



Health in Neighbourhood Plans March 2024

A guide for Norfolk
communities to embed health
in neighbourhood plans



Norfolk County Council
Public Health

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Aim of this guide

Planning shapes the places in which people live and their ability to live healthy lives. Neighbourhood planning, introduced by the [Localism Act 2011](#), gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. The process of making a neighbourhood plan provides an important opportunity to ensure that new development and changes proposed in a neighbourhood plan area (typically the area covered by 1-2 town or parish councils) are planned and designed to support people's health and wellbeing.

This guide is for anyone working on a neighbourhood plan in Norfolk, or helping others with a neighbourhood plan, such as: neighbourhood planning forums, town and parish councillors, local authority planners supporting neighbourhood planning in their areas and private sector consultants employed by a neighbourhood planning forum.



How to use this guide

This guide is not subject to copyright and can, in total or part, be incorporated into a neighbourhood plan as required.

The guide contains references to primary sources of health evidence for further research. These sources can be used as an evidence base to develop policies for a neighbourhood plan.

It also includes examples of good practice which can be adapted for use. These examples are included to provoke imagination and inspire local communities to embed health into their neighbourhood plans. Neighbourhood Plans are most effective or significant where these are locally distinctive, reflecting matters appropriate to the plan area.

The guide is most useful if used from the beginning of any neighbourhood plan development process, but it can also be used to audit the contents of a neighbourhood plan at any stage of development.

If you have any queries about the guide please contact Public Health at phplanning@norfolk.gov.uk

Policies to support integrating health in planning

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

In England, all planning policy and practice is shaped by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹, which is regularly updated. A range of policies in the NPPF support consideration of health in planning policy, most notably Chapter 8 “Promoting healthy and safe communities”. The NPPF requires local authority planners to promote healthy communities, use evidence to assess health and wellbeing needs, and work with public health leads and organisations. Chapter 8 in the NPPF is supported in greater detail in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)².

Local planning policy

Local Plans are the key documents through which local planning authorities set out a vision and strategic framework for the future development of their area, engaging with their communities in doing so. Local Plans address needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the local economy, community facilities and infrastructure. They safeguard the environment, enable adaptation to climate change and help secure high quality accessible design.

The Norfolk Planning in Health Protocol Is an agreement between Norfolk’s Local Planning Authorities, Norfolk Public Health and the NHS. It includes a healthy planning checklist covering six themes that highlight health issues and facilitate discussion in planning³. These themes could be used in neighbourhood plans to inform policies and ensure that proposals consider their impacts, positive and negative, on the health and wellbeing of residents and the wider communities of Norfolk. Further detail on the themes alongside neighbourhood plan examples can be found on [page 16](#).

Neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the [Localism Act 2011](#) as a new community right to plan and gives communities greater influence over the development and growth of their areas. Since its introduction, over 1,500 neighbourhood plans (as of January 2023) have passed local referenda to become part of statutory development plans for their local areas – meaning that policies within the plan must be taken into consideration when planning applications come forward in the neighbourhood plan area.

There is significant flexibility in what neighbourhood plans can include – and it is important that neighbourhood plans are community-led and reflect local priorities and needs. It is also important to remember that for a neighbourhood plan to be successful it needs to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the existing Local Plan, as well as meeting the other basic conditions of neighbourhood planning, as set out in government legislation. Find out more about the process, here www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning.

The formal role of a neighbourhood plan is the setting of planning policies which deal with land use and development, as statutory development plan documents. However, plans can go beyond regulating the form and function of land by including a list of desired community actions and projects. Although community actions and projects are not applied directly as policies for determining planning applications, they can still carry some weight to help development management officers make decisions that are in line with the community's wishes.

For more information and support for neighbourhood planning contact your Local Planning Authority or access neighbourhoodplanning.org.

The wider determinants of health

The factors that influence our health are multiple and complex; but most of these factors lie outside health and social care systems. Good homes, clean air, jobs, parks and green spaces, being active every day and trusted friends and neighbours are all important wider determinants of population health. It has been estimated that 60% of the causes of good health lie outside the NHS and social care⁴. Focusing on these wider determinants of health is essential for improving population health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities.

