



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of Saxmundham Town Council held on Monday 12th May 2025
at the Market Hall, High Street, Saxmundham at 7:00 pm.

Minutes

12/25TC Election of Chair

Nominations for Chair were invited. Cllr Elizabeth Clark nominated Cllr John Findlay. The motion was seconded by Cllr David Humphreys. It was **unanimously resolved** to elect Cllr John Findlay as Chair for the civic year 2025-2026. Cllr John Findlay signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, witnessed by the Town Clerk.

13/25TC Election of Vice-Chair

Nominations for Vice-Chair were invited. Cllr John Findlay nominated Cllr Geraldine Barker. The motion was seconded by Cllr John Fisher. It was **unanimously resolved** to elect Cllr Geraldine Barker as Vice-Chair for the civic year 2025-2026.

14/25TC Attendees

Cllr John Findlay (Chair)
Cllr Geraldine Barker (Vice Chair)
Cllr Nick Jackson
Cllr Marianne Kiff
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr Elizabeth Clark
Cllr David Humphreys
Cllr Tim Lock
Cllr Georgina Burns
Cllr Laura Purina
Cllr Jeremy Smith (part of the meeting)

Apologies

Cllr James Sandbach

Also Present

Sharon Smith (Town Clerk/RFO)
1 member of the public

15/25TC Declaration of Interests

Cllr John Findlay declared an interest in item 23/25TCd.

16/25TC Open Forum

The Chair noted that, due to the volume of business, there was no Open Forum included on the agenda. However, he agreed to a request from a member of the public to address the Council. The member of the public reported being disturbed by night-time works carried out by contractors clearing foliage as part of the railway line upgrades for the Sizewell C project. He stated that he intervened, and the contractors agreed to cease operations, as local residents had not been given prior notice of the activity. The Chair confirmed that the Council would raise the matter with Sizewell C.

17/25TC Minutes

Signed _____ Date _____

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14th April 2025.
- b) The Council received the draft minutes from the:
 - i. Resources Committee meeting held on 6th May 2025.
 - ii. Amenities and Services Committee meeting held on 17th April 2025.
 - iii. Planning and Development Committee meeting held on 24th April 2025.

18/25TC Council and Committees

- a) The Council noted the Councillors' Attendance at Meetings Report for the previous civic year.
- b) The Council approved the revised Committee and Working Group structure for the civic year 2025–2026.
- c) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint members to Committees as follows:
 - i. Amenities and Services Committee – Cllr Tim Lock, Cllr Elizabeth Clark, Cllr Laura Purina, Cllr David Humphreys, Cllr Marianne Kiff.
 - ii. Civic and Community Committee – Cllr Nick Jackson, Cllr Geraldine Barker, Cllr Tim Lock, Cllr James Sandbach, Cllr Laura Purina, Cllr Georgina Burns.

Cllr Jeremy Smith joined the meeting and offered his apologies to the Chair for his late arrival.

- iii. Planning and Development Control Committee – Cllr John Fisher, Cllr Marianne Kiff, Cllr David Humphreys, Cllr Geraldine Barker, Cllr Elizabeth Clark, Cllr Laura Purina.
 - iv. Staffing – Cllr David Humphreys, Cllr John Findlay, Cllr Elizabeth Clark, Cllr John Fisher, Cllr Tim Lock.
- d) It was unanimously resolved to make the following appointments to Working Groups for the civic year ahead:
 - i. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – Cllr Jeremy Smith, Cllr John Findlay, Cllr Geraldine Barker, Cllr Nick Jackson.
 - ii. Fromus Energy Projects Team – Cllr Geraldine Barker, Cllr Tim Lock, Cllr Nick Jackson, Cllr Georgina Burns, Cllr Laura Purina.
- e) The Council appointed the following Chairs to its Committees for the civic year ahead. Working Groups, who include members of the public, were authorised to appoint their own Chairs from within their membership.
 - i. Amenities and Services Committee – Cllr Tim Lock.
 - ii. Civic and Community Committee – Cllr Nick Jackson
 - iii. Planning and Development Control Committee – Cllr John Fisher
 - iv. Staffing Committee – Cllr David Humphreys

Signed _____ Date _____

- f) It was **unanimously resolved** to appoint the Chairs of all Committees to the Resources Committee, namely: Cllr Tim Lock, Cllr Nick Jackson, Cllr John Fisher, and Cllr David Humphries. In addition, Cllr John Findlay, as Chair of the Town Council, and Cllr Elizabeth Clark, as Chair of the Resources Committee for the previous civic year, were also appointed. Cllr Elizabeth Clark was appointed as Chair of the Resources Committee for the civic year 2025–2026.
- g) Following an amendment to the Terms of Reference of the Working Groups proposed by Cllr Jeremy Smith, it was **unanimously resolved** to approve the Scheme of Delegation including the revised Terms of Reference for the civic year ahead.
- h) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the schedule of ordinary meetings of the Council and Committees for the civic year ahead.

19/25TC Code of Conduct

- a) The members noted the requirement to conduct the annual review of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct.
- b) The members noted the requirement to conduct the annual review of their Registers of Interest.

20/25TC External Bodies

- a) The Council discussed the importance of reviewing its representation on external bodies and agreed that a comprehensive list of relevant organisations should be compiled to support this process. It was agreed that the Town Clerk be instructed to draw up a list of external bodies for consideration at a future meeting, to enable the Council to determine whether it wishes to appoint representatives and establish appropriate reporting arrangements.
- b) Cllr Laura Purina reported that she had represented the Council at Community Rest Centre training delivered by East Suffolk Council.

21/25TC Energy Projects

- a) Cllr Geraldine Barker, Chair of the Fromus Energy Projects Team, summarised her report, which had been previously circulated and is available on the Council's website. Cllr Barker also reported that she and the Town Clerk will represent the Council at a series of meetings with East Suffolk Council and other Town and Parish Councils directly affected by the numerous energy projects.
- b) It was unanimously resolved to endorse the 'Empowering Nature' paper for community consultation and to publish the associated press release.
- c) It was **unanimously resolved** to delegate authority to the Chair of the Fromus Energy Projects Team, in conjunction with the Chair of the Town Council and the Town Clerk, to submit responses to the Sealink Development Consent Order examination, subject to prior email approval by Councillors.

22/25TC Strategic Plan 2025-2026

- a) The Council received a summary of the results of the community consultation,
- b) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the Strategic Plan for 2025-2030.

Signed _____ Date _____

23/25TC Finance

- a) The Council received the payments, receipts and bank balances to 30th April 2025.
- b) The Council received the budget versus actual income and expenditure report to 30th April 2025.
- c) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the continued use of the BACS system for online payments.
- d) The Council considered the grant request from IP17 Good Neighbours Scheme and, following discussion, **resolved by majority** to award a grant of £10,000. Cllr John Findlay, having declared an interest, did not participate in the discussion or vote.

24/25TC Policies

It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the Resources Committee recommendations to approve the:

- a) updated Standing Orders
- b) biennial review of the Disciplinary Policy
- c) biennial review of the Grievance Policy.

25/25TC Staffing

The Council noted the resolution of the Staffing Sub-Committee to increase the Town Clerk's weekly hours by two, moving the role to a full-time position, from 1 April 2025.

26/25TC Next Meeting

The Council noted the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for Monday 9th June 2025 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8:25 pm.

Sharon Smith
Town Clerk/RFO

Signed _____ Date _____



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Amenities and Services Committee held on
Thursday 15th May 2025 at the Town House, Station Approach, Saxmundham at 5:35 pm.

Minutes

1/25AS

Attendees

Cllr Tim Lock (Chair)
Cllr Elizabeth Clark
Cllr David Humphreys
Cllr Marianne Kiff
Cllr Laura Purina

Apologies

None

Also Present

Sharon Smith (Town Clerk)
Lisa Hamon (Deputy Town Clerk)

2/25AS

Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensations from members on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable interest, or non-registerable interest.

3/25AS

Open Forum

No members of the public were present and invited representatives from the Adventure Playground were not available for the meeting.

4/25AS

Minutes

It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the minutes of the meetings held on 20th March 2025 and 17th April 2025 as true and accurate records.

5/25AS

Matters Arising

In answer to a question from Cllr Elizabeth Clark, the Deputy Town Clerk replied that the Events and Communications Committee had been provided with the Committee's decision regarding the Christmas lights.

6/25AS

Finance

- a) The Committee noted the budget versus actual expenditure report as of 30th April 2025.
- b) Following an explanation from the Town Clerk of the Community Infrastructure Levy position, the Committee noted the Earmarked Reserves as of 30th April 2025.

7/25AS

Play Parks

- a) The Committee received the quarterly play equipment report from East Suffolk Services Ltd and noted there were no medium or high-risk actions identified in the report.
- b) The Town Clerk presented the findings of the recent community consultation on new play equipment for Seaman Avenue. The Committee welcomed the survey results and agreed that the exercise had been very worthwhile. Four design options were put out for community consultation, with two emerging as clear favourites among respondents. The Committee

Signed _____ Date _____

requested that the Town Clerk arranges site visits with the suppliers of the two most popular designs to verify the accuracy of their existing quotations to ensure there are no unforeseen or hidden costs. The Committee also asked for the quotations to reflect that the existing play equipment is to be retained and to incorporate recommendations arising from the community survey. The Town Clerk agreed to present the revised specifications and quotations for the two most popular design options for consideration at the next meeting.

8/25AS Memorial Field

- a) The Deputy Town Clerk informed the Committee that installation of the roundel had been delayed due to concerns raised by the funder regarding the colour and size of the brick. The Deputy Town Clerk agreed to continue progressing this project and to work towards a satisfactory resolution.
- b) The Committee received a quotation to extend the fencing in the northwest corner. The Deputy Town Clerk was asked to revise the specification and obtain further quotations for the Committee's consideration.
- c) The Committee considered a request to fund and install a bench commemorating Falklands War veterans. While recognising the importance of honouring those who served in the Falklands, the Committee noted the need to reflect the service of veterans from all recent conflicts. In view of the cost associated with a bench commemorating only a single war, the Committee asked the Deputy Town Clerk to explore alternative options, such as a memorial tree, for the Committee's consideration.

9/25AS Green Team

The Committee received an update from the Environment Coordinator regarding the activities of the Green Team

10/25AS Christmas Lights

It was **unanimously resolved** accept a proposal from the current supplier of the Christmas lights, under which the additional costs of extending the lights to the Bell Hotel and altering the style of lighting around the Market Hall and Christmas Tree would be waived, on the condition that the Committee agrees to extend the existing contract by a further year, until 2027.

11/25AS Next Meeting

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting, which is scheduled for Thursday 17th July 2025 at 5:30 pm.

The meeting closed at 6:35 pm.

Lisa Hamon
Deputy Town Clerk

Signed _____ Date _____



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Development Control Committee held on 12th May 2025 at 12.00pm at the Town House, Station Approach, Saxmundham

Minutes

10/25PD

Attendees

Cllr John Fisher (Chair)
Cllr Marianne Kiff
Cllr Geraldine Barker

None

Apologies

Also Present

Michelle Allen (Assistant Town Clerk)

11/25PD

Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensations from members on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable interest, or non-registerable interest.

12/25PD

Open Forum

None.

13/25PD

Minutes

It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24th April 2025 as a true and accurate record.

14/25PD

Planning Applications

- (a) The Committee considered planning application DC/25/1383/LBC – Remove flat roof and rooflights reinstate with similar - Ashford House, High Street, Saxmundham. It was **unanimously resolved** to support the application to maintain the integrity of the structure.
- (b) The Committee considered planning application DC/25/1230/ARM – Outline erection of 10 commercial units - Carlton Park Industrial Estate, Ronald Lane, Kelsale-Cum-Carlton. It was **unanimously resolved** there were no objections.
- (c) The Committee considered planning DC/25/1786/TCA – Fell 1 Cypress Tree – Riverbank, Church Street, Saxmundham - It was **unanimously resolved** there were no objections.

The meeting closed at 12.35pm

Michelle Allen

Assistant Town Clerk

Signed _____ Date _____



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on Tuesday 3rd June 2025
at the Town House, Station Approach, Saxmundham at 12:00 pm.

Minutes

21/25RC Attendees

Cllr Elizabeth Clark (Chair)
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr John Findlay
Cllr Nick Jackson
Cllr David Humphreys

Apologies

Cllr Tim Lock – none received

Also Present

Sharon Smith (Town Clerk)

22/25RC Declaration of Interests

None.

23/25RC Open Forum

None.

24/25RC Minutes

It was **unanimously resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th May 2025 are a true and accurate record.

25/25RC Monthly Reports

- a) It was **unanimously resolved** to approve the payments and receipts for May 2025.
- b) The Committee noted the bank balances as at 31st May 2025.
- c) Cllr Elizabeth Clark verified the bank reconciliations as at 30th April 2025 and 31st May 2025.
- d) The Committee reviewed the budget versus actual income and expenditure report as at 29th May 2025.

26/25RC Local Council Award Scheme

The Committee received an update on progress against the Continuous Improvement Plan as part of the ambition to achieve the Silver level of the Local Council Award Scheme.

27/25TC HM Land Registry

The Committee noted that HM Land Registry has completed the first registration of title for the Memorial Field and Seaman Avenue playground.

28/25RC Next Meeting

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for Tuesday 8th July 2025 at 11:30am.

The meeting closed at 12:35 pm.

Sharon Smith, Town Clerk/RFO

Signed _____ Date _____



Saxmundham Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Sub-Committee held on Friday 30th May 2025
at the Town House, Station Approach, Saxmundham at 1:00 pm.

Minutes

1/25SC

Attendees

Cllr David Humphreys (Chair)
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr John Findlay
Cllr Elizabeth Clark

Apologies

Cllr Tim Lock – none received

Also Present

Sharon Smith (Town Clerk)

2/25SC

Exclusion of the Public

It was **unanimously resolved** that, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

3/25SC

Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensations from members on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable interest, or non-registerable interest.

4/25SC

Minutes

It was **unanimously resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March 2025 are a true and accurate record.

5/25SC

Staff Salaries and Pensions

- a) The Committee noted the payroll summary reports for March, April and May 2025.
- b) The Committee received a report from the Town Clerk outlining the current workplace pension contribution arrangements. It was noted that while employees are currently contributing 3% (below the statutory employee minimum of 5%), the Council is contributing 5%, thereby ensuring the total contribution meets the legal minimum requirement of 8%.

It was **unanimously resolved** to ratify the Council's current contribution level of 5% towards staff pensions and authorise the Town Clerk to write to affected employees to inform them of the Council's contribution, clarify their option to increase their personal contributions, and provide guidance on how to do so.

6/25SC

Staff Wellbeing

- a) The Committee received a confidential report from the Town Clerk regarding recent conduct by a Councillor which had negatively impacted Officer wellbeing and challenged previously agreed Council resolutions. The report highlighted concerns relating to tone, content, and persistence of communications that were considered inappropriate and undermining of the Council's governance.

It was **unanimously resolved** that the Chair should write a formal letter to the Councillor concerned, reiterating the importance of respecting Council decisions and supporting the impartiality and welfare of Officers.

Signed _____ Date _____

- b) The Committee considered a report from the Town Clerk setting out a range of proposals to enhance staff wellbeing and foster a respectful and supportive working environment. The Committee acknowledged its responsibility for the wellbeing of the Town Clerk, who in turn holds responsibility for the wellbeing of the wider staff team.

It was **unanimously resolved** to accept the following recommendations:

- i. Introduce a Wellbeing Support Programme including offering access to an Employee Assistance Programme to all staff.
- ii. Implement a Wellbeing Register to record negative and positive incidents which affect the wellbeing of all staff.
- iii. Invite all new and returning Councillors to attend Code of Conduct training which explicitly covers respect for Officers.
- iv. Recommend amendments to the Communications Policy to the Town Council to include a formal protocol on the use of email and social media.

7/25SC Training and Development

- a) The Committee noted the updated training records for the current financial year.
- b) The Committee agreed to circulate possible dates for Councillor Basics training for all Councillors and staff.

8/25SC Finance

The Committee noted the budget versus actual income and expenditure report for staffing matters.

9/25SC Policies

Following amendments, it was **unanimously resolved** to recommend approval of an Appraisal Policy and Form to the Town Council.

10/25SC Staffing Requirements

The Committee authorised the Town Clerk to undertake a review of current staffing requirements and bring forward recommendations for the Committee's consideration at its next meeting.

11/25SC Next Meetings

- a) The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for Friday 5th September 2025 at 1:00 pm.
- b) It was **unanimously resolved** to change the scheduled meeting of 27th February 2026 to 6th March 2026.

The meeting closed at 2:40 pm.

Sharon Smith
Town Clerk/RFO

Signed _____ Date _____

ENERGY PROJECTS REPORT – SAXMUNDHAM TOWN COUNCIL MEETING 9 JUNE 2025

INTRODUCTION:

Many hours have been spent on compiling the Town's Sea Link Relevant Representation however other projects have not been ignored including Sizewell C and Scottish Power Renewables.

SCOTTISH POWER RENEWABLES:

I received a complaint that a Low Loader bound for the Friston Substation site entered Saxmundham from South Entrance and proceeded along Church Road. The Clerk and I attended SPR's Knodishall update session and established that until the haul road is constructed there will be HGV's travelling through Saxmundham. Thereafter, HGV's will be issued with identity markers and will use the appropriate route via the A1094.

SIZEWELL C:

I attended the Southern Area Transport Forum held on 4 June 2025. Currently there are over 1,200 people on site and this will increase to 2,000 by the end of 2025. Of wider interest to the community:

1. Sizewell C will offer a Subscription Service to update members of the public on construction progress. Registration is via a link on the Sizewell C Works Tracker. [Sizewell C Works Tracker - Track SZC Projects & Get Alerts for New Activities \(szcworkstracker.co.uk\)](https://szcworkstracker.co.uk) (The Council may wish to advertise this via the Town's Face Book page).
2. The Art Station has received a Sizewell C Community Grant for £86,264 and ACTIVLIVES, an organisation promoting the wellbeing of older people in our region received £110,309.
3. The Orwell Park Freight Management Facility is now operational and was tested during a long closure on the A12 in April.
4. The Friday Street by-pass and roundabout works will fully commence in Summer 2025 and it is envisaged that this will not impact with A12 traffic.
5. The Wickham Market Park and Ride will be fully operational by the end of the year and in the interim, one area is now completed to take a few cars plus the associated bus service.
6. During the meeting, Network Rail hinted that the A12 at Darsham will be fully closed for works. Apparently Sizewell C is not happy about this and would prefer overnight closures only. This is an ongoing issue.
7. HGVs during March (the most recent available figures) remain low.

8. Sizewell C is working in conjunction with SPR and NGET Sea Link in relation to traffic issues and further information will be available at the Southern Area Transport Forum in September.
9. Sizewell C has arranged for 340 touring caravan pitches to be available at Pakefield.
10. Works to improve the A12 at Woodbridge are in the planning stage with a completion date of Mid-June 2028.

SEA LINK

The Town Council's Relevant Representation for Sea Link is now nearing completion and will shortly be submitted to Councillors for formal approval. It is a substantial and detailed document, addressing a multitude of issues that would impact Saxmundham should the project receive consent.

This is an appropriate moment to acknowledge the significant time and effort that has gone into reaching this stage. A vote of thanks is due to all those that have contributed to the preparation of the document. It has been a collaborative effort, led by Cllr Geraldine Barker, with valuable input from our Town Clerk, Cllr Tim Lock, Cllr Nick Jackson as well as the Blue Team and Green Team environmentalists Laura Bonnett, Amy Rayner.

The report reflects not only technical and environmental concerns but also the voices of local residents. Where community comments have aligned with the dual aims of objecting to the project while seeking to safeguard Saxmundham in the event it proceeds, they have been incorporated into the submission.

Gnb/05 June 2025

Saxmundham Town Council

Committee Meeting	Town Council
Meeting Date	9 June 2025
Item Number	5b
Report Title	Town Clerk Report and Crime Statistics
Report Author	Sharon Smith

Town Council – Day-To-Day Enquiries and Reports

Beyond the projects led by the Town Council and its Committees, staff also handle a wide range of enquiries, reports, and complaints from members of the public. Below is the combined data for the previous two months:

Type	Detail	Method	Response
Compliment	Town looks very good at the moment.	In Person	Thanked
Compliment	Memorial Garden planting is a Green Team triumph	In Person	Thanked
Report	Timing of traffic lights at crossroads x 3	Email	Reported to SCC
Complaint	Parking fine at the train station x 2	Email/Door	Signposted to NCP
Request	Locations permitted for metal detecting	Email	Apologised for having no idea
Complaint	Children creating noise disturbance on Fromus Green	Telephone	Acknowledged
Complaint	Car alarm creating noise disturbance	Telephone	Signposted to ESC/Police
Request	Owner of Carlton Woods	Telephone	Signposted to Batho family
Complaint	Litter in Fromus Square	Telephone	Signposted to ESC
Request	Location of social supermarket x 2	Door	Signposted to IP17 GNS
Request	Display posters on noticeboards x 2	Door	Granted
Complaint	No phone signal at train station	Door	Sympathised. Guest wi-fi to be set up in Town House
Request	Notarise document	Door	Signposted to Solicitors
Complaint	Letters delivered to the wrong address	Door	Signposted to Post Office
Request	Appointment with Citizens Advice	Door	Signposted to Library
Request	Join the Mens Shed	Door	Signposted to Mens Shed
Request	Public notice regarding innocence of Turkish barber during multi-agency raid	Door	Signposted to Police
Request	Community Payback Team request to use wi-fi	Door	Guest wi-fi to be set up in TH
Request	Help with onward travel x 2	Door	Provided taxi numbers and location of bus stops
Request	Help to dispose table	Door	Signposted to Mens Shed
Request	Help with planning application	Door	Signposted to ESC
Complaint	Water leak at Waveney Close	Door	Signposted to Solicitors
Request	Location of public toilets x 2	Door	Signposted to Car Park
Request	Directions to an address x 2	Door	Directed
Visit	Sizewell Community Safety Team	Door	Invited in to meet Councillors
Request	Solicitor requires information on energy projects for prospective house buyer	Telephone	Information provided
Request	Landowner as trees/shrubs needs cutting back x 2	Telephone	Signposted to Solicitor/SCC
Request	Help identifying owner of Westleton duck pond to provide permission for resident to fish	Telephone	Signposted to Parish Council

Suffolk Constabulary - Local Crime Statistics

Crime Definition	Qtr 3 2023	Qtr 4 2023	Qtr 1 2024	Qtr 2 2024	Qtr 3 2024	Qtr 4 2024	Qtr 1 2025
Violence and Sexual Offences	43	31	39	39	31	39	42
Anti-Social Behaviour	32	10	10	13	17	1	5
Public Order	12	4	5	7	12	4	0
Criminal Damage and Arson	9	9	9	12	18	11	15
Burglary/Theft/Other/Weapons	21	20	22	20	14	18	15
Drugs	4	1	1	4	0	4	0
Totals	121	75	86	95	92	77	77

Train Station Accessibility Improvements

Cllr Marianne Kiff, Cllr John Fisher and the Town Clerk met with Andrew Bramwell (Senior Strategic Transport Planner, Suffolk County Council) and Aimee McLachlan (Sustainable Travel Officer, East Suffolk Council) to discuss potential improvements to accessibility, lighting, and bicycle parking at Saxmundham train station.

Saxmundham is currently on the list for enhancements under Greater Anglia's 'Access for All' funding programme. Councillors raised concerns about the lack of a safe crossing route for wheelchair users between platforms. It was acknowledged that resolving this would be a significant undertaking, likely to exceed the limited funding currently available.

SCC confirmed that work is ongoing to progress the design for a link between the two station car parks, which would include step-free access to the platforms.

Bicycle parking in the current location is to be upgraded. The existing Sheffield stands will be relocated, and a new covered, lit, and CCTV-monitored shelter will be installed. This element is readily deliverable, as it does not require groundworks.

Land Registration Update

HM Land Registry has now completed the first registration of title for both the Memorial Field and the Seaman Avenue playground. In addition, the registration of the transfer of land on the east side of the High Street has also been finalised.

Hanging Baskets

The hanging baskets have now been installed along the High Street for the summer season. You may notice a few gaps—this is because East Suffolk Council has agreed to water only 40 baskets, due to the limitations of their water bowser.

Some baskets have also been relocated this year. Suffolk County Council requested the use of neoprene sleeves on lampposts to prevent metal-on-metal contact. While sleeves were fitted in some locations, it was more practical to reposition a few baskets where possible.

National Volunteering Week

As part of National Volunteering Week, the Town Council formally acknowledged and thanked, via its Facebook page, the volunteers of the Green Team and the Blue Spaces team for their ongoing dedication and valuable contribution to the town.

The Green Team plays a key role in enhancing our green spaces through regular planting, weeding, litter picking, and general maintenance—helping to create a more attractive and environmentally friendly town centre.

The Blue Spaces team has worked tirelessly to restore and maintain the River Fromus and surrounding areas, improving biodiversity, access, and the overall health of our local watercourse.

Both groups are a credit to the town, and their work embodies the spirit of community action and civic pride.

Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Review

2022-2036



Pre-submission consultation version
June 2025

Front cover amended

Contents

	Page
1. Modifying a 'Made' Neighbourhood Plan	X
2. Saxmundham parish	X
3. How the Plan was prepared	X
4. Vision and objectives	X
5. Planning policies	X
6. Parish wide: Design principles	X
7. Parish wide: Local economy	X
8. Parish wide: Community infrastructure	X
9. Parish wide: Transport and movement	X
10. Parish wide: Housing	X
11. Parish wide: Heritage and natural environment	X
12. South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood	X
13. Mitigating the impacts of National Infrastructure and Energy Projects on Saxmundham	X
14. Opportunity Zones: Saxmundham town centre	X
15. Opportunity Zones: Former Fromus Centre and Community Garden	X
16. Actions/statements of intent by Saxmundham Town Council	X
17. Implementation and monitoring	X
Appendix	X
A. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members	
B. Justification for Non-designated Heritage Assets	
C. Justification for Local Green Spaces	
D. Glossary	
E. Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan Area	
F. Saxmundham Concept Masterplan for the High Street	





1. Modifying a ‘Made’ Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.1 The Saxmundham Neighbourhood Development Plan adopted in July 2023 provided the first ever statutory planning policy document specifically for the parish of Saxmundham. Neighbourhood Plans were introduced by the 2011 Localism Act which sought to decentralise policy making to the local level, give more powers to communities and the right to shape future development where they live.
- 1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan was supported by over 87% of residents who voted in the Referendum and the Neighbourhood Plan Area covered the civil Parish of Saxmundham (as it was at the time of Neighbourhood Area designation in 2017), shown in Figure 1 below.

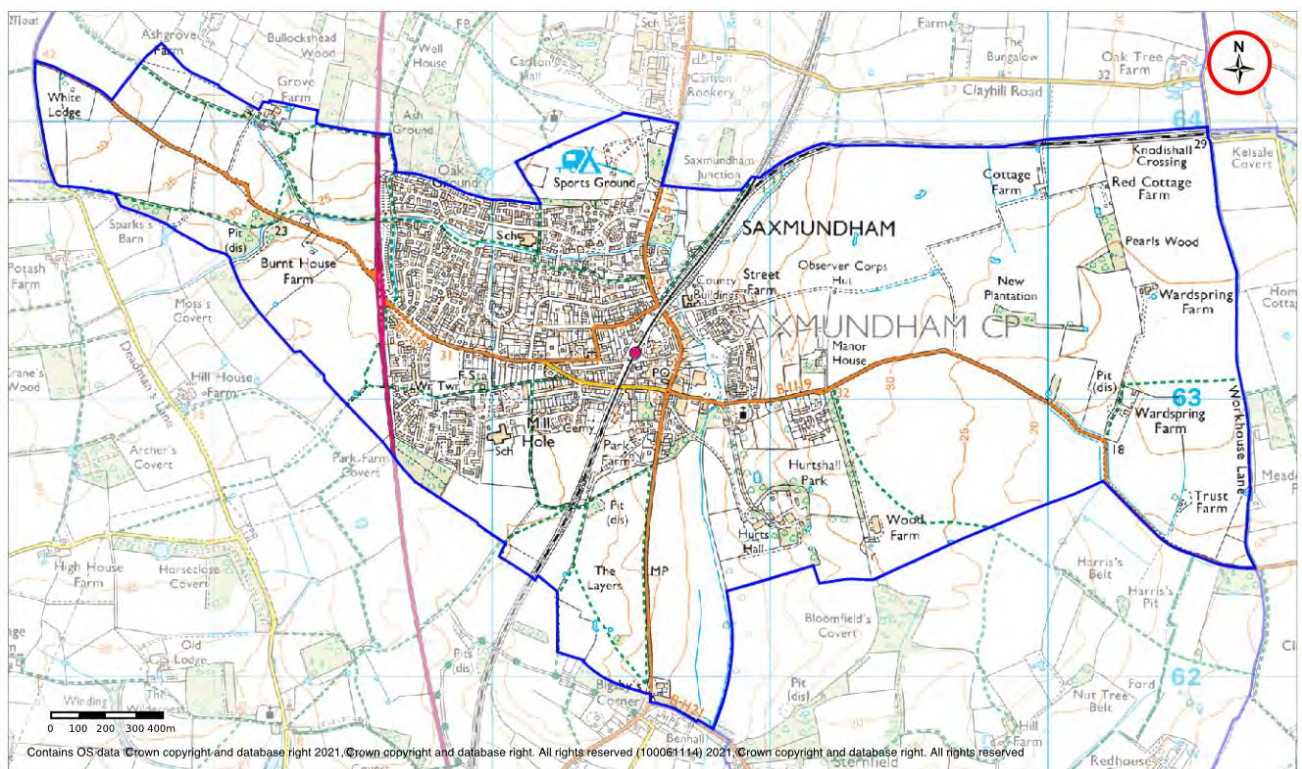
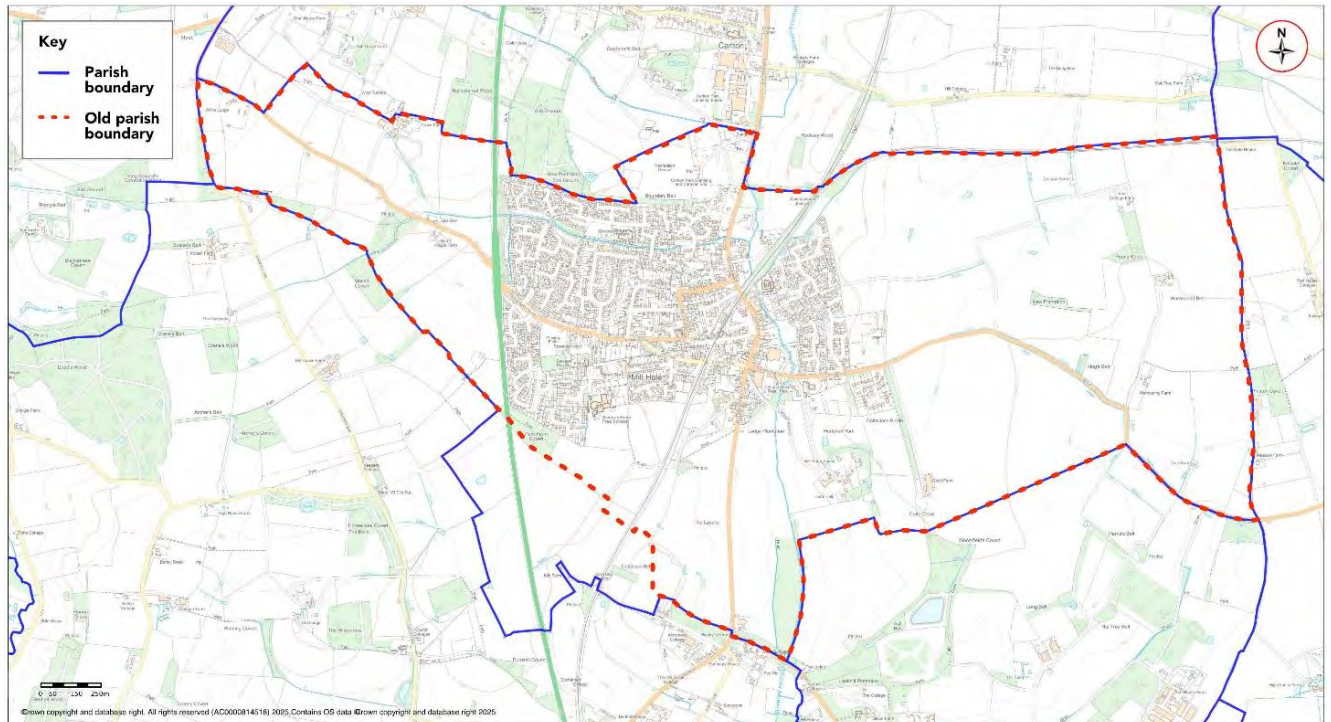


Figure 1: 2017 Saxmundham Neighbourhood Area (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

- 1.3 After a Community Governance Review in April 2023, the Saxmundham Parish Boundary was amended to include land that was previously in the parish of Benhall. The reason for the Parish Boundary change, which was initiated by Saxmundham Town Council with agreement from Benhall Parish Council, was so that all of the land allocated in the East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan 2020, as the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood would fall within the parish boundary of Saxmundham. In December 2023, the Town Council applied to East Suffolk Council to amend the Neighbourhood

Area so that it was consistent with the new parish boundary. The request was approved by East Suffolk Council on 30th April 2024. The new Neighbourhood Area is shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Map showing the new and old parish boundaries (source: Parish Online, with own annotations)



1.4 Saxmundham Town Council began a review of its 'made' Neighbourhood Plan shortly afterwards. There are two principal reasons for reviewing or 'modifying' the Adopted 2023 Neighbourhood Plan. These are:

- To ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan and its policies can successfully influence the development of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood to gain maximum benefit for the community and ensure its proper integration with the existing settlement of Saxmundham.
- To ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan contains suitable policies for influencing the mitigations required as a consequence of the multiple National Significant Energy Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) proposed in the local area.

