

**FINAL VERSION**

**MUTFORD**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

**2019 - 2036**



The Mutford Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' by East Suffolk Council  
on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

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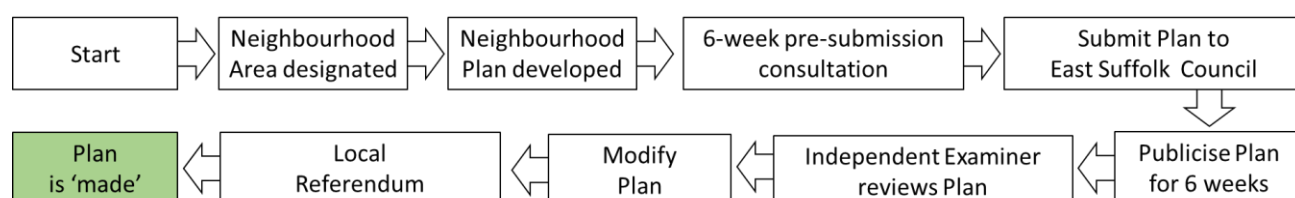
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## A ONE-MINUTE SUMMARY

The Mutford Plan is an important document. It will be a material consideration in all planning decisions within the parish through to 2036.

If you do not have time to read the whole document, this is what you need to know:

- The Mutford Plan cannot oppose the policies in the East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan (March 2019)<sup>1</sup>, including the proposal for approximately six homes on land north of Chapel Road.
- The ten planning policies in Section 5 and listed on the next page have evolved from the findings of the village survey (conducted during summer 2017), public engagement and other evidence.
- The policies reflect the strongly held community aspiration to retain the rural identity of Mutford. This includes conserving the open landscape, tranquillity and dark skies of the parish, and ensuring that any new development is of an appropriate size, scale and design for a small rural parish accessed via unclassified roads, with very limited facilities and no public transport.
- Non-development issues raised in the survey and public engagement – including concerns about speeding traffic, requests for a faster broadband speed, better mobile phone signal and improved road maintenance, lie outside the scope of the Mutford Plan but are listed in Appendix G. Mutford Parish Council and other stakeholders will endeavour to address these issues.
- Feedback from statutory consultees, residents and local businesses have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this final version of the Mutford Plan.
- East Suffolk Council (ESC) conducted an independent examination of a ‘submission’ version of the Mutford Plan in August 2019.
- ESC undertook a local referendum in October 2019 amongst the residents of Mutford; over 80% of those who voted agreed that the Mutford Plan should be used to help ESC decide planning decisions in the neighbourhood area.



<sup>1</sup> Waveney District Council and Suffolk Coastal merged on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, forming East Suffolk Council. The Mutford Plan was initially prepared using the Final Draft Waveney Local Plan (March 2018), which was subsequently adopted as the East Suffolk – Waveney Local Plan in March 2019.

## List of Policies

- MNP.1 Rural identity
- MNP.2 Conserving the setting of the Church
- MNP.3 Dark skies
- MNP.4 Housing density
- MNP.5 Infill development within settlement boundaries
- MNP.6 Backland development
- MNP.7 Backland development and street frontage
- MNP.8 Off-road parking
- MNP.9 Rural tourism accommodation
- MNP.10 Rural business

## SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

### How to read this document

The Mutford Plan is principally a planning document to be used by the local planning authority when determining planning applications in the parish of Mutford. As such it will contain planning terminology which is explained as the terms are introduced.

This plan also fits within a legal framework and to be approved must meet certain regulatory conditions. The section on Legal Framework is focussed on this aspect.

The rest of the document is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** sets out the context for the Mutford Plan and describes the parish of Mutford including the historical and geographical background of the area, existing housing provision and future development proposals.
- **Section 3** outlines the evidence provided by the village survey and feedback from public engagement. This leads on to the Vision and Objectives of the Mutford Plan through to 2036 in **Section 4**, which have evolved from the evidence and context.
- The text in Sections 1 -3 provide context, reasoning and evidence for both general readers and decision makers to show how the ten policies in **Section 5** have been developed, with the narrative for each policy showing how the policy should be applied and interpreted.
- The policies must be used by local planning officers and the Planning Committee when determining applications for development. The policies will also be referred to by applicants and their agents when designing and submitting planning applications.
- Finally, the **Appendices** include policy maps, reference sources used in the preparation of the Mutford Plan and a list of other concerns raised by respondents to the village survey such as speeding traffic and poor broadband speeds.

## What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood Plans (NPs) were introduced in the Localism Act of 2011 and are intended as a means of empowering local communities such as Mutford to use the planning system to promote appropriate development in their Neighbourhood Area<sup>2</sup>.

According to strategic policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), NPs give communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area.

They can shape, direct and help deliver appropriate development by influencing planning decisions – providing a level of detail for the NP area that cannot be expected to be in a Local Plan. The NPPF (para. 13) states that

*‘Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.’*

In other words, NPs must have regard to national planning policy as set out in the NPPF as well as be in conformity with district wide Local Plans (in our case, East Suffolk – Waveney Local Plan, March 2019). NPs cannot promote less development than required in the strategic policies of the Local Plan or undermine those policies.

The Mutford Plan has used the phrase ‘exceptional circumstances’ for the various specific policies which permit development outside settlement boundaries; this is a categorisation adopted by the Mutford Plan Working Party (‘the Working Party’) but is not formally used by either the Local Plan or NPPF.

The Local Planning Authority appoints an independent examiner who will study the draft NP and associated documents, assess them against basic conditions and suggest modifications where necessary.

Assuming the NP is recommended to go forward to referendum, residents on the electoral roll for the given Neighbourhood Area will be invited by the local planning authority to take part in a local Referendum at the end of the drafting process. If accepted by the majority of those who have voted, the plan comes into force as part of the statutory development plan for the area. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NP will be a statutory consideration in determining all relevant planning applications within the Neighbourhood Area (in this case, the parish of Mutford).

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<sup>2</sup> A Neighbourhood Area is the geographical area that a Neighbourhood Plan covers and must be designated by the local planning authority.



## The legal framework

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Local Plan

The NPPF<sup>3</sup> provides a strategic context at a national level, and all planning decisions must consider the policies within the NPPF as a material consideration. The Mutford Plan references the July 2018 version of the NPPF document.

The Working Party has used the East Suffolk – Waveney Local Plan as primary evidence; the Local Plan was adopted in March 2019 and supersedes the Waveney Local Development Framework. For the ease of reading, the East Suffolk – Waveney Local Plan (March 2019) is from this point on referred to as ‘the Local Plan’.

### Basic Conditions

Since a NP is a formal statutory document, it must meet what are termed the ‘Basic Conditions’ set out in planning legislation. These relate to having regard to national policy (defined in the NPPF), achieving sustainable development<sup>4</sup>, general conformity with strategic local policy (defined in the Local Plan) and not breaching EU obligations. The NP must also comply with human rights law.

This conformity is demonstrated in a separate Basic Conditions Statement which accompanied the Mutford Plan when it was formally submitted to the local planning authority for examination. All documents are available on the East Suffolk Council website.

The independent examiner appointed by the local planning authority tested the NP against the basic conditions as part of the formal consultation stage and other requirements as set out in law.

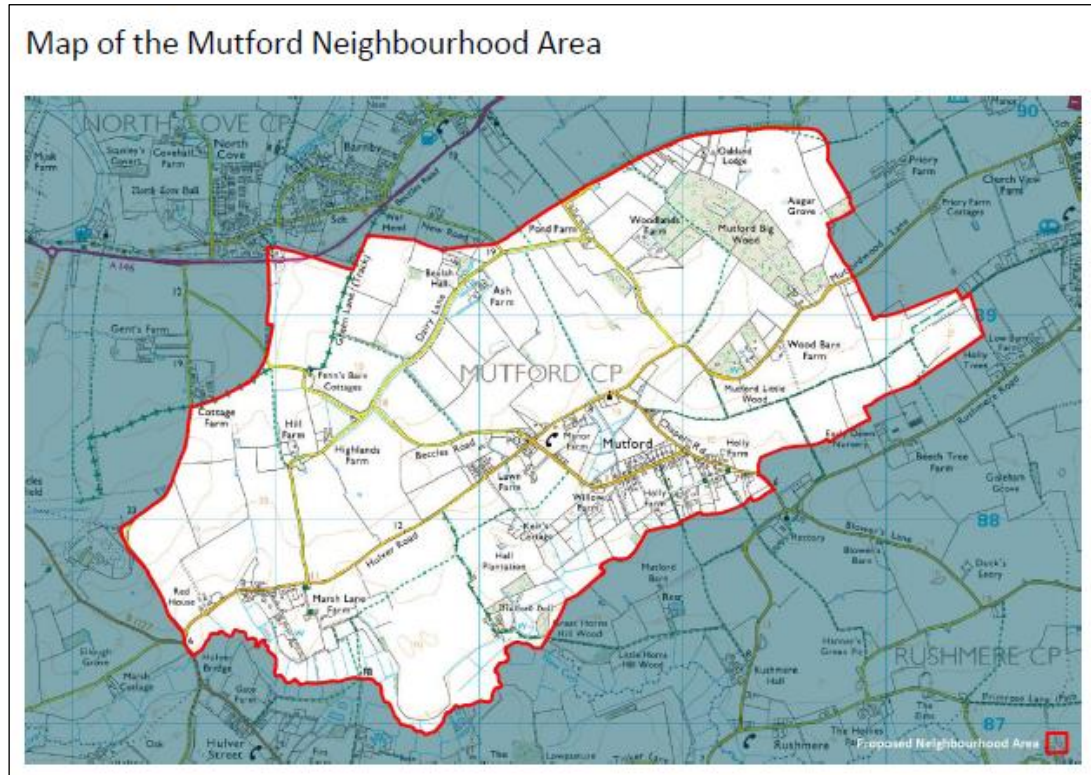
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<sup>3</sup> The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out government’s planning policies in England and how they are expected to be applied. They are intended to make the planning system less complex and more accessible and acts as guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers, both in drawing up plans and making decisions about planning applications.

<sup>4</sup> From NPPF (para.7): ‘The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

## The Mutford Plan

Mutford Parish Council is the 'qualifying body' for the purposes of preparing this NP and the 'designated area' is the whole of the parish of Mutford, as agreed by Waveney District Council in September 2016.



Mutford Parish Council agreed to formally start work on a NP in May 2016, following unanimous support from residents at the Annual Parish Meeting. A local Working Party consisting of residents and representatives of Mutford Parish Council was created to prepare the Plan.

During the preparation of the Mutford Plan the Working Party has taken guidance from the local planning authority and Suffolk County Council. The group reports to the Parish Council at regular intervals and at key stages in its preparation.

The Vision for Mutford through to 2036, and the policies that support it, have been developed from analysis of a village survey, set within the local environmental and socio-economic context, and planning guidance as represented by the Local Plan and the government's National Planning Policy Framework (2018). A full list of additional evidence sources, including the current Suffolk Parking Guidance and Waveney District Landscape Character Assessment (2008), are listed in Appendix E.

The Mutford Plan runs through to 2036 to reflect the same time period adopted by the Local Plan.

As stated above, the Mutford Plan - in common with all NPs - cannot promote less development than required in the strategic policies of the Local Plan. The Mutford Plan therefore accepts the Local Plan's allocation of approximately six new dwellings in Mutford (policy WLP7.13 Land North of Chapel Road, Mutford).

The Mutford Plan will be reviewed as and when necessary, to take account of any changing circumstances affecting the area including any significant change to the local housing need, review of the Local Plan or any relevant changes in national policy.

The Mutford Plan is important. It will provide more control on the type of development permitted in the parish, with a level of local detail which cannot be expected to be included in a wider-ranging planning document.

In summary the policies contained within the Mutford Plan will:

- reflect and reinforce the importance of the rural identity of Mutford as a small tranquil village;
- limit new development to within the two settlement boundaries unless in exceptional circumstances;
- provide guidance on the size and scale of any new development;
- ensure the provision of off-road parking, and
- support rural tourism accommodation within converted buildings and small businesses of a size and scale appropriate to the rural setting.

## SECTION 2 - CONTEXT

### Overview

Mutford is a small rural parish in north east Suffolk, several miles wide, with just over 200 homes and a population of 471 – a number that has hardly changed for several hundred years. At the time of the last Census in 2011, over one quarter (26%) of the population of Mutford were aged 65+, whilst 13% were aged 15 and under.

