



Wilstead Neighbourhood Plan

2021-2035

Draft Mar 2021

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Foreword

The Parish Council determined in 2017 that a Neighbourhood Plan should be developed and a team to put the Plan together was recruited from volunteers and Council members after publicity in the local newsletter and an Open Day in the Village Hall.

Following a survey of the opinions of residents, completed in September 2019, the Wilstead Neighbourhood Plan team and Parish Council have drafted this Neighbourhood Plan for Wilshamstead Parish.

A Neighbourhood Plan is a way for local people to influence the planning and development of the area in which they live and/or work. Our's is expected to last for 15 years and aims to:

- Specify a shared vision for the village
- Help prevent inappropriate or poorly placed development in the village
- Sit within the Bedford Borough Local Plan to provide specific planning policies for Wilstead
- Comply with the Government's wider policy of sustainable development
- Ensure any development is sympathetic with the look and feel of the village
- Identify and help protect important local green spaces or other treasured assets
- Help local residents have access to new homes locally
- Establish the important aspects of the village that need to be preserved
- Identify further actions or aspirations that the Parish Council may wish to pursue in the future to improved aspects of village life

The Plan was endorsed by Wilshamstead Parish Council on 8th February 2021

Once approved, our plan will have legal force in setting out what development is acceptable in our parish and for what reasons.

An on-line copy of the Neighbourhood Plan can be accessed via the Parish Council's website:

<http://wilsteadparishcouncil.org/>

The Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan team would like to thank all those who contributed to the survey, attended open communication and working sessions and those who carried out the extensive research and consultation required and put so much hard work into putting this plan together.

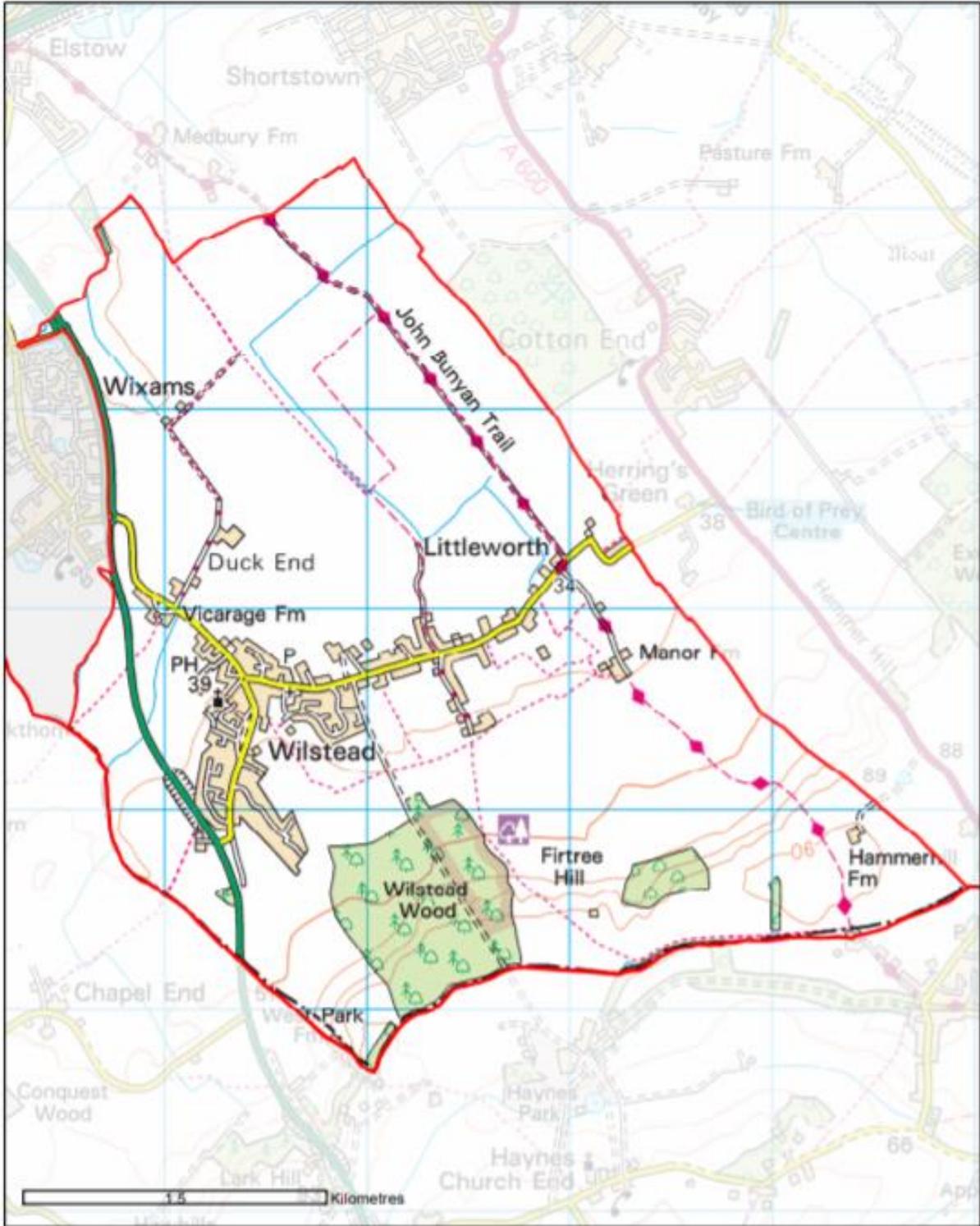
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. In 2011, the Localism Act introduced a new opportunity for local communities to shape their future formally as part of the planning system. Neighbourhood Plans can be produced by Parish Councils and when they have gone through all the required steps and processes, they become part of the development plan for the area. This means that any planning applications will have to take account of policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan. It also provides local people with a say on how land use and buildings can develop over time, such as protecting open spaces and improving local character.
- 1.2. Producing a Neighbourhood Plan is a formal process involving several stages, governed by the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, but critically important is that the Plan is developed with continuing community involvement. In order to rigorously test the policies of a Neighbourhood Plan, an independent Examination is carried out. The Neighbourhood Plan must conform to the following 'basic conditions':
 - be consistent with local planning policy
 - demonstrate how it will contribute towards sustainable development
 - have regard to national policy;
 - provide general conformity with strategic local policy;
 - meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.
- 1.3. Once the Plan has passed Examination, it is voted upon in a referendum by Parish residents and if a simple majority 'yes' vote is achieved, then the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' by Bedford Borough Council and comes into force as a planning document with legal weight in decision-making.
- 1.4. Wilshamstead Parish Council decided in February 2017 that they wished to designate the whole of the Parish as a Neighbourhood Area in order to safeguard the current character of the village and the integration of future communities in the village and its surrounds. The Neighbourhood Area is contiguous with the Parish boundary and was designated on the 22nd February 2017.



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Parish of Wilshamstead

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2. The Strategic Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) version was published in July 2018 and sets out the Government’s approach to sustainable development. At the heart of the NPPF is the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. Essentially, it is about positive growth with economic, social and environmental gains being sought simultaneously through the planning system. Neighbourhood planning forms part of the NPPF approach to planning, to allow local communities to shape sustainable development within their area and to enable local communities to address their strategic needs and priorities. The NPPF states that Neighbourhood Plans should set out a positive vision for the future of the local area with planning policies to determine decisions on planning applications, including policies which set out the quality of development that should be expected for the area, based on stated objectives for the area’s future and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. However, a Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and plan positively to support these policies.

Sustainable development

- 2.2. The Neighbourhood Plan must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF states that pursuing sustainable development includes making it easier to create jobs in villages, to promote gains in biodiversity, to achieve better quality design, to improve people’s quality of life, and to provide a wider choice of high quality homes.
- 2.3. Therefore, the aims objectives, policies and proposals of the Neighbourhood Plan should be assessed against their ability to achieve sustainable development. Wherever possible the Neighbourhood Plan should actively promote the achievement of sustainable development.

Local Planning Documents

- 2.4. The current Local Plan is the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 which was adopted on the 15th January 2020. There are also some remaining relevant policies in the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 and these are referenced in the Local Plan 2030. The Borough also have a suite of Supplementary Planning Documents which provide more detailed information and application of policies. The current list is available on the Borough Council’s website.

3. Parish Description

- 3.1. Wilstead is a village and civil parish in Bedfordshire, just off the A6 Bedford to Luton road, about five miles south of Bedford town centre at the foot of the Greensand Ridge escarpment. The name of the village has been spelled in many different ways, including Wilshamstead and Wylhamstead. Wilstead is now the usual name of the village, but the civil parish is named Wilshamstead.
- 3.2. Housing types include traditional farms, older houses (including thatched cottages and many Listed Buildings) and more modern, estate-type housing. Dwellings on the estate are generally

of a more spacious character than the most modern developments. There is also a park home site called Briar Bank Park on the southern end of the village.

History and Heritage

- 3.3. The origin of the village dates back to Roman times, or earlier; there are signs of a settlement in fields to the north of the village. The Domesday Book (1086) records the village as Winessamestede with 23 heads of households. Close to the crossroads in the middle of the village is the 14th century church All Saints. The church contains a memorial to William Tompson who in 1595 founded Wilshamstead Charities which still exists to help the villagers. In the churchyard there is the tomb of Sir William Morgan, Chief Secretary of the State of South Australia. A village-born grocer's son, he founded gold in Australia and became one of Australia's richest men. He died on a visit to the village in 1883. At the top of Church Road is the Church House thought to have been a 'Pilgrim's Rest', for those journeying to shrines.
- 3.4. According to the Domesday Book, at the eastern end of Cotton End Road there used to be another hamlet called Westcotes, probably where Littleworth is now. Near here down Elms Lane is Manor Farm, thought to be the location of Nigel de Albini's Manor. Much nearer the centre of the village on Cotton End Road is another Manor Farm, thought to be the likely location of Countess Judith's (sister of William the Conqueror) manor on Winessamestede, the second manor of the village mentioned in the book.
- 3.5. Historically farming has always been the essence of village life and has played an important part of Wilstead life over the years. Seven farms exist today in the village and continue to be operational.
- 3.6. Duck End, to the north east of the village centre, was once a separate hamlet and first appears in the village enclosure award. The original nucleus in the village is believed to have been around a large green to the south east of the church, centred on what is today called 'the crossroads', where the village sign stands. To the south east of the crossroads was also once the site of the original animal pound and the Blacksmiths house. Many houses were built from Wilstead Brick which is a yellow/brindle brick and can be seen in some properties today.



