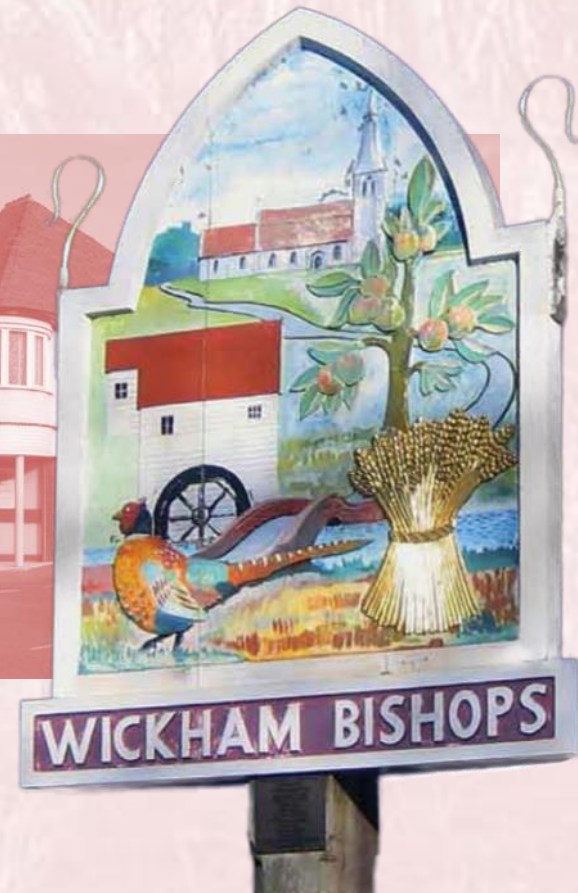


# Wickham Bishops

Neighbourhood Plan 2016–2029



Regulation 14 Consultation Draft

*Wickham Bishops*

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. There are communities all over the UK that have successfully developed a Neighbourhood Development Plan as a tool to influence planning decisions in their area.

“Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.” (Gov.uk definition)

The Plan must meet a number of Basic Conditions and other statutory requirements set out in Paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). A Basic Conditions Statement accompanies this Plan outlining how it meets these requirements.

The basic conditions that the Plan must meet are that it:

- has regard to National Policies and Guidance

- contributes to the achievement of sustainable development

- is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the Maldon District

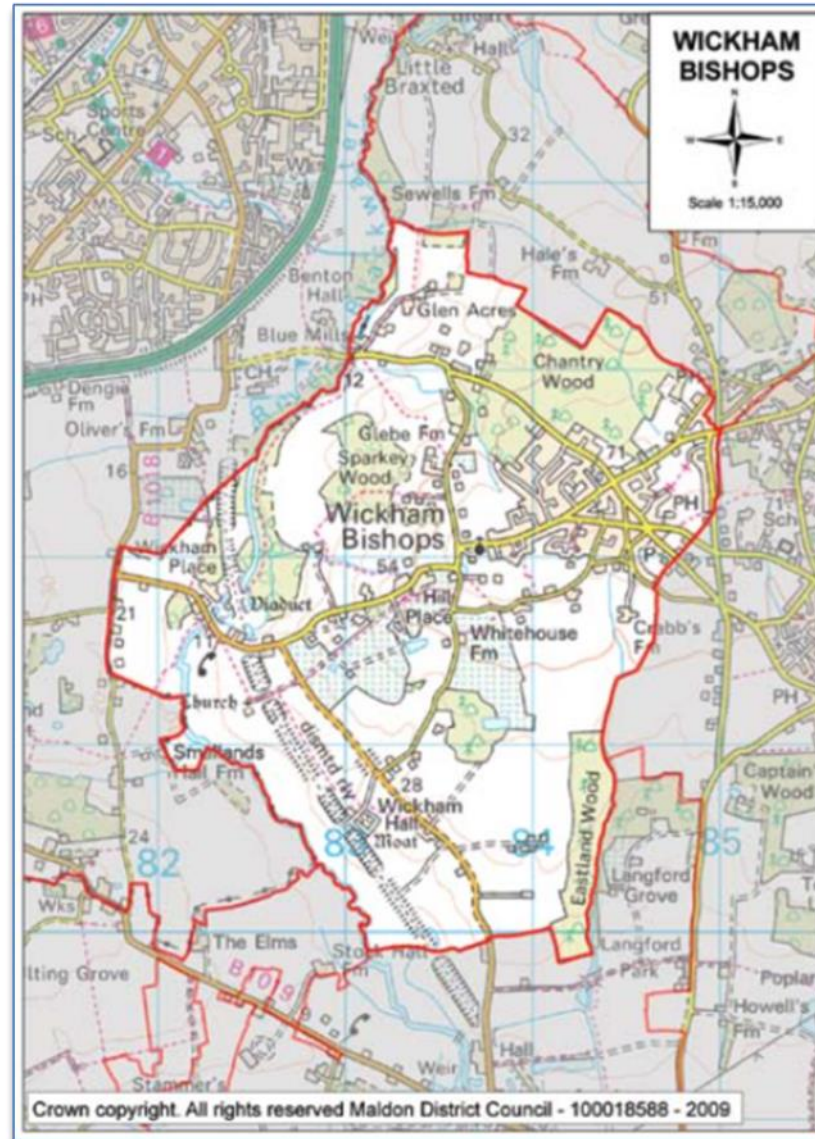
- does not breach and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations

- is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

Once adopted the Plan will be a statutory document which forms part of the Maldon District Development Plan for the Parish. It will be used alongside National Policy and Maldon’s Local Development Plan to determine planning applications in the Parish.

Wickham Bishops Parish Council applied for the Neighbourhood Area designation. The Wickham Bishops Neighbourhood Area includes the entire area of the parish of Wickham Bishops (see Map 1). Following changes in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations on 1 October 2016, consultation on the Wickham Bishops Neighbourhood Area (NA) application was not required, as the NA was proposed by the Parish Council and the NA covers the whole of the parish area.

The area for Wickham Bishops Neighbourhood Plan was designated in November 2016. The Neighbourhood Plan can set out land use policies, which seek to address local issues. It can identify sites for development, including for community led housing and rural exception sites, the scale of development and local impact of the development. Because the Plans are prepared by local people, it is not development allocated by the Council or imposed through speculative development. Maldon District Council is encouraging Neighbourhood Planning as a key method of engaging local people in the Plan making process and giving them a real say in shaping their own areas. In considering subsequent planning applications, the Neighbourhood Plan is given considerable weight, by both the Council and the Planning Inspectorate.



