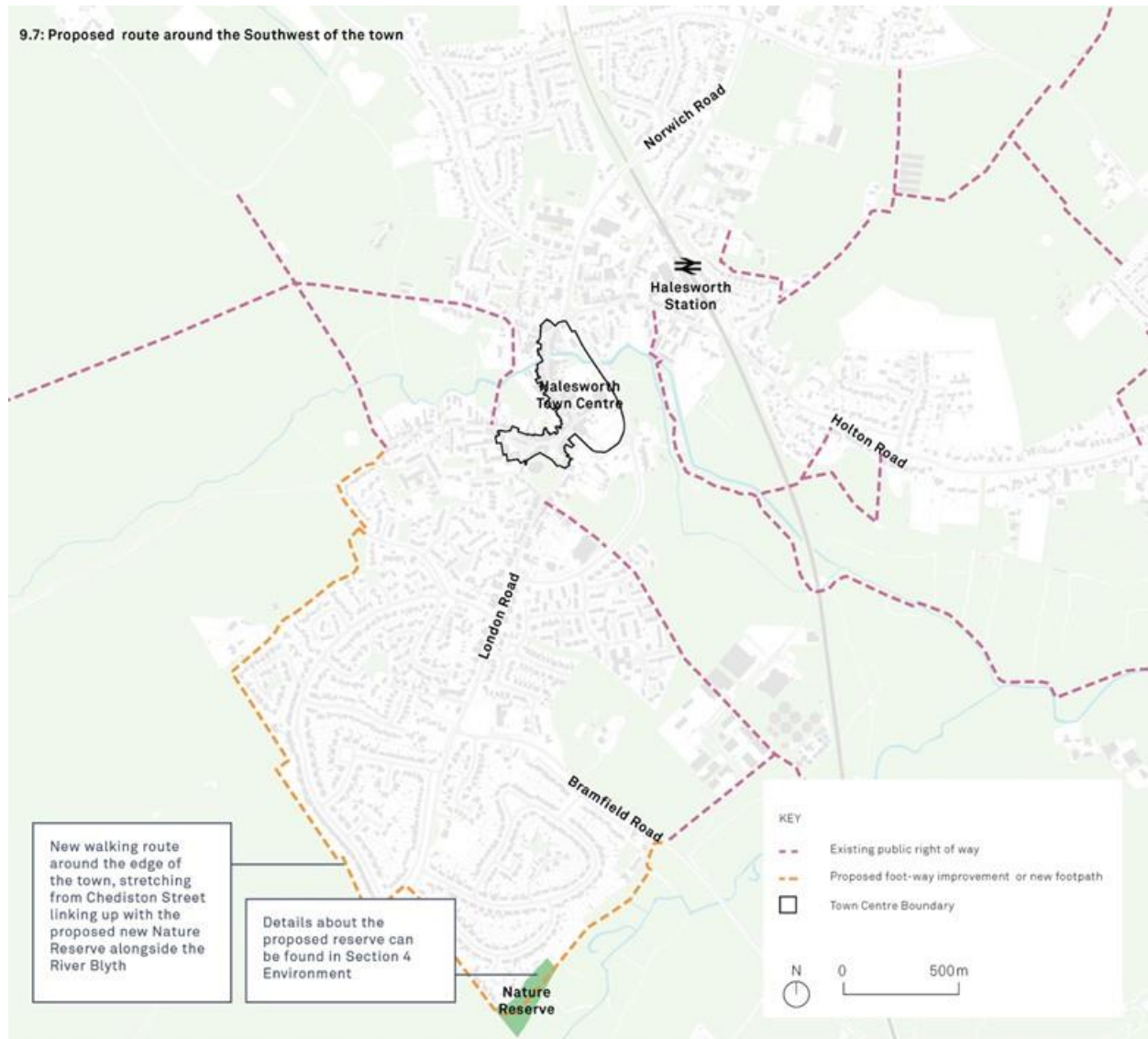


**Leaflets promoting historic circular walks in Halesworth**

- Numerous existing leaflets of trails around town such as the Hooker Trail, Malt Trail and Town Trail are being digitalised so they can all appear on tourism websites.
- As shown on Figure 9.2 the south of the town is lacking in footpaths. The NPSG wishes to see a walk around the edge of the town stretching from Chediston Street (the planned housing estate could enable the start of such a path) round the back of the houses of Dukes Drive, crossing Walpole Road, continuing behind the houses of Kennedy Avenue and Close, linking up with the proposed new Nature Reserve alongside the River Blyth. At either end this path would link to public rights of way which take walkers back into town or through the Millennium Green.

Whilst landowner agreement has not been secured, it is hoped that new Environmental Land Management schemes and new subsidy arrangements for farmers may provide incentives for this to happen in the future. This is shown in Figure 9.7.