1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan Review (this document) takes the original Plan and adds further detail and justification to it in respect of the two key issues outlined above. The new Plan is a different document. However the overarching vision and objectives are still consistent with those of the original Plan with the desire to ensure that Saxmundham remains a place which retains its distinct natural and historic characteristics, and where the services and facilities have the capacity to meet the needs of residents. Even though the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan is still relatively up to date there have been a number of changes to national planning policy and guidance which will need to be reflected in the modified Neighbourhood Plan. It is also anticipated that East Suffolk Council will begin a review of their Plan in September 2025 (as it will have reached 5 years since adoption).

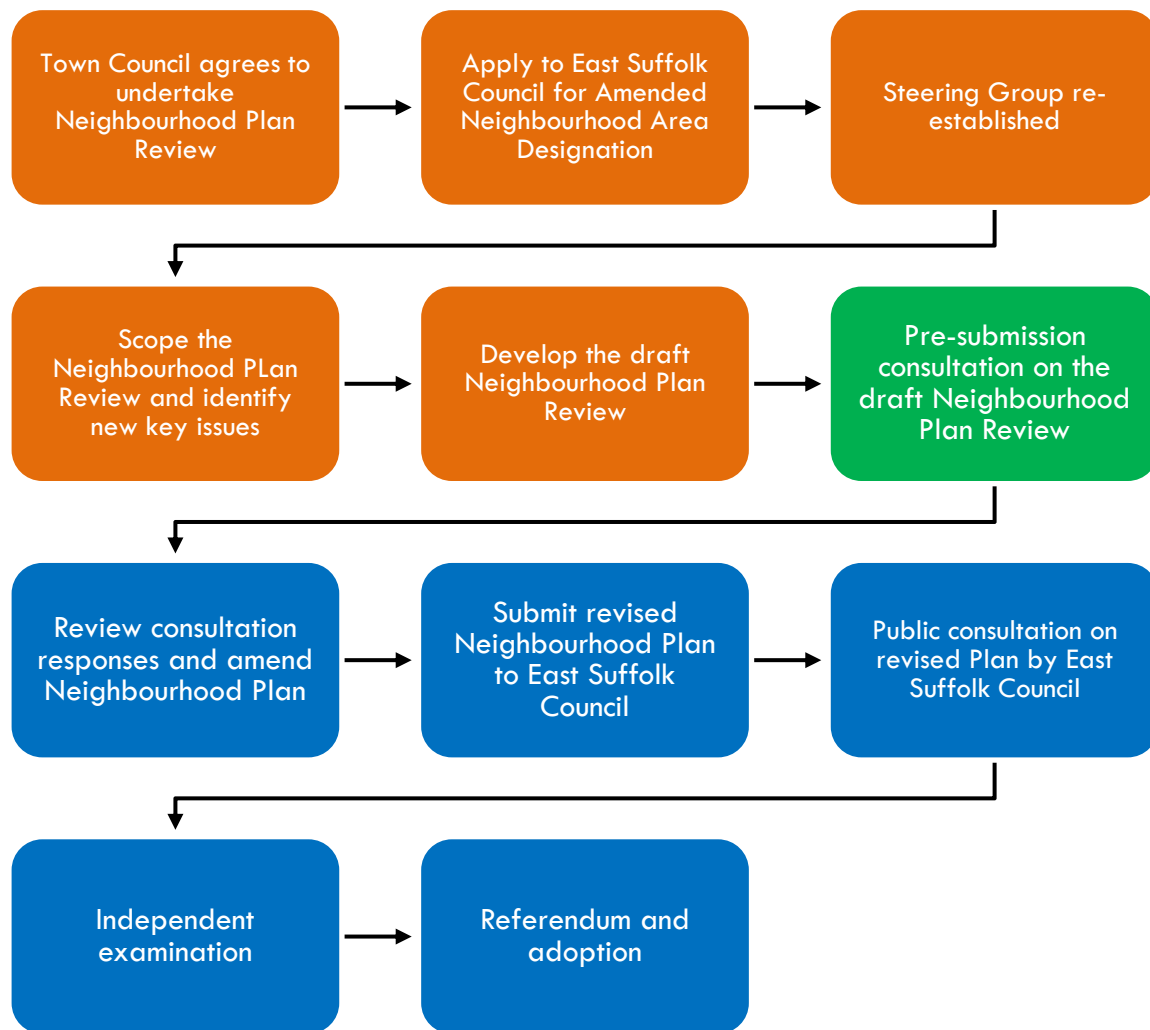
- 1.6 The Neighbourhood Plan remains a community-led document for guiding the future development and use of land in the parish between 2022 and 2036. The Adopted 2023 Neighbourhood Plan remains in force until it is superseded by the Neighbourhood Plan Review. Once the Review is 'made' and adopted, East Suffolk Council will use it to determine planning applications. Saxmundham Town Council will use the Plan to respond to planning applications.
- 1.7 The Neighbourhood Plan Review covers the same plan period as the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan and looks ahead to 2036, which is consistent with the current Local Plan.
- 1.8 The Neighbourhood Plan Review operates in the context of the East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan's vision and objectives will be realised through policies, projects, promotions and advocacy. Most policies will guide new development across the whole plan area, some are specifically tailored to the needs of particular zones. The Town Council will promote, and collaborate with others, to realise projects which will further the vision for the town.
- 1.9 The Plan's policies and proposals will rely on investment in the town by private, public, and voluntary agencies. Many of the specific proposals will only happen through partnerships and collaboration. Part of the purpose of the Plan is to give the sense of direction and momentum which will build confidence and commitment.
- 1.10 By undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan and the subsequent Review, the aim remains to improve and protect Saxmundham, in the interests of its people, as a lively, attractive, successful, and sustainable 'heritage' market town:
- playing its full role as employment and service centre for the surrounding area, and gateway to east Suffolk's attractions,
 - promoting and implementing future-looking policies for economic development, social cohesion, and enhancement of our local environment
 - ensuring the successful physical, environmental and social integration of new development in the Garden Neighbourhood with the existing community
 - working with partners in public, private and community sectors to ensure coherent policy making and delivery for our town, and access to the required resources and infrastructure.
 - addressing the challenges posed for our future by climate change and the need for environmental protection and improvement, across the range of policies and activities.
- 1.11 The Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Review will continue to ensure that development takes place in an appropriate way for the parish. It has been positively prepared, with the purpose of supporting and managing Saxmundham's growth, not preventing it. In practice, higher level planning documents such as the Adopted East Suffolk Council – Suffolk Coastal Local Plan cannot feasibly deal with all of the issues particular to every town and village across the entire district, whereas the Neighbourhood Plan can by providing additional details which reflect specific local circumstances and conditions. Whilst many residents felt that the amount of growth proposed in the Local Plan for Saxmundham was excessive, it is recognised, now the Local Plan is approved, that the Neighbourhood Plan has the responsibility to ensure that growth is well managed and beneficial, and in accordance with the Local Plan.



The process of reviewing or modifying a made Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.12 This Modified Neighbourhood Plan is known as the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Review and in essence introduces two new chapters – one relating to the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood (which builds on Local Plan Policy SCLP12.29) and the second in respect of the mitigation of the impacts of Energy Infrastructure Projects. The remainder of the Plan has been updated where necessary but its overall direction and strategy remains unchanged. The regulations covering neighbourhood planning require that, where significant changes are made to a Plan, it has to be taken through full public consultation and if necessary another referendum before it can be adopted.
- 1.13 In the case of the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Review, the Plan is not seeking to make any additional allocations for new housing development over and above that already set out in the Adopted Local Plan. It does however include new areas of policy to provide guidance for the development of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood and new policy in mitigating the impacts of the Major Energy Infrastructure Projects in the area. If the introduction of these new chapters constitutes a 'significant change' to the 2023 Neighbourhood Plan, the Independent Examination would need to be followed by a referendum as was the case for the original 2023 Plan. If these changes are not 'significant' then only an Examination will be required. The Examiner will be the final arbiter of whether a Referendum is required, however, the Town Council as Qualifying Body for the Neighbourhood Plan Review will need to produce a statement at Pre-Submission and Submission Stages indicating whether they believe the proposed modifications to the Plan are significant or not.
- 1.14 In developing this Neighbourhood Plan Review, the Town Council have sought to ensure that the statutory minimum standards for consultation on Neighbourhood Plans have been met. The Neighbourhood Plan Review has been prepared in accordance with the statutory requirements and processes set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). Figure 3 outlines the stages in the process.





Key

- Completed stages
- Current stage
- Future stages

Figure 3: Stages of the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Review.

1.15 Neighbourhood Plans provide clarity, through their policies, on what will be expected from development proposals in the parish, and ensures that the impact of development is anticipated and planned for in Saxmundham. A Neighbourhood Plan is a significant document and will carry legal weight so that developers have to take note when considering future developments in the parish. Policy SCLP12.1 (Neighbourhood Plans) of the Local Plan sets the framework for housing growth in Neighbourhood Plan areas within the District.

National and local planning policy context

1.16 Every local planning authority in England is required to prepare a Local Plan. Local Plans include all of the local planning policies for the district's area and identify how



land is used, determining what will be built and where. The relevant Local Plan for Saxmundham is the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan which was adopted in September 2020. The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, along with any Neighbourhood Plan, provides the basis for determining planning applications and future development in the local area and should be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 1.17 Despite a relatively short time between the Adoption of the 2023 Neighbourhood Plan and the beginning of work on the Neighbourhood Plan Review, there have been some significant changes in the National Planning Policy context.
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been reviewed twice since the 2023 Plan was ‘made’ – in December 2023 and in December 2024 . The Neighbourhood Plan Review needs to be in general conformity with the national planning policies.
 - The Labour Government (from July 2024) has shifted emphasis in national policy specifically in the areas of housing number calculations, design, Net Zero and affordable housing (specifically social rent).
 - Furthermore the Planning and Infrastructure Bill 2025 which contains an emphasis on ‘Getting Britain Building’ will also have an influence.
 - It is also expected that consultations on a set of National Development Management Policies will take place during 2025
 - There will also be new housing requirement figures for East Suffolk, although these are to be reflected in the Local Plan Review, envisaged to begin in September 2025.
- 1.18 Development is defined as ‘the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land’.¹ Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 emphasises that the planning system continues to be a ‘plan-led’ system and restates the requirement that ‘determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise’.

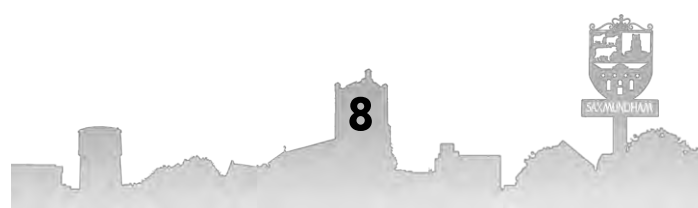


Figure 4: Spatial and strategic policy context: relationship between the NPPF, Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan. Own diagram.

Policy framework for Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.19 Saxmundham is identified as a ‘Market Town’ in the settlement hierarchy of the adopted Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (SCLP 2020). The Local Plan (through Policy SCLP 12.28) indicates that Saxmundham will be enhanced as a market town, employment and service

¹ Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.



centre, serving a key role in meeting the needs of residents, surrounding rural communities and visitors, recognising the opportunities offered by its road and rail connections. The following Local Plan policy provides the context for the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan.

Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policy SCLP12.28: Strategy for Saxmundham

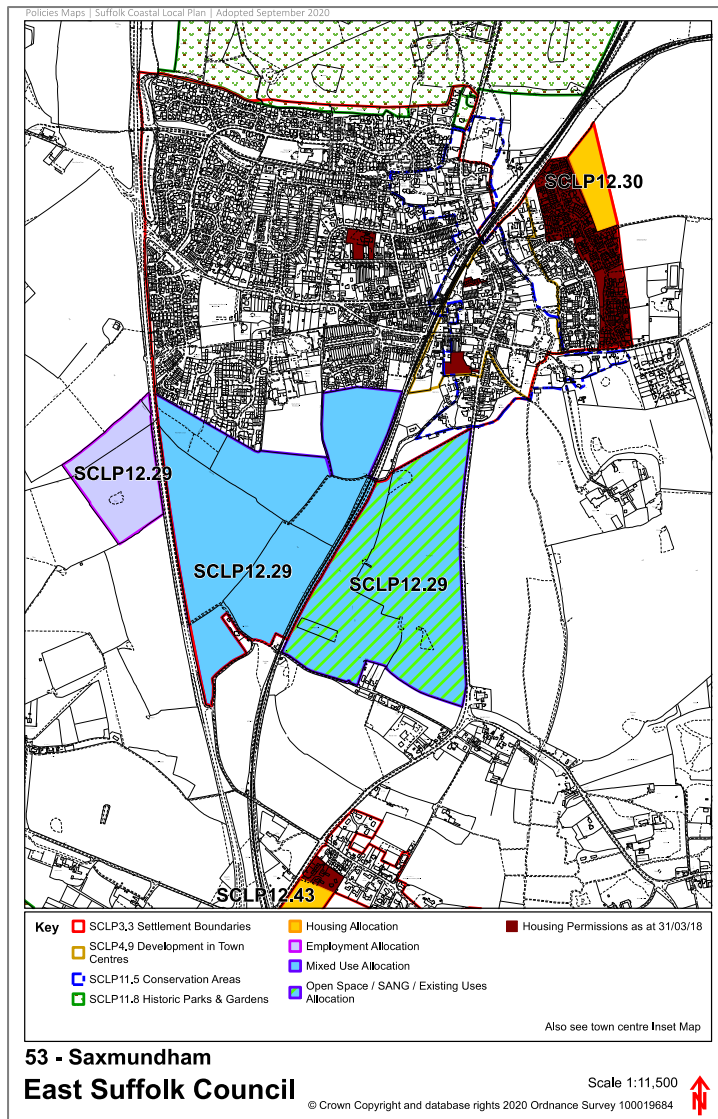
Saxmundham will be enhanced as a market town, employment and service centre, serving a key role in meeting the needs of its residents, surrounding rural communities and visitors, recognising the opportunities related to the connections offered by the rail and A12 transport corridors.

The strategy for Saxmundham is to:

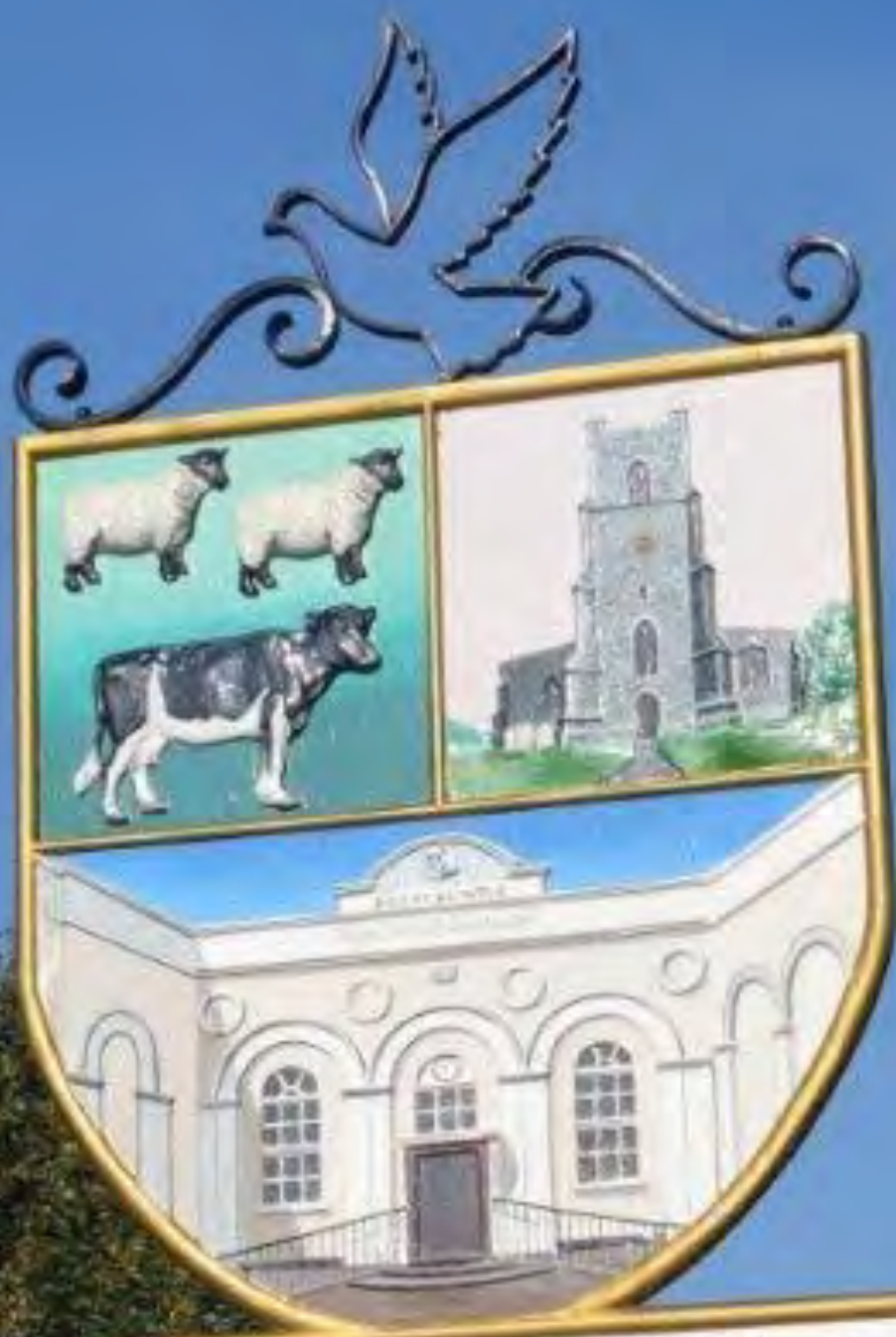
- a. Enhance the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre, including through protecting and enhancing the historic core of the town and the railway station.
- b. Utilise opportunities related to the presence of the railway and the proximity to the A12.
- c. Diversify and expand employment opportunities.
- d. Enhance pedestrian and cycle connectivity around and beyond the town, particularly to the town centre and the railway station.
- e. Promote quality of life including through enhancements to networks of green infrastructure.
- f. Increase the provision of housing and affordable housing and providing greater choice in the mix of housing available.
- g. Provide for a safe and inclusive community; and
- h. Protect and enhance the natural environment.

The creation of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood will provide new opportunities for housing, employment and community facilities, focused around the principles of an inclusive community and integration with Saxmundham and the surrounding countryside through enhancing green infrastructure networks.





- 1.20 The Local Plan identifies an area of 66.6 hectares for development as the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood which is expected to provide an education led scheme of approximately 800 dwellings, community facilities and employment land. This issue is dealt within detail in **Chapter 12**.
- 1.21 In addition to the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood, the Local Plan makes a further allocation which is SCLP12.30: Land North-East of Street Farm, Saxmundham. This allocation is for 2.18ha and approximately 40 dwellings northeast of Street Farm, to the east of the built-up area of Saxmundham. This has now been developed.
- 1.22 Due in particular, to the level of new housing growth proposed in the Local Plan, the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan **Review** is not allocating any further specific sites for development. Instead, its proposed policies will focus on managing the impacts of the proposed growth and ensuring that the community benefits are realised. A number of areas are however identified as offering future potential for a range of types of development that it is considered would benefit the parish (See **Opportunity Zones policies** section).



SAXMUNDHAM



Kelsale B1121

Lowestoft

2. Saxmundham parish

- 2.1 Saxmundham is in a strategic location being roughly equidistant from Ipswich and Lowestoft, the two principal economic centres of East Suffolk district. It is served both by the A12 and the East Suffolk line of Greater Anglia railways. It also acts (largely due to its station) as a ‘gateway’ to the Suffolk Heritage Coast, the tourist resorts of Aldeburgh and Thorpeness and the international music venue at Snape Maltings.



Figure 6:
Location of
Saxmundham
(source: Parish
Online, with
own
annotations).

Demographic profile of Saxmundham²

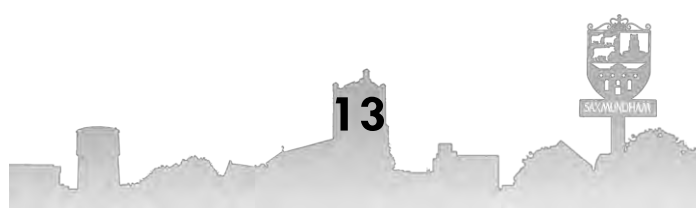
- 2.2 The population of Saxmundham parish/ward in 2021 according to the Census was 4,773, up from the 2011 census figure of 3,644. The town has grown by nearly one-third in the last 20 years. The population in 2021 was 52.4 per cent female and 47.6 per cent male which showed a slight increase in the number of males since the 2011 census. Further information can be accessed from the Saxmundham Data Profile 2024 which accompanies this draft plan.
- 2.3 The following table shows the age categories in Saxmundham parish from the 2011 and 2021 Census. The percentage of the population aged 65 years and over has declined slightly.

Age category	Census 2011 number	Census 2011 percentage	Census 2021 number	Census 2021 percentage
Total	3,644	100%	4773	100%
Aged 15 and under	706	19.3%	964	20.2%
Aged 16 to 64 years	2,061	56.5%	2,716	56.9%
Aged 65 years and over	877	24.1%	1,093	22.9%

Figure 7 above: Age structure of Saxmundham parish Census 2011 and 2021. Source: Nomis website. Information obtained 09.09.2024.

- 2.4 The graph below shows the age of Saxmundham, East Suffolk and Suffolk residents in 5-year age categories in 2021. There is a higher percentage of young people in Saxmundham aged 19 years and under compared to East Suffolk and Suffolk. There is a lower percentage of people aged 50 to 74 years in Saxmundham parish compared to East Suffolk and Suffolk.

² Data from the Suffolk Observatory website.



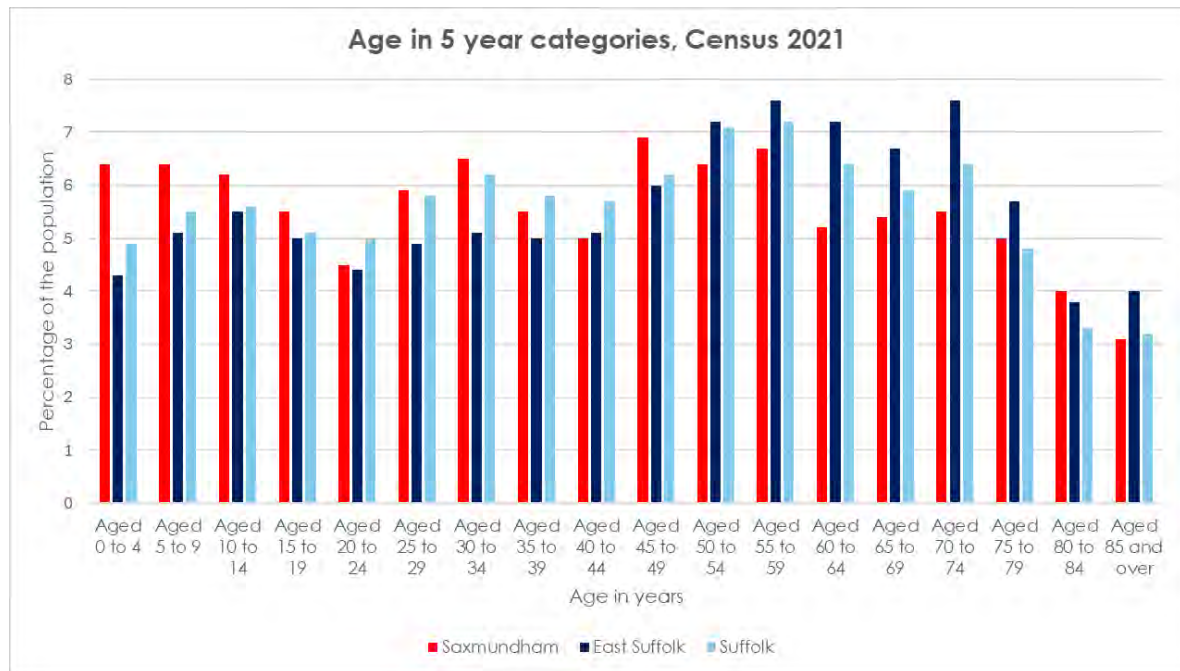


Figure 8 above: Graph showing the age of Saxmundham, East Suffolk and Suffolk residents in 5-year age categories. Census 2021 (source: www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/build/. Information obtained 09.09.2024).

Housing

- 2.5 Over the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2024, East Suffolk Council records show there were 485 net additional dwellings built in Saxmundham parish. Full details are shown in the Data Profile.

Year	Housing completions Saxmundham parish
2023/2024	4 (provisional figure, may be subject to change)
2022/2023	1
2021/2022	21
2020/2021	26
2019/2020	50
2018/2019	56
2017/2018	68
2016/2017	45
2015/2016	76
2014/2015	138
Total 2014 – 24	485

Figure 9: Housing completions (net additional dwellings) 2014 – 2024 in Saxmundham parish. Source: East Suffolk Council Planning Policy and Delivery monitoring records. Information obtained 06.09.2024.

- 2.6 Data from the 2021 Census shows that there were 2,176 households in Saxmundham parish. This is an increase in households of 25.4% from 1,623 households in the 2011 Census.

Saxmundham parish Tenure	Census 2021 number	Census 2021 percentage
All Categories	2,169	100%
Owned or shared ownership	1,306	60.21%
Social rented	526	24.25%
Private rented or lives rent free	337	15.54%

Figure 10: Tenure of households in Saxmundham parish from the 2021 Census.

- 2.7 The table below shows Saxmundham parish household composition data from the 2011 and 2021 Census. There is an increase in one person households and a decrease in one family households between the 2011 and 2021 Census. Saxmundham parish has a higher percentage of one person households compared to East Suffolk and Suffolk.

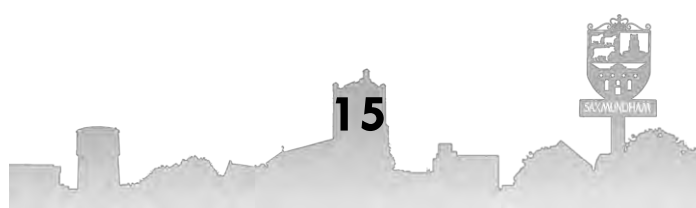
Household Composition	Saxmundham Census 2011 percentage	Saxmundham Census 2021 percentage	East Suffolk district Census 2021 percentage	Suffolk Census 2021 percentage
All Categories	100%	100%	100%	100%
One person household	32.6%	35.9%	32.3%	31.2%
One family household	64.2%	60.6%	63.8%	64.4%
Other household types	3.2%	3.5%	3.9%	4.5%

Figure 11: Table showing household composition from the 2011 and 2021 Census for Saxmundham parish, East Suffolk and Suffolk. Source: Nomis website. Information obtained 10.09.2024

Health

- 2.8 The following table shows how the population reported their general health in the 2021 Census.

General Health Census 2021	Saxmundham parish percentage	East Suffolk district percentage	Suffolk Percentage
Very good health	43.5%	43.3%	45.6%
Good health	36.6%	36.0%	35.8%
Fair health	14.6%	15.0%	13.6%



Bad health	4.0%	4.5%	3.9%
Very bad health	1.4%	1.2%	1.0%

Figure 12: Table showing general health reported by the population of Saxmundham parish, East Suffolk district and Suffolk in the Census 2021. Source: Nomis website. Information obtained 10.09.2024.

- 2.9 The table below shows Disability reported by all usual residents of Saxmundham parish, East Suffolk district and Suffolk in the 2021 Census. The percentage of residents who are disabled under the Equality Act is slightly higher in Saxmundham parish compared to East Suffolk and Suffolk.

Disability Census 2021	Saxmundham parish percentage	East Suffolk district percentage	Suffolk percentage
Total	100%	100%	100%
Disabled under the Equality Act	21.1%	20.6%	18.3%
Not disabled under the Equality Act	78.9%	79.4%	81.7%

Figure 13 above: Table showing disability reported by all usual residents of Saxmundham parish, East Suffolk district and Suffolk in the 2021 Census. Source: Nomis website. Information obtained 10.09.2024.

Educational attainment

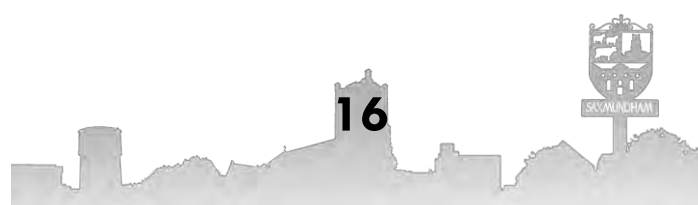
- 2.10 Census 2021 data indicates that 18.1% of people in Saxmundham parish aged 16 and over have no qualifications which has reduced from 25 % in 2011. This compares to 19.4% for East Suffolk and 19.7% for Suffolk.

Employment

- 2.11 Data from the 2021 Census shows that 52.7% of residents aged 16 years and over in Saxmundham parish are economically active and in employment including full time students. This is slighter higher than the percentage for East Suffolk district, and lower than the percentage for Suffolk.

Economic Activity Status	Saxmundham percentage	East Suffolk percentage	Suffolk percentage
Total	100%	100%	100%
Economically active: In employment (including full time students)	52.7%	51.5%	56.5%
Economically active: Unemployed (including full time students)	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%
Economically inactive	44.8%	45.9%	40.9%

Figure 14 above Saxmundham parish Economic Activity Census 2021. Source: Nomis website. Information obtained 09.09.2024).



- 2.12 Data from Census 2021 in respect of the occupations of all usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment is shown in the table below.

Occupation (current)	Saxmundham parish percentage	East Suffolk percentage	Suffolk percentage
Total: All usual residents aged 16 years and over in employment the week before the Census.	100%	100%	100%
1. Managers, directors and senior officials	12.5%	13%	12.6%
2. Professional occupations	14.1%	15.9%	16.7%
3. Associate professional and technical occupations	12.3%	12.5%	13.1%
4. Administrative and secretarial occupations	8.9%	9.5%	9.4%
5. Skilled trades occupations	13.2%	12.5%	12.2%
6. Caring, leisure and other service occupations	12.5%	10.6%	10.1%
7. Sales and customer service occupations	8.1%	8%	7.6%
8. Process, plant and machine operatives	6.6%	7.7%	7.7%
9. Elementary occupations	11.7%	10.3%	10.6%

Figure 15 above: Table showing Census 2021 Occupation data for Saxmundham parish, East Suffolk district and Suffolk. Source: Nomis website. Information obtained 10.09.2024.

- 2.13 Data from the 2021 Census shows the industries in which Saxmundham parish residents are employed. The highest percentage of residents are employed in public administration, education and health, followed by distribution, hotels and restaurants.
- 2.14 Saxmundham residents do not travel long distances for work. The highest proportion of residents of Saxmundham parish travel less than 10km to work, followed by working from home.

Deprivation levels

- 2.15 The 2021 Census reports that 46.9% of Saxmundham residents are not deprived using any of the deprivation indicators and a further 34% are deprived when scored against one indicator. These figures are almost identical to those for East Suffolk as whole and the area is not seen as particularly deprived.



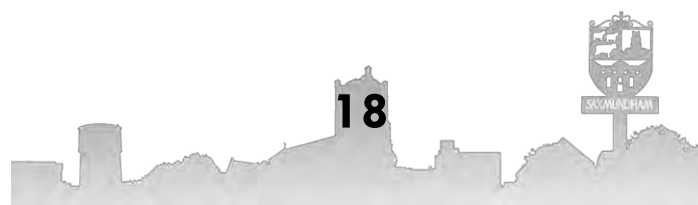
The local economy – jobs, businesses and shops

- 2.16 A survey³ conducted for East Suffolk Council in 2019 found that there were 79 businesses operating in the town centre of which 43 were retail, including 2 national chain supermarkets (Waitrose and Tesco). There were 12 food and drink establishments ranging from the Bell Hotel to restaurants, cafes, and takeaways. Seven businesses fall into the financial and professional services sector. There is a bank in the town centre. Although still relatively small, there is also a growing arts-connected sector, including the (not-for-profit) Art Station, plus galleries.
- 2.17 Within the rest of the town there are a number of small businesses, including garages, a care company, accountancy, hardware and engineering and carpet shops. There are numerous small businesses operating from residential properties. Just outside the plan area, Carlton Park Industrial Estate is home to a range of businesses providing employment and services for the town and wider area.
- 2.18 Despite its rural location and proximity to the coast, the town does not have a significant tourism economy. In Spring 2021, there were 11 properties in the town which were marketed as holiday lets, but there may well be more let on an informal basis. The Happy Days Trailer Park and Escape Room is situated on the Leiston Road and the Carlton Park Camping and Caravan site is just outside the town, although within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Farming, which used to be a bedrock of the town, now employs a mere 3 per cent.