Poor health and health inequalities in England are estimated to cost the NHS an extra £4.8 billion a year and cost the UK £31-33 billion a year in lost productivity⁵. Interventions to reduce inequality and improve health in more deprived neighbourhoods have the potential to save money for health systems not only within years but across people's entire lifetimes⁶.

The ecosystem model of health determinants developed by Barton and Grant⁷ provides a holistic model of the relationship between people, their quality of life and their local and global environment. Such models provide an important framework for considering the wider health impacts of development.

Health Map For the Human Habitat designed by Barton and Grant

The determinants of health and wellbeing in our neighbourhoods

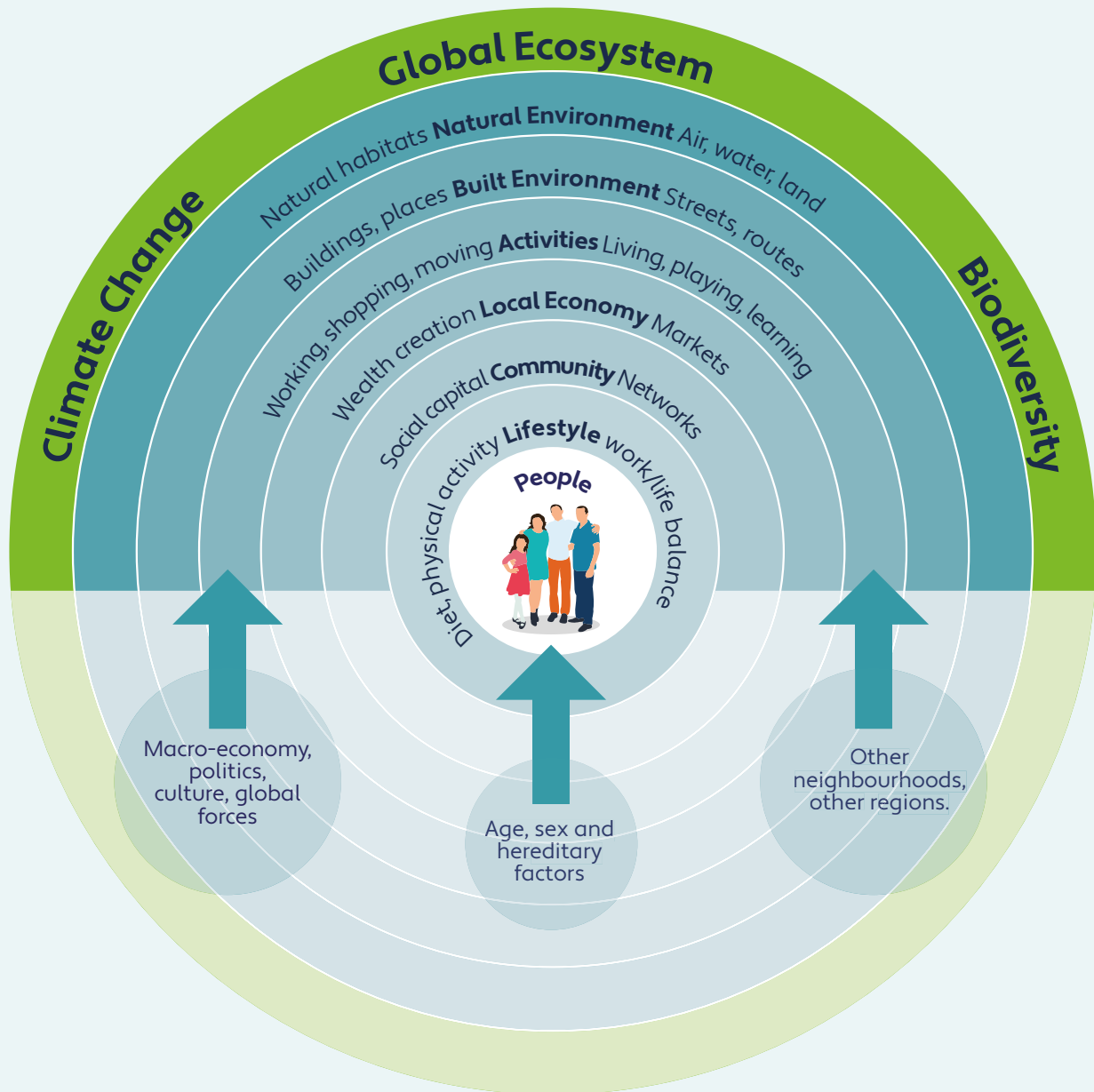


Figure 1: The Health Map describes the determinants of health and wellbeing in our neighbourhoods. It shows the relationship between people, their lifestyle, community and local economy and how these factors relate to their activities, the built and the natural environment; all of which are surrounded by the global ecosystem.

There is now a lot of evidence about what sort of places are good for people's wellbeing by supporting their physical and mental health. Neighbourhood planning groups might want to think about and discuss this evidence in the early stages of formulating their ideas for their neighbourhood plan. The evidence can also be used to justify proposals in the plan on the grounds that they will support community wellbeing.

In addition to this general evidence about what makes a healthy place, the neighbourhood plan could also include a data profile containing facts and figures about the locality and specific evidence about the health of the community, including information about population, housing and environmental factors such as flood risk. Capacities of local services such as GP surgeries and schools can also be included. Possible sources of information for a neighbourhood data profile are –

- The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Fingertips public health data collection. [Public health profiles](#) and the Local Health Report websites [Local Health Reports on a custom area](#). Both of these websites give data on health issues.
- The Office for National Statistics 2021 Census data [Find a geographic area](#) gives data on population, identity, housing, employment and education.
- Norfolk County Council's data observatory [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics](#) gives data on demographics, including quick profiles by election wards.
