

Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan

Proposed Post Hearing Modifications from Saxmundham Town Council following the removal of Policies SSGN1-3.

Extract from Chapter 1

- 1.10 The Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan is there to ensure that development takes place in an appropriate way for the parish. It has been positively prepared, with the purpose of supporting and managing Saxmundham's growth, not preventing it. In practice, higher level planning documents such as the Adopted Suffolk Coastal Local Plan cannot feasibly deal with all of the issues particular to every town and village across the entire district, whereas the Neighbourhood Plan can by providing additional details which reflect specific local circumstances and conditions. Whilst many residents felt that the amount of growth proposed in the Local Plan for Saxmundham was excessive, it is recognised, now the Local Plan is approved, that the Neighbourhood Plan has the responsibility to ensure that growth is well managed and beneficial, and in accordance with the Local Plan.
- 1.11 The Neighbourhood Plan provides clarity, through its policies, on what will be expected from development proposals in the parish, ~~including those in the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood~~, and ensures that the impact of development is anticipated and planned for in Saxmundham. A Neighbourhood Plan is a significant document and will carry legal weight so that developers have to take note when considering future developments in the parish. Policy SCLP12.1 (Neighbourhood Plans) of the Local Plan sets the framework for housing growth in Neighbourhood Plan areas within the District.
- 1.12 The Neighbourhood Plan Area includes the relevant areas (within Saxmundham) of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood site which is defined and allocated in the Local Plan (policy SCLP 12.29, and see below), and is to be delivered through a masterplan approach brought forward "through landowner collaboration and community engagement". Though an important part of the site presently falls within the parish of Benhall, the whole development adjoins the existing urban settlement and will have a major relationship with and impact on Saxmundham in its roles as "market town, employment and service centre" (see SCLP 12.28). To ensure that the Plan promotes the achievement of sustainable development, in all of its dimensions, it is vital that the new community is well integrated into and linked with the existing community, and that its development is coherent with the overall (physical and social) fabric and development of the town. The Neighbourhood Plan's policies supplement, within its area, the strategic policies in the Local Plan, ~~including the Garden Neighbourhood~~, but are (and are required to be) consistent with them.
- 1.13 This is the Submission version of the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan, prepared for submission to East Suffolk Council . This follows pre-submission consultation which took place during the seven-week period from 5th November to 22nd December 2021.

Local residents, businesses, and statutory agencies had the opportunity to comment on the draft Plan. 91 responses were received from individuals together with the statutory consultees. All comments have been collated and considered. The Plan has been amended for submission to East Suffolk Council in April 2022.

Accompanying supporting documents

1.14 When the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan is submitted for independent examination, it will also be accompanied by the following documents:

- Basic Conditions Statement – outlines how the statutory basic conditions have been met.
- Consultation Statement – outlines how and when the public have been consulted on the content of the Plan.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report – to determine whether the Neighbourhood Plan requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- Habitat Regulation Screening Report – identifies any potential impacts on protected species or habitats.

1.15 In addition, the following two supporting documents, which have provided technical input in developing some of the Neighbourhood Plan's policies, are included as Appendices, their guidance submitted to be drawn upon as set out in the relevant policies. These relate to the appropriate in the future master planning of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood and High Street/Town Centre, and in design of future development, throughout the parish both within the Garden Neighbourhood and some specific guidance for the in the town centre and Neighbourhood Plan area as a whole:

- Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Code for the Garden Neighbourhood site and the Neighbourhood Plan Area – undertaken by consultants AECOM in July 2021. A focus on design elements to inform policy making and application determination across the Neighbourhood Area.
- Saxmundham Concept Masterplans for the High Street and Garden Neighbourhood—undertaken by consultants AECOM in July 2021. Notional masterplans used to inform discussions and policy development in relation to the Garden Neighbourhood and the Town Centre.

6. Parish wide: Design principles

High quality design

- 6.1 Among the key determinants of whether any new development, irrespective of scale or use, is successful is how well it is considered to integrate with its surroundings. Matters such as design, materials, form and massing, the impact on local character, layout and scale are the most common issues that will cause the local community concerns about any proposed new development.
- 6.2 If a community believes that it has been involved in and been able to influence the design of a development at an early stage, the higher the likelihood that the development will be considered to be acceptable.
- 6.3 Whilst to an extent design and impact on local character are subjective judgments, these can be influenced by breaking design elements down into component parts and attempting to address them. Whether a proposed new development is acceptable and appropriate and relates well to its surroundings, is one of the most common judgments to be made, yet there is often very little evidence or guidance to assist local people (or decision makers) in making that judgement.
- 6.4 A key purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is not only to help influence the designers and proposers of development at an early stage of formulating their proposals, but also to help promote an understanding of what elements make up the character of the area and what constitutes good design that respects local character.
- 6.5 Government guidance places considerable emphasis on achieving well-designed places and this has been reinforced in the most recent revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2021. Paragraph 126 of the NPPF describes it as fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work, and helps make development proposals acceptable to communities. Effective engagement between applicants, communities and local planning authorities is essential.
- 6.6 Paragraph 127 of the NPPF states ‘Design policies should be developed with local communities so that they reflect local aspirations and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics.’ Neighbourhood Plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of an area and how they should be reflected in development.
- 6.7 In addition, the NPPF makes clear that local planning authorities should ensure that visual tools such as design codes and guides are used to inform development proposals to provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage and reflect local character and preferences. They should

provide a framework for creating high-quality places, with a consistent and high-quality standard of design to inform development proposals. It also makes clear that the level of detail and degree of prescription within design codes and guides should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified.

- 6.8 Design coding is one tool available to local planning authorities, communities, and developers to define and deliver design quality, in addition to design guides, planning briefs, heritage characterisation studies, standards and masterplans as set out in the NPPF and planning practice guidance. A design code is a set of simple, concise, illustrated design requirements that are visual and numerical wherever possible to provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area.
- 6.9 The Government is heavily advocating the use of design codes and expects all local planning authorities to prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code and which reflect local character and design preferences.
- 6.10 The Town Council commissioned consultants AECOM to produce Design Guidelines and Codes ~~not only for the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Garden Neighbourhood but also for the rest of the parish.~~ This work was completed in July 2021 and is contained in Appendix X of this a supporting document to inform the Neighbourhood Plan ~~(see paragraph 1.15 above).~~ The Design Code reflected a detailed analysis of the local character of the parish, developed some strategic design guidelines and identified a palette of materials which should influence the design of future development. The Code's principles have informed and are reflected in Policy SAX1, and its more detailed guidance should be drawn upon as appropriate in the design of future development, ~~both within the Garden Neighbourhood and~~ in the Neighbourhood Plan area as a whole. In addition, the report provided specific guidance to be used by the Town Council when assessing and responding to consultation in future planning applications for new development.