Whilst there is not a village green, activity is centred around the village hall and playing field, bequeathed to the villagers in the 1950s when it was adjacent to the now demolished Victorian village school.

The playing fields have a fully equipped children's play area and a purpose-built village hall. Earlier and smaller clusters of housing along Church Road, Chapel Road and Hulver Road, together with individual and small groups of houses across the parish, make up the village.

There are very limited facilities within the parish: no Post Office, general store, school or pub, and no public transport. The village is accessed via narrow country lanes, with on-street parking and speeding traffic significant concerns for many residents.

### Historical background

Mutford was once an important medieval village and mentioned twice in the Domesday Book of 1086. It is thought that the name Mutford may mean 'ford near the meeting of the streams', from the Anglo-Saxon 'mutha' meaning mouth of a river – possibly where a stream enters the Hundred River in the grounds of Mutford Hall.



*Map of Mutford circa 1700  
(Green area marks the Church of St Andrew)*



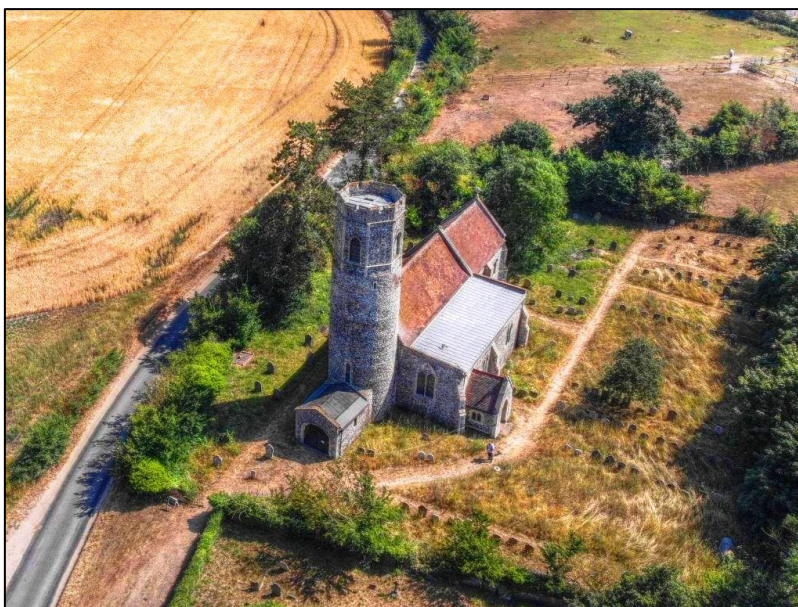
Up to the mid-nineteenth century 'Mutford and Lothingland Hundred' was an administrative area in the north-eastern corner of Suffolk, separated from Norfolk by the River Waveney and the appropriately named Hundred River. The southern part of the hundred was formerly the Half Hundred of Mutford, comprising the parishes of Barnby, Carlton Colville, Gisleham, Kessingland, Kirkley, Mutford, Pakefield and Rushmere, all of which still exist today.

There are several listed buildings in the village which contribute to the historic landscape character. [see Appendix C for a full list of Listed Buildings in Mutford].

The Grade I listed Church of St Andrew is likely to have been one of the two churches in Mutford listed in the Domesday Book.

The tower is thought to be original, with the rest of the church being rebuilt in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> Century at which time the tower was heightened and topped with an octagonal belfry. At the same time, the south aisle was added, and a galilee porch built against the round tower - the only known example in England.

Managed with advice provided by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the churchyard at St Andrew's acts as a sanctuary for wildlife and wildflowers.



A Wesleyan Methodist chapel, built in 1828, was located on the southern side of Chapel Lane, near Holly Farm but closed in the late nineteenth century.



A National School, built in 1842 for the local schoolchildren, was enlarged around 1891 and had an average attendance of 70 children at that time. This school was then replaced by a Council School, built in 1912, which had an average attendance of 91. The school, located next to the Village Hall in Mill Road, was demolished in 1986. Local children must now travel to schools outside the village, to Carlton Colville, Barnby and Beccles – and further afield.

A wind-powered corn mill built on Mill Road around 1826 was demolished in 1922.



At one time there were two public houses in the village – The Crossings on Church Road closed in the 1970s, and The Crown on Chapel Road (near Holly Farm) closed in the 1960s. The nearest pub is now The Swan at Barnby, 2½ miles away.





## Mutford and the surrounding countryside

The parish is set in a rural Suffolk landscape just south of the Broads National Park, between Lowestoft and the market town of Beccles, and is close to the Waveney Valley and the Suffolk Heritage Coast.

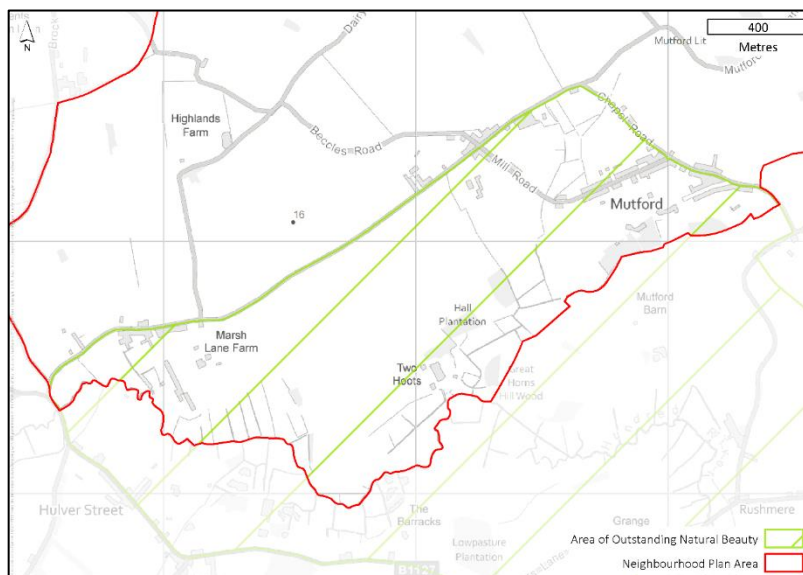


The landscape in Mutford is categorised in the Waveney District Landscape Character Assessment (2008) as predominantly Hundred Tributary Valley Farmland – ‘an area of undulating farmland cut by tributaries draining into the minor Hundred River... Sparsely settled with scattered farmsteads varying in age and small hamlets linked by sunken lanes including linear (Mutford) and

*nucleated (Henstead). Both are low density and demonstrate traditional the vernacular character of red brick and pantiles with occasional thatched buildings...’.*

The Grade II\* listed Mutford Hall is noted to contribute to the ‘historic landscape character’, whilst another key characteristic is a ‘*textured landscape, with a varied landscape mosaic composed of a variety of landcover elements, with pasture and wet grassland juxtaposed with woodland and arable fields.*’

A portion of the parish, from the southern side of Hulver Road, the church of St Andrew and Chapel Road, is located within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) [see Appendix A – Map 1 for a larger version of this area].



The Mutford Plan supports the NPPF (para.172) which

states that the AONB has the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty and that wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations.

The Hundred River passes through the parish, on its way to the coast at Kessingland. There is some risk to farmland from flooding of the Hundred River in the southern part of the parish and some minor risk of flooding from surface water in various parts of the parish<sup>5</sup>.

Most of the parish is classified as 'Rolling valley farmlands and furze' in the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment<sup>6</sup>. This landscape typology is characterised by sandy soil, straight field boundaries associated with late enclosure and a fragmentary cover of woodland.

There is also a swathe of 'Ancient plateau claylands' across the northern section of the parish, characterised by flat or gently rolling arable landscape of clay soils dissected by small river valleys, field pattern of ancient enclosures, scattered ancient woodland parcels containing a mix of oak, lime, cherry, hazel, hornbeam, ash and holly and a 'network of winding lanes and paths often associated with hedges create visual intimacy.'



'Valley meadows and fens' in the lower portion of Mutford are primarily characterised by small grassland fields, some of which have historically been poorly managed due to difficulty of access and are now used as horse paddocks.

Comprising around 6.5km<sup>2</sup>, the agricultural land around Mutford is used for a variety of arable crops such as wheat and barley, and root vegetables including sugar beet, turnips and potatoes.

Horse-riding is a popular pursuit in and around Mutford, with informal livery facilities and equine tourism available in the parish.

## Connections with neighbouring towns and villages

Mutford is accessed via country lanes, with a network of public footpaths, bridleways and lanes full of wildlife that cross and link the village to Rushmere, Barnby and North Cove.

Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk includes the northern part of Waveney District and identifies 'a low-key rural road network threading through the character area'<sup>7</sup> that survives to this day.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B - Suffolk County Council's Flood Risk maps

<sup>6</sup> Source: [http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/landscape\\_map.aspx](http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/landscape_map.aspx)

<sup>7</sup> Source: Waveney District Landscape Character Assessment



There are several well maintained and signposted footpaths in the parish, providing recreational access to the countryside for residents and visitors. The Mutford Plan supports the NPPF (para. 98), which requires planning policies to protect and enhance public rights of way and access.

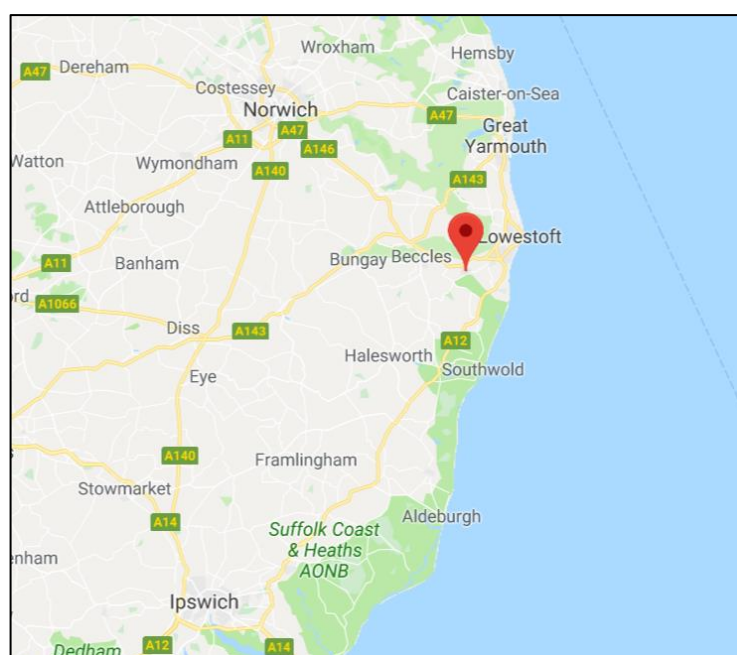


The A146, which connects Norwich to Lowestoft, passes across the northern most tip of the parish – see top left of map. Some traffic from Lowestoft and Carlton Colville will divert through

the village on the way to Beccles and beyond, especially if an accident or heavy rush-hour traffic slows progress on the A road.

Large agricultural vehicles, primarily tractors and large trailers, frequently use the lanes to transport harvested crops to nearby farms and the Anaerobic Digestion Plant at Ellough, which turns locally grown crops, such as maize, into sustainable gas which is fed directly into the national grid.

Other road users include horse-riders from local stables and equine tourism facilities within the parish. Recreational cyclists also use the narrow lanes through the village, some of which are formally designated as part of the National Cycle Network.



## Access to facilities

There are a few local businesses in the village, but no Post Office, school, doctor's surgery, public house or general store. Residents are completely reliant on private transport to access the facilities and services of nearby towns, with no public bus service passing through the village.

Facility	Nearest location/ distance from Mutford <sup>8</sup>
Police station (manned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beccles (5.1 miles)</li> </ul>
Fire station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pakefield (3.3 miles)</li> </ul>
Railway station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oulton Broad South (4.2 miles) (Branch line between Ipswich &amp; Lowestoft)</li> </ul>
Doctor's surgeries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carlton Colville (3.6 miles)</li> <li>• Kessingland (3.1 miles)</li> </ul>
Hospital A&E Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James Paget University Hospital, Gorleston (11 miles)</li> </ul>
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barnby &amp; North Cove Primary School (2 miles)</li> <li>• Carlton Colville Primary School, Gisleham and Grove Primary, Carlton Colville (1.8 miles)</li> <li>• Several schools in Beccles (5 miles)</li> </ul>
Supermarket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pakefield (4.5 miles)</li> <li>• Beccles (5 miles)</li> </ul>
Public House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barnby (2.3 miles)</li> </ul>

## Car ownership and parking

Due to the lack of facilities and no public transport servicing Mutford, residents need to use cars to access all the necessary shops and services of contemporary life. Because of this essential need, there is a higher than average level of car ownership in the village. The 2011 Census found that over half (56%) of households in Mutford had two or more cars or vans, which is above average when compared to neighbouring parishes (28% in Beccles, 44% in Barnby and Carlton Colville).