Map 1: The designated Neighbourhood Plan area: The Parish

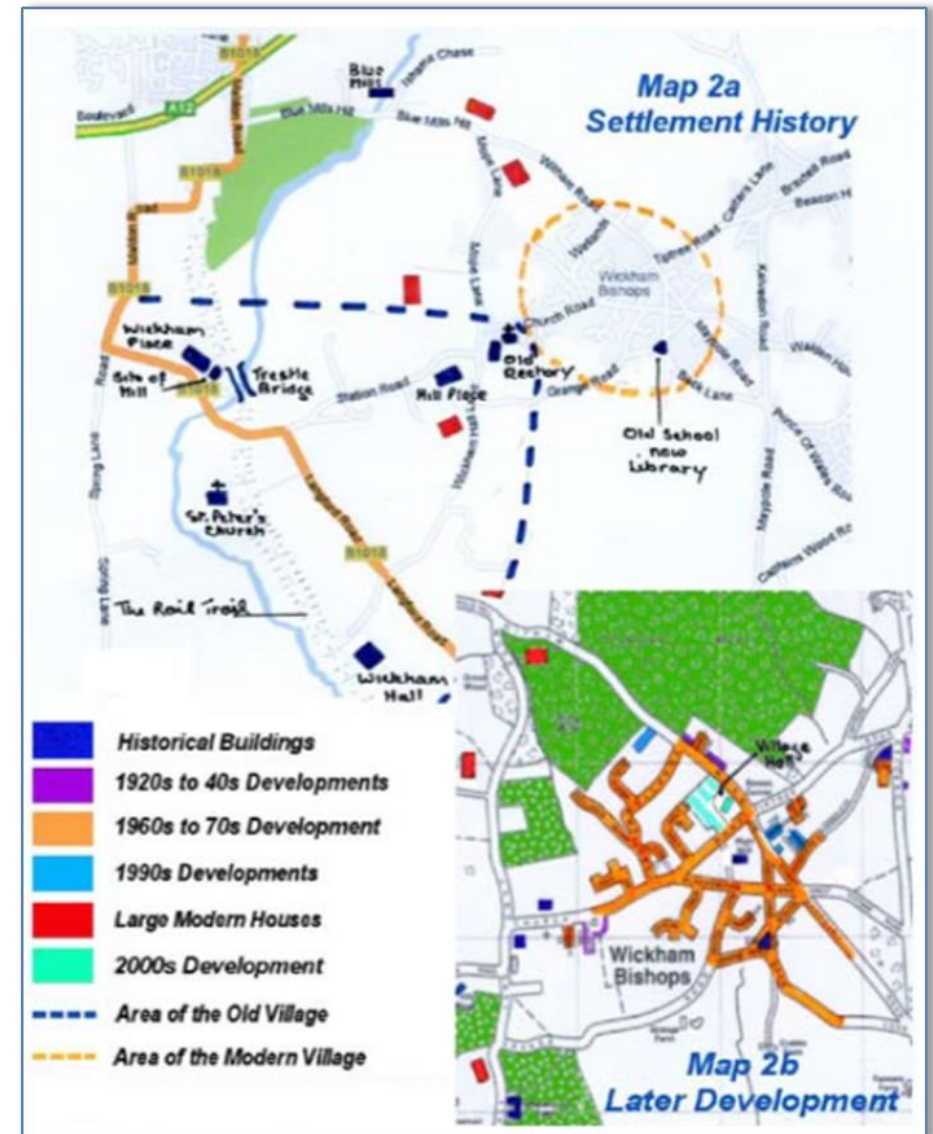
## 1 Introduction

### 1.2 Wickham Bishops

There is little evidence about our village from Saxon times until around the Norman Conquest. The first mention comes from William the Conqueror's Domesday Book of 1086 as one of 24 manors belonging to the Bishop of London. The original parish church, St Peter's, dates from the late 11thC. It was poorly constructed and over the years was continually repaired, so in 1850 our present St. Bartholomew's Church was built as was the Village School. A railway branch line was opened in 1848 between Braintree and Maldon, which was finally closed in 1966<sup>1</sup>.

The first public building in the village was the Church Room, built around 1912. By 1995 it had become too small and was demolished. The new Church Hall Extension is now the focus for many church and village events. The War Memorial is Grade II listed. It commemorates the 17 fallen in WW1, was built in 1919 and was updated after WW2 to include 3 more fallen. Our first Village Hall, surrounded by playing fields, was built by volunteer labour and opened in 1929. The Beacon Hill Sports Association (BHSA) was formed in 1945 to administer the Village Hall and its grounds.<sup>1</sup>

The present day Parish Boundary as recorded by Maldon District Council in 2009 is defined in Map 1. The Parish Boundary recorded in Map 1 is consistent with the boundary recorded in (for example) the Maldon District Rural Facilities Survey of February 2011 and the designation of the Wickham Bishops Neighbourhood Area as advised to the Parish Council in November 2016. The boundary and total area of the Parish are considered stable<sup>2,3</sup>. The Wickham Bishops Village Design Statement of 2010 states that the total area of the parish is approximately 762 hectares.



Map 2 History of development in the Parish



The western boundary roughly follows the Blackwater River. East of the river the land rises quite steeply to a height of 77m, where the main part of the village is situated. The local road network links Witham, which is 2.5 miles NW of the village, to Maldon which is 3 miles to the SE.

The Maldon District Rural Facilities Survey of 2011 states that the measured population within the Parish was 1,773 in 2001, and that it was projected to grow to 2,348 by the year 2033.<sup>4,5</sup> The residential area of the village is fairly densely developed as result of infill expansion in the 1960/70's, thereby affording relatively few open areas in the centre of population. The areas involved in the infill expansion of the 1960/70's are indicated in Map 2. The infill expansion is shown in context with both earlier development from the 1920's and later development to about 2010.

The infill expansion was facilitated by the introduction of mains sewerage in 1963. The planning during this expansion was well considered. Several new roads were built. They are wide and the houses are well set back with decent sized plots featuring an open plan front garden giving a pleasant, spacious feel. The house designs are varied in each road and different in each area, avoiding the appearance of a large housing estate.

The infill expansion which took place is a key driver for local opinion that future housing development in this area should not further increase the existing density<sup>1,6</sup>. Table 3 (p26) showing existing low housing densities illustrates how the Arcadian character and maintenance of the open, rural character of the village has been created and maintained.

Since 2010 the most significant development in terms of number of dwellings has been the site off Tiptree Road, near Snow's Corner. This site comprised (a) 15 offered on the open market including four reserved for local people for a fixed period, and (b) 12 built by the English Rural Housing Association offered on an affordable rent, shared ownership or discounted sale basis. The Parish Council proactively engaged with the landowner to progress the site's development to provide housing to meet the needs of the local community.

The boundary of Wickham Bishops for the purpose of planning additional dwellings has been established by the Maldon District Local Development Plan (LDP). The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is one of several technical reports and background documents that underpin the LDP (approved July 2017) . The SHLAA identifies sites for 256 potential dwellings within the parish of Wickham Bishops but all of these are considered to be 'subject to policy.' In order for these sites to come forward for development there would need to be a change in development plan policy through either the Maldon District Local Development Plan or the Wickham Bishops Neighbourhood Plan<sup>7,8,9</sup>.

The population of Wickham Bishops is largely stable, with 39% of residents responding to the Residents' Survey (2018) being resident for 25 or more years and 47% of the respondents being 65+ years of age. The gender profile of respondents was 44% male: 56% female. 94% of respondents want to retain the open countryside bordering the village to prevent merging with other settlements. The features which residents value highly and wish to retain within their parish include: Village feel and community spirit, Open green spaces and wooded areas, Size of village (no more housing developments / restrict new housing developments), Village amenities such as pub, post office, village hall, playing fields and shop, Village services such as bus, doctors and primary school, Not having street lights, Maintenance of footpaths through village and countryside.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.3 Community Engagement

In 2010 the Wickham Bishops Village Design Statement (VDS) was published which had involved over 300 people, who attended meetings, a Photo Fun Day, exhibitions and filled in the questionnaire for the VDS. This was adopted by Maldon District Council and assessed the character of the parish to influence the design of new development locally.

A Parish Plan (2011) was produced following the VDS that explored social, economic and environmental issues and assessed current and future potential issues in an area and set out a plan of action for the Parish. This engaged people further from the VDS and included an additional 80+ people who attended Open Gardens and the Village Fete events.

The Neighbourhood Plan production commenced in 2016. It differs from the VDS and Parish Plan as it gives the opportunity for the Parish to play a greater role in determining the future of their area. A neighbourhood plan can include policies on the development and use of land in a parish or neighbourhood area.