Wilstead brick was used to construct the signs at the entrances to the village in Luton and Bedford Roads. The brickworks closed in 1919.

Gradually several homesteads were established along a roadway to the East that was to become Cotton End Road. As the population grew the gaps between houses were slowly filled in.

This gradual expansion followed the line of the main roadways, thus giving the strung-out appearance or "ribbon development" for which the parish is known. In the 1950s and 60s many cottages and older houses were demolished in the national trend to modernise .

- 3.7. The population of the village did not grow substantially until the late 1960s when several estates of varying sizes were built out from the principal roads. This brought new, younger

families attracted by the availability and affordability of the new housing developments. In more recent years further development has taken place in the Longmeadow Drive area on the southern fringe of the Village. In addition, a park home site (Briar Bank - now restricted to residents 50 years of age or older) has existed at the southern edge of the village for 50 years.



There are 23 listed buildings in the Parish, all Grade II apart from the Grade II* listed Parish Church of All Saints.

- 3.8. In the early 2000s Wilshamstead Parish Council were charged with representing a brand-new community to be established on the old Second World War munitions site at the Elstow Storage Depot. This community, now named Wixams, will eventually grow to small town size with 10,000 residents. In 2015 Wilshamstead officially “deparished” so creating the two separate communities of Wixams and Wilstead. Part of the old village boundary (west of the A6 trunk road) is now incorporated into the Wixams parish. Since the split it has been an important part of Parish Council policy to preserve the separate identity of Wilstead. The Neighbourhood Plan consultation process has also established that Wilstead residents feel it very important that the separate identity of the two communities is maintained together with a physical green belt of land between the two.

Village Life

- 3.9. The village is a vibrant village, activities in the various halls continue to promote the community life. Wilstead offers its locals a variety of clubs namely the football club, school clubs, holiday clubs, children’s clubs, British Legion Club, Bowls Club, Wilstead Drama group, Allotment Society, Garden Club, WI, senior citizen reunions, footpath group meetings, art club and many more.

Landscape

- 3.10. Wilstead is a rural, relatively flat parish which slopes up towards the Greensand Ridge in the south. Countryside surrounds the village and reaches into its very heart with working farms, public spaces and footpaths joining the main arteries.

Education

- 3.11. Wilstead has a Primary School located in Cotton End Road and also a pre-school next door. Both are very popular and always near capacity or full, causing difficulty for parents moving into the village with young children.



In September 2020 there were 5 children waiting to join the reception class, 6 on the waiting list for Year Three and 2 for Year Four.

Recreation facilities

- 3.12. Playgrounds are located next to the primary school, (off Whitworth Way), in Longmeadow Drive and in a small area in the corner of the Wooding Way estate. There are allotments close to the village playing fields. These and the Wilstead Jubilee Centre/Sports pavilion, Multi Use Games Area and a Lawn Bowls club are all situated in Jubilee Way, close to the village centre, off Bedford Road.

Local business, services and employment

- 3.13. Near the centre of the village are a small shop that incorporates a sub post office with a sorting office, two pubs, a pharmacy/convenience store, an Indian takeaway, a Chinese takeaway and a used car sales outlet. There is a craft shop on the Briar Bank site. The village hall, a modern building, is located in Cotton End Road. The village also has three churches. In Duck End several farm buildings have been converted into commercial uses, creating a small industrial estate. There are also a number of small businesses located in people's homes and a number of people working from home. 407 people responded to a question in the survey regarding their employment. Of these 185 are either retired or not working and, of the remaining 178 people, 26 (15%) work either at home or within the village, indicating a very high occupancy of the village during working hours. We aim, therefore, to help maintain and/or increase local facilities.

Population & Household Data

- 3.14. In 2011, Wilstead had about 2,300 residents and 1040 households This included early Wixams residents. The figure without Wixams has grown to around 2500 residents. Approximately 200 new homes have been built in the village since 2000 and planning permission exists for a further 30.

4. Consultation

- 4.1. In preparing the Neighbourhood Plan the team has carried out a range of communication and consultation activities. They have also been assisted by the existence of a



Village Design Statement produced by a team in September 2000 and a Parish Plan survey conducted in 2010.

4.2. The first consultation was an Open Day held at the Village Hall in April 2017 when villagers were introduced to the concept of a Neighbourhood Plan. This has been followed by regular articles in the village Newsletter, banners, a further Open Day and a subsequent event to publicise the results of the Village Survey.

4.3. The survey achieved 447 responses, the large majority from separate households. One of the lowest return rates (23%) was from the Briar Bank Park Home site, probably a result of less ability to respond on-line and the distance from the collection points. However one of the newer estates (Longmeadow Drive) showed only a

22% response which may be a reflection of the distance from the centre and less historic feeling of community involvement. Full details of the Consultations are shown in Annex A of this Plan.

- 4.4. Unfortunately, only a small number of respondents (4.5%) were aged 25 or under.
- 4.5. Close to 70% of respondents indicated that they have lived in the village for more than 10 years. This is a strong indicator of the closeness of the community and that people do not move away.

5. Vision and Objectives

- 5.1. The Vision and Objectives of this Neighbourhood Plan have been carefully developed and refined by the Parish Council to reflect the views and priorities of the community. They help set the future of the village. The Vision is the overall aim of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Objectives are more detailed, allowing the development of policies which in turn will be used to comment on and determine planning applications.

Vision

To retain and enhance the countryside setting, friendly character, identity and relative tranquility of the village of Wilshamstead.

Development opportunities will be sustainable and appropriate to the scale and nature of the village, respecting its historic, agricultural and rural character.

Objectives

- 1. To seek protection and enhancement of the countryside setting of the village, by ensuring separation from the urban edge whilst retaining access to the countryside.**
- 2. Identified green spaces, views and vistas and local wildlife habitats will be maintained and enhanced.**
- 3. To identify, protect and enhance village heritage assets and key public spaces, ensuring that any future development is sympathetic to the existing rural character of the village.**
- 4. To ensure any future housing responds to local needs, is of a high standard of design, and fits well into the context of the village in terms of type, mix, scale and character.**
- 5. To protect existing assets such as the school, village hall and other community buildings and spaces used for community events and encourage improvements in line with changing needs.**
- 6. To improve the leisure and recreation opportunities for residents of all ages by maintaining and encouraging community activities and the provision of open space and children's play facilities**
- 7. To promote safe public streets and spaces; reduce traffic volumes through more accessible and beneficial sustainable transport links (including pavements, footpaths and cycle routes) and ensure appropriate parking solutions.**
- 8. To sustain and enhance the range of community and commercial activities and services in the village. Economic activity such as working from home and appropriate small-scale diversification of farm buildings will be encouraged.**

6. Sustainable Development

- 6.1. Reflecting the NPPF, there are several over-arching development principles to ensure that new development is sustainable, achieves high design & environmental standards, reflects local preferences in terms of location and, especially important, delivers new community infrastructure.
- 6.2. The Parish has a distinctive character and new development should protect, reflect and enhance that character. There is a need for development to contribute to the quality of life for residents, including healthy lifestyles, access to local services, green open spaces, safe places for active play, and to be accessible by walking and cycling and public transport.
- 6.3. It is generally accepted that new development is necessary but there is a strong feeling that this should meet the needs of local people - existing and future generations, applying the principles of sustainable development to reflect environmental, economic and social needs. However, in many ways the social implications of accepting more development underlie the key issues and need; namely for an investment in new community infrastructure. The policies reflect the issues facing the Parish, the Vision and the Objectives.
- 6.4. For Wilstead, the meaning of sustainable development is set out below.

Sustainable Development Principles

Sustainable development for Wilstead means that development should be:

- ***At an appropriate scale and in locations where it would support the community,***
- ***Of a high standard of design, reflecting the character of the surroundings,***
- ***Contributing towards community infrastructure,***
- ***Providing superfast broadband (fibre-optic) connections,***
- ***Ensuring that there is no increase in the risk of flooding,***
- ***Meeting contemporary construction, energy efficiency and water management standards,***
- ***Located and designed to enable safe walking and cycling to local services and facilities, preferably within a 400m radius of those locations.***

The following adverse impacts must be avoided:

- ***Reduction in the physical separation between the village and Wixams,***
- ***Avoidable intrusion into open countryside,***
- ***The loss of or damage to wildlife habitats and hedgerows and trees,***
- ***The loss or inappropriate diversion of public rights of way,***
- ***A loss of amenity for existing residential properties and reduced efficiency for nearby businesses,***
- ***Overloading existing utilities and services (water, drainage, sewerage and waste).***

7. Rural Character



Picture courtesy of Google Earth

- 7.1. As stated previously, countryside surrounds Wilstead and extends visually and functionally into the heart of the village through footpaths, important views and green public spaces. The village extends out into the Parish by the means of various 'lanes' which run at right angles from the main routes in the village. To the south of the village is the face of the Greensand Ridge which is largely wooded and provides a backdrop to the village. The remainder of the Parish is largely flat open fields.
- 7.2. Consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan demonstrates the value that local people place on the landscape and rural environment of the Parish. 95% of respondents agreed that the rural feel and access to the countryside are fundamental to the quality of life and community identity for Wilstead.