Both car ownership and the number of cars per household in Mutford is likely to have increased since the last Census, following the closure of the Post Office/general store, the cessation of the bus service and the national and regional trends in car ownership (there has been a 9% growth in car ownership in East of England since the last Census, based on Dept. of Transport data). There is no empirical data to provide firm evidence, but anecdotally most households in Mutford now own at least two cars to access facilities and services in nearby towns and villages.

At the time of the last Census, 67% of the population were economically active, and most have to drive out of the area to work in places such as Norwich, Lowestoft and Ipswich.

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<sup>8</sup> Distance by road from Mutford Village Hall.

With limited off-road parking, the increased levels of car ownership in the village has led to more on-road parking, creating safety concerns.

Regarding new development, the current Suffolk Guidance for Parking proposes a minimum allocation: 1.5 car spaces for 2-3-bedroom properties where parking is within the curtilage, and 3 car spaces for 4+ bedrooms.

## **Dark skies**

There are no street lights in the village.

The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)'s Night Blight map (2016) indicates that Mutford currently enjoys some of the darkest skies in the area. A survey, conducted in 2010 by the CPRE and the British Astronomical Association's Commission for Dark Skies, found that in England the main causes of light nuisance are road lighting (89%), domestic security lighting (79%), street lights that are more than five years old (77%) and businesses (56%).

The CPRE survey found that almost two-thirds of the light pollution came from a source with an established lighting scheme, for example a development that has been in place for some time; a total 82% of respondents to their survey said that the offending lights were left on all night.

## **Current housing provision**

Based on the last Census data (2011), there are 216 homes in Mutford, the majority of which are detached houses or bungalows. Twenty-eight percent of occupied homes have 1-2 bedrooms, 40% have 3 bedrooms, 22% 4 bedrooms and 9% 5+<sup>9</sup>.

Eighty-five percent of homes were owned (outright or with a mortgage or loan). Four percent of homes were rented from the Local Authority. Overall, 22% of homes in Mutford were single-person households.

Overall, the housing is of a low density<sup>10</sup> with a very disparate distribution around the parish, with three distinct clusters of residential development:

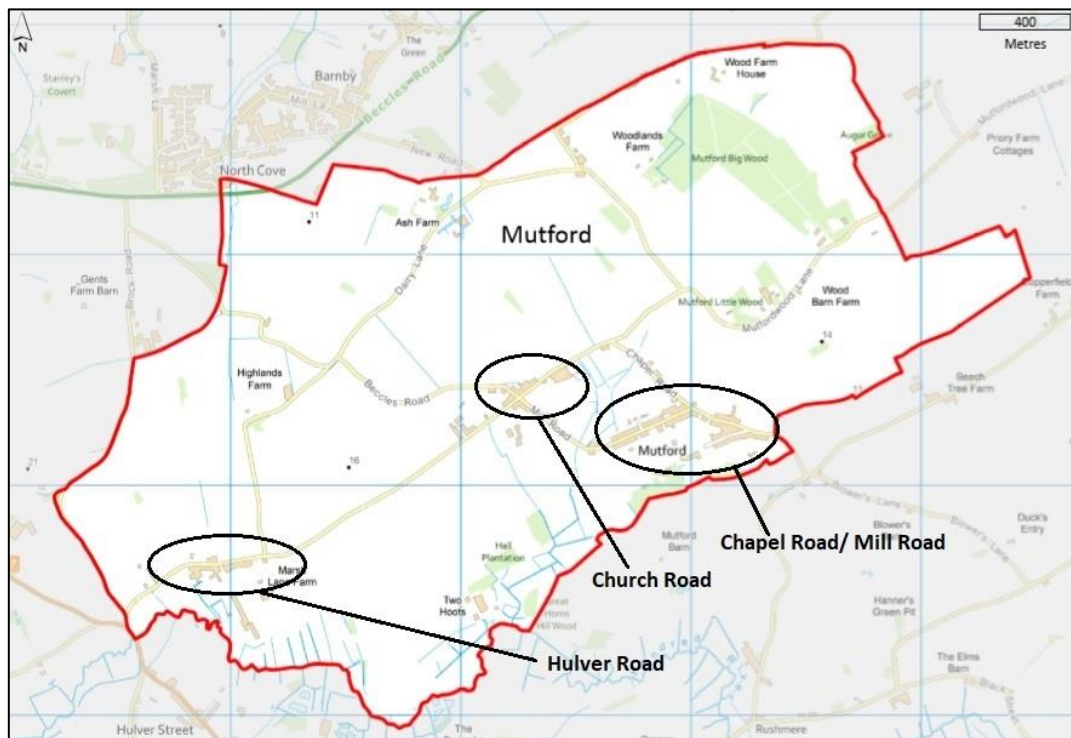
- Chapel Road/ Mill Road. This area includes the largest proportion of the parish's homes – most of which were built within the last 50-60 years - as well as the village hall, playing field and play area. There is a short stretch of pavement along the eastern end of Mill Road. The area has a housing density of 16 dwellings per hectare (estimate provided by Waveney planning department);
- Church Road, known locally as 'the crossroads'. This historic cluster of properties used to include a pub and Post Office/general store, with an approximate housing density of 20 dwellings per hectare, and

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<sup>9</sup> Source: 2011 Census data. Based on All household spaces with at least one usual resident

<sup>10</sup> Housing density is expressed as the number of dwellings per hectare (1 hectare = 2.741 acres or 10,000m<sup>2</sup>)

- the western end of Hulver Road, around one mile from the crossroads.

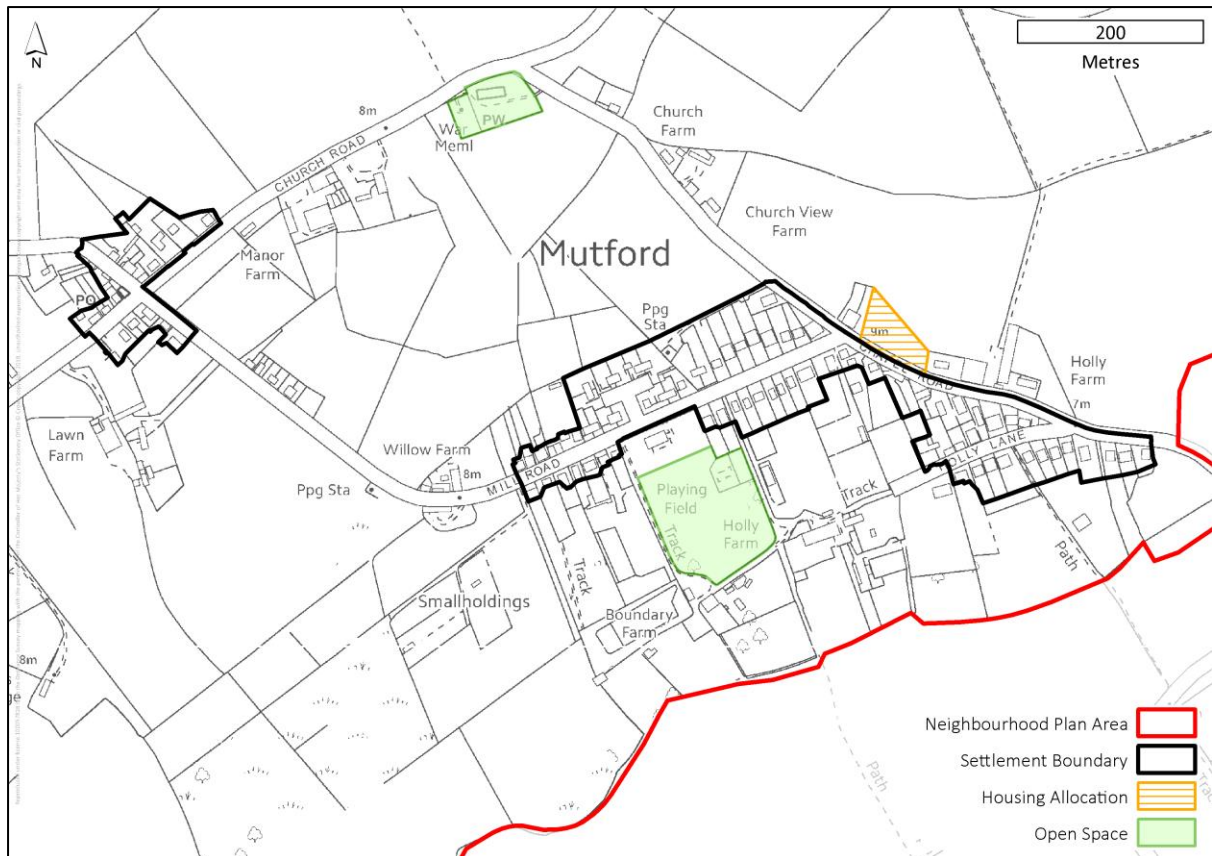


There are also many homes spread out across the outlying areas, including various farmsteads, and houses in and beside Mutford Big Wood.

The Chapel Road/ Mill Road and Church Road areas have, for the first time, both been formally defined by 'settlement boundaries' in the Local Plan.

The Local Plan (para.1.33) states that '*Settlement boundaries define the built-up area of settlements, and subject to the other policies of this Local Plan, indicate where development for housing, employment and town centre development would be suitable.*' There are two settlement boundaries in Mutford [see Appendix A - Map 2]; previously, all Mutford was defined as Open Countryside<sup>11</sup>. The Mutford Plan supports this approach.

<sup>11</sup> Countryside is defined as any land outside settlement boundaries. There is a presumption against all development in the countryside, except in exceptional circumstances. See Section 5 para.37 for these exceptional circumstances.



The Local Plan (policy WLP1.2 Settlement boundaries) states '*Land which is outside of settlement boundaries and allocations in the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans is considered as the Countryside. New residential, employment and town centre development will not be permitted in the Countryside except where specific policies in this Local Plan indicate otherwise.*' These exceptional circumstances are listed in Section 5 (para. 37).

Limiting development beyond these settlement boundaries is intended to remove what is termed the 'hope value' for land outside these areas, provide certainty for developers and the public about which land may be developed and concentrate development in a pre-defined area.

## Amenities

There are only a few local businesses operating from registered premises within the parish:

- Several commercial farms;
- Serenity Hair & Beauty Lounge located on Hulver Road, in the old Post Office which closed in 2013;
- SWB Mutford Garage on Hulver Road services Land Rovers;
- A.G. Block Engineering, on Hulver Road;
- builder's yard, Chapel Road;
- two roadside stands selling farm produce on Chapel Road; and
- several self-catering holiday homes and Bed & Breakfast



The Mutford and Rushmere Village Hall in Mill Road operates as a registered charity; opened in 1968, the hall is used by several interest groups on a regular basis and attracts a number of private party and event hires.



A large playing field, play area and tennis courts, all located behind the Village Hall, were gifted to the residents of Mutford in perpetuity and are managed by a Trust. The children's play area was upgraded in 2010 following local fundraising and a Big Lottery Grant.

Allotments located a short distance to the west of the Village Hall were also gifted to the residents of Mutford in perpetuity and are managed by the Mutford Welfare Trust, which is a registered charity.

The playing fields/play area/tennis courts and the Church, churchyard and cemetery at St Andrew are also designated as Open Space in the Local Plan (Policy WLP8.23 – Protection of Open Space); this states that *'there will be a presumption against any development that involves the loss of open space or community sport and recreation facilities.'* [see Appendix A - Map 2]

It is therefore considered that the Village Hall, playing fields, play area and allotments are all provided with due protection from development for current and future generations, enabling villagers to enjoy and benefit from the recreational facilities in a safe and accessible location.

## Infrastructure

The only public telephone box in the village was decommissioned more than five years ago.

There are only two post boxes within the parish, with one in the village itself on Mill Lane, and one at the western end of Hulver Road.

A mobile library, funded by Suffolk Libraries, serves the village monthly, stopping at three locations in the parish.

There is no mains gas supply within the parish, and many homes in the outlying areas are without mains sewerage; the Local Plan (para. 7.119) states that 'localised improvements to the foul sewerage network will be required' to accommodate the 'limited amount of residential development' in Mutford.