Transport, movement and access

- 2.19 The town is by-passed by the A12. The former A12, now the B1121, runs through the town from north to south and intersects in the centre of the town with the B1119 to Framlingham (west) and Leiston (east), together they form the basis of the road network. The High Street section of the B1121 is very narrow at its northern point causing congestion at times and making servicing of the shops difficult. It is also particularly dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians. The whole length of the High Street is characterised by narrow and uneven pavements. There is a traffic light-controlled junction with the Leiston Road (at Church Street). This junction is heavily used as it gives access to the two supermarkets on Church Street and at busy times of the day it can become congested. There is a zebra crossing facilitating pedestrian movement between the supermarkets and nearby shops.
- 2.20 The B1119 snakes its way through residential areas of the town and does not provide a clear east- west route, to the confusion of visitors to the town. In practice, much of the east/west-bound traffic uses the traffic-light controlled junction with the B1121 to use Chantry Road (very narrow at the junction) as the main route to or from the west. The railway station, although centrally situated in the town, has been described as 'geographically challenged'. The access routes, Station Approach, New Cut and Albion Street, are very narrow and involve tight turns making it difficult for larger vehicles and buses which need to serve the station.

³ 'Saxmundham, Understanding the Heart of Our Town, Town Centre Baseline Report September 2019', <https://eastsuffolkmeansbusiness.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Saxmundham-Heart-of-Our-Town-Report-September-2019.pdf>



- 2.21 Cycling is challenging in and into the centre of town mainly because of narrow roads, absence of earmarked routes, parked cars and heavy traffic at times. There are cycle racks at the supermarkets, the station and at the north end of the High Street. Cycling out of the centre towards the surrounding villages is dangerous because of fast traffic and a lack of dedicated cycle lanes or cycle tracks.
- 2.22 In general, the pavements in the older parts of the town are very narrow and walking two abreast is not possible, this is a particular problem in the centre of town where there is more pedestrian movement and where more space is needed for people to be able to interact socially. Those with mobility issues are also disadvantaged by the narrow and often uneven pavements.
- 2.23 Outside the town there are public footpaths and other Public Rights of Way, out into the countryside, these are mainly to the west and involve crossing the A12, which is hazardous, given the speed of traffic. The parish also features in the East Suffolk Line Walks, a series of promoted long-distance trails between railway stations between Ipswich and Lowestoft.
- 2.24 The town has a central car park with long stay spaces and short stay free spaces and disabled spaces, it operates a pay and display charging system. The two supermarkets have car parks, both operate on the basis of free parking for the first 2 hours. There is free short stay on-street parking in the Market Place and at the north end of the High Street. The station has a pay and display car park for railway users only.

Social, cultural, community and leisure

- 2.25 The largest meeting place and events venue in the town is the Market Hall which can seat 200. The Fromus Centre has relocated to Street Farm Road and has become the main community centre. In addition, the Gannon Rooms, the Old Bank (formerly Sax'cess House) and the two church halls are used for a variety of leisure and social groups. The Social Club is a meeting place for its members. Informal socialising takes place in the cafes and bars in the town.
- 2.26 The Museum and the library are important to the cultural life of the town. The Art Station, housed in the former telephone exchange, is developing as a significant local centre for the arts and creative industries. The annual SaxMusicFest is a vibrant community event.
- 2.27 The town now only has a primary school. The primary school is close to capacity in terms of pupil numbers. The secondary school closed in 2024.
- 2.28 Medical services are provided by the GP surgery, a dentist, an optician, and the pharmacy. There are several residential homes for the elderly, a sheltered housing complex and mental health services.
- 2.29 Leisure activities are provided by a large number of clubs and societies. Outdoor sport takes place at Carlton Park. The Memorial Field includes a skate park and there are several children's playgrounds around the town.



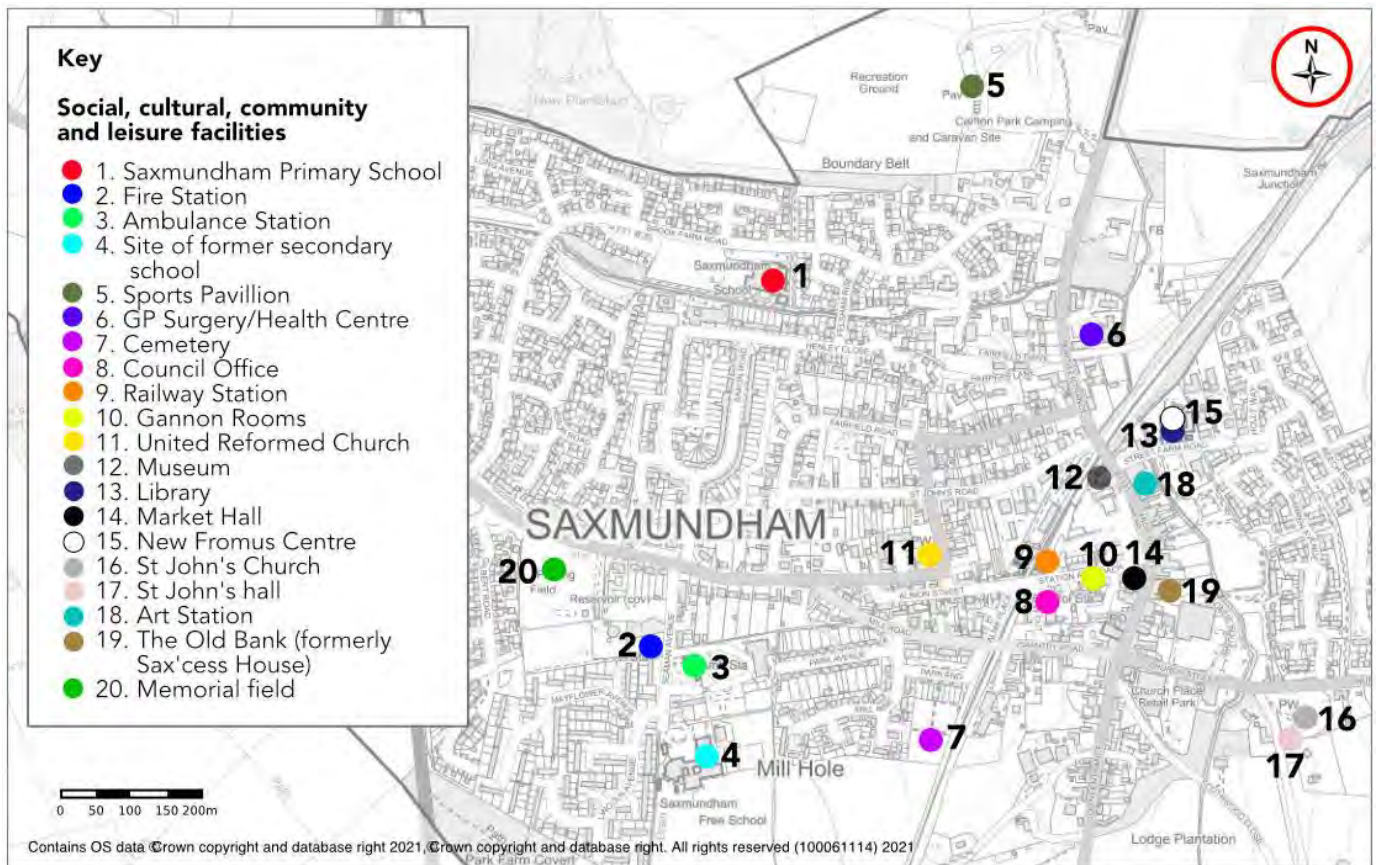


Figure 16: Location of social, cultural, community and leisure facilities (source: parish online, with own annotations). (Secondary School renamed as Site of former Secondary School; Sax cess House to be renamed The Old Bank (formerly Sax'cess House))

Built heritage

2.30 The town originally grew up to the west of the River Fromus and developed in a linear form along the turnpike, which was the main road from London to Lowestoft. The town was granted a market in 1272, signifying its importance as a market town serving the surrounding agricultural and rural area, a function which it still fulfils. The buildings in the centre of town are mainly 16th, 17th and 18th century. With the coming of the railway the town expanded westwards largely in the form of typical Victorian brick-built terraces. The construction of the by-pass in the 1980s has led to large scale residential development between the existing town and the by-pass. More recent development has extended the town eastwards to the skyline.

2.31 The approach to the town from the south along the B1121 is spacious, it is flanked by The Layers to the west and Hurts Hall Park to the east with views across to Hurts Hall itself and the church. The town sits below the rising land to the east. The approach from the north is wooded and enclosed and opens out on arrival at the built-up area. Approaching on the B1119 Leiston Road from the east, the town is not visible until the boundary when the road dips down towards the Fromus, and there are glimpses of the roofs of the town ahead. From the west the approach from the by-pass is unremarkable.



2.32 Saxmundham Conservation Area covers the historic heart of the town and includes most of the land between the River Fromus and the railway and extends north of the railway bridge to include Fairfield House and Langley Manor. Saxmundham boasts 50 listed buildings, most of which are in the town centre. St John's Church is listed grade II* as is The Beeches at 5, North Entrance.

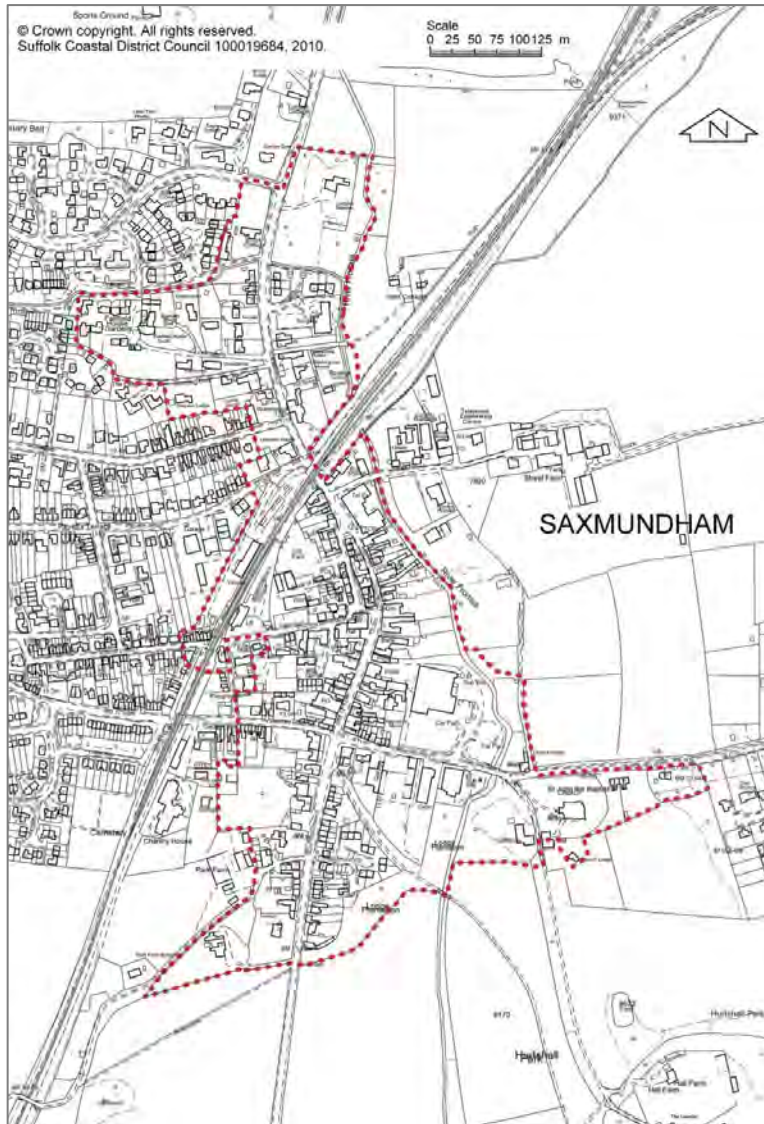


Figure 17: Saxmundham Conservation Area (source: East Suffolk Council, Saxmundham Conservation Area Appraisal, March 2016).

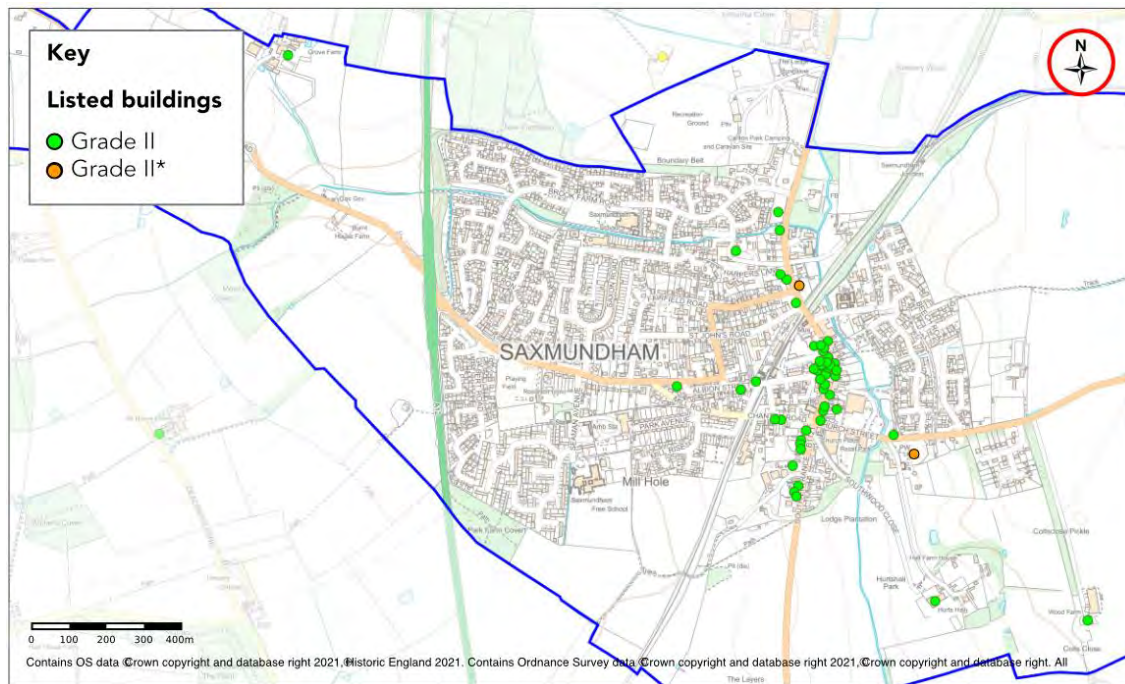


Figure 18 below: Listed buildings in Saxmundham parish (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary prior to extension in 2023.

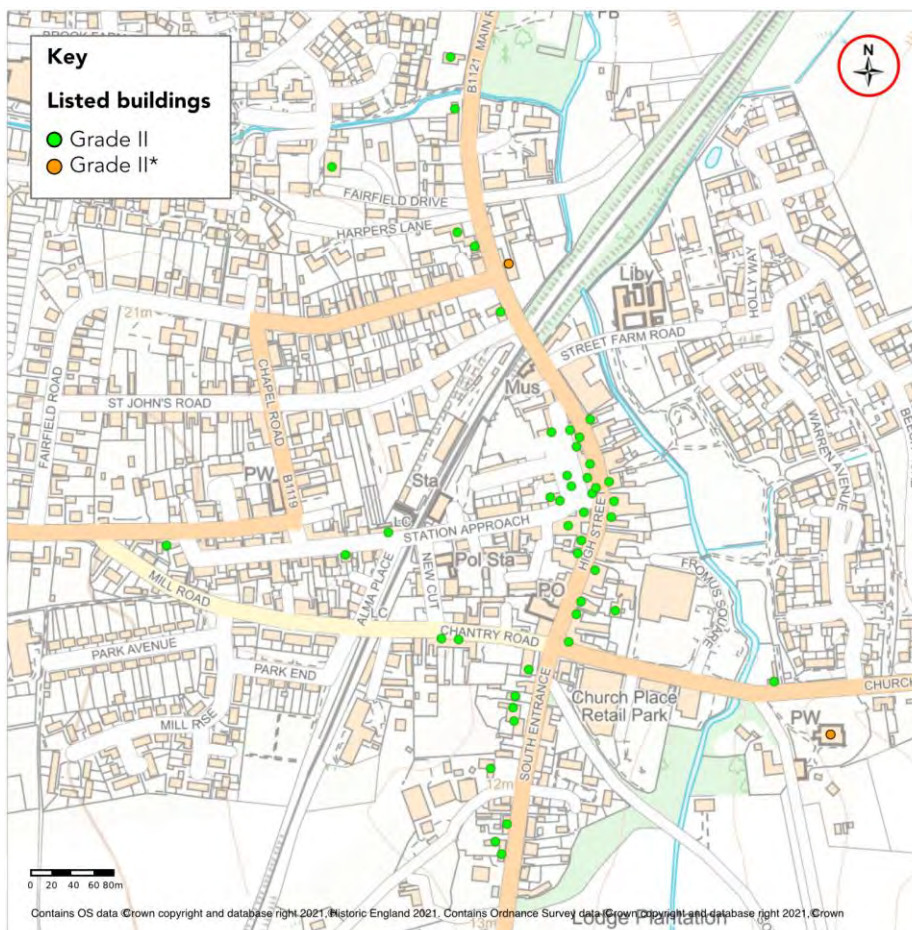


Figure 19: Listed buildings in Saxmundham town centre (source: Parish Online, with own annotations).

Archaeology

- 2.33 Information on the archaeology within the parish is held within the County held Historic Environment Record (HER), which is maintained by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS). Of particular note have been the archaeological investigations at Land East of Warren Hill, Saxmundham which revealed evidence of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Saxon settlement. The archaeological evidence recorded included a significant phase of Saxon activity which included a large rectangular post-built structure representing a hall, two additional post-built structures and nine sunken feature buildings. Furthermore, evidence for Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age occupation and further Iron age and Saxon settlement has also been identified in the vicinity. Further information on the archaeology of the parish can found on the Suffolk Heritage Explorer.¹

Natural environment and green spaces

- 2.34 There are no designated nature conservation sites within the parish, however the parish is in relatively close proximity to the extremely sensitive Sandlings, Alde-Ore and Minsmere-Walberswick Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Saxmundham is situated in an area which has several road links to areas of open countryside and the coast. However, it only has a few open green spaces in the town centre and several smaller green spaces that create an open setting within the more recently developed housing estates. There are also footpath links to Carlton Park to the north which, although not wholly within the boundary of Saxmundham, is used by its residents. With the planned expansion of the town, it is necessary to safeguard existing green space and increase it for the benefit of the community.





3. How the Plan was prepared

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan Review has been prepared by a Steering Group consisting of a mix of Town Councillors and local residents. Many of the Steering Group members had been involved with the preparation of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan and were therefore familiar with the process. The Steering Group were supported by a small team of independent consultants. The process of the review began in August 2024.
- 3.2 The Neighbourhood Plan Review is commissioned by Saxmundham Town Council. The funding for its production has come from a central government Locality grant and the Town Council's own funding.

Community engagement and consultation

- 3.3 The process employed for this Neighbourhood Plan Review has been shorter than that for the original Neighbourhood Plan which is consistent with its more focussed scope. The key issues of the Garden Neighbourhood and the Energy Infrastructure Projects were identified at an early stage by the Town Council (and the community). In respect of the Energy Projects, the Town Council formed the Fromus Energy Projects Team comprising Town Councillors, Councillors from Kelsale cum Carlton Parish Council and Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council, Town Council staff, and local residents which has engaged considerably with both energy developers and the local community. More details can be found on the Energy Projects page of the Town Council's website <https://www.saxmundham.org/energy-projects/>.
- 3.4 It should be noted that the Garden Neighbourhood was a significant issue for the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan and that the Submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan contained specific policies for the Garden Neighbourhood which were removed by the Examiner as they related to land which was then outside of the Neighbourhood Area. These had been the subject of considerable public consultation both with stakeholders and the local community. This Neighbourhood Plan Review draws heavily on that original work.

Communication

- 3.5 Communicating with local residents and businesses has been a key consideration particularly as the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan is relatively recent. It has been important to explain to the community that the purpose of Neighbourhood Plan Review is to ensure that there are effective and clear planning policies guiding the development of the Garden Neighbourhood and opportunities for mitigating the impacts of the Energy Infrastructure Projects affecting the parish. The Garden Neighbourhood is expected to be delivered during the Neighbourhood Plan period and there has been engagement with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, the community and the Town Council by the promoters of the site, and further engagement in the production of the required Masterplan is expected to continue. The challenge for the Neighbourhood Plan review is to effectively communicate that the Review is seeking to manage the development of the site to gain maximum benefits for the community and is not a mechanism for stopping or



preventing the development of the site, the principle of which was established through the Local Plan allocation. There have been regular updates on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan Review to Town Council meetings, the Neighbourhood Plan Facebook Page and articles in the local press.



EAST ANGLIAN

DAILY TIMES

EAST ANGLIAN
DAILY TIMES

**S'MUNDHAM:
TOWN'S
FUTURE IN
SPOTLIGHT**

WEDNESDAY



4. Vision and objectives

A Vision for Saxmundham (to 2036)

- 4.1 The vision for the Neighbourhood Plan Review remains the same as that in the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan and is set out below.

VISION 2036	<p>A thriving and prosperous town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which acts as a key service centre and transport hub for the town and surrounding area • with the physical and community infrastructure to support growth • with new and varied employment opportunities, including in new and growing sectors, which take advantage of the connections offered by rail and the A12 • with a vibrant and viable town centre and a bustling weekly market, with strong retail, cultural, energy and hospitality sectors • and adequate and convenient parking provision. <p>A safe and healthy town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with good social, cultural and leisure provision contributing to the health and wellbeing of all ages • with well used green open spaces and an enhanced network of green infrastructure providing access to nature and improvements to biodiversity • with ease of movement throughout the town • with safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists • with good quality housing which meets the current and future needs of residents • enjoying enhanced medical and educational facilities, which support healthy lifestyles • where services and employment choices are local. <p>An attractive and distinctive town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which is friendly and inclusive • where new and existing development is successfully integrated forming a holistic and sustainable community • which has a strong, wide-ranging cultural identity with well-equipped public venues and programmes of events and activities • with a well maintained and valued historic town centre, enjoyed by visitors and residents alike.
-------------	---

- 4.2 The vision underpins the objective and policies of the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan and is referred to throughout.
- 4.3 From the vision flow the different objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan and from there, the policies. The diagram below outlines this relationship.



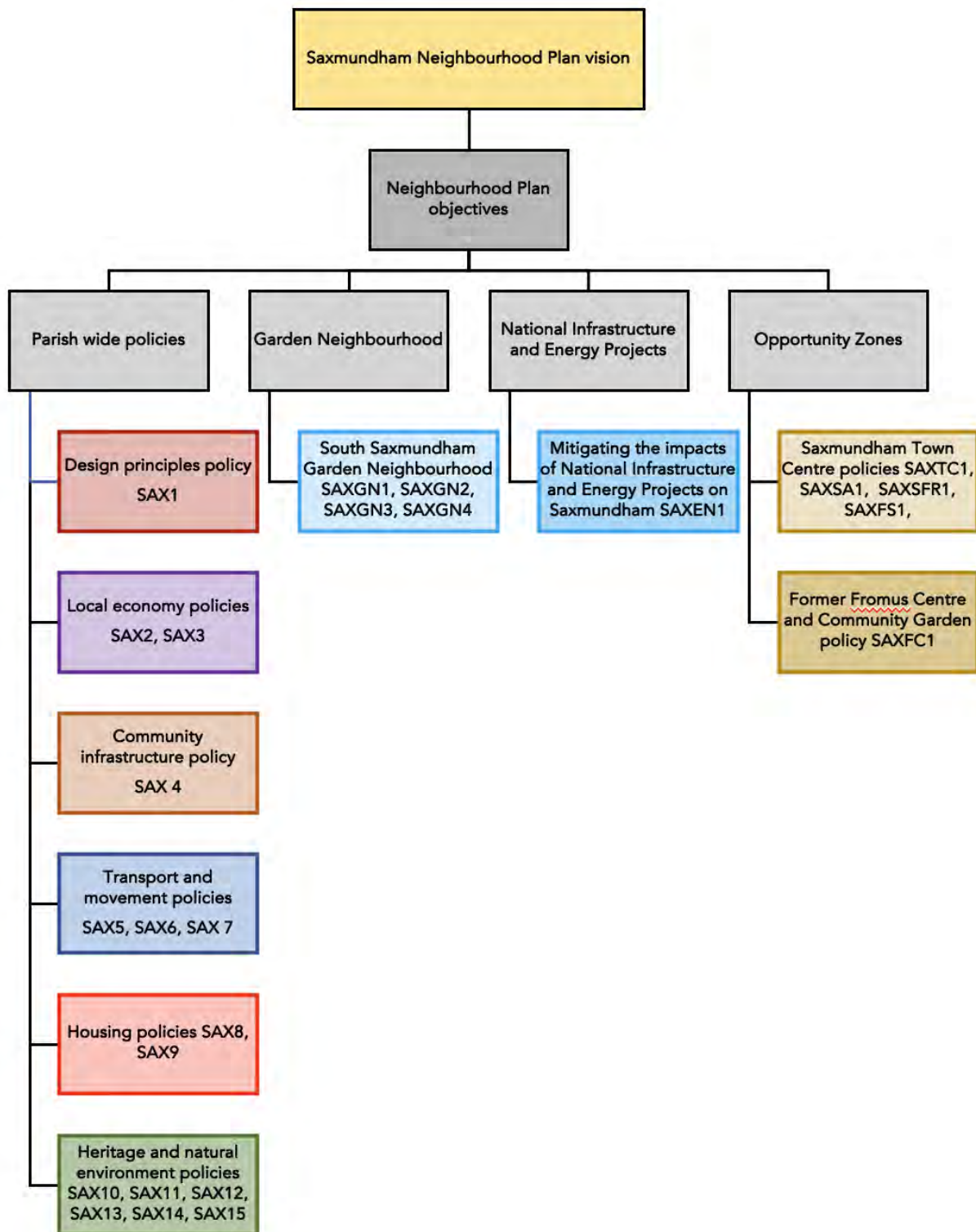


Figure 20: Structure of the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan (Redrawn diagram, added objectives for the Garden Neighbourhood and the Energy Infrastructure Projects)

- 4.4 The objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are broad statements of intent which are there to help deliver the vision and link to the issues that Saxmundham is seeking to address. They have been drafted using themes picked up at an early stage and have been



refined through the community consultation exercises. The Neighbourhood Plan Review adds new objectives which relate to the Garden Neighbourhood and the Energy Infrastructure Projects.

Area wide Objectives

Objective 1: To promote a strong and diverse forward looking, local economy, building upon the town's advantages as a service centre market town with a strategic location.

Objective 2: To secure for the community of Saxmundham a full range of physical and community infrastructure to meet the growing needs of the town and its environs.

Objective 3: To improve transport and safe accessibility for the people of Saxmundham by foot, bicycle, mobility scooter and public or private transport, resulting in environmental and health benefits.

Objective 4: To successfully integrate - physically, environmentally, and socially - the new neighbourhood with the existing town and community of Saxmundham.

Objective 5: To promote the development of high quality, energy efficient housing to meet the needs of the people of Saxmundham.

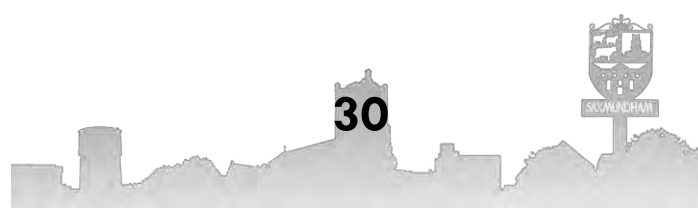
Objective 6: To protect and enhance the conservation area, the town's heritage, green spaces, natural features and rural setting, and to address the challenges of climate change.

Objective SSGN1: To create a high quality, well designed, distinctive development in line with 'Garden City' principles which is valued by its residents and recognised as an asset to the Town.

Objective SSGN2: To successfully integrate – physically, environmentally, and socially – the new neighbourhood with the existing town and community of Saxmundham.

Objective EN1: To ensure that the necessary measures required to mitigate the physical, visual and social impacts of National Infrastructure and Energy Projects on Saxmundham are identified and implemented.

Opportunity Zone Objectives: Saxmundham town centre (including High Street, station area, Street Farm Road and Fromus Square)



Objective STC1: To create an attractive and welcoming town centre with space to gather and socialise, with a pedestrian friendly environment stretching from the station to Fromus Square and along the length of the High Street.

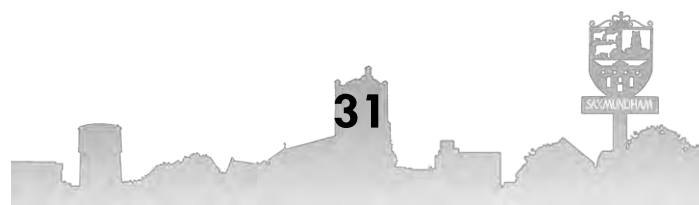
Objective STC2: To reduce the non-essential use of the High Street by motor vehicles and to prioritise pedestrian movement and safety in the centre, whilst improving and encouraging parking provision in accessible locations within walking distance of the town centre.

Objective STC3: To protect and enhance the historic core of the town as defined by the Conservation Area.

Objective STC4: To support the economic and environmental regeneration of the station area via a masterplan led approach, which encourages mixed-use development of underused and derelict land, and improves the attractiveness of Station Approach as a route for pedestrians and cyclists.

Opportunity Zone Objectives: The former Fromus Centre and Community Garden

Objective FFC1: To support a high-quality development for specialist and other housing purposes including community use, which safeguards the community garden, and offers improved pedestrian access to, and permeability within, the site.



5. Planning policies

Introduction to policies

- 5.1 The vision and objectives have provided the framework to develop the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Each policy relates to a particular objective under the following five area wide themes: the local economy; community, social and recreation provision; transport and movement; housing and heritage; and the natural environment. In addition, there are zonal policies for the identified Opportunity Zones, for the town centre, station area, Street Farm Road, Fromus Square and the former Fromus Centre. The Opportunity Zones are not intended to be site specific allocations but indicative areas within which specific proposals and actions will be encouraged. The Neighbourhood Plan Review adds specific policies relating to the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood and for mitigating the impacts of proposed major Energy Infrastructure projects.
- 5.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is first and foremost a land-use document for planning purposes. All policies in the Plan have been derived from a series of consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and desk research, which provide the justification and evidence base for their selection.
- 5.3 The Neighbourhood Plan policies follow the government's guidance. They exist to:
- Set out locally led requirements in advance for new development in the parish.
 - Inform and guide decisions on planning applications.
 - Ensure that the multitude of individual decisions add up to something coherent for the area as a whole⁴.
- 5.4 To aid interpretation for decision makers and planning applicants, each policy is accompanied by supporting text, which includes context for the theme, the views of residents, guidelines and reference to strategic plans. This is set out before each of the policies.

Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan policies

Parish wide: **Design principles**

SAX1: General design principles

Parish wide: **Local economy**

SAX2: Expansion of existing businesses

SAX3: New businesses

Parish wide: **Community infrastructure**

SAX4: New community facilities

Parish wide: **Transport and movement**

⁴ Tony Burton, Writing Planning Policies, Locality.