- Active Norfolk's library of insight tools [Insight Tools - Insight and Evaluation](#) has links to a number of useful websites.



Evidence

This section provides a summary of the evidence about what makes a healthy place and links to further resources and guidance.

Built and natural environment

People spend almost all their time in human-made or modified environments. Features such as neighbourhood design, housing, the food environment, transport, and natural and sustainable environments are all recognised as determinants of health and are described in detail in the Public Health Spatial Planning for Health Evidence Review⁸.

- **Neighbourhood design**

If neighbourhoods and communities are planned and designed so that it is easy for people – including those who are older, very young, or less able – to walk to community facilities (such as shops, schools, healthcare, open spaces and sports amenities), or to visit friends, or other places, it can support people to stay well by making physical activity part of their everyday lives. Improving neighbourhood walkability with infrastructure designed to promote walking, wheeling and cycling is associated with numerous positive health outcomes, including increased physical activity levels⁹, maintaining a healthy weight and improved social engagement among older adults¹⁰.

Areas of well-connected mixed land use and co-location of services and facilities along with high-quality public transport are associated with increased physical activity levels, reduced risk of pedestrian injury and road traffic collisions, and also increased social engagement among older adults.

Through the neighbourhood planning process, it is possible to find out which parts of the neighbourhood people like walking in, and which could be improved. Sometimes relatively small changes, such as more benches to rest on, better signposting and safer crossings can give people the confidence to walk instead of drive short distances. A neighbourhood plan could identify infrastructure priorities which could then be delivered through mechanisms such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

- **Housing**

People living in poor quality homes are twice as likely to have poor general health than people who do not (22% of people compared to 11%)¹¹. Good quality, secure and affordable housing is associated with positive health outcomes including improved social outcomes among older adults, reduced injury among older adults and children and improved general physical and mental health¹². Among vulnerable groups (for example people with disabilities) provision of affordable housing is associated with improved quality of life, mental health and clinical health-related outcomes.

