

## Waterbeach Neighbourhood Plan Examination

### Response from Waterbeach Parish Council to the Examiner questions issued 20 May 2021

**Examiner Question 1:** *In response to Regulation 16 Representation Ref 68681, I would like to see copies of the formal Parish Council minute proposing to proceed with preparation of the neighbourhood plan and the designation of the neighbourhood area as well as copies of the formal minutes agreeing the neighbourhood plan for pre-submission consultation and for submission to the District Council.*

1.1 Please find attached the following sets of minutes which are also available to view at <https://www.waterbeach.org.uk/opus/opus175.html>

**Appendix 1:** Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 3 March 2015. Minute 14/139 provides a record of the Parish Council's recommendation that the Waterbeach Parish be the designated Neighbourhood Area for the Neighbourhood Plan. This also confirms the Parish Council's decision to develop a Neighbourhood Plan, together with community representatives.

**Appendix 2:** Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 3 December 2019. Minute 19/165 provides a record of the Parish Council approving the Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to Regulation 14 Pre-submission consultation.

**Appendix 3:** Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 22 December 2020. Minute 20/143 provides a record of the Parish Council approving the Neighbourhood Plan to be submitted to SCDC and the published under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

**Examiner Question 2:** *Please can you explain the distinction between WAT18 protected open spaces and Protected Village Amenity Areas as protected in the Local Plan? In other words, in what way are the WAT18 sites not capable of being protected either as Local Green Space or Protected Village Amenity Area within the Local Plan. In the same way as the open space at the Barracks entrance is being added as a PVAA, why are at least some of the WAT18 sites, stated as of value in amenity terms, not being treated similarly? – eg the smaller areas on Park Crescent for example.*

#### **NP Steering Group response:**

2.1 Policy NH/11 in the 2018 Local Plan reads as follows:

***Protected Village Amenity Areas are identified on the Policies Map where development will not be permitted within or adjacent to these areas if it would have an adverse impact on the character, amenity, tranquillity or function of the village.***

2.2 Policy WAT 18 in the submitted Neighbourhood Plan reads:

***The following publicly accessible open spaces are identified as important open spaces in the parish and shown on Map 6.12 are protected from development.***

- ***Allotments off Glebe Road***
- ***Allotments off Burgess Drove***
- ***Camlocks***
- ***Waterbeach Recreation Ground***
- ***Green spaces within Park Crescent***
- ***Clare Close***
- ***Winfold Rd***

***Exceptions may apply where the purpose of a development proposal will be to improve overall provision in the quality or quantity of an open space***

2.3 One key difference in the above approaches is that policy NH/11 restricts development proposals which would adversely impact the village (in terms of function, character, amenity or tranquillity) whereas the policy WAT 18 is seeking to protect the spaces per se.

2.4 The wording of policy WAT 18 specifically seeks to protect the function of the space as an open space but allows exceptions where *“the purpose of a development proposal will be to improve overall provision in the quality or quantity of an open space”*. This category of open spaces fits neatly within the spaces referred to in paragraph 97 of the NPPF.

2.5 A second key difference is the types of spaces which are covered by the Local Plan and the proposed Neighbourhood Plan designations. All green spaces which fall under Neighbourhood Plan policy WAT 18 are all publicly accessible open spaces where public amenity is by virtue of residents being able to access the sites. In the case of spaces covered by Local Plan policy NH/11, the spaces cover a wide range of different types of spaces. They include both publicly accessible open spaces and other spaces. Generally, these spaces can be regarded as providing local significance for a range of reasons. Paragraph 6.40 in the Local Plan states:

*“Some of the PVAAs may have important functions for the village such as allotments, recreation grounds and playing fields whilst others have an important amenity role in providing a setting for buildings or offer tranquil areas where there is minimum activity. Not all PVAAs have public access as some undeveloped areas which are important may be private gardens. They also vary from those which are very open to visual penetration to those which may be enclosed or semi-enclosed.”*

2.6 A third key difference is that policy WAT 18 includes open spaces which fall both within the development framework (settlement boundary) and outside whereas policy NH/11 in the Local Plan only applies to spaces which falls within a development framework. SCDC confirm this as their policy approach in paragraph 23 of their response in the Regulation 16 consultation.