The Parish Council maintains an information board located outside the Village Hall in Mill Road, a noticeboard inside the Village Hall, and manages a website (<http://mutford.suffolk.cloud/>) which includes links to local events and the Village Hall page.

A free monthly community newsletter – Mutford News, launched in September 2018; it is distributed free to every household in the parish and provides local information and contacts.

As identified in the Local Plan, mobile phone coverage is poor in many rural areas; more than eight in ten respondents to the village survey households think that it is important that the mobile phone network is improved in Mutford.

The existing broadband provision is also regarded as inadequate. Many areas of the parish experience speeds of less than 10Mb/s, although a few houses near the crossroads can access superfast (>50Mb/s) broadband services. The use of fast broadband service is becoming increasingly necessary for home-working and school research, which often requires access to applications which support high-definition content.



The provision of good telecommunications is vital to avoid social exclusion in a rural area – particularly when there is no public transport, and all possible opportunities should be taken to drive forward a better telecommunication infrastructure.

## Development proposals for Mutford

Waveney District Council's first draft Local Plan (2017) proposed two sites for housing developments within Mutford – eight dwellings on a site to the south of Chapel Road (WLP7.15), and six dwellings on a site to the north (WLP7.16). The village survey asked residents for their general views on these two sites, and these have been considered by the Working Party when forming the policies in the Mutford Plan.

Residents were invited by Waveney District Council (WDC) to make specific comments on the two sites – and any other matters within the draft Local Plan, direct to WDC as part of the Council's public consultation.

Mutford Parish Council, in their submission to the consultation, had 'no objection' to either of the two sites originally proposed to the south and north of Chapel Road – although it wished '*to ensure that there is sufficient off road parking for each of the proposed dwellings commensurate with the number of driving aged occupants in each household and the likely number of motor vehicles per households in a rural location is higher than in an urban environment (an absolute minimum of 2/3 spaces per dwelling)*'.

The consultation for the first draft Local Plan closed in September 2017.

The Local Plan, when adopted in March 2019, revised the housing need across the district. Ten per cent of the overall housing growth – equivalent to 865 new homes – was allocated to rural areas. Excluding homes completed since 2014 and permissions, 167 homes were allocated across ten ‘smaller villages’ in the district. Mutford is classified as one of these smaller villages<sup>12</sup>.

Following the consultation on the first draft Local Plan and additional evidence, the adopted Local Plan reduced the proposed development in Mutford from two sites to one, with a housing allocation of eight dwellings<sup>13</sup> across this plan period (2014-2036); two homes have already been completed or had planning permission and there is a site allocation for approximately six new dwellings - 3 pairs of semi-detached houses - (policy WLP7.13 Land North of Chapel Road, Mutford), ‘to be developed at a density of approximately 20 dwellings per hectare’. [See Appendix A – Map 2]

Extract from the Local Plan (para 7.120, 7.121):

*‘The site (0.32 hectares) is located on the east fringe of the residential cluster based around Chapel Road and Mill Road in the setting of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The land is used for agriculture and can be accessed from Chapel Road.*

*The site will enable a small number of dwellings to be provided in a location that is contained in the landscape and well related to existing development on Chapel Road. The site has good access to community facilities on Mill Road.’*

The proposed site to the north of Chapel Road is currently outside of the settlement boundaries. Once the site is developed, settlement boundaries may be reviewed.

There is no identified need for additional housing within the parish, other than that outlined above. The Mutford Plan has specifically decided not to allocate any further development in the parish.

<sup>12</sup> The Waveney Local Plan (policy WLP7.1 Rural settlement hierarchy and Housing Growth) classified ten settlements in rural areas as ‘smaller villages’: Brampton; Homersfield; Ilketshall St Lawrence; Lound; Mutford; Ringsfield; Rumburgh; Willingham (Shadingfield and Willingham St Mary); Westhall, and Wissett.

<sup>13</sup> Waveney District Council proposed, at the Examination Hearings for the final draft Local Plan in October 2018, that all housing allocation numbers should be expressed as ‘approximately’. This wording has been used in the adopted version of the Local Plan.



## SECTION 3 - EVIDENCE

The Mutford Plan supports the delivery of the strategic policies of the NPPF and Local Plan and has taken guidance from various additional sources including the Waveney District Landscape Character Assessment (2008) and the current Suffolk Parking Guidance; see Appendix F for a full list of reference material.

The Mutford Plan is a community-led document. A village survey was commissioned, alongside a series of public engagement sessions. These two sources of information were used as primary evidence to ensure that the policies are based on the community's shared views and aspirations for the future of Mutford.

The full questionnaire can be found in the Consultation Statement<sup>14</sup>. Findings of the survey have been used to develop the vision for Mutford through to 2036, and to providing supporting evidence for the policies in Section 4.

### The Village Survey

A self-completion questionnaire, designed by the Working Party, was distributed to all 216 homes in the parish, and to those with business interests in the area, during summer 2017. The survey was made available for two months, in both paper copy and online, and closed in late August 2017. Questions covered topics including the perceived levels of relative importance of local facilities, environment and services.

In total, 130 completed questionnaires were received from 122 addresses, representing 56% of the 216 households in Mutford. Just over half (53%) of responses were postal, with the remainder completed online. Analysis tools available from Survey Monkey software were used to tabulate the results.

### Public engagement

In addition to the findings of the village survey, community engagement included several public meetings between 2017 and 2019, and a stand at the village fete in July 2018. The provision of a dedicated and monitored email address and a post box beside the village hall ensured that all residents could present their views to the Working Party.

The Mutford Plan can only include policies on future development within the parish. Comments made by residents when responding to the survey and during the public engagement sessions which relate to non-developmental issues (such as an expressed need for an improved mobile phone signal in the parish) have been summarised in Appendix G. These non-development issues represent community aspirations that the Parish Council will endeavour to address to the best of their ability or redirect to other stakeholders.

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<sup>14</sup> The Consultation Statement is available online and includes further details on public engagement: <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans-in-the-area/mutford-neighbourhood-plan/>

## SECTION 4 - VISION FOR MUTFORD THROUGH TO 2036

To provide a community led framework for Mutford through to 2036 which retains the rural identity of the parish and allows growth in a way that is sympathetic and proportionate to the village as it is today.

### Objectives

During the production of the Mutford Plan, residents have been very clear about what they like about living in Mutford; these objectives are based on their shared vision for the future and are compatible with the strategic objectives for the parish as set out in the Local Plan.

- **To reinforce the rural character of the village**
  - Ensure that the predominant land use remains agricultural by controlling the growth of the village, and supporting farms
  - Retain and protect trees and hedgerows, and promote biodiversity
  - Conserve the tranquillity and dark skies
  - Maintain the individual character of Mutford with separation from Carlton Colville and Barnby/North Cove
- **To ensure that any future development is of a size and scale appropriate to a small village with few facilities**
  - Ensure that new development outside the two settlement boundaries in Mutford is only permitted in exceptional circumstances<sup>15</sup>
  - Retain defined open landscapes in Mutford to ensure settlement characteristics are protected
  - Ensure that adequate off-road car parking is a critical element of planning approval

<sup>15</sup> See Section 5 para.37 for a list of the most relevant policies in the NPPF and Local Plan which will permit development outside settlement boundaries.

## SECTION 5 - POLICIES

1. The policies are grouped into three categories:
  - 1.1. Landscape character
  - 1.2. Future development
  - 1.3. Employment
2. Each category is introduced by a narrative to explain why the policies exist, and the evidence to support them including the relevant sections of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (2018), the Local Plan (2019) and responses from public engagement. The policies – shown in shaded boxes - must be used by local planning officers and the Planning Committee when determining applications for development. The policies will also be referred to by applicants and their agents when designing and submitting planning applications.

### Conserving the open countryside

3. The Mutford Plan has noted the strongly held view of residents that the rural landscape of Mutford must be conserved. However, both the NPPF and the Local Plan are clear that new housing in the open countryside will only be permitted in certain very specific circumstances – see para.37, below, for a full list of these exceptional circumstances. It has therefore been decided the Mutford Plan does not require a policy to duplicate this approach.
4. The NPPF (para. 79) states that *‘Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside’* unless certain circumstances apply. To help meet this strategic objective, the Local Plan identified settlement boundaries which define the built-up area of settlements and indicate where housing would be appropriate. Two settlement boundaries have been identified in Mutford, which the Mutford Plan accepts.
5. The Local Plan (policy WLP1.2 Settlement boundaries) states that *‘Land which is outside of settlement boundaries and allocations in the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans is considered as the Countryside. New residential, employment and town centre development will not be permitted in the Countryside except where specific policies in this Local Plan indicate otherwise.’* These include, for example, *‘permanent dwellings in the Countryside for rural workers where they are to support an existing and viable rural business.’* [See para.37, below, for a list of the most relevant exceptional circumstances]. There is therefore a presumption in the Local Plan that new housing in the Countryside will generally not be supported.
6. The Mutford Plan supports the principles of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Management Plan 2018-2023.

## Green energy

7. There are no specific policies related to green energy.<sup>16</sup> The NPPF (para. 151) states that the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat should be increased *‘while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts)’*.
8. The Local Plan (policy WLP8.27 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy) reinforces this national strategy, noting that Waveney *‘is already home to a number of renewable energy and low carbon developments, including wind turbines in Lowestoft, Kessingland and Holton, solar farms around Ellough and an anaerobic digester in Ellough.’* (Local Plan para. 8.156). The Local Plan, however, also notes that renewable energy developments can have *‘significant negative effects on the environment, including design, heritage, biodiversity and landscape’* (Local Plan para. 8.159) and does not identify any further suitable sites within the District.
9. In the village survey, most residents expressed only limited - and conditional - support for solar farms and wind turbines within the parish, with many emphasising the likely cumulative negative landscape impact of any commercial renewable energy initiative. Most solar thermal collectors and domestic wind turbines on private dwellings would be considered as ‘permitted development’ and as such do not require planning permission. The Local Plan therefore provides adequate protection of the rural landscape against any unsuitable development within the parish. For these reasons the Mutford Plan does not have a policy on green energy.

## Conserving our heritage

10. Mutford is situated in an area of archaeological potential, which is highlighted in the Suffolk County Council Historic Environment Record. There are numerous crop circles visible on aerial photography, indicating archaeological remains. Development may require archaeological investigation to ascertain if there are archaeological remains on site and what mitigation strategies may be appropriate. Developers should consult Suffolk County Council archaeological service at the earliest opportunity. [See Appendix D for a map of Mutford Common as an example of an area of archaeological interest within the parish.]

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<sup>16</sup> Green energy comes from a natural source and is renewable, such as wind, solar, hydropower, geothermal and biomass.

## Landscape character

11. Mutford is a small village in a rural setting. The policies in this section reflect the residents' strong desire to retain and enhance the surrounding landscape, conserve the dark skies, wildlife habitats and the tranquil<sup>17</sup> and rural nature of the parish. Woodland, hedgerows and the open countryside are all essential elements of the rural quality of the parish.
12. A large part of the southern portion of Mutford – south of Hulver Road, Church Road and Mill Road - is within the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. The Mutford Plan supports the NPPF (para.172) which states that the AONB has the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty and that wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations.
13. The Local Plan (policy WLP8.35 Landscape Character) states development will not be permitted which has a significantly adverse impact on the setting and designation of the AONB.
14. The Local Plan (policy WLP8.23 Protection of Open Space) protects designated open space with a '*presumption against any development that involves the loss of open space...*'; the Local Plan policies map designates two such areas for special protection within the parish of Mutford: St Andrew's churchyard and cemetery and the playing fields/play area/tennis courts behind the village hall on Mill Road [see Appendix A – Map 2].
15. The Mutford Plan also notes that there is further protection against development for the playing fields, tennis court and equipped play area which were gifted to the village in perpetuity, and allotments to the west of the Village Hall which are registered as a charity and held by Mutford Welfare Trust.
16. The Mutford Plan supports the Local Plan (policy WLP8.36 Coalescence of settlements) which does not permit the development of undeveloped land and intensification of developed land between settlements if it leads to the coalescence (merging) of settlements. For Mutford, this means maintaining separation between the parish and Carlton Colville, and Barnby/North Cove.
17. The Local Plan (policy WLP8.7 Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside) emphasises that the design of any development outside settlement boundaries must '*respect and reflect the character of the settlement and existing built up frontage*' with the housing density reflective of the density in the village and surrounding built up area, and the ratio of the building footprint to the plot area '*consistent with existing properties nearby which characterise the village*'.