An important aspect of both rented and owned housing is affordability. This influences where people live and work and affects the quality of housing, poverty, community cohesion, and time spent commuting.

Planning groups could find out what sort of homes are needed by the local community and put forward policies that could help secure delivery of the right mix and tenure of housing to meet local needs. In many places there is a shortage of particular types of homes, such as those designed for people with disabilities, housing with care for older people or smaller homes for single people. A neighbourhood that prioritises the type of homes the community needs most could make a difference. This should be based on a robust assessment of housing needs. Guidance and assistance in developing Housing Needs Assessments is currently available via Locality; [Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#).

- **Food environment and healthy eating**

Provision of and access to healthier and affordable food can be effective in helping people choose to eat healthier diets and maintain a healthy weight. Opportunities to grow food locally and engage in gardening are associated with improved attitudes towards healthy eating, increased opportunities for social connection, improvements in mental health and increased opportunities for physical activity.

For children and young people, initiatives that aim to change eating habits that take an integrated approach, including involving the child's school, may be most effective in improving children's diet and food choices¹³.

Neighbourhood planning groups should consider local opportunities for food growing, such as allotment provision, community orchards, gardens and community spaces and also ways to support the maintenance of these spaces over the long term. Plans can also seek to ensure good home design with space for domestic growing through gardens and balconies.

- **Transport**

Active travel is the simplest and most inclusive way of getting people to incorporate activity into their daily lives, and has numerous benefits for physical and mental health, the environment, the places we live, quality of life and social inclusion¹⁴.

How people move around plays a significant role in supporting people's daily activity levels and can support a reduction in reliance on cars, contributing to improved air quality and improve road safety. Infrastructure for active travel – walking, wheeling and cycling – installation of traffic calming measures, and public realm improvements, for example street lighting (designed to minimise light pollution), frequent seating and shaded areas, are associated with increased physical activity levels, reduced obesity, reduced heat exhaustion and reduced risk of injury, among other positive outcomes. Furthermore, the provision of high quality, affordable and reliable public transport is associated with numerous positive health outcomes, including increased physical activity, improved cardiovascular outcomes, and improved social participation¹⁵.

Although policies to support public transport availability and affordability tend to be strategic and therefore outside of the remit of neighbourhood plans, plans can include strategies and projects committing to support and lobby for public transport improvements which is especially important in more rural areas. Policies in Neighbourhood Plans could for example make travel plans a requirement for developments above a certain size which includes public transport improvements. Plans may also consider EV charging networks and how to support the shift to lower-polluting vehicles.



- **Natural and sustainable environment**

Access to green space, close to home, is important. There is a very significant and strong body of evidence linking contact and exposure to the natural environment with improved health and wellbeing. This contact can be everything from seeing trees from your window or doorstep, to accessing parks, rivers and larger open spaces.

Access to high quality, well-maintained green spaces has a beneficial effect on health and wellbeing¹⁶. There is consistent evidence that having access to recreational infrastructure, such as parks, playgrounds, and space for informal play is associated with reduced risk of obesity among adolescents. However access to green space is unequally distributed, with deprived communities generally having less access¹⁷.

A number of air pollutants have adverse effects on health. Some of the strongest evidence is for effects of fine particulate matter (PM2.5), leading to increased mortality risk, particularly from heart and lung conditions¹⁸.

Issues of climate change may have implications for planning and health. Flooding is associated with a number of health related issues including poor mental health outcomes¹⁹ and increasingly extreme heat exposure will also be a challenge for places and communities²⁰.

- **Sustainable design**

Neighbourhood plans can also seek to embed commitments to sustainable design and construction. Plans can seek to support developments that are optimised for water and energy efficiency, target zero carbon emissions, use renewable energy technologies, or employ *Passivhaus*²¹ or similar standards.

Education

Educational attainment is strongly linked with healthy behaviours and outcomes. Better-educated individuals are less likely to suffer from long term diseases, to consider themselves in poor health, or to suffer from mental conditions such as depression or anxiety²².