The Neighbourhood Plan took the engagement work from the VDS and Parish Plan and involved the residents further. Residents overwhelmingly (97% of respondents) want to retain the local rural character, historic setting and natural assets of the surrounding area. Some of the features which residents would like to see develop include improved infrastructure such as better access to medical services, improved broadband and mobile phone coverage, safer roads and pedestrian access throughout the parish.

The various means by which residents were involved or consulted include:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Articles in the Village Magazine   | village   |
| Parish Council Website   | Residents Survey (February 2018)  |
| Parish Council Facebook Page   | Business Survey (March 2018)  |
| Vision and Objectives Consultation (July 2016)                               | Village Hall usage survey (September 2017)  |
| Housing Needs Survey (February 2017)   | Estate agent information (January 2018)   |
| Displays at village events – Church and Village fetes, Christmas Fayre       | Housing Densities data (September 2017)   |
| Library display with comments board  | Pre-regulation 14 consultation draft review by Maldon and consultant (started May 2018) |
| Drawings from Beavers and Guides of what children would like to see in their | Share draft Plan with residents (started June 2018)                                     |





## 2 Vision and Objectives

### 2.1 Vision

In 2029 Wickham Bishops will continue to have a distinctive rural tree-filled feel, centred on the church, sporting facilities, the village hall and the local retail area, with improved access to open green spaces. Sustainable development consistent with the design and character of the village will have occurred ensuring the provision of a suitable housing mix, local businesses, community facilities, communications and transport provision to meet the needs of the parish.

### 2.2 Objectives

The village continues as a distinctive settlement that does not further coalesce with surrounding areas with enhanced access to open / green spaces and a diversity of sustainable linked habitats for wildlife.



**Photo 1: Village sign at Snows Corner**

There is better connectivity with improved mobile phone signal, broadband and transport infrastructure including a network of linked public footpaths, bridleways, cycle paths and access to public transport providing pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders with opportunities for safe movement within the parish.

There is sustainable development of high quality design that is in character with the local area, and of an appropriate mix and type to meet local current and future needs.

To retain and improve the village's existing high standard of sports and community facilities, including a cricket pitch, football field, tennis courts, village hall, library and children's playground.

To encourage business growth and tourism of an appropriate scale and form to suit the character and size of the village; providing sustainable opportunities for local businesses including home workers.

*Wickham Bishops*

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### 3 Policies

#### Economy

- WBEc 01 HOME WORKING
- WBEc 02 BUSINESS AND RETAIL

#### Environment

- WBEh 01 RECREATIONAL DISTURBANCE AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION
- WBEh 02 TREES, HEDGEROWS AND HABITATS
- WBEh 03 GREEN CORRIDORS AND WILDLIFE SPACES
- WBEh 04 SPECIAL VIEWS
- WBEh 05 OPEN SPACES
- WBEh 06 LOCAL GREEN SPACES

#### Facilities

- WBF 01 PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE CONNECTIVITY
- WBF 02 COMMUNITY FACILITIES
- WBF 03 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

#### Housing

- WBH 01 DESIGN AND CHARACTER
- WBH 02 HOUSING MIX
- WBH 03 HERITAGE

## 3. Policies

### 3.1 Economy

The Neighbourhood Plan is for all those who live, work and do business in the Parish. The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies about:

- Home working.
- Encouraging business growth.

Currently, 35% of residents employed in the most senior and highly skilled occupations (officially classified as ‘managers, directors and senior officials’) commute out of the District to work<sup>10</sup>. Wickham Bishops has a high level of people in managerial posts and longer than average commuter distances<sup>11</sup>. Commuters in the Parish often work from home as part of their employment. 8.1% of the population work from home, higher than the national average of 3.5%<sup>2</sup>. There are several small local businesses based at residents’ homes within the Parish. The Parish has a higher than average percentage of self employed people (13.2% self employed compared to English average of 9.8%<sup>2</sup>).



Photo 2: Snows Corner Businesses

The Residents’ Survey (2018) showed support for home working as it reduces the need for transport to work, car journeys at peak times and supports local residents in being present within the community during the working week which promotes use of local facilities. 77% of respondents were in favour of the provision for a home office to be accommodated.

#### WBEC 01 HOME WORKING

Planning permission for development that enables home working will be granted if the development is in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings and the Wickham Bishops Village Design Statement and protects the amenity of the surrounding area.

Any new or redesigned dwellings should include provision to enable home working to be accommodated.

Appropriate infrastructure for improved broadband connectivity and mobile phone signal is supported.

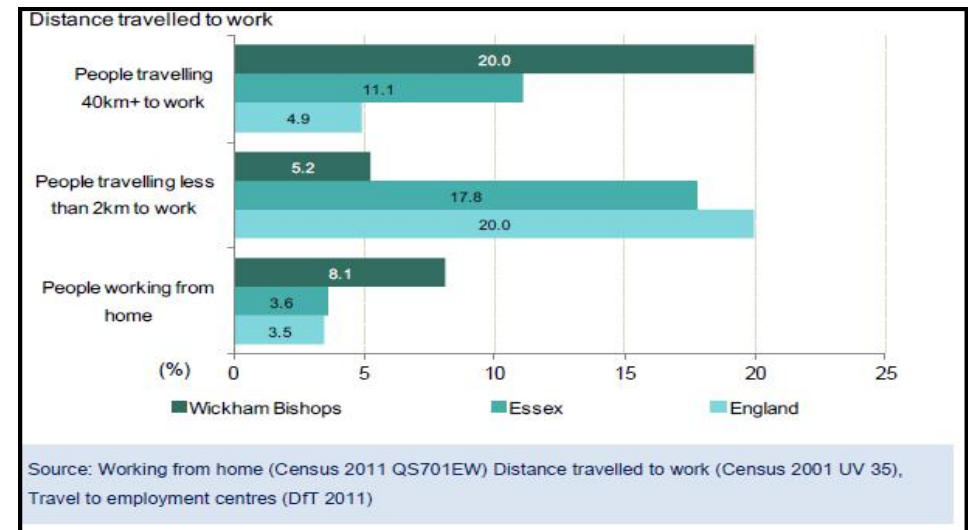


Table 1: Distance travelled to work



76% of respondents use the One Stop at least once a week. Additional retail provision of benefit to residents was supported including: restaurant/take away, pharmacy, baker, butcher, tea room, community shop selling fresh products. 82% of respondents valued Snows Corner as a business area and 89% valued The Street as a business area. Provision of visitor information to the area should be provided e.g. through notice boards indicating local footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes. Residents also commented they would support a small hotel or guest house with a maximum of five guest rooms.

The Business Survey (2018) had a positive response from businesses with a full response from Snows Corner and The Street business areas. The main issues included: better internet and mobile coverage, parking spaces and a better road network. 80% felt having a number of other local businesses in the Parish was important to them.

The Maldon District has an excellent reputation for hospitality and there is a host of restaurants, inns, and cafes, together with a range of quality assured accommodation providers. The one pub in the Parish, The Chequers has recently been converted to a restaurant and bar. A former pub, The Mitre is now The Mulberry Tree and is due to reopen as a bar in addition to part conversion to a spa/beauty parlour.



Photo 3: Shops in village centre



Map 3: Snows Corner and The Street shopping and business areas

**WBEC 02 BUSINESS AND RETAIL**  
 The Snows Corner and The Street shopping and business areas will be maintained. Proposals resulting in loss of local retail provision, services or public house will be resisted unless an equivalent replacement facility is provided.  
 Provision of small scale overnight accommodation will be supported.  
 Business and retail development must provide appropriate parking.