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<sup>17</sup> The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England says that for many people tranquillity is 'seeing landscapes, along with birdsong, peace and quiet, and starlit skies.'

18. 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)'<sup>18</sup> promotes tree planting – *'Planting more trees provides not just new habitats for wildlife – it also helps reduce carbon dioxide levels and can reduce flood risk'* and states that *'By using our land more sustainably and creating new habitats for wildlife, including by planting more trees, we can arrest the decline in native species and improve our biodiversity.'*
19. The Mutford Plan recognises the importance to the rural community of the protection of local wildlife habitats such as woodland and hedgerows. Dense islands of planted woodland and the network of tree-studded hedgerows have both a visual and structural value: they provide shelter against inclement weather, top soil erosion – which inevitably results in local flooding - and a wildlife habitat. New planting should use trees and hedging currently prevalent in the parish, including Poplar, Elder, Ash, Birch and Willow.

### Rural identity

20. In the village survey, residents were unequivocal about the importance of preserving the rural quality of Mutford. An important feature and characteristic of Mutford is the relationship between the surrounding countryside and the two main built-up areas of the village, defined by the settlement boundaries; these open areas of landscape contribute to the visual amenity and character of the parish.
21. More than 9 out of 10 respondents to the village survey felt that it was important to protect the local wildlife habitats; at a public meeting there was strong support for preserving the biodiversity<sup>19</sup> of the locality – preserving open areas for owls to hunt, birds to nest, bees to thrive and pollinate, and wildflowers to flourish.



22. To conserve the rural landscape and setting it is also important to ensure the continued separation of the two main clusters of housing in Mutford – the cluster of old houses around the crossroads and the predominantly more recent homes along Mill Road/ Chapel Road, as defined by the settlement boundaries. An open break<sup>20</sup> between these two built environments will retain the historic delineation of housing around the

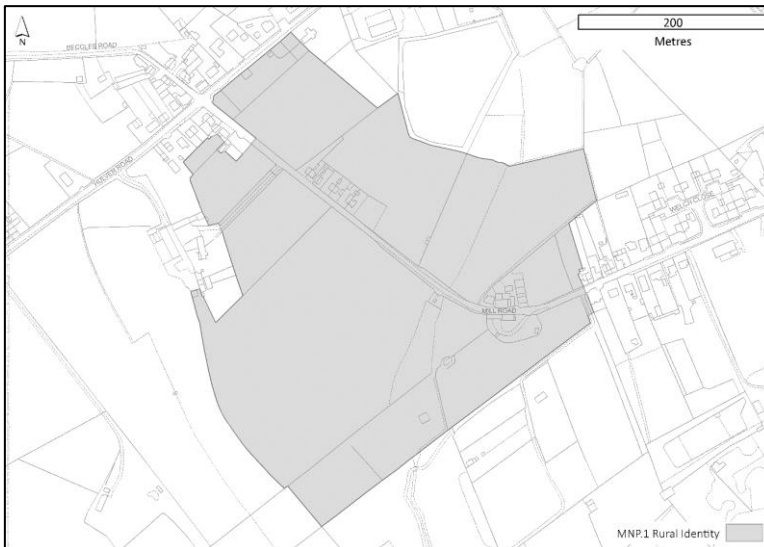
<sup>18</sup> Published by Department for Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs (Defra). 2018.

<sup>19</sup> 'Biodiversity (short for biological diversity) describes the whole variety of life on earth. It includes all species of plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms and the natural systems that support them' (Source: Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service)

<sup>20</sup> An open break is a defined area of land, protecting a visual amenity or setting.

crossroads and conserve the rural identity and setting of the area for current and future generations by protecting the land from any future development.

23. The Mutford Plan supports the approach taken in the Local Plan (policy WLP7.13 Land North of Chapel Road, Mutford) which requires the use of tree planting to avoid creating a prominent settlement edge and the protection of hedgerows along the street frontage except where needed for access; the Mutford Plan proposes the adoption of this approach for any new development or extension of existing buildings across the parish.



24. The Mutford Plan supports the Local Plan (policy WLP8.35 Landscape character), which offers protection for the local landscape; new development must not have an adverse impact on the landscape and the rural identity of the parish.

#### **MNP.1 – Rural identity**

In order to conserve the rural identity of Mutford, all new development should enhance and reinforce the existing landscape character and biodiversity.

Existing trees and hedgerows will be retained where at all possible, except where needed for provision of access

All new landscape planting should employ native species and should integrate the development into the surrounding landscape

Development proposals for built development will not be supported in the open landscape between the two settlement boundaries.

The open landscape is identified in Appendix A – Map 3.

### Conserving the setting of the Church

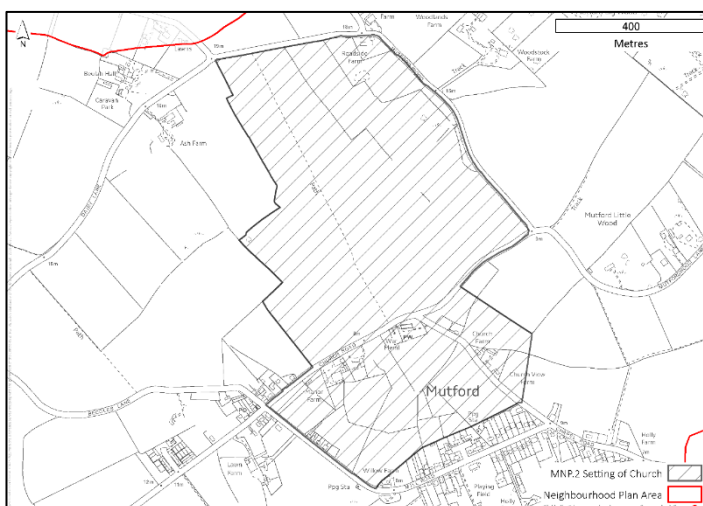
25. The Local Plan (policy WLP8.23 – Protection of Open Space) designates the Church of St Andrew and churchyard as Open Space, with a ‘presumption against any development’. The Local Plan (policy WLP8.37 – Historic Environment) also protects the setting of Heritage Assets – a term which includes ‘buildings... monuments and archaeological remains that are of historic or archaeological value’.



26. The Church of St Andrew is a Grade I listed building dating from Anglo-Norman times. The tall round tower is an important visual focal point for Mutford – a feature of Hundred Tributary Valley Farmland noted in the Waveney District Landscape Character Assessment as one of the ‘Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities’.

27. The setting of the church in the open countryside landscape and its’ historic significance should be conserved for current and future generations as it is an important and significant element of the rural quality of the village [see supporting evidence in a separate document: ‘Mutford Neighbourhood Plan: Additional photographic evidence and maps’]

28. The defined area of the setting of the church (see map, right, and a larger version as Map 4 in Appendix A) specifically describes the land to be protected adjacent to the church and has been defined by hard landscape features such as hedging and lanes. However, any development proposed in an adjacent area which has a view of the church will be considered on a case by case basis.



29. A public footpath leads from the Church to the neighbouring village – Barnby, passing across fields [See Appendix A – Map 6]. This footpath is used by residents of both villages



to walk their dogs, for general recreation and to access the nearest local Public House – The Swan at Barnby; it is an important recreational amenity which should be conserved.

30. In order to conserve the significance and setting of the church, its landscape setting should be protected from harmful development. Following guidance from Historic England, a Heritage Statement will be required for any development within the setting. The NPPF (para. 189) states that *‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting’*.

#### **MNP.2 – Conserving the setting of the church**

Any new development within the setting of the church, as defined in Appendix A map 4, should respect the setting of the church. Development proposals which would have an unacceptable harmful impact on the setting will not be supported

Development proposals within the identified setting of the church must include a Heritage Statement that sets out any potential impacts upon the significance of the church including through development in its setting. Conflict between any aspect of a proposal and the conservation of the church’s significance must be avoided or minimised, but where this is not possible any harm must be clearly and convincingly justified.

Development proposals beyond the identified setting of the church and which have an inter-visibility with the church will be supported where they accord with other development plan policies and would not have an unacceptable harmful impact on the setting of the church.

#### **Dark skies**

31. The Local Plan (para. 8.211) notes that *‘Waveney is the one of the darker Districts in the country with much of the District darker than regional and national averages’* and policy WLP8.35 Landscape character states that *‘Proposals for development should protect and enhance the tranquillity and dark skies of both the Waveney District and Broads Authority areas.’*
32. The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Management Plan 2018-2023 states that one of its objectives for its vision to 2038 is that *‘Tranquillity is retained and undesirable intrusion prevented’* – *‘The importance of tranquillity to the character of the AONB is fully recognised and sources of noise and visual intrusion have been resisted or mitigated. The area’s dark night skies are valued and protected...’*
33. The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) believes that darkness at night is one of the key characteristics of rural areas and it represents a major difference between what is rural and what is urban. The CPRE’s Night Blight map shows that Mutford currently enjoys dark night skies. During public engagement, many residents proactively

expressed their enjoyment of the dark skies in the parish, and the importance of conserving them; the village survey found that most residents are strongly opposed to the introduction of street lighting in any form.

34. The Parish Council will work with residents to promote the benefits of keeping external lighting to a minimum intensity level unless safety is compromised, and of low energy consumption, to conserve the dark skies and maintain the aesthetic character of the parish which is so valued by residents.
35. Policy MNP.3 Dark skies, below, applies to all new development proposals other than householder development (for example extensions to existing dwellings).

#### **MNP.3 – Dark skies**

Development proposals should respect the dark skies that are characteristic of the parish.

Other than householder development, development proposals should include a statement explaining how any external lighting (including its' luminosity) has regard to preserving the dark night skies in the neighbouring area.

Development proposals which incorporate highway lighting will only be supported if required by the Highways Authority for reasons of road safety.

### **Future development**

36. Mutford is classified as a small village in the Local Plan; it is accessed via narrow unclassified lanes with few facilities and unsupported by public transport. Any new development in Mutford is expected to be located within one of the two settlement boundaries in Mutford defined by the Local Plan. The housing allocation for Mutford, as proposed in the Local Plan, is currently located outside a settlement boundary; once the site is developed, this settlement boundary may be reviewed.
37. New development outside settlement boundaries - and so in the open countryside, including between the two settlement boundaries in Mutford - is only permitted in certain specific cases which the Mutford Plan has termed 'exceptional circumstances.' These circumstances are listed in both the NPPF and the Local Plan and cannot be opposed by the Mutford Plan and are replicated below.
  - 37.1. The NPPF (para. 79) states that 'Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:
    - there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;

- the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;
  - the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;
  - the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential dwelling; or
  - the design is of exceptional quality, in that it: - is truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and - would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.
- 37.2. NPPF Glossary - Rural exception sites: *'Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.'*
- 37.3. The Local Plan (policy WLP1.2 Settlement boundaries) states *'Land which is outside of settlement boundaries and allocations in the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans is considered as the Countryside. New residential, employment and town centre development will not be permitted in the Countryside except where specific policies in this Local Plan indicate otherwise.'*
- 37.4. The Local Plan permits development outside settlement boundaries/in the Countryside in certain circumstances, the most relevant ones being:
- the development of affordable housing (policy WLP8.6)
  - small scale residential development (policy WLP8.7)
  - permanent dwellings in the Countryside for rural workers where they are to support an existing and viable rural business (policy WLP8.8)
  - New Employment Development (policy WLP8.13)
  - The 'New Self-Catering Tourist Accommodation' (policy WLP8.15) allows for certain specific types and scales of this sort of development to take place where they meet the criteria.