Figure 16: Design Guidelines and Codes for the ~~Garden Neighbourhood site and the~~ Neighbourhood Plan area. (Amended cover to be included)

- 6.11 The Neighbourhood Plan Household Survey conducted in June 2019 asked residents for their views on which design elements they considered to be important in future developments. 889 people responded to this question and 2107 preferences were expressed. The most supported concepts were ‘highly energy efficient’ (79 per cent of respondents) and ‘landscaping of high visual and ecological quality’ (57 per cent). In relation to house building style, 43 per cent express support for ‘Traditional Suffolk’, 18 per cent for ‘Innovative design’ and some support also for ‘dementia friendly’, 12 per cent. Further information on dementia friendly design can be found in the Royal Town Planning Institute Guide ¹
- 6.12 Given the increasing importance that both local people and national Government are placing on design, it is considered that achieving well designed places and promoting high quality design should also be fundamental to this Neighbourhood Plan and go to its heart. The Plan therefore sets out its key design principles at the beginning of the policies section, recognising that good design should be a theme that flows throughout the plan, and sets the tone for other policies to follow in terms of its importance for all new development of any scale, form or use. **Policy SAX1** below applies throughout the Neighbourhood Area, ~~including within the Garden Neighbourhood (in so far as parts of it fall within the Neighbourhood Area.~~
- 6.13 Suffolk County Council has also produced a range of guidance which may be helpful to prospective applicants when designing their proposals, These include:
- The draft Suffolk Design Streets Guide
 - Suffolk Guidance for Parking.
 - The Suffolk Flood Risk Management Strategy, particularly Appendix A.
- 6.14 The criteria in the policy below are informed by the **Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Codes for the ~~Garden Neighbourhood Site and the Neighbourhood Plan Area~~** (July 2021). It is important that new development is not viewed in isolation and consideration of design and layout should be informed by the wider context, considering not only the buildings immediately adjacent but also the townscape and landscape of the wider locality all of which will contribute to the character of the area. The pattern of streets, spaces, building styles and types, materials and the natural environment will all help to shape the character and identity of a development, of any scale. Proposals for new development should take full account of the local context and innovative, eco- friendly and contemporary designs that add interest and embody the general ‘sense of place’ are encouraged.

¹ RTPi | Dementia and Town Planning: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/practice/2020/september/dementia-and-town-planning/>

POLICY

SAX1: General design principles

The design of all new development in Saxmundham should reflect the town's local distinctiveness and character and seek to enhance its quality.

Proposals should have regard to the advice contained within the Design Guidelines and Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan area as set out in Appendix X.

Proposals that incorporate eco-friendly, innovative or contemporary designs whilst respecting the architectural heritage and character of the area will be supported

Proposals for new development should accord with the following criteria, as appropriate:

- a. Respect the existing settlement pattern in order to preserve its character.
- b. Retain existing connections and ensure new connections integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks, as well as natural features such as tree groups, hedgerows, and public rights of way.
- c. Reinforce the established character of streets, greens, and spaces, where this provides a positive impact.
- d. Harmonise and enhance the existing settlement in terms of physical form and architecture.
- e. Retain existing natural and historic features within the new development.
- f. Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing.
- g. Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details.
- h. Incorporate necessary services and drainage without causing harm to retained features.
- i. Ensure all component elements of a development, e.g., buildings, landscapes and access routes, parking, open space, are well related to each other.
- j. Enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address health and well-being needs

Consideration should be given to the specific guidance contained in the policies for the relevant Opportunity Zones. See also Policy SAX11 which relate to the Conservation Area.

Extract from Chapter 9

Objective 3: To improve transport and safe accessibility for the people of Saxmundham by foot, bicycle, mobility scooter and public or private transport resulting in environmental and health benefits.

Walking and cycling connectivity

- 9.10 Opportunities to encourage and facilitate the use of sustainable transport in particular walking and cycling should be maximised. Government guidance encourages development proposals to provide for high quality walking and cycling networks and supporting facilities such as cycle parking. Suffolk County Council has produced a

Green Access Strategy (2020-2030) ². This strategy sets out the council's commitment to enhance public rights of way, including new linkages and upgrading routes where there is a need. The strategy also seeks to improve access for all and to support healthy and sustainable access between communities and services through development funding and partnership working.

- 9.11 Such networks should be comprehensive and provide not only for recreational routes but also for meaningful routes that can realistically be used for commuting to work or school. In addition, new routes should connect to the existing network and be suitable for use by people with disabilities and reduced mobility. New cycling and pedestrian routes should be safe, secure, and attractive, maximise the scope for pedestrians and cyclists and respond to the character of the area and any relevant design standards. See also ~~Policy SAXGN1 for more detail on connecting the Garden Neighbourhood and~~ **Policy SAXTC1** for the town centre/High Street.
- 9.12 Opportunities for improving connectivity between the town centre and the railway station (for commuting/business and recreational purposes) and also the town centre and the river frontage (for recreational purposes) should be given high priority.

² Suffolk Green Access Strategy, <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/Roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way/suffolk-green-access-strategy-2020-2030.pdf#:~:text=The%20Suffolk%20Green%20Access%20Strategy%20details%20why%20green,it%20can%20contribute%20to%20the%20council's%20corporate%20priorities.>

SAX6: Improving connectivity

Over the Plan period, opportunities will be sought to make the town safer and more accessible, and to contribute to the health and well-being of residents, through the provision of safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes, public rights of way and crossings, suitable for all users, in particular linking **new and existing** housing areas to the town centre and station. Development should maximise walking and cycling through its location and design.

New provision should be in the form of well-designed, attractive and safe to use routes (including appropriate lighting), and the enhancement of existing routes including making new connections and links where appropriate. New cycle linkages should be built to the standards set out in LTN1 /20 Cycle Infrastructure Design.

Development that will improve connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists, and users with a mobility impairment, both within Saxmundham, and in and out of Saxmundham to neighbouring towns and villages will be supported.