### 3. Policies

#### 3.2 Environment

The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies about:

- Mandatory regulations and assessments regarding habitats, disturbance avoidance and mitigation

- Maintaining a distinctive, rural, tree-filled feel and character

- Enhanced access to open green spaces

- Protection of habitats for wildlife

- Better connectivity (for movement without use of motor vehicles) with enhanced public footpath, bridleway, cycle path networks

- Views that are valued and merit protection.

The Village Design Statement (2010) identified “an overwhelming wish amongst parishioners for greater access to the woods, fields and open spaces which geographically dominate the parish.” It highlighted the desire for “the formation of conservation areas to protect the remaining rural aspect of the village and its surrounding area” and “to encourage the retention and management of historic, or visually important, hedgerows in the parish.” The green, leafy streets and roads were of particular value to residents in both the 2010 survey and the 2018 NHP survey.



A Habitat Regulations Assessment has been completed for the Maldon District Local Development Plan. That assessment, together with the emerging Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) for the Essex Coast identify that the in-combination effects of the Plan, together with neighbouring local planning authorities Local Plans and neighbourhood plans are likely to adversely affect the integrity of European designated nature conservation sites ('European Sites').

In view of that, Maldon District Council is working with ten other Greater Essex local planning authorities, and Natural England, on a RAMS for the Essex Coast. RAMS is a strategic solution to protect the Essex coast from the recreational pressures of a growing population. A RAMS is usually driven by challenges and opportunities arising from planning issues. RAMS generally applies more broadly than at a single designated European site, provides strategic scale mitigation and enables the development of a generic approach to evidence collection and use.

Financial contributions will be sought for all residential development, which falls within the zones of influence, towards a package of measures to avoid and mitigate likely significant adverse effects in accordance with Maldon District Council policy N2 Natural Environment, Geodiversity and Biodiversity. This includes development allocated in Neighbourhood Plans within the District. Details of the zones of influence and the necessary measures will be included in the Essex Coast RAMS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

In the interim period, before the Essex Coast RAMS is completed, proposals within the zones of influence for recreational disturbance to European sites will need to carry out a project level Habitat Regulations Assessment and implement bespoke mitigation measures to ensure that in-combination recreational disturbance effects are avoided and/or mitigated.

#### **WBE n 01 RECREATIONAL DISTURBANCE AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION**

Where proportionate all residential development within the zones of influence of European Sites will be required to make a financial contribution towards mitigation measures, as detailed in the Essex Coast RAMS, to avoid adverse in-combination recreational disturbance effects on European Sites.

In the interim period, before the Essex Coast RAMS is completed, where proportionate all residential development within the zones of influence will need to deliver all measures identified (including strategic measures) through project level HRAs, or otherwise, to mitigate any recreational disturbance impacts in compliance with the Habitat Regulations and Habitats Directive.

## 3. Policies

### 3.2 Environment

The Residents' Survey (2018) showed overwhelming support (94-98%) for the maintenance of existing features important to wildlife as habitats. Around 70% of residents would like to see accessible wildlife and conservation areas, together with wildlife and habitat corridors developed and extended within the village. The Maldon District Local Development Plan protects ancient woodlands. Map 4 shows Protected Ancient Woodlands and Local Wildlife sites which were easily identified by local residents. Local Nature Reserves exist near the River Blackwater, and a very large proportion of the parish is identified as a living landscape by Essex Wildlife Trust (from Chantry Wood, across Sparkey Wood, through to Eastland Wood and Langford Grove). Residents identified hedgerows, native trees, grassland and woodland as important for wildlife and local people in overwhelming numbers, with 94-98% of respondents saying these are important. Tree protection orders were identified as important by 81% of respondents.

Species of animal identified within the parish, as seen regularly and commonly, in gardens, fields and woods by residents through the survey are reported as:

Fox, bat species, hare, rabbit, hedgehog, muntjac deer, frog/ toad, grey squirrels and pheasants, (more than 50% of residents). Sparrows, blue tits, great tits, coal tits, long-tailed tits, robins, blackbirds, thrushes, buzzards, feral pigeons, crows, magpies and jays are common birds. Commonly heard migrants include cuckoos.

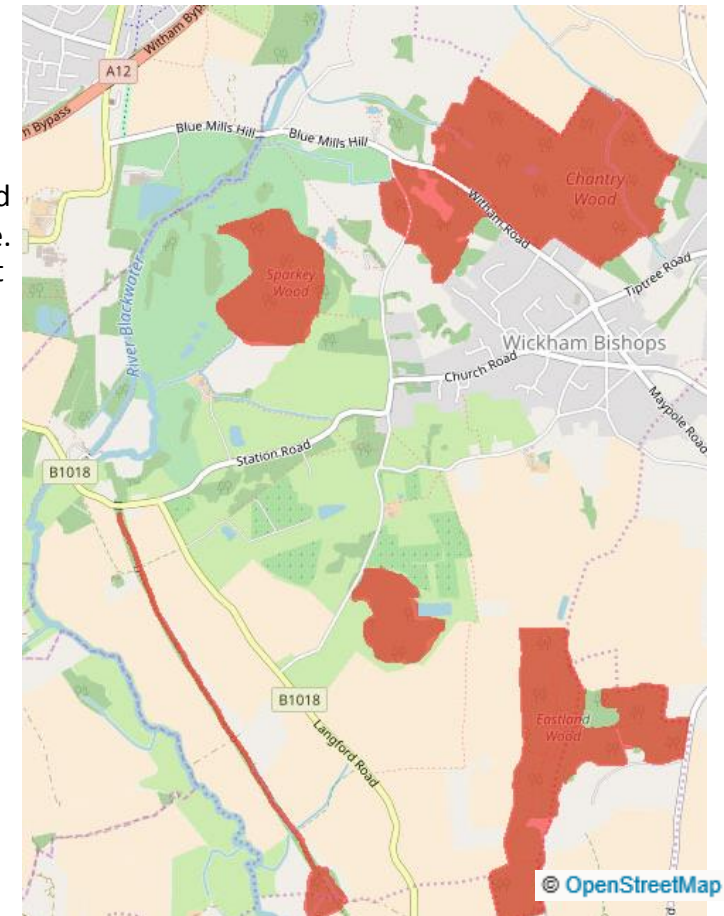
Badger, otter, newt, slow worm are less commonly seen (less than 50% of residents). Along with grass snakes, owls, herons, nightingales and birds of prey including kestrels and sparrowhawks. Stoats and weasels are seen occasionally. Woodpeckers (green and greater spotted), goldfinches, greenfinches, siskins, wrens and pied wagtails are less common visitors, along with fieldfares, swans, Canada and Greylag geese being seen flying over as migrants. Occasional sightings of common lizards, red kites and adders are also reported.

Species of tree identified within the parish by more than 50% of residents through the survey are reported as:

Ash, beech, birch, blackthorn, hazel, hawthorn, oak, rowan, willow and yew.

Hornbeam, Sycamore, Silver Birch, Holly, Hornbeam, Walnut, Buckthorn, Lime and Horse Chestnut were also identified in addition to those stated on the survey

Gardens contain a wide variety of trees and shrubs including fruit trees (apple, pear, plum), magnolia, and cherry trees.



Map 4: Ancient Woodlands and Local Wildlife Sites





Photo 4: Sparkey Wood

**WBen 02 TREES, HEDGEROWS AND HABITATS**

All development proposals should protect, retain and enhance existing trees, hedgerows and habitats which are important for their historic, visual or biodiversity value. If in exceptional circumstances there is loss of trees, hedgerows and habitats as part of development, then new provision is expected elsewhere on the site.

New development should:

- Be designed to retain trees or hedgerows of good arboricultural and amenity value
- Include additional planting of native species of trees and hedgerows to act as stepping stones for wildlife
- Enhance the Arcadian green nature of the Parish in accordance with the Wickham Bishops Village Design Statement (2010) and Maldon District Design Guide (2017)
- Seek to maintain and enhance green corridors wherever possible to improve ecological networks across the Parish.