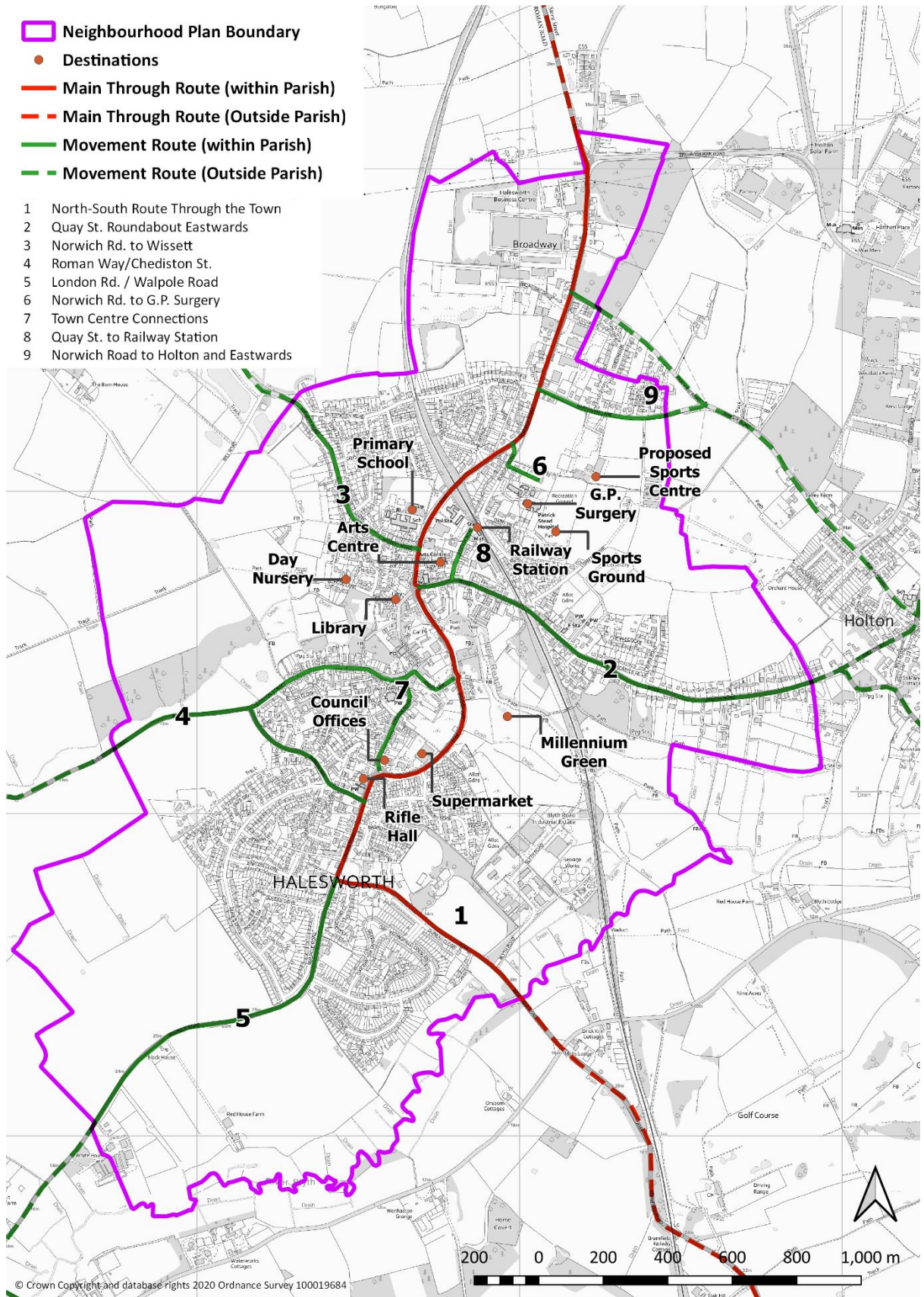
**Figure 9.7: Proposed route around the south-west of the town**



9.39 Drawing this analysis and recommendations together creates a series of 'Key Movement Routes' where access for walking and cycling should be prioritised. These are shown in Figure 9.8.



**Figure 9.8: Key Movement Routes**





#### **POLICY HAL.TM1: KEY MOVEMENT ROUTES**

- A. Development which proposes to improve cycling and walking in the Neighbourhood Plan area will be supported. In particular, provision of segregated cycle and pedestrian routes will be strongly supported. Such routes should also ensure that access by disabled users, the blind and deaf and users of mobility scooters is secured.**
- B. To ensure that residents can access public transport facilities, schools, leisure and other important facilities serving Halesworth, all new developments where feasible should ensure safe and continuous pedestrian routes that connect to the Key Movement Routes shown on the Policies Map.**
- C. Proposals to enhance the identified Key Movement Routes are strongly encouraged.**
- D. Development must not have an unacceptable impact on the safety and accessibility of Key Movement Routes. Developments will be expected to provide a strategy to mitigate the impact of additional traffic movements on the safety and flow of pedestrian and cycle access.**

#### **5. Signage**

- 9.40 All the improvements identified to walking and cycling routes need well-designed signage to support usage by residents and visitors. It will be important if the NCR1 is rerouted out of the shopping street that signage supports the many cafes and independent shops used by cyclists and walkers.
- 9.41 Improved signage is a wider issue than just for cyclists and walkers. It is essential for tourism, for the businesses and the places of interest in the town such as The Cut Arts Centre and the Millennium Green. This need is referenced in the Town Centre section of the plan.

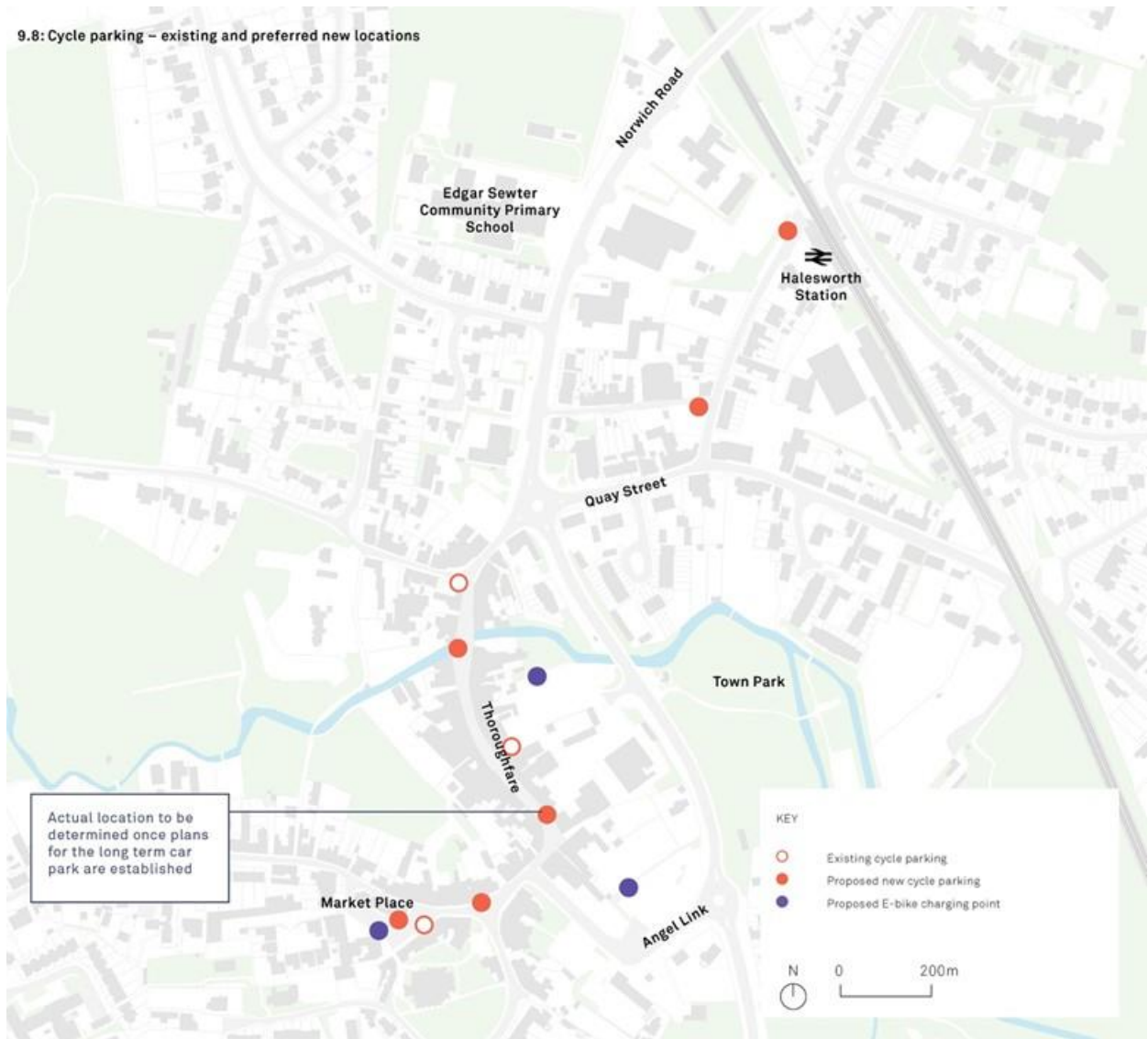
#### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: IMPROVED SIGNAGE FOR CYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIANS**