2.7 The open space at the Barracks entrance is considered to fit neatly into the Protected Village Amenity Area policy category. As set out in paragraph 6.17.10 in the Neighbourhood Plan, the site *has cultural significance and currently provides an iconic entrance to the barracks providing an important transition from the village to the new town. It is dominated by a magnificent copper beech hedge and beyond the hedge is an avenue lined with well-established ornamental cherry trees. It is an important landmark in the parish.* Unlike the other spaces listed under policy WAT 18, its primary function is one of providing local cultural value, rather than as providing open amenity land.

2.8 The 2018 Local Plan identifies nine areas of land in Waterbeach village as Protected Village Amenity Areas (this is also set out in paragraph 6.17.9 in the submitted Neighbourhood Plan). Of the nine spaces, only three of these spaces provide amenity land which is accessible to the general public:

- a) a grassed area of amenity land in front of bungalows on Cambridge Road either side of the Coronation Close junction
- b) an area of green space, comprising private gardens and public amenity grassed area with bench next to the chip shop, referred to locally as the Old Pond site and
- c) a small plot of land between the Green and the Gault (outside the takeaway and used for parking).

2.9 Given that the spaces identified in policy WAT 18 share the same characteristics as providing amenity value to residents as areas of open land to enjoy and given that some of the spaces lie outside the development framework, the policy approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan is considered to be:

- a) the most appropriate to reflect the function of the spaces; and
- b) the most straightforward in that it treats all open spaces the same way regardless of whether their location is inside or outside the development framework.

2.10 It is recognised that Local Plan policy SC8: *Protection of Existing Recreation Areas, Playing fields Allotments and Community Orchards* provides a district wide protection for allotments and recreation grounds. However, policy SC8 is not accompanied by a policy map in the same way that proposed policy WAT 18 in the Neighbourhood Plan is. Local Plan policy SC8 allows for exceptions where loss of a space could take place (including alternative/replacement provision and clear demonstration of excess provision). In the case of Waterbeach village these circumstances are highly unlikely to apply since the allotments and recreations ground are three well-established spaces, located on green belt land serving a growing village with a growing population.

Local Green Space designations:

2.11 The spaces identified under proposed policy WAT 18 in the Neighbourhood Plan could be capable of being designated as Local Green Spaces.

2.12 Finally, it is noted there is a minor typographical error in the first paragraph of policy WAT 18. It should read:

***The following publicly accessible open spaces (shown on Map 6.12) are identified as important open spaces in the parish and are protected from development.***

**Examiner Question 3:** *In paragraph 6.21.15, the text states that policy WH19 (which I take to be a typo error and which should read WAT21) requires a majority of the affordable units to comprise 1 and 2 bedroom properties. However, the policy does not do this and still refers to specific percentages as set out in the WBNT SPD. What is the intention here? It may be there was an intent to introduce greater flexibility, as now requested in some Regulation 16 representations, but the actual policy change was never made. Please confirm.*

3.1 It is confirmed that the policy reference to WH19 in paragraph 6.21.15 is incorrect. It should read WAT21.

3.2 Policy WAT21 requires that the 1- and 2-bedroom element of both the market homes and the affordable homes should reflect the need indicated in the Waterbeach New Town SPD and refers in brackets to the figures 40% of the market housing and 75% of the affordable housing. There is an error here. The text in brackets should be state as follows (note additions indicated in bold text):

(40% of the market housing, 75% of the affordable **rent housing and 50% (2 bed only) of the shared equity housing**)

**Examiner Question 4:** *Re Policy WAT 2 - please can you explain why, if the station is relocating, would it be necessary to identify and safeguard a route from the old station (which is right on the boundary of the village) to the new. I am not clear why the route isn't proposed from a more central point in the village to start with or is it simply that this best aligns with the Greenway proposal.*

4.1 The safeguarded route is a part of the planned Waterbeach Greenway. It benefits residents who will lose their convenient access to the existing station avoiding a lengthy detour back into the village to access the new station. It also benefits the residents in the east of the village and the eastern part of the New Town because they have direct segregated access to the Greenway. In both cases this segregated route avoids NMU (Non-motorised users) and MU (motorised users) conflict in the village.