Photo 5: Handleys Lane byway

**WBen 03 GREEN CORRIDORS AND WILDLIFE SPACES**

Ancient woodlands and Local wildlife sites as identified on the map must be retained and where possible joined through wildlife corridors and a network of footpaths and bridleways.

New development should include green corridors, footpaths and wildlife corridors which must be joined in a network across the Parish to maintain local habitats and wildlife and provide opportunities for safe movement by wildlife.

### 3. Policies

#### 3.2 Environment

73% identified special views worthy of protection including to St Bartholomew’s Church and the River Blackwater. The table below lists views which residents felt were particularly valuable and which residents wish to retain included:

| View  | Reasons for retention/value  |
|---|--|
| 1. Views from Handley’s Lane  | Tranquil pedestrian route through village is much used and appreciated by a large number of residents. Historic views across woodland and grassland. |
| 2. View West from end of Church Road  |  |
| 3. View from Kelvedon Road East to the Estuary  | Beauty of the estuary viewed from the highest point in the area allows far reaching vistas.  |
| 4. View to St Peter’s Church and Blackwater from Langford Road and Footpath 22            | Views of the tranquil space around St Peter’s and the flood meadows adjacent to the river.   |
| 5. View from Grange Road and Footpath 16, 17 to St Bartholomew’s and The Estuary          | Iconic spire of St Bartholomew’s is a defining part of the village landscape creating a sense of identity to the community.                          |
| 6. View from Mope Lane and Footpath 2 towards Sparkey Woods and Golf Course               |  |
| 7. View from Blue Mills Bridge and Footpath 1 towards Village and St Bartholomew’s Church | Treas and the spire of St Bartholomew’s are iconic and can be seen from miles around.  |

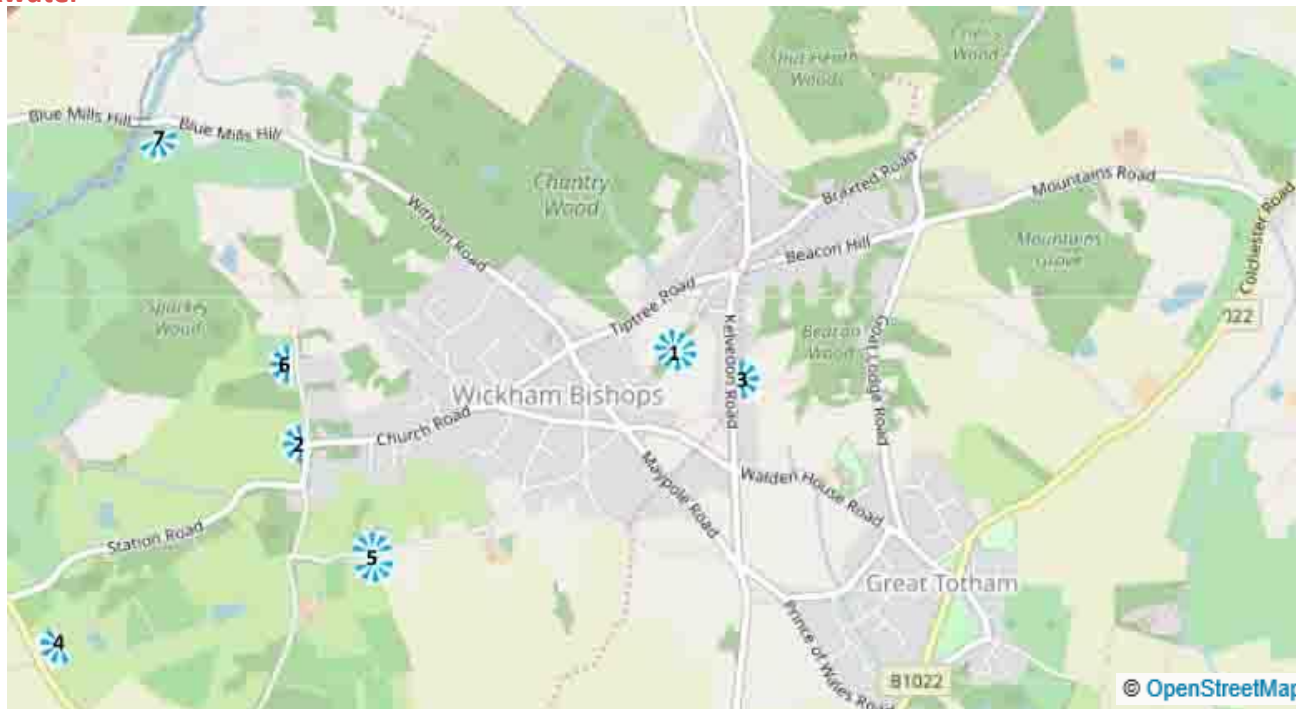
**Table 2: Special Views**



Photo 6: River Blackwater

#### WBen 04 SPECIAL VIEWS

Development should protect or enhance special views identified within the Parish shown on Map 5.



Map 5: Special Views

## 3. Policies

### 3.2 Environment

The Village Design Statement (2010) showed “overwhelming support for open spaces, greens and verges retaining their rural character.” It emphasised the importance of “the open agricultural land around the village, which in some areas extends between dwellings”.

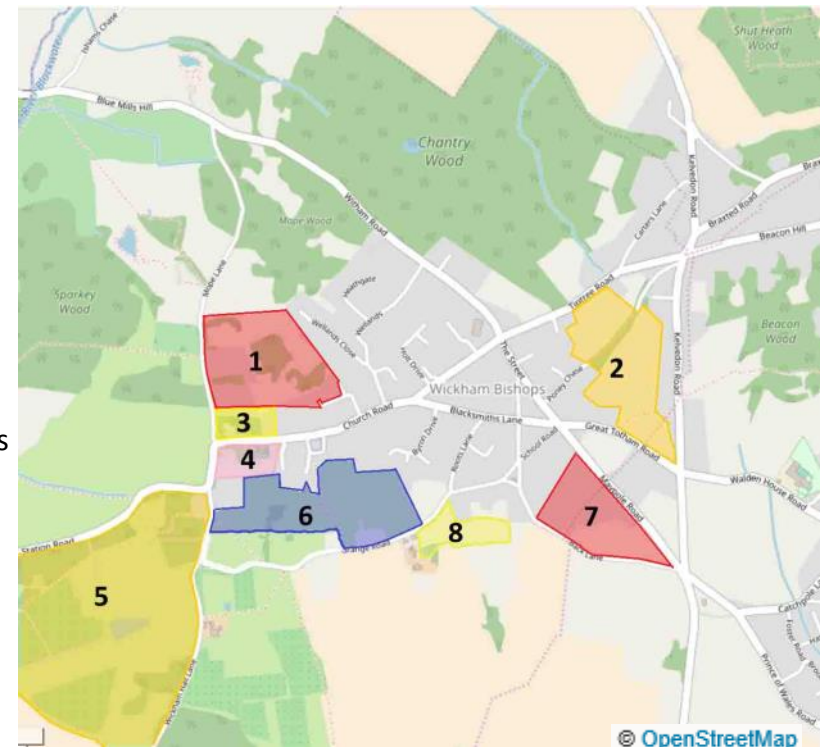
94% of respondents want to keep the open countryside bordering the Parish.

Over 80% of respondents to the survey felt all identified spaces were important with the most important area in the village being the land surrounding the church and churchyard – and cemetery (91%). Map 6 shows the identified open spaces.