**Halesworth Town Council will take a lead in devising a signage strategy for pedestrians and cyclists in the town centre and commissioning local artists to design signage that best reflects Halesworth.**

#### **Cycle parking**

- 9.42 The cycling group established a subgroup to look specifically at cycle parking in the town. It is acknowledged that for basic cycle parking to be considered secure, it needs to be located in well used and visible areas such as near shops and cafes.
- 9.43 Figure 9.9 shows the locations where cycle parking is currently provided along with the preferred locations for new parking. The possible development in the long-term car park gives opportunities to secure new cycle parking.

**Figure 9.9: Cycle parking – existing and preferred new locations**



- 9.44 E-bike charging points need to be considered as part of a broader infrastructure development alongside car charging. There are three areas of town that are logical locations for e-bike charging points – the Market Place, the central car park and the Angel car park near to the hotel.

**POLICY HAL.TM2: CYCLE PARKING**

**A. Proposals to provide new bicycle parking in Halesworth will be supported. Proposals must be located in a well-used, visible location for security and must be designed to avoid obstructing the movement of pedestrians and mobility-impaired users. Such provision should ideally be designed to support parking by cargo bikes and other non-standard bikes.**

**B. In particular, commercial and tourist development proposals are encouraged to maximise the provision of secure cycle parking for workers and customers.**

## **Electric vehicles**

- 9.45 The national shift to electric vehicles is now in law, with the requirement that no new petrol or diesel cars are sold after 2030. It is therefore vital that new development provides charging points and the appropriate supporting infrastructure. Waveney Local Plan Policy WLP8.21 (Sustainable Transport) supports developments that include facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles. Suffolk County Council parking standards<sup>21</sup> gives guidance on the minimum specification of charging facilities by use, but simply says that such charging points are to be provided. In particular, larger houses with multiple off-street parking spaces will require potentially more than one charging point or at least the ability for additional charging points to be installed (with the associated capacity in the household electrical system). The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that such provision is explicitly included in the proposals for all residential development.
- 9.46 It should be noted that new Building Regulation (Approved Document S: Infrastructure for the charging of electric vehicles) comes into effect on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022. This will require all new-build homes to with associated parking to have electric vehicle charging points.

**POLICY HAL.TM3: RESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC CAR CHARGING**

**Proposals for new residential properties with off-street parking should provide at least one charging point for electric vehicles. For properties of 3 or more bedrooms, the provision of more than one electric charging point is encouraged.**

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<sup>21</sup> Suffolk County Council (2019) *Suffolk Guidance for Parking: Technical Guidance*, Third Edition



## 10 HALESWORTH TOWN CENTRE

- 10.1 Halesworth's Town Centre is made up of distinct parts, offering a range of experiences – the Thoroughfare for shopping and eating; art and culture at The Cut, Halesworth Gallery and the Museum; the town centre's fine heritage architecture; an historic church, and the Millennium Green with its wide-open spaces. These are the things residents like about the town and wanted to see protected. However, people also expressed concerns about the economic sustainability of the Thoroughfare. Previous sections of this Plan – Economic Development, Movement and Transport and Heritage and Design - refer to the town centre. This section brings these different strands together.
- 10.2 The following objective was subject to a range of consultation exercises and received strong community approval.
- Better integrate the distinct parts of the Town Centre and make it a place where more people want to come and spend their time and support the local economy***
- 10.3 Given the economic importance of the town centre, Halesworth Town Council commissioned architects, We Made That, to undertake a study focusing on improving connectivity within the town centre and enhancing its different features. The full report can be accessed here: <https://halesworthtowncouncil.org.uk/town-centre-connectivity-report/>.
- 10.4 Following the appraisal process and consultations with the public and a range of other stakeholders, both statutory and business, the study made proposals focused on four geographic parts of the town. These are detailed and costed in the full report and summarised below. It is important to recognise that these are potential indicative solutions to address the issues raised by the community and addressed through the technical assessment. They do not represent fixed solutions and Policy HAL.TC1 seeks to provide flexibility so that the solutions brought forward through planning applications are the most appropriate.