New routes, including new public rights of way, should form a cohesive network for users and allow for access both within the town and also to the wider countryside, where opportunities should be taken to create green corridors connecting with neighbouring villages. New developments will be supported where they provide, or contribute to safe, convenient, and pleasant pedestrian and cycle routes to the town centre, to community facilities (schools, library etc) and also to the wider countryside.

Proposals that would improve connectivity between the town and the river frontage, including those that would provide for a comprehensive riverside walk, will be supported.

Where major new development is to take place to the south of the town, support is given for the following new 'indicative' pedestrian and cycle connections as shown in Figure X below:

- i. **Between new development and the railway station.** To be achieved through a new cycle and pedestrian route from the development via the cemetery along the west side of the railway, or other route offering similar direct linkage
- ii. **Between new development and the town centre (including supermarket area).** To be achieved through an improved cycle and pedestrian route via the existing bridge over the railway to South Entrance to provide easy and swift access to and from shops and facilities.
- iii. **Between new development and the surrounding residential areas and schools.** To be achieved via:
 - a. the existing footpath to the east of the school playing field (footpaths 12 and 15 Saxmundham), upgraded appropriately, and leading to and from Seaman Avenue and Mill Road, and
 - b. a new cycle and pedestrian route to the west of the school playing field which is necessary to forge a strong connection with the existing residential communities to the south and west of the Memorial Field (Montagu Drive, Gilbert Road, Franklin Road, Drake Close, Mayflower Avenue and Lincoln Avenue) together with access to and from other residential areas beyond.

iv) Upgrading of the existing public footpath (Saxmundham 19) between Benhall and Saxmundham, (where it runs along the B1121) to provide a safe cycle and pedestrian route between the settlements

v) Indicative new footpath rail crossing over the railway to provide a safe and accessible connection for residents of all ages to the SANG and open space on the east of the railway and to Benhall.

See also Policy SAXGN1, Appendix X Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Code for the Garden Neighbourhood and the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

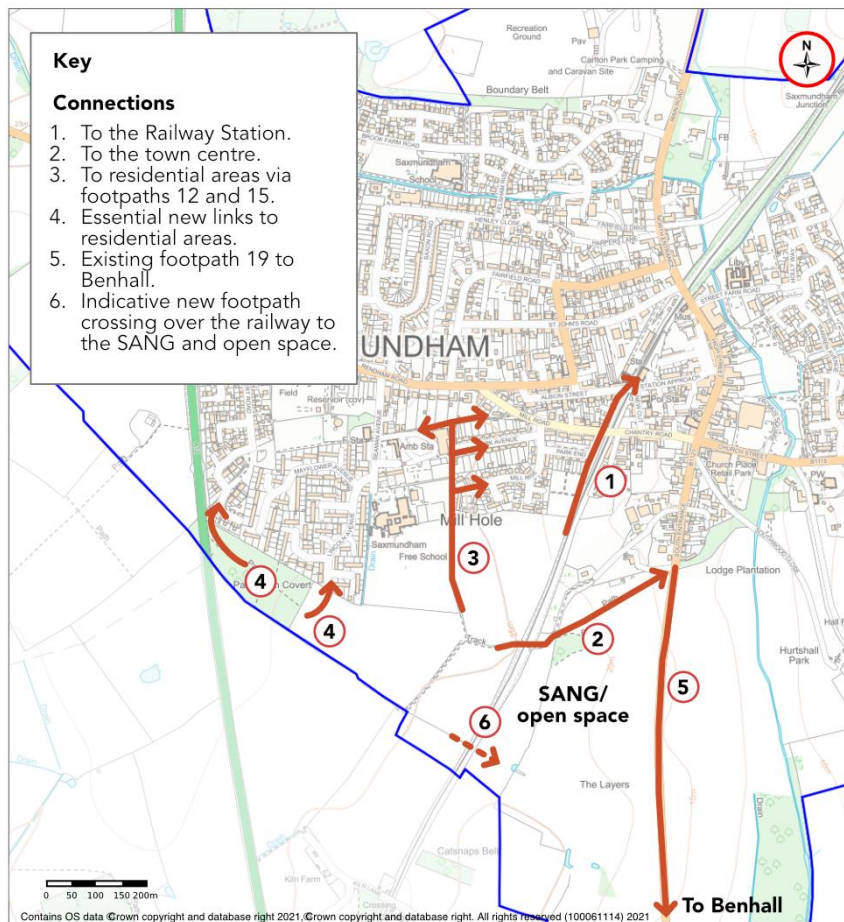


Figure X: Indicative Connections (source: Parish Online with own annotations). Blue line denotes Neighbourhood Plan Area boundary (replace essential with indicative in the key)

Existing Public Rights of Way

9.13 The NPPF advises that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance Public Rights of Way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails. Opportunities to improve facilities for walkers and cyclists in the parish would be supported.

9.14 Where development proposals are likely to affect an existing Public Right of

Way, these should take account of its route and incorporate it into the overall layout of the scheme. Where this is not considered possible, this will need to be justified. Where Public Rights of Way may be unavoidably impacted or lost, appropriate diversions or new routes should be provided that are safe, equally accessible, and convenient for users.

- 9.15 Existing Public Rights of Way which are incorporated into new developments, including bridleways and footpaths, should be protected and enhanced. Enhancement can take the form of new routes, connections, improved surfaces and/or signage increasing access to the countryside and connectivity between communities.