Residents value very highly open and green spaces within this rural setting. 40-50% of residents would like to see a community garden, allotments and a village pond, as useable green spaces within the village.

Local green spaces were identified as valuable to maintain the green lungs of the village and its rural character; to maintain the rural feel of the village and to prevent the sense of overdevelopment and urbanisation which so many residents wish to resist. “The quiet, peaceful, friendly nature of the village, combined with its rural character, surrounded by beautiful countryside and green open spaces” was cited by many residents in the 2018 survey.

The open spaces adjacent to the bridleway on Handley’s Lane is seen as valuable as a calm relaxing haven within the centre of the village. The bridleway is a much-used pedestrian route through the village avoiding roads.



Map 6: Open Spaces



Photo 7: View of St Bartholomew’s Church

**WBen 05 OPEN SPACES**

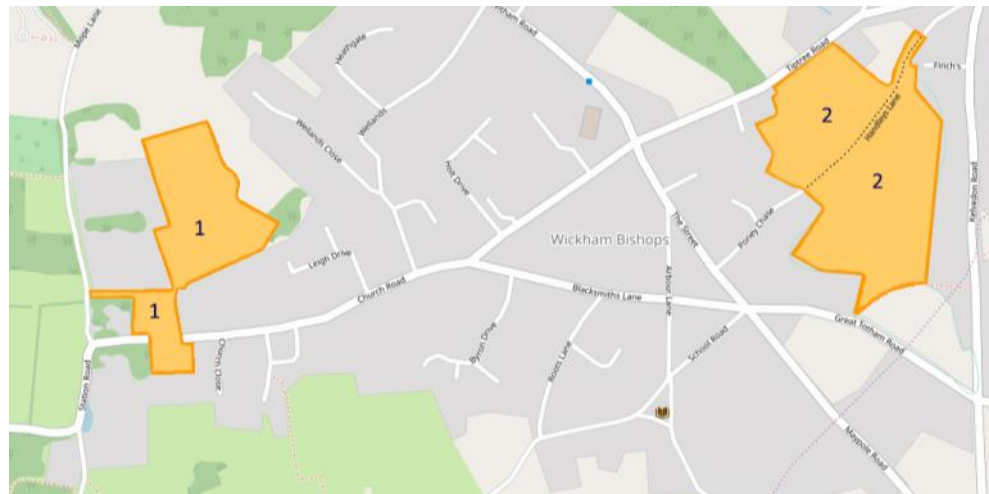
Development will be permitted which provides open spaces and community woodland, and connect these spaces with others in the village and that have defined areas for public access to such spaces. New development should retain and enhance open spaces to maintain the Arcadian and rural nature of the Parish. New development should not reduce the open countryside around the village if the effect is to merge the village with other settlements

**WBen 06 LOCAL GREEN SPACES**

Local Green Space designation will apply to areas identified in Map 7:

- Land including and behind Church Yard towards Mope Lane (Site 1)
- Land surrounding Handley’s Lane (Site 2)

Development proposals within this local green space that will harm the permanent open character of the land will only be supported in very exceptional circumstances.



Map 7: Local Green Spaces 21

## 3. Policies

### 3.3 Facilities

The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies about:

Transport infrastructure including public footpaths, bridleways, cycle paths and access to public transport. Retain and improve the village's existing high standard of sports and community facilities, including cricket pitch, football field, tennis courts, village hall, and children's playground.

The Parish Plan (2011) highlighted the need from both residents and businesses to have improved mobile signals and faster broadband. Mobile Phone signal is variable depending on the network with many areas having limited signal when inside<sup>12</sup>. A new mobile phone mast sited at Beacon Hill Sports Fields became operational in February 2018 and has improved signal for Vodafone and O2. Openreach have been installing High Speed Fibre broadband across the Parish which will improve connectivity for most residents.

The Parish Plan (2011) identified the need for improved pavements. Pedestrian counts by Essex Highways fall well below the threshold for any crossing points on The Street. There is a higher than average level of car ownership within the Parish<sup>11</sup>. The need for adequate off road parking for homes is evidenced in the Wickham Bishops Village Design Statement (2010). The Parish will have input into the reviewed Vehicle Parking Standards for the District. Future development should be linked to appropriate improvements in infrastructure to ensure sustainability of the Parish.

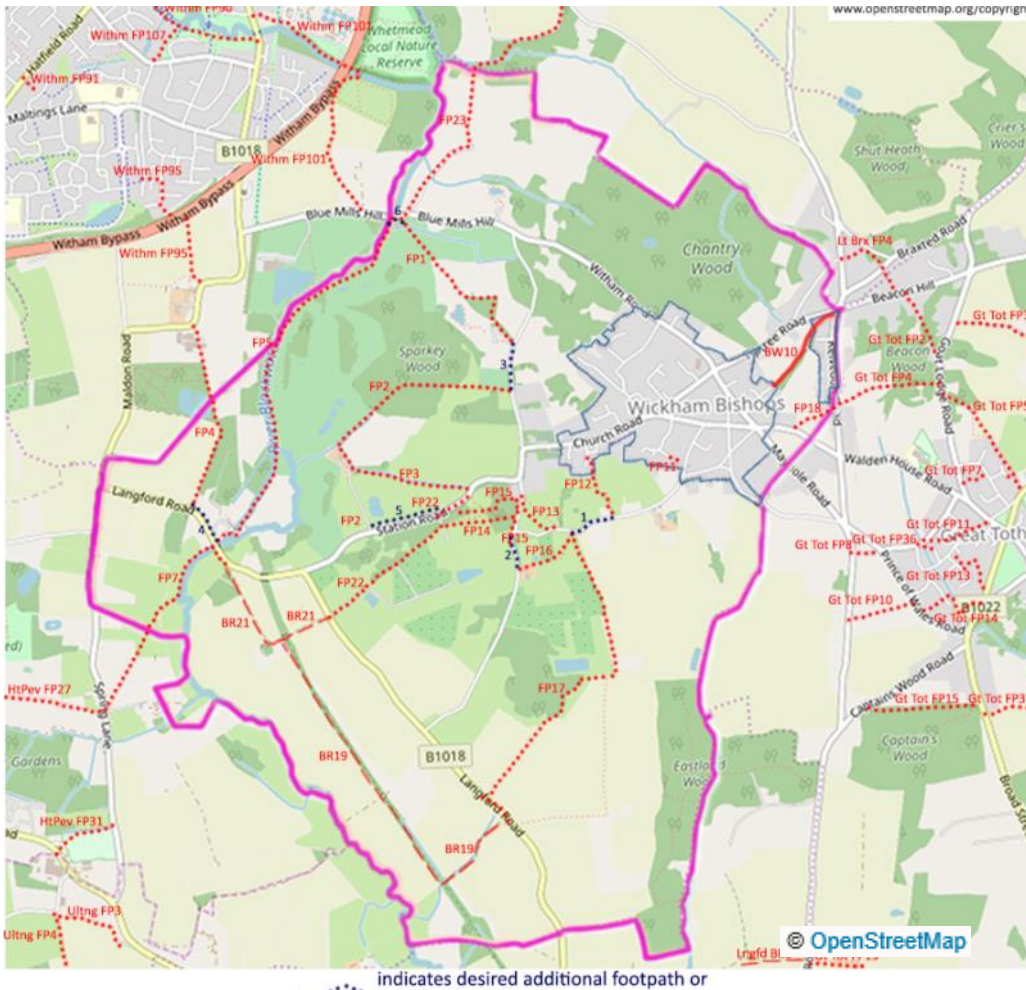
There are 20 well marked and maintained footpaths, permissive routes and bridleways in the Parish with a total length of approximately 12 kilometres which are held in high regard by the residents. Improving connectivity further with additional footpaths and pavements is seen as a way of alleviating some of the local traffic concerns. Traffic speed is perceived as high and better pedestrian access around the village would help make residents feel safer. 76% identified footpaths as important with many using on a daily basis. Footpaths signs should be numbered to ensure ease of access and relate to the 6 Walks of Wickham Bishops booklet. Over 60% of residents reported wanting an increase in the number of footpaths and the creation of a connected footpath network.