Also the physical environment of education establishments such as green space, forest trails, playgrounds and sports facilities and fixed resources such as outdoor clothing, climbing frames and sand pits can impact on physical activity and behaviour.

Income

Many physical and mental health outcomes improve as income rises²³. Income is related to life expectancy, disability free life expectancy, self-reported health and a range of indicators linked to diseases and conditions.

Work and the labour market

A strong local economy provides sufficient quantity and quality of employment opportunities for the population. On the whole, work is good for mental and physical health²⁴. In addition to the health benefits associated with an adequate wage, work can provide valuable social interactions, a place to develop skills, and a sense of social participation and contribution.

Retaining appropriate levels of retail and commercial uses in communities supports a buoyant local economy, providing increased opportunity to shop and use services locally and reducing the need to travel and commute. Neighbourhood plans could provide policy support for new commercial uses and regulate changes of use to combat loss of retail provision.

Crime

Crime affects physical and mental health in many ways²⁵. Violence against people causes the most harm to health, while the psychological effects of experiencing crime, whether violent or not, can also have far reaching consequences. The fear of crime can have psychological effects and directly reduce health promoting behaviours such as physical activity and social contact. Neighbourhood plans can have a significant impact by promoting the principles of 'Designing Out Crime'²⁶.

Social capital

Community life, social connections and having a voice in local decisions are all factors that have a vital contribution to make to health and wellbeing. These community level determinants build control and resilience and can help buffer against disease and influence health related behaviour²⁷.

Healthy planning checklist themes and policy examples

The Health Impact Assessment checklist contained within the Norfolk Planning in Health Protocol has six healthy planning themes that can be used to inform neighbourhood plans.

Each theme is listed below with guidance or examples of Neighbourhood Plan policies. Examples from within Norfolk are highlighted in green boxes. These examples are intended to provoke imagination and inspire local communities to embed health into their neighbourhood plans, rather than to be adopted literally.



Theme 1 Partnership and inclusion

Engagement

Communities, including vulnerable and seldom heard groups, have been engaged in the development of plans and policies.

Integration

The design creates environments where people can meet and interact and connects the proposal with neighbouring communities.

Place Standard Partners (Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland, Architecture & Design Scotland): Place Standard Tool

The Place Standard Tool offers a way of assessing places based around 14 questions. It covers physical elements (such as buildings, spaces and transport) as well as social aspects (like whether people feel they have a say in decision making). There are also Climate Lens and Children and Young Peoples' versions.

The Place Standard Tool and user guide are free to access from:

[Our place /About-Place-Standard](#)



Theme 2 Healthy Environment

Construction

The plans or proposals minimises construction impacts such as dust, noise, vibration, and odours.

Air Quality

The plans or proposals minimise air pollution.

Noise

The plans or proposals minimise the impact of noise caused by traffic and commercial uses through attenuation, insulation, site layout and landscaping.

Biodiversity

The plans or proposals contributes to nature conservation and biodiversity.

Poringland Neighbourhood Plan 2021

Policy 6 – Natural Environment

All development will be expected to achieve a demonstrable net ecological gain to meet statutory requirements including through the creation of a range of locally appropriate habitats and the inclusion of design features, including those that enable animals, especially species in decline, to move between habitats unhindered. Support will be given to proposals that would result in a significant net ecological gain, or which help to support the B-Line for pollinators or other key green infrastructure as set out in The Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy.

For more information see [Poringland Neighbourhood Plan k](#)

Local food growing

The plans or proposals provide opportunities for food growing, for example by making provision or land allocation for allotments, private and community gardens.

Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2033

Policy WL07 – Community Allotments, Orchards and Composting

Proposals for the provision of allotments, community orchards and composting in the larger residential development areas (over 50 dwellings), in suitable locations and sufficient to meet local demand will be supported. The use of redundant land for community allotment, orchard and composting initiatives in suitable locations will be supported.

For more information see [Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan](#)

Flood risk

The plans or proposals reduce surface water flood risk through sustainable urban drainage techniques, including storing rainwater, use of permeable surfaces and green roofs.