**Fig 10.1: Four Focus Areas across the Town Centre**



**Key**

**Focus areas**

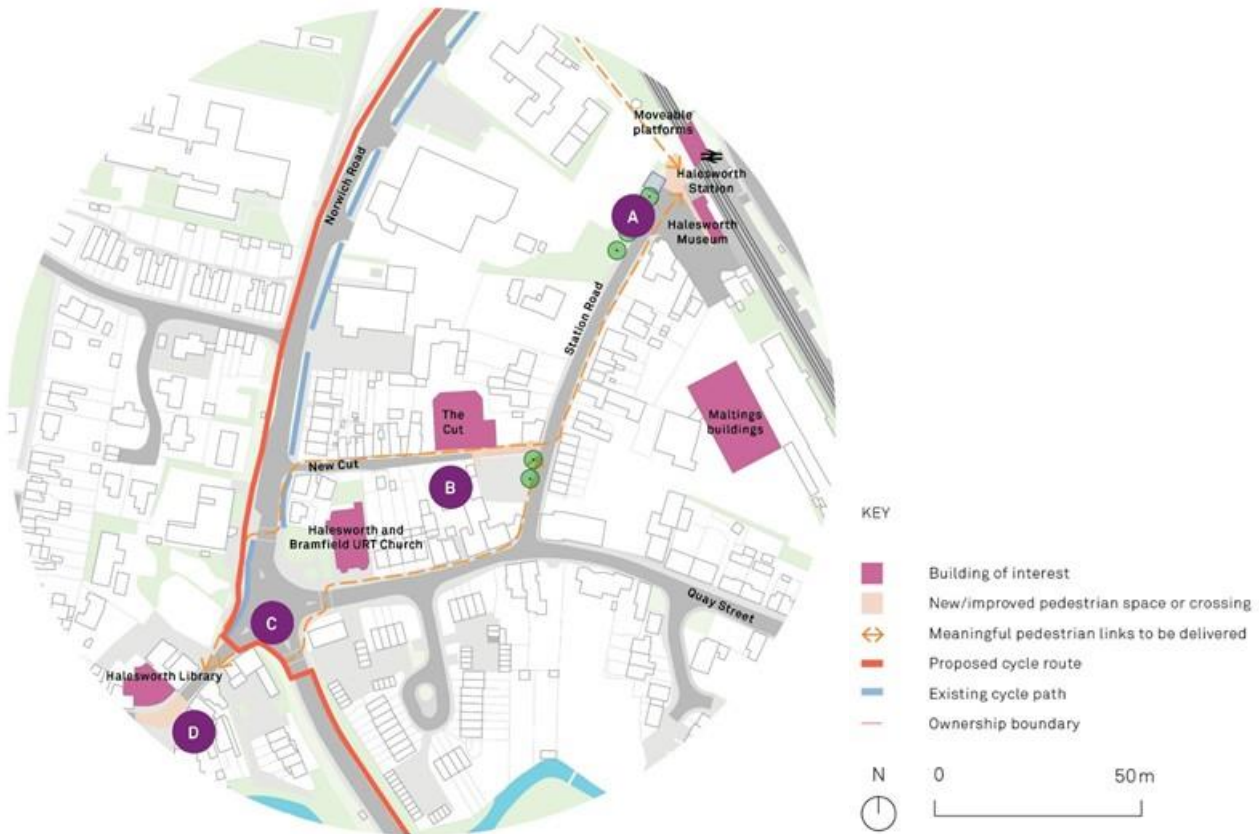
- 1. Station Links
- 2. Long-term car park site and Town Park
- 3. Thoroughfare to Market Place
- 4. Swan Lane environs

Focus area  
 Town Centre Boundary  
N  
○ 0 100m

**1. Station links**

- 10.5 The area between the railway station and the town centre contains a number of historic and cultural assets, most notably the Halesworth Museum in the Station building, The Cut Arts Centre and the Library positioned at the head of the shopping street. These assets are currently under-celebrated. Routes between the station and the town centre are dominated by roads and parking. This gives an opportunity to create a better public realm that improves the settings of these important buildings and better spaces for pedestrians, creating a series of 'moments' along the route between the station and town centre.
- 10.6 The possible improvements identified focus on four areas:

**Figure 10.2: Four potential project areas in Station Links**



**A. Station and Museum**



New hard landscaping on approaching the Station would create a better setting for the museum. Seating and landscaping would encourage people to stop and appreciate the unique moveable platform. New signage would advertise the presence of the museum and the platform and wayfinding points would direct visitors to the town centre, The Cut and other destinations. Cycle parking and cycle hire could be explored.

B. New Cut



The access to The Cut is uninviting. A new footway and carriage treatment on New Cut would make the centre more visible, accessible, and safer when approaching from Station Road. This would require the removal of the parking spaces outside The Cut. The car park in front would be improved with a raised planter on Station Road to replace the chain link fence and a new stair from the car park would create a direct link between the car park and The Cut.

C. Quay Street roundabout



The roundabout creates a barrier to the town centre despite two controlled crossings. Improvements for pedestrians and cyclists are needed considering proposals for new cycle routes in the Movement section of the plan. Further detailed study is required. Signage for pedestrians to take them to the Thoroughfare and the Millennium Green is needed.

D. Library crossing



The Library is separated from the pedestrianised Bridge St / Thoroughfare. A raised heritage paving table crossing to link the end of the Thoroughfare and the Library entrance would improve the setting, create a sense of pedestrian priority and act to calm traffic speeds.



## 2. Long term car park site and Town Park

- 10.7 Town Park and the Millennium Green are separated from the Thoroughfare by Saxons Way and car parks. The car parks play a valuable role in serving the town centre for those arriving by car but create a hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists. The link between the town and the park is unclear, and the pedestrian route to the park is an underpass accessed from the car park, which is liable to flooding in winter. There is no direct street level safety crossing and people (including children) frequently walk across what is the busiest road in the town, often at the junction of the Thoroughfare car park.
- 10.8 There is interest in developing the site to the south of the area, known as the long-term car park and a small site to the north which runs along the river side. This opens up the potential to improve connections across this area and into Town Park and into the Thoroughfare. Site assessment work<sup>22</sup> undertaken to support the Neighbourhood Plan concluded that the site is suitable for redevelopment for a mix of uses including retail, enterprise, business and housing. The site is within the Primary Shopping Area and has potential to be further considered with the adjacent car park to the north as an extension to the primary or secondary shopping area.
- 10.9 The town centre study proposed three different scenarios - residential development, a mix of residential and community use and retail development. The same connectivity principles apply to them all. These are:
- Improved pedestrian and cycle routes across the car park
  - A well-designed route through any potential development
  - A new pedestrian and cycle crossing over Saxons Way
  - A pedestrian link across to Angel Link
  - Potential riverside connection including improvements to the underpass
- 10.10 Figure 10.3 shows one possible way that improvements could be made to connectivity.

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<sup>22</sup> AECOM (2020) *Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan: Site Options and Assessment*, for Halesworth Town Council

**Figure 10.3: A potential retail development to illustrate the possible improvements to connectivity**



KEY

-  Building of interest
-  Suggested location for retail development
-  New/improved pedestrian space or crossing
-  Pedestrian link existing
-  Meaningful pedestrian links to be delivered
-  Proposed cycle route
-  Ownership boundary
-  Existing NCR 1 cycle route



### 3. Thoroughfare to Market Place

- 10.11 Market Place forms part of the Primary Retail Area of Halesworth which should be continuous from the Thoroughfare. There is a dramatic change in public space from the shared level surface of the Thoroughfare Pedestrian Zone to the narrow footways where it connects to Market Place. This means the perception is that the retail space stops here. Market Place itself is out of view from the end of the Pedestrian Zone, but it is the nature of the streetscape and narrow footways that suggests there is nothing more to discover beyond this point.
- 10.12 Market Place itself is dominated by car parking (30 spaces). This combined with narrow footways undermines its former (and potentially future) role as an additional part of the social and economic heart of the town, as well as obscuring its heritage buildings. These conditions have limited the types of successful businesses found on Market Place.