SAX5: Improving connectivity
SAX6: Public rights of way
SAX7: Parking provision

Parish wide: Housing

SAX8: Windfall and Infill development
SAX9: Tenure blind Housing Development

Parish wide: Heritage and natural environment

SAX10: Historic town centre and Conservation Area
SAX11: Non-designated Heritage Assets
SAX12: Gateways, views and landscape setting of Saxmundham
SAX13: Protection and enhancement of natural assets
SAX14: Community gardens and allotments
SAX15: Protection of existing Local Green Spaces

South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood

SAXGN1: Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood
SAXGN2: Green infrastructure
SAXGN3: Community Facilities
SAXGN4: Design of the Garden Neighbourhood

Mitigating the impacts of National Infrastructure and Energy Projects on Saxmundham

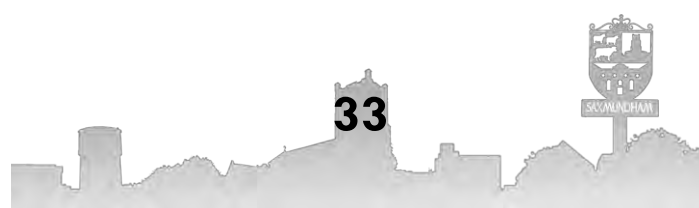
SAXEN1: Addressing and mitigating the impacts of large scale energy projects

Opportunity Zone: Saxmundham town centre

SAXTC1: Town centre overarching strategy
SAXSA1: Station area
SAXSFR1 Development and environmental enhancement opportunities at Street Farm Road
SAXFS1: Fromus Square

Opportunity Zone: Former Fromus Centre and Community Garden

SAXFC1: Former Fromus Centre site and Community Garden



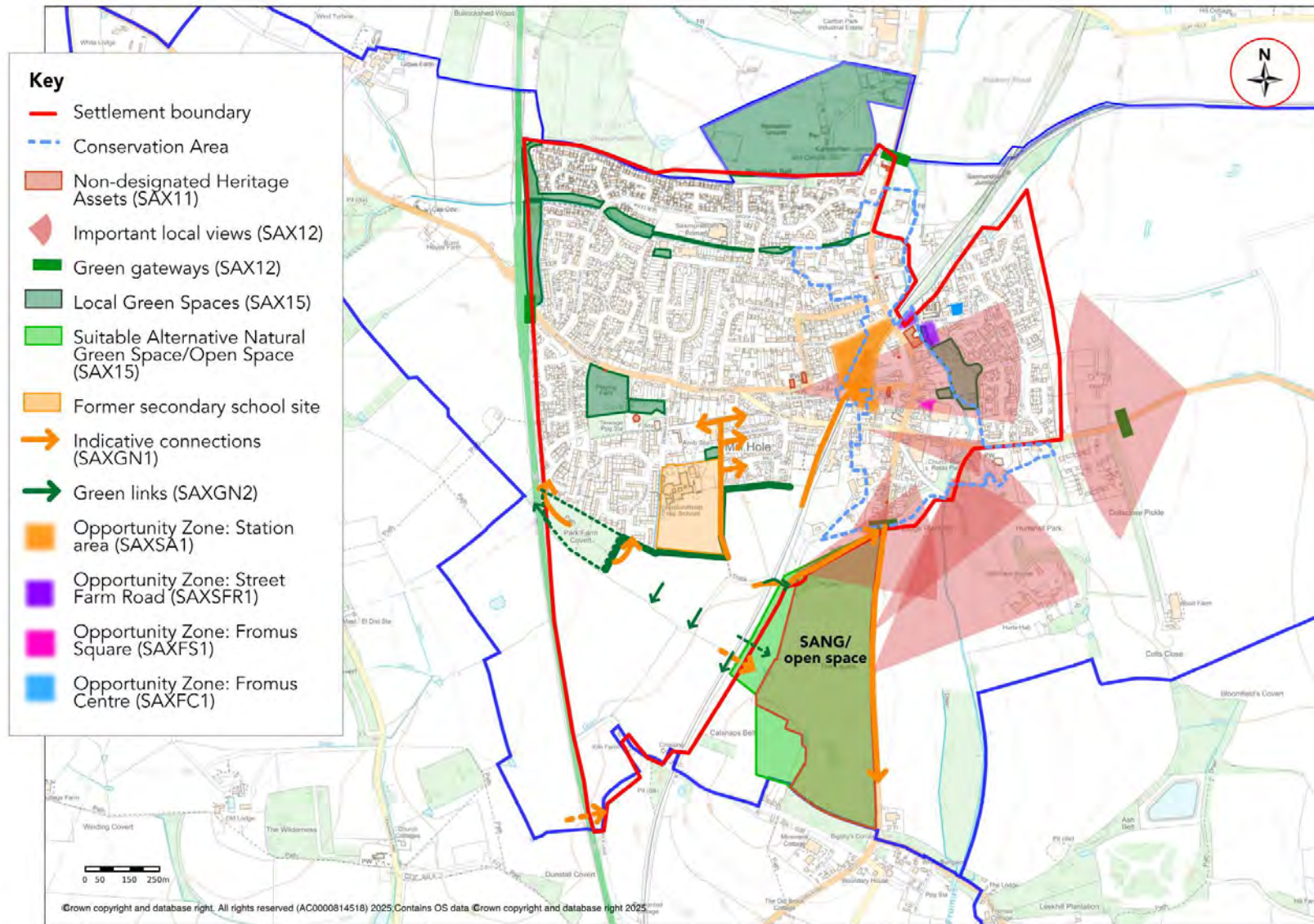


Figure 21: Composite policies map (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Please refer to individual policy maps for more detail (amended)



6. Parish wide: **Design principles**

High quality design

- 6.1 Among the key determinants of whether any new development, irrespective of scale or use, is successful is how well it is considered to integrate with its surroundings. Matters such as design, materials, form and massing, the impact on local character, layout and scale are the most common issues that will cause the local community concerns about any proposed new development.
- 6.2 If a community believes that it has been involved in and been able to influence the design of a development at an early stage, the higher the likelihood that the development will be considered to be acceptable.
- 6.3 Whilst to an extent design and impact on local character are subjective judgments, these can be influenced by breaking design elements down into component parts and attempting to address them. Whether a proposed new development is acceptable and appropriate and relates well to its surroundings, is one of the most common judgments to be made, yet there is often very little evidence or guidance to assist local people (or decision makers) in making that judgement.
- 6.4 A key purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is not only to help influence the designers and proposers of development at an early stage of formulating their proposals, but also to help promote an understanding of what elements make up the character of the area and what constitutes good design that respects local character.
- 6.5 Government guidance places considerable emphasis on achieving well-designed places and this has been reinforced in the most recent revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF describes it as fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work, and helps make development proposals acceptable to communities. Effective engagement between applicants, communities and local planning authorities is essential.
- 6.6 Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states 'Design policies should be developed with local communities so that they reflect local aspirations and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics.'

Neighbourhood Plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of an area and how they should be reflected in development.

- 6.7 In addition, the NPPF makes clear that local planning authorities should ensure that visual tools such as design codes and guides are used to inform development proposals to provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage and reflect local character and preferences. They should provide a framework for creating high-quality places, with a consistent and high-quality standard of design to inform development proposals. It also makes clear that the level of detail and degree of prescription within design codes and guides should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified.
- 6.8 Design coding is one tool available to local planning authorities, communities, and developers to define and deliver design quality, in addition to design guides, planning briefs, heritage characterisation studies, standards and masterplans as set out in the NPPF and planning practice guidance. A design code is a set of simple, concise, illustrated design requirements that are visual and numerical wherever possible to provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area.
- 6.9 The Government is heavily advocating the use of design codes and expects all local planning authorities to prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code and which reflect local character and design preferences.
- 6.10 The Town Council commissioned consultants AECOM to produce Design Guidelines and Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan Area to support the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan . This work was completed in July 2021 and is contained in **Appendix E** of this Neighbourhood Plan. At the time work was undertaken in respect of the Garden Neighbourhood, but due to the confines of the original Neighbourhood Area much of this related to land outside the geographical scope of the Neighbourhood Plan. **With the review of the parish boundary in 2024, this work falls back into the scope of this Neighbourhood Plan review.** The Design Code reflected a detailed analysis of the local character of the parish, developed some strategic design guidelines and identified a palette of materials which should influence the design of future development. The Code's principles have informed and are reflected in **Policy SAX1**, and its more detailed guidance should be drawn upon as appropriate in the design of future development, throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area. In addition, the report provided specific guidance to be used by the Town Council when assessing and responding to consultation in future planning applications for new development.

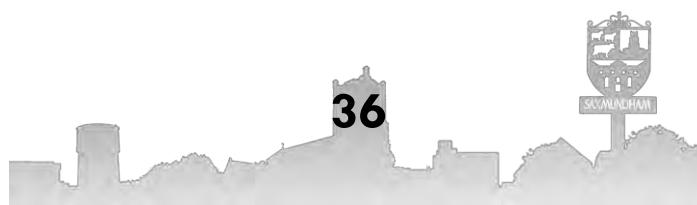




Figure 22: Design Guidelines and Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan area. (Appendix E).

- 6.11 The Neighbourhood Plan Household Survey conducted in June 2019 asked residents for their views on which design elements they considered to be important in future developments. 889 people responded to this question and 2107 preferences were expressed. The most supported concepts were 'highly energy efficient' (79 per cent of respondents) and 'landscaping of high visual and ecological quality' (57 per cent). In relation to house building style, 43 per cent express support for 'Traditional Suffolk', 18 per cent for 'Innovative design' and some support also for 'dementia friendly', 12 per cent. Further information on dementia friendly design can be found in the Royal Town Planning Institute Guide.⁵
- 6.12 Given the increasing importance that both local people and national Government are placing on design, it is considered that achieving well designed places and promoting high quality design should also be fundamental to this Neighbourhood Plan and go to its heart. The Plan therefore sets out its key design principles at the beginning of the policies section, recognising that good design should be a theme that flows throughout the plan, and sets the tone for other policies to follow in terms of its importance for all new development of any scale, form or use. **Policy SAX1** below applies throughout the amended Neighbourhood Area, .
- 6.13 Suffolk County Council has also produced a range of guidance which may be helpful to prospective applicants when designing their proposals, These include:
- The Suffolk Design Streets Guide.
 - Suffolk Guidance for Parking.
 - The Suffolk Flood Risk Management Strategy, particularly Appendix A.
- 6.14 The criteria in the policy below are informed by the **Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan Area (July 2021)**. It is important that new development is not viewed in isolation and consideration of design and layout should be informed by the wider context, considering not only the buildings immediately adjacent but also the townscape and landscape of the wider locality all of which will contribute to the character of the area. The pattern of streets, spaces, building styles and types,

⁵ RTPI | Dementia and Town Planning: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/practice/2020/september/dementia-and-town-planning/>

materials and the natural environment will all help to shape the character and identity of a development, of any scale. Proposals for new development should take full account of the local context and innovative, eco- friendly and contemporary designs that add interest and embody the general ‘sense of place’ are encouraged. It should be noted that the General Design Principles identified in Policy SAX1 below apply throughout the Neighbourhood Area including the area of the proposed South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood located within the extended Neighbourhood Area. More detailed design guidance for the development of the Garden Neighbourhood is contained in Chapter 12.

POLICY

SAX1: General design principles

The design of all new development in Saxmundham should reflect the town’s local distinctiveness and character and seek to enhance its quality.

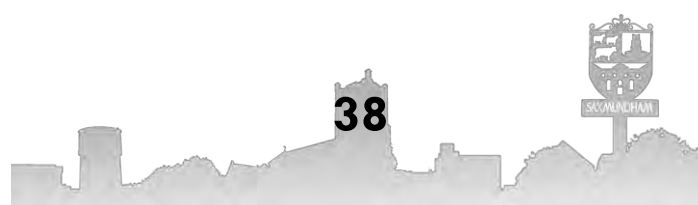
Proposals should have regard to the advice contained within the Design Guidelines for the Neighbourhood Plan area as set out in **Appendix E**.

Proposals that incorporate eco-friendly, innovative or contemporary designs whilst respecting the architectural heritage and character of the area will be supported

Proposals for new development should accord with the following criteria, as appropriate:

- a. Respect the existing settlement pattern in order to preserve its character.
- b. Retain existing connections and ensure new connections integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks, as well as natural features such as tree groups, hedgerows, and public rights of way.
- c. Reinforce the established character of streets, greens, and spaces, where this provides a positive impact.
- d. Harmonise and enhance the existing settlement in terms of physical form and architecture.
- e. Retain existing natural and historic features within the new development.
- f. Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing.
- g. Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details.
- h. Incorporate necessary services and drainage without causing harm to retained features.
- i. Ensure all component elements of a development, e.g., buildings, landscapes and access routes, parking, open space, are well related to each other.
- j. Enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address health and well-being needs

Consideration should be given to the specific guidance contained in the policies for the relevant Opportunity Zones. See also **Policy SAX10** which relate to the Conservation Area.





7. Parish wide: Local economy

Objective 1: To promote a strong and diverse local economy, building upon the town's advantages as a service centre market town with a strategic location.

Employment in Saxmundham

- 7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can expand and invest and adapt. Weight should be given to the need to support economic growth and productivity taking into account local business needs. In rural areas planning policies should enable the sustainable growth of all types of business both through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. The use of previously developed land and sites that are well related physically to existing settlement should be encouraged.
- 7.2 The Adopted Local Plan (Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, September 2020) indicates that employment opportunities are limited in the town and that there is a high level of net out commuting for employment. A range of employment sites exist in close proximity to Saxmundham, but a significant proportion of residents travel for employment to locations such as Ipswich, Martlesham, Leiston and Lowestoft. Policy SCLP12.28 of the Local Plan which contains the Strategy for the town also refers to the need to diversify and expand employment opportunities.
- 7.3 The creation of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood will provide new opportunities for employment in the area; however it is acknowledged that the area provisionally identified for employment in the Local Plan is west of the A12 and lies outside the Neighbourhood Area for Saxmundham.
- 7.4 The largest identified employment site is located just outside the Neighbourhood Area to the north of the town in the parish of Kelsale-cum-Carlton. This may be the reason that employment as an issue did not feature particularly strongly in the results of the Household Survey, where most comments relating to jobs and business tended to refer to the town centre. However, a strong theme was the need to do more for younger people in the town both in terms of employment and training opportunities but also social and recreational provision. The area known as the Carlton Industrial Estate (SCLP12:36) is expanding with planning consents already permitted or recently approved for an additional 97,000 square feet/ 9012 square metres which equals approximately 150-160 jobs for the local area. The site consists of a range of uses and sizes. Given the

connectivity of the site with access to and from Saxmundham this development is expected to make a positive impact on employment in Saxmundham.

- 7.5 The Neighbourhood Plan also does not propose to make any traditional additional allocations for employment or business uses but where proposals for such uses as identified above come forward, they would be encouraged to existing areas insofar as room is available. The locational focus for new employment generation for the Neighbourhood Plan will be the existing built-up area of the town, the town centre and specific locations where there are areas of unused or underused land that lend themselves to commercial and mixed developments such as the station area or Street Farm Road (see also the **Opportunity Zones policies**).
- 7.6 In addition the Neighbourhood Plan will support the appropriate expansion of existing businesses, particularly where such proposals will strengthen the economy of the town either by retaining or increasing the number of jobs, where they increase the overall vitality and viability of the town and where they provide sustainable jobs and skills for younger people.

POLICY

SAX2: Expansion of existing businesses

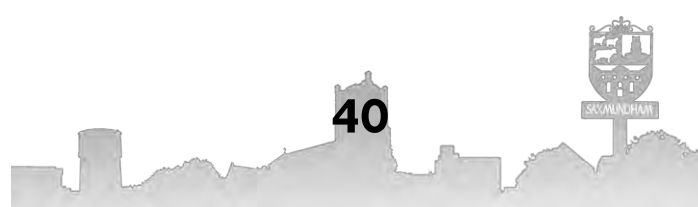
Proposals for the expansion or intensification of existing businesses (including otherwise acceptable changes of use) especially those which retain or increase the number of jobs, and provide skills development particularly those for young people will be permitted where:

- a. They strengthen the economy of the town, particularly the town centre and station area, and
- b. They do not have a significant adverse impact upon the character of the area or the amenity of local residents, for example, through their design, impact upon amenity or highway safety issues caused by traffic generated.

New business

- 7.7 The Local Plan policies provide a clear steer on the need to diversify and expand the existing employment base in the town for the benefit of its existing young people but also the resident population more generally.
- 7.8 Consideration has been given to the potential for attracting new sectors of business e.g. the energy sector which already has a presence in the area thus broadening the employment base of the town and to building on those industries that already have a presence in the town but would benefit the town by increasing their impact (e.g. the growing arts/digital sector or specialist retail).
- 7.9 Successive revisions to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)⁶ during 2019 and 2020, have meant that planning permission is no longer required to move from certain uses to others, such as employment uses to retail, or

⁶ The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1987/764/contents/made>.



offices to houses, thereby resulting in a more limited scope for this area of planning policy.

- 7.10 The desire still exists to ensure that settlements that act as a focus for their surrounding rural hinterland and serve a key role in meeting the needs of its residents can still provide the range and depth of employment, cultural and retail opportunities that will enable them to continue to be attractive places to live and work and to thrive economically into the future. Therefore the Neighbourhood Plan contains the following policies aimed at protecting and retaining existing employment uses insofar as is possible within the framework provided by the Use Classes Order, but also those that enable mixed uses including employment, commercial and housing to come forward on key sites in order to safeguard and diversify the business base of the town and promote opportunities for regeneration and renewal. Support is given for a range of potential employment sectors including those relating to retail, hospitality and creative and cultural industries such as those already resident at The Art Station. The policy expresses a preference for locating new business uses in the Town Centre, re-using brownfield sites, existing or allocated sites before unallocated out of centre or edge of settlement sites will be considered. This is consistent with the approach taken in Adopted Local Plan Policy SCLP4.2.

POLICY

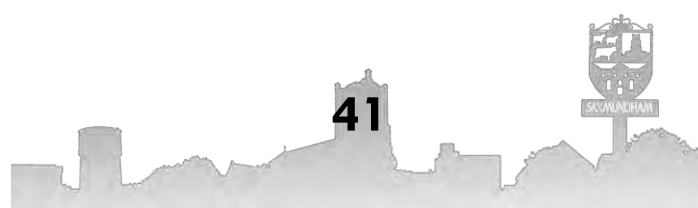
SAX3: New businesses

Development proposals which enable the establishment and growth of new businesses including small and medium sized enterprises particularly those within the following types, will be supported:

- a. Retail and hospitality.
- b. Traditional service industries.
- c. The energy sector (renewable energy, green energy, and carbon neutral energy) and those businesses associated with supporting those sectors.
- d. Creative and cultural industries including those that combine modern technology and the arts.
- e. Digital industries.
- f. Health, social care, and community support services.⁷

Wherever possible, development proposals for business or mixed uses within the parish should be located in the town centre, the station area, Street Farm Road, or existing or allocated employment sites before out of centre or edge of settlement sites will be considered. (see **Opportunity Zone policies**).

⁷ See Appendix D: Glossary for more specific definitions of terms used in criteria a to f.





8. Parish wide: **Community Infrastructure**

Objective 2: To secure for the community of Saxmundham a full range of physical and community infrastructure to meet the growing needs of the town and its environs.

Vibrant, healthy and integrated communities

- 8.1 The overarching social objective of the planning system as set out in the NPPF is to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support the health, social and cultural well-being of communities.
- 8.2 In order to achieve this, planning of new development must go hand in hand with planning for the community services and facilities that need to be in place to support development and meet the needs of residents. This includes green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, footways and cycleways, public transport, education, library provision, allotments, fire hydrant provision, health services and a range of cultural facilities. These together are often described as 'community infrastructure'. Housing and other development will be expected to contribute towards improving local services and infrastructure through either the payment of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); planning obligations (via a Section 106 agreement/Section 278 agreement); or use of a planning condition.
- 8.3 The NPPF requires that the levels and types of infrastructure required to support growth should be set out clearly in strategic policies e.g., the Local Plan.
- 8.4 Presently Saxmundham is relatively well served by community infrastructure although there are some elements of fragility and gaps in provision. This infrastructure is also extensively used by the surrounding parishes. There are primary and secondary schools, a doctors' surgery, library, dentist, vets, supermarkets, local shops, a bank, garage, restaurants, takeaway restaurants, cafes, bars, pubs, community meeting venues, places

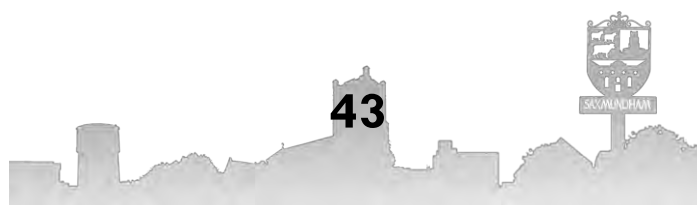


of worship, day care facilities, play areas, and car parks. Saxmundham does not, on the other hand, benefit from an indoor sports centre, allotments, cinema etc. so its social infrastructure is more limited than most other towns in the area. However, as the population of the parish increases over the Neighbourhood Plan period, a number of these current services are either at or nearing capacity and will therefore require consideration as to how they will continue to serve the community without a significant decrease in the quality of service they provide. Therefore, with all the proposed growth in the Garden Neighbourhood and the allocation north-east of Street Farm, there will be a need for new, improved, or reconfigured facilities, in order to at least maintain the quality of life for the whole community. This is particularly the case in relation to local GP/medical services given the foreseen level of population increase.

- 8.5 As well as giving consideration to the potential for new community facilities it is important that the existing valued facilities in the town which have served the community over time continue to perform their relevant community function. Such facilities should be safeguarded and protected from development proposals that would lead to their loss or would adversely affect their ability to function as community facilities.
- 8.6 With the majority of future growth in Saxmundham taking place within the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood, some consideration to future community infrastructure requirements has been given at a strategic level. This is covered in more detail in Chapter 12.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 8.8 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008, to help deliver in the infrastructure required to support the development of an area. The CIL is levied on practically all new development within a given area. East Suffolk Council has introduced CIL across its administrative area and has an adopted CIL Charging Schedule which sets out the charges levied on various forms of development. East Suffolk is responsible for levying and collecting the CIL payable and they retain 5% of the overall CIL collected in the District to administer the scheme.
- 8.9 **Neighbourhood CIL** is the percentage of the CIL that is payable to the parish or neighbourhood within which eligible development takes place. At present Saxmundham Town Council receives 25 per cent of the CIL levied on development in the original Neighbourhood Plan area by virtue of being covered by an Adopted Neighbourhood Plan. Currently development in the extended Neighbourhood Area would only generate a 15% levy for the Town Council until this Neighbourhood Plan Review is 'made' (adopted) and then this will rise to 25%. Saxmundham Town Council regularly reviews its priorities for spending the Neighbourhood CIL. In January 2022, after consultation, the following were agreed by the Town Council for Neighbourhood CIL expenditure on community infrastructure.
- Purpose 1: Improving access from new housing areas to the town centre for pedestrian and cyclists.
 - Purpose 2: Enhancing children and young people's recreational facilities.
 - Purpose 3: A more attractive successful town centre to meet the needs of the growing population.
 - Purpose 4: Improving community, entertainment, and cultural facilities in the town.



- Purpose 5: Improving facilities for non-fossil fuel modes.
- Purpose 6: Developing new or improving existing open or green spaces for the community.
- Purpose 7: Developing sports and recreational facilities.

Specific projects are identified and developed from this set of purposes.

- 8.10 **District CIL** is the remaining percentage of CIL that goes into the District Infrastructure fund which is pooled and allocated to infrastructure projects that make the development in the area sustainable, e.g. extensions to schools and health. This may be spent on infrastructure projects identified in the Local Plan's Infrastructure Delivery Framework, Neighbourhood Plans or through bids received.
- 8.11 Community consultation undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process identified the following priorities in respect of community facilities:

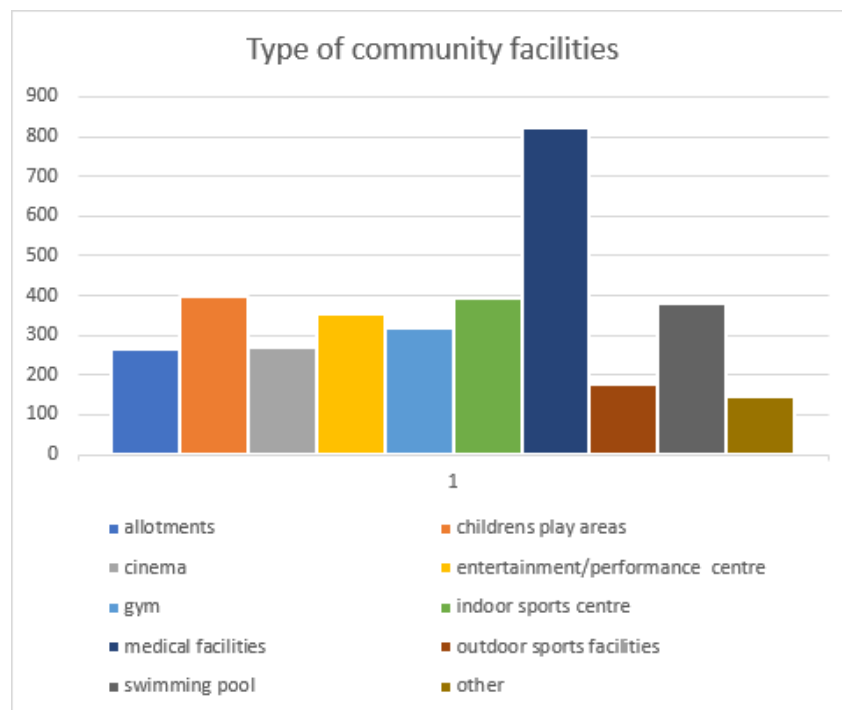


Figure 23: Community facilities identified as important through community consultation.

- 8.12 The top priority was medical facilities followed by the provision of an indoor sports facility which could also include outdoor sports provision, a gym and a swimming pool which were also identified as priorities for the community. The cost of provision of such facilities is too great to be provided through Neighbourhood CIL alone and therefore the use of other funding streams such as the District Level (pooled CIL contributions) will be required. Given that these facilities have been clearly and consistently identified as priorities by the community, the Town Council is extremely keen to ensure their delivery. The Town Council classes these as 'Essential Infrastructure' for the purposes of the District Council's CIL spending strategy. The Town Council will work closely in partnership with

other bodies such as the District Council, County Council and the private sector, as appropriate to enable the delivery of these facilities.

Community facilities

- 8.13 A range of community facilities are highlighted in the Local Plan policy as needing to be delivered to support the growth of the Garden Neighbourhood. **These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 12.**
- 8.14 Community consultation undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process revealed that indoor sports provision was the key priority for a facility thought consistently to be lacking in the town and therefore the development of the Garden Neighbourhood should consider opportunities to provide such facilities where they can easily serve the new and existing communities. (See **Policy SAX4** below).
- 8.15 **Policy SAX4** below seeks to reflect the expressed preferences of the community. It expresses support for proposals that would lead to the direct provision of new or improved community facilities and sets out the priorities for those facilities, including whether they are essential or desirable for the purposes of the District's CIL funding strategy, whilst ensuring that such proposals are acceptable in terms of their impact upon amenity, the environment and in highways terms. The policy is in the form of an area wide policy in order to reflect the needs for new infrastructure generated by the incremental growth of the town and other allocations outside (as well as due to) the Garden Neighbourhood.

POLICY

SAX4: New community facilities

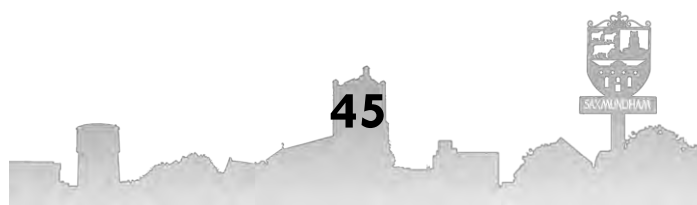
Development proposals for new or improved community facilities will be supported. This includes:

- i. Fully functioning indoor sport and leisure provision within the town
- ii. A fuller range of local health services, for example, new or expanded health and social care facilities.
- iii. Entertainment and cultural facilities.
- iv. Improved social provision, particularly for the young and the socially isolated.

Proposals should:

- a. Be accessible by high quality walking and cycling links.
- b. Avoid or mitigate significant impacts on the amenity of surrounding residents.
- c. Enhance the local natural environment and avoid or mitigate significant detrimental impacts upon the local natural environment.
- d. Avoid severe impact to highway function or safety and mitigate any significant impacts to highway function or safety.

(See also **Policy SAX14** relating to community gardens and **allotments** and **Policy SAXGN3** relating to the Garden Neighbourhood).

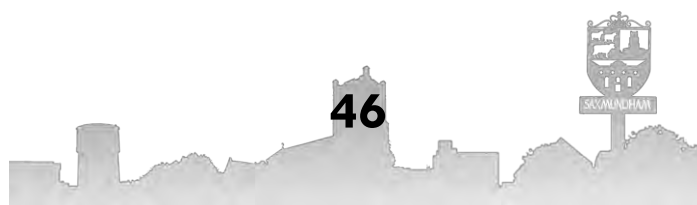




9. Parish wide: **Transport and movement**

Strategic transport context

- 9.1 Saxmundham's strategic links are provided by the A12 to the west which provides road access to the town and much of the parish. The town has a railway station which provides good rail access on the East Suffolk Railway line providing passenger services to Ipswich and Lowestoft, from which onward connections can be made.
- 9.2 From the south, Saxmundham is primarily accessed by the B1121 'South Entrance' which provides an historic entrance to the town centre. It is at this end of the town that the proposed Garden Neighbourhood will be located. Vehicular access to the Garden Neighbourhood is expected to be from the west via the A12, and the creation of a new access point onto the existing road network. This access point will also serve the proposed employment area to be located west of the A12.
- 9.3 The household survey results revealed that 45 per cent of respondents used the train service and that they were largely satisfied with the service. A much lower percentage 16 per cent of respondents said they used the bus service and 56 per cent were dissatisfied with the service provided.
- 9.4 Rail users were also asked what improvements were required to the local train service. From 400 respondents, 147 identified the facilities at the train station itself as needing improvement and this was the most popular issue raised. Respondents were also asked about specific improvements with physical improvements to the building itself, better catering facilities and improved waiting/seating area being the highest priorities.
- 9.5 Accessibility within the town itself for pedestrians and cyclists was also examined by the household survey with results revealing support for cycle routes, some pedestrianisation of the High Street, wider pavements and footpaths and cycle parking and storage.
- 9.6 As with many market towns, Saxmundham does have its share of traffic issues. Congestion in the town centre can occur at peak times and when HGVs are delivering to town centre businesses. The historic core of the town can become



difficult to navigate which is not unusual for an historic town whose original street pattern was designed to accommodate considerably less and substantially different traffic levels and transport modes. Some pavements cannot accommodate the requirements of mobility guidelines.

- 9.7 Whilst concerns over traffic congestion, speeding and unregulated parking are often issue of concern to local communities, the planning process and Neighbourhood Plans more specifically are limited in the ability to address many transport issues as their policies are only enacted where development occurs. Neighbourhood Plan policies therefore cannot address issues such as speeding, congestion, or nuisance parking where these are already existing problems, but may be able to influence such issues for the future and ensure that new development does not exacerbate existing problems or cause new ones.
- 9.8 Government guidance in respect of plan making and transport issues tends to focus on promoting sustainable transport. Plans are urged to consider at an early stage the impacts of development on transport networks, realise opportunities for improvement, promote walking and cycling and public transport use and ensure that any adverse impacts of traffic are mitigated. It is also acknowledged that the pattern of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes and contribute to making high quality places.
- 9.9 The government advises that significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes, which can help to reduce congestions and emissions and improve air quality and public health.

Objective 3: To improve transport and safe accessibility for the people of Saxmundham by foot, bicycle, mobility scooter and public or private transport resulting in environmental and health benefits.

Walking and cycling connectivity

- 9.10 Opportunities to encourage and facilitate the use of sustainable transport in particular walking and cycling should be maximised. Government guidance encourages development proposals to provide for high quality walking and cycling networks and supporting facilities such as cycle parking. Suffolk County Council has produced a Green Access Strategy (2020-2030) ⁸. This strategy sets out the council's commitment to enhance public rights of way, including new linkages and upgrading routes where there is a need. The strategy also seeks to improve access for all and to support healthy and sustainable access between communities and services through development funding and partnership working.

⁸ Suffolk Green Access Strategy, <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/Roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way/suffolk-green-access-strategy-2020-2030.pdf#:~:text=The%20Suffolk%20Green%20Access%20Strategy%20details%20why%20green,it%20can%20contribute%20to%20the%20council's%20corporate%20priorities.>



- 9.11 Such networks should be comprehensive and provide not only for recreational routes but also for meaningful routes that can realistically be used for commuting to work or school. In addition, new routes should connect to the existing network and be suitable for use by people with disabilities and reduced mobility. New cycling and pedestrian routes should be safe, secure, and attractive, maximise the scope for pedestrians and cyclists and respond to the character of the area and any relevant design standards. **See Policy SAXGN1 for more detail on connecting the Garden Neighbourhood and Policy SAXTC1 for more detail on the town centre/High Street.**
- 9.12 Opportunities for improving connectivity between the town centre and the railway station (for commuting/business and recreational purposes) and also the town centre and the river frontage (for recreational purposes) should be given high priority.

POLICY

SAX5: Improving connectivity

Over the Plan period, opportunities will be sought to make the town safer and more accessible, and to contribute to the health and well-being of residents, through the provision of safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes, public rights of way and crossings, suitable for all users, in particular linking new and existing housing areas to the town centre and station. Development should maximise walking and cycling through its location and design.

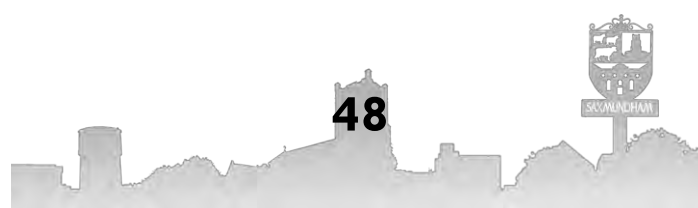
New provision should be in the form of well-designed, attractive and safe to use routes (including appropriate lighting), and the enhancement of existing routes including making new connections and links where appropriate. New cycle linkages should be built to the standards set out in LTN1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design.

Development that will improve connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists, and users with a mobility impairment, both within Saxmundham, and in and out of Saxmundham to neighbouring towns and villages will be supported in so far as it relates to works within the plan area.