Harleston Town Council 2021

Policy RWH22 – Climate change and flood risk

All new development (including minor development) is required to use appropriate sustainable drainage systems (including SuDS and drainage lagoons), wetland and water features, to protect against pollution, provide drainage and wider amenity, recreational and biodiversity benefits.

All development will be expected to demonstrate how it can mitigate its own flooding and drainage impacts, avoid increase of flooding elsewhere and seek to achieve lower than greenfield runoff rates. All proposals for new development within the Plan area should take account of the advice and guidance on surface water drainage and the mitigation of flood risk obtainable from Norfolk County Council (as Lead Local Flood Authority) and the Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland Drainage Board (as statutory Drainage Board for the Plan area). All development proposals will be required to secure the necessary consents and approvals from those bodies

For more information see

[Neighbourhood Plan Policies – Harleston Town Council](#)

Overheating

The design of buildings and spaces avoids internal and external overheating, through use of passive cooling techniques and urban greening.



Theme 3 Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Social infrastructure

The plans or proposals contribute new social infrastructure provision that is accessible, affordable and timely.

The plans or proposals promote access to a range of community facilities and public services (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure) that are well designed and easily accessible.

Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan 2019

Policy 15 – Additional Community Facilities

Planning applications relating to the provision of additional community facilities, additional recreation space, play space and sports facilities will be supported where they comply with the requirements of other policies within the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan and the requirements of other development plan policies.

The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that provision of additional local facilities meets the growing local community needs.

For more information see [Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan](#)

Access to fresh food

The plans or proposals provide opportunities for local food shops and avoids an over concentration or clustering of hot food takeaways.

Newmarket Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2031

Policy NKT7 – The Market

As far as planning permission is required, proposals for an enhanced twice-weekly market in the town centre will be supported where it is in a suitable and accessible location.

For more information see [NP-referendum-version.pdf](#)





Theme 4 Active lifestyles

Access

The plans or proposals protect and enhance existing and/or provide suitable new accessible green and open space, play and sports spaces, woodlands, and allotments (or provides alternative facilities in the vicinity). They set out how these new spaces will be managed and maintained for the lifetime of the development.

Travel and Transport

The plans or proposals have a travel plan that includes adequate and appropriate cycle parking and storage and traffic management and calming measures. The layouts are highly accessible and includes safe, well-lit, and networked pedestrian and cycle routes and crossings.

The plans or proposals minimises travel to ensure people can access facilities they need by walking cycling and public transport. The plans or proposals keep commercial vehicles away from areas where their presence would result in danger or unacceptable disruption to the highway or cause irreparable damage.

Holt Town Green Wheel 2022

Policy HOLT 6 – Connectivity in and around Holt

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a Green Wheel comprising public footpaths, cycle routes, bridleways, quiet streets/lanes and public transport assets and routes.

Proposals for major development, as defined by national planning policy, should demonstrate how their future occupants will be able to access the Green Wheel in safe and convenient ways, both within the site through its layout, access arrangements and permeability and beyond the site boundary.

Where proposals require mitigation measures to address their effects on the quality or extent of the Green Wheel, they will be required to make reasonable financial contributions.

For more information see [Holt Neighbourhood Plan September 2022](#)



Theme 5 Healthy Housing

Healthy living

The plans or proposals provides dwellings with adequate internal space, including sufficient storage space and separate kitchen and living spaces.

Garden space is provided and where garden space is impractical effectively managed communal garden space will be provided.

The plans or proposals encourage the use of stairs by ensuring that they are well located, attractive and welcoming.

Hilton, Martson on Dove & Hoon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2035

Policy H6 – Housing design

Residential development should reflect the character and density of the immediate surrounding area and use building materials consistent with neighbouring properties.

- Use green infrastructure, in particular trees, to create a barrier between sources of pollution and residents.
- All new developments should include footpaths to encourage and facilitate walking.
- All new development should be located within 800 metres walking distance of shops, parks, recreational facilities and services including medical facilities.