**Figure 10.4: Possible new connections between the Thoroughfare and Market Place**



- 10.13 Interventions here aim to create a better visual and accessible link between the Thoroughfare and Market Place (marked 'A' on Figure 10.4). Rather than creating a continuation of the material

treatment, which could be dangerous given the change in function to a roadway, there is scope to increase footway widths and create much more pedestrian space at the junction of Market Place and London Road. A second initiative is to create a sense of arrival at Market Place, currently dominated by parked cars (marked 'B'). Parking provision and capacity in Halesworth will need to be assessed in order to properly determine impacts of any proposed changes.

10.14 The potential projects to achieve the above are:



10.15 Create an improved visual connection between Market Place and Thoroughfare through changes to the junction at Market Place and Thoroughfare. The central island is removed enabling an extended pedestrian area and creating an inviting space near to the entrance to the church yard. Planting and seating encourage people to dwell and create a visual link from the Thoroughfare suggesting further activity in the Market Place. The roadway remains two-way and it would be important to ensure that vehicular movement did not make users feel unsafe.





- 10.16 Test the reduction of parking spaces from 30 to 20 within Market Place to create more space for pedestrians. To trial the part-pedestrianisation, temporary planters will bring greenery to the square and also create temporary barriers to one of the vehicle access routes. They will define a space that is safe for pedestrians and can be used for seating and other activities. The entrance and exit route will be unchanged at the western end of Market Place.

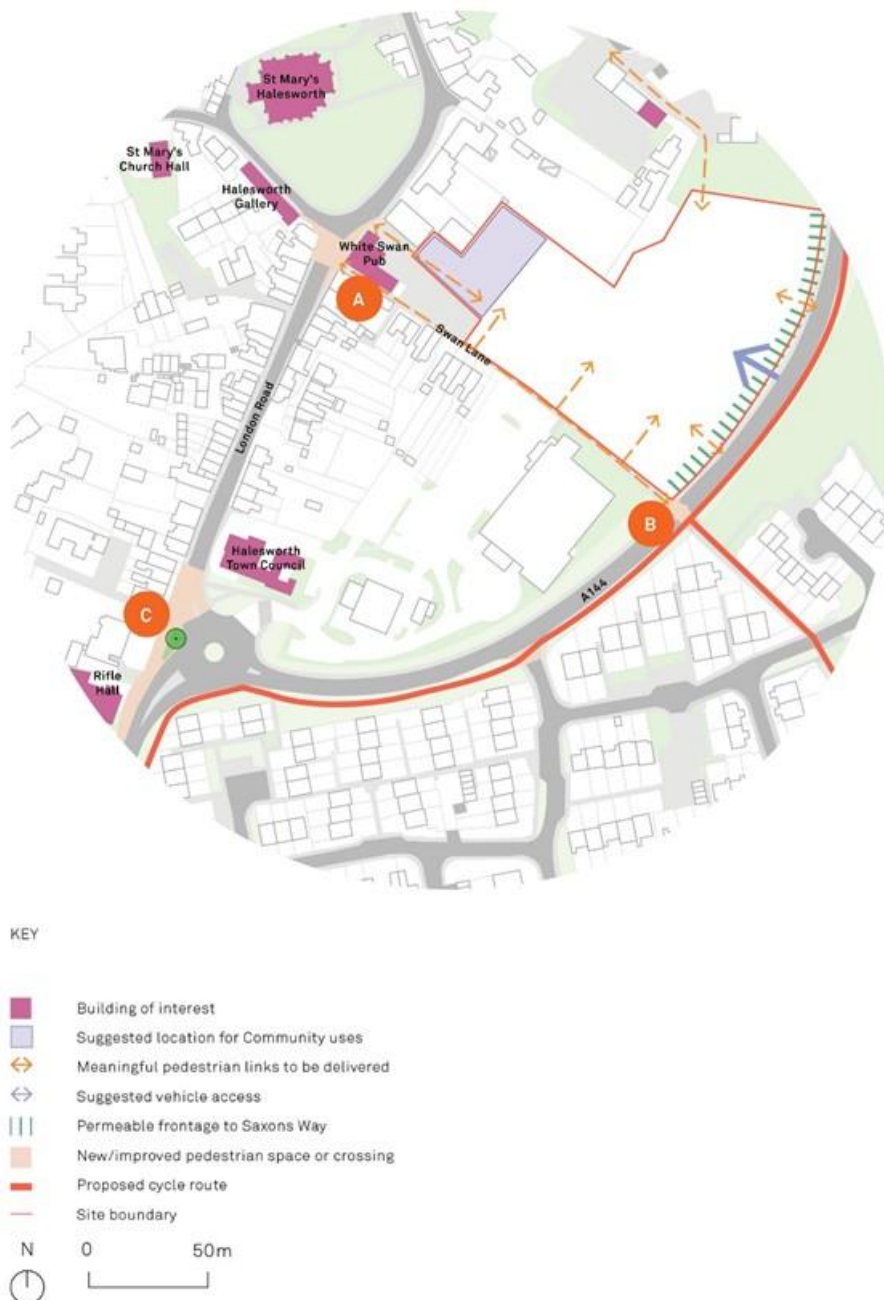


- 10.17 Create a permanent pedestrian plaza at the eastern end of Market Place. On arriving from Thoroughfare, a new paved pedestrian space will create an improved setting for listed buildings and businesses surrounding the square. Planting and public seating provide places to dwell, while the otherwise open 'plaza' allows for a variety of activities including the weekly market, and seating, possibly for a café. 20 car parking places will be laid out.

#### 4. Swan Lane environs

- 10.18 Swan Lane and the area it connects to is in many ways the historic centre of Halesworth, centred around St. Mary's Church and connecting into Market Place. The Halesworth Gallery sits within a listed building overlooking the churchyard, along with a pub, a fish and chip shop, and a number of other small outlets. Swan lane itself is a well-used footpath connecting residential neighbourhoods to the southeast. But footways in the area are very narrow to non-existent, and though London Road is relatively quiet at this point, it still feels unsafe to be in the road when traffic is around.
- 10.19 Possible interventions in this area are about making useful links more usable by creating improved road crossings and improving entrances and gateway moments.