4.2 Whilst the existing train station is located on the boundary of the village, the station is within a ten-minute walk from Waterbeach village centre. Under normal circumstances (pre Covid 19 times), Waterbeach Railway Station has very high usage. There is a high level of out-commuting from the parish and much of this is via train services to Cambridge and beyond. This is described in the Neighbourhood Plan - see paragraph 3.16. Many commuters are local residents who walk or cycle to the station from Waterbeach village and neighbouring areas such as Horningsea.

4.3 The safeguarded route from the existing railway station to the new railway station will help ensure many of these commuters can continue to easily access railway services by foot or by bike or scooter without having to negotiate the heavily trafficked parts of the village.

4.4 Waterbeach village experiences a high level of through-traffic during the morning and early evening commute. This is traffic leaving the A10 at Denny End Road, travelling along the High Street, along Station Road and out of the village along Clayhithe Road. At the same time, the roads in and around the village centre are not easily or safely navigable by non-motorised users (due to a combination of narrow pavements and very wide junctions – see Map 6.4 for a visual illustration).

4.5 It is important that good access to the relocated railway station is provided to as many villagers as possible. This means providing a route away from the congested parts of the village which is accessible to as many parts of the village as possible. Providing a segregated route to reach all the way down to Station Road allows residents along Lode Avenue, Whitmore Way, Station Road to access the route without having first to navigate the busy village centre.

4.6 Phase 1 of the Waterbeach Greenway was approved by the GCP (Greater Cambridge Partnership) Executive Board on 19th February 2020. The route between old and new stations is part of the Phase 2 plans. Section 6.7 of the report on the Greenways stated *“The scheme has been broken down into two phases to enable an initial phase to be delivered as quickly as possible to make a route between Waterbeach and the north of Cambridge available. The later phase will make the route even more direct and add value to the project.”* Phase 2 is important to avoid all of the New Town NMU traffic passing through the village centre and to provide the most direct routes hence maximising the potential for modal shift that the Greenway is intended to achieve.

4.7 In addition to providing residents living close to the existing station a convenient segregated route to the new station it also provides residents in the east of Waterbeach (e.g. Burgess Road, Capper, Road, Kirby Road and the many new houses north of Bannold Road) with convenient direct access to the Greenway into Cambridge.