New routes, including new public rights of way, should form a cohesive network for users and allow for access both within the town and also to the wider countryside, where opportunities should be taken to create green corridors capable of connecting with neighbouring villages. New developments will be supported where they provide, or contribute to safe, convenient, and pleasant pedestrian and cycle routes to the town centre, to community facilities (schools, library etc) and also to the wider countryside.

Proposals that would improve connectivity between the town and the river frontage, including those that would provide for a comprehensive riverside walk, will be supported.

See also **Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Code for the Neighbourhood Plan Area.**



Existing Public Rights of Way

- 9.13 The NPPF advises that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance Public Rights of Way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails. Opportunities to improve facilities for walkers and cyclists in the parish would be supported.
- 9.14 Where development proposals are likely to affect an existing Public Right of Way, these should take account of its route and incorporate it into the overall layout of the scheme. Where this is not considered possible, this will need to be justified. Where Public Rights of Way may be unavoidably impacted or lost, appropriate diversions or new routes should be provided that are safe, equally accessible, and convenient for users.
- 9.15 Existing Public Rights of Way which are incorporated into new developments, including bridleways and footpaths, should be protected and enhanced. Enhancement can take the form of new routes, connections, improved surfaces and/or signage increasing access to the countryside and connectivity between communities.

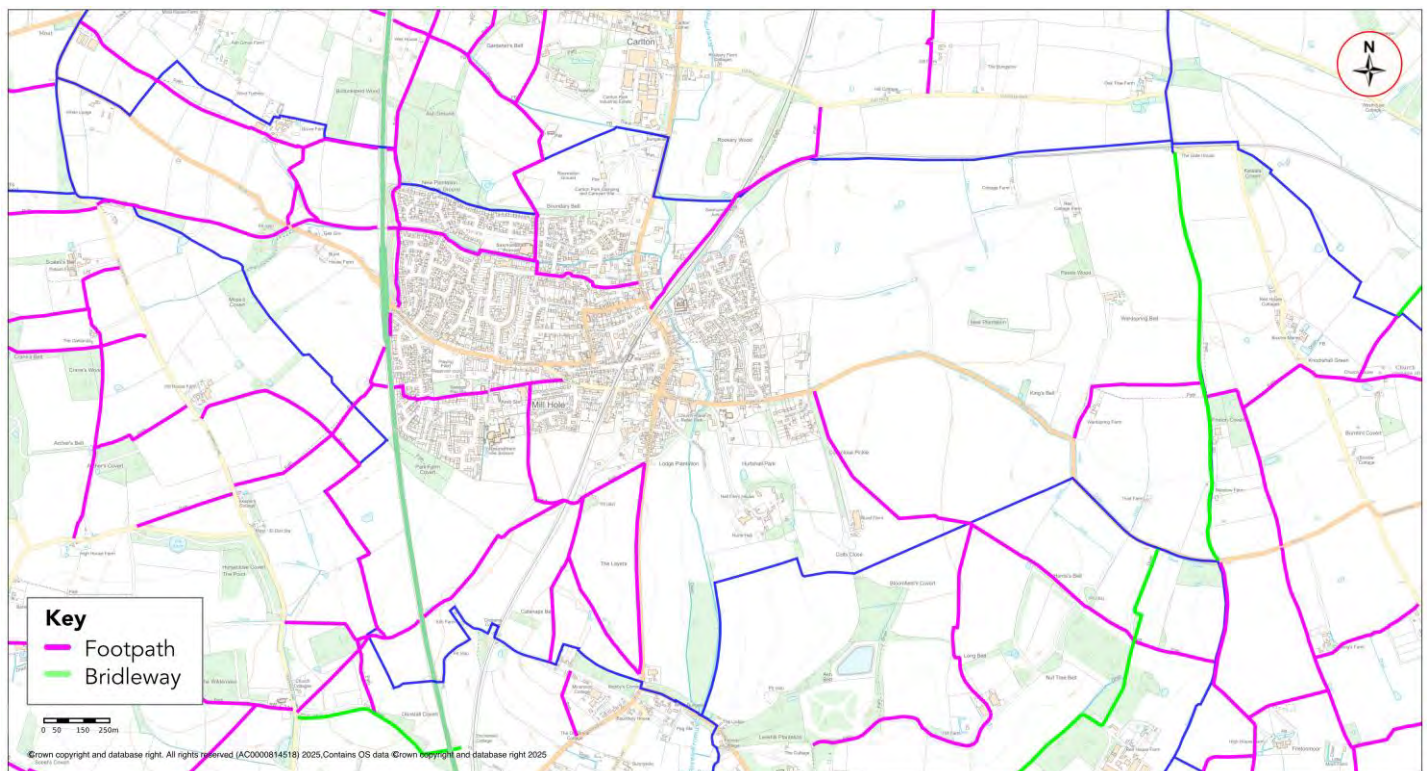
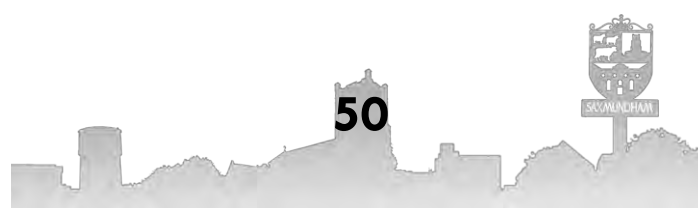


Figure 24: Public Rights of Way in Saxmundham parish (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary. **(map extended to include revised parish boundary)**

POLICY	<p>SAX6: Public Rights of Way</p> <p>Existing Public Rights of Way, including bridleways and footpaths, should be protected and enhanced to promote walking and cycling.. Enhancement can take the form of new routes, connections, improved surfaces and/or signage increasing access to the countryside and connectivity between parts of the town.</p> <p>Where new routes are to be provided and existing routes enhanced, careful consideration should be given to ensure their safety and attractiveness, for all users and for adjacent occupiers. Proposals should seek to minimise light pollution whilst remaining safe and attractive to users.</p> <p>Public Rights of Way should be retained, except where it can be demonstrated that there is strong community support for it to be re-routed. Where Public Rights of Way are to be unavoidably impacted or lost, appropriate diversions or new routes will be provided that are safe and convenient for users.</p>
--------	---

Parking

- 9.16 Government guidance recognises that there continues to be a demand for parking in both residential and non-residential developments. The NPPF makes it clear that parking standards for residential and non-residential development should only be set where there are clear and compelling reasons for doing so that are necessary to manage the local road network. Parking provision for developments in East Suffolk will be made in order to satisfy the relevant adopted standards of East Suffolk Council as local planning authority.
- 9.17 Adequate and well-maintained parking provision is an important element of new development, whether it is for a single dwelling or for a major housing scheme or business premises. The Neighbourhood Plan encourages sustainable transport options, however, it is also a reality that private cars will be used to access services and employment either within or beyond the town.
- 9.18 Allocated parking in new residential development should discourage indiscriminate and on-kerb parking. As demand for electric vehicles is expected to increase over the plan period, opportunities should be taken to encourage and require the installation of electric charging points both in residential and non-residential developments.
- 9.19 In larger housing developments, unless parking provision is well designed it can either dominate or detract from the overall visual appearance of that development. Where parking is to be provided it should be an integral part of the design and layout and it should also be designed to meet the needs of residents it is intended to serve. East Suffolk Council uses the Suffolk Guidelines for Parking, and these are therefore applicable within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 9.20 Whilst it is recognised that the use of cars for personal mobility will continue and therefore provision for parking is necessary, the principles of high-quality design and the creation of a safe, attractive and liveable environment is still paramount. Detailed consideration should be given to the provision of new parking, which should aim to be



discreet and not dominate the design of development. The **Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Code for the Neighbourhood Plan Area July 2021** provides useful guidance on the design of parking areas which the proposers of development are encouraged to follow.

POLICY

SAX7: Parking provision

Parking provision (including cycle parking) for all new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area shall be in accordance with the adopted parking standards of Suffolk County Council.⁹

Residential parking

Parking in new housing developments should be located to be discreet, accessible, and appropriate to both the character of the proposed development and the character of the existing area. New parking surfaces will be expected to use permeable materials to minimise the occurrence of flooding.

Taking into account the proposal and its location, individual parking provision should include adequate off-street parking for the size of the dwelling. Where garages are proposed they should be a minimum of 4.95m in length with a width of at least 2.9m in order to accommodate and provide easy access to and from a range of modern vehicles.

Where parking areas are proposed they should:

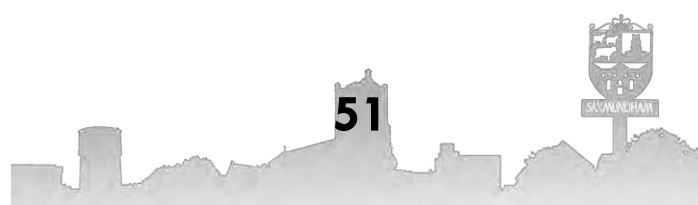
- i. Be located to promote natural surveillance and security
- ii. Where appropriate, make specific provision for layby parking and visitor parking.
- iii. Be well designed, including landscaping between parking bays.
- iv. Safe and convenient for users, including appropriate lighting.

Non-residential parking

Non-residential development including, commercial, retail and leisure development should provide adequate parking for the intended users of that development, including staff and customers to avoid creating parking problems such as parking on pavements and verges.

See also **Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Code for the Neighbourhood Plan Area July 2021**. **See also Policy SAXGN4.**

⁹ Parking guidance, Suffolk County Council, <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/parking-guidance/>





10. Parish wide: **Housing**

Scale and location of new housing

- 10.1 Government guidance advises that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area. In addition, they should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans and should shape and direct development that is outside these strategic policies. Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies.
- 10.2 The issue of new housing is often a key determinant in the decision by a local community to embark upon the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. The issue of future housing development in Saxmundham is a key issue for the town over the next 15-20 years, particularly its potential impacts upon the people, services and environment of the town and parish.
- 10.3 As referred to in earlier chapters, the Adopted Local Plan makes a significant allocation of 66.6 hectares (approximately 800 new dwellings) in the form of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood. In addition, a further 2.18 hectares of land (approximately 40 dwellings) is allocated in the Local Plan, at land north-east of Street Farm. Between April 2001 and March 2020, 1,030 new homes were built in the parish with over 600 of these being constructed since 2011. The total quantity of dwellings in the parish in 2019 was estimated at 2,190 (source Valuation Office Agency). Data provided by East Suffolk Council indicated that on 31st March 2020, there were outstanding (unimplemented) permissions for a further 62 dwellings in the parish. The total as of March 2020 was therefore believed to be approximately 2,200 dwellings.
- 10.4 The adopted Local Plan has identified the housing requirement for the district as a whole and has made specific allocations within the parish. The Neighbourhood Plan recognises that in addition to these allocations, there will be 'windfall development' which will come forward during the Neighbourhood Plan period. Following early feedback from the community, the Town Council has therefore taken the view **that neither the Neighbourhood Plan nor the Neighbourhood Plan Review will make further allocations** for new housing development but instead will focus its policies on managing the impacts of this proposed level of development over the plan period.

- 10.5 The Neighbourhood Plan also does not intend to alter the current adopted Settlement Boundary for the town and therefore will use that in the adopted Local Plan for the purposes of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. The settlement boundary will be expected to be the focus for new windfall development outside the specific Local Plan allocations. Proposals for development inside the settlement boundary including small scale infill development (e.g. individual houses or small groups of dwellings) will be supported subject to the proposals meeting certain design criteria such as not having adverse impacts upon the natural or built environment or highway safety and the design criteria set out in **Policy SAX1**. In addition, proposals that would lead to the development of new housing in existing back gardens, back land or tandem development will only be supported where they meet certain criteria in relation to impact on the natural and historic environment, highways safety and residential amenity. This form of development they should not result in a cramped form of development, or a density of development that detracts from the overall character of the area. The following **Policy SAX8** sets out the criteria for the consideration of proposals for new windfall and infill development.

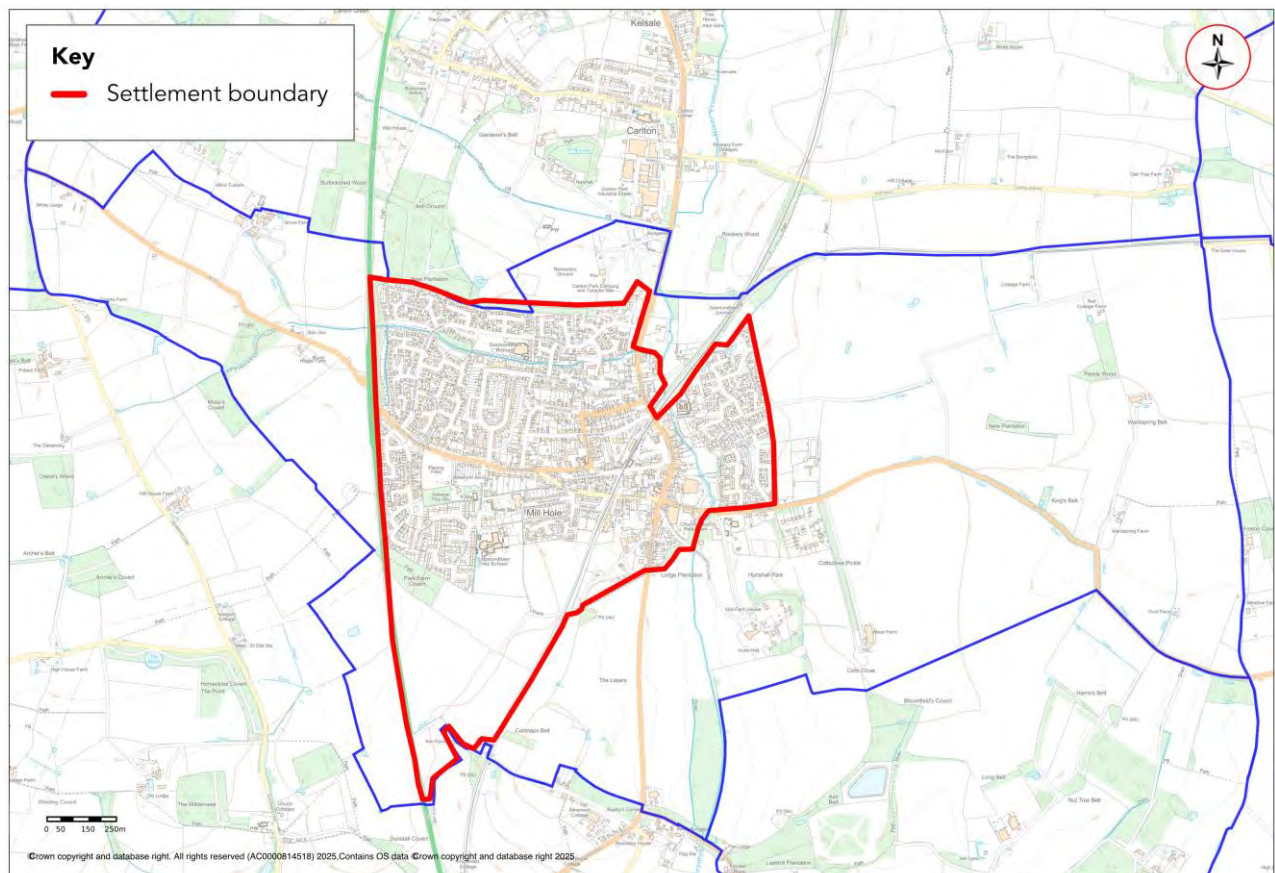


Figure 25: Settlement boundary (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary. (map amended to reflect new parish boundary)

POLICY	<p>SAX8: Windfall and infill development</p> <p>Proposals for windfall and infill development should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. be located within the defined settlement boundary and b. not have an adverse impact upon the historic or natural environment or highway safety and c. have a close functional relationship with the existing built-up area of the town and the existing pattern of development and d. be self-contained with logical, natural boundaries and e. be appropriate in size and scale to the site, its setting, and the town and f. not have an adverse impact upon the amenity of adjoining occupiers <p>Proposals for back land¹⁰, tandem¹¹ or the development of gardens will only be supported where they meet all of the above criteria, and where they would not result in a cramped form of development or a density of development that would detract from the overall character of the area. Both the existing and proposed dwellings should have sufficient outdoor amenity space.</p>
--------	--

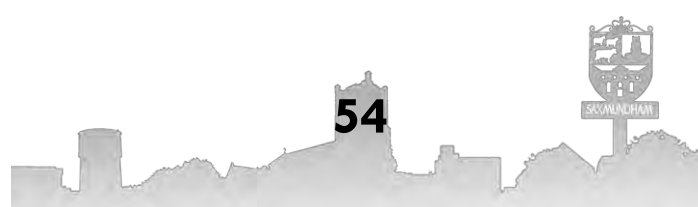
Objective 5: To promote the development of high quality, energy efficient housing to meet the needs of the people of Saxmundham

Housing need and mix

- 10.6 As well as housing numbers, the size, type and tenure of any new housing is also a key issue for local communities in respect of new housing. The specific mix of housing will clearly have an impact on the existing community and therefore careful thought needs to be applied to determining that mix.
- 10.7 Delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes is essential to support a sustainable, vibrant, and mixed community. Community consultation, including the results from the questionnaire revealed that residents want to have a range of types of accommodation to meet their changing needs and to cater for any needs that are currently not being met. 53 per cent of respondents felt that the share of affordable housing (for rent or ownership) should account for between 10 per cent- 25 per cent (of the dwellings proposed on a site), whilst 47 per cent felt it should be over 25 per cent. 73 per cent of respondents supported owner-occupied housing as a priority with 41 per cent in favour of social housing. Shared ownership homes and sheltered housing each had the support of around one third and there was also some support for bungalows. The survey also asked for respondents to indicate a preference of the size of dwelling to be provided in the town in the future and 80 per cent of respondents indicated support for 2-3 bedroomed dwellings.

¹⁰ Development involving the re-use of parts of a number of rear gardens to existing houses for further residential development.

¹¹ Tandem development refers to land set back behind existing properties often existing houses, utilising brownfield or garden land generally with limited street frontage.



Affordable Housing

- 10.8 There is no specific Housing Needs Assessment for Saxmundham as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, however there is wider district data available to support the adopted Local Plan policies. **See Local Plan policies SCLP5.8 and 5.10.**
- 10.9 The new dwellings allocated in the Adopted Local Plan should deliver at least 277 units (33 per cent) of Affordable Housing. There may be other opportunities that arise through infill, windfall, or redevelopment over the Neighbourhood Plan period. The Adopted Local Plan Policy SCLP5.10 requires that 1 in 3 dwellings should be affordable on sites over 10 units or 0.5 hectares. Of these affordable dwellings, 50 per cent should be for affordable rent/social rent, 25 per cent should be for shared ownership and 25 per cent should be for discounted home ownership. Provision is expected to be made on-site, unless it can be demonstrated in exceptional circumstances that it is not feasible or practical to provide the units on site in which case it may be agreed that a commuted sum could be paid towards provision of affordable housing outside the site.

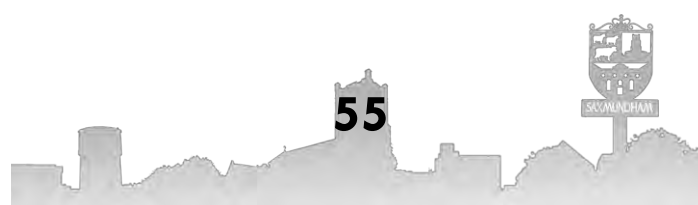
Dwelling size

- 10.10 The parish is expecting a substantial volume of new development during the Plan period. It would be unwise for this to be delivered in an unbalanced way (e.g. with too much emphasis on large homes). Those wishing to move within or relocate to the area will have a range of circumstances and preferences, and they should be offered a range of options. It is also overly simplistic to think about home sizes in terms of the number of bedrooms offered. There is a significant contrast between a 4 bedroom ‘executive’ home with a luxury specification on a large rural plot and a 4-bedroom townhouse suitable for a large family on a lower income within walking distance of local schools.
- 10.11 Therefore the Neighbourhood Plan should encourage for all sizes of home to be provided in Saxmundham in future years. In particular, encouragement is given for additional provision of accommodation suitable for vulnerable people or those with special needs. Housing provision in the parish should be part of a dwelling size mix that is balanced overall and which meets the needs of a growing older population as well as those currently priced out of the market.

POLICY

SAX9: Tenure blind Housing Development

Where affordable housing is to be provided it should be indistinguishable from other tenures in external form, quality, and character. In order to encourage both physical and social integration, affordable housing should be spread throughout any new development.





11. Parish wide: **Heritage and the natural environment**

Objective 6: To protect and enhance the conservation area, the town's heritage, green spaces, natural features and rural setting and to address the challenges of climate change.

Heritage protection

- 11.1 Saxmundham possesses a high quality and varied historic environment with a wealth of historic buildings and structures concentrated within the historic core of the town centre which is reflected in its designation as a Conservation Area. The Conservation Area was originally designated in 1970 by East Suffolk County Council; it was then extended by Suffolk Coastal District Council in 1980 and redesignated in 1991. The designation and re-appraisal of Conservation Areas is an important process and one that is governed by the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Council has a duty to review its Conservation Area designations and in 2016, the District Council undertook a Conservation Area Appraisal resulting in the production of some management guidelines.
- 11.2 The Conservation Area Appraisal 2016, describes the overall character of Saxmundham as one of 'a reasonably well-preserved historic Suffolk market town of picturesque and attractive appearance. In particular the town centre and roads leading from the High Street retain the special characteristics that strongly justify its Conservation Area designation.' This Neighbourhood Plan draws upon and affirms the Appraisal's contents and guidance in the following paragraphs.
- 11.3 At the heart of the Conservation Area is the historic Market Place. This area is located to the west of The High Street and hidden from the road by a row of commercial premises and dwellings. The High Street runs approximately north – south, and generally the most high-status buildings found in Saxmundham abut this road. Those premises located within the town centre are largely commercial (often with domestic accommodation above) whereas to the northern and southern extremities of the Conservation Area, as well as to the tributary roads to the east and west, domestic properties are found. Those dwellings

located close to the railway station tend to be of nineteenth century date, smaller in scale and more concentrated in terms of spatial density. Scattered around this area are former commercial and industrial sites, including land once occupied by the gas works and the site of a maltings complex northeast of the station.

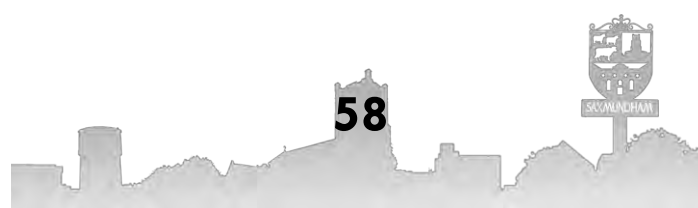
- 11.4 Closer to the Market Place buildings tend to be of sixteenth, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century date, whereas to the north and south extremities of the Conservation Area sizeable individual properties from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and set in private gardens and landscapes, are found.
- 11.5 The overall character of Saxmundham is very much one of an historic Suffolk market town which retains its traditional form and appearance. Despite some 20th Century development, some small-scale incremental change having taken place, the town centre retains the special characteristics which strongly justify its Conservation Area designation.
- 11.6 These special characteristics include, amongst other things, the number and quality of its traditional buildings and the fact that most still retain their traditional features; the shape, form and layout of the settlement itself; and the attractive relationship that exists between the older buildings and the spaces between and around them.
- 11.7 Important landscape features such as trees, shrubs, hedges, old walls, and railings all make a major contribution. It is vitally important therefore, that these special characteristics are retained and reinforced.
- 11.8 Inappropriate development, neglect and the cumulative effect of incremental change are a constant threat to the special architectural and historic interest of any Conservation Area. Detrimental change can take many forms, from infill with poorly designed new development to modern replacement windows and doors in old buildings.
- 11.9 Other changes can include: inappropriate alterations and extensions which do not respect the scale, form and detailing of existing buildings, the use of modern materials and details in the area, insensitive highway works and signage, unsympathetic shopfronts and advertising, the construction of intrusive non-traditional walls, fences, driveways, garages, outbuildings and other structures.
- 11.10 In terms of materials and finishes, the use of concrete tiles, artificial slates, plastic and aluminium windows and doors, cement render and modern bricks, should all be avoided. So too should the use of brown stain on timber joinery, windows and doors as it invariably appears as a particularly discordant feature in an area where the tradition of using white paint forms an important unifying element in the street scene. Old facing brickwork should not be painted over and where this has happened in the past the Council will provide advice on the potential for its removal.
- 11.11 The surfaces between buildings also need very careful consideration. Special materials, including natural stone, bound gravel and exposed aggregate kerbs, paving slabs and blocks will normally be the most suitable. Certain types of concrete brick paving should not be used because they have a harsh modern appearance which is very much at odds with the traditional character of the Conservation Area. In order to protect the character and appearance of the Saxmundham Conservation Area the Neighbourhood Plan will, wherever possible, seek to prevent such inappropriate changes from taking place through a specific Neighbourhood Plan policy (**SAX10 below**).



- 11.12 When development is proposed within a Conservation Area, it can be a challenge to consider what is appropriate for the design of new development and whether this can include high quality modern design. Pastiche can be acceptable but is not always well delivered particularly where existing buildings contain a number of decorative features. Certain characteristics can be used as inspiration without resorting to copying. This approach can ensure that new design is both creative and contextual. New development should always respect the grain of the Conservation Area, including preservation of building lines, relationship to gardens, streets, parking and farmland, scale, density and uses.
- 11.13 Proper account should also always be taken of the impact that new development adjacent to a Conservation Area can have on its setting. Although a Conservation Area boundary represents a demarcation enclosing a special area of historic interest, changes immediately outside of it can still have a significant impact on character and appearance. The setting of the Conservation Area, therefore, has an intrinsic value that must be acknowledged in any proposals for change to it, and this protection is enshrined in the NPPF.
- 11.14 A key component of Conservation Areas that is afforded protection by their designation is that regarding trees, to ensure that the spaces they need to grow and thrive are preserved and enhanced. New boundary treatments to property can also provide enhancement to the Conservation Area and here the use of materials rich in character with the settlement should be considered. Walls, fences, railings and hedges (whether native or ornamental) can be carefully chosen to reflect local styles and respond/create a sense of local distinctiveness. The Conservation Area Appraisal makes a number of recommendations, and these are reflected in **Policy SAX10** below. In addition the District Council have recently adopted an Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document which contains a lot of useful advice on many heritage matters:
<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Local-Plans/Supplementary-documents/Historic-Environment-SPD/Historic-Environment-SPD-reduced.pdf>

Shopfronts in the Conservation Area

- 11.15 By their very nature Conservation Areas tend to be focused on the historic core of a settlement, which will usually include the town or village centre which includes the centre of retail activity. The successful and sustained stewardship of historic retail is closely linked with the on-going health of the retail sector.
- 11.16 In recent years, out of town retail sites, changing shopping habits and the growth of online retailing have all challenged town centres. As the number of people visiting and the range of shops to be found in town centres has changed, there has been a related impact on the local historic character of town centre buildings, their range of uses and street patterns. These may well be permanent changes. The decline in use of a number of particular types of buildings (for example pubs, post offices and banks) has added to the problem. Reduced footfall and increased vacancy rates in some areas has led to under-investment and a deterioration in the quality of the environment. At the same time, there have been changes to the planning system that have made it easier to transform retail and office buildings into residential properties. These changes can also have a major impact on the character of historic places. On the other hand, there is some



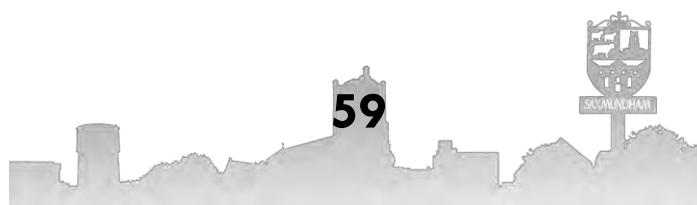
evidence that, following the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional smaller market towns may be attracting more, or losing less, shopping ‘footfall’ than larger cities.

- 11.17 Historic England has published a raft of useful advice on Historic Town Centres, including guidance on public realm¹², Works to Highways and Public Realm: Streets for All¹³ and highways improvements¹⁴. Such guidance advocates a collaborative approach to town centre management and a joined-up approach to transport (including the provision of the necessary services for town centre uses, such as loading bays) underpins a welcoming and attractive arrival experience for visitors.
- 11.18 Ensuring that public realm is designed to be in keeping with the surrounding built environment is important (controls over the use of signage and street furniture also contribute to the overall attractiveness of the public realm of a settlement). Reviewing and managing shop fronts as a collection rather than individually is also preferable.

¹² Public Realm - all parts of the built environment where the public has free access.

¹³ Streets for All, Historic England, <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/>

¹⁴ Historic Town Centres and High Streets, Historic England, <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/historic-towns-and-high-streets/>



POLICY**SAX10: Historic town centre and Conservation Area**

The special character of Saxmundham Conservation Area and its setting will be preserved and enhanced. This will be achieved by:

- a. Encouraging the retention and maintenance of traditional buildings and shop fronts which contribute to the overall character of the Conservation Area, whether listed or not.
- b. Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to the special qualities, character and appearance of the Conservation Area and takes account of its historic significance.
- c. Protecting the setting of the Conservation Area from development which adversely affects views into or out of the Conservation Area
- d. Ensuring that new development complements the built form and layout of the settlement itself and the attractive relationship which exists between the older buildings and the spaces between and around them.
- e. Encouraging the maintenance and enhancement of features and details which contribute to the area's local distinctiveness e.g., shopfronts, important landscape features such as trees and shrubs, walls, and railings.
- f. Requiring the use of high-quality traditional building materials and detailing, including but not limited to:
 - i. Local Suffolk bricks, e.g., soft reds largely on the rear elevations and hard whites on the front facades).
 - ii. Lime render.
 - iii. Pantile roofs.
 - iv. Decorative details such as pargeting, or ashlar scored lines/stone blocks.

The use of non-traditional materials such as concrete tiles, artificial slates, plastic and aluminium windows and doors, cement render and modern bricks, should be avoided.

All proposals should have regard to the advice contained within the Design Guidelines and Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan Area as set out in **Appendix E** and where relevant the Concept Masterplan for the High Street (**Appendix F**).

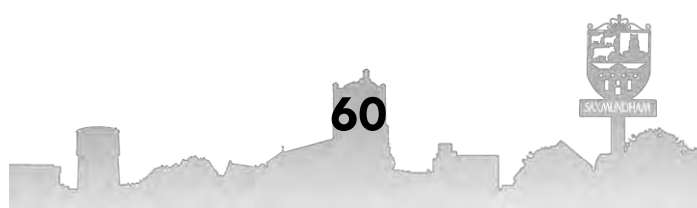
Signage and shopfronts

Where the need for new or reconfigured advertising signage (including shopfronts, highways and directional signage) has been established, consideration must be given to its size, design, and siting to ensure that it enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Proposals that seek to rationalise or reduce the amount of signage within the Conservation Area will be supported.

Street furniture

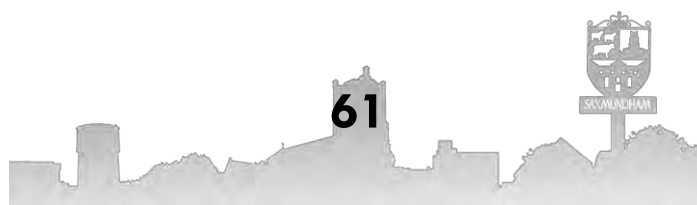
Proposals seeking to enhance the streetscape and public spaces through appropriate use of street furniture and where practicable results in the provision of wider pavements which preserves and enhances the area will be supported.

Please note that Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service advise that there should be early consultation with the Historic Environment Record (HER) and assessment of the archaeological potential of any area proposed for development at an appropriate stage in the design of new developments. The Archaeological service is happy to advise on the level of assessment and appropriate stages to be undertaken.



Non-designated Heritage Assets

- 11.19 The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) recognises that there are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which are not formally designated heritage assets. In some areas, local authorities identify some Non-designated Heritage Assets as 'locally Listed'. The PPG goes on to explain that these can be identified through Local Plans (and now most commonly through Neighbourhood Plans) and can be a positive way for the local community to identify Non-designated Heritage Assets against consistent criteria so as to improve the predictability of the potential for sustainable development.
- 11.20 The NPPF indicates that the effects of an application on the significance of a Non-designated Heritage Assets should be taken into account in determining the applications.
- 11.21 The household survey undertaken did not ask specific questions around Saxmundham's heritage although in answers to other questions it was clear that local residents valued the historic past of the town centre and felt that more could be done to improve it and to protect it.
- 11.22 Through their own work Steering Group Members have identified a number of potential Non-designated Heritage Assets in the town. All of the suggested nominations for Non-designated Heritage Assets have been assessed against criteria based on the Local Heritage Listing: Historic England Advice Note 7, page 9. The results of this exercise are shown in **Appendix B** and those buildings/structures that are considered to score well when measured against the criteria are included in **Policy SAX11** below.