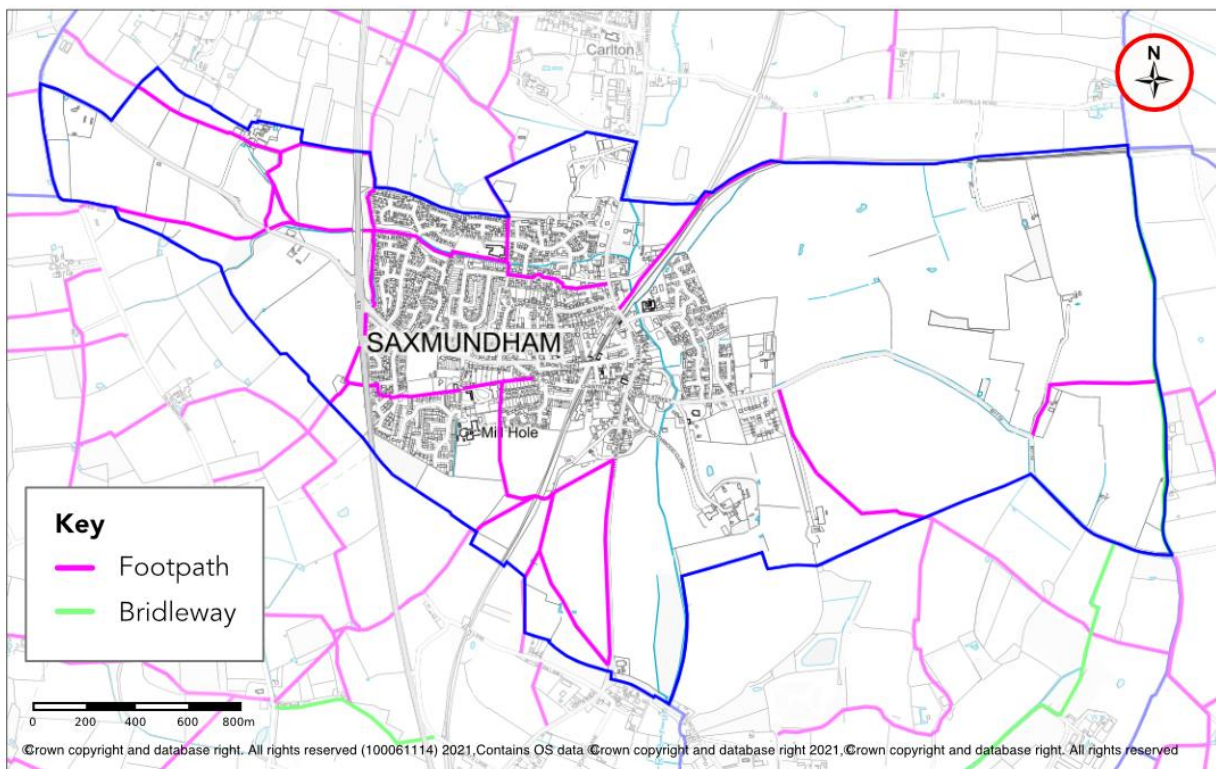


Figure 1.15: Public Rights of Way in Saxmundham parish (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

POLICY

SAX7: Public Rights of Way

Existing Public Rights of Way, including bridleways and footpaths, should be protected and enhanced to promote walking and cycling. Enhancement can take the form of new routes, connections, improved surfaces and/or signage increasing access to the countryside and connectivity between parts of the town.

Where new routes are to be provided and existing routes enhanced, careful consideration should be given to ensure their safety and attractiveness, for all users and for adjacent occupiers. Proposals should seek to minimise light pollution whilst remaining safe and attractive to users.

Public Rights of Way should be retained, except where it can be demonstrated that there is strong community support for it to be re-routed. Where Public Rights of Way are to be unavoidably impacted or lost, appropriate diversions or new routes will be provided that are safe and convenient for users.

See also ~~Policy SAXGN1.~~

Extract from Chapter 12

12. Site specific: South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood

South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood

Objective SSGN1: To create a high quality, well designed, distinctive new development in line with 'Garden City' principles which is valued by its residents and recognised as an asset to the Town.

- 12.1 **Policy SCLP12.29** in the Adopted Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (SCLP) 2020, allocates 66.6 hectares of land as the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood, the development of which is expected to provide an education led scheme of 800 dwellings, community facilities and employment land. The Garden Neighbourhood is envisaged to be an extension to the existing built-up area of Saxmundham; however, part of the allocation also extends into Benhall Parish to the south of Saxmundham.
- 12.2 ~~The Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan area covers the parish of Saxmundham only and therefore the following policies are applicable only to that part of the Garden Neighbourhood that falls within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The following policies seek to guide development of the Garden Neighbourhood within the parish of Saxmundham and their content has been informed in part by the AECOM Master Plan and the Design Guidelines and Codes for the Garden Neighbourhood (see also relevant area wide policies). As stated earlier, the AECOM Masterplan is a notional masterplan used as the basis for evaluating the impact the development may have on~~

~~the town and the policies needed to mitigate the problems raised and to strengthen the advantages.~~

- 12.3 Local Plan **Policy SCLP12.29** provides the overarching allocation for the Garden Neighbourhood and sets out the key issues that will need to be addressed in order for the development to be brought forward successfully. The Local Plan places considerable emphasis on the need for the development to be delivered through a masterplan approach brought forward and informed by landowner collaboration and community engagement. Saxmundham Town Council believe that such a masterplan, produced with both the input of the landowners and through meaningful engagement with the community is essential to the ensuring that the development of the Garden Neighbourhood is a success, in its own right and for the town as a whole. The Neighbourhood Plan policies (consistent with the Local Plan's policies) seek to influence and shape proposals that come forward for the development of the Garden Neighbourhood through the collaborative masterplan process outlined in the Local Plan.
- 12.4 The Local Plan provides an indicative concept draft masterplan diagram that gives a broad indication of where various elements of the Garden Neighbourhood may be located. Within the parish boundary of Saxmundham, it is envisaged that there will be at least three areas of residential/mixed use development, areas of woodland, informal and formal open space, existing mature hedgerows, and tree belts and at least 3 pedestrian and cycle accesses from the town into the Garden Neighbourhood. The proposed community hub and employment areas together with additional residential and mixed-use areas would be located within Benhall parish. The indicative masterplan in the Local Plan assumes that the new primary school will be located within the residential/mixed use areas but does not give a specific parish location. However, apart from the allocation of the employment site to the west of the A12, and land to the east of the railway for green space/SANG purposes (and not for built development), the siting and layout of the new development is left for the collaborative masterplanning process outlined above.
- 12.5 ~~This section of the Neighbourhood Plan aims to provide more detail to the Local Plan policy, provide input into the collaborative masterplan and identify specific land use requirements that will need to take place to enable the Garden Neighbourhood to come forward. This details in this section have been informed by community consultation undertaken as part of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan as well as the AECOM work in the 'notional' Masterplan and the Design Guidelines and Code.~~
- 12.6 Critical to the success of the Garden Neighbourhood will be its successful integration with the existing community of Saxmundham (and Benhall). In order to create a full sustainable Garden Neighbourhood consistent with the objectives of the NPPF, this integration needs to be:
- Physical – in terms of the relationship between the new development and the existing built-up area of the town, high quality connections – pedestrian and cycle – to promote easy, safe and quick access between the town and the development and also the development and the facilities of the town e.g., the town centre and the railway station.
 - Environmental – in terms of high-quality green infrastructure connections and links between the Garden Neighbourhood and the town; design and layout of the Garden Neighbourhood to reflect local character.
 - Social – A strong connection and interaction between the Garden Neighbourhood and the rest of the town, services to meet the needs of local

Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood

Objective SSGN2: To successfully integrate – physically, environmentally, and socially – the new neighbourhood with the existing town and community of Saxmundham.