Landscape

- 7.3. Some change that occurs in the landscape is outside planning control, but where planning permission is required for development, landscape features should be considered in a systematic way. Proposals for new development will need to include an appropriate landscape analysis either as a freestanding report or as part of a design and access statement to enable the impact to be assessed and any mitigation proposed.
- 7.4. The Landscape Character Assessment (2014) for this part of Bedfordshire indicates a high-quality landscape, where characteristic features are well represented and in good condition and there is a wide and long history represented in the landscape. The County is divided up into ‘landscape character types’ which allows characteristic features to be identified and guidelines produced so that development can be designed to respect the surroundings. The bulk of the Parish is set within the East Marston Clay Vale landscape character type with the southern part of the Parish including Wilstead Wood lying within the Mid Greensand Ridge landscape character type.
- 7.5. The key characteristics of these two landscape types are the large scale, flat, open vale landscape underlain by Oxford Clay with expansive views across the vale to the wooded Greensand Ridge that forms a prominent backdrop to the vale and which provides some sense of containment. Formerly meadow pasture, land use is now predominantly defined by intensive arable cropping contained within medium to large arable fields. Some smaller fields given over to pasture and horse grazing remain.
- 7.6. The Landscape Character Assessment sets “Guidelines for New Development”. Those relevant to the landscape around Wilstead are summarised below.
- Conserve the dispersed pattern of settlements - preventing linear expansion and the merger of villages e.g. Wixams with Wilstead. Monitor linear development, and infill of villages in order to prevent further settlement coalescence and loss of individual village identity – this is particular the case for the dispersed, loose settlements and ‘Ends’ such as Duck End.
 - Prevent further urbanisation of the rural roads - and ensure that traffic management measures are sympathetic to the rural character. Monitor the expansion/widening of transport corridors, to prevent further fragmentation of the landscape. Consider further opportunities for landscape enhancement along the road corridors e.g. through planting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees where appropriate
 - Improve settlement edges where these form an unsympathetic relationship with the open countryside - small scale woodland planting is a key opportunity but should not obscure views to the Mid Greensand Ridge , rather it should form part of a connected network which complements and responds to topography and landscape structure of the ridge.
 - Conserve locally distinctive influences such as the palette of bricks used in buildings
 - Conserve the clear views and visual relationship with the Mid Greensand Ridge.
 - Avoid any large scale, taller development of land at the base of the ridge to retain the dramatic visual contrast between the flat vale and steep slopes.
 - Conserve and enhance access and connections from the urban area into the vale e.g. via existing footpaths or the John Bunyan Trail. Avoid severance of existing routes.
- 7.7. The Wilstead Landscape Sensitivity Study (Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 background document) reinforces the above guidelines and also recognises the importance of

views to the open setting of the 14th Century All Saints Church.

(<http://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=kCUtyDy%2bKg%2foDKZkw4LWuw%3d%3d&name=47%20-%20Landscape%20Sensitivity%20Study.pdf>)

- 7.8. Existing hedgerows and trees contribute greatly to the landscape in the Parish, particularly given the relatively flat terrain. Policies 39 and 40 of the Local Plan set out the requirements for retaining these features, whilst Policy 38 recognizes that landscaping and planting is important not only for its visual qualities, but it can also help with climate regulation, biodiversity and the mental health and wellbeing associated with being outdoors in a green space. Accordingly the Local Plan requires that new development is accompanied by a landscaping scheme.

Key Views



7.9. Local surveys have identified the key views in the local landscape, shown in detail in the Green Spaces, Open Spaces and Local Views Annex to this plan (Annex B). These are identified on the Policies Map. The key views have been identified for their particular value to residents and visitors and should be retained and not blocked by insensitive development.

7.10. The way the countryside comes into the very heart of Wilstead, including the footpaths, bridleways and Green Spaces within it and the views from within the village into the surrounding countryside, were highlighted in the Village Design Survey in 2000 and the NP survey resulted in an overwhelming number (close to 100%) continuing to support the need to protect these - indicating very little has changed in

the way people feel about the village in the last 20 years.

- 7.11. Especially important and emphasised in the responses to the surveys are the views of the Greensand Ridge, the Cardington hangars and All Saints Church from Church Road

Forest of Marston Vale

- 7.12. The Parish lies within the Forest of Marston Vale, one of only 12 Community Forests in England, each designated by Government as national priority areas for the environmentally led regeneration of degraded and industrially scarred landscapes. The core objective for all Community Forests is to radically transform these degraded landscapes using trees and woodlands to create a new landscape with 30% tree cover by 2030, this being the catalyst for wider social and economic regeneration of these areas.

- 7.13. The Parish Council has been very active in promoting the use of land within the Parish as a Community Woodland and has been working with the FoMV organisation to plant a large area of trees on the border between Wilstead and Wixams to serve both communities for recreation and to form part of the natural countryside break between the two parishes.
- 7.14. Policy 36S of the Local Plan seeks contributions to the enhancement of the Forest area and the primary aim of planting trees will be expected to be supported by all new housing and commercial developments in the Parish where relevant.

Policy RC1: Rural Character

Any proposals for development in the rural parts of the Parish should recognise and seek to protect and enhance the historic and natural landscape and local character of the Parish, including

- ***Field patterns and elements of the landscape heritage of the area, including ridge and furrow, field ponds, mature trees and historic hedgerows should be protected and incorporated into any landscape design schemes and their long-term maintenance ensured***
- ***Retention and where possible, enhancement of the key views identified on the Policies Map***
- ***Development of new sites will be expected to contribute to the tree planting aspirations of the Forest of Marston Vale***
- ***Landscaping schemes will be required to be implemented for new developments. Where appropriate, planting should reflect existing planting in the vicinity of the site particularly where there are established trees and hedgerows, to provide visual integration and allow the movement of wildlife wherever possible***

Gaps between settlements

- 7.15. Wilstead is very close to the new housing developments at the Wixams and residents are keen that both settlements remain separated to support the retention of rural character of Wilstead Parish. Over 94% of respondents to the Questionnaire considered that maintaining a gap between the village and Wixams was 'essential' or 'important'. Maintaining other gaps between the village and Duck End, Littleworth and Briar Bank was not seen as essential by residents.
- 7.16. The Landscape Character Assessment recognizes that the need to retain separate identities of villages contributes to landscape character as does the Local Plan, Policy 37 and the Allocations and Designations Local Plan AD42. The latter recognizes that the gap between Wilstead and Wixams is less than 800 m in places. In order to preserve the separate character and identity of Wilstead village, the gap between it and Wixams new settlement requires additional protection from development to prevent coalescence.
- 7.17. However, the Local Plan Local Gap designation uses an arrow to define the gap between the settlements and does not define the boundaries of where development should be avoided to retain the visual and functional separation of the settlements. Accordingly, this

Neighbourhood Plan gives more detail to the gap between the settlements and the area set out in the Policies Map gives clarity and certainty to the gap policy.

- 7.18. The gap to be preserved between the two settlements should encompass the areas shown on the Policies Map. This can be summarised as all land within the Parish to the West of existing development up to the A6 trunk Road including land to the West and North of Duck End Lane. It includes the important Community Woodland managed by the Forest of Marston Vale and shared between the two communities.

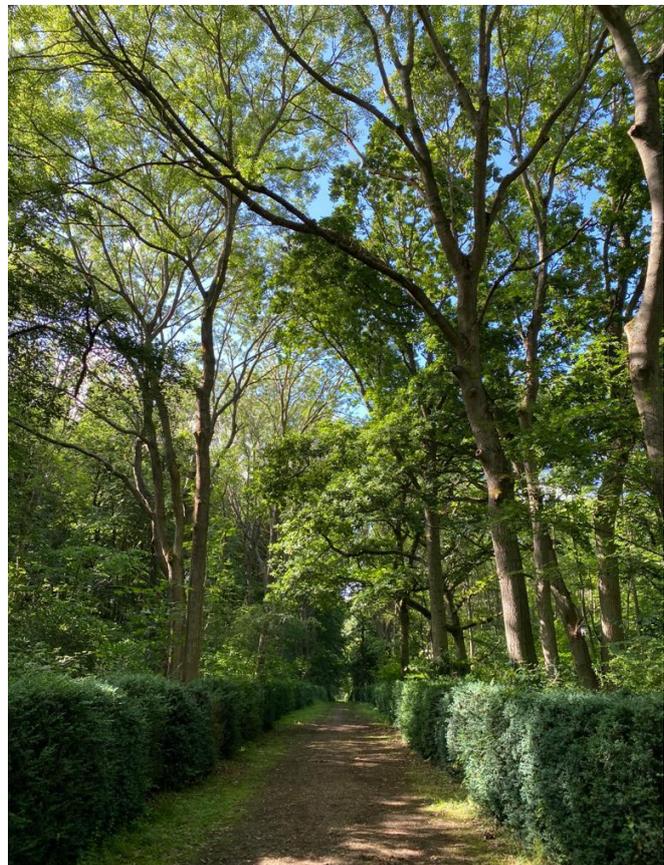
Policy RC2: Wilstead-Wixams Gap

Development will not be supported in or adjoining the Wilstead-Wixams local gap as defined on the Policies Map (sites with the prefix SG) which, because of the nature of the proposal:

- *diminishes the gap physically or visually*
- *adversely impacts on the rural character of the gap and its immediate surroundings*

8. Natural Environment

- 8.1. Protection of the nature conservation interest in the Parish, which is valued by local people, is critical to the rural character of the Parish.
- 8.2. There are 6 County Wildlife sites within, and one partly within the Parish. These are designated for their special wildlife interest and are protected through Policy 42S in the Local Plan
- Wilstead Wood is ancient woodland at the base of the Greensand Ridge and mostly within the area of the Greensand Ridge NIA.
 - St Macute's Wood is also ancient woodland close to the Greensand Ridge and fully within the NIA.
 - Wilstead Meadows
 - Top of Northwood Lane
 - Top of Hooked Lane
 - Land to the south of Chapel End
 - Keyse's Spinney and Hurstpightle Spinney (partly within the Parish)



- 8.3. The Parish lies within the Forest of Marston Vale and also the southern end of the Parish lies within the Green Infrastructure opportunity zone of the Greensand Ridge Fringes as set out in Policy AD24 of the Allocations and Designations Local Plan. Opportunities must be sought through development finance and other sources of funding to implement the following:
- Linking and extending woodland sites to each other and down the ridge slopes to strengthen the wooded fringe landscape character.
 - Managing ancient woodlands, veteran trees, biologically significant trees and historic hedgerows and interpreting historic environment features associated with ancient woodlands.
 - Linking the ancient woodlands together, and creating a complex of grassland, scrub and woodland habitats.
 - Creating green corridors and enhancing access routes, particularly creating woodlands and meadow features along the Bunyan Trail.
 - And enhancing the setting of archaeological features.
- 8.4. Where appropriate, development will deliver or contribute to the protection, enhancement and/or creation of green infrastructure in accordance with the priorities set out for the opportunity zone. A wildlife corridor is an area of habitat connecting wildlife populations separated by human activities or structures (such as roads and built development). It is important to try and link up individual pockets of habitats to provide a wider area for wildlife migrations and expansion.
- 8.5. The layout and form of new buildings should have regard for the rural setting of the village, with its existing green spaces and corridors. Development should enhance green spaces or features and the connections between them where practicable. New development must provide a 10% biodiversity net gain in line with the emerging Environment Bill.
- 8.6. Proposals for all types of new development will be required to demonstrate how the design has taken into account its potential impact on local habitats and species. This will include sites and features that are locally important in the parish, including trees, hedges and woodland, parkland, ponds & watercourses and unimproved grassland. Developers will be required to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to protect wildlife and take every available opportunity to enhance biodiversity and important habitats. Landscaping schemes will be required to use native species for planting schemes, particularly those found locally.