38. The Mutford Plan supports the Local Plan's policy on residential gardens (policy WLP8.33 Residential gardens and Urban Infilling), specifically '*...The living conditions of proposed and existing properties are not unacceptably harmed through means such as overlooking, loss of light, or overbearing forms of development*' and applies this to the development of both backland<sup>21</sup> and infill<sup>22</sup> sites. Additionally, the Mutford Plan recognises that loss of amenity, noise, visual intrusion, difficulties with recycling and waste collections/bin storage and parking are other potential adverse impacts which must be considered when preparing planning submissions.
39. Residents have expressed safety concerns about the current level of on-road parking and the potential for this to increase if additional housing was permitted within the village. Both infill and backland sites also have the potential to create issues relating to access to the highway; the provision of adequate off-road parking and turning space is therefore a critical element of any new development.
40. Respondents to the village survey gave conditional support for future development within the parish, with great emphasis given to conserving the existing rural identity and landscape character, and to retaining undeveloped and green spaces within and adjacent to the existing settlement areas. The existence of the AONB designation for the southern third of the parish is noted as a level of protection against inappropriate development.
41. The Local Plan (policy WLP8.29 Design) outlines the design principles to be adopted in all new developments, including the need to 'complement local character and distinctiveness' and to take account of the 'relationship between buildings and spaces and the wider street scene'. The Mutford Plan supports the need for all new developments to be sensitive and complementary to existing dwellings and the surrounding landscape.
42. In the village survey, residents expressed concern for the capacity of the existing water drainage and sewerage systems to cope with additional demand from new homes. The Local Plan (policy WLP1.3 Infrastructure) restricts new development where this will have a significant impact on the capacity of the existing infrastructure and states '*developers should provide evidence to ensure there is capacity in the water recycling centre and the wastewater network in time to serve the development*'; the Mutford Plan strongly supports this policy and the need for these concerns about capacity to be explicitly addressed when planning applications are submitted.
43. Finally, the Mutford Plan also strongly supports the final paragraph of policy WLP1.3 where it requires that: '*All new developments must provide the most viable high-speed*

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<sup>21</sup> Backland development is typically sited on undeveloped land – such a residential garden or orchard – and where access is required across adjacent land.

<sup>22</sup> Infill is the infilling of a small un-built gap between two dwellings within a built-up frontage or close group of dwellings and have direct access to the highway.

*broadband connection*'; this is a significant issue in Mutford, where broadband speeds vary considerably across the parish.

44. The following policies are complementary and need to be considered holistically when assessing planning applications for new development in Mutford.

#### **Housing density**

45. The Local Plan (policy WLP8.32 Housing Density and Design) states that 'Neighbourhood Plans can set their own policies for housing density which respond to local circumstances'. The Mutford Plan notes the concerns of residents about the relative size and scale of any new development in Mutford which was expressed during public engagement.
46. Where new housing was considered appropriate, residents expressed a preference for small developments of five dwellings or less (in a multiple-choice question in the village survey, 48% of respondents said that developments of 1-2 homes were 'suitable and in keeping with the village character', with 45% supporting 3-5 homes).
47. Feedback from residents revealed that there were concerns that new development – particularly large houses of 4+ bedrooms or housing developments of 5+ homes, would significantly increase traffic levels through the village, potentially creating further issues with on-road parking and more congestion in the narrow lanes in and around the parish. The Highways division of Suffolk County Council has also confirmed that there is a direct correlation between the number of bedrooms in a property and the number of cars in that household.
48. The Mutford Plan also supports the Local Plan's design guidance (policy WLP8.29) which requires development proposals to reflect local distinctiveness and respond to local context and the form of surrounding buildings.
49. The Mutford Plan therefore recommends that new development within the settlement boundaries should not significantly increase the existing housing density. The Local Plan states that the residential land opposite the proposed new housing 'has a housing density of approximately 15 dwellings per hectare' (para 7.122) whilst it is proposed that the semi-detached homes on the new site will be developed 'at a density of approximately 20 dwellings per hectare' (policy WLP7.13).

#### **MNP.4 – Housing density**

All new residential development should reflect adjacent density.

For semi-detached properties densities should not exceed 20 dwellings per hectare, and for detached properties densities should not exceed 15 dwellings per hectare.

New residential development should reflect the relationship between plot sizes and building footprints in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site

### **Infill development within settlement boundaries**

50. Infilling is development within a small un-built gap between existing dwellings within a built-up frontage or close group of dwellings and has direct access to a road. Within a settlement boundary, this would usually comprise a continuous frontage of five or more dwellings.
51. A small gap is defined here as no bigger than that required to build one or at most two dwellings positioned to follow the existing built frontage line and to be of a similar size and on plot shape as those in the existing group, thereby respecting and retaining the rural character and street scene of the locality. A built-up frontage suggests a regular pattern of development over time, rather than a loose grouping of properties with lots of gaps and spaces in-between.
52. More than three-quarters of respondents to the village survey felt that small infill developments within the village were in keeping with the existing village character.
53. All land outside the settlement boundaries is classed as open countryside. Here, infill is defined as development of a small gap between at least two properties, one on each side of the plot. The principle of development is supported by the Local Plan within settlement boundaries and not supported in the Countryside, except where certain stringent conditions apply; these exceptional circumstances are listed in para. 37, above. The Mutford Plan considers the existing policies within the Local Plan provide sufficient protection against inappropriate development in the open countryside.

#### **MNP.5 – Infill development within settlement boundaries**

Within the settlement boundaries in Mutford, development of small gaps of land between existing dwellings and which create a continuous road frontage (also known as infill sites) will be supported.

The design and layout of the development should not be detrimental to the local street scene and should not cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of residents in the existing dwellings either side of the plot, by visual intrusion, noise nuisance, loss of privacy and loss of light.

### **Backland development**

54. Backland development is typically the development of undeveloped land at the rear of a property on land that is currently used as residential garden or orchard, or where there is an existing building such as a detached garage or workshop. Backland plots are often landlocked and require access through another property's land to access the highway.
55. The NPPF (para. 70) states that '*Plans should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area.*'



56. The Mutford Plan seeks to ensure that backland development does not cause harm – including loss of amenity, visual or noise intrusion, loss of light or privacy, nor through the creation of access to the plot resulting in reduced off-road parking for the existing dwelling(s) such that on-road parking becomes necessary. The policy for off-road parking (MNP.10) must be applied to both the new development and existing dwelling(s) if existing off-road parking space is impacted.

**MNP.6 – Backland development within settlement boundaries**

Small backland development within settlement boundaries will be supported provided that:

- a) The development does not unacceptably harm the living conditions of existing or future neighbours
- b) Provision is made for the off-road placement of waste collection/ recycling bins
- c) Landscape features are retained to conserve the existing street scene

57. More than 9 out of 10 respondents to the village survey thought ‘Maintaining the rural character of the parish’ was important. As with the development of infill plots, the conservation of this rural character includes ensuring that any development of backland plots should be undertaken with due regard to the potential harm to adjacent properties, and the immediate landscape – this would include the potential of increased traffic density.

**MNP.7 – Backland development and street frontage**

Development of a backland site which requires the demolition of a building, where this building contributes positively to the character of the existing street frontage, will not be supported.

**Off-road parking**

58. Department of Transport trend data shows that there has been an increase in car ownership nationally and regionally since the last Census was conducted in 2011. It is likely that the number of private cars per household in Mutford has further increased due to the essential need to use private vehicles to access local shops due to the closure of the Post Office/general store and the withdrawal of public transport.
59. Residents have commented on a perceived increase in on-road parking in the parish. Responses to the village survey in relation to the proposed housing site(s) within Mutford provided clear evidence that that on-road parking is a significant safety concern for residents due to the narrowness of the roads in the parish. The Mutford Plan recognises

the view that adequate off-road parking is an essential element of any new housing or business development in Mutford.

60. The Local Plan (policy WLP7.13 Land North of Chapel Road, Mutford) states that 'Car parking should be provided on-plot to the side of the dwellings.' The Mutford Plan supports this approach and applies it to all new development.
61. The Mutford Plan notes the minimum requirements in the current Suffolk Parking Guidance of 1 or 1.5 spaces for new dwellings. However, due to the essential reliance on private transport for those living in or visiting the village, the Mutford Plan regards two off-road car spaces a minimum requirement for each new home. There should also be an adequate turning area within the curtilage of the property in order to allow forward access to the highway.
62. Suffolk County Council has confirmed that there is a strong positive correlation between the number of bedrooms and the level of car ownership; the Mutford Plan therefore regards three off-road car spaces for larger houses to be a minimum requirement.
63. There can be pressure to convert a garage into living accommodation, or to be used for storage, forcing cars to be parked on the road. For this reason, detached garages are preferred.

#### **MNP.8 – Off-road parking**

All development should provide sufficient off-road parking, with a minimum of two car spaces per dwelling.

Car parking plots should be positioned to ensure that there is adequate on-plot turning space and forward access to the highway.

Development proposals which incorporate detached garages will be supported.

#### **Rural tourism accommodation**

64. Mutford is located close to the popular tourist areas of the Waveney Valley and the Suffolk Heritage Coast. The NPPF (para. 83) supports 'sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside'. Eighty-five percent of respondents to the village survey felt that 'new building developments should maintain and reinforce the character of the village' – for many this means retaining large open areas of countryside, unfettered by structures.
65. The Local Plan (para. 8.76) notes that tourism is an important part of the economy of the Waveney District, but cautions (para. 8.84) that '*New tourism accommodation should... be restricted so that it is retained for the benefit of the tourism economy in the District and not lost to residential use.*'

66. The Local Plan (policy WLP8.15 New Self Catering Holiday Accommodation) states: *'New self-catering tourist accommodation will be restricted by means of planning conditions or a legal agreement which permits holiday use only and restricts the period the accommodation can be occupied'*. A business plan which includes a financial viability assessment for the economic viability of any rural tourism development will be required to provide some reassurance on the validity of the proposition – for example, to avoid any deliberate intention at the outset to use the development as a permanent residence.

#### **MNP.9 – Rural tourism accommodation**

Proposals to convert existing buildings outside of settlement boundaries into tourism accommodation will be supported where:

- The structure is permanent and has been established for at least five years; and
- A business plan demonstrating the viability of the tourism accommodation proposal is submitted with the planning application. The business plan must include a financial viability assessment of the proposed tourism accommodation.

Development proposals which do not meet the criteria in the first part of this policy will not be supported.

## **Employment**

67. The NPPF encourages a prosperous rural economy, including the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses (policy 83). The NPPF (para. 84) also recognises that *'sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist'*.
68. The Local Plan (policy WLP8.13 New employment development) supports this with the condition that developments are restricted to business use classes B1 ('Business' – for example offices, light industry appropriate in a residential area), B2 ('General Industrial') and B8 ('Storage or distribution') provided they do not cause detriment to the area due to noise or pollution.
69. Just over half the respondents to the village survey supported new business in the parish; this was often conditional support due to concerns about the potential negative impact of additional traffic, noise and pollution on physical and mental wellbeing. There was

clear support from residents during public engagement for the return of a post office or small general store. As such the Mutford Plan would support a restricted use of some use class A1 businesses ('Shops' – for example post offices, hairdressers, pet shops and sandwich bars) located in or immediately outside the settlement boundaries within an existing cluster of buildings.

70. The Mutford Plan will require all new business development to ensure safeguards are put into place concerning noise and traffic levels and a restriction enforced to restrict a business growing in scale beyond what is appropriate for Mutford. Policy MNP.10 captures these matters. It offers support to the development of rural businesses within either of the two settlement boundaries or in locations which are adjacent to either of the settlement boundaries (other than where they would fall within the open landscape area as defined earlier in this Plan)

[See Appendix E for a full definition of business use classes referenced above.]

#### **MNP.10 – Rural business**

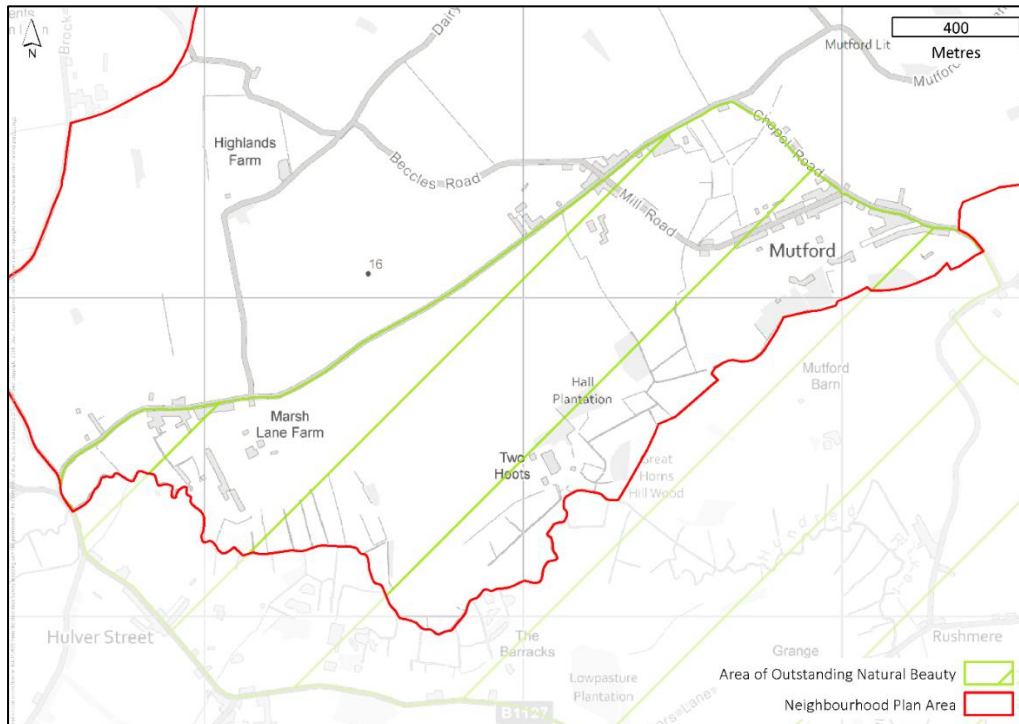
Development proposals for small scale employment uses within the two settlement boundaries or adjacent to either of the two settlement boundaries, except within the open landscape area defined in Policy MNP.1 and as shown on Map 3 Appendix A, will be supported provided that:

- a) Any such development must be of an appropriate scale and sensitive to the character of the area.
- b) Use class A1 businesses (for example a post office or general store) will be particularly supported, where the retail use is of an appropriate scale to serve the village.
- c) Employee and customer off-road parking and an off-road turning area compliant with the current Suffolk Parking Guidance should be provided.
- d) Cycle parking compliant with the current Suffolk Parking Guidance should be provided.