- 12.10 The success of the Garden Neighbourhood, for its residents and for the town of Saxmundham, depends to a large degree on (a) how well it is physically accessible to and integrated with the town, offering seamless, easy-to-navigate routes, and (b) how well it provides for excellent connections and movement within the Neighbourhood. The development proposals for the Garden Neighbourhood (to be master-planned with full community engagement) are required to ensure that excellent connectivity is provided: (a) between the existing Town and the Garden Neighbourhood, and (b) within the Garden Neighbourhood itself.
- 12.11 Since the only vehicular access route to and from the Garden Neighbourhood to the existing town is indirect, via the A12, direct, well sign-posted pedestrian and cycle connections to the town (including town centre, station, residential areas) must be provided that are sufficient in number and of high quality. Such links will also serve to further other aims, including promoting health and well-being.

Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood to the existing town and community

- 12.12 Fundamental to the success of the development of the Garden Neighbourhood is to ensure that the local community can access existing town-based services and facilities as well as those which will be created over the plan period, e.g. the new primary school. At least three new and/or upgraded connections are ~~required~~ supported (See Policy SAX6) – to the Station, the town centre, and the existing residential area to the north-west of the neighbourhood site. The development of the Garden Neighbourhood should facilitate access to public transport, ~~through a layout that maximises the catchment for bus or other public transport – rail travel in particular.~~

Connections and movement within the Garden Neighbourhood

- 12.13 The creation of the Garden Neighbourhood provides the opportunity to encourage and facilitate use of sustainable transport, in particular walking and cycling, and so to promote exercise for health and well-being. Connections both within and into and out of the Garden Neighbourhood should create places that are safe, secure and attractive to users, in terms of their visual quality and which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles and avoid unnecessary street clutter and respond to local character and design standards.
- 12.14 ~~Policy SAXGN1 below has been developed to take account of these issues.~~

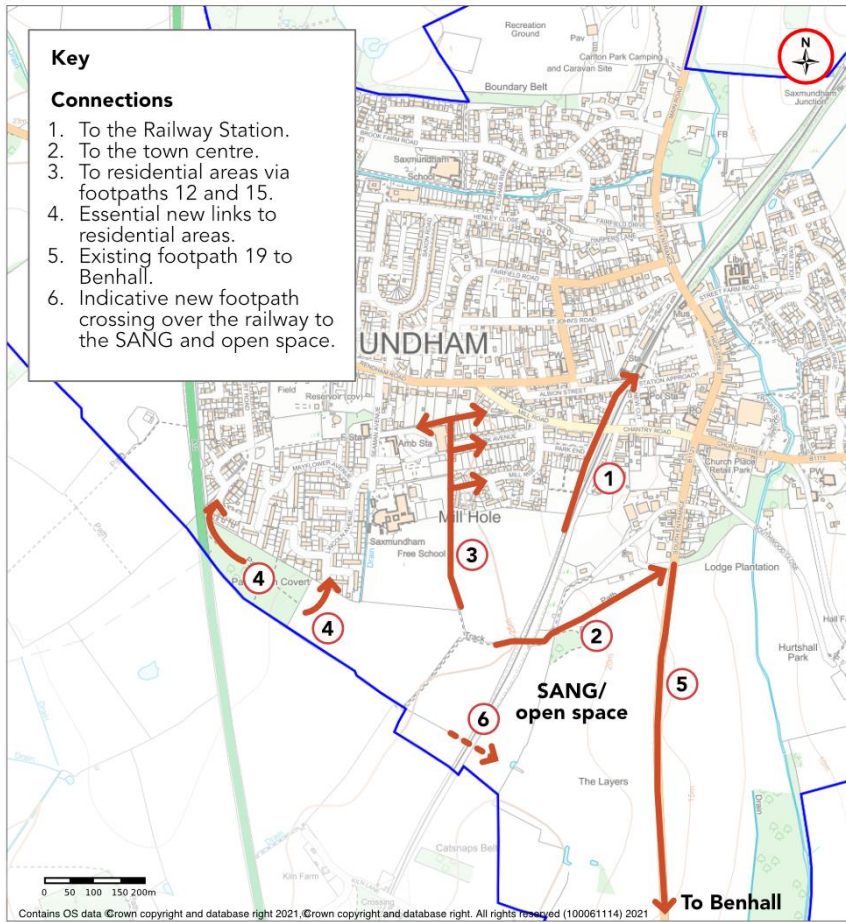


Figure 26: Connections (source: Parish Online with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary Moved to SAX6

SAXGN1: Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood

Development proposals for the Garden Neighbourhood will be expected to ensure that excellent connectivity, both between the existing town and the Garden Neighbourhood and within the Garden Neighbourhood itself, is provided for all users, including those with a mobility impairment.

Pedestrian and cycle movement between the Garden Neighbourhood and the existing town is prioritised over vehicular movement through the provision of connections, sufficient in number and of the highest quality. They must be convenient and direct in order to avoid use of the single vehicular access to the Garden Neighbourhood via the A12.

This provision will be in the form of well designed, attractive and safe to use (including appropriate lighting), new pedestrian and cycle linkages and the enhancement of existing routes including making new connections and links where appropriate. New cycle linkages to be built to the standards set in LTN 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design³ Such links will be implemented at the outset of the development (Phase 1) prior to the occupation of new dwellings.

Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood to the existing town and community

New and enhanced pedestrian and cycle connections will include:

- i. Connection between the Garden Neighbourhood and the railway station. This will be achieved through a new cycle and pedestrian route from the development via the cemetery along the west side of the railway, or other route offering similar direct linkage
- ii. Connections between the Garden Neighbourhood and the town centre (including supermarket area). This will be achieved through an improved cycle and pedestrian route via the existing bridge over the railway to South Entrance to provide easy and swift access to and from shops and facilities.
- iii. Connections to the surrounding residential areas and schools. These will be achieved via:
 - a. the existing footpath to the east of the school playing field (footpaths 12 and 15 Saxmundham), upgraded appropriately, and leading to and from Seaman Avenue and Mill Road, and
 - b. a new cycle and pedestrian route to the west of the school playing field which is necessary to forge a strong connection with the existing residential communities to the south and west of the Memorial Field (Montagu Drive, Gilbert Road, Franklin Road, Drake Close, Mayflower Avenue and Lincoln Avenue) together with access to and from other residential areas beyond.