For more information see [Neighbourhood planning – Hilton, Marston on Dove and Hoon Neighbourhood Development Plan](#)

Accessible housing

The plans or proposals meet all the requirements contained in National Housing standards for daylighting, sound, insulation and private space.

The plans or proposals provide accessible homes for older people and people with disabilities.

Spixworth Neighbourhood Plan 2021

Policy 8 – Home Design

New homes (including those created through conversions, extensions and infill) should be designed to a high standard and be mindful to how residents will live in their home by:-

- Encouraging the use of and /or generating renewable energy in association with methods to reduce energy demands (such as 'fabric first') and increase conservation.
- Providing private external amenity space appropriate to the size and type of dwelling, for conversions and flatted developments shared provision of external amenity space will be acceptable..
- Enabling direct access to rear gardens via external means.
- Ensuring where garages are provided they should be located within the property curtilage and encouraged to include electric vehicle charging points.
- Providing accessible screened storage space for refuse and recycling within the property curtilage.

For more information see [Spixworth Neighbourhood Plan Adopted Version](#)

Housing mix and affordability

Neighbourhoods are designed with a mix of housing types and tenures and provide accommodation, which is adaptable to cater for changing needs, including the ageing population.

Affordable housing is integrated in the whole site and will avoid segregation.

Filby Neighbourhood Plan 2022

Policy H1 – Housing Type and Mix

All housing proposals for five or more dwellings will need to provide a mix of housing types and sizes, and these should aim to reflect local need using the best available and proportionate evidence. This should include, unless evidence is provided either showing a lower need is justified or the scheme is made unviable:

All housing must be accessible and adaptable, with bungalows strongly encouraged; and a minimum of 25% of dwellings comprising two bedrooms or fewer, to enable older residents to downsize or younger residents to get on the housing ladder.

Conversely, the inclusion of dwellings comprising five bedrooms or more will not be supported unless it is clearly and demonstrably meeting a local housing need.

These requirements apply to the whole proposal, and so open-market and affordable housing combined.

All proposals for sheltered housing will be encouraged subject to meeting other policies in this plan and the local plans.

All proposals within the development limits that will deliver affordable housing but fall below the national threshold requiring provision of such will be especially supported.

For more information see [Filby Neighbourhood Plan](#)



Theme 6 Economic Activity

Local employment and healthy workspaces

A range of employment opportunities are available within the neighbourhood or is accessible by sustainable travel means.

The plan or proposal includes commercial uses and provides opportunities for local employment and training, including temporary construction and permanent 'end-use' jobs.

Wroxham Neighbourhood plan 2019

Policy BUS2 – New businesses

Proposals for new business development, as listed below, that diversify employment opportunities in Wroxham will be supported:

- Start-up/incubator units.
- Office facilities
- Training facilities.
- Live/work units.
- Marine businesses.
- Light industry/new technologies.

All new businesses need to demonstrate how their size and design respects the immediate surrounding in which they are located and are appropriate to the character of Wroxham.

For more information see [Wroxham Neighbourhood Plan Adopted Version](#)

Summary

In very simple terms, a neighbourhood plan is:

- A statutory development plan that sets out non-strategic planning policies for the neighbourhood area that will safeguard and improve the health and wellbeing of the community
- Written by the local community, the people who know and love the area, rather than the local planning authority
- Adopted by the local planning authority as part of the statutory development plan, following independent examination and referendum
- A powerful tool to ensure the community gets the right types of development, in the right place

For more help and further information please see

[Neighbourhood Planning – Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)

[Neighbourhood Planning – Breckland Council](#)

[Support for developing your Neighbourhood Plan – Broadland and South Norfolk](#)

[Current neighbourhood planning status – Great Yarmouth Borough Council](#)

[Neighbourhood plans | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk](#)

[Home | Neighbourhood Planning North-Norfolk](#)

[Neighbourhood planning | Norwich City Council](#)

[Neighbourhood planning advice – Norfolk County Council](#)

Acknowledgements

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