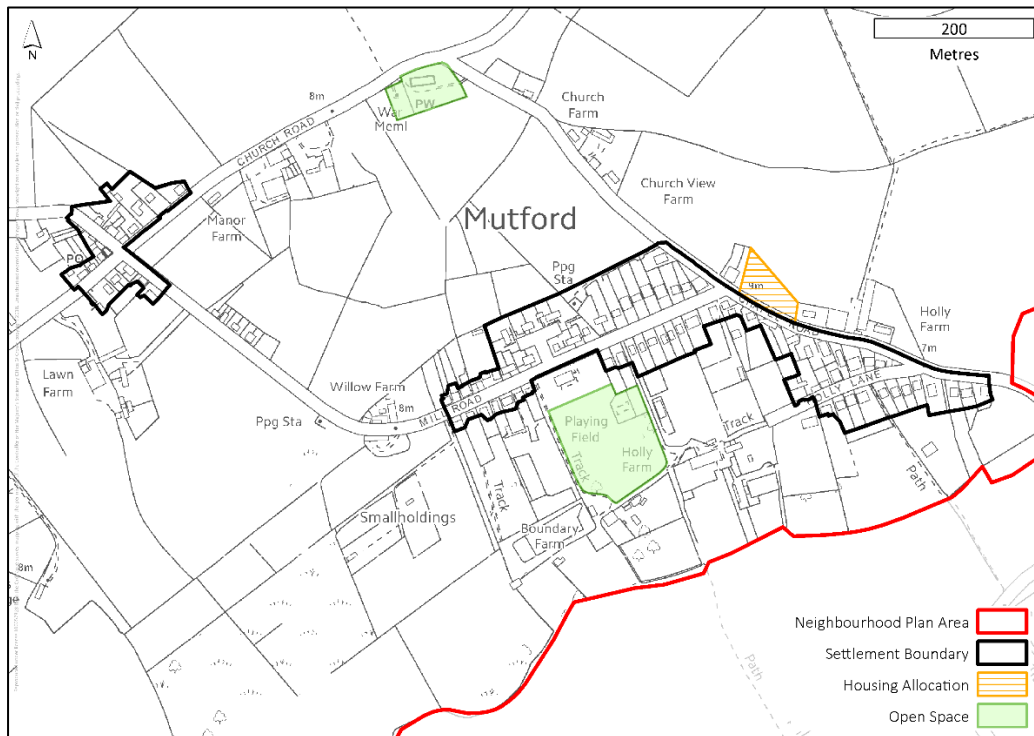
## APPENDICES

### Appendix A – Policies maps

**Map 1: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

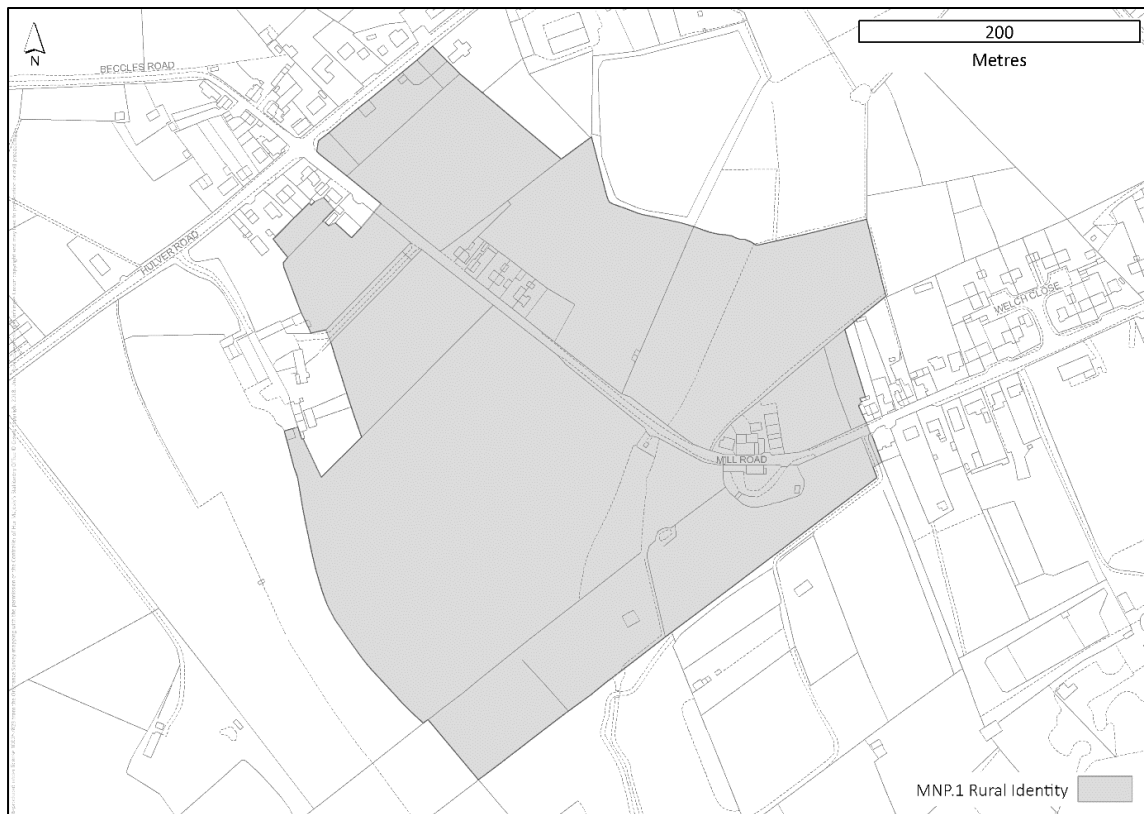


**Map 2: Settlement boundaries, Open Space and land identified for housing allocation<sup>23</sup>**

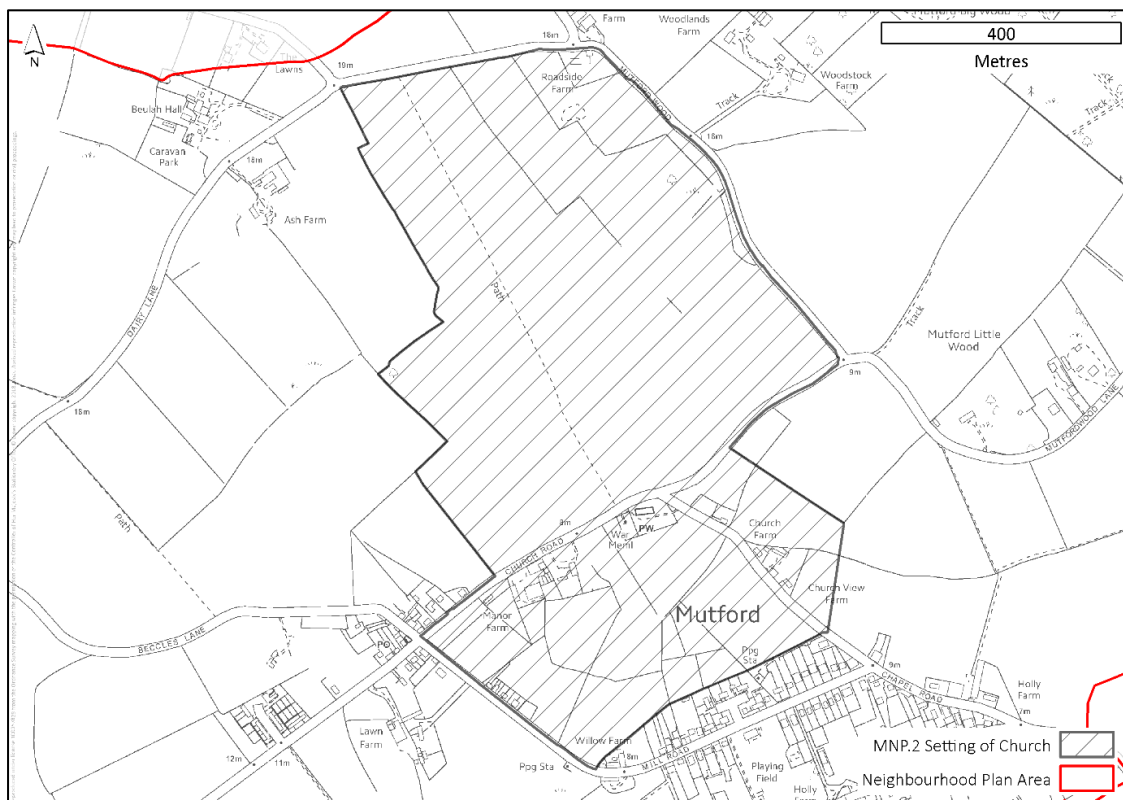


<sup>23</sup> Based on Waveney Local Plan policies map

**Map 3: MNP.1 – Rural identity**



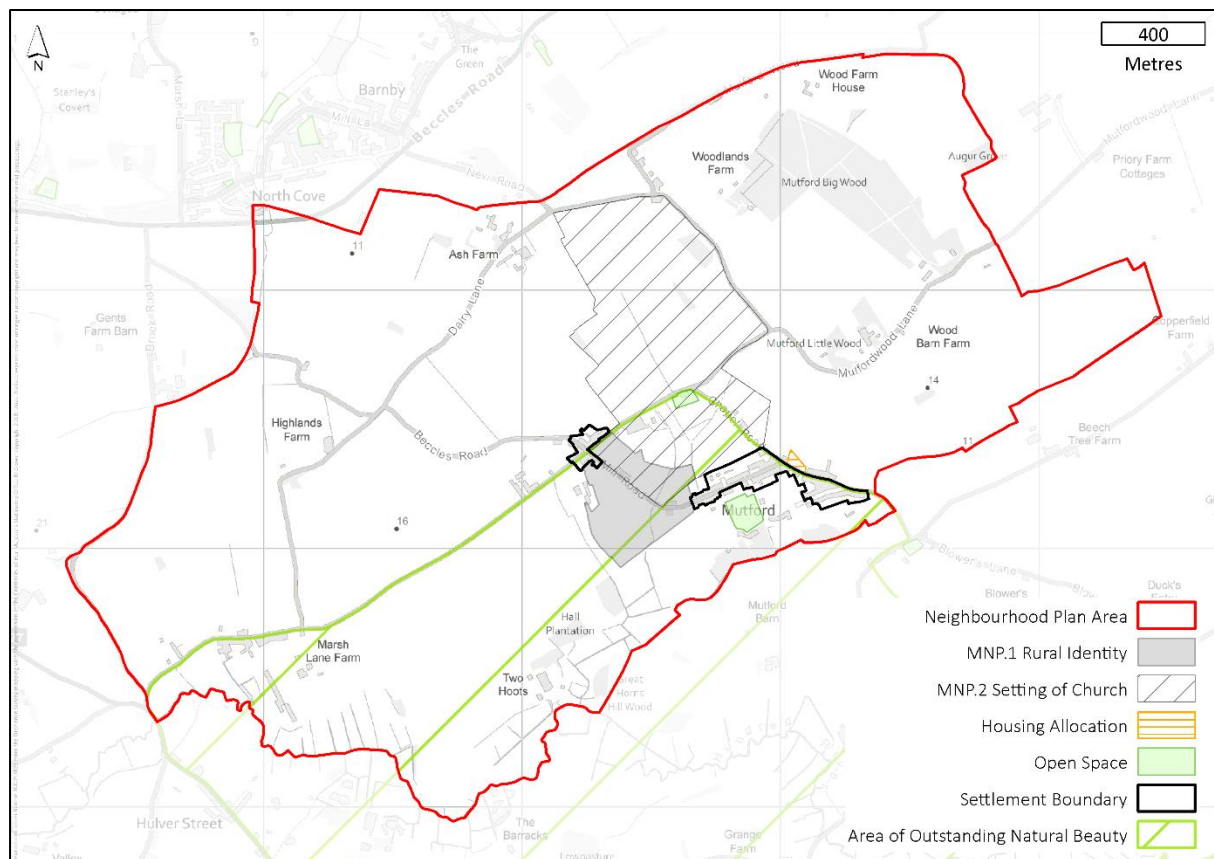
**Map 4: MNP.2 - Setting of church<sup>24</sup>**