Policy NE1: Nature Conservation

New development will be required to protect and enhance existing natural features of sites and where possible enhance biodiversity.

Development proposals must provide appropriate green infrastructure and enhanced Green Infrastructure networks which result in a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity, species richness and/or abundance. Provision of appropriate species-related measures will be required, including, for example, tunnels for hedgehogs and the incorporation of native species into landscaping schemes.

Opportunities should also be taken by developers and landowners to link sustainable drainage solutions in new development to complement nature conservation objectives.

Opportunities should be sought to increase biodiversity, particularly at the edges of the settlement.

- 8.7. Where Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDS) are required to serve new developments, every opportunity to link them into habitats should be taken.

9. Built Environment

Heritage Assets



9.1. It is essential that the location and design of new development has regard to the historic character of the local area. This protection is in accordance with the guidance contained in paragraphs 192-199 of the National Planning Policy Framework. There are 23 listed buildings in the Parish currently, including the Parish Church of All Saints which is a Grade II* listed building. A summary of listed buildings in the village is shown in

the Historical and Important Buildings Annex (Annex C).

- 9.2. Listed Buildings are already protected under legislation and Local Plan policy 41S which requires that proposals for alterations to heritage assets must be assessed on their impact on the value of that asset.
- 9.3. The list of non-designated heritage assets (local list for Wilstead) set out below has been compiled and consulted upon in the questionnaire and seeks to recognise the historic importance of local buildings that are not listed buildings in the Parish. The buildings and features identified which may not be of sufficient architectural or historic merit to justify listing, but they are an important part of the character of the Parish. The policy will help to ensure they are retained.

They are:

- 47 Cotton End Road
- The Elephant and Castle (former pub) 49 Cotton End Road,
- The Rose (former pub) 265 Cotton End Road near Littleworth
- The Woolpack
- The Old Infants School (78 Cotton End Road)
- Wilstead Post Office (33, Cotton End Road)
- Wilstead Methodist Church

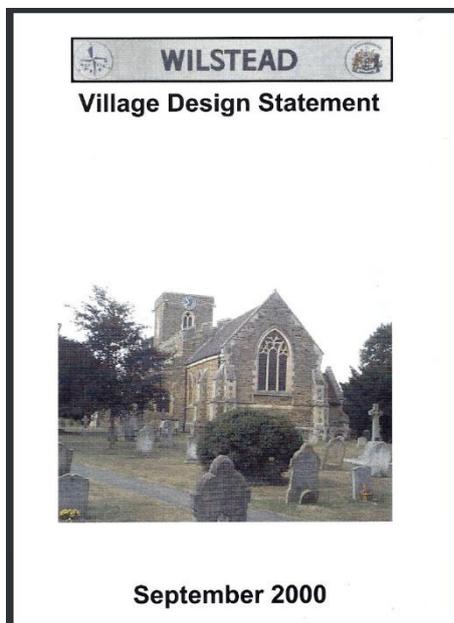
Owners have been consulted for inclusion of the above in the list of Historical and Important Buildings Annex (Annex C) where a brief description of each is shown.

- 9.4. Enhancements to the local features may be sought through funding bids to support their management.

Policy BE1: Protecting and enhancing local heritage assets

All development proposals affecting identified local heritage assets (including the non-designated assets listed above) will be required to take into account the character, context and setting of the assets. Development should be designed taking account of local styles, materials and detail. The loss of, or substantial harm, to a local asset, will be resisted unless exceptional circumstance is demonstrated.

High Quality Design



9.5. Wilstead Parish Council produced a Village Design Statement in 2000 which was adopted by Bedford Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. It remains a useful document for residents, developers, the Parish Council and Bedford Borough Council and is a technical background document to the Neighbourhood Plan. However, the main elements have been incorporated into this Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that the principles are up to date and can be applied to planning applications as current planning policy.

9.6. Residents have a range of views on design for new development in the village, and 30% are aware that the village has a design guide. Over 70% of respondents thought that 3 storey buildings were not acceptable and over 80% thought that new developments should be in small clusters with green space around and within them.

Longmeadow Drive is an example of a well-designed new housing development in that it incorporates both substantial properties and affordable housing with wide verges and plenty of green spaces together with a substantial area set aside for children's play and recreational activity.

9.7. Over 80% of the respondents to the survey supported renewable energy for new housing development.

9.8. Wilstead village has no specific single building style but the following points include the essence of the rural character of the village and should be respected in new development:

- Open and generous quality of external spaces including verges, green spaces and play spaces
- Strong green links between the village and countryside
- Gaps of non-uniform width between buildings giving a feeling of openness
- Ponds, ditches, streams and hedgerows forming wildlife corridors
- Rural footpaths linking the village with countryside

- Wide planted road verges
 - Varying pattern of development with both buildings set in deep fronted gardens and historic buildings set close to the road
 - Prominent copses and tall trees within the built area
 - Buildings generally pitched roof, dark red/brown/grey tiles or slate over brick. Wilstead brick is a warm buff colour.
 - Buildings generally do not exceed 2 storeys in height (other than some of the new development at Longmeadow Drive which is visually separate to the main part of the village)
 - Most buildings have small windows and are relatively simple in design
- 9.9. The distinct zones of the village and their design guidance are shown in the Design Annex (Annex D).
- 9.10. The Village is centred around the main crossroads and any development in future would need to be located as close as possible to this area to facilitate integration of new villagers into the community and provide close access to local amenities such as the Post Office, take-aways, public houses and public transport.
- 9.11. The NPPF and the Neighbourhood Plan recognises that well-designed buildings and places improve the quality of life and that it is a core planning principle to secure good design. Good design is not just about appearance, but also functionality and the relationship to surroundings and it is not about copying past styles or preventing innovative modern design. The aim is to create site-specific creative design, which is contextual by referencing form and materials to surroundings.
- 9.12. Development proposals should include a Design and Access Statement, or other written statement related to the scale and complexity of the scheme, which shows that the development has been designed to specifically relate to its setting. This is essential to ensure that the special character of the village is protected, and its local distinctiveness is enhanced and reinforced.

9.13. Larger scale proposals must be accompanied by a Development Brief.

Policy BE2: The Design of New Development

Proposals for high quality new development (including new buildings and extensions to existing buildings) will be supported, where they address the following criteria.

All new development will:

- *Contribute to the locally distinctive rural character;*
- *Take advantage of the local topography, retaining water features, trees and hedgerows;*
- *Relate to the existing development pattern in the vicinity of the site in terms of building placement on the site, enclosure and definition of streets/spaces;*
- *Be of an appropriate scale and density in relation to its setting;*
- *Be of simple design and form to reflect the rural character of the village;*
- *Use materials appropriate to the development's context.*
- *Be well integrated with surroundings; reinforcing connections, taking opportunities of new ones, retaining or allowing close access to the countryside;*
- *Provide convenient access to community services and facilities;*
- *Respect the residential amenities of adjacent properties, including privacy and overshadowing.*
- *Integrate car parking within landscaping so that it does not dominate the street;*
- *Provide convenient, well-screened storage for bins and recycling, bicycles and motor vehicles.*
- *Conform to sustainable building design and construction best practice.*

10. Housing

Existing population and housing stock

- 10.1. In 2011, there were 1,402 households in Wilstead containing 3,270 residents. Compared to 2001, this represents an increase of around 46% in terms of households (from 958) and also an increase of 44% in terms of residents (from 2,263). This large increase in population and households can be attributed to the introduction of a number of new developments in the village plus the development of Wixams, which, at the time of the 2011 census, was included within the parish of Wilshamstead. In 2015 Wixams became a separate parish.
- 10.2. New developments within Wilshamstead Parish since 2011 have been introduced as 'in-fill' or in the form of a new estate of 70 houses located to the west and south of Whitworth Way. This development was allowed, on appeal, to meet the need for additional housing in Bedford Borough. Although granted planning permission before the adoption of the Local Plan 2030 this estate was taken into account when allocating sites for Wilstead and, as a result, no additional housing was included for the village in the final plan. Since then a further 30 houses

have been granted outline planning permission, again on appeal, located some distance from the village centre at the end of Howard Close, off Luton Road.

- 10.3. The age profile in 2011 (compared to 2001, and then to Bedford Borough as a whole in 2011) is shown below.

Age	% Wilstead 2011	% Wilstead 2001	% Bedford Borough 2011
0 – 4	7.1	4.5	6.3
5-15	11.0	11.3	14.3
16-17	2.0	2.5	2.6
18-64	60.4	62.2	61.7
65-84	16.5	17.2	13.1
85+	3.1	2.7	1.8

- 10.4. The age demographic has stayed fairly stable in Wilstead over the 10 years between 2001 and 2011. The proportion of those aged 85+ has risen slightly but this resulted in a slight decrease in the 65-84 age category. The greatest increase has been in the 0-4 age category, which can be attributed to more young families moving into the newly developed Wixams area. This is putting pressure on the availability of school places in both parishes. The age profile overall is older than that of Bedford Borough as a whole, which can be attributed to the 50+ age stipulation for the Briar bank park home site and the very common practice of residents to move within the village rather move away.

Household Composition	% Wilstead	% Beds Borough
1 person - pensioner	14.6	11.9
1 person - other	10.0	16.9
Couple + dependent children	19.3	20.9
Couple + non-dependent children	31.9	23.5
Lone parent + dependent children	6.3	7.6
Lone parent + non-dependent children	3.1	3.4
All aged 65 and over	9.7	8.2
Other	5.1	7.5

10.5. There are slightly higher levels of households with all occupants aged 65 and over and 1-person pensioner households, compared to Bedford Borough Averages. There is also a higher level of families with non-dependent children at home.

Housing Tenure	% Wilstead	% Beds Borough
Owned outright	43.7	31.4
Owned with mortgage/loan	39.4	34.3
Shared ownership	4.7	1.0
Social rented	12.4	16.1
Private rented	5.3	15.9
Living rent free	0.9	1.3

10.6. The majority of households are owner occupiers in Wilstead. There are much higher levels of properties owned outright and owned with a mortgage or loan compared to Bedford Borough averages. The levels of shared ownership properties in the parish is above the average figure for Bedford Borough. Levels of both social and private rented properties were lower than the Bedford Borough averages.

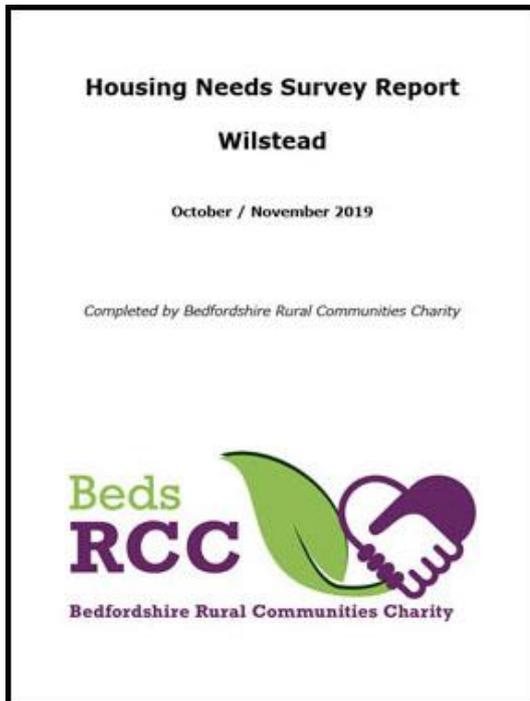
Dwelling Types	% Wilstead	% Beds Borough
Detached house	43.7	27.4
Semi-detached house	25.9	32.2
Terraced house	23.2	21.9
Flat	2.4	17.6
Caravan/other temp. accommodation	14.5	0.9

10.7. There are significantly more detached properties, with correspondingly fewer semi-detached houses in Wilstead compared to Bedford Borough averages. The number of flats is significantly lower than the boroughs average figures. There are much higher levels of caravan and other temporary accommodation due to the Briar Bank park home site situated within the parish.

10.8. The Parish Questionnaire asked a series of questions regarding the scale, type and location of new houses for residents to comment on. Most respondents would prefer to see infill of one or two dwellings or 4-9 new units, with a strong negative response to developments of 10 or more houses (55% strongly disagreeing). This negative response is likely to be in response to the recent high levels of current building and planning applications for larger development around the village.

10.9. In terms of the types of housing, many of the respondents considered that affordable housing for those with a local connection was a priority (82% agreeing), retirement housing (63% agreeing) and bungalows (79%) should also be provided. Smaller homes of 1-2 or 2-3 bedroom houses were more popular than 3-4 or 4+ bedroom houses which reflects the predominance of larger homes in the village housing stock.

Housing Affordability and Mix



10.10. In 2019, the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity was contracted to carry out a Housing Needs Survey (HNS) by the Parish Council. The following information is extracted from that document which is a technical background document to the Neighbourhood Plan.

10.11. **Affordability:** The 'affordability ratio' (median house prices as a ratio of median household earnings) for Wilstead in 2008/09 (latest data available) was 12.5. In other words, houses on the market cost on average 12.5 times annual incomes.

10.12. 14.9% of dwellings in Wilstead are in Council Tax Band A, and 13.8% in Band B, compared to 13.6% and 24.9% for Bedford Borough as a whole. The lower proportion of particularly Band B properties when

compared to district wide levels is likely to indicate a relative shortage of affordable housing for purchase in Wilstead.

- 10.13. According to the DCLG guidance, in order to purchase the cheapest property currently available for sale on the open market in Wilstead (a 2-bedroom house at £200,000) as a first time buyer, a single earner household would need an annual gross income of over £57,000 and dual-income household would need over £68,000. There was a 1-bedroom shared ownership flat for sale which would require a single earner household to have an annual gross income of around £21,000 and a dual income household would need an income of over £25,500. It should be noted that the median annual full-time wage in the UK stood at £28,200 in April 2016 .
- 10.14. According to the same guidance, "A household can be considered able to afford market house renting in cases where the rent payable was up to 25% of their gross household income." (The 'Rent Payable' figure is defined as the entire rent due, even if it is partially or entirely met by housing benefit.) In order for a household to be able to rent the cheapest property available closest to Wilstead (a 2-bedroom apartment at £725pcm), a household's gross income would therefore need to be over £34,500.
- 10.15. Another major barrier to entry to the property market for first-time buyers is the high deposit needed for a competitive mortgage rate. The average loan to value for first time buyers nationally in October 2017 was 84.7% , meaning that the average deposit is 15.3%. Smaller deposit mortgages all but disappeared following the onset of the financial crisis. However,

Phase 2 of the government's Help to Buy scheme has more recently facilitated a market in mortgages for first-time buyers at up to 95% loan to value. These mortgages are generally offered at higher rates of interest than for buyers with larger deposits. At 95% loan to value, a first-time buyer household in order to purchase the cheapest property currently available on the market in the parish (2-bedroom house) at £200,000, would require a deposit of around £10,000. At the current average of 84.7% loan to value, a deposit of over £30,500 would be required.

- 10.16. **Mix:** The Housing Needs Survey suggests there is a need for smaller properties, particularly as there are rarely smaller properties on the market in Wilstead (only 2 x 2 bed units at the time of the survey in 2019 and at the time of drafting this document, 1 house and 3 park homes). Those that are, are often park homes which are restricted to older residents.
- 10.17. **Affordable Housing needs:** Analysis of the data from the 2019 Housing Needs Survey has identified a need for affordable housing within Wilstead from households resident in (or with strong links to) the parish. This is unlikely to be met by normal market provision. This need is predominantly from young adults/couples who are currently living in their parents' home and want to move into a rented property of their own or get on the housing ladder. There is also a demand from families who are currently in rented accommodation who would like to get on the property ladder. Based on data supplied by respondents in late 2019, up to 13 households with a local connection would be suitable for housing within a rural exception site development, whether for rent, shared ownership or under a starter homes initiative. However, it must be recognised that this is a snapshot of current, self-assessed need: some respondents may withdraw, move, or be housed by other means during the planning and development of any future scheme.
- 10.18. At the time of the HNS, 18 households were on the Bedford Borough Council Housing register plus 7 from the older age group.
- 10.19. The Local Plan policy 58S requires that sites of 10 or more residential units or 0.5 hectares or more will provide 30% affordable housing with 78% of the dwellings as social or affordable rented properties and the remainder (22%) as other forms of affordable housing. Policy 59S requires that all sites will be required to provide a mix of size and type of housing, including 59% 'accessible/adaptable housing on sites of 3 or more houses. However, there is no threshold set out for the size of houses. Given the ageing population and the lack of smaller, more affordable properties in the housing stock of the Parish, it is reasonable to require that a larger proportion of smaller homes are provided on sites of 3 or more dwellings including bungalows.

Location of Housing

- 10.20. The current Local Plan policies do not allow large scale development outside the Settlement Policy Boundary (as defined on the Policies Map) unless the need for housing outweighs the policy restrictions. This may happen when the Borough as a whole cannot provide a 5 year housing land supply. This requirement is set out in Government Policy, NPPF chapter 5 refers.
- 10.21. Bedford Borough Council will also be required to provide additional housing land for development through a new Local Plan Review. Whilst there is no information on the distribution of that housing requirement currently, it is likely that Service Centres such as Wilstead will be expected to provide additional housing in years to come. The majority of respondents to the Questionnaire considered that no development should take place in the

Parish (50%) but accepted that infilling in the existing built up area could be less unacceptable (36%) as opposed to the use of greenfield sites outside the current built up area (2%).

- 10.22. This NP does not seek to allocate sites currently given that there is no requirement in the current Local Plan for it to do so. However, in the future, should new housing be required in the Parish by the Borough Council, the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be reviewed to consider this at a local level.

Policy H1: Housing

Infill development within the built form of the village (Settlement Policy Area) is supported provided that the principles of high-quality design are adhered to (see Annex D).

All new housing development on sites of 3 units or more will provide at least 33% smaller homes (up to 2 bedrooms). The provision of bungalows is supported.

11. Community Facilities

- 11.1. Wilstead has a small collection of services and facilities. There is a Post Office/general store, a pharmacist and 2 pubs, The Woolpack, currently owned by Green King and the Red Lion. There are also 2 takeaways, one Indian and one Chinese, and a craft shop situated on the Briar Bank site.
- 11.2. There are various community halls which can be hired: Village Hall, Jubilee Centre, Methodist Church Hall and All Saints Chapter House, each being run on a voluntary basis.
- 11.3. Places of worship are:
 All Saints Church, the Methodist Church and Wilstead Evangelical Church
- 11.4. Wilstead has a Primary School with a capacity for 210 children from Reception Class to Year 6 and a pre-school nursery. The Primary School currently has a waiting list of 13 children.
- 11.5. Residents value their local services and facilities and loss of any of them would inevitably result in more car journeys to facilities outside the Parish. The questionnaire revealed that 87% of residents regularly use the Post Office and over 70% use the chemist regularly. Nearly 50% said that they regularly visit the pubs in the village. All are an indication of the spirit of 'local community', appreciated by residents and very much evident in survey responses.
- 11.6. The survey revealed less usage of the services provided by a mobile library, Methodist Hall and Jubilee Centre and these need to be promoted more locally.

11.7. The policy is intended to retain these facilities and services to maintain Wilstead as a sustainable village. Accordingly, change of use, conversion or demolition of any of the facilities listed above to a use which is not for the community will be resisted unless a replacement would prove more suitable for the needs of the community. The applicant will need to put forward evidence that the existing use is no longer commercially viable and, prove that a genuine attempt has been made to market the enterprise as a going concern for at least a year.

Policy CF1: Community Facilities

Development proposals that will result in either the loss of or significant harm to a valued community facility will not be supported, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that its continued use is no longer viable or that appropriate alternative arrangements are more suitable for commercial uses. This will require evidence that the property has been actively marketed, commensurate with its use, at an open market value for a period of at least 12 months. Facilities include;

- Red Lion and Woolpack pubs
- The Post Office/store
- The pharmacy
- Village Hall
- Take-away shops
- Jubilee Centre and Playing Field
- Bowls Club
- Community Woodland
- The 3 Village Churches

Proposals to improve the viability of a community facility by way of the extension or partial replacement or redevelopment of buildings, structures and land, will be supported, provided the design of the scheme respects heritage features, the street scene and the resulting increase in use will not have an unacceptable negative impact on the amenities of adjoining residential properties.

12. Recreation and Open Space

- 12.1. Wilstead has a wealth of informal and formal open spaces. Informal spaces allow people to enjoy the natural environment and landscape whilst walking or simply being outdoors. Increasingly, the value of being outdoors is recognized as playing an important role in healthy lives, mental health and general wellbeing. Formal spaces include recreation grounds and sports pitches. All open spaces contribute visually to the rural nature of the Parish.
- 12.2. An overwhelming majority of respondents to the questionnaire (81%) said that they used open/green spaces regularly, with a further 30% saying that they used the children’s play areas regularly.

12.3. The following open spaces are identified:

- Church Yard & Burial Ground
- Green Spaces, MUGA, Children’s Play Area and Ponds off Longmeadow Drive
- Community Woodland and Newt Reserve
- The area between the A6 and Bedford Rd, next to the Balancing Pond.
- Spaces within the Whitworth Way estate
- The Allotments, Bowling Green and Jubilee Playing Field
- Whitworth Way Playing Field and Children’s Play Area
- Island to the West of Luton Road

These are all areas that are open to the public and a major source of recreation in the village.

Further detail on each of the above is shown in Annex B. Within new housing developments, new open space and recreation facilities will be required in line with Local Plan requirements. Where any such development is in reasonably close proximity to existing playing fields and/or children’s play areas financial assistance will be sought to help introduce a new area of land north of the village centre being considered for teenage and adult recreation.

Policy ROS1: Existing Open Spaces

Existing open spaces and recreation facilities as listed will be protected from development. Proposals which would reduce the quality or quantity of these facilities will only be permitted where the existing facilities are re-provided to a better quality or quantity in an appropriate location.

Policy ROS2: Open space provision as part of new development

Open space should normally be provided within new development to accord with the standards set by Bedford Borough Council in the Local Plan and the following criteria should be met:

- *Efforts should be made to develop green corridors between the village and the countryside.*
- *New open spaces should incorporate tree and shrub planting.*

Suitable arrangements must be incorporated for the costs of future maintenance of these spaces.

The Parish Council will want to be responsible for maintenance of the open spaces within any new development to ensure a consistent approach throughout the parish.

Local Green Spaces

12.4. Consultation showed that people place a high value on the relationship



between the village, the countryside and on the open spaces that help to define the landscape and character of the area.

Designation of Local Green Spaces (LGS) give a very high level of protection to such open spaces. In the NPPF it is stated that in Neighbourhood Plans, local communities can identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection and to rule out new development, other than in “very special circumstances”. The proposed designations are in accordance

with the requirement in Paragraph 100 of the NPPF:

- The green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- The area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife;
- The area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Important green spaces identified that enhance the feeling of the village being located within a countryfied setting are shown on the Policies Map (with ref GS). Details are shown, together with the listed open spaces and County Wildlife sites, in Annex B.

Policy ROS3: Local Green Spaces

The following areas (shown on the Policies Map with a GS reference) are designated as Local Green Spaces:

- *Field in front of Manor Farm*
- *Spaces and Pond off Longmeadow Drive*
- *Allotments, Bowls Club and Jubilee Playing Field*
- *Whitworth Way Playing Field*
- *Fields between Dragons Wood, Wilstead Woods and Luton Road*
- *Dragons Wood*
- *Spaces within the Whitworth Way Estate*
- *Island to the West of Luton Road*
- *Rectory Grounds*
- *Community Woodland and Newt Reserve*
- *Area between the A6 and Bedford Road (north of the underpass)*
- *Wilstead Meadows – Butterfly Field (CWS)*

Development will be resisted in the Local Green Spaces to protect their special character and contribution to the Parish, except in very special circumstances.

13. Traffic and Transport

- 13.1. Wilstead is served by two major routes: Bedford Road and Luton Road providing the main North-South route through the village and linking at either end with the A6 trunk road, and Cotton End Road which runs East-West and links the Village to the A600. The traffic on the Bedford Road and Luton Road is used predominantly by residents, with through traffic using the A6 Bypass. Cotton End Road provides a connection between the new development of Wixams to the East and the A1M, and for the new developments at Cotton End and New Cardington to the A6 and Luton. It suffers from excessive through traffic which is often found to be above the 30mph speed limit.
- 13.2. Heavy Goods vehicles are prohibited from entering the village.
- 13.3. Public transport is currently provided by bus services between Bedford and Luton, with an additional service to Flitwick. There are no rail services. A low percentage of survey responses showed regular use of public transport into/from the village (8%) and 69% hardly ever or never use the bus.
- 13.4. Most people depend upon travel by car, putting pressure within the village on road conditions and car parking space. 69% of the 339 respondents answering a survey question about car ownership have 2 or more vehicles in their household. This reduces to 52% who have less than 2 cars if you add the number who replied accordingly to the number who skipped the question, a figure which is very close to the 53% average of 'Bedford Rural Villages & Bedford Rural Town & Fringe' taken from the 2011 Census (compared to 32% in England as a whole).
- 13.5. The survey showed few people admitting to using their car within the village, preferring to walk or cycle. This highlights a need to keep the pavements in good order and to consider better facilities/routes for cyclists.
- 13.6. Traffic and transport issues were raised constantly throughout the public consultation, Open days and Survey. 70% of the survey responses referencing dislikes and issues in the village related to speeding, parking and the state of the pavements.
- 13.7. While speeding and other traffic violations are policing and highway issues, new infrastructure by way of traffic calming measures or speed cameras would bring about significant improvements to the environment.
- 13.8. 51 people (approx. 10%) responding to the September 2019 survey indicated that they have issues with mobility. Improvements requested are listed in the Aspirations section at the end of the Plan.
- 13.9. Traffic congestion is an issue from traffic turning at the junctions of Dines Close and Whitworth Way which are used as mini roundabouts.
- 13.10. All developments which will increase traffic should be accompanied by a Transport Statement or Assessment and should include the following matters:
- Road safety and parking, including the avoidance of congestion.
 - A local focus on providing pedestrian and cycle links between new housing to the school, shops, Village Hall, recreation grounds and sports field.
 - Developers should identify the realistic level of traffic their development will generate.
 - Development should not add to existing traffic congestion but should strive to reduce it.
- 13.11. As part of the underlying approach to achieving sustainable development in the Neighbourhood Plan any development should encourage walking, cycling, and the use of public transport.

Policy TT1: The traffic impact of new development

Proposed developments that would generate a significant amount of movement or would potentially affect a known traffic hazard should be supported by realistic measures to maintain highway safety and avoid vehicular/pedestrian conflict. Where appropriate it may be necessary to consider off site measures where these are required to accommodate the traffic impact of the scheme.

Where they are proposed, new roads, junctions, footpaths and traffic management measures should be designed to complement the rural character of the village and reflect local heritage.

Parking

- 13.12. There is a single car park off Whitworth Way close to the village centre which provides limited parking for the School, Preschool, Village Hall, Methodist Church and Post Office. The parking is inadequate at peak times and any loss of this facility will be resisted.
- 13.13. It is important that the design of new housing development is not dominated by car parking but a failure to make proper provision can result in problems in terms of appearance and safety. In terms of design, the provision of off-street car parking in sight of properties is of primary concern. Some parts of estates in the village offer off-street parking in the form of communal areas. This is disliked because residents cannot physically see their cars, evidenced by the number that are then parked in adjoining roads. Tandem parking can be inconvenient to residents, particularly when there are many car movements per day for school runs, work commuting and accessing facilities and that this encourages parking on the street, adding to congestion and narrowing the usable highway. This is particularly true in Cotton End Road, (outside the post office and opposite the school,) and in Whitworth Way opposite the school playing field.



The most recent development in the village offers sufficient parking for 2 cars at each property and is designed to keep as many as possible off the street. This is a good example for the future.

- 13.14. Car ownership levels in the parish are high as indicated above, reflecting both the rural location and limited availability of public transport. Off-road parking is limited in the village and is a frequent source of frustration for residents, even on new estates. Adherence to Bedford Borough Council's parking standards should reflect these local factors and seek to ensure that new development does not add to current levels of congestion.
- 13.15. In the questionnaire, residents expressed strong concerns about traffic and transport issues and the impact on their well-being. They highlighted the dangers caused by on-street parking and risks to pedestrian and cyclist safety. The loss of any of the limited parking in the village would exacerbate these problems.

Policy TT2: Car Parking

Proposals for new housing developments will provide parking in line with Bedford Borough Council's parking standards and have adequate on-site parking to meet current and future needs, tandem parking should be avoided where possible.

New development should not result in the loss of publicly accessible off-street car parking. Developments which propose to remove off-road parking spaces will only be supported where alternative provision is made which increases or maintains the number of accessible parking spaces available on or within the immediate vicinity of the site. Proposals for new development that provide additional off-road car parking spaces, to alleviate parking congestion will be encouraged.

Provision for cyclists and pedestrians

- 13.16. Rights of Way are designated footpaths and bridleways, the latter can also be used by cyclists. These are protected by law and also protected by Policy 91 of the Local Plan, which encourages improvements as well as provision of new rights of way.
- 13.17. There are no designated cycle routes within the village. There is a cycle/pedestrian link between the northern extremity of the village and Wixams, leading on to a link to the neighbouring village of Elstow and the outskirts of Bedford.
- 13.18. Wilstead benefits from a considerable number of public footpaths – 15 in total which together cover nearly 7 miles. They are used extensively by villagers for recreation, as walks can be planned to combine several footpaths resulting in an enjoyable circular walk in the countryside. All the walks offer pleasant views over the landscape whether North East towards the Cardington hangars or South towards the Greensand Ridge and woodland areas. In addition there are 3 bridleways which are used by walkers, cyclists and by recreational horse riders from the local equestrian centre and neighbouring smallholdings. The walks have inspired Wilstead residents to form a walking group which regularly meets to help maintain the network of footpaths and to go on organised rambles, using the local footpaths and exploring outside the village.

- 13.19. A comprehensive list of public footpaths and bridleways together with an indexed map is shown in Annex E.
- 13.20. 94% of respondents to a question in the Survey were in favour of creating better footpaths to make it easier to walk around the village and 87% were in favour of creating better bridleways that could be used for horse riding or cycling.
- 13.21. Within the village the encroachment onto the pavements by parked cars, grass and hedges has resulted in large lengths of the pavements being too narrow for buggies or wheelchairs.
- 13.22. There are significant gaps in the pavements on the east side of Bedford Road stretching from No 30 up to Cawne Close. On the north side of Cotton End Road there is a break in the pavement between Cotton End Farm and 245 Cotton End Road (opposite Elms Lane) and on the south from No 114 to 154. Where footpaths end grass verges then extend to each of the main trunk roads. The older lanes (e.g. Duck End Lane, Northwood Lane, Ivy Lane, etc.) do not have pavements nor do some of the smaller, more recent developments (e.g. Brambles, Reid Court, Black Hat Close).
- 13.23. A partnership approach between the Parish Council, Bedford Borough Council and developers will be required to improve highway safety and minimise conflicts between road traffic, cyclists and pedestrians. It is intended to support new ways of managing the traffic throughout the parish by promoting pedestrian and cyclist safety and resident well-being through lower traffic speeds and traffic volumes. Local Employment & Business

Policy TT3: Provision for pedestrians & cyclists

New development, including housing sites, must retain rights of way and fund schemes to improve the provision of pavements and improve safety and access for pedestrians and cyclists.

New rights of way and permissive paths will be supported.

Local Businesses

- 13.24. Wilstead has supported a variety of trades, services and centres in the past and continues to do so today with hairdressers, takeaways, the pharmacy, the post office, a cattery, computer services, Equestrian Centre, garages, builders, gardeners, bookkeepers, childminders, and many others. There are still seven working farms in the Parish with some diversification such as open days and storage.
- 13.25. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate employment sites, but it supports the viability of local businesses and their expansion, where this is proportionate and appropriate in the individual circumstances. The intention is to avoid Wilstead becoming more of a “dormitory” settlement which is over-dependent on outward commuting. The September 2019 survey showed most people who travel to work do not travel more than 20 miles.
- 13.26. The Plan also encourages appropriate diversification of existing economic activities, as this will make the local economy more robust and more sustainable. Home working is also seen as a means of encouraging business and creating a sustainable community with less commuting

and a more sustainable lifestyle, saving individuals the cost of travel and increasing their leisure time.

- 13.27. However, development must be of a scale and intensity appropriate to its context, must not impact detrimentally on residential amenity, and must have an acceptable impact on the character and scale of the village and its rural hinterland. There was little support in the Survey responses for industrial development, offices or facilities to encourage tourism.
- 13.28. The provision of good telecommunications is particularly important in rural areas and in supporting the viability and sustainability of rural enterprise and home working. The village is well served by the provision of fibre-optic communications. These can be extended into individual homes although with the short distance to the telephone exchange within the village 'copper wire' connection to houses is sufficient to provide fairly fast connection.

Policy LE1: Supporting Local Employment and Businesses

Proposals for the development of new small businesses and for the expansion or diversification of existing businesses, including farm-based operations, will be encouraged, providing that:

- *it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse impact from increased traffic, noise, smell, lighting, vibration or other emissions or activities arising from the proposed development; and*
- *it would have an acceptable impact on the character and scale of the village, its rural hinterland and landscape.*

Applications for extensions or part change of use of dwellings to enable flexible or home working within the development boundary will be supported, subject to there being appropriate parking and that the residential amenity of neighbouring properties is maintained.

In each instance, the provision of effective broadband services will be encouraged and appropriate measures should be incorporated into the design of workplaces.

14. Implementation, Monitoring and Review

- 14.1. This section outlines the approach to the implementation of the Wilstead Neighbourhood Plan, including: working in partnership, funding mechanisms, priority projects and monitoring/review. The approach will be that any new development should be supported by the timely delivery of infrastructure, services and facilities necessary to provide a balanced, self-sufficient community.

Working in partnership

- 14.2. Wilstead Parish Council is committed to Localism and locally informed influence over planning decisions and it will be the key organisation in the implementation, monitoring and review of



the Neighbourhood Plan. The Council will build upon its excellent track record in engaging in planning decisions (reactively through consultation and proactively through promoting the policies of this plan) and by delivering related projects for the local community. However, it is recognised that partnership working is needed for the potential of the plan to be realised. Partnership and joint working will be key elements in the successful implementation of the plan. The main organisations and the roles that they can play are summarised below.

- **Bedford Borough Council** - Planning Policy, Development Control, Housing Management and Improvement, Economic Development, Open Spaces, Recreation and Community Facilities and unitary authority functions, including: Drainage, Highways and Transport, Education, Landscape and Social Services.
- **Highways England** – traffic and transport on the A6 and A600 trunk roads.
- **Adjoining Parish Councils** – Assessing impact of large-scale planning applications.
- South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnerships (SEMLEP)
- **Environment Agency** The planning, design and delivery of development, taking account of: Flood risk management; Water quality and water resources and other regulation.
- **Site owners and developers** will need to liaise with the Parish Council as well as the other agencies involved in development.

Funding and Implementation Mechanisms

- 14.3. Financial contributions will be sought from developers through Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which provides a legal framework to raise funds to provide the infrastructure needed to cope with new developments. Contributions will be sought as appropriate under CIL Regulations and the NPPF.
- 14.4. The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations of the 2011 Localism Act enable areas with a Neighbourhood Plan in place to receive at least 25% of the CIL raised in their area to direct to their own local infrastructure priorities. These contributions will be targeted on the priority need to deliver new community infrastructure.
- 14.5. In addition, the Parish Council will seek to influence annual and other budget decisions by Bedford Borough Council on housing, open space and recreation, economic development, community facilities and transport, through the Local Transport Plan.
- 14.6. The Parish Council will also work with the appropriate agencies and organisations to develop funding bids to help to achieve Neighbourhood Plan policies and objectives. This might include: The Lottery; UK Government programmes; land fill tax credits, EU Funds and LEP funding.
- 14.7. The Plan will be used by the Parish Council to:
 - guide comments on planning applications
 - negotiate with landowners and developers to achieve the best possible outcomes from new development
 - direct financial resources to the village in a structured way
 - bring together groups or working parties to improve the village environment
 - lobby local authorities to support the parishioners wishes and aspirations
 - encourage ideas from local residents to further improve or introduce amenities in the village

- 14.8. It is important to check that progress is made towards meeting the objectives and policies of the Plan. The Parish Council will report on the implementation of the Plan every 5 years and consider
- if progress is being made to achieve the vision and the objectives of the Plan
 - if progress is being made towards the implementation of the policies in the Plan
 - if financial contributions available to the community arising from development are being targeted towards the identified plans and projects
 - if the Plan remains based on the most up to date information
 - if the Plan is being taken into account by Bedford Borough Council when determining planning applications
- 14.9. It will then conclude whether a review is required. If so, it will secure opinions of residents and stakeholders to update the Plan.

15. Parish Aspirations

- 15.1. There was remarkable consistency in responses to the September 2019 Survey showing that people appreciate:

- Living in a village and its location in the countryside with its views and its walks.
- Community Spirit and the friendliness of neighbours and other residents.
- Relative quiet and tranquillity as opposed to the hustle and bustle of a town.
- Local amenities, particularly the post office, pharmacy and school
- The availability of organised social activities.
- The village feels safe and has a relatively low crime rate.
- Good infrastructure

But they do not want:

- Continual development and expansion of the Village.
- Inconsiderate parking, particularly around the post office, school entrance and crossroads area and across dropped kerbs.
- Vehicle speeding.

- 15.2. Where appropriate, these responses to the survey have been summarised within the appropriate paragraph of the Neighbourhood Plan above. There are additional comments, however, that cannot be addressed directly by the Plan and these are reproduced in this section as aspirations for the future. The Parish Council should consider these in their future planning.

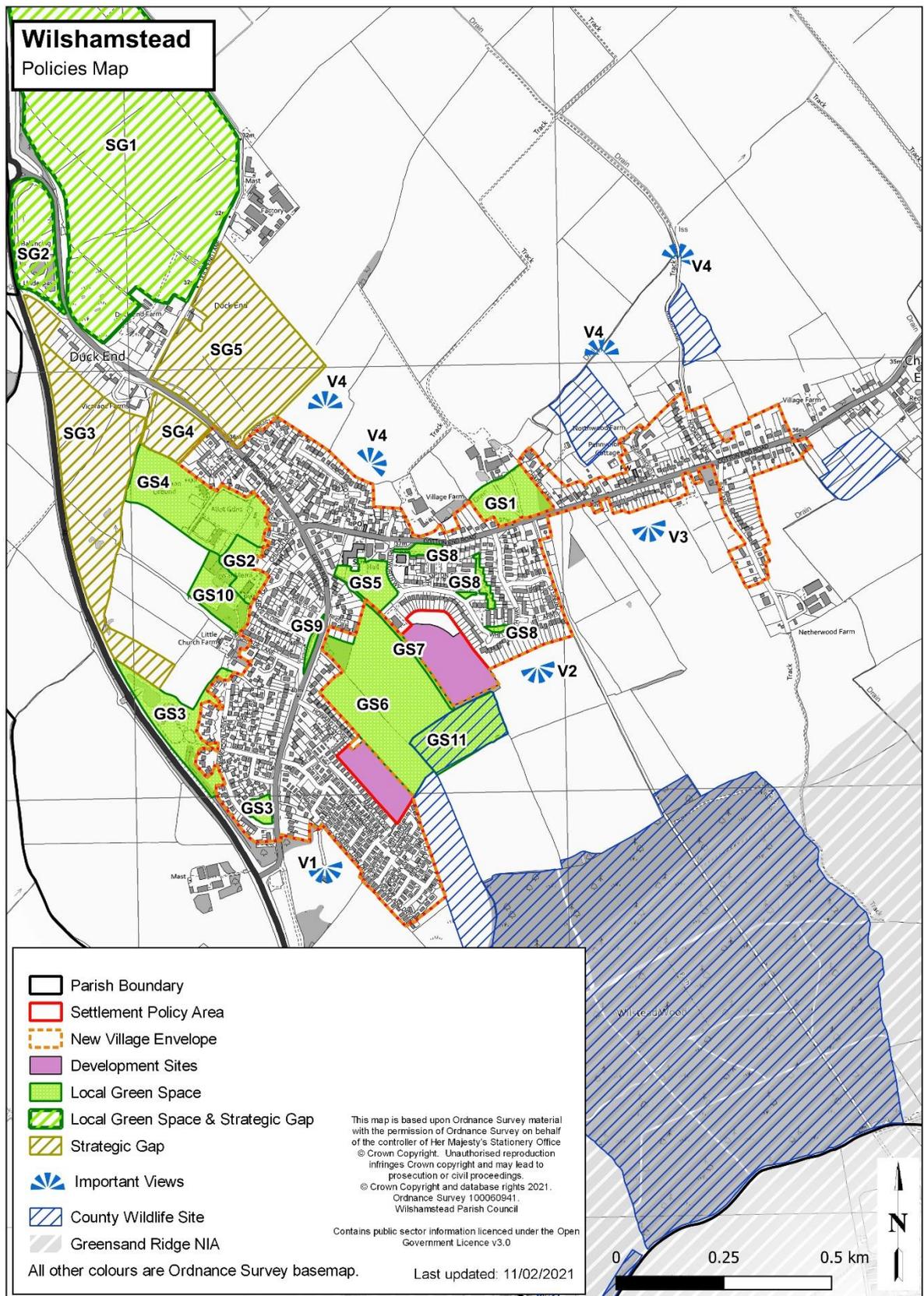
In no order of priority:

- The poor state of pavements (particularly for those with mobility issues)
- Lack of GP or medical facilities
- The lack of a clear village centre
- An improvement in facilities for younger people and the elderly
- Better bus shelters
- More shops



- Improved street lighting (e.g. Ivy Lane)
- Reduction in litter.
- Improved safety and security.
- Better mobile phone coverage.
- More pedestrian crossing points/dropped kerbs.
- More seats.
- Reduced potholes (particularly for those with mobility issues).
- Increase the CCTV to provide support and a deterrent at additional places such as the "bottle bank" lay-by.
- Hanging baskets of seasonal flowers on lamp posts, planting , landscaping and raised beds.
- Better maintenance (e.g. fencing around ditches).
- Manage the encroachment of bushes & over hanging trees which reduce pavement widths.
- Digital speed signs.
- More litter bins.
- Roundabout at A6/Luton Road junction
- An annual village fete.
- Additional recreational apparatus on the school playing field.
- Improve/repair current children's play equipment.
- Extend Christmas decorations over future years.
- Opening up of Duck End Lane planted area as a centre for woodland wildlife conservation and the creation of a substantial pond.
- Set up a high quality free book store exchange library.
- Establish a neighbourhood garden tour, inviting residents to open up their gardens for viewing.

Appendix 1: Policies Map



Appendix 2: Table showing relationship between Objectives and Policies

Objectives	Policies
1. To seek protection and enhancement of the countryside setting of the village, by ensuring separation from the urban edge whilst retaining access to the countryside.	RC1, RC2
2. Identified green spaces, views and vistas and local wildlife habitats will be maintained and enhanced.	NE1,
3. To identify, protect and enhance village heritage assets and key public spaces, ensuring that any future development is sympathetic to the existing rural character of the village.	RC1, BE1, BE2, ROS3
4. To ensure any future housing responds to local needs, is of a high standard of design, and fits well into the context of the village in terms of type, mix, scale and character.	BE2, H1, ROS2
5. To protect existing assets such as the school, village hall and other community buildings and spaces used for community events and encourage improvements in line with changing needs.	CF1
6. To improve the leisure and recreation opportunities for residents of all ages by maintaining and encouraging community activities and the provision of open space and children's play facilities	CF1, ROS1, ROS2, ROS3
7. To promote safe public streets and spaces; reduce traffic volumes through more accessible and beneficial sustainable transport links (including pavements, footpaths and cycle routes) and ensure appropriate parking solutions.	TT1, TT2, TT3
8. To sustain and enhance the range of community and commercial activities and services in the village. Economic activity such as working from home and appropriate small-scale diversification of farm buildings will be encouraged.	LE1



Annexes to the Neighbourhood Plan

- Annex A: Consultations and Survey Results
- Annex B: Green Spaces, Open Spaces, County Wildlife Sites, Strategic Gaps and Important Views
- Annex C: Historical and Important Buildings
- Annex D: Housing Design
- Annex E: Public Footpaths and Bridleways

Glossary

Adoption		The procedure by which a plan becomes formal council responsibility. The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations also call this stage 'made' for the purposes of a Neighbourhood Plan.
Affordable housing		Housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined taking into account local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision
Allocation		A piece of land that has had a particular use earmarked via a Neighbourhood Plan or Local Plan. This might be for housing, employment or another use such as open space.
Amenity		A positive element or elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area. For example, open land, trees, historic buildings and the interrelationship between them, or less tangible factors such as tranquility.
Biodiversity		The whole variety of life encompassing variations, including plants and animals.
Brownfield/previously developed		Land that has been previously developed on (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings and residential gardens)
Bedford Borough Council	BBC	The Local Authority within which Wilstead lies
Consultation Statement		A document which details when, where and how the public and stakeholders have been consulted, issues that were raised and how they were addressed.
Countryside		Land not within settlement boundaries
County Wildlife Site	CWS	A designated area of land important for its species or habitat, of Bedfordshire-wide importance

Community Infrastructure Levy	CIL	An amount of money payable to the Council on new housing and other development which is used for infrastructure and community facilities and services
Developer Contributions/Planning Obligations/Section 106		Developer contributions, also known as planning obligations, can be secured via a section 106 legal agreement or planning condition attached to a planning permission. They help mitigate any adverse impacts generated by new development on infrastructure and facilities.
Employment Land		Land that is used or is proposed to be used for offices, industry and/or storage and distribution – covered by the B Class in the Use Classes Order
Evidence Base		The information and data gathered by local authorities and other plan makers to inform and support the policy approaches to be set out in a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan
Examination		For neighbourhood planning, an independent assessment carried out by an examiner to determine whether your plan meets the Basic Conditions
Flood risk		The combination of probability of a particular flood event and its corresponding hazard and is used to refer to the scale of flood effect, combining hazard and probability, upon a particular site. Flood Zones 1-3b describes land with a specific probability of flooding with 1 being the least affected. Development may be restricted by Flood Zones.
Greenfield		Land where there has been no previous development.
Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area	NIA	The Greensand Ridge NIA is a partnership led by the Greensand Trust, the Wildlife Trust and the RSPB, working closely with Central Bedfordshire Council and Natural England, committed to working

		together and with others to achieve a real and lasting difference to the habitats, species and landscape of the Greensand Ridge
Green Infrastructure	GI	A network of multi-functional green space and other environmental features, urban and rural, including both established and new sites - which support natural and ecological processes, and are capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
Green Space	GS	An open space that helps to define the landscape and character of the area and is of aesthetic or recreational value to the community
Habitats Regulation Assessment	HRA	Tests the impacts of a plan or project on nature conservation sites of European importance and is required under EU legislation.
Heritage asset		A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
Infrastructure		Refers to the fundamental facilities and systems serving a country, city, or other area, including the services and facilities necessary for its economy to function, including transport
Local Green Space	LGS	A green space that has been designated for protection from development
Local Plan		The main planning document in an area which sets out what type and how much development will occur across the area for the next 15 years. It also provides a suite of policies that help manage development including for design, access and amenity

National Planning Policy Framework	NPPF	Sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
National Planning Practice Guidance	NPPG	A web-based resource, provides more detailed guidance on the contents of the NPPF
Neighbourhood Area		This is the area that the Neighbourhood Plan will focus on. For town or parish councils, the designated area is usually the boundary.
Neighbourhood Development Plan or Neighbourhood plan	NDP/NP	Will set out the vision for a neighbourhood area and the planning policies for the use and development of land. If adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan will become a statutory plan carrying equal weight with adopted local plan policies
Policy		A concise statement of the principles that a particular kind of development proposal should satisfy in order to obtain planning permission.
Parish Plan		A Parish Plan or community led plan can include planning related issues but they can focus purely on areas other than development. Parish Plans will not have the same legal status in planning terms as a Neighbourhood Plan
Policies Map		Illustrates the spatial extent of the planning policies and designated areas.
Qualifying Body		Either a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum, which can initiate the process of neighbourhood planning.
Referendum		A vote by the eligible population of an electoral area who may decide on a matter of public policy. Neighbourhood Plans are subject to a referendum of the eligible voters within a neighbourhood area. There is a specific question set in Regulations which has a yes or no answer.
Settlement Hierarchy		Many Local Plans set out a hierarchy of settlements according to their population

		and facilities. Different levels of growth may be attributed to each tier.
Strategic Environmental Assessment	SEA	European requirement assesses the significant environmental impacts of plans and programmes.
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	SFRA	An assessment of the probability of flooding within a particular area.
Strategic Gap	SG	In order to preserve the separate character and identity of Wilstead village, the gap between it and other settlements requires additional protection from development to prevent coalescence
Supplementary Planning Document	SPD	A document which elaborates upon a policy (ies) of the Local Plan to provide additional guidance for a particular topic or type of development.
Sustainability Appraisal	SA	An assessment of the environmental, social, and economic impacts of a Local Plan to check that the plan accords with the principles of sustainable development.
Sustainable Development		An approach to development that aims to allow economic growth without damaging the environment of natural resources thereby development which 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'
Sustainable Drainage System	SuDS	An artificial drainage solution which reduces and slows the quantity and rate of surface water run off from new development, dealing with it as close to the source as possible
Tree Preservation Order	TPO	An order made by a local planning authority to protect a specific tree, a group of trees or woodland. TPOs prevent the felling, lopping, topping, uprooting or other deliberate damage of trees without the permission of the local planning authority.
Village Design Statement		Contains a description and analysis of the distinctive aspects of a village and

		<p>outlines design guidance for further development. A Village Design Statement can then be considered in assessing planning applications</p>
<p>Wilshamstead or Wilstead</p>		<p>Usually the name Wilshamstead is used to refer to the whole Parish and Wilstead to the village. However, they do get confused in everyday usage. For the purposes of this document, the first statement in this section applies</p>