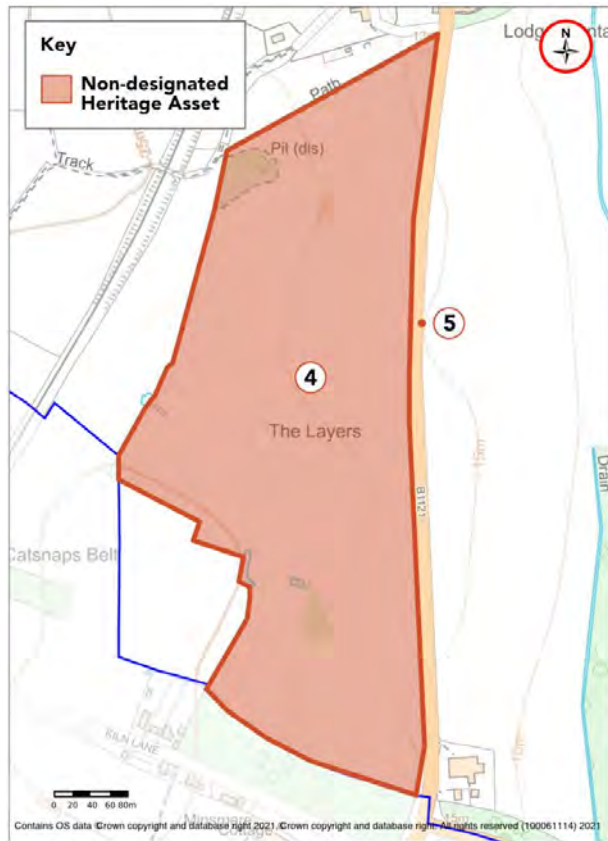


Figure 25 and 26: Non-designated Heritage Assets (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary. Note: figure 25 and figure 26 have different scales.

POLICY

SAX11: Non-designated Heritage Assets

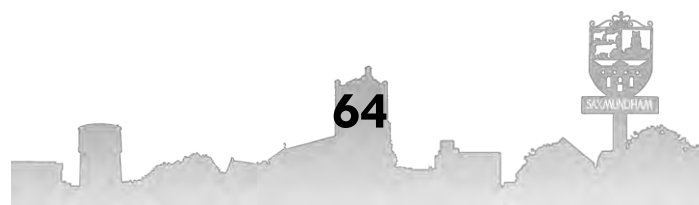
The following historic buildings and features (figure 25 and 26) are identified as Non-Designated Heritage Assets due to their locally important character and historic features:

1. The United Reformed Church, Chapel Road including its graveyard.
2. The Old Fire Station, Rendham Road.
3. Toll Gate Cottage, North Entrance.
4. The Layers.
5. Milestone on the B1121.
6. The pillbox in the Memorial Field.
7. The War Memorial in Fromus Square.
8. The Town Pump.
9. The Gannon Rooms.
10. The Water Tower, Rendham Road.
11. The Telephone Exchange, High Street.
12. Victorian Post Box at the Railway Station.
13. Saxmundham Goods Shed.
14. Victorian Post Box at South Entrance.
15. George V Post Box at North Entrance.

Development proposals affecting these non-designated heritage assets will be judged having regard to the scale of any harm or loss to their significance which may include its setting and relationship to its immediate surroundings and the contribution it makes to the character of the local area.

Landscape

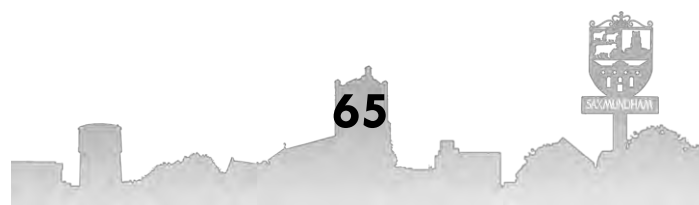
- 11.23 Saxmundham is an historic market town set on the bank of the River Fromus, which is a tributary of the River Alde that ultimately reaches the sea south of Orford Ness, after skirting past Snape, Aldeburgh and Orford.
- 11.24 The river valley locates Saxmundham just between two specific landscape character types - the Rolling Estate Sandlands and the Rolling Estate Claylands (to the west) as defined by the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment, which as a joint project between the County Council and the Suffolk Districts. Peripheral parts of the town also fall within the Ancient Rolling Farmlands character type. The underlying geology is essentially crag deposits, sands and gravels laid down during the Pliocene period over the chalk, which underlies all of Suffolk at depth.
- 11.25 The key characteristics of the Rolling Estate Sandlands character type are:
- Rolling river terraces and coastal slopes.
 - Sandy and free draining soils with areas of heathland.
 - Late enclosure with a pattern of tree belts and straight hedges.
 - Landscape parklands.
 - A focus of settlement in the Estate Sandlands landscape.
 - 19th century red brick buildings with black glazed pantiles in the east.
 - Tree belts and plantations throughout.
 - Occasional and significant semi-natural woodlands and ribbons of wet woodland.
 - Complex and intimate landscape on valley sides.
- 11.26 The Rolling Estate Claylands character type occurs in east Suffolk as linear bands in the middle reaches of the valleys of a number of rivers including the Alde and The Fromus around Kelsale and Carlton. The typical characteristics of this valley side landscape of clay loams with parklands and fragmented woodland include:
- Rolling valley-side landscape.
 - Medium clay and loamy soils.
 - Organic pattern of fields.
 - Occasional areas of more rational planned fields.
 - Numerous landscape parks.
 - Fragmented woodland cover, both ancient and plantation.
 - Winding hedged and occasionally sunken lanes.
- 11.27 This Neighbourhood Plan recognises the intrinsic value and special qualities of this area of landscape and proposes ensure that distinctive features of the two landscape character types are protected insofar as they contribute to the distinct landscape setting of the town.
- 11.28 The transition between rural landscape character and the urban form of the edge of the town is important not only for its landscape value appearance but because of the visual gateway it provides to the appearance of the edge of the town. Land to the south of the town and east of the B1121 with views to Hurts Hall and the town beyond was identified as sensitive by the Suffolk Coastal Settlement Sensitivity Assessment, which was undertaken to support the Local Plan.



- 11.29 Representations made during the Local Plan Examination further expressed the sensitivity of The Layers to development. The Layers is an open area to the west of the B1121 and has some heritage significance –the land between the B1121 and the tree belt being considered particularly sensitive to built development. The Heritage Impact Assessment undertaken to support the Local Plan advises that built development here should be avoided. Local Plan policy SCLP12.29 clarifies that the land east of the railway, which is outside the settlement boundary, is ‘identified for the provision of open space and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) as part of the garden neighbourhood. The retention of existing [agricultural] uses on land to the east of the railway would be supported where this complements the delivery of open space and SANG.
- 11.30 Through consultation, the north, south, east and west entrances to the town have been identified as important entrances providing important ‘green gateways’ due to the soft edge they provide between urban area and the surrounding rural landscape character. Proposals that would enhance the visual appearance of an entrance or ‘gateway’ to the town will be supported, however where ‘green’ gateways or substantially undeveloped entrances currently exist, these should be maintained as ‘soft’ entrances to assist with the urban to rural transition.

Important public views

- 11.31 In addition, the Steering Group have also identified a number of important views and vistas. The Group were mindful that any policy which sought to protect these views should focus on those that are ‘important’ to the overall landscape character of the parish and which can be enjoyed from publicly accessible locations, e.g., footpaths, public highway, an existing open space, or through a gap between buildings. The views identified are as follows:



1. **View from the B1121 looking across to Hurts Hall and St John's Church:** The road undulates and at the top of two rises there are open views across to the Church and Hurts Hall which are both important landmarks.

- a) Looking north-east from a point approximately 200m south of the milestone. This is a panoramic view which includes open farmland in the foreground, Hurts Hall and St John's Church in the middle distance backed by wooded rising land.
- b) Looking north-east from a point approximately 100m south of the milestone. This view centres on the church, which is framed by a gap in the trees, and also encompasses the open farmland setting and the rising wooded land behind.



2. **View from the high point of The Layers looking across the River Fromus to Hurts Hall:** Looking due east from the tree line which marks the western edge of The Layers, across open farmland and the River Fromus. This gives a wide view of Hurts Hall and its associated buildings, and the backdrop of rising wooded land. It demonstrates the contrast between the open landscape of the valley and the wooded ridge, below which the town sits.



3. **View along Chantry Road towards St John's Church:** Looking east from outside 7, Chantry Road the road dips away, then curves and rises towards the church. In summer trees fill the view, with the church tower visible above the trees, but in the winter the church is very prominent and dominates the view.



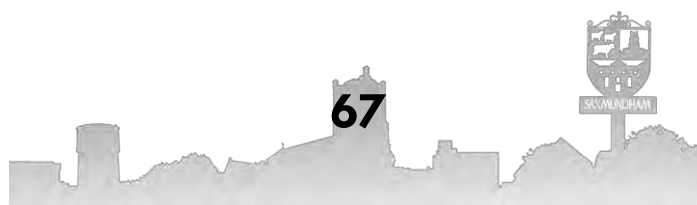
4. **View from Albion Street across the town to Church Hill.** From a point near the top of Albion Street opposite the Sax Club looking due east. This gives an interesting view across the rooftops of the historic centre of the town to the green ridge beyond topped by a line of trees. It emphasises the historic nature of the town and the close proximity of the countryside.

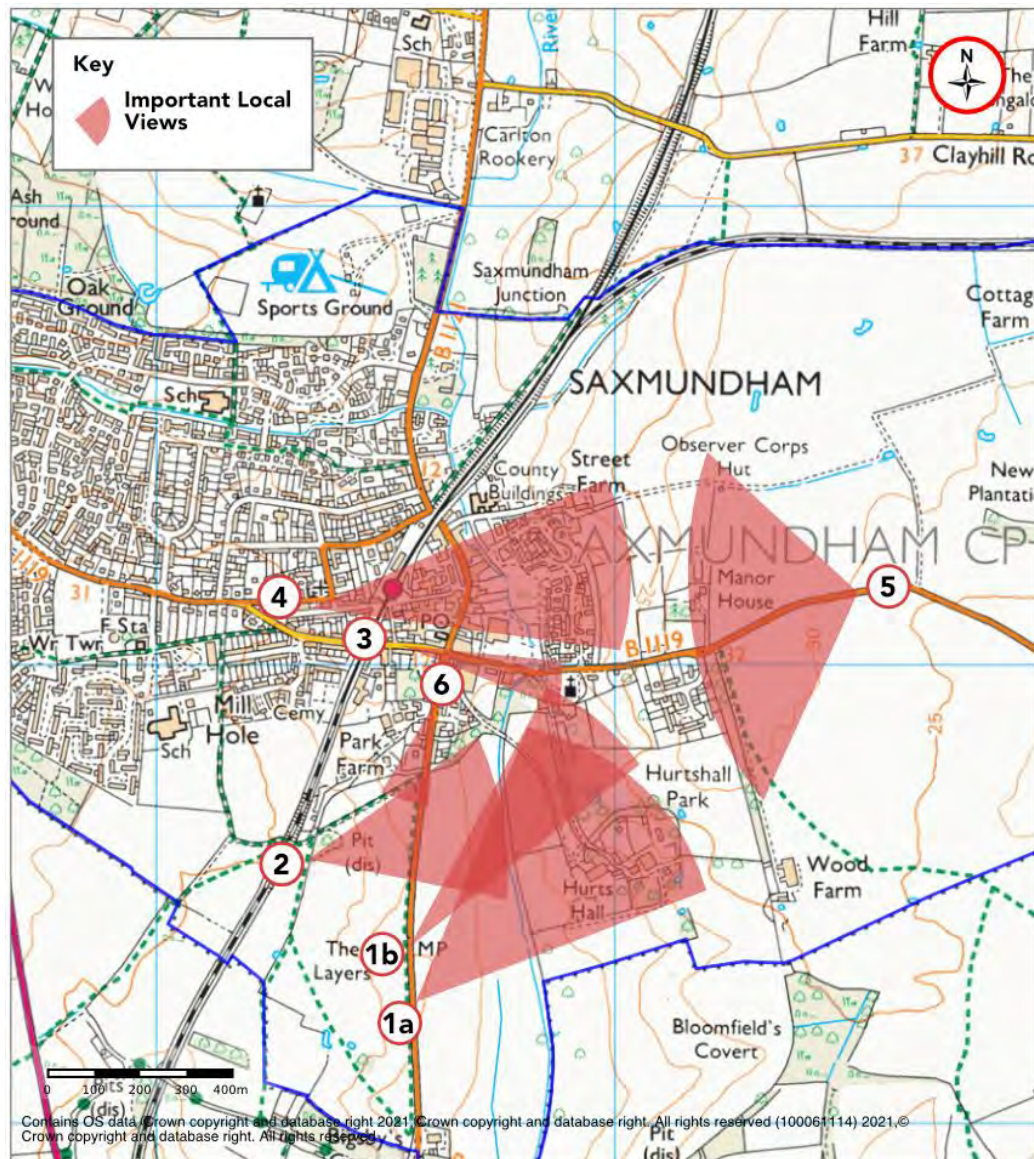


5. **View towards the town from the B1119 (Leiston Road).** The approach from Leiston is across a wide-open plateau. Looking west at a point about 400m east of the access to Wood Farm the view of the tree line along the ridge becomes conspicuous, the town below is hidden, but the view of the trees and the change in the landscape is the first clear indication that the town is nearby. (see also **Policy EN1**)



6. **View to towards open countryside from South Entrance:** This view shows the historic exit view from the town to the country, looking along the B1121 to The Layers and the treeline beyond, and - reinforcing the traditional settlement boundary.





Blue line denotes parish boundary.

Figure 27:
Important
Local Views
(source: Parish
Online with
own
annotations).



Figure 28: Green gateways (source: Parish Online with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

11.32 Taking the above into account **Policy SAX12** has been developed which covers the distinct but related elements of landscape character, the protection of important public views and the enhancement of specific entrances to the town.

POLICY**SAX12: Gateways, views and the landscape setting of Saxmundham**

The visual scenic value of the landscape and countryside in the parish outside of the defined settlement boundary will be protected from development that may adversely affect this character. The existing clear landscape break that physically separates different settlements shall be maintained in order to prevent coalescence and loss of individual settlement distinctiveness and identity.

Development proposals within or which would affect the following important local views should take account of the view concerned. Developments, which would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape or character of the view concerned, will not be supported.

1. View from the B1121 looking across to Hurts Hall and St John's Church.
2. View from the high point of The Layers looking across the River Fromus to Hurts Hall.
3. View along Chantry Road towards St John's Church.
4. View from Albion Street across the town to Church Hill.
5. View towards the town from the B1119 (Leiston Road).
6. View to towards the open countryside from South Entrance.

Green Gateways

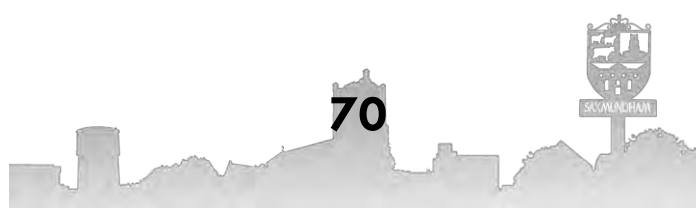
Proposals that would enhance the visual appearance of an entrance or 'gateway' to the town will be supported however where 'green' gateways or substantially undeveloped entrances currently exist, these should be maintained as 'soft' entrances to assist with the urban to rural transition.

The following are identified as important Green Gateways (**figure 28**):

- A. Southern entrance to be maintained as a green gateway to the town with the provision of accessible natural green space suitable for recreation.
- B. Northern entrance (on Main Road), proposals that would enhance the existing gateway feature adjacent to Tollgate Cottage will be supported in principle, subject to other criteria in this policy.
- C. Western entrance at Rendham Road. The existing landscape buffer north of this entrance between the built-up edge of the town and the A12 shall be retained and enhanced.
- D. Eastern entrance at Leiston Road. The existing landscape buffer and tree line at this entrance shall be retained.

Where gateway enhancements are proposed, schemes should be designed to ensure that gateway enhancements do not detract from highway safety and visual amenity and should minimise the need for non-essential lighting.

Opportunities to improve the public realm at entrances to the town, through the use of appropriate hard or soft landscaping measures will also be supported where they include the use of vernacular materials and native planting.



Natural assets

- 11.33 In terms of nature conservation sites, the parish itself does not contain significant sites, however this area of East Suffolk is in relatively close proximity to the extremely sensitive Sandlings, Alde-Ore and Minsmere-Walberswick Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Saxmundham falls within the 13 km Zone of Influence (ZOI) for the Council's Recreational Disturbance, Avoidance and Mitigation Scheme (RAMS). As evidenced by the Recreational Disturbance, Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy additional residential development within the ZOI could have a detrimental impact on the designations due to increased recreational disturbance. Natural England advises that consideration of 'off-site' measures (i.e., in and around the relevant European designated site(s)) is required as mitigation for predicted recreational disturbance impacts.
- 11.34 East Suffolk Council, together with Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts and Ipswich Borough, are taking a collaborative approach to strategic mitigation to support development and avoid impacts on internationally important designated wildlife sites. The councils have produced a combined recreational disturbance, avoidance and mitigation strategy (Suffolk RAMS) for the area. This identifies and costs measures necessary to mitigate recreational impacts and confirms how they will be funded and delivered over the lifetime of the Local Plans. Such measures are to be delivered strategically through the Suffolk Coast RAMS, to make the sites more resilient to increased recreational pressures. A proportionate financial contribution should therefore be secured from proposed residential development in the Zone of Influence (ZOI) in line with the Suffolk Coast RAMS and all new housing development in Saxmundham is required to contribute to this scheme. The Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Local Plan identified the need for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to mitigate the potential impacts of recreational disturbance on the above SPA sites from the Garden Neighbourhood allocation.
- 11.35 Nationally and internationally designated sites are protected through national planning policy in the NPPF and also in specific legislation. However, there is often less protection for locally designated sites or non-designated local sites which have a wildlife value or for specific features which may have a wildlife value. **Policy SAX13** below seeks to such features where they are typical of the prevailing landscape character types, such as woodlands, tree belts and plantations, straight hedges etc and where development would damage their wildlife value.
- 11.36 The Environment Act 2021 introduced a new system for the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). In simple terms, BNG is an approach to development which aims to leave the natural environment in a *measurably* better state than it was beforehand. Planning policy that seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity is not new, but this latest approach focuses in more on the *measurability* aspect. Planning applications will need to quantify the different habitat types on site both before and after the proposed development using the latest Biodiversity Metric. A minimum of 10% gain in biodiversity is now mandatory on almost all planning applications except for some minor exceptions. and its importance in the planning process **has been** significantly elevated.
- 11.37 There are a number of veteran trees and areas of ancient woodland in the parish. A veteran tree is one that is of interest biologically, aesthetically or culturally because of its age, or a tree in the ancient stage of its life or trees that are old relative to others of



the same species. Ancient woodland takes hundreds of years to establish and is defined as an irreplaceable habitat. The policy also seeks to protect veteran trees.

- 11.38 The policy also refers to ‘wildlife corridors’ which is a term used to refer to any linear feature in the landscape that can be used for the migration or dispersal of wildlife. Such corridors allow for the linking of habitats and reduce the isolation of populations. Linear features may vary and may also not be continuous however patches of natural habitat can benefit wildlife and occasionally the term ‘steppingstones’ is used to refer to them. The role of wildlife corridors is assuming greater importance and opportunities should be taken to create them as a consequence of new development.

POLICY

SAX13: Protection and enhancement of natural assets

Development proposals will be expected to protect and enhance existing ecological networks and wildlife corridors. Proposals should retain existing features of biodiversity value, associated with the Rolling Estate Claylands and Rolling Estate Sandlands Landscape Character types, where possible to do so, (including ponds, trees (including veteran trees), woodland, hedgerows, and verges).

Development proposals will be supported where they provide a minimum 10 per cent net gain in biodiversity through, for example:

- a. The creation of new natural habitats.
- b. The planting of additional trees and hedgerows.
- c. The restoration and reparation of fragmented ecological networks.

Development proposals should conform to the mitigation hierarchy and seek initially to retain existing features and avoid loss or damage of biodiversity. Where loss or damage is unavoidable, the development shall provide for appropriate replacement planting or appropriate natural features on site together with a method statement for the ongoing care and maintenance of that planting. Where development proposals cause damage to identified natural features, wildlife corridors around the interruption will be constructed.

Proposals for new buildings (including non-residential development) should incorporate measures to protect and enhance wildlife species including the incorporation of wildlife friendly measures e.g., bat, swallow and swift boxes, hedgehog doors and insect bricks etc, new garden hedgerows and trees. Consideration should also be given to the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) which can provide considerable benefits to wildlife.

Proposals to enhance and increase the biodiversity of important spaces, including green spaces will be supported as will proposals to restore or enhance traditional hedgerows in the parish.



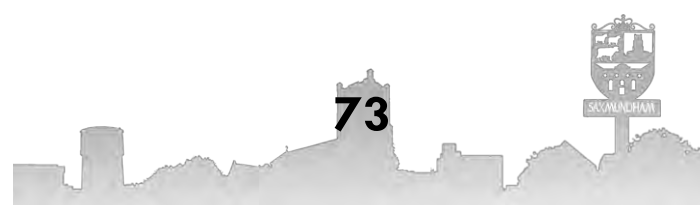
Community Gardens and allotments

- 11.39 The NPPF highlights the important contribution to the character and quality of environments that can be derived from trees. They also help with mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The NPPF requires planning polices to ensure that opportunities are taken to to incorporate trees and other environmental features into developments such as parks, community orchards, community gardens and allotments. The NPPF also recognises the important beneficial contribution to health and wellbeing that access to open spaces such as communal gardens and allotments can bring to a community in addition to the opportunity to grow ones own food. New provision should be easily accessible to the community which it is intended to serve. The Neighbourhood Plan Household survey results revealed significant demand for allotments. (See paragraph 8.9)
- 11.40 As well as the provision of new community spaces, planning policies should also seek to safeguard and protect those already in existence, either because of the physical contribution they make to the character of the area or where they have a value to their community.
- 11.41 The existing community garden at the former Fromus Centre site is specifically identified for protection under **Policy SAX14** below.

POLICY	<p>SAX14: Community gardens and allotments</p> <p>The existing community garden at the former Fromus Centre site within Saxmundham will be protected (see Policy SAX15).</p> <p>All new large scale residential developments should be strongly encouraged to make provision for a proportionate area of land for a community garden or allotments to allow for the opportunity for residents to grow their own food, Such spaces and any associated facilities (benches, paths) should be accessible to those with limited mobility in order to reduce the isolation of vulnerable groups..</p> <p>Where land becomes available, the provision of allotments will, in principle, be supported.</p>
---------------	---

Local Green Spaces

- 11.42 The National Planning Policy Framework 2024, at paragraphs 106-108 introduces the concept of Local Green Spaces which can be identified through neighbourhood plans by local communities and allows green areas identified as being of particular importance to be protected. Paragraph 107, sets out 3 broad criteria for identifying and designating such spaces as follows:
‘The Local Green Space designation should only be used when the green space is:
- in relatively close proximity to the community it serves.
 - 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 and richness of its wildlife: and

- c. local in character and not an extensive tract of land’.

11.43 The NPPF at paragraph 108 then goes on to state that ‘policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for green belts’ and therefore affords them a very high level of protection. It is also clear that the designation of Local Green Spaces should not be used as a mechanism to try to block or resist development on agricultural land immediately adjacent to village development boundaries and that a successful designation must meet the criteria outlined above.

11.44 Such spaces can be viewed locally as equally as important as the landscape setting of an area. Such spaces are green spaces found within the built-up area that contribute to the character of a settlement. These can vary in size, shape, location, ownership and use but such spaces will have some form of value to the community particularly for benefits to mental and physical health and wellbeing and help define what makes that specific settlement what it is.

11.45 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have identified a number of spaces that would meet the criteria and should be protected because of their value to the local community. Each space has been assessed against the NPPF criteria. The result is the 11 spaces shown in figure 27 and listed within **Policy SAX15**. Assessments for each one against the criteria set out in the NPPF have been carried out and these are shown in **Appendix C**.

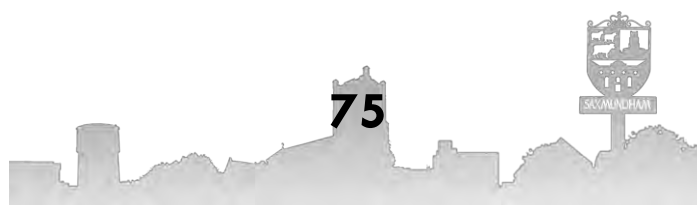
Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG)

11.46 The Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan identified the need for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) areas to mitigate the potential impacts of recreational disturbance on the Sandlings, Alde-Ore and Minsmere–Walberswick Special Protection Areas. The Local Plan Appropriate Assessment identifies the need for SANGS to be of high quality and design to deter visitors from popular sensitive sites, to be of a sufficient scale to deter driving to European sites and to accommodate circular walks that provide a varied and high-quality experience in terms of visual and other sensory factors. As mentioned in earlier sections, development within the District (and within the Neighbourhood Plan Area) will also be expected to contribute to the Recreation Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy.

11.47 To reduce the impact of the proposed Garden Neighbourhood development and alongside providing for sufficient SANG areas, the Local Plan policies require significant green infrastructure provision and areas of natural green space for recreation to be integral to the layout of the Garden Neighbourhood. Reflecting the heritage sensitivities and requirements for SANG, the Local Plan sets out that any uses to be delivered on land to the east of the railway to the south of the town, are to be open space/SANG provision only, however the Local Plan does recognise that on the land east of the railway there is scope for some existing agricultural uses to remain. The Local Plan policy also indicates that the provision of open space and enhancements related to provision of SANG do not need to be confined to land to the east of the railway. Alongside this, the delivery of an integrated network of green infrastructure is expected to be provided throughout the Garden Neighbourhood (see also Chapter 12).



- 11.48 The Neighbourhood Plan builds upon this strategic aim and seeks to protect an area of land to the south of the town and east of the railway line, which includes The Layers, as a significant area of SANG to perform the 'avoidance' function. The role of the SANG would be to provide avoidance measures for the potential impact of residential development of this kind on the SPA by preventing an increase in visitor pressure on the SPA. The effectiveness of SANG as mitigation will depend upon its location, design, and access. The SANG should be located to be easily accessible from the south of the town and access to it from the new housing area, will need to be in the north of the SANG area, where the only viable safe crossing point over the railway exists. The purpose of the SANG is twofold. It is required not only to 'mitigate' the new Garden Neighbourhood but also to 'compensate' for the change in access to the area that is currently enjoyed by residents of the town e.g. informal recreation such as dog walking. The result must be such that the SANG is more attractive than the SPA to users of the kind that currently visit the SPA.
- 11.49 Natural England provides guidance on the identification and management of SANG. Given that the purpose is to make the SANG as attractive and accessible as possible for visitors there is an acknowledgement that there may be the need in the future for additional facilities to be provided, that are connected to the successful functioning of the SANG such as discreetly located car parking, visitor routes.



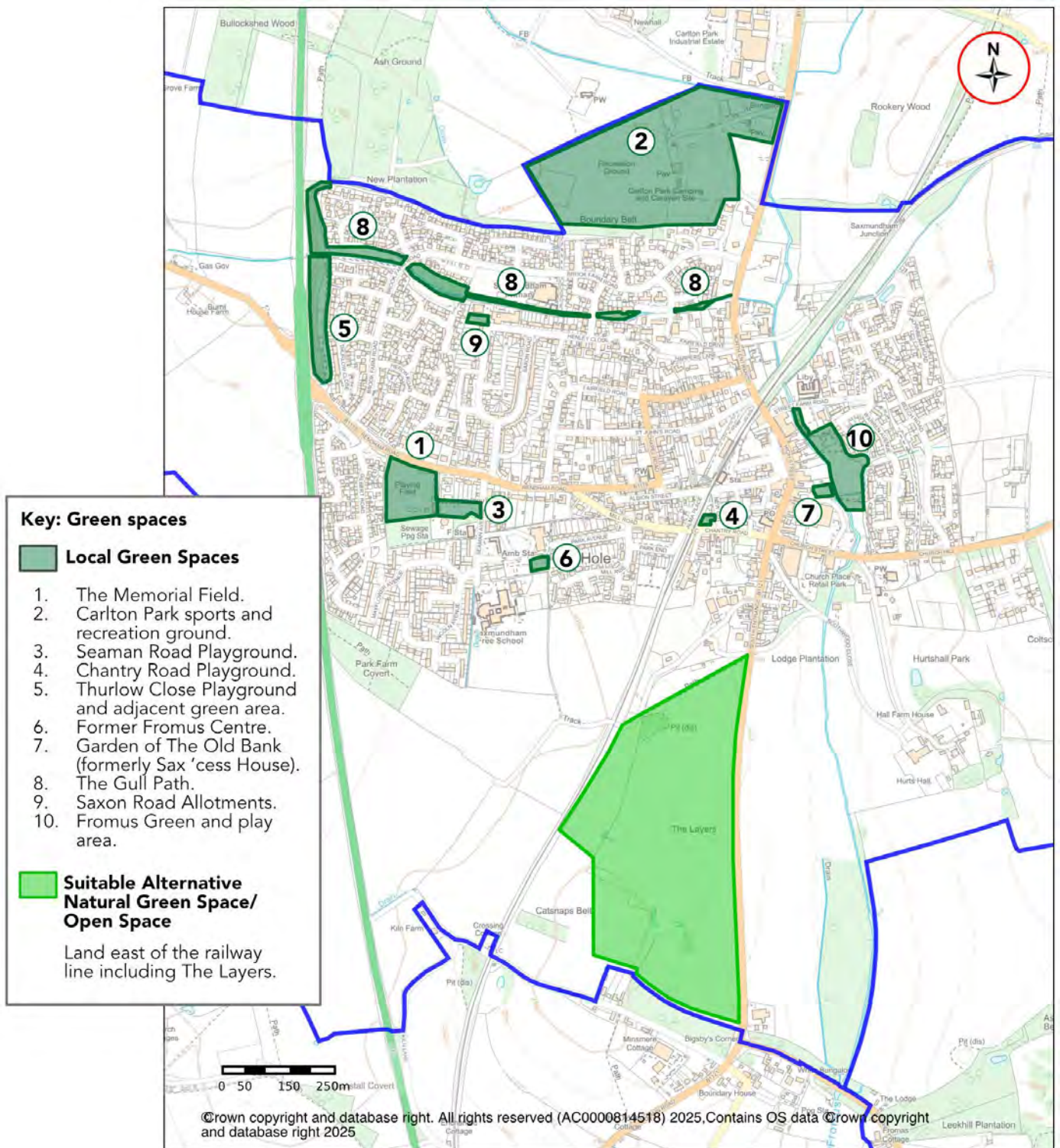


Figure 29: Local Green Spaces (source: Parish Online with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

(Amended map to include new parish boundary, amend 6 to say former Fromus Centre and amend 7 to say Garden of The Old Bank (formerly Sax'cess House))

POLICY

SAX15: Green Spaces

Local Green Spaces

The following are identified as Local Green Spaces (**figure 29**) where any proposals will be judged against the requirements which rule out development unless there are very special circumstances:

1. The Memorial Field.
2. Carlton Park sports and recreation ground.
3. Seaman Avenue Playground.
4. Chantry Road Playground.
5. Thurlow Close Playground and adjacent green area.
6. The Community Garden at the former Fromus Centre off Seaman Avenue.
7. Garden of The Old Bank (formerly Sax'cess House).
8. The Gull Path.
9. Saxon Road Allotments.
10. Fromus Green and play area.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

Land east of the Railway line and to the south of Saxmundham, including land known as The Layers is identified as an area of open space and SANG, in connection with the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood which will serve to meet the informal day to day recreational needs of both the new Garden Neighbourhood and the existing community whilst allowing for the retention of the existing uses of the land where it complements the delivery of the open space and the SANG, The location, design and access of the proposed SANG should take into account the purpose of the SANG, the need for easy and safe access to it together with potential impacts on landscape, nature conservation and heritage.



12. South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood

South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood

Objective SSGN1: To create a high quality, well designed, distinctive development in line with 'Garden City' principles which is valued by its residents and recognised as an asset to the Town.

12.1 Policy SCLP12.29 in the Adopted Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (SCLP) 2020 allocates 67.8 hectares of land as the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood, the development of which is expected to provide an 'education led' scheme of 800 dwellings, community facilities and employment land. The Garden Neighbourhood is envisaged to be an extension to the existing built-up area of Saxmundham. However, prior to the parish boundary review in 2023, a significant portion of the allocation extended into Benhall Parish to the south of Saxmundham. Following the conclusion of the boundary review the Local Plan allocation site is now wholly within Saxmundham parish. In order to ensure that there are Neighbourhood Plan policies which cover this area and that there is a consistent approach in planning policy terms across the extent of the area covered by the Local Plan allocation, it has been necessary to amend the Neighbourhood Plan area to be consistent with the parish boundary changes. As a consequence it is also necessary to review the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that there is complete Neighbourhood Plan policy coverage across the allocated area.