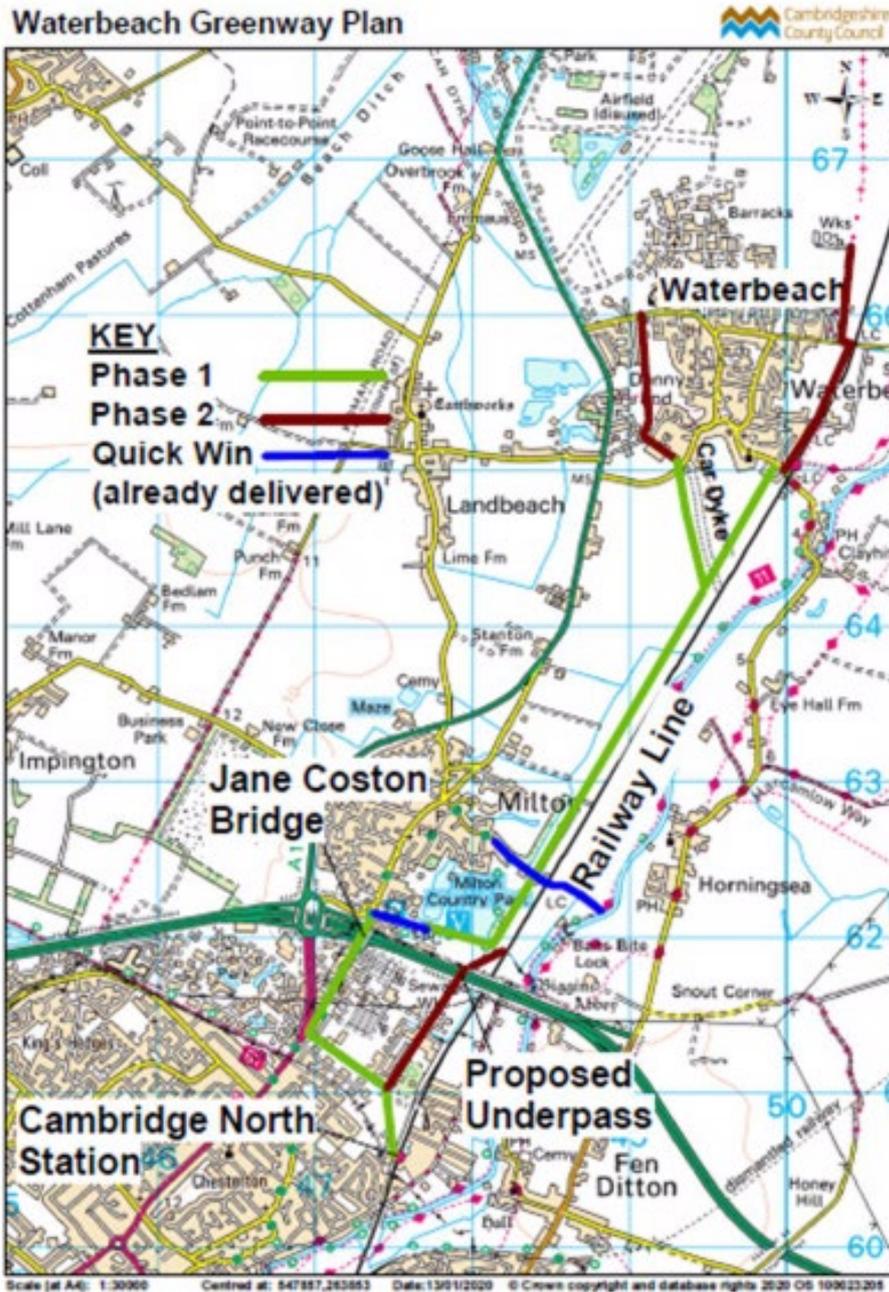


Figure 1: Waterbeach Greenway Map from GCP Executive Board Agenda Pack 19 February 2020

**Question 5:** *Re policy WAT 16 - I would appreciate some clarification in respect of both parcels of land as to what is different in respect of adjacent parcels – why, for example, the land south of Bannold’s Road adjacent the railway is not similarly identified and similarly the land between the Clayhithe Road and the Town Holt triangle.*

5.1 **Land east of Midload Farm:** The value and function of land east of Midload Farm is described in Table 6.3 of the submitted Neighbourhood Plan as an:

*Informal area of open space on private farmland and not accessible to the public. An open and tranquil site on the edge of settlement, providing an open setting to the walking/cycling*

*and driving route from village edge to the riverside walks. Important for wildlife. An important site contributing to the quality and openness of the countryside beyond.*

5.2 At this location along Bannold Road, there is a strong sense of departure out of the village and arrival into the village. The view looking north-east from this point provides a vast sense of open space to the north. The difference between this parcel of land to the north of Bannold Road is its edge of settlement character, whereas, the settlement edge south of Bannold Road is further west. At this latter location, the perception of vast and open countryside beyond is not so readily perceived.

5.3 **Town Holt:** The value and function of Town Holt is described in Table 6.3 of the submitted Neighbourhood Plan as follows:

*Informal open space providing visual amenity. The area is an open and tranquil parcel of green belt farm land on edge of settlement boundary linking the station to riverside walks on a safe pedestrian route. An important site contributing to the quality and openness of green belt land beyond.*

5.4 In this case it is agreed the land between Clayhithe Road and the Town Holt triangle is valued in a similar way. The Town Holt triangle is however bounded on two sides by well walked public footpaths so is particularly enjoyed by many. During communication with the landowner of the southern parcel of land (the land between Clayhithe Road and the Town Holt triangle) at plan preparation stage, objections were raised. Following this, the NP group decided to omit this area of farmland which is used for seasonal grazing. For information, both parcels of land fall within fluvial flood zone 3.