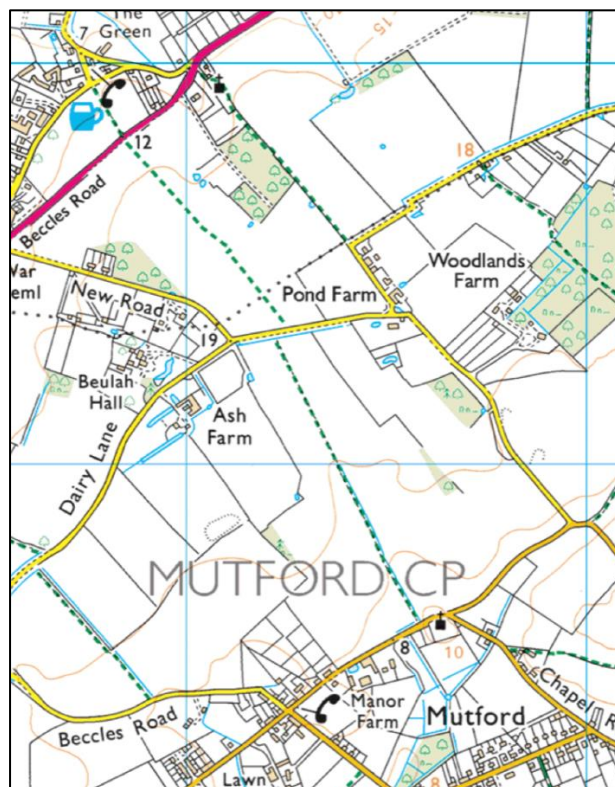
<sup>24</sup> These boundaries have been defined by hard landscape features.



**Map 5: Policies map**



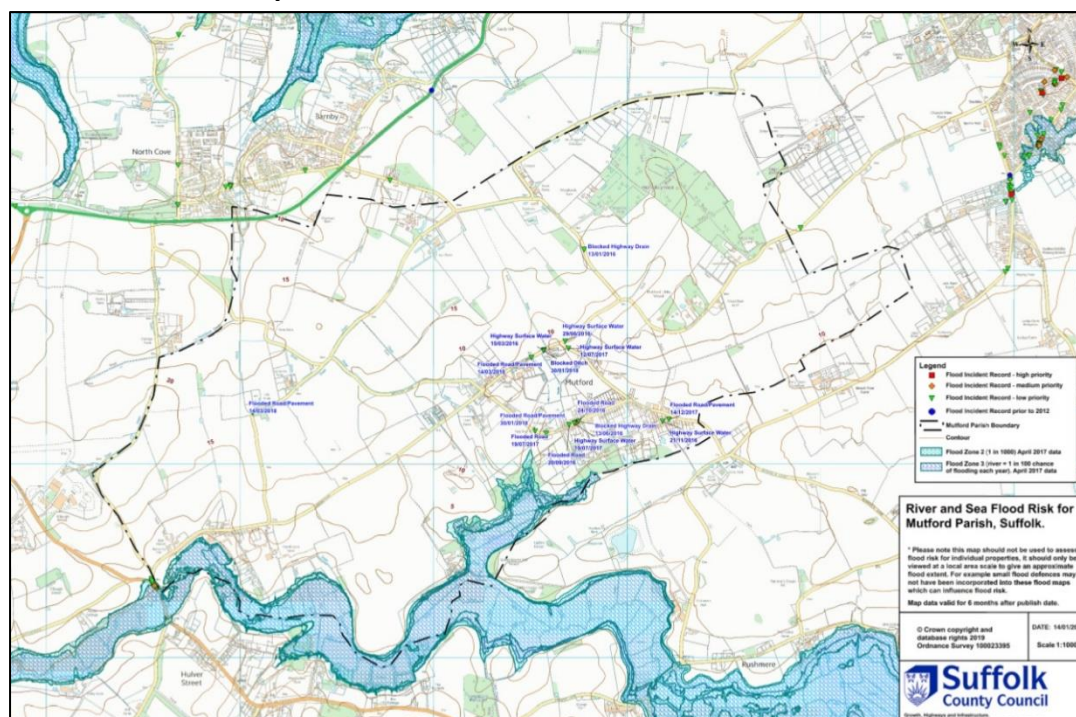
**Map 6: Public footpaths linking church of St Andrew to Barnby**



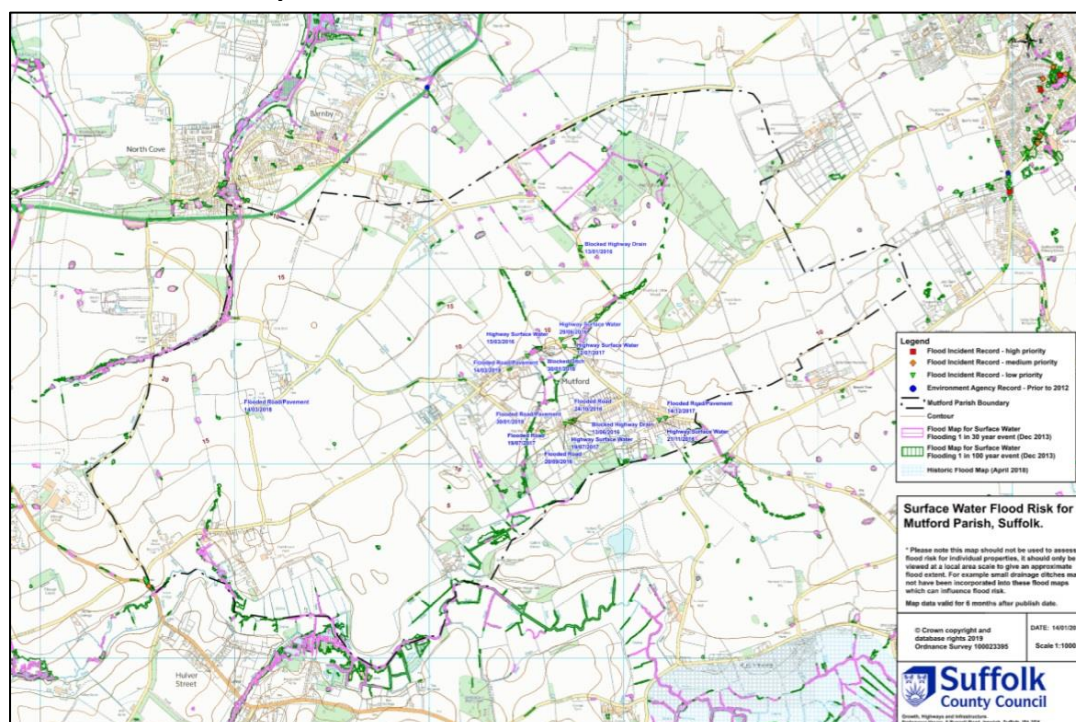
See also separate document: 'Mutford Neighbourhood Plan: Additional photographic evidence and maps'

## Appendix B – Flood risk maps<sup>25</sup>

### Fluvial flood risk map for Mutford



### Pluvial flood risk map of Mutford



<sup>25</sup> Source: Suffolk County Council

## **Appendix C – Listed buildings in Mutford**

- St Andrew Church (Grade 1)
- War memorial (Grade II)
- Parts of the Old Manor House (Grade II) are date back to 1250, and is thought to be the oldest recorded dwelling in the Waveney Valley
- Mutford Hall (Grade II\*), built in the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century
- Kiers Cottage (Grade II), circa 1600
- Ash Farmhouse (Grade II), built in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century
- Barn 20 metres south of Mutford Hall (Grade II), 17<sup>th</sup> Century
- Pond Farm (Grade II), early 18<sup>th</sup> Century



## Appendix D - Map: Mutford Common<sup>26</sup>

Site of a former common visible on Hodskinson's map of 1783 – an example of archaeological potential in Mutford.



<sup>26</sup> Source: Suffolk Heritage Explorer interactive map. Suffolk County Council Historic Environment Record

## Appendix E – Business use classes classifications

[Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987]

The following use classes are referred to in the Mutford Plan.

### Part A

- **A1 Shops** - Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes.

### Part B

- **B1 Business** - Offices (other than those that fall within A2), research and development of products and processes, light industry appropriate in a residential area.
- **B2 General industrial** - Use for industrial process other than one falling within class B1 (excluding incineration purposes, chemical treatment or landfill or hazardous waste).
- **B8 Storage or distribution** - This class includes open air storage.

## Appendix F – Sources & reference material

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2018).  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- East Suffolk - Waveney Local Plan (March 2019)  
<http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/local-plans/waveney-local-plan>
- 2011 Census  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>  
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=1170218926>
- Suffolk Guidance for Parking (Second edition. November 2015)  
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/parking-guidance/>
- Car ownership in East of England: Vehicles per thousand head of population (mid-2016 population estimates vs mid-2010 estimates)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/all-vehicles-veh01#table-veh0101>
- Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2018-2023  
<http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/About-Us/Man-Plan-Docs/2018-2023/2018-23-SCH-Management-Plan.pdf>
- Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment  
<http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/>
- Waveney District Landscape Character Assessment (2008)  
<http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Waveney-Local-Plan/Background-Studies/Landscape-Character-Assessment.pdf>
- Night Blight interactive map (June 2016). Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)  
<http://www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk/>
- A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (Feb 2018)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>
- Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service  
<http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/biodiversity>
- British History Online  
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/suffolk-history-antiquities/vol1/pp269-279>
- Suffolk Mills Group  
<http://www.suffolkmills.org.uk/>
- Suffolk Heritage Explorer  
<https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/>



## **Appendix G – Additional observations arising from public engagement**

The points below were collated from either comments in the village survey or raised during public engagement.

### **Traffic/road safety concerns**

- (1) Speeding traffic, particularly HGVs. It is accepted that agricultural vehicles – tractors and trailers, will need to pass through the village; however, significant concern was expressed by some residents about the size and speed of some of these vehicles in 30-mile an hour zones.
- (2) On-street parking, particularly near junctions and on narrow lanes.
- (3) Road maintenance. Flooding from surface water and potholes were mentioned as potential safety issues, particularly in Church Road and Chapel Lane.
- (4) Road safety concerns created by large groups of cyclists, and the difficulty of passing them on narrow lanes.

### **Improved communication**

- (5) Requirement for faster broadband speed.
- (6) Improved mobile phone network signal.
- (7) Access to public transport – a local twice weekly bus service to Beccles has been suggested.
- (8) Request for an additional Royal Mail post box in or near Newson Avenue.
- (9) More information about local events – a Request for additional information boards – possibly in or near Newson Avenue.

### **Other**

- (10) Preservation of dark night skies: avoiding the introduction of street lighting and minimising the level of external lighting on residential and commercial properties.
- (11) Fly-tipping.
- (12) Litter.
- (13) Unapproved change of land use.
- (14) Concerns about the siting of commercial wind and/ or solar energy collection within the parish.

## **Acknowledgements**

Mutford Parish Council would like to acknowledge the considerable effort that the Working Party have invested in bringing this plan to fruition.

The Mutford Plan's Working Party also wishes to thank Sara Barratt for her help in designing the survey questionnaire; Bob Mitchell who provided aerial photographs of the church and surrounding landscape; Paul Tavener and Graham Pallett for other photographs used in this Plan; the leaflet distributors, and the residents of Mutford for their support during, and participation in, the preparation of the Mutford Plan.

END