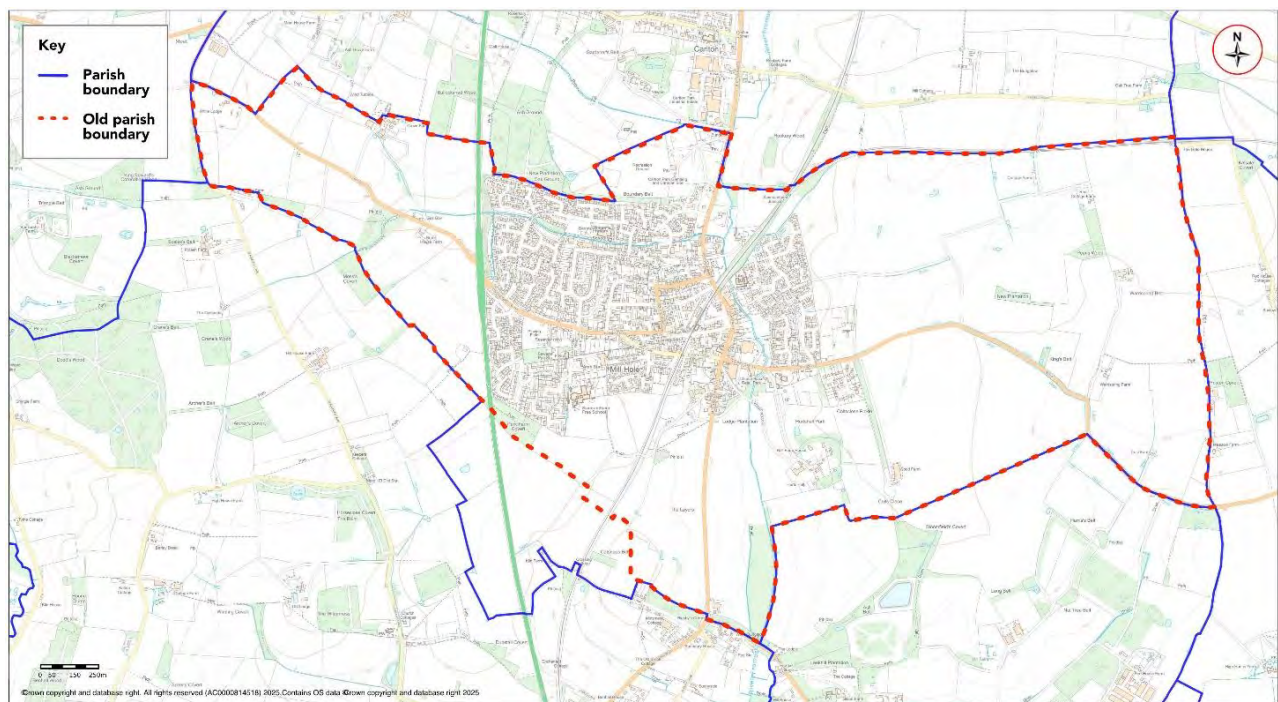


Figure 30: Map showing the new and old parish boundaries (source: Parish Online, with own annotations)

12.2 The revised designated Neighbourhood Area for the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Review includes the revised parish boundary and therefore the modified Neighbourhood Plan is able to include policies which are applicable to the Garden Neighbourhood.

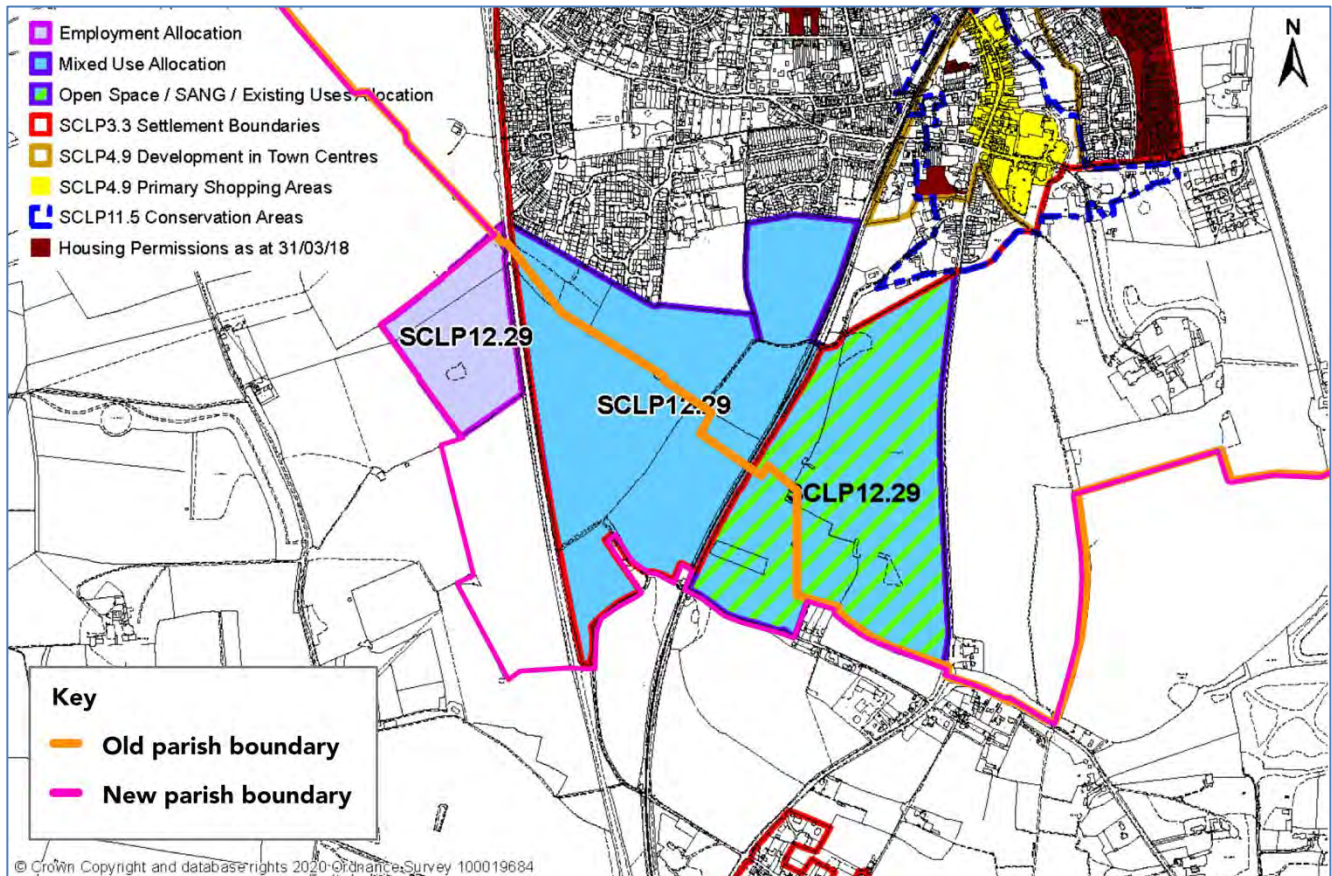


Figure 31: Map of Local Plan allocations with old and new parish boundaries added

Strategic context for the Local Plan allocation

12.3 Local Plan **Policy SCLP12.29** provides the overarching allocation for the Garden Neighbourhood and sets out the key issues that will need to be addressed for development to be brought forward successfully. The Local Plan places considerable emphasis on the need for the development to be delivered through a masterplan approach brought forward and informed by landowner collaboration and community engagement. Saxmundham Town Council believe that such a masterplan, produced with both the input of the landowners and through meaningful engagement with the community is essential to ensuring that the development of the Garden Neighbourhood is a success, in its own right and for the town as a whole. The Neighbourhood Plan policies (consistent with the Local Plan's policies) seek to influence and shape proposals that come forward for the development of the Garden Neighbourhood through the collaborative masterplan process outlined in the Local Plan.

12.4 The Local Plan Policy SCLP12.29 allocates 67.8 hectares of land for the following elements to be included with an 'education led' development:

- Approximately 800 dwellings
- Primary school with potential for expansion for early years provision - on a site of 2.2ha of which 0.1 ha reserved for early years setting
- Community hub¹⁵
- A significant area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace - the area of land east of the railway is identified for the provision of open space and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)
- Green infrastructure, including informal and formal open spaces, circular walks,
- Formal recreation areas for all ages including play space
- Design and layout which supports a dementia friendly environment
- Provision of new vehicular access point from the A12 supported by safe access for cyclists and pedestrians
- Significant pedestrian and cycle accessibility throughout the site with connections and improvements to networks beyond the site, including to the station and town centre
- Employment land to the west of the A12.

12.5 The Local Plan provides an indicative concept draft masterplan diagram which gives a broad indication of where various elements of the Garden Neighbourhood may be located. Within the allocation it is envisaged that there will be areas of residential/mixed use development, areas of woodland, informal and formal open space, existing mature hedgerows, and tree belts and a number of pedestrian and cycle accesses from the town into the Garden Neighbourhood. The allocation provides for a community hub within the residential and mixed-use areas and an employment area. The indicative masterplan in the Local Plan assumes that a new primary school will be located within the residential/mixed use areas but does not give a specific location. Apart from the allocation of the employment site to the west of the A12, and land to the east of the railway for green space/SANG purposes only (and not for built development), the siting and layout of the new development is left for the collaborative master-planning process to address.

¹⁵ 1 For the purposes of this policy services and facilities could include convenience store, shops, meeting places, allotments, education facilities, care facilities and medical facilities.

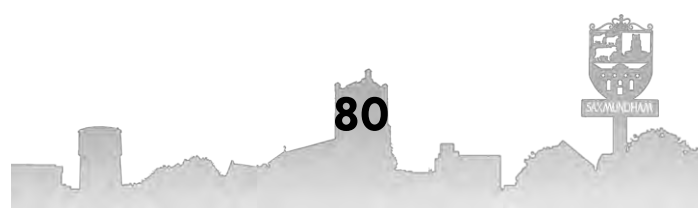




Figure 32: South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood, indicative draft masterplan from the Local Plan. Note: indicative draft masterplan assumes new primary school within the residential/mixed use areas (source: Area Specific Strategies, Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020).

Pigeon proposal

- 12.6 Since the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan, pre-application discussions have been taking place between land promoters Pigeon Developments Limited who control the majority of land within the Local Plan allocation site, (except for that part of the land east of the railway line known as The Layers which remains in the control of the landowner Notcutts). Pigeon are in the process of producing a Masterplan consistent with the requirements of the strategic policies set out in the Local Plan. Public consultation on the draft Masterplan is expected in 2025. Saxmundham Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have been actively engaging in the discussions in order to influence the development of the draft Masterplan.
- 12.7 The extent of the area of the Pigeon Masterplan differs from that of the Local Plan allocation in significant respects. The area of the Pigeon proposal does not include part of the land to the east of the railway line, known as The Layers, which is included in the allocation. The land included within the Pigeon proposal falls predominantly within the new parish boundary for Saxmundham, however a small area of proposed SANG is located within Benhall parish at the site's southern tip and is not within the Local Plan allocation. Furthermore the Pigeon proposal includes additional land for services and employment development west of the A12 which is also outside of the allocation and outside of the existing adopted settlement boundary for the town. The Pigeon proposal also makes provision for a crossing of the A12 to a site (proposed for biodiversity net gain purposes) which is outside of the allocated site. The extent of the Pigeon proposal is identified in the latest version of the draft masterplan, which is shown below in **Figure 34**.

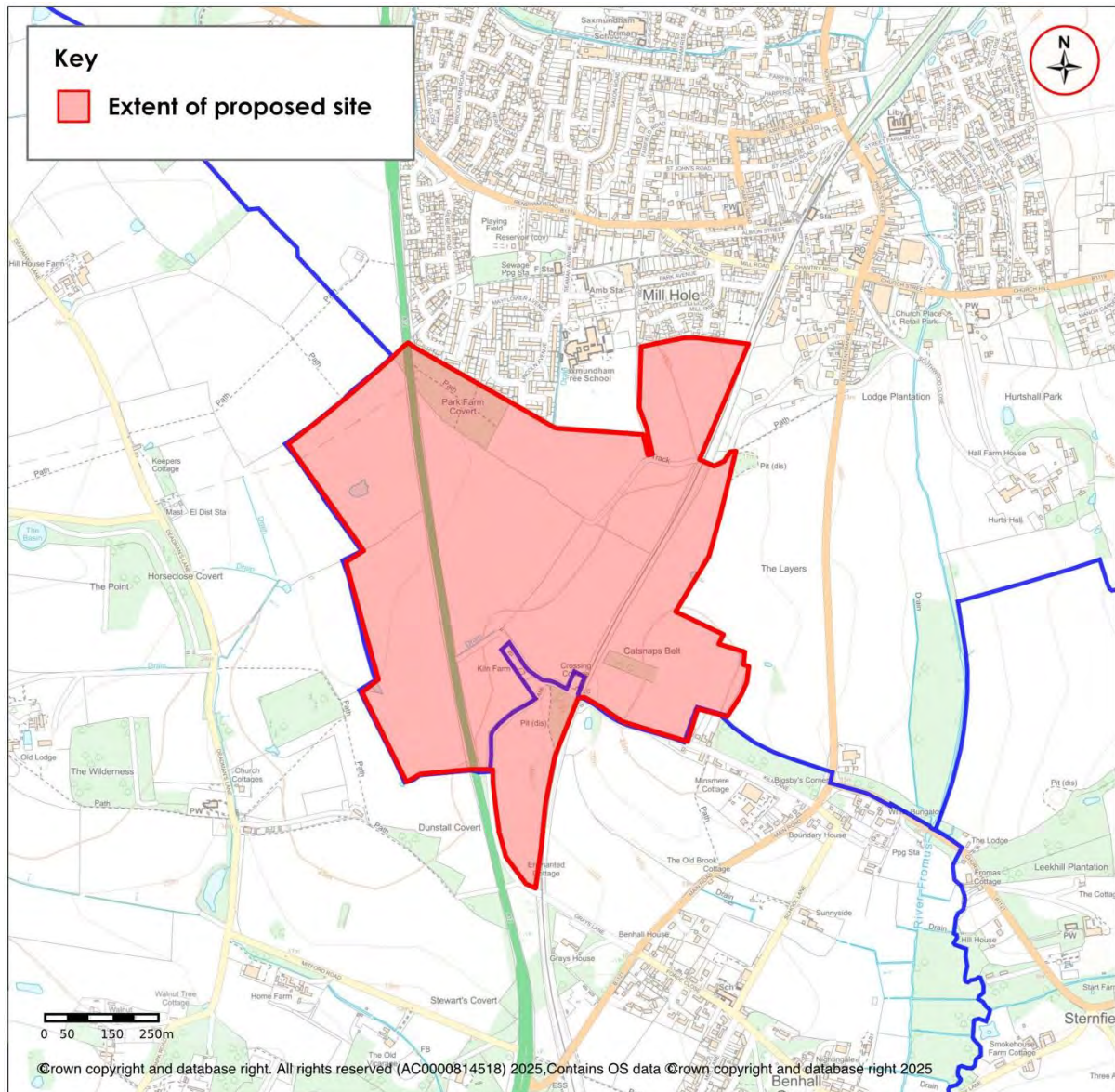


Figure 33: Indicative extent of proposed site (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary [The Kiln Lane indented strip is excluded from Pigeon's site so should not be in pink].

Figure 34: Pigeon proposal (indicative only), December 2024 (source: Draft Masterplan).



Proposed Employment/Commercial area west of A12

12.8 As outlined above the emerging Pigeon proposal includes land for employment and services uses to the west of the A12, which lie outside of the Local Plan allocation. This area also lies outside of the settlement boundary for Saxmundham and therefore within 'open countryside'. This area of land is not identified as an existing employment area under Policy SCLP4.1 of the Adopted Local Plan. Policy SCLP4.2 of the Local Plan - New Employment Development - sets out the criteria for assessing applications for new employment development outside of existing settlement boundaries. The policy provides that proposals for new employment development (use classes B1, B2 and B8) will be permitted where a need for additional employment development has been demonstrated or it can be demonstrated that there is no sequentially preferable land available adjacent to existing Employment Areas, within existing Employment Areas or within Settlement Boundaries. Furthermore the proposal would (a) not have an unacceptable adverse impact on surrounding land use; and (b) avoids, or adequately mitigates, any adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area and landscape,...its setting or the natural or historic environment. In addition to the above, proposals for B1a office premises outside of town centres other than for small scale rural offices in accordance with Policies SCLP4.5, SCLP4.6 and SCLP4.7 on sites not allocated for employment use, should also be subject to a sequential test which demonstrates that there are no suitable and available sites within firstly town centres and then edge of centre sites to accommodate the proposal.

12.9 In order to be successful under the current Local Plan policies, the Pigeon proposal would need to demonstrate that a need for this type and size of employment land exists which can only be accommodated in this location and that landscape impacts could be successfully mitigated. Furthermore in the light of the current policy position, the Town Council is likely to oppose this element as not meeting the policy requirements, unless the Pigeon proposal assessed in its totality is considered to provide significant benefits to the town which would outweigh the disadvantages of this element being located here. Such benefits could take the form of delivering community priorities already identified in the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan such as indoor sports facility provision.

AECOM work to support the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan

12.10 It is useful to recall that in order to support the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan, Saxmundham Town Council commissioned some specific pieces of work from consultants AECOM through the Locality Technical Packages. These were:

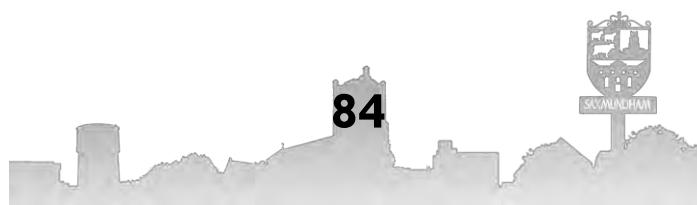
- Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Code for the Garden Neighbourhood site and the Neighbourhood Plan Area – undertaken by consultants AECOM in July 2021. A focus on design elements to inform policy making and application determination across the Neighbourhood Area.
- Saxmundham Concept Masterplans for the High Street and Garden Neighbourhood – undertaken by consultants AECOM in July 2021. Notional masterplans used to inform discussions and policy development in relation to the Garden Neighbourhood and the Town Centre.

12.11 The Design Guidelines and Codes for the Garden Neighbourhood and the Concept Masterplan for the Garden Neighbourhood were removed from the list of documents supporting the Neighbourhood Plan by the Examiner in February 2023, because they related to land which was in part outside of the Neighbourhood Area for the Neighbourhood Plan which was being examined. The parish wide Design Guidelines and the Town Centre Masterplan were retained, and the Design Guidelines and Codes were incorporated as Appendix E to the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

12.12 With the formal amendments to the parish boundary and the Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan Review, both documents fall back within the geographical scope of the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan Review and can be given as much or little weight as the Qualifying Body (Town Council) see fit.

Changing context relevant to the Garden Neighbourhood – School Site

12.13 A significant change in circumstances since the Neighbourhood Plan was first prepared has been the closure of the secondary school in August 2024. The school site is located on the edge of the existing built up area accessed off Seaman Avenue and lies immediately north of the Local Plan allocation. It is within the settlement boundary for the town, The site comprises former secondary school buildings, car parking area, areas of hardstanding, and 2.8 hectares of playing fields and sports pitches. The site lies outside of the Local Plan allocation and outside of the emerging Pigeon proposal. However, the Pigeon proposal does include connections to the playing fields. The location of the school site and its proximity to the Garden Neighbourhood development opens up potential possibilities which should be explored in terms of more effectively connecting the Garden Neighbourhood and the town, and in relation to potential complementary uses of land not required for direct County Council education-related purposes. The site is currently



vacant and is being promoted by Suffolk County Council for Special Educational Needs (SEN). If approved it is anticipated that only part of the site would be required for this purpose, with part of the site remaining with potential for other uses. The site is important because of its size and location and offers significant opportunities to benefit the community in terms of providing connections between the Garden Neighbourhood Site to the existing areas of the town but also the potential for indoor recreation and community use of the existing playing fields.



Figure 35: Former secondary school site (source: Parish Online, with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

Planning policies for the Garden Neighbourhood

Objective SSGN2: To successfully integrate – physically, environmentally, and socially – the new neighbourhood with the existing town and community of Saxmundham.

12.14 This section of the Neighbourhood Plan aims to provide more detail to the Local Plan policy, provide input into the collaborative masterplan and identify specific land use requirements that will need to take place to enable the Garden Neighbourhood to come forward. The details in this section have been informed by community consultation undertaken as part of the development of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan as well as discussions with Pigeon and East Suffolk, the AECOM work in the 'notional' Masterplan and the Design Guidelines and Codes.

12.15 Thus, the vision for the site is to create a high quality, well designed, distinctive new development in line with 'Garden City' principles which is valued by its residents and recognised as an asset to the Town. Moreover, for its future inhabitants, the Garden Neighbourhood Development should:

- Foster a strong sense of community
- Encourage positive social interaction
- Create a sense of pride for the neighbourhood
- Be a happy home where people can feel safe and secure inside and outside
- Be a neighbourhood that demonstrably cares for all its living inhabitants – human and others.

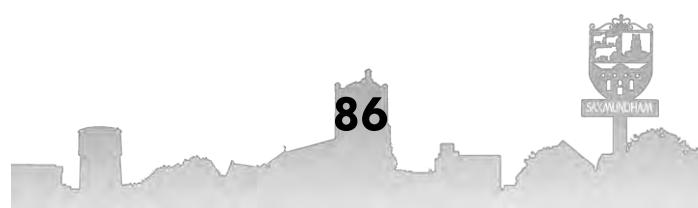
The green infrastructure would contribute to this vision in the form of informal green spaces, parks, public squares, sports pitches, community gardens, large street trees, hedgerows and so on. There will be a strong connection and interaction with the existing settlement to the north.

12.16 This will be achieved through the adoption and implementation of the following key development principles for the area:

- a. the creation of a rural/countryside feel for the area where pedestrian and cycle movement are prioritised over vehicular movement, and retaining and featuring, so far as practicable, the existing field and landscape structure.
- b. the provision of a wide range of green infrastructure including informal green spaces, parks, public squares, sports pitches, allotments or community gardens, the use of large trees and hedgerows.
- c. strong connections and access to and from the north of the area with the existing settlement of Saxmundham, and, to the south and east, providing non-motorised access routes towards Benhall.

12.17 It remains critical to the success of the Garden Neighbourhood that it should be seamlessly and successfully integrated with the existing community of Saxmundham. In order to create a full sustainable Garden Neighbourhood consistent with the objectives of the NPPF, this integration needs to be:

- Physical – in terms of the relationship between the new development and the existing built-up area of the town, high quality connections – pedestrian and cycle – to promote easy, safe and quick access between the town and the development and also between the development and the town's facilities e.g. the town centre and the railway station.



- Environmental – in terms of high-quality green infrastructure connections and links between the Garden Neighbourhood and the town; design and layout of the Garden Neighbourhood to reflect local character.
- Social – A strong connection and interaction between the Garden Neighbourhood and the rest of the town, services to meet the needs of local people, provision of primary school and early years facilities, housing that provides for a mixed and balanced community and ensure integration and cohesion between new and existing communities.

12.18 Saxmundham Town Council believes that any future development in the Garden Neighbourhood site should take the name of the site literally and aim to create a rural countryside feeling for the area, e.g. through its overall design, layout, landscaping, public facilities and green spaces and infrastructure.

Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood

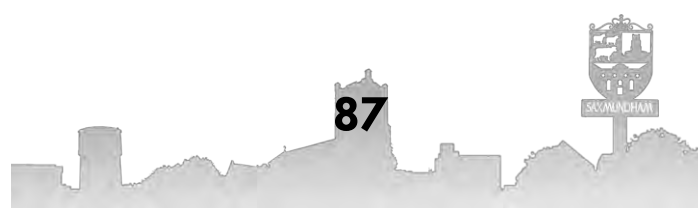
12.19 The following policies seek to guide development of the Garden Neighbourhood and their content has been informed by a number of sources including: the Local Plan allocation policy, community feedback on the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan, pre-application discussions with Pigeon and their emerging draft Masterplan.

12.20 The success of the Garden Neighbourhood, for its residents and for the town of Saxmundham, depends to a large degree on (a) how well it is physically accessible to and integrated with the town, offering seamless, easy-to-navigate routes, (b) how well it provides for excellent connections and movement within the Neighbourhood and (c) how well the employment areas are connected to the Garden Neighbourhood and also to the countryside beyond. The development proposals for the Garden Neighbourhood (to be master-planned with full community engagement) are required to ensure that excellent connectivity is provided: (a) between the existing Town and the Garden Neighbourhood, (b) within the Garden Neighbourhood itself, (c) between the residential areas of the Garden Neighbourhood and the proposed employment and commercial areas west of the A12, and (d) between the Garden Neighbourhood and Benhall.

12.21 The only vehicular access route to and from the Garden Neighbourhood to the existing town is indirect, via the A12. Due to this single vehicular access, the success of the site is dependent upon reducing/minimising car use and maximising other forms of transport, such as public transport and community transport to ensure less congestion and safe traffic flow. Convenient and attractive, direct, well sign-posted pedestrian and cycle connections to the town (including town centre, station, residential areas, employment and commercial areas) must be provided sufficient in number and of high enough quality if they are to be a realistic alternative. Such links will also serve to further other aims, including promoting health and well-being. However a number of key accesses, which could achieve this, are in third party ownership e.g. land to the side of the school and land at the cemetery.

Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood to the existing town and community

12.22 Fundamental to the success of the development of the Garden Neighbourhood is to ensure that the local community can access existing town-based services and facilities as well as those which will be created over the plan period, e.g. the new primary school. At least three – and if practicable four - new and/or upgraded connections are required:



- a. to the Station,
- b. to the town centre,
- c. to existing residential area to the north-west of the Garden Neighbourhood site, via the existing footpath to the east of the former school, and also (if practicable) via a direct link to Lincoln Avenue and Seaman Avenue

12.23 The most direct link to the station is via the eastern edge of the cemetery (via a new cycle/footpath) and on to the road network, and creating this link is seen as essential. The shortest link to the town centre and its facilities, including its supermarkets, is via the existing footpath over the railway bridge down to South Entrance, which will need to become a cycle path; the junction with South Entrance (B1121) will need to be improved to ensure safe transition to the road network. It is also essential to provide easy non-vehicular access to and from the adjacent residential areas, to the northwest of the site. This access is already envisaged via an upgrade to the existing footpath to the east of the old school site, which is due to continue, as a cycle path, through the (to be developed) former Fromus Centre site to Seaman Avenue. More direct links are potentially available e.g. to/from Lincoln Avenue, but realizing these would require discussion with the relevant land owners of the access strips of land.

Connections and movement within the Garden Neighbourhood

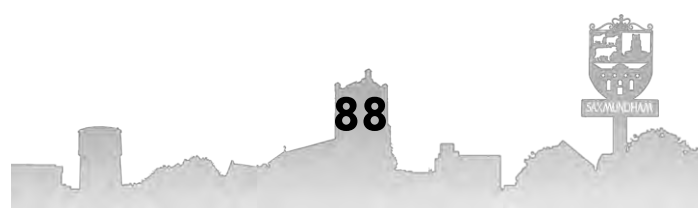
12.24 The creation of the Garden Neighbourhood provides the opportunity to encourage and facilitate use of sustainable transport, in particular walking and cycling, and so to promote exercise for health and well-being. Connections both within, around and into and out of the Garden Neighbourhood, including to the town centre itself, should create places that are safe, secure and attractive to users, in terms of their visual quality and which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles and avoid unnecessary street clutter and which also respond to local character and design standards.

Connections between the residential areas of the Garden Neighbourhood and the proposed commercial area west of the A12

12.25 The Local Plan allocation makes provision for an employment area to the west of the A12. The emerging Pigeon Masterplan includes a substantial additional area west of the A12, which is outside of the Local Plan allocation, immediately to the south of the allocated area. The Pigeon proposal seeks to develop the site as potential service area which could include a petrol filling station, drive thru and hotel. As outlined in paragraph 12.9 above, support for any development on this additional land outside of the strategic allocation and settlement boundary is contingent upon the delivery of benefits to the community which outweigh the adverse impacts of the proposed additional commercial development, in particular in the form of indoor recreation facilities, and otherwise will not be supported.

12.26 To ensure that all areas of the Garden Neighbourhood are well-integrated and that the wider strategic connections between the existing town and the countryside are enhanced, pedestrian and cycle crossings of the A12 will be required as follows:

- a. A new pedestrian and cycle crossing of the A12 to the employment land .



- b. An enhanced pedestrian and cycle crossing as part of the strategic footpath and cycle route that runs on a south-west / northeast axis through the new neighbourhood.
- c. Connections to the countryside west of the A12
- d. Cycle path connecting Saxmundham and Benhall and into the Garden Neighbourhood site.

12.27 Policy SAXGN1 below has been developed to take account of these issues.

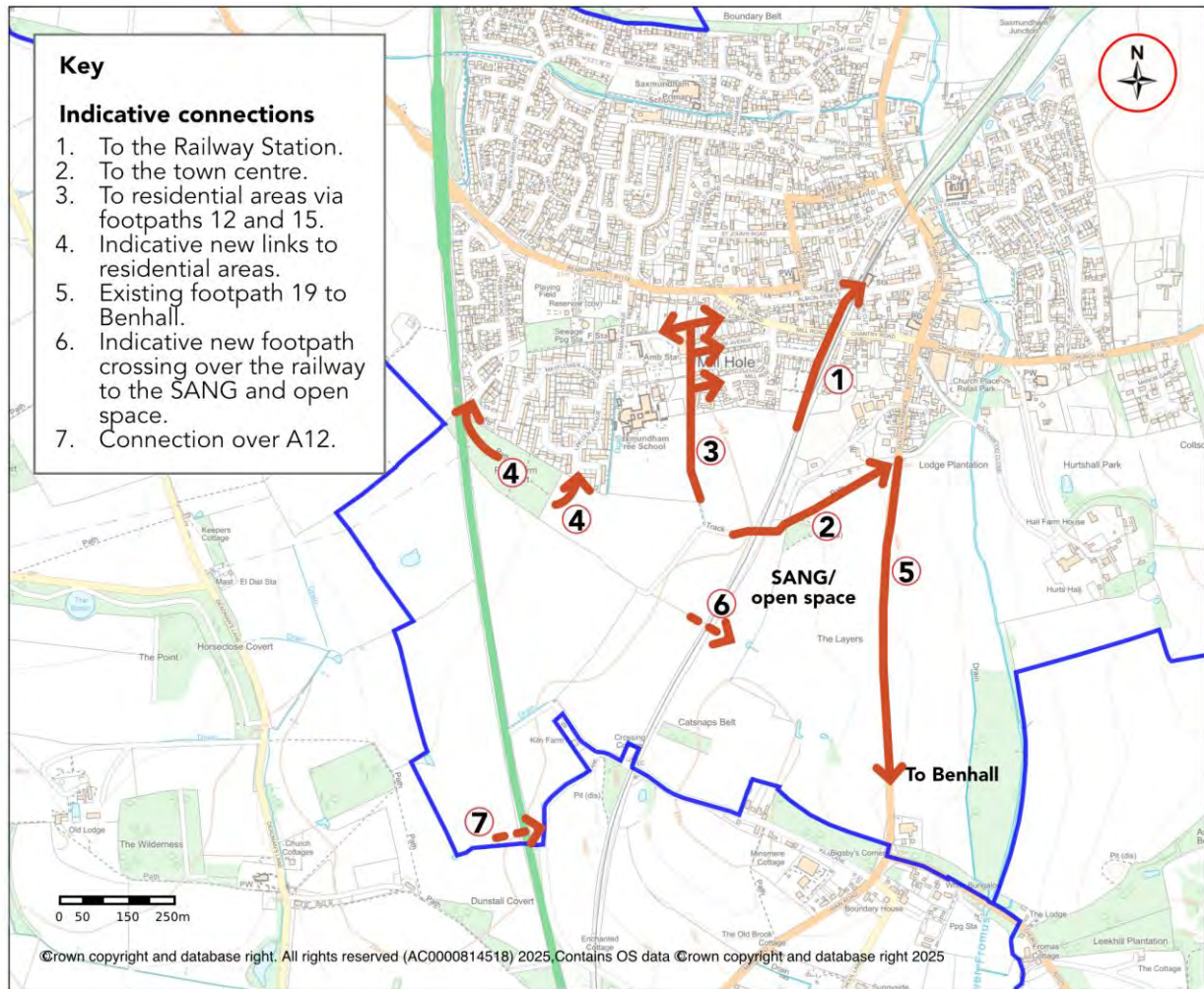


Figure 36: Connections (source: Parish Online with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary.

POLICY

SAXGN1: Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood

Development proposals for the Garden Neighbourhood will be expected to ensure that excellent connectivity, is provided for all users, including those with a mobility impairment, in particular:

- a. between the existing town and the Garden Neighbourhood,
- b. within the Garden Neighbourhood itself and
- c. between the residential areas of the Garden Neighbourhood and the proposed employment/commercial areas west of the A12.

Pedestrian and cycle movement between the Garden Neighbourhood and the existing town is prioritised over vehicular movement through the provision of connections, sufficient in number and of the highest quality. They must be convenient and direct, in order to avoid use of the single vehicular access to the Garden Neighbourhood via the A12.