**Figure 10.5: Map of Swan Lane environs showing location of potential projects**



**A. Swan Lane entrance** - create a better gateway into London Road

10.20 Arriving along London Road to Swan Lane, hardscaping and planting would create an improved setting for the shops, pub and gallery at this junction. Extended footways create an improved setting for the White Swan Public House and more space for pedestrians to access the other businesses here. A raised table crossing creates better access between Swan Lane and Steeple End, the gallery, the church and Market Place beyond. The raised table crossing will also calm traffic speeds and bring a sense of pedestrian priority.



### B. Saxons Way crossing

10.21 As noted elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan, only one controlled crossing exists along the whole of the by-pass, Saxons Way and that is at the other end of the road from the Swan Lane footway. A new controlled crossing is proposed which would help residents, many of whom are elderly, from the Lansbury Road estate, to have safer access to town centre and to the Coop store. The Movement section of the Plan suggests that Swan Lane becomes a shared cycle path and if this is taken forward then a 'tiger crossing' (a zebra crossing with cycle facilities) would be required.

### C. London Road Gateway

10.22 Arriving along London Road from the south an area of planting, trees and seating (retaining vehicular access to the neighbouring house) would create a welcoming gateway into Halesworth Town Centre. A raised table crossing point across the entrance into London Road indicates to traffic to slow down and would support pedestrians to cross to the Coop store.





- 10.23 This focus area also includes an identified Local Plan development site between Swan Lane and Saxons Way. The Local Plan includes provision for community facilities on the site located at the Angel Link end. Proposals by We Made That suggests an alternative location to an area of the site next to Swan Lane as shown in Fig 10.5. This would bring more active uses to this end of town. Vehicle access from Saxons Way needs to create a through route and good public pedestrian connectivity is required.

**Next steps to take forward a programme of improvements to Connectivity**

- 10.24 The Town Centre report outlines the key logistics such as planning, statutory permissions, costs, sustainability and accessibility required to bring these projects forward. Table 10.1 sets out the report’s suggestions as to the next steps needed to reach decisions as to which of the proposals could be taken forward. Further public consultation will be needed on any final proposals.

**Table 10.1: Next steps for potential Town Centre improvements**

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Actions</b>
1 to 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise projects for potential CIL funding or Section 278 agreement</li> <li>• Engage with Printworks site landowners to establish ambitions for connectivity</li> <li>• Further engagement with Stakeholders such as The Cut and Halesworth Museum to establish specific ambitions and concerns</li> <li>• Liaise with market traders and businesses around Market Place to determine concerns and establish ambitions for the space</li> <li>• Work with ESC and The People and Places Partnership to commission a parking capacity study once people’s movement is back to pre-Covid levels</li> <li>• Continue to work with ESC and SCC highways to develop cycling strategies</li> <li>• Continue to work with ESC Planning Department to guide connectivity issues relating to upcoming development</li> </ul>
4 months to 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage architects/landscape designers to undertake design development of priority projects that could be funded through CIL</li> <li>• Commission local artists to develop designs for wayfinding and signage</li> <li>• Continue to work with Sustrans, ESC, and SCC to develop a strategy for re-routing NCR1</li> <li>• Continue to work with ESC Planning Department to guide development in meeting the principles set out in the connectivity study</li> </ul>
1 year to 5+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with ESC Planning Department to guide development to meeting the principles of the connectivity study</li> <li>• Work with ESC to seek funding and delivery the wayfinding strategy</li> <li>• Work with ESC Planning and Highways to identify and deliver highways projects to be delivered by developers via section 278 agreements</li> <li>• Identify other funding opportunities to deliver other projects in the connectivity study</li> </ul>

**POLICY HAL.TC1: ENHANCING HALESWORTH TOWN CENTRE**

**Proposals which enhance the quality and accessibility (specifically for pedestrians and disabled users) of the public realm in Halesworth Town Centre will be supported. In particular, any proposals are encouraged to reflect the principles that informed the public realm and movement solutions and projects identified in Section 10 of this Neighbourhood Plan.**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: TOWN CENTRE PROPOSALS**

**Halesworth Town Council to set up a working group to consider, in the first instance, the initial three-month programme of next steps. The working group will report back to Halesworth Town Council at an agreed date with proposed priorities and the work programme required.**

- 10.25 In previous surveys of residents and businesses and during the consultation for this Plan two other aspects of connectivity and movement within the town centre have been highlighted as needing attention.

**Movement and traffic on the Thoroughfare**

- 10.26 Following the opening of the ring road in 1989 the Thoroughfare became a pedestrianised area regulated by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). In theory this gives vehicle access to only certain Thoroughfare users – residents, blue badge vehicles and delivery vehicles to retail units. Cycling is allowed north to south, and the northern section is a two way part of the National Cycle Route 1 (see Movement and Transport section for details). Parking is not allowed, except for offloading and within the limitation of the Blue Badge scheme. There has been little enforcement of the regulations leading to considerable traffic on the street creating confusion for all users and safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 10.27 In 2017, Halesworth Town Council (HTC) set up an Urban Infrastructure Working Group. It undertook a thorough consultation with residents and businesses to gauge their views on the traffic situation in the town including a focus on the Thoroughfare. The results showed that 81% of respondents thought the Thoroughfare should be fully pedestrianised, 98% said cyclists should dismount both ways and 91% thought delivery vans should use a designated area in the car park. These findings are supported by the responses to the more recent NP consultations.
- 10.28 As part of the post Covid Safer Streets initiative Suffolk County Council issued a TRO closing the Thoroughfare between 10am and 2pm each weekday. A staffed barrier at the top of Bridge Street prevented entry other than to the limited number of users with a permit. Informal feedback to the town council, from residents and businesses to these arrangements has been positive. However, once the staffed barrier no longer operated, traffic and parking rapidly increased on the Thoroughfare despite the TRO still being in force. An increase on online purchasing has also increased the numbers of parcel delivery vans.
- 10.29 Suffolk County Council is due to review these arrangements by March 2022. It is therefore an opportune time to look for a more permanent and properly enforceable solution to the management of the TRO including permanent barriers that can limit access to only those with permits.

- 10.30 In September 2021 the Town Council agreed to set up a working group to consider future traffic management in the Thoroughfare and to make proposals as to the best feasible solution. The Town Centre report contains some pointers as to the kind of barriers that could be considered. The NPSG strongly supports this work by the Town Council as further limiting traffic and better management of the rules would make the Thoroughfare a more appealing place for residents and visitors to spend time. This in turn would support the economic sustainability of Halesworth's retail and tourist offer.