Photo 8: Local Footpath



Photo 9: Local Footpath



Map 8: Proposed Footpaths

Improving connectivity and creating a network of footpaths with additional footpaths and walkable verges will improve pedestrian safety and could alleviate some of the local traffic concerns. The footpaths are maintained by ECC supported by local residents through the Parish Paths Partnership (which the Parish Council has joined). The way markers will be numbered so that identification of specific footpaths is easy for users making the network more accessible. The Plan proposes provision of information boards showing a map of the numbered footpaths within the Parish, to be located at the Village Hall and Church. Public Rights of Way are important to the village and should be maintained and enhanced where possible. There are six walks identified in and around the parish of Wickham Bishops (Parish Council booklet November 2007). They are available in hard copies from the library or downloaded from the internet on the PC site. On these walks some of the most significant rural and heritage features, views and buildings can be seen.

**WBF 01 PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE CONNECTIVITY**

Development should deliver safe pedestrian and cycle connections as part of a comprehensive approach to movement that aims to encourage walking and cycling and reduce reliance on vehicles.

Improvements to the existing footpath network will be encouraged to ensure a safe walking option throughout the village by extending and linking footpaths as indicated on Map 8.

### 3. Policies

#### 3.3 Facilities

The village is well served with sports and community facilities and would like to see these retained.

The local library is valued by the residents. From October 2016—September 2017 the local library was open on average 13 days a month, and had on average 580 visitors counted each month with a total of 6959 visitors in that period. Along with book loans it provides internet access on two computers and offers a weekly session ‘Rhyme Time’ for babies and toddlers. It also hosts the Parish Council surgery monthly.<sup>13</sup>

Residents valued local assets in particular:

**Olio at The Chequers** – Grade 2 listed building. Italian restaurant and bar. Seen as a good meeting point / social centre. Important to have a pub in the village.

**The Mulberry Tree** – Grade 2 listed building. notable historic building. Mixed views over conversion to beauty room/spa – some people very happy building is being put to good use, others see no need for this type of business. The change of use to tea rooms was seen as a positive move.

**Library** – invaluable part of the community proving a service to all ages. Essential for the elderly, people that don’t drive and those with young children. Some people felt it wasn’t open often enough for it to be useful.

**St Bartholomew's Church** – The religious centre of the village and historical building. Church hall provides place for clubs. Seen again as heart of the village and provides an important point of focus for the community even from those who state they are not religious.

**St Peter's Church**— Grade 2\* Listed Redundant Consecrated Church used as a stained glass workshop. Landmark in a prominent position on Blackwater Rail Trail.

**The Air Raid Shelter** – very mixed views. Common responses - should be kept for historical purposes and it should be removed as it’s an eyesore. Many were not aware of its existence.

**Playing Fields** – good place for young and old to exercise, encourages the playing of sport and healthy lifestyle. Could be used for more community events.

The historic environment includes the trestle railway bridge which is listed as an historic monument and is the oldest wooden bridge of its type in England. The Churches of St. Bartholomew’s and St. Peter’s represent significant historic buildings within the parish. The air raid shelter and the War Memorial are seen as valuable to local residents in terms of more recent history and local contributions and sacrifices made in more recent conflicts. Over 85% of residents identified the War Memorial and St. Bartholomew’s as important heritage and community assets. The Parish Council are pursuing listing the Library and The Air Raid Shelter as Assets of Community Value.

54% of residents use the village hall at least once per month and 52% use the library at least once per month. 29% of young people engage with scouts, guides, brownies and beavers groups at least monthly, while sports facilities are used by residents of all ages (53%) at least monthly and 26% of residents visit St Bartholomew’s Church at least monthly.





Photo 10: Library

**WBF 02 COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Proposals that would result in the loss of community facilities will not be supported unless:  
Suitable alternate provision exists in the immediate area to serve the community or  
Suitable alternative provision is included in the development proposal itself

The Chequers, The Mulberry Tree, playing fields and St Bartholomew’s Church are important to the local community. The Library and the Air Raid shelter are to be listed as Assets of Community Value.

Subject to meeting all other policy requirements development proposals will be supported which:  
Enhance the community use of these facilities  
Help secure their viability



Photo 11: Village Hall

**WBF 03 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS**

Any proposed new development within the Plan Area must demonstrate how it can contribute towards the delivery of community development including:

- wildlife and habitat corridors
- accessible wildlife conservation areas
- increased footpath provision
- village pond
- community garden
- allotments

This may be via a Section 106 Agreement or through payment of any future CIL or payment contribution method where appropriate.

### 3. Policies

#### 3.4 Housing

The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies about:

- Sustainable development of high quality design that is in character with the local area as defined by the Wickham Bishops Village Design Statement (2010).

- An appropriate mix and type of homes to meet local needs as evidenced by the Housing Needs Survey (Nov 2016).

Wickham Bishops is described by the Maldon District Design Guide (2017) as Arcadian, which is defined as a “dispersed pattern and without a core street or green at their heart. Buildings are within a picturesque or pastoral ideal and in harmony with nature.”

Between January 2014 and March 2018 there were 204 Planning Applications of which, situated outside the development boundary: 96, of which 60 approved (63%). 47% of all applications are outside the boundary, and 29% of all approved development is happening outside the boundary (extensions, new builds, replacement dwellings etc.). MDC and WBPC agreed on planning applications, 162 applications, approx. 80%. 18 were approved by MDC despite objections from the Parish Council, around 9%. There was better agreement on applications outside the boundary, with MDC and WBPC coming to same conclusions on 83% of the applications.

The Residents’ Survey (2017) asked for views on new developments and how they should fit in with the way the village is currently laid out. Most responses to specific questions about the local rural character, open plan frontages and local distinctiveness provided a response rate in excess of 90% in favour of maintaining those existing characteristics. Free text comments made clear the lack of support for any further development with some respondents referring to the recent development at Snows Corner as being sufficient for the village’s needs. Comments were made that any large scale development would impact adversely on the character of the village and that any development should be by way of infill without expanding the development boundary. Small scale development of less than 5 properties per site would have less of an impact. Whilst the Survey did not specifically ask for suggestions as to where new developments within the village could be sited, no respondent who completed this section identified any specific site; most comments indicated that no further development was needed. One respondent suggested, however, that the development boundary should be extended to allow for lower density housing but did not suggest where.

| Area                      | Hectares | No Houses | Density |
|---------------------------|----------|-----------|---------|
| Byron Drive               | 3.0      | 45        | 15.0    |
| Holt Drive                | 1.8      | 32        | 17.8    |
| Leigh Drive               | 1.7      | 28        | 16.5    |
| Heathgate                 | 2.2      | 21        | 9.5     |
| Wellands Close            | 3.1      | 32        | 10.3    |
| Church Green              | 2.0      | 24        | 12.0    |
| School Road               | 1.2      | 14        | 11.6    |
| Maypole Road (West side)  | 1.9      | 8         | 4.2     |
| Malone Field              | 1.47     | 14        | 9.5     |
| Snows Corner              | 2.06     | 27        | 13.1    |
| Kelvedon Road             | 3.0      | 56        | 18.8    |
| Arbour Lane (part)        | 0.8      | 11        | 13.75   |
| The Street (central part) | 0.8      | 18        | 22.5    |

Table 3: Housing Densities

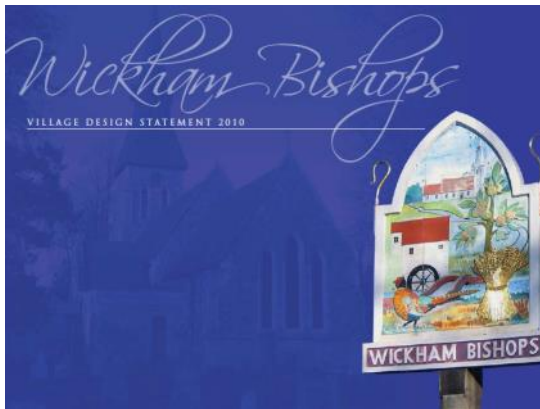


Photo 11: Village Design Statement



Photo 12: HRH The Princess Royal at official opening of Mackmurdo Place

### WBH 01 DESIGN AND CHARACTER

Development will be permitted provided it adheres to the design principles laid out by the Wickham Bishops Village Design Statement (2010) and the Maldon District Design Guide (2017).