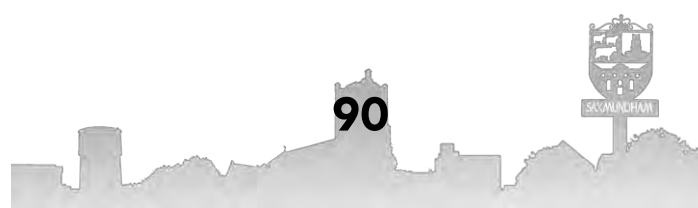
This provision will be in the form of well designed, attractive and safe to use (including appropriate lighting), new pedestrian and cycle linkages and the enhancement of existing routes including making new connections and links where appropriate. New cycle linkages to be built to the standards set in LTN 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design.¹⁶ Such links will be implemented at the outset of the development (Phase 1) prior to the occupation of new dwellings.

Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood to the existing town and community

New and enhanced pedestrian and cycle connections will include:

- i. Connection between the Garden Neighbourhood and the railway station. This will be achieved through a new cycle and pedestrian route from the development via the cemetery along the west side of the railway, or other route offering similar direct linkage
- ii. Connections between the Garden Neighbourhood and the town centre (including supermarket area). This will be achieved through an improved cycle and pedestrian route via the existing bridge and footpath over the railway to South Entrance to provide easy and swift access to and from shops and facilities.
- iii. Connections to the surrounding residential areas and schools. These will be achieved via:
 - a. the existing footpath to the east of the former school playing field (footpaths 12 and 15 Saxmundham), upgraded appropriately, and leading to and from Seaman Avenue and Mill Road, and
 - b. a new cycle and pedestrian route to the west of the school playing field which is necessary to forge a strong connection with the existing residential communities to the south and west of the Memorial Field (Montagu Drive, Gilbert Road, Franklin Road, Drake Close, Mayflower Avenue and Lincoln Avenue) together with access to and from other residential areas beyond.

¹⁶ Cycle infrastructure design (LTN 1/20), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>.



Public Transport (including community transport)

- iv. The site access must be able to accommodate buses to easily serve the site including bus linkages to the town centre and supermarket area including consideration to be given to the potential to connect with Seaman Avenue via a guided busway west of the school site. New bus stops should be provided within easily accessible locations.

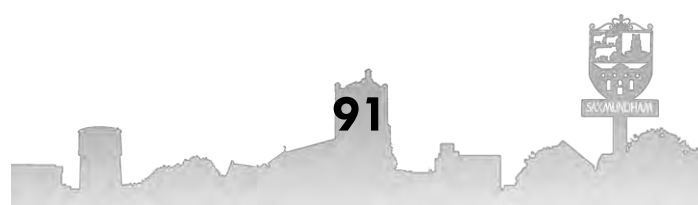
Connections and movement within the Garden Neighbourhood

New development within the Garden Neighbourhood, is expected to come forward through a master planning process involving landowner collaboration and community engagement as identified in the Local Plan. Proposals must promote the use of sustainable transport modes, as appropriate, including for exercise for health and well-being, as set out below:

- v. The street layout should integrate existing public rights of way with new green links to encourage walking and cycling within the area, thereby reducing the reliance on cars within the Garden Neighbourhood.
- vi. A central cycle avenue running through the residential areas, which uses the existing public footpath network and runs alongside the green corridor, is essential.
- vii. In addition to other cycleways referred to above, the provision of a circular green route is encouraged around the main housing areas of the site as defined in the Local Plan, for use by cyclists and walkers.
- viii. Good quality walking and cycling links to and from Benhall, utilising existing Public Rights of Way, shall be created or improved.
- ix. The existing public footpath (Saxmundham 19) between Benhall and Saxmundham, (where it runs along the B1121 within the hedgerow along the eastern boundary of the allocated Garden Neighbourhood site), shall be upgraded to provide a safe cycle and pedestrian route between Benhall and Saxmundham.
- x. The existing rail crossing bridge and footpath shall be retained and upgraded for safe cycle and pedestrian use and access to the main SANG area.
- xi. A further suitable rail crossing point (bridge) should be considered to the south of the site to provide a safe and accessible connection for residents of all ages to the SANG on the east of the railway and to Benhall.
- xii. Existing public rights of way to be preserved and enhanced to promote walking and cycling appropriate for all users. Connections between the residential areas of the Garden Neighbourhood and the proposed commercial areas west of the A12 and linking to the countryside beyond.

Connections between the residential areas of the Garden Neighbourhood and the proposed commercial areas west of the A12 and linking to the countryside beyond

- xiii. A new pedestrian and cycle crossing from the housing and mixed use areas of the Garden Neighbourhood across the A12 to the employment/commercial site west of the A12.
- xiv. An enhanced pedestrian and cycle crossing as part of the strategic footpath and cycle route that runs on a south-west / northeast axis through the new neighbourhood and providing direct access to the PROW network to the west of the A12. (Footpath 21 – Benhall). Where new routes are to be provided and existing routes enhanced, careful consideration should be given to ensure their



	safety and attractiveness, for all users and for adjacent occupiers. Proposals should seek to minimise light pollution whilst ensuring that routes are safely lit and attractive to users.
--	--

Green infrastructure

- 12.28 The successful integration of the Garden Neighbourhood into the wider area and its acceptance by the wider community will no doubt be influenced by how well it is considered to live up to its name e.g. 'Garden' and also how engaged the community has been in the collaborative masterplanning process. A key indicator of this will be the quality and quantity of green infrastructure that is provided both within and at the edge of the Garden Neighbourhood development. Within the site, as much as possible of the existing hedgerows and other green infrastructure should be preserved.
- 12.29 New Green links will be required along the edges of the site to create a green buffer, mitigate any noise disturbance and connect with surrounding assets (countryside, SANG, existing settlement, High Street). The Local Plan proposes that the entire area east of the railway but adjacent to the town, is for 'open space' and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (possibly with some part in existing agricultural use) in order to have a positive impact on the environment. Footpaths and signage within the SANG will facilitate movement and attract people. Any new green links will need to be located to encourage walking and cycling around the area reducing the reliance on cars.
- 12.30 The emerging Pigeon Proposal also includes an area of 'amenity greenspace' west of the A12 and south of the proposed employment and commercial areas. It is likely that this will form part of the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for the proposal and therefore its ecological value and connectivity to other parts of the Garden Neighbourhood enhanced. The Neighbourhood Plan is supportive of this area of amenity green/SANG biodiversity net gain but would not support the use of additional land for further development west of the A12.



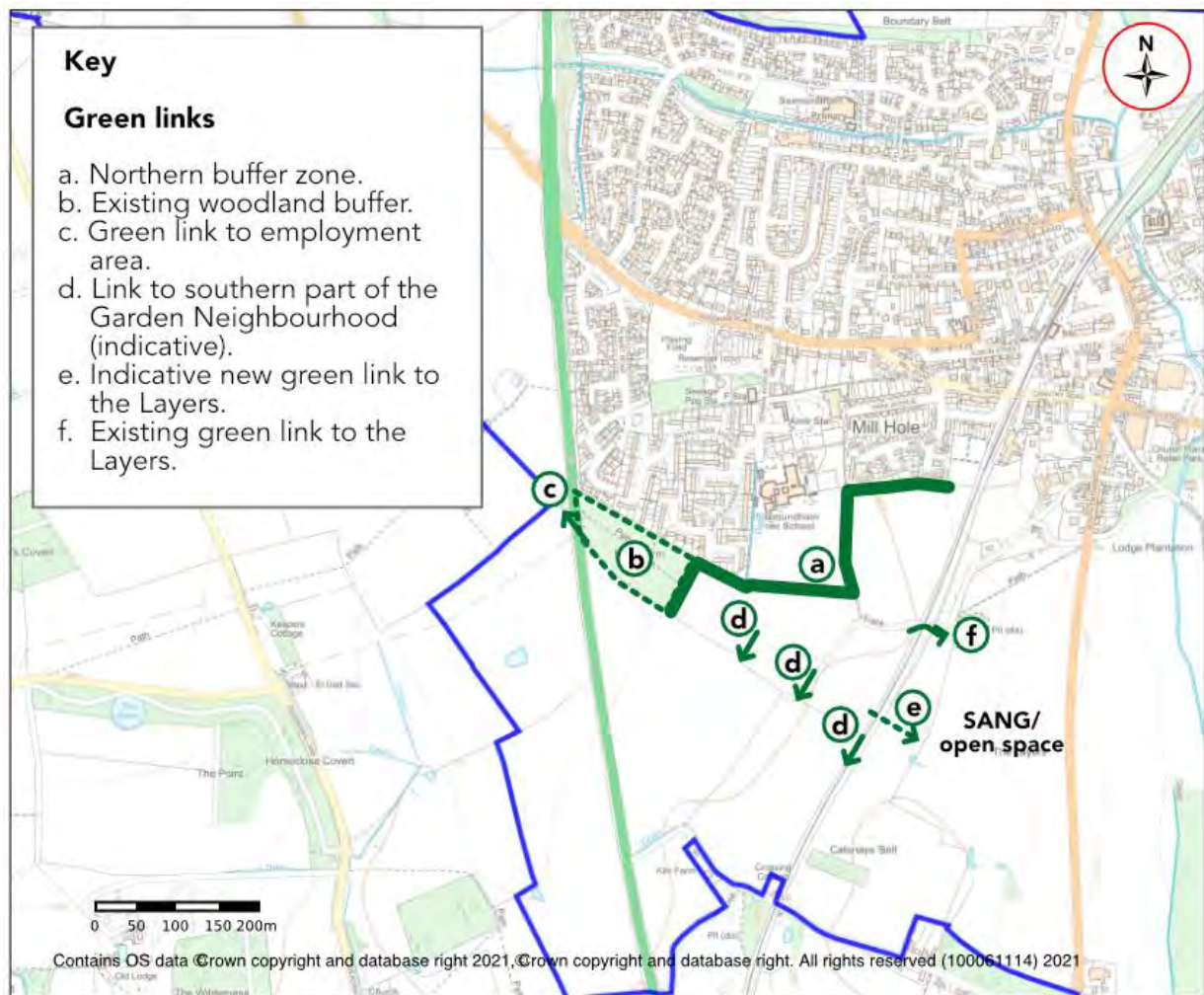


Figure 37: Green links (source: Parish Online with own annotations). Blue line denotes parish boundary. Annotations have slipped down the map – see original adopted plan for where they should be.

12.31 A range of green spaces will need to be provided including formal parks, play areas, a public square, informal greens, allotments or community gardens. All will create a system of different types of green spaces that meet the needs of a wide range of people; shelters, public toilets and other facilities may need to be investigated in some specific green spaces; and a circular green route around the main housing site would enhance the rural countryside 'feel' and promote walking and cycling.

POLICY**SAXGN2: Green infrastructure**

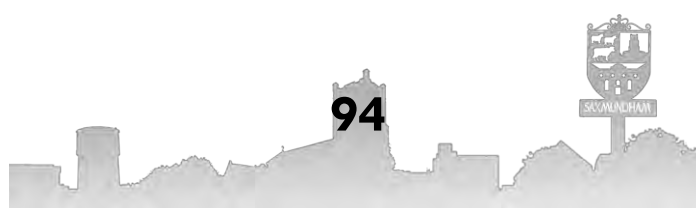
The provision of high quality, well designed and accessible green infrastructure shall be provided in order to achieve a sustainable and integrated new neighbourhood.

New development within the Garden Neighbourhood as identified in the Local Plan is expected to come forward through a master-planning process involving landowner collaboration and community engagement and should link the town and the new community through the use of green infrastructure. Development proposals which meet the following criteria will be supported:

- i. Green infrastructure links which connect to the wider countryside, to the west to the employment area, to the wider countryside and east to the Layers.
- ii. A well landscaped 'green buffer zone' to be created along the northern boundary of the Garden Neighbourhood between the existing and new communities and to safeguard amenity between existing and new properties.
- iii. The area east of the railway line including The Layers is identified for the provision of open space and an appropriate area of well-designed Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), to mitigate the potential impacts of recreational disturbance on the Special Protection Areas (see **Policy SAX16**). The land east of the railway, defined for these purposes, should be delivered as an integral part of the Garden Neighbourhood. The retention of existing uses on a part of the land to the east of the railway is supported, within this framework, where it is compatible with and complements the delivery of open space and SANG.
- iv. The existing hedgerow structure of the site should be retained insofar as it is practicable to do so and this should influence the design and layout of the proposed housing areas. All existing trees, hedges, and hedgerows to be retained and incorporated into the design and layout of proposals, in so far as is reasonably practicable.
- v. Provision of significant landscaped area along the western boundary of the main housing site, adjacent to the A12, to provide a soft landscaped edge to the development and the opportunity for recreational pedestrian and cycle routes and noise mitigation.
- vi. New allotments and/or community gardens should be provided within the new neighbourhood.
- vii. The inclusion of 'green corridors' to allow the passage of wildlife through and within the neighbourhood.
- viii. Green Infrastructure should be provided on the proposed commercial/employment area to the west of the A12 which could include the enhancement of the existing pond on site, new hedgerows and new footpath connections to the wider countryside beyond.

Community facilities

12.32 A range of community facilities are highlighted in the Local Plan policy as needing to be delivered to support the growth of the Garden Neighbourhood. These are set out in paragraph 12.4 above. The Local Plan provides an indicative draft masterplan layout.



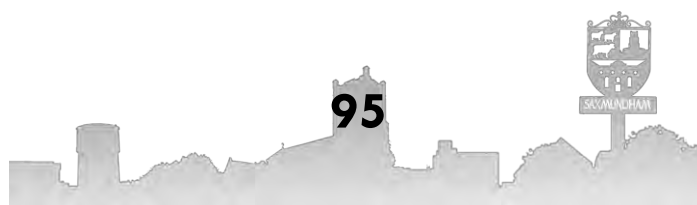
The proposed community hub (or local centre) is shown as centrally located within the Garden Neighbourhood in the Local Plan. The emerging Pigeon Masterplan indicates a 'commercial hub' located adjacent to the main access from the A12. In order to function successfully as a hub the facility needs to relate well to and be easily accessible from the rest of the entire development, by all modes of transport. Subject to masterplanning consensus, it is considered that there would be advantages for the more commercial parts of the 'local centre' to be located next to the main vehicular entrance to the site, close to the A12, welcoming visitors and local residents, including those from the employment areas. It will need to serve as a local shopping function, with open spaces and visitor facilities, in a location where it can be easily seen from the main road (A12) attracting drivers passing by and enhancing viability. A separate 'community hub' would be provided elsewhere in the site which could take the form of an outdoor meeting space, or well-designed focal point and potentially including a community café.

12.33 There is no specific location for the new primary school indicated in the Local Plan. However the former secondary school site is located immediately north of the proposed Garden Neighbourhood and there is some logic that would support locating the primary school close to that facility particularly if the site were to be retained in some form of community or educational use such as a Special Educational Needs School and/or facilities for indoor sports and recreation. The location of the primary school in this area would also mean it is within easy walking distance from the existing and the new communities.

12.34 Locating the primary school to the north of the development would enable the school grounds along with the existing woodland to the west and the former secondary school site to the north to form a significant green buffer while also offering opportunities for peripheral pedestrian and cycle routes. The proximity of the school grounds to the woodland area also gives the opportunity for outdoor school classes during spring and summer periods.

12.35 Community consultation undertaken as part of the production of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan revealed that indoor sports provision and additional medical facilities were the key priorities for future development to provide. Paragraph 3.32 of the Local Plan acknowledges that consultation on the Local Plan highlighted the need for improvements to the capacity of the medical practice. Given the priority that the community ascribes to these two issues, it is considered that proposals to address both issues would fall within the definition of 'significant benefits to the community' which the Neighbourhood Plan identifies in paragraph 12.9 above, are required to be provided to outweigh the disadvantages of the proposed commercial area to the west of the A12. Therefore the development of the Garden Neighbourhood should respond positively to the community and maximise the opportunity presented by the availability of the former secondary school site to provide indoor sports facilities where they can easily serve the new and existing communities (see also **Policy SAX5**).

12.36 The town has outdoor sports facilities at the northern end of the town, at the Sports and Recreational Club at Carlton Park. However, it has no indoor sports provision of any kind. The provision of an indoor sports centre facility, in the southern area of the extended town, and reasonably accessible to residents of both the new Neighbourhood and of the existing town, would provide a much-needed resource, help to promote healthy lifestyles, and assist in the aim of integrating the new development in the community life of the town.



POLICY

SAXGN3: Community facilities

The creation of the new Garden Neighbourhood will be supported by the provision of the following key pieces of community infrastructure.

Primary school and associated early years setting

Consideration to be given to it being located to the north of the site, within the Neighbourhood Plan area to allow for physical and social connectivity with the existing community affording opportunities to enhance the proposed northern landscape buffer (see **Policy SAXGN2 ii**) above). Both facilities to be accessible by high quality walking and cycling facilities.

Second Early Years Setting (of approximately 0.1 hectares)

To be suitably located to ensure good coverage of childcare across the Garden Neighbourhood and to ensure that both early years settings can be sustainable in the long term; and to be accessible by high quality walking and cycling facilities.

Local centre/community hub

To be located where it can best meet the needs of residents of the neighbourhood and the communities beyond, preferably with good connections to the Primary School with easy access from all parts of the new neighbourhood, including the employment area. This would also allow for existing and proposed green links to come through the local centre creating a well-connected walking network.

Recreational facilities including play areas

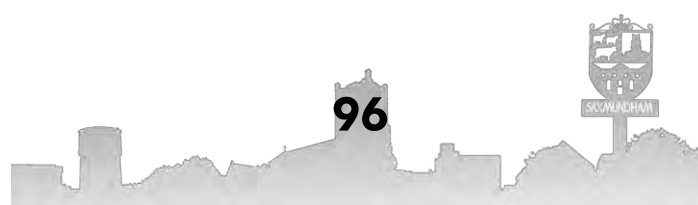
To be located at different points within the development, and catering for different age groups

Proposals for additional **indoor sports provision** within the Garden Neighbourhood and/or utilising the former secondary school site will be strongly encouraged. This should be easily accessible from the town and the Garden Neighbourhood. (**See also Policy SAX5**).

Design of the Garden Neighbourhood

12.36 Policy SAX1 of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan sets out the general design principles which all new development in the parish should have regard to. This also includes the detailed guidance set out in the Design Guidelines for the Neighbourhood Area (produced by consultants AECOM) which is included as Appendix E of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The policy and the Design Code relate to the original Neighbourhood Area and therefore can now be applied the new Neighbourhood Area which includes the Garden Neighbourhood Site.

12.37 During the preparation of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan, AECOM initially produced some detailed design guidance for the Garden Neighbourhood Site. This was removed from the final Design Code due to the fact that the Garden Neighbourhood did not fall wholly within the original Neighbourhood Area. The guidance produced at that time was



(and remains) consistent with national design advice as outlined in the National Model Design Code, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

12.38 The design principles contained in Policy SAX1 can be easily applied to the Garden Neighbourhood Site, however this is relatively high level and given that detailed guidance for the site has been developed it is essential to supplement them. The scale of development proposed in the Garden Neighbourhood also warrants some detailed guidance to ensure that the original objectives for the site as set out in the Local Plan allocation are met.

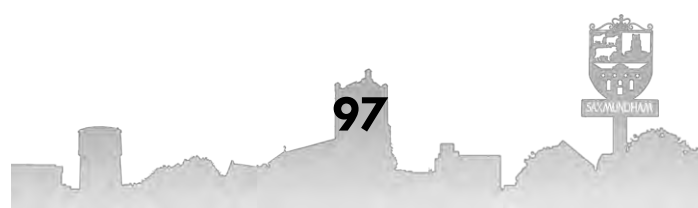
12.39 Policies SAXGN1 and SAXGN2 cover the strategic issues of connectivity and green infrastructure, whilst Policy SAXGN3 covers issues relating to community facilities within the Garden Neighbourhood. There remains a gap in policy relating to the detailed design of the site which sits between the strategic guidance set out in SAX1 and the emerging masterplan for the site. The following policy aims to fill that gap.

Design and the Garden Neighbourhood

12.40 The southern extent of the Neighbourhood Area, where the Garden Neighbourhood has been located., currently consists of open fields, woodlands and water elements. These existing qualities of the site need to be preserved and enhanced in the future. New development should take the existing local character of wider Saxmundham into careful consideration. The design of the Garden Neighbourhood should consider scale, layout, density, mass, materials and architectural features, as well as incorporate a high standard of landscaping to add to the quality of the area. The existing building typologies in the parish can also be reflected in the new development where this provides a positive contribution to the new neighbourhood and existing character of Saxmundham. In particular, there is a variety of building types in the Neighbourhood Plan Area; for example terraced housing, semi-detached, detached and bungalows. It is important that this mixture of types of housing is retained and promoted in new development in order to create variety and interest in the streetscape. The architectural styles, details and materials of the existing Saxmundham settlement should act as a reference for the new development to promote local distinctiveness. The new development also offers a significant opportunity for more distinctive, innovative and contemporary approaches to design and architecture, within the overall mix of typologies. The aim is for the Garden Neighbourhood to be recognised as a design leader in terms of sustainability, energy efficiency and technological advancement.

12.41 Policy SAXGN4 below seeks to set out more tailored design guidance for the layout and design of the new garden neighbourhood and builds on the existing Neighbourhood Plan Policy SAX1, and the Design Code, to provide this.

POLICY	<p>SAXGN4: Design of the Garden Neighbourhood</p> <p>This development will be a very significant enlargement of Saxmundham and as such will be expected to be imaginative and innovative and make a positive contribution to the character of the town and the range of housing on offer. It should be a high quality, well designed, distinctive development which is physically, environmentally and socially well connected to the existing town and community of Saxmundham.</p>
---------------	---



The site is unconnected visually to the existing town which presents opportunities for original and contemporary design solutions as well as more traditional schemes. The objective is for a distinctive, environmentally and technologically advanced development which will be an asset to the town of Saxmundham. To achieve this it is expected that standards of building, layout and design will exceed minimum standards.

Proposals for the Garden Neighbourhood should have regard to the design guidelines for the Neighbourhood Plan area, in Appendix E

Proposals should, so far as relevant to the context, accord with the following criteria

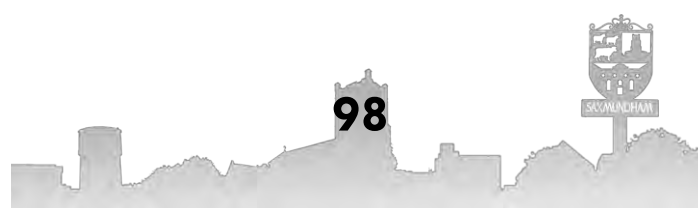
STREET DESIGN AND PARKING

Layout

1. The site should be developed as a series of neighbourhoods, each with its own distinctive character, in terms of layout, materials, building design and public realm detailing. The whole to be drawn together/ connected by the diagonal cycleway/footpath.
2. The central cycle/footpath avenue through the Neighbourhood including associated landscaping and public open space is to be designed as a whole and form a principal component of the layout.
3. Green verges should be provided along the main street with large street trees to provide shading and create a 'garden' neighbourhood feel.
4. Where appropriate, on-street parking should be interspersed with trees to avoid impeding moving traffic or pedestrians and also mitigate the visual impacts of vehicles.
5. Front gardens should be provided, they are a key element which contribute to the openness of the streetscape with rich vegetation and planting. Use of front gardens as additional car parking should be discouraged.
6. Corner buildings should act as landmarks to create memorable routes.
7. When cul-de-sacs are proposed these should be connected to the footpath network in the area.
8. When a street is proposed adjacent to the countryside or a large open space, a planting buffer and landscaping between the edge of the carriageway and the countryside or open space should be provided to enable transition and control pedestrian accessibility. Such buffers should also be used for swales and rain gardens to address any flooding issues.
9. The use of hedgerows where dwellings or streets face onto agricultural land is particularly encouraged.

Car and cycle parking

10. Residential parking should be provided on plot and to the side with convenient Electric Vehicle charging points. Garages should be sized to accommodate modern typical family type cars.
11. Car parking design should be combined with landscaping to minimise the presence of vehicles.
12. Parking should be placed in well overlooked areas, without dominating the street scene. Garages should not be separate from dwellings.
13. Parking areas and driveways should be designed to minimise water run off through the use of permeable paving.
14. The provision of secured covered cycle parking within all residential developments is encouraged.



15. Encouragement is also given for publicly available cycle parking in the public realm.

Landscaping and tree planting

16. Hedgerows can be planted in front of bare boundary walls to ease their visual presence, or they can be used to conceal on plot car parking and driveways within curtilages,
17. Where flower beds, bushes and trees are to be planted within front gardens, ornamental species add interest and colour to their surroundings and become an identity and character to individual dwellings.
18. Trees should be added to any public open space, green or play area to generate environmental and wildlife benefits.

Lighting

19. Any new development shall ensure that lighting schemes will not cause unacceptable levels of light pollution particularly in intrinsically dark areas of the countryside but must be adequate to ensure a safe, environment for pedestrians and cyclists in the dark. The use of lighting, such as blue LED light, that has a negative effect on health and wellbeing, should be avoided.

Mitigating the impact of the A12

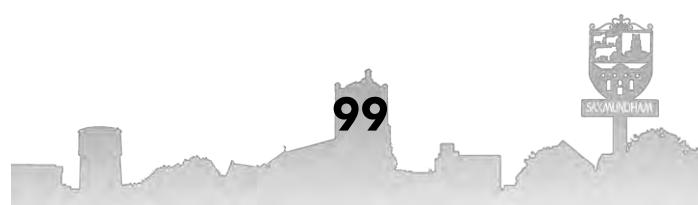
20. Where new dwellings are proposed close to the A12, suitable noise mitigation such as barriers, planting or non-residential buildings should be employed. The road edge should be softened with planting, and dwellings should be orientated such that habitable rooms and gardens are located furthest from the noise sources. Noise attenuating road surfaces should be incorporated.

Mitigating the impact of the railway line

21. Layouts adjacent to the railway line should incorporate planting for noise mitigation. A landscaped pedestrian path should also be provided, as part of the proposed circular route around the entire site, which will add additional noise mitigation. Dwellings should be orientated with habitable rooms located furthest from the railway line.

BUILT FORM AND BUILDING DESIGN

- 22 Buildings should front on to streets and maximise passive building design (see para 34). The building line should have subtle variations in the form of recesses and protrusions but form a unified whole.
- 23 Buildings should be designed to ensure that streets and/or public spaces have good levels of natural surveillance from buildings. This can be ensured by placing ground floor habitable rooms and upper floor windows facing the street.
- 24 New buildings should be sympathetic in mass, height and scale to the rural location. Subtle variation in height is encouraged to add visual interest. Buildings reflecting the local vernacular should avoid pastiche and such elements as fake chimneys.
- 25 Windows should be used to increase the natural surveillance of the public realm and enhance the attractiveness of the street scene. They should be constructed using sustainable materials. Corner buildings should incorporate windows on both primary and secondary facades. Long stretches of



windowless walls should be avoided. Windows should be of sufficient size and number to allow an abundance of light.

27 Services and utilities such as meter boxes, guttering, drainpipes and EV chargers should be carefully located to avoid visual clutter on the front of buildings.

28 Driveways, paths and pavements should use materials which are robust, aesthetically pleasing and with excellent weathering characteristics, defining a sustainable and attractive place for residents and visitors

29 Materials for new buildings should be of a high quality and reinforce local distinctiveness. Materials should be selected based on an understanding of the local built and natural environment.

The Employment Area

30 The Employment Area is an integral part of the Garden Neighbourhood and as such should have commensurate levels of high-quality landscaping, a green infrastructure network and easy well signed access to the wider countryside.

31 Employment buildings should have a high level of energy efficiency and exemplary eco design features. Roofs should maximise solar panel gains. They should be of contemporary design with a variety of buildings of limited height, designed with flexibility in mind to address a range of commercial uses.

Environmental and Energy design

32 Energy efficient and eco design features based on Passivhaus principles are to be incorporated into all developments at the design stage and include such elements as triple glazing, above standard insulation, grey water capture, air source heat pumps, and mechanical ventilation heat recovery (MVHR). Solar conversion materials (panels, shingles, integrated solar roof tile systems etc) should be included in the design of all buildings, similarly satellite dishes or other external features should be included at the design stage and positioned unobtrusively.

33 Elements such as water management features, flood resilience and resistance features and energy efficiency features are to be included. The use of renewable/non carbon energy solutions such as air and ground source heat pumps, district heating and solar panels are essential throughout.

34 Buildings should be orientated and designed to maximise solar gain, daylight and sun penetration, whilst avoiding overheating.

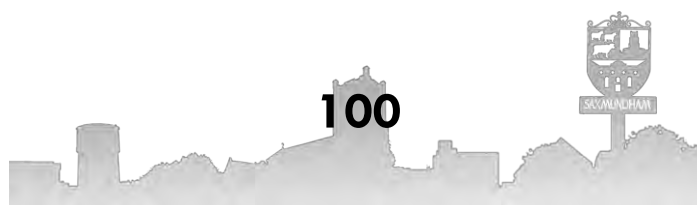
35 All dwellings should be provided with an EV charger

Innovative and contemporary building design

36 Innovative and contemporary design solutions of high quality (including self-build housing), where they also exemplify high standards of sustainability in environmental and energy design, will generally be supported. These may where appropriate form part of character areas within which they may offer a design contrast to other buildings that adds to the overall positive design impact.

Gateways

37 The pedestrian/cycle access points linking the new development to the existing town are important gateways into the Garden Neighbourhood and



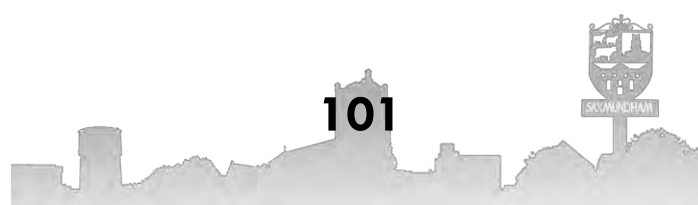
should be designed to take advantage of the opportunities that these give to create distinctive, welcoming spaces and creative physical design elements. The entry points to the development site from the Railway Station, and from the town via the single track railway bridge, are particularly important in this respect. The vehicular access into the neighbourhood should be attractive, inviting and well signposted.

Density

38 Densities should be appropriate to a small Suffolk market town. Densities within character areas may differ, provided that the overall density of the development of the Neighbourhood is not significantly altered. The highest densities should in general be positioned at the north of the site, adjacent to the existing town settlement and progressively lower densities created towards the southern boundary to provide a soft, green transition between development and countryside.

Waste and Recycling Storage

39 All residential properties should be designed with convenient, secure, and visually unobtrusive storage for general waste and recycling bins. Bin storage areas should be located away from the primary street frontage where possible and screened using planting, fencing, or built enclosures that are in keeping with the overall design of the development. Provision should also be made for accessible collection points that do not obstruct pavements, and consideration should be given to the gradient and surfacing to ensure ease of movement for residents and waste collection services.



13. Mitigating the impacts of National Infrastructure and Energy Projects on Saxmundham

Objective EN1: To ensure that the necessary measures required to mitigate the physical, visual and social impacts of National Infrastructure and Energy Projects on Saxmundham are identified and implemented.

- 13.1 Due to its coastal location and potential connections with Europe, areas of East Suffolk District have been identified for a number of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects also known as NSIPs. In the case of East Suffolk the majority of these relate to national scale energy projects brought about by the significant generation and connection infrastructure required to deliver net zero carbon emissions in the UK by 2050. The resources and conditions in East Suffolk for fixed foundation offshore wind and interconnectors have made the area favourable to developers. Concerns have been raised about the significant number of projects proposed for the area and their cumulative impact. .
- 13.2 NSIPs by their very definition are significant in scale and also in impact and planning applications for their development are determined on behalf of the Secretary of State by the Planning Inspectorate. The NSIP process is a prescribed process and is set out in regulation. The District Council, County Council and Saxmundham Town Council are statutory consultees (along with a range of organisations including the environmental bodies such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England). However because the decision on such projects are made at a national level, there is a limit to the weight that can be given to adopted development plan policies such as the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan.
- 13.3 The Local Plan contains policy SCLP3.4 Proposals for Major Energy Infrastructure. The policy sets out the approach to be taken by East Suffolk to such applications either in its role as determining authority for development under the Town and Country Planning Act, or as consultee on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. The policy indicates that the Council will take into consideration the nature, scale, extent and potential impact of proposals for Major Energy Infrastructure Projects, including cumulative impacts throughout their lifetime, including decommissioning of existing plant and facilities. Proposals for Major Energy Infrastructure Projects across the plan area and the need to mitigate the impacts arising from these will have regard to relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies, community benefits to mitigate the impacts of disturbance experienced by the local community for hosting major infrastructure projects; environmental impacts such as landscape, wildlife, heritage, coastal erosion and floodrisk, highway safety, impacts of construction, economic benefits, decommissioning and restoration measures and the cumulative impacts.



13.4 There is a history of such developments in this area with the most notable being the Sizewell Nuclear Energy Site. Nuclear energy has been generated at Sizewell since the 1960's and the operation of the site will continue well beyond the plan period of the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan as a result of the separate operations that take place such as the decommissioning of Sizewell A and B and the construction of Sizewell C.

Energy Projects wither within or in the vicinity of the Neighbourhood Area

13.5 There are a number of Nationally Significant Energy Projects proposed in East Suffolk and these vary in terms of their form and impact on the Neighbourhood Area.