### **Signage and wayfinding**

- 10.31 When coming out of Halesworth Railway Station, a visitor would not know what direction to take to the town centre or what they might find there. The Museum, located in the station building, is easily missed. Once in the Thoroughfare they would be unaware that the largest Millennium Green in England is just a minute away. The photograph below encourages visitors to stop at the end of the Thoroughfare as nothing indicates that the Market Place is hidden from view around the corner to the right. The map on the left of the photo is headed 'The Market Place' but is wrongly positioned and creates more confusion.



### ***Lack of signage to the Market Place***

- 10.32 The Town Centre report proposals as to where finger post way-marking signs and flank wall signage could be located to replace the present limited number of uncoordinated signs around the town which tend to add to clutter on the streets and are often ineffective. A new signage system should incorporate a holistic design approach throughout the town, reduce clutter on the streets and make Halesworth's assets more visible and easier to find for visitors to the town. Designs will need to be developed to enhance and complement the character of the town.

**Figure 10.6: Way finding proposals**



10.33 The People and Places initiative, led by the Economic Development team at East Suffolk Council have included signage in the action plan designed to improve the economic sustainability of the town. This action has been allocated to HTC and NPSG to take forward. The project will require engagement with residents and businesses in order to achieve sign-off of design proposals. Engagement with businesses and landowners where flank wall signage is proposed will be of particular importance.



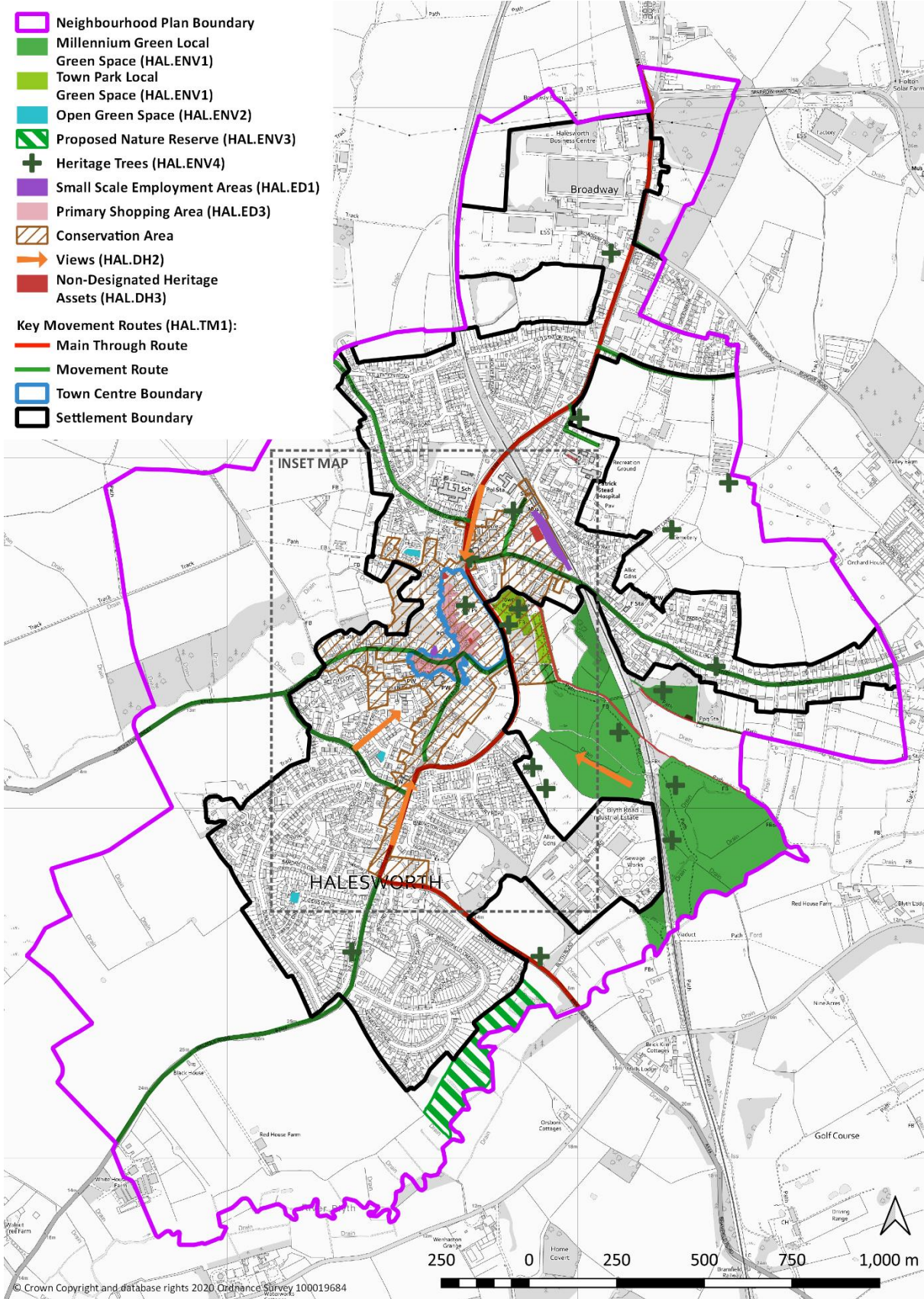
**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ACTION: SIGNAGE AND WAY FINDING**

**Halesworth Town Council, with partner organisations in the People and Places action group, to take a lead on setting up a design team, including professional input where necessary, to scope, propose and implement improvements to the signage and wayfinding for Halesworth. Consultation with businesses and residents will be essential.**

**Design in the Town Centre**

- 10.34 As shown in the Design and Heritage section of this plan Halesworth has an extensive conservation area which covers much of the town centre as defined from the Station through to the roundabout at London Road and Saxons Way. Conservation area status ensures that development properly reflects the historic character of the area.
- 10.35 Any development proposals that impact on the area and on listed buildings should positively contribute to the setting through appropriate choice of scale, mass, height and materials. The historic and active frontages of the independent shops and cafes along Bridge Street, the Thoroughfare and the Market Place should be retained and enhanced where possible.
- 10.36 Any proposed street furniture needs to enhance the character and complement the existing historic street furniture including lighting, seating, and signage. Modern materials that complement the street scene may be appropriate where they might enhance the local character.