Public Transport

- iv. The site access will need to be able to accommodate buses to easily serve the site including bus linkages to the town centre and supermarket area. New bus stops should be provided within easily accessible locations.

iv. _____

³Cycle infrastructure design (LTN 1/20), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

Connections and movement within the Garden Neighbourhood

New development within the Garden Neighbourhood, is expected to come forward through a master planning process involving landowner collaboration and community engagement as identified in the Local Plan. Proposals must promote the use of sustainable transport modes, as appropriate, including for exercise for health and well-being, as set out below:

- v. The street layout should integrate existing public rights of way with new green links to encourage walking and cycling within the area, thereby reducing the reliance on cars within the Garden Neighbourhood.
- vi. A central cycle avenue running through the site, would help to filter traffic and vehicular movement—
- vii. In addition to other cycleways referred to above, the provision of a circular green route is encouraged around the site as defined in the Local Plan, for use by cyclists and walkers.
- viii. Good quality walking and cycling links to and from Benhall, utilising existing Public Rights of Way shall be created or improved.
- ix. The existing public footpath (Saxmundham 19) between Benhall and Saxmundham, (where it runs along the B1121 within the hedgerow along the eastern boundary of the Garden Neighbourhood site), shall be upgraded to provide a safe cycle and pedestrian route between the settlements (also forming part of the circular green route at (vii) above).
- x. The existing rail crossing bridge shall be retained and upgraded for safe cycle and pedestrian use.
- xi. A further suitable rail crossing point (bridge) should be considered to the south of the site to provide a safe and accessible connection for residents of all ages to the SANG on the east of the railway and to Benhall (this could be sited within the Neighbourhood Plan Area).
- xii. Existing public rights of way to be preserved and enhanced to promote walking and cycling.

Where new routes are to be provided and existing routes enhanced, careful consideration should be given to ensure their safety and attractiveness, for all users and for adjacent occupiers. Proposals should seek to minimise light pollution whilst ensuring that routes are safely lit and attractive to users.

Note: this policy only applies to the parts of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood that fall within the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan area. See also **Policy SAX6 Improving Connectivity**.

Physical Infrastructure

12.15 It should be noted that off-site infrastructure requirements including health provision and police facilities, will be required through developer contributions. Confirmation of foul sewerage and water capacity will also be required. This is referred to in the Local Plan (**Policy SCLP12:29**).

Green infrastructure

~~12.16 The successful integration of the Garden Neighbourhood into the wider area and its acceptance by the wider community will no doubt be influenced by how well it is considered to live up to its name e.g. 'Garden' and also how engaged the community has been in the collaborative masterplanning process. A key indicator of this will be the quality and quantity of green infrastructure that is provided both within and at the edge of the Garden Neighbourhood development.~~

~~12.17 New Green links will be required along the edges of the site to create a green buffer, mitigate any noise disturbance and connect with surrounding assets (countryside, SANG, existing settlement, High Street). The Local Plan proposes that the entire area east of the railway is for 'open space' and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (possibly with some part in existing agricultural use) in order to have a positive impact on the environment. Footpaths and signage within the SANG will facilitate movement and attract people. Any new green links will need to be located to encourage walking and cycling around the area reducing the reliance on cars.~~

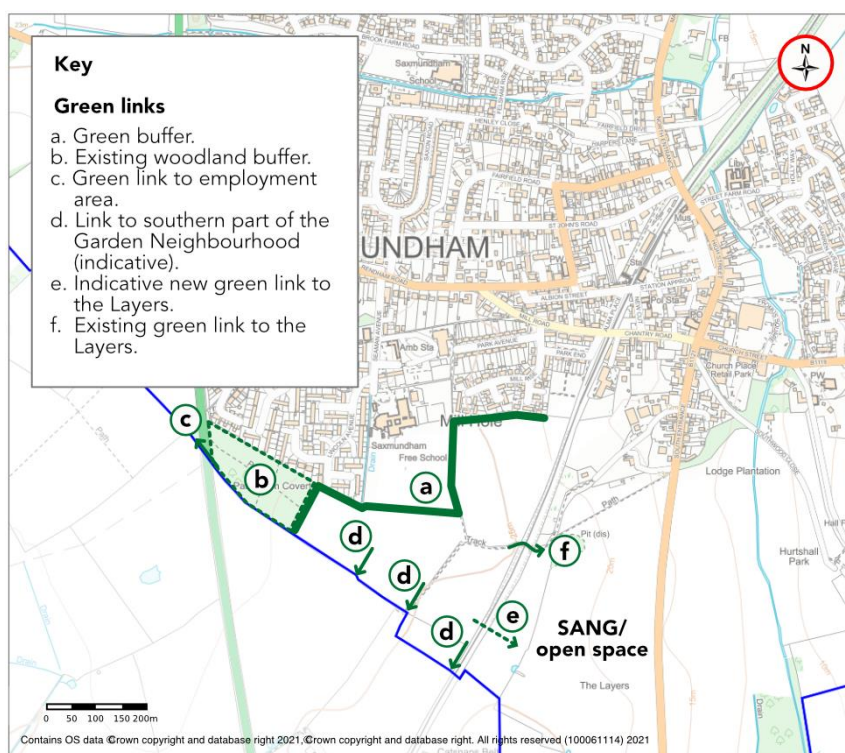


Figure 27: Green links (source: Parish Online with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary. Diagram to be removed

~~12.18 A range of green spaces will need to be provided including formal parks, play areas, sports fields, public square, informal greens. All will create a system of different types of green spaces that meet the needs of a wide range of people; shelters, public toilets and other facilities may need to be investigated in some specific green spaces; and a circular green route around the site would enhance the rural countryside 'feel' and promote walking and cycling.~~

SAXGN2: Green infrastructure links

The provision of high quality, well designed and accessible green links, spaces and green infrastructure shall be provided in order to achieve a sustainable and integrated new neighbourhood.

New development within the Garden Neighbourhood is expected to come forward through a master-planning process involving landowner collaboration and community engagement as identified in the Local Plan. Development proposals which meet the following criteria will be supported:

- i. Green infrastructure links which connect to the wider countryside, to the west to the employment area, east to the Layers and to the wider countryside.
- ii. A well landscaped 'green zone' to be created along the northern boundary of the Garden Neighbourhood between the existing and new communities and to safeguard amenity between existing and new properties.
- iii. The area east of the railway line including The Layers is identified for the provision of open space and an appropriate area of well-designed Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), to mitigate the potential impacts of recreational disturbance on the Special Protection Areas (see **Policy SAX16**). The land east of the railway, defined for these purposes, should be delivered as an integral part of the garden neighbourhood. The retention of existing uses on a part of the land to the east of the railway is supported, within this framework, where it is compatible with and complements the delivery of open space and SANG.
- iv. All existing trees, hedges, and hedgerows to be retained and incorporated into the design and layout of proposals, in so far as is reasonably practicable.
- v. Provision of significant landscaped area along the western boundary of the site, adjacent to the A12, to provide a soft landscaped edge to the development and the opportunity for recreational pedestrian routes and noise mitigation.
- vi. New allotments and/or community gardens should be provided within the new neighbourhood.
- vii. The inclusion of 'green corridors' to allow the passage of wildlife through and within the neighbourhood.

Note: this policy only applies to the parts of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood that fall within the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan area.

Community facilities

- 12.19 A range of community facilities are highlighted in the Local Plan policy as needing to be delivered to support the growth of the Garden Neighbourhood. The Local Plan provides an indicative draft masterplan layout. The proposed community hub (or local centre) is shown within Benhall parish but close to the parish boundary. It should however relate well to and be easily accessible from the rest of the entire development if it is to function successfully as a hub. The hub's location, and that of the primary school, should be decided within the masterplanning process referred to above. The local centre could be located next to the main entrance to the site welcoming visitors and residents. It will need to offer a variety of shops, open spaces and visitor's parking attracting people from the new and existing community as well as from the employment area. In such a location it can be easily seen from the main road

~~(A12) also attracting drivers passing by. It would also seem to offer advantages for the local hub/centre to be located close to the schools.~~

12.20 ~~There is no specific location for the new primary school indicated in the Local Plan. However the existing secondary school is located immediately north of the proposed Garden Neighbourhood and there is some logic that would support locating the primary school close to the secondary school where opportunities for shared facilities and ease for parents at pick up and drop off can be realised, and the extent of motor vehicle journeys within the Neighbourhood minimised.~~

~~12.21 Locating the primary school to the north of the development would enable the school grounds along with the existing woodland to the west and the secondary school to the north to form a good amount of green buffer between the existing and new settlement, while also offering opportunities for pedestrian and cycle routes. The proximity of the school grounds to the woodland area also gives the opportunity for outdoor school classes during spring and summer periods. The location of the primary school in this area would mean it is within easy walking distance from the existing and the new communities respecting the needs of both sides~~

12.22 Community consultation undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process revealed that indoor sports provision was the key priority for a facility thought currently to be lacking in the town and therefore the development of the Garden Neighbourhood should consider opportunities to provide such facilities where they can easily serve the new and existing communities. (See also **Policy SAX5**).

SAXGN3: Community facilities

The creation of the new Garden Neighbourhood will be supported by the provision of the following key pieces of community infrastructure:

Primary school and associated early years setting: consideration to be given to it being located to the north of the site, within the Neighbourhood Plan area to allow for physical and social connectivity with the existing community and secondary school and affording opportunities to enhance the proposed northern landscape buffer (see **Policy SAXGN2 ii)** above). Both facilities to be accessible by high quality walking and cycling facilities.

Second Early Years Setting (of approximately 0.1 hectares): To be suitably located to ensure good coverage of childcare across the Garden Neighbourhood and to ensure that both early years settings can be sustainable in the long term; and to be accessible by high quality walking and cycling facilities.

Local centre/community hub: to be located where it can best meet the needs of residents of the neighbourhood and the communities beyond, preferably in close proximity to the Primary School with easy access from all parts of the new neighbourhood, including the employment area. This would also allow for existing and proposed green links to come through the local centre creating a well-connected walking network.

Proposed housing areas: should create a well-connected neighbourhood where all housing types and tenures are equally distributed and are well located in relation to the green spaces, green links in order to maximise accessibility and to provide natural surveillance, as well as the location of the primary school and the local centre.

Proposals for additional **indoor sports provision** within the Garden Neighbourhood will be strongly encouraged. This could be co-located with the school(s) or the Local Centre/Community Hub and should be easily accessible from the town. **(See also Policy SAX5)**

Note: this policy only applies to the parts of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood that fall within the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan area.

13. Opportunity Zones:

Saxmundham town centre

- 13.1 Saxmundham town centre is the historic heart of the town. It includes the High Street, Market Place and parts of North and South Entrances, together with Station Approach, Street Farm Road and Fromus Square plus Church Street which now gives access to two supermarkets. This is the centre of the town's economic and business activity, where a good variety of facilities are found.
- 13.2 The town centre is not unlike most market towns in Suffolk in that it has a range of issues and challenges to face in terms of reinforcing the retail role of the town centre in a changing retail environment, maintaining a good quality and safe environment for people to shop in and visit but at the same time catering for the demands of those visitors and local residents and businesses in relation to issues of parking, HGVs, traffic congestion, pollution and pedestrian safety.
- 13.3 Saxmundham however, does have some specific town centre issues of its own, which have been identified by the community through responses to consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan as it develops, and also reinforced as challenges by the technical work undertaken by AECOM.
- 13.4 The key physical and environmental issues for the town centre have been identified as:
- Traffic congestion in the High Street
 - Narrow carriageways making an unsafe pedestrian and cycle environment.
 - Lack of pedestrian crossings in the High Street.
 - Unauthorised on-street parking.
 - Lack of coherent signage.
 - Lack of connection between High Street and surrounding open spaces.
 - Station Approach feels disconnected from the town centre.
 - Poor visibility at key junctions.
 - Narrow pavements along the High Street hinder pedestrian flow.
 - Narrow, uneven and inadequate pavements affect mobility, particularly for those with mobility difficulties.
 - Limited street furniture and green elements along the High Street.
- 13.5 The Town Council engaged consultants AECOM in early 2021, to produce a concept Master Plan for the [High Street \(See Appendix XXX\)](#) and present some potential options and opportunities for addressing these issues that the Town Council could then take forward.
- 13.6 The following set of primary objectives have been developed to guide the future of the town centre and the identified Opportunity Zones.
-

Objective STC1: To create an attractive and welcoming town centre with space to gather and socialise, with a pedestrian friendly environment stretching from the Station to Fromus Square and along the length of the High Street.

Objective STC2: To reduce the non-essential use of the High Street by motor vehicles and to prioritise pedestrian movement and safety in the centre, whilst improving and encouraging parking provision in accessible locations within walking distance of the town centre.

Objective STC3: To protect and enhance the historic core of the town as defined by the Conservation Area.

13.7 Due to the interdependency of various areas of the town centre, and the wide scope of potential actors involved in potential development proposals, it is important that proposals in this area are co-ordinated. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the town centre as an ‘Opportunity Zone’ and proposals within the zone should contribute to the overarching town centre strategy as set out in **Policy SAXTC1** below and should be delivered having regard to ~~this Master Planning framework~~, the Concept Masterplan for the High Street.

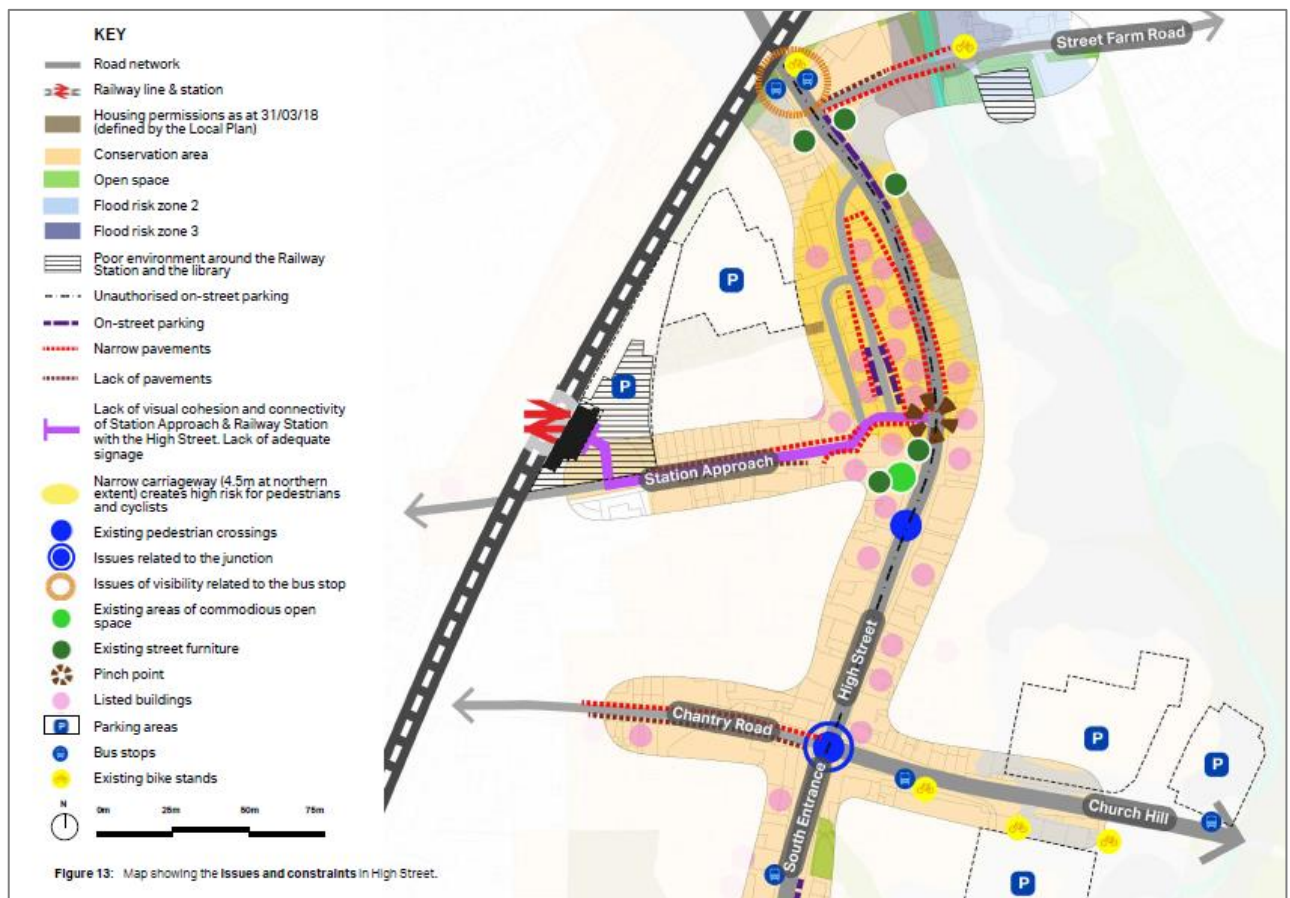


Figure ~~XX28~~: Issues and constraints around the High Street, Saxmundham (source: Concept masterplan for the High Street ~~and Garden Neighbourhood~~, AECOM).

SAXTC1: Town centre overarching strategy

Proposals will be supported that contribute to achieving a vibrant and bustling town centre comprising a healthy mix of retail, service sector, business, entertainment, cultural and residential uses.

Proposals should have regard to the advice contained within the Concept Masterplan for the High Street as set out in Appendix XXX.

Development proposals in and around the High Street will be supported where (if otherwise appropriate) they contribute to the following aims, as appropriate:

- a. Reinforce the area's distinctiveness and attractive character as a location where pedestrian activity is prioritised and users have a high sense of safety and belonging.
- b. Ensure the impact of vehicular traffic is relatively low and frontage servicing is minimised.
- c. Support good connectivity between the different areas of the town centre by creating a pedestrian friendly environment.
- d. Enhance the focal point around the Market Hall and The Bell Hotel as a desirable meeting place.
- e. Enhance of the appearance of the frontage of the Market Hall as an important landmark building, which contributes to the character of the town centre.

Development proposals that improve accessibility and safety for pedestrians, cyclists and other town centre users will be supported that:

- f. Provide for parking within easy walking distance from the town centre to encourage walking.
- g. Improve provision for cyclists both in terms of access and for cycle parking.
- h. Enhance the visual appearance of the High Street through the use of an increased number of 'Street trees.'

Proposals will not be supported where they would be detrimental to these aims.

See also **Policy SAX11: Historic Town Centre and Conservation Area.**

10th February 2023