Development must:

Respect the local character, historic setting and natural assets of the surrounding area

Reinforce local distinctiveness and create a strong sense of place through design and materials

Retain open plan frontages and/or original hedging where this already exists

Avoid large areas of uniform hard-standing in front of houses

Use materials on driveways and hard standings which minimise problems of surface water run-off

Where new walls are built, be sympathetic to the surrounding area in their size, height, character, materials and design

Where practicable and viable, to incorporate features that improve its environmental performance thereby reducing carbon emissions. These can include both energy efficiency measures and green energy generation

Not include three-storey town houses which are out of character in a village

Be **small in scale** and with a density lower than 10 per hectare

Not include street lighting in order to maintain the village character and protect our dark skies.

Not include external lighting on development to reduce impact on dark skies.

### 3. Policies

The Survey sought comments which might aid future planning. Responses indicated a continuing concern about the volume of traffic through the village with particular reference to the major developments in the nearby town of Maldon which will inevitably increase traffic through the village to Witham with its mainline railway station and access to the A12. There was comment on the lack of infrastructure generally to support any significant increase in housing, for example the oversubscribed local primary school in the adjoining village of Gt Totham and the pressures on the local GP surgery.

The Housing Needs Survey (2016) received a 37% response rate and showed the need for an additional 42 homes in the Parish over a five year period. Table 4 sets out the recommended tenure for the additional homes. The response was above the county average of 25%, which suggests that housing needs are an important issue to many residents. There is a higher than average ageing population within the Parish, with pensioners making up 32.9% of the population<sup>11</sup>. Specific needs identified 57% of people looking to move required a bungalow<sup>6</sup>. Across Maldon District there is a particular need for homes suitable for elderly people. Housing for elderly people has evolved, and the old style sheltered housing schemes are gradually being re-structured or replaced. Approximately 25% of the existing housing stock is bungalows<sup>5</sup>.

House prices within the parish are high with 73.6% of properties being detached<sup>11</sup>. There is preference for development to be of smaller open market houses.<sup>6</sup> Church and Hawes estate agents reported that the majority of sales in Wickham Bishops during 2016 were detached properties, selling price of £749,429. Semi-detached properties sold for an average of £330,000, with terraced properties fetching £410,000. Wickham Bishops, with an overall average price of £641,893 was more expensive than nearby Great Totham (£394,855), Witham (£257,061) and Hatfield Peverel (£387,132). Overall sold prices in Wickham Bishops over the last year were 8% up on the previous year and similar to the 2011 level of £638,364.

Residents were strongly (92% of responses) in favour of the need for housing that would suit older persons by way of provision of bungalows or other suitable housing types incorporating Building for Life 12 standards. Any new development should also be informed by Building for Life 12 standards to enable people to stay in their homes for life (86% of responses in favour). New development should provide a mix of housing types including smaller, two bedroom and starter homes (84% of responses in support) and should be small in scale with a density lower than

| Type                       | Number    |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Open Market                | 29        |
| Sheltered Housing          | 2         |
| Housing Association rental | 7         |
| Shared Ownership           | 2         |
| Self Build / Annexe        | 2         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>42</b> |

**Table 4: Recommended tenure of additional dwellings<sup>14</sup>**



Photo 14: Arbour Lane

### **WBH 02 HOUSING MIX**

New housing development must:

- Address the local need for older persons' housing allowing people to stay in their homes throughout their lifetime. This can occur through the provision of bungalows or other suitable housing types incorporating Building for Life 12 standards
- Reflect the existing housing mix of approximately 25% bungalows.



Photo 15: Historic Trestle Bridge

### **WBH 03 HERITAGE**

New development must preserve and enhance the historic assets and their surroundings and settings.

- The character and heritage of the plan area should be maintained and enhanced wherever possible. Particular protection must be given to listed buildings and locally identified historic assets.
- Any changes to locally identified historic assets including the Trestle Bridge and St Peter's Church must not detract from their significance.

## 4. Acknowledgements

The development of this Neighbourhood Plan is the result of considerable effort by a great many people: individuals, groups, local businesses and organisations. Our grateful thanks go to everyone who contributed along the way. It was very clear that there is a strong feeling of community spirit in the village, judging by the high number of responses to questionnaires and input from villagers.

In particular, we thank the following:

Residents who completed the Housing Needs Survey

Residents who completed the Residents' Survey about the village, many of whom must have wondered how many more surveys they would be asked to complete

Local businesses who completed the Business Survey

Residents who took the trouble to give us their views at our stands at various functions and gatherings over the past two years.

Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan was initiated by the Parish Council and the steering group has parish councillors and the parish clerk as members, it has been a community group, not a sub-group of the Parish Council. Nevertheless, we are grateful for the support the Parish Council has given us.

We are grateful to those involved in the following events and organisations who allowed us to set up stalls, stands and displays to publicise and seek community involvement and who provided information on activities, clubs and so on for inclusion in the Plan:

Parish Christmas Fete; Summer Fete; Church Fete; Beavers and Guides; Gt Totham County Primary School; Library – where the Plan display board has been available for residents to view; Beacon Hill Sports Association.

We could not have established the views of the village without the assistance in analysing the Housing Needs Survey of the Rural Community Council of Essex and our thanks go to them.

The Residents' and Business Surveys information was designed and collated by Stella Scrivener and Jane Williams – many thanks to them.

Leonie Alpin of Maldon District Council provided helpful advice both at the outset and during the process and we are grateful to her for that advice and for providing her observations on our draft Plan.

We have drawn on earlier work set out in the Village Design Statement of 2010 and the Parish Plan of 2011. That work saved us much time and we should acknowledge with thanks those involved in the preparation of those documents.

We very much appreciated the input and comments provided by those residents who attended our meetings – some of whom found themselves on the steering group!

The draft document was pulled together by Stella Scrivener and we are grateful for her expertise and knowledge of such plans and the time and effort she has put into preparing the draft.

Finally, we would not have got this far without the dedication and commitment of the steering group members. Some helped to get us started but couldn't continue, for many reasons; some joined later in the process; some have been there throughout. Special thanks go to all: Mick Buckingham, Janet Davidson, Paul Edwards, Angela Hankin, Penelope Johnston, Iain MacGregor, Mandy Mickelsen, Sharon Moore, Richard Mundell, Liane Rowland, Stella Scrivener, Ian Smith, Ian Wardrop, Jane Williams.



## 5. Accompanying Documents

Residents Survey 2018 Results

Consultation Statement—TO BE CREATED

Basic Conditions Statement—TO BE CREATED

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*Wickham Bishops*  
Neighbourhood Plan 2016–2029