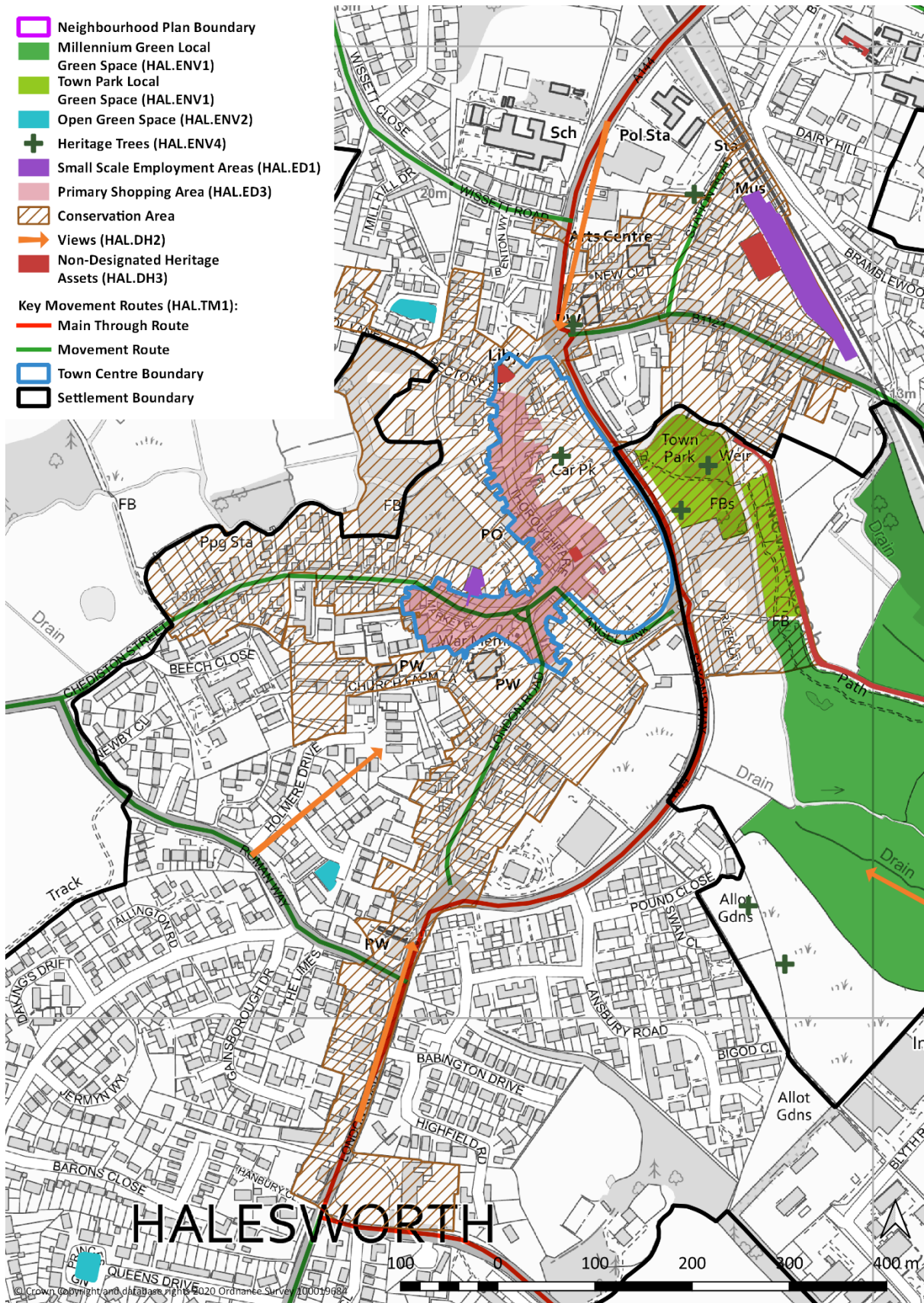
# 11 POLICIES MAP





**INSET MAP**

- Neighbourhood Plan Boundary
  - Millennium Green Local Green Space (HAL.ENV1)
  - Town Park Local Green Space (HAL.ENV1)
  - Open Green Space (HAL.ENV2)
  - Heritage Trees (HAL.ENV4)
  - Small Scale Employment Areas (HAL.ED1)
  - Primary Shopping Area (HAL.ED3)
  - Conservation Area
  - Views (HAL.DH2)
  - Non-Designated Heritage Assets (HAL.DH3)
- Key Movement Routes (HAL.TM1):**
- Main Through Route
  - Movement Route
  - Town Centre Boundary
  - Settlement Boundary



**HALESWORTH**

## **Appendix 1      Proposed new north-south route including National Cycle Network Route 1**

The **northern section** of this new route would be up Norwich Road from Quay Street to Spexhall Road/ Triple Plea roundabout in the north. At present a shared cycle track goes only part way along the Norwich Road (A144) on the eastern side as far as Harrison's Lane. Cyclists, if they use it, have to stop at numerous entrances and roads. The NPSG recommends a new route along the western side of Norwich Road. The NCR1 route follows the present shared pavement route but at Harrison's Lane veers off towards Holton before turning north again. The route along Norwich Road would allow a more direct and safer NCR1 beyond the town boundary.

At the south the route has to cross Norwich Road to continue down the main pedestrianised shopping road, into a car park before going under a small underpass to come out into the Park and onto the tarmac cycle track out towards the east and south of the town. The town centre section of the NCR1 is assessed as Red or Amber by Sustrans. See Figure 9.3.

For the **central section** of the new route the group proposes a cycle track along the eastern edge of Saxons Way round to the Coop roundabout at London Road. The two existing pedestrian crossings on Norwich Road and Quay Street would connect the Norwich Road section to the Saxons Way section.

As cycling is not allowed northwards along the Thoroughfare there is no easy, direct cycle route to and from the south and west of the town.

Removing the NCR1 from the shopping street and car park would offer a much safer and pleasanter environment for pedestrians and this change is supported by residents in consultations held over the years and is supported by Sustrans.

The Saxons Way b-pass was built with no regard for cycling and retrofitting a route will need local authorities and developers working together to make it happen. Suffolk County Council does own grass verges along the eastern side of Saxons Way and there are potentially three developments along the route that give opportunities for Section 106 and CIL contributions towards the creation of a new route.

The **southern section** from London Road/Coop roundabout along London Road and left into Bramfield Road would create better connectivity for the housing on the southern edge of town, to the industrial estate and would link to the NCR1 as it crosses Bramfield Road.

Consideration has been given to an alternative that would allow the NCR1 to be rerouted from the shopping street and to mitigate some of the difficulties that achieving the Saxons Way route might pose in the short term. However, the alternative itself poses problems caused by the narrowness of a small stretch of road, the need to change a footpath into a bridleway, the need to get permission to use a private road and a narrow bridge! Just some of the challenges faced in a market town when trying to improve cycling!



HALESWORTH

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE