

Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan

2017-2028



Wincanton Town Council
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Summary

Wincanton has seen a significant period of housebuilding with 594 new dwellings built in the 10 years from 2006 (the start of the Local Plan). Another 270 dwellings have planning permission. This means that there are more than enough sites with planning consent to meet the Local Plan's target of 703 homes for Wincanton, to be built between 2006 to 2028. In contrast, there is less certainty about the delivery of the employment land.

Residents are very concerned over the impact on local services, the effect on the local environment and on the nature of the community by this level of development. Other key issues identified during our consultation were that the types of houses being built do not suit residents' needs, not enough jobs were being created to balance the increased population (so that Wincanton retains its working town character) and that more could be done to support the town centre economy.

Two Planning Appeal decisions on important sites during the preparation of the Plan served to re-focus the Steering Group's determination to deliver it. At that time, the District Council did not have a five year housing land supply, and therefore despite the local housing target being exceeded, there was (and still remains) a presumption in favour of new housing, regardless of where the existing settlement boundary is drawn, provided there are no significant environmental or other concerns associated with it. With the short-fall in housing numbers across South Somerset, this presumption is likely to continue until a new Local Plan is adopted.

This Plan takes a realistic and positive approach to where future development should take place, by highlighting the type of development the town needs and the special features of the town we want to retain, which can then be considered in where and how new development might come forward. It is not an allocations-based Plan; the Local Plan Early Review will identify the numbers/quantity of homes and amount of employment space required for the town looking beyond 2028.

The Vision

In 2028 Wincanton will be an even better place to live, work and visit. The town will still have its working character, with employment land and facilities that allow existing businesses to grow and attract in new businesses. It will have a thriving town centre that continues to perform a useful retail, social and community purpose for the town. It will have well-designed homes and developments that suit residents' needs, that are visually unobtrusive and link well to the town centre. The spaces, buildings and other places or features that make Wincanton special, will be protected and respected in new development.

The Objectives

The objectives of the Plan are;

1. Identifying the most sustainable locations for development

We have considered the possible directions for future growth, issues associated and features that are important, to help identify the best areas for any future development, which would create the least environmental impact and support a thriving, well-connected community.

2. Housing suitable for Wincanton's population

The population of the town needs more smaller homes for older people and starter homes for young families, and developments that prioritise these kinds of homes will be supported.

3. New employment space near the A303

A key objective is to retain existing and facilitate new jobs, to keep Wincanton's working town character. High quality, flexible, larger footprint business units for warehousing, storage and light industrial use, and some offices, will be supported.

4. Make the town centre more attractive to users

Residents want a lively and useful town centre that is a pleasure to shop in. This Plan proposes a modest series of environmental improvements that will make shopping on foot more attractive and safer by slowing traffic and widening some pavements. This will also improve access for mobility scooter users and cyclists.

5. Protect open spaces & improve walking & cycling routes

To make walking a cycling practical for day to day trips, there needs to be suitable, well-signed and attractive off-road links from housing areas to the town centre and other key facilities such as the schools, leisure and health centres. We have identified two routes that will form the basis of this network, and the open spaces that are important to local residents.

The detail of these objectives, and the policies that will deliver them, are outlined in this document, our Neighbourhood Plan.

1. Introduction

The Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan aims to shape future development that will enhance the town and help build a balanced community and local economy.

The 2012 Localism Act gives local communities the power to produce their own neighbourhood plans which will influence future development in their local area.

Such plans are focused on shaping the built environment and can:

- Identify a shared vision and common goals for a neighbourhood.
- Define where new homes, shops, offices and other development should be built.
- Identify and protect local green space.
- Influence what new buildings should look like and set design standards.

Consultation has been a key and necessary part of the process in preparing the Plan, which is summarised in section 5 and in detail in the separate Consultation Statement.

Wincanton Town Council is the qualifying body that has led the production of this Plan.

2. National & Local Planning Context

Under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, the Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan has to comply with the Basic Conditions of the Localism Act 2012, with the National Planning Policy Framework and with the strategic objectives of the adopted South Somerset Local Plan (2006 - 2028).

2.1. The Basic Conditions

The right for communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans was established by the Localism Act in 2011, which was accompanied by the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. As a result, Neighbourhood Plans are required to meet a number of basic conditions which are detailed within Schedule 4B of the 1990 Act, as inserted by the provisions of Schedule 10 of the Localism Act. The basic conditions are addressed in the Basic Conditions Statement and require that:

- The neighbourhood plan is prepared having regard to national policies and advice issued by the Secretary of State,
- The making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development, and
- The making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with any strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority.

2.2. The National Planning Policy Framework

The Government's planning policy for England is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), supplemented by online guidance. The focus of this policy is to achieve the right balance between sustainability and growth to ensure that development is carried out in a way that makes a positive contribution to our lives but also leaves a lasting legacy for our children.

It identifies three distinct planning roles and objectives:

Economic - Contributing to building a strong economy: ensuring that sufficient land is available in the right places and at the right time.

Social - Providing homes that will meet the needs of future generations and supporting the community's health, social and cultural well-being.

Environmental - Protecting our environment: using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating climate change.

In guiding neighbourhood plans, the framework makes clear that neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity and not undermine or promote less development than set out in the Local Plan. However they can shape and direct sustainable development in their area, but need to be flexible enough to accommodate needs or changes in economic circumstances they may not have been anticipated.

2.3. South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028

South Somerset District Council is the local planning authority. The South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) is a collection of policies which set out the long term vision and strategic context for managing and accommodating growth within South Somerset up to 2028.

The District Council adopted the South Somerset Local Plan on the 5th March 2015. The Council has begun an 'Early Review' of the Local Plan, and expects to consult on the Issues and Options in Autumn 2017, publish and consult on the preferred approach in Winter 2018 and consult on the Submission Plan in Summer 2019, with adopted therefore likely in early 2020.

Key elements of the Local Plan that will influence Neighbourhood Plan policy in Wincanton over the Plan period are:-

- The town's status as a Primary Market Towns, where provision will be made for housing, employment, shopping and other services that increases its self-containment and enhance its role as a service centre
- The delivery of 703 new homes, of which 594 have been built and a further 270 already have planning consent
- The creation of 599 new jobs, with a preferred 'direction of growth' identified to the south west of the town

The Local Plan's Vision for 2028 relating to Market Towns including Wincanton is;
"South Somerset's Market Towns and Rural Centres will provide the basis of the thriving regenerated and diversified economy outside Yeovil. These places will have retained their distinctiveness and continue to provide a focus for their surrounding areas. They will have built upon their existing roles and functions and be thriving and vibrant places offering quality housing, job opportunities and a range of services to meet the needs of their communities and visitors and be more self- sufficient and with a better balance of jobs to dwellings.

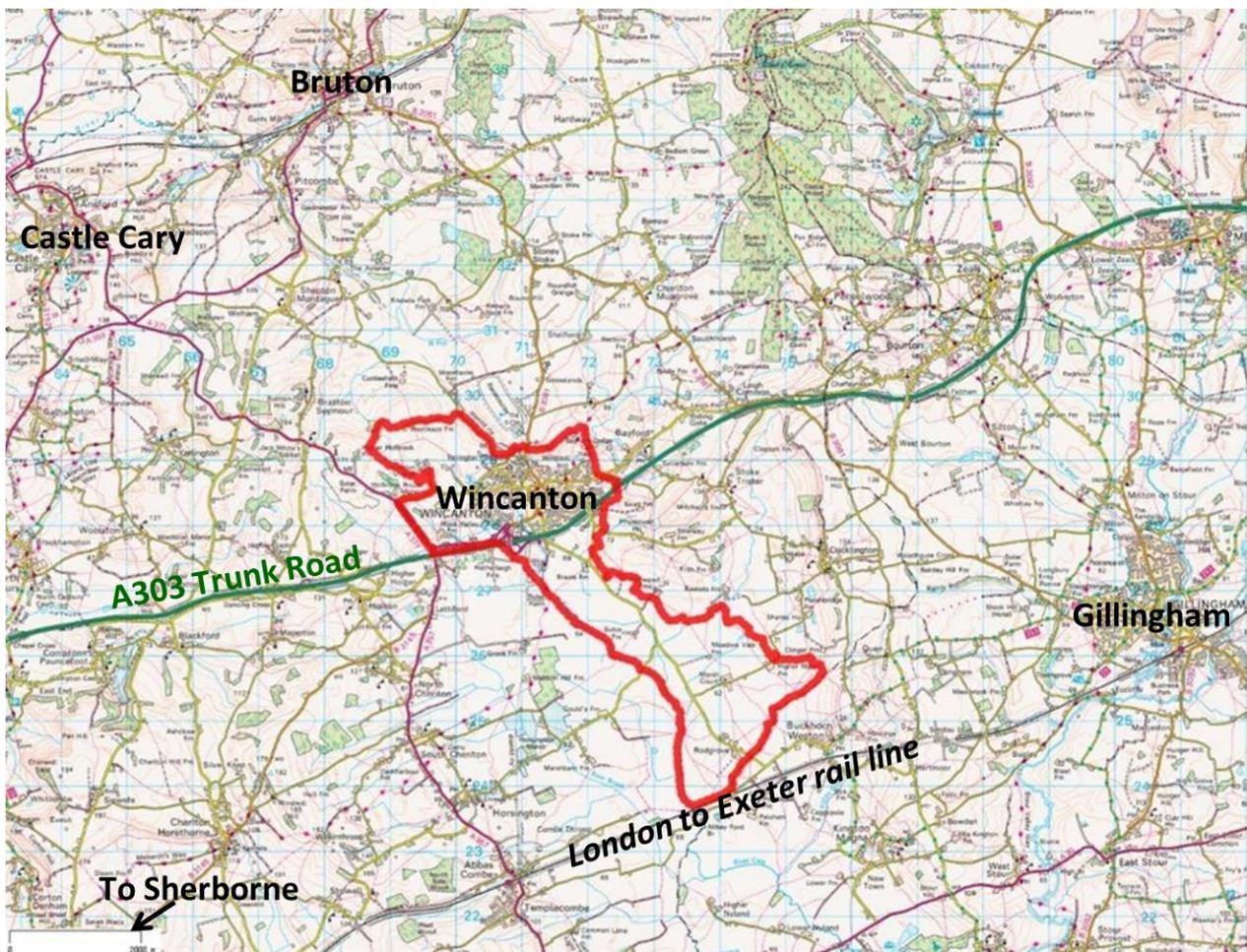
The growth proposed ... will provide economic regeneration, better housing and, with the maintenance and enhancement of commercial and community services across the district, allowing better access for all. The mix of employment, housing and associated land uses in these places will promote greater settlement self-containment."

3. Wincanton in Context

Wincanton is situated at the south eastern corner of Somerset, close to the border with Dorset and Wiltshire, to the north of the Blackmore Vale and overlooking the Cale valley.

The Local Plan provides a brief overview of the history of the town. It describes how the town dates back to Saxon times, where there was a settlement on the east bank of the River Cale in the vicinity of the Church, spreading up the hill to the current High Street where burgage plots were established in the 13th Century. An area around the town centre and extending to the north is designated as a Conservation Area.

The town's location on the main Exeter to London medieval coach route would have encouraged the steady growth from the Middle Ages onwards, and cloth manufacture, clock making and the dairy industry were key strands of the local economy. The A303 trunk road now defines the south edge of the town, providing good road links to London and the south west of England. Within easy reach are the nearby towns of Bruton, Castle Cary, Gillingham and Sherborne, and the major town of Yeovil is about 30 minutes away by car.



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Fig 1. Area context

Wincanton's population of 5,300 makes it the fourth largest settlement in the district in terms of population. Recent residential growth has taken place at New Barns Farm to the

south west, with the main employment areas of the town on the south and south west of the town.

Wincanton is located within a rural setting and is important in serving the needs of residents in the nearby rural areas. In terms of retail, Wincanton has a range of independent stores and a supermarket in the town centre and several supermarkets near the A303. Other key services to be found in the town include a health centre, a hospital, a leisure centre, a library, banks, primary and secondary schools.



The Market Place

Wincanton has historic connections with logistics and distribution and continues to feature elements of the dairy industry and food production. The town enjoys some particular tourism assets with its famous racecourse (just outside the neighbourhood plan area to the north) and literary connections with Terry Pratchett's 'Discworld' series.

Growth in lifestyle business has occurred in the last decade, associated with proximity to the South East and good connectivity. However the town is not overly dependent on any one single employer. Wincanton Racecourse plays a role in the local economy by bringing people to the town.

4. How the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared

The Neighbourhood Plan area was designated in March 2014, and a Steering Group of Town and District Councillors, business representatives and community groups (with officer liaison from the District Council) began meeting in January 2015.

The Steering Group undertook a focused consultation process, building on existing evidence.

The initial focus was on business needs, and a survey of local businesses took place in March 2015. This was to update the evidence from a 2011 South Somerset District Council business needs survey. A follow-up meeting gave local businesses the opportunity to respond to the findings and add more detail.



June 2015 Consultation event at the Memorial Hall

Wincanton Town Council had already produced a comprehensive Community Plan in 2007 with an update in 2012, and a Local Transport Plan (2013) and these were reviewed to identify existing issues. These were incorporated into a consultation event in June 2015, where over 150 people gave over 1500 comments across the whole range of issues.

Throughout the production of the Plan, Steering Group members have raised concerns and suggestions from local people and businesses at meetings. The Town Council has maintained a dedicated section of its website to explain progress. Email and social media have also been useful in explaining progress and as a channel for comments.

A Planning Consultant, Jo Witherden (Dorset Planning Consultant) was appointed in November 2015 to help develop a number of policies and the evidence for these.

A group of Town and District Councillors completed a Placecheck, a series of guided visits to areas of the town to assess the constraints and identify opportunities for different kinds of development that the town needs. Specific research was undertaken to establish local housing and employment needs.

The full details of our consultation are shown in the Consultation Statement. The Placecheck report can be viewed in our Evidence Base.

5. What the Neighbourhood Plan aims to achieve

5.1. Issues for the town

The previous sections set out the context for this Neighbourhood Plan. But what are the issues for local people that the Plan aims to tackle?

Residents are concerned by the level of recent housing development and its impact on local services, effect on the local environment and on the nature of the community. These concerns resulted in a demonstration of around 300 people in December 2014.

Key issues identified during our consultation were that;

- businesses need better quality, larger footprint units that they can adapt as the business grows. These need good access to the A303, much better broadband and sufficient parking.
- the types of houses being built do not suit residents' needs, in particular for the elderly and for young people
- not enough jobs are being created for the increased population, so that Wincanton's working town character is under threat and services are under pressure
- the physical environment of the town, especially the main approach into the town from the A303, was of poor quality, with messy industry and old commercial units providing a poor first impression
- more could be done to support the town centre economy. Edge-of-town supermarkets and internet shopping have had an effect on the vitality of many town centres including Wincanton, but measures such as pedestrian improvements and traffic calming, redeveloping two key Listed buildings and widening the choice of shops were suggested.
- access around the town on foot and by cycle is difficult due to terrain, the one-way system and the historic pattern of development.

Additional concerns raised through contact with Steering Group members and the Neighbourhood Plan Coordinator have included noise from industrial processes affecting householders in the News Barns development (and conversely the impact on local businesses) which can be seen as poor design and planning of new developments, and access concerns for emergency vehicles in New Barns due to on-street parking (again because of poor design).

5.2. Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan

Five objectives formed the basis of the research and focus of our Neighbourhood Plan:

1. Identifying the most sustainable locations for further development
2. Housing suitable for Wincanton's population
3. New employment space near the A303
4. Make the town centre more attractive to users
5. Protect public open spaces & improve walking & cycling routes

Other issues that were raised, shown in the table below, can largely be addressed outside the Neighbourhood Plan. These are either non-planning issues or likely to be supported through existing planning policies.

The vision that encapsulates these objectives, and the policies that will deliver them, are outlined in the following sections.

Recognising the need for flexibility the term ‘should’ has been adopted in a number of the policy statements. This does not imply that the policy is optional, but instead recognises that there may be reasons why the tests set out in the policy may not be practical, and if this is the case the application should contain information explaining the reasons why an exception should be made.

5.3. Aims outside of the Neighbourhood Plan

The following table lists additional aims that were identified through the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, but which fall largely outside of its remit. The Town Council would hope to work together with organisations such as those listed (and others that may wish to be involved) to achieve these aims.

Aims	Bodies that could be involved in delivery
Protecting Wincanton Community Hospital	Wincanton Town Council, Somerset Partnership (NHS), Clinical Commissioning Group
Improving Primary Care	Wincanton Town Council, Clinical Commissioning Group, Patients Participation Group, Wincanton Health Centre
Supporting the expansion of the Primary School	Wincanton Town Council, Local Education Authority
A town centre development to attract an anchor store or service	Wincanton Town Council, Chamber, South Somerset District Council
Unlocking the barriers to viable development of Listed Buildings	Wincanton Town Council, South Somerset District Council

5.4. The Vision

In 2028 Wincanton will be an even better place to live, work and visit. The town will still have its working character, with employment land and facilities that allow existing businesses to grow and attract in new businesses. It will have a thriving town centre that continues to perform a useful retail, social and community purpose for the town. It will have well-designed homes and developments that suit residents’ needs, that are visually unobtrusive and link well to the town centre. The spaces, buildings and other places or features that make Wincanton special, will be protected and respected in new development.

6. Housing

Objective 1. Identifying the most sustainable locations for further development

Objective 2. Housing suitable for Wincanton's population

While the town has seen a high level of recent housebuilding, the reality is that without a District-wide 5 year housing supply, planning applications for further development outside of the town could still come forward and be permitted. This is because development plan policies that restrain housing growth, such as settlement boundaries or local thresholds, are considered 'out of date' where there is a significant shortfall in housing land supply across the wider housing market area. So when this happens, unless there are serious site-specific issues that would make them unsuitable, housing proposals in locations such as Wincanton are likely to be considered favourably.

However although local plan (and even neighbourhood plan) policies may become out of date, they will still carry some weight in the decision making process, particularly if there is a clear underlying purpose.

This Plan looks to provide further guidance on those local issues, such as landscape character, that should be taken into account in directing development to the most appropriate locations for further growth, and the type of housing needed based on an understanding of current demand, likely trends and residents' issues and concerns.

6.1. Identifying the most sustainable locations for further development

The plan does not identify or allocate sites for development. But during its preparation the Steering Group did look at sites which may well come forward for consideration in the future. This was done through a PlaceCheck appraisal, where representatives of the local community thought about what local people would say about those sites and the type of issues that the development of these sites might raise. Although this work was not as detailed as would be required for determining a planning application or site allocation, this has highlighted particular points that should usefully be considered in such planning decisions, so that development better meets the local needs and aspirations of the community whilst not preventing development that is needed. It is hoped that these findings will be used to influence both the Local Plan Review and decisions made on planning applications when the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied.

South West of the Town

This area is where the current Local Plan has focused growth. Our investigations showed that it is important that the design, layout and extent of development respects the special landscape towards Hook Valley Farm, and does not become visually obtrusive by building towards the northern elevated field (adjoining West Hill).

There are also some visually sensitive areas where development should be avoided, most notably the higher ground west of New Barns Farm where development would be particularly prominent on the skyline, and Lawrence Hill. The overall form of the town is shaped by its topography, and it is important to keep the higher ground to the west of New Barns Farms free from built development to provide a green backdrop to the town's limits, and allow views across the town. Lawrence Hill is a particularly interesting and enjoyable

landscape rising up towards one of the main access roads to the town, and should be retained as informal open space if development were to extend this far to the south-west.

Within the direction of growth defined in the Local Plan, the stream corridor provides the basis of an important green link, which could provide wildlife, landscape, flood alleviation and recreational benefits. Consideration needs to be given how best to ensure this links through to the remaining green infrastructure network. Similarly the hedgerows and mature trees can be incorporated into the layout of new development to create better places. Opportunities should also be taken where appropriate to soften the existing urban edge to the town.

Given the distance from the town centre, it would be appropriate to plan for a neighbourhood centre within this direction of growth. The existing attractive stone buildings at New Barns could form the basis for such a centre (subject to viability and demand), and their retention would also provide a clear visual link to the history of this area as farmland serving the town's population. Safe and attractive walking and cycling links are important, connecting this new centre, and the surrounding housing to the town centre and other well-used community facilities.

The Local Plan recognizes the importance of having good access to the strategic road network for employment development, and the existing roundabout could be adapted to provide a new access from the A371. In the section on employment there are more specific policies aimed at avoiding potential conflict between different uses, and designing the employment areas to be able to adapt to different business requirements.

Somerset County Council's Service Manager for Schools Commissioning has requested that, if further major housing was proposed for the town, they would need to secure a site for a seven class primary school which would require 1.1 hectares of flat land on a square site. It is important that they can access any new site at the earliest opportunity and this would be central to their negotiations with any developer.

Within the Town

Looking within the existing built up areas of the town, there may be development opportunities on previously development land, though any proposals will need to be subject to more detailed investigation. One such example was the Tythings site. The opportunity of redeveloping this site could bring a number of benefits to the town. The messy industrial processes of a concrete works with associated daily HGV movements could be removed from this central site, and the main approach into the town visually improved. The site is within walking distance of the town centre and the health centre. A residential development (focused for older people) or a mixed use development incorporating suitable employment uses ('clean' B uses, such as offices) may be suitable for such a location.

The small Travis Perkins site similarly might present an opportunity for residential development if it became available and subject to avoiding possible harm from flooding (as part of the site is within the flood risk zone).

There are a number of key buildings and green spaces within the town that are important, not only in defining its distinct character, but also in helping people recognise where they are and providing attractive and more direct routes through to different parts of the town and countryside beyond. Poorly planned development might block existing views or

reduce the quality of such spaces and links, and miss opportunities to reinforce this network of key buildings and spaces. With good design, the scale and layout takes advantage of potential views and the benefits of providing better connections.

Heritage features must be respected in any future development. Not all heritage assets may be obvious – there are local historic features that are not Listed or otherwise highlighted in policy documents. Sometimes the role of a site or building may become apparent by looking at the historic maps and talking to local people who have lived in the area for many years. The former railway line on the eastern edge of the Tythings, marked by stone wall, and the slaughterhouse on the adjoining land, are two such examples. The design and layout could creatively incorporate features that help explain the historic evolution of the town, and in particular the role that some of these sites have played.

Land immediately south of the A303

Land immediately south of the A303 feels separate from the town because of the severing effect of the trunk road, but could still be a potential option for future growth, particularly if improved links can be provided. Flood risk would be a major issue for some areas, particularly west of the River Cale, and national guidance makes clear that vulnerable development such as housing should not be permitted in flood risk areas if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding. Providing good access, both vehicular access (local and strategic) and pedestrian / cycle links into the town, would also be critical if this area were to be seriously considered for future development. Some of the land falls within the minerals safeguarding zones and as such if development were to be considered, the opportunity for these minerals to be extracted as part of any scheme would be sought by the County Council as the Minerals Planning Authority.

This area's close proximity to the town, yet separation from residential uses suggests that this area may be more appropriate for commercial / industrial uses, particularly as flood risk, possible noise from the A303 and distance from community facilities may make this area unsuited for housing.

Elsewhere in the Parish

Our investigations did not find identify any other sites that appeared to provide opportunities for significant housing development elsewhere in the parish that would be well related to the town.

There may be some scope for housing development east of Penn View but there is little land within the parish boundary, and the larger area falls outside the scope of our Neighbourhood Plan.

The higher ground to the north of the town is very prominent and forms the backdrop in general views across the town. The network of rural lanes and footpaths along this ridge afford key views across the town, as well as access to and sweeping views of the contrasting undeveloped countryside to the north, just a step away from the town centre. For these reasons this higher ground is considered visually sensitive. The existing road network and gradients also make this area particularly difficult to access from a development perspective. For these reasons, development on the high ground to the north of the town, along Windmill Hill, should be avoided.

Main findings

It was clear from our investigations that there appear to be potential opportunities for further housing development that would be well-related to the town, including sites within the town boundary and direction of growth, and possibly other locations as well. Such decisions on the location of new housing will be taken by the Local Planning Authority and detailed through the Local Plan Review, and subject to more detailed investigation than our PlaceCheck could provide. However, our investigations did highlight a number of factors that should form part of these considerations and potentially influence the more detailed design and layout of development. By including these as policy considerations, future development should reflect and reinforce the unique character of the town and help achieve the wider objectives of this plan relating to supporting successful businesses, a strong and vibrant town centre, and a good walking and cycling network potentially as part of a wider green infrastructure strategy.

In terms of supporting local character, key points were:

- > Avoiding the most visually sensitive areas, where development would cause substantial harm to local character and the setting of the town – these were identified from the PlaceCheck and landscape studies as:
 - the higher ground west of New Barns Farm,
 - Lawrence Hill, and
 - the higher ground to the north of the town
- > Protecting and reinforcing the network of key buildings and spaces around the town, by considering how the design and layout can create positive visual and route connections, these were identified from the PlaceCheck and Conservation Area Appraisal as:
 - Bayford Hill Villas
 - St Luke and St Theresa
 - St Peter and St Paul
 - Clock Tower
 - West Hill House
 - New Barns
 - Sports Centre
 - Pavilion
 - Way Close
 - Bellfields
 - Windmill Farm
 - Ireson House
 - Alfreds Tower
- > Protecting trees, hedgerows and streams, and incorporating them into the green infrastructure network of any new development. Opportunities for further green corridors and tree planting should also be encouraged where this would strengthen the landscape character and wildlife value of a site, or as mitigation if the retention of the existing features would prevent a better overall design and layout.
- > Encouraging opportunities for development to provide a more attractive edge to the town, through requiring appropriate landscaping that creates a soft transition with the countryside, rather than a hard, urban edge
- > Encouraging opportunities for development to reflect the interesting history of the town, even where the features are not Listed or otherwise designated. Examples identified from the PlaceCheck were the former railway line and the slaughterhouse on the adjoining land. Local knowledge can play a key role in understanding possible undesigned heritage assets.

These points are reflected in the policies that follow. Other factors relating to employment, walking and cycling are contained in the following chapters.

Policy 1. Visually sensitive areas

Visually sensitive areas (identified in the Proposals Map) are locations where new buildings would cause substantial harm to local character and setting of the town. This includes:

- > the higher ground west of New Barns Farm where development would be visually prominent on the skyline,
- > Lawrence Hill
- > the higher ground to the north of the town

Proposals for new buildings within these visually sensitive areas are not supported, unless necessary to support the rural economy.

Policy 2. Key Buildings and Spaces

Where development allows and is otherwise in accordance with the development plan, opportunities should be taken to reinforce the network of key buildings and spaces (identified in the Proposals Map), by ensuring the scale and layout of new development takes advantage of potential views and opportunities to provide better route connections. The re-use of the existing attractive stone buildings at New Barns as part of a local neighbourhood centre of a scale and type to meet the local needs with local detail / serve the west side of the town should be supported.

Policy 3. Trees and Hedgerows

Where a development site includes existing mature trees or hedgerows, these features should be incorporated into the scheme layout to provide wildlife and potential recreational corridors and reinforce local character.

Policy 4. River & Stream Corridors

The river and stream corridors (identified in the Proposals Map) provide the basis of important green links, with the potential to provide wildlife, landscape, flood alleviation and recreational benefits and should be safeguarded as part of any development proposals. Where opportunities allow, the benefits of these green links should be enhanced through an appropriate landscape management scheme.

Policy 5. Development on the outskirts of the town

Where development is otherwise acceptable on the edge of the built-up area, opportunities should be taken as part of any proposals to include landscape schemes to soften the existing urban edge to the town.

Policy 6. Interpreting the history of a site

Site features that may provide a clear link to the town's historic evolution should be assessed as potential heritage assets. Consultation with the local community to gain local knowledge about a site's history is encouraged. If confirmed as historically significant, opportunities should be taken to sensitively incorporate such local heritage assets in the design, to help explain the historic evolution of the town, and the role those sites or features have played.

6.2. Housing suitable for Wincanton's population

Our investigations also included a review of Census and other statistics on housing and the local population, interviews with estate agents and healthcare providers, to provide us with an insight on the type of housing needed in the area. A more up-to-date assessment

of the wider housing market area's housing needs has also been published by the District Council (October 2016). This research has highlighted the following points:

Wincanton's age population profile will have an increasing number of elderly (80 years+) residents by 2030, accounting for about 13% of the predicted population (almost double current levels). About 9% of the population say that their day-to-day activities are "limited a lot", and about 5% say that they are in bad or very bad health. With an aging population, these figures are likely to rise, increasing the need for more suitable accommodation for people who have limited mobility or who may need a greater degree of support, whether from the healthcare sector or the wider community. This suggests that there will be increasing demand for single level accommodation, homes with level and easy access to local facilities, homes that are designed for wheelchair access and homes that have care systems that enable independent living. Lifetime Homes and technical standards for accessible, adaptable dwellings and wheelchair user dwellings (contained in Building Regulations as optional standards), are widely recognised by the industry as providing suitable accommodation to help meet this growing demand.

The vast majority (70%) of households are occupied by one or two people. The amount of one and two person households is projected to grow, whereas the projections indicate that there will be no growth in larger 'family' households. Family homes with small gardens are also difficult to sell. This suggests that there is little locally driven need for larger homes (particularly in the private market sector), as the current stock of larger homes should more than cater for the likely demand. However where family homes are provided, these should have reasonable sized gardens to allow sufficient room for children to play.

Nearly 3 out of 4 houses are "under-occupied" with occupants having one or more bedrooms over and above what they need. This means that houses generally have more bedrooms than they have to be. Although there are obvious benefits from having the space and flexibility that 'spare bedrooms' have, this only applies if you can afford to buy or rent one, and open market housing is largely unaffordable in comparison to average household income levels. Given the increasing number of single and couples living on their own, building more studio and 1 bedroom homes could be the solution. But these smaller types of homes have not generally sold easily on the private market, regardless of the economic cycles, and estate agents have told us that demand continues to be primarily for 2 to 3 bedroom properties. The latest housing needs evidence suggests that many dwellings with only 1 or 2 bedrooms do not meet the national standards for room sizes, which may partly explain why they tend to be avoided. Innovative solutions are needed to provide suitable, popular configuration/s for 1 and 2 bedroom homes that can be built and sold or rented on the open market at lower cost, as part of the overall mix.

On the basis of all this research, an appropriate mix would include a significant proportion of 1 and 2 bedroom homes (in the region of 50 to 55% of dwellings, but mainly weighted towards the affordable home types, and ideally meeting the national space standards for such homes).

The latest evidence has also considered the potential demand for starter homes, which is a new form of potentially affordable housing being prescribed through national guidance and legislation, where the sale of such homes is restricted to first time buyers aged 23 - 39, and the price starts at no more than 80% of the open market value. The provision of Starter Homes will enable some local households in the private rented sector to move into owner-occupation, and a 'target' of up to 20% of new homes to be Starter Homes is suggested in the report's conclusions. The exact proportion will be a matter of negotiation,

as a much higher 'discount' than the 20% minimum (possibly in the region of 45% to 50%) is needed to make the starter home product similarly affordable to affordable rents.

There is mixed evidence of potential demand for custom and self-build, but this is thought to be higher than local authority registers and estate agents might suggest. In the 9 months between May 2016 and February 2017, the number of people on the South Somerset Register grew from 24 to 41, and with marketing and the prospect of possible sites, this figure could be much higher. Such house building can provide a more affordable and bespoke type of housing, contribute to the distinctiveness of neighbourhoods and is more likely to support the economy through use of local skills and contractors in the build process, but without intervention is unlikely to be provided on large sites which provide the main source of new housing. As such a requirement for serviced plots is considered reasonable on larger sites, provided that this does not unnecessarily delay building out planning consents.

In conclusion, what this research makes clear is that the population of the town needs more smaller (but generously proportioned) homes for older people and affordable homes for young adults, couples and families, including starter homes and self-build options that will help local residents get onto or move up the housing ladder. These key points are encapsulated in the following policies, and are expected to form the basis for deciding the appropriate mix of housing types, although the most appropriate mix for any site will to a degree depend upon a wide range of factors, including site size, viability and local character. For example, the provision of bungalows would not be in character in the historic town centre, but this does not necessarily preclude the potential for other forms of suitable accommodation for the elderly in such locations).

National guidance indicates that any requirements for the higher optional technical standards should be made through the Local Plan where issues such as the impact on viability can be examined in greater detail. As such the policy supporting these higher standards is one of encouragement (and to which weight can be given in assessing the overall planning balance of a proposal) but is not on its own likely to lead to a refusal. The inclusion of a policy requirement for such standards is a matter that should be considered through the Local Plan Review.

Policy 7. Housing Types

In providing a mix of open market housing types and sizes that contributes to the provision of sustainable and balanced communities, new homes provided as part of a development scheme should fall within one or more of the following categories:

- > 1 and 2 bedroom homes (a significant proportion of which should be designed to cater for an ageing population, including bungalows, and are encouraged to have room sizes that meet the national prescribed standards)
- > 3 bedroom homes (with reasonable sized gardens to allow informal play)

unless there are demonstrable reasons why this is not possible or desirable. On large sites of 10 or more homes, at least 50% of dwellings should be provided as 1 or 2 bedroom homes, where practical providing accommodation suitable for an ageing population (particularly in locations within easy walking distance of local shops and facilities).

Policy 8. Starter Homes for Local People

The provision of starter homes for first time buyers should be supported on up to 20% of new homes. Such provision may be counted as contributing towards affordable housing requirements provided restrictions are imposed to ensure (a) the homes are prioritised to households with a local connection who cannot afford to buy suitable housing on the open

market, and (b) the re-sale price is retained at an affordable level in relation to local incomes (or the proceeds recycled).

Policy 9. Accessible and Adaptable Homes

New homes that meet the Lifetime Homes standards or the optional higher standards as set out in part M4(2) Category 2 or 3 of the Approved Document M Building Regulations should be supported within any proposed mix.

Policy 10. Custom and Self-Build Homes

The provision of custom and self-build homes will be supported on sites suitable for general housing.

On larger sites of more than 30 houses, developers should make provision for custom and self-build housing based on the likely demand as evidenced from the District Council's self-build register, and taking into account the suitability and viability of the site. Where plots have been marketed appropriately for a reasonable period and not sold, the plot(s) may be released from this requirement.

Any policy requiring a set proportion of homes to be built at the higher accessibility standards will need to be examined in the context of its impact on economic viability, and as such is a matter for the Local Plan Review. Policy 9 should therefore be read as an interim policy that encourages (but cannot require) such homes, that may be replaced by a requirement if such is included in the next version of the Local Plan.

Similarly the Government's regulations and requirements for starter homes are not yet finalised, and therefore the starter homes policy (policy 8) is intended to provide flexibility that will allow more locally-focused starter homes to be provided in addition.

Although at the time of writing this plan the evidence for custom and self-build homes was in its infancy, this evidence will grow over the plan period. The requirements in Policy 10 will only apply when there is clear evidence of need.

7. Employment

Objective 1. Identifying the most sustainable locations for further development **Objective 3. New employment space near the A303**

The vision for this plan highlights the importance of Wincanton's working town character. We want to encourage suitable businesses to grow in Wincanton.

Our review of evidence and consultation with local businesses and residents shows that there is likely to be a continuing demand for employment land in the Wincanton area, and a strong desire to retain a good balance of jobs in the town as it grows in size, so that it continues to be relatively self-sufficient.

The latest employment monitoring report for South Somerset (2016) clearly demonstrated that the development of employment land and floorspace in towns such as Wincanton has been well behind the anticipated delivery rate, and concluded that "the strategy of 'predict and provide' for new employment land is overly simplistic, and there may be a disconnect between the Council's approach to allocating land, and what is truly needed by the business community." The report also recognised that investment decisions tend to be linked to the strength and hoped future competitiveness of a particular business.

Our research has shown that typical requirements are for premises suitable for warehousing and manufacturing, plus related office space. However it is important to have a range of unit sizes available, from small incubator / start-up units to large units (e.g. 2,000m² footprint), and units that can be readily expanded or reconfigured to cater for different occupants and changing business needs can also help keep relocation costs to a minimum. Few businesses stand still as their market, processes and scope change over time and the business builds on its successes. Building flexibility into the design and layout of employment areas is therefore to be encouraged. The shared use of facilities, such as parking and even business support facilities, can all enable the efficient and effective use of land.

The town's location on the A303, a key part of the strategic road network in the south west, is critical to the success of a number of businesses, and also makes it a good base for distribution companies, which produce or assemble their products on site. This potential is likely to increase if A303 improvements materialise within the plan period, provided sufficient suitable employment land is available. Although the Local Plan cautions against allowing direct access from the strategic road network, Highways England have suggested that although their preference will always be that new development should make use of existing junctions, they would not necessarily object to a new access from the A303 provided there was a strong enough case in support of economic growth and there was not adverse impact on traffic flows and safety. Where a new junction or direct means of access is agreed, the promoter will be expected to secure all necessary consents and to fund all related design and construction works.

The significant volume of delivery vehicle movements generated by businesses also means that good road access to the strategic transport network is a key factor. The traffic levels generated, and some manufacturing processes, can lead to concerns about the potential disturbance and conflict with more residential uses in nearby streets. Having sufficient parking provision is another factor that can make a difference where businesses are reliant on good access and customer's first impressions.

With markets increasingly relying on the internet for advertising and processing orders, superfast broadband is also essential. As of January 2017, new building and buildings undergoing major renovations will be required to be equipped with high-speed-ready in-building connection points. As such, the provision of broadband access, although critical, does not need to be made a policy requirement in our Neighbourhood Plan.

There are three main employment sites in the town:

- > **Bennetts Field Trading Estate** - a long established employment area with a variety of business types in a range of unit sizes (including small units suitable for start-up businesses)
- > **The Tythings** - a concrete mixing plant, but also home to a number of other businesses in the various units on site.
- > **Wincanton Business Park / Lawrence Hill Business Centre** – the most recent industrial estate (now largely built out)

Parts of these existing employment sites are not particularly well suited to potential businesses due to one or more of the above issues highlighted in the paragraphs above. As such, we have included a policy to help guide the release of employment land where alternative uses may be the better long-term solution. This is similar to, but not as restrictive as, Policy EP3 of the Local Plan, which requires at least 18 months marketing of the site and significant environmental improvements.

It is important that the overall available of employment land is not diminished. A direction of growth to the south west of the town (north of Lawrence Hill and west of Wincanton Business Park) was included in the Local Plan for further employment land, but as yet no detailed plans have been made. Section 8.1 and the more detailed PlaceCheck appraisal reviewed possible areas in terms of whether they could be suitable for development, and locally identified issues that should be taken into account. Our investigations highlighted that land south of the A303 might warrant further consideration as an alternative or additional site to provide employment land, if a direct access from the A303 slip road can be established. By providing the flexibility to allow other locations outside of the strategic direction of growth to be considered, the risk that the town could stagnate due to the lack of available employment land should be avoided. This is a similar approach to that found in national policy for housing, where housing sites may be permitted on unallocated land in the absence of a five year housing land supply.

These points are encapsulated in the following policies. For the purposes of the following policies, “employment” is defined as B1, B2 and B8 uses, and other uses typically found on large industrial estates.

Policy 11. The Retention of Employment Land

In considering the need to safeguard employment land within the town’s development area (as defined in the Local Plan), proposals that would result in the loss of employment land to alternative uses may be supported, where:

- > a change would be desirable to reduce adverse environmental impacts on nearby residential or environmentally sensitive areas, and
- > the introduction of alternative uses will not adversely impact on nearby B2/B8 employment sites or the vitality of the town centre, and

- > the development secures an overall lasting employment benefit, such as through the provision of more modern and flexible business premises

Policy 12. New Employment Areas

In the absence of existing and available serviced sites to meet and identified employment demand, development proposals for new employment site outside of the town's development area (as defined in the Local Plan), may be supported, provided that the development would;

- > support the town's continued economic growth (at a level appropriate to its size and strategic location on the A303),
- > have good road access to the strategic transport network, avoiding routes through residential or other sensitive areas where significant traffic movements would be detrimental to existing nearby uses and their occupants or cause harm to designated heritage or other environmental assets,
- > avoid giving rise to potential conflict and unneighbourly complaints from any nearby residential or leisure uses, and
- > not result in adverse social or environmental impacts that would clearly outweigh the potential economic benefits

On large employment sites, the provision of new units or alterations to existing units should have regard to the desirability of providing a mix of unit sizes ranging from small incubator / start-up units up to large units (e.g. 2,000m² footprint).

Where practical new employment premises should be designed to enable the future expansion and reconfiguration of the units, without the need for major rebuild.

Policy 13. Design and Layout of Employment Areas

The design and layout of new employment areas should ensure sufficient parking provision in line with the adopted parking standards, and solutions that help alleviate existing problems created by poor access and inadequate parking provision will be encouraged.

The layout of employment areas should consider and where practical include opportunities for shared parking areas and pedestrian / cycle access to the town within the design.

B2 / B8 and similar uses will not be supported in locations adjoining or in close proximity to residential or other sensitive areas where they are likely to give rise to significant traffic movements or noise and disturbance of a scale that may be detrimental to existing nearby uses and their occupants or cause harm to designated heritage or other environmental assets

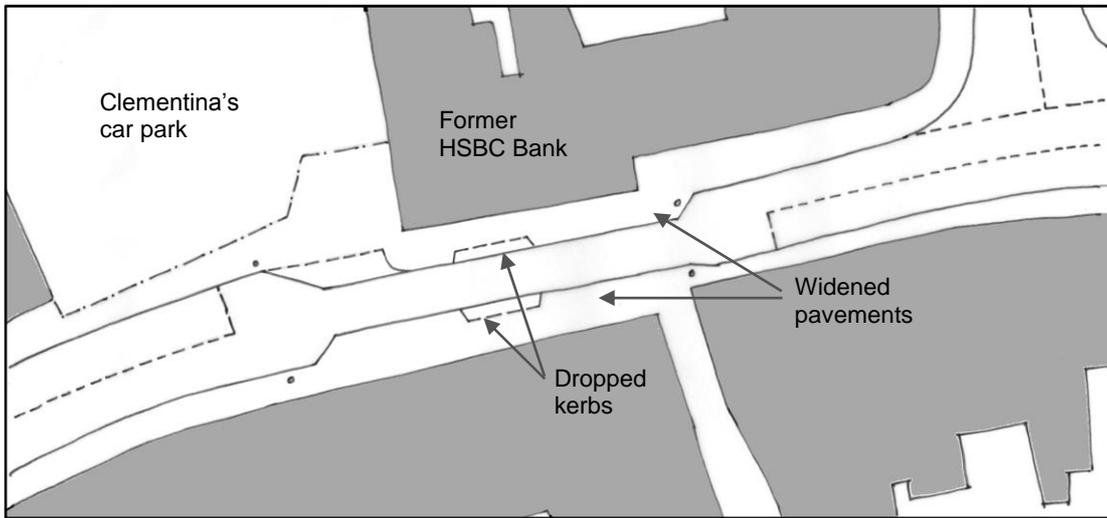


Fig 3. High Street enhancement

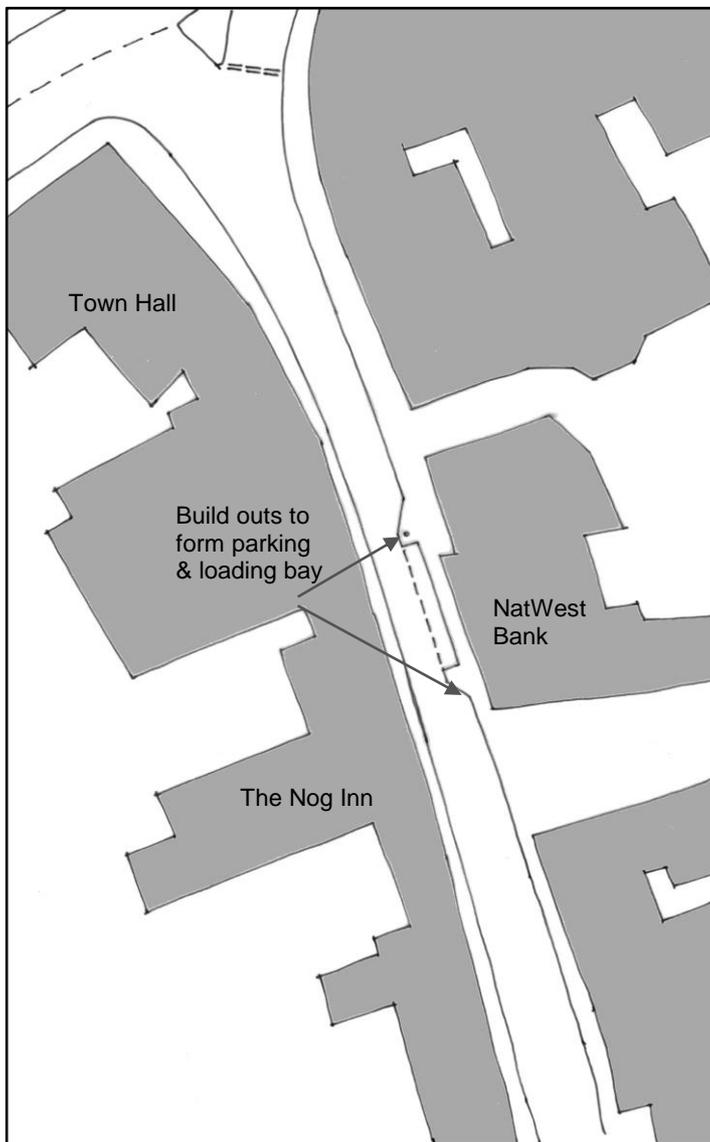


Fig 4. South Street enhancement

9. Environment

Objective 5. Protect public open spaces & improve walking & cycling routes

Residents are rightly proud of the town's public open spaces, which are mostly near the River Cale. This forms a spine of green spaces that is much valued. Most of this land is owned by the Town and District Councils.

National planning guidance makes clear that, through neighbourhood plans, local communities can identify green spaces for special protection (where new development is ruled out other than in very special circumstances) which will endure well beyond the end of the plan period. The designation should only be used where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, where it is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquility or richness of its wildlife. The designation is also only intended for sites which are local in character, and is not appropriate for extensive tracts of land. The following green spaces have therefore been identified:

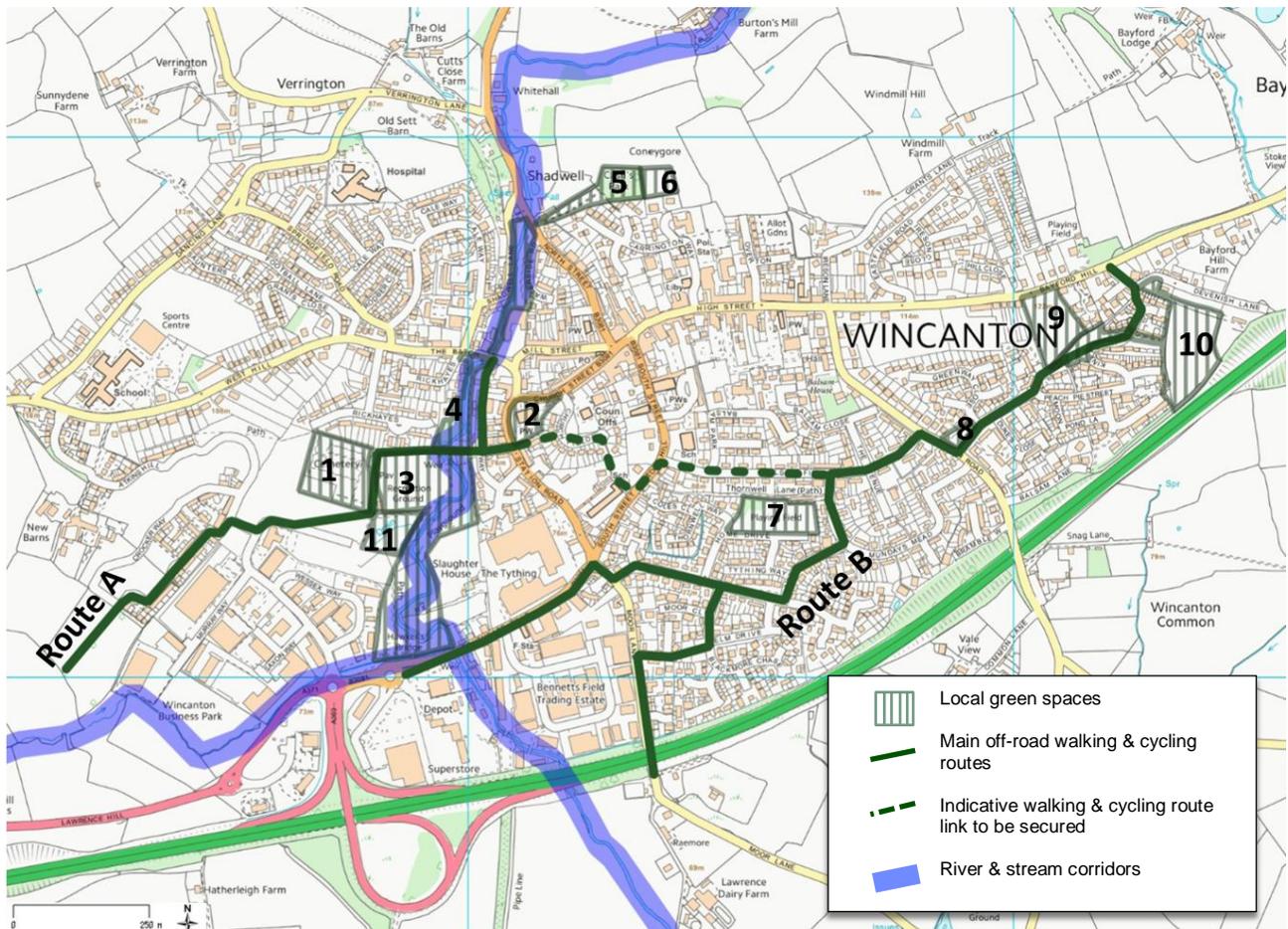
Green Space	Ref on map	Owned by	Reasons for inclusion
Cemetery	1	Wincanton Town Council	Burial ground of cultural and historic importance
Churchyard	2	PCC/Diocese	Burial ground of cultural and historic importance
Cale Park (inc Recreation Ground)	3	Wincanton Town Council	Valued space for informal recreation & sport
Riverside walk	4	Land directly behind Travis Perkins in private ownership. Land at Waterside to be transferred to SSDC.	Valuable link/access, and used by many dog walkers. Cared for by CATCH (river improvement group). Beautiful area.
Cash's Park	5	Wincanton Town Council	Provides a valuable peaceful walking route with wide views. Used for informal recreation.
Coneygore & Wrixon's View	6	Wincanton Town Council	Provides a valuable peaceful walking route with wide views. Used for informal recreation.
Home Drive Playing Field	7	SCC	Currently used by pre-school. Recreational value.
Corner of Common Road & Deanesley Way	8	SSDC	Used as an informal play area. Affords good green space and views to east.
Charity Field off Bayford Hill	9	Wincanton United Charities	Important landscape contribution. Mature trees contribute to townscape.

Eastern areas (Play area & field to east of Morpork St & area north of Kinklebury St.)	10	Currently owned by Taylor Wimpey but due to be transferred to Trinity Estates.	Play area & informal open space, created as part of 08/02183/FUL. Included in the developments Open Space & Landscape Management Plan, this well-used area allows 'wild play' and is a wildlife habitat. It may be under threat from future development.
New Barns attenuation pond area	11	Abbey Manor Group	Informal open space and wildlife habitat.

The Local Plan expects all new development to be designed to maximise the potential for sustainable transport through securing inclusive, safe and convenient access on foot, cycle, and by public and private transport that addresses the needs of all.

The Wincanton Transport Plan section on Cycling acknowledges the town is difficult for cyclists; "The combination of narrow, busy roads and steep gradients make it difficult to get around the town safely." However with a growing town the opportunity exists to make cycling and walking safer and more convenient. The health benefits of active travel cannot be ignored.

Fig 5. Green space network, river & stream corridors and improved walking & cycling routes



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From reviewing the Transport Plan and by walking and cycling potential routes, we have identified two key routes that link to the town centre and/or the health centre, and in line with the Local Plan policy expect that new development will link to these. This will strengthen these convenient walking and cycling links and encourage more active travel.

The northern route (Route A in Fig 7) utilises the existing cycle path from the Recreation Ground to near the Health Centre, and the quiet access road across the Recreation Ground. This could be extended to the west by a cycle lane or dedicated path, linking to any new developments to the south west. It would link to the one way system to the east.

The southern route (Route B) provides a cross-town route that avoids the steep and busy town centre and links to the Health Centre via Cale Park. It utilises relatively quiet residential streets and could be achieved mainly with signage, though some minor junction improvements may be required. It also provides a link to Moor Lane's Sports Ground and any future development south of the A303, and avoids the one-way system.

Improving these routes will be delivered by a mix of signage, minor junction adjustments where needed to improve safety for cyclists, on-carriageway cycle lane marking, promotion of the new routes and, only where required, constructing new cycle paths. Funding for these elements will come from CIL and s106 agreements. It is expected that any new housing developments will provide suitable on-site paths to link to the nearest of these routes.

Policy 14. Local Green Spaces

Local Green Space designations (as shown on the Proposals Map) have been made to protect those spaces that are of particular local importance and used by the community. Development on these sites must not detract from their green or open character or their reason for designation.

Policy 15. Key Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

The network of existing pedestrian and cycle routes through the town will be protected, in particular the key off-road walking and cycling routes (as indicated on the Proposals Map). Where development allows, opportunities should be taken to connect to and improve the existing network, to make it safe and attractive to use, and to secure the potential link (as indicated on the Proposals Map)

10. Monitoring and Review of the Plan

The Wincanton Neighbourhood Development Plan will run concurrently with the South Somerset Local Plan and apply until the 31st March 2028. It is, however, a response to the needs and aspirations of the local community as understood today and it is recognised that current challenges and concerns are likely to change over the plan period. It is, therefore, essential for the long term success of the Plan that developments in the Plan area are monitored and reviewed against the Plan's Objectives and Policies.

Wincanton Town Council, as the Neighbourhood Plan authority, will be responsible for maintaining and periodically revisiting the Plan to ensure relevance and to monitor delivery.

It is expected that South Somerset District Council will continue to monitor progress relating to the number of dwellings and number of affordable homes delivered during the Plan period, as part of the wider monitoring responsibilities for the District.

An overarching review of the issues and concerns within the community will take place every 5 years. If this and/or the annual monitoring work shows that the Neighbourhood Plan is no longer fit for purpose, then work will start on altering part or producing a new Plan. Otherwise it is envisaged that the Plan will be replaced by a new one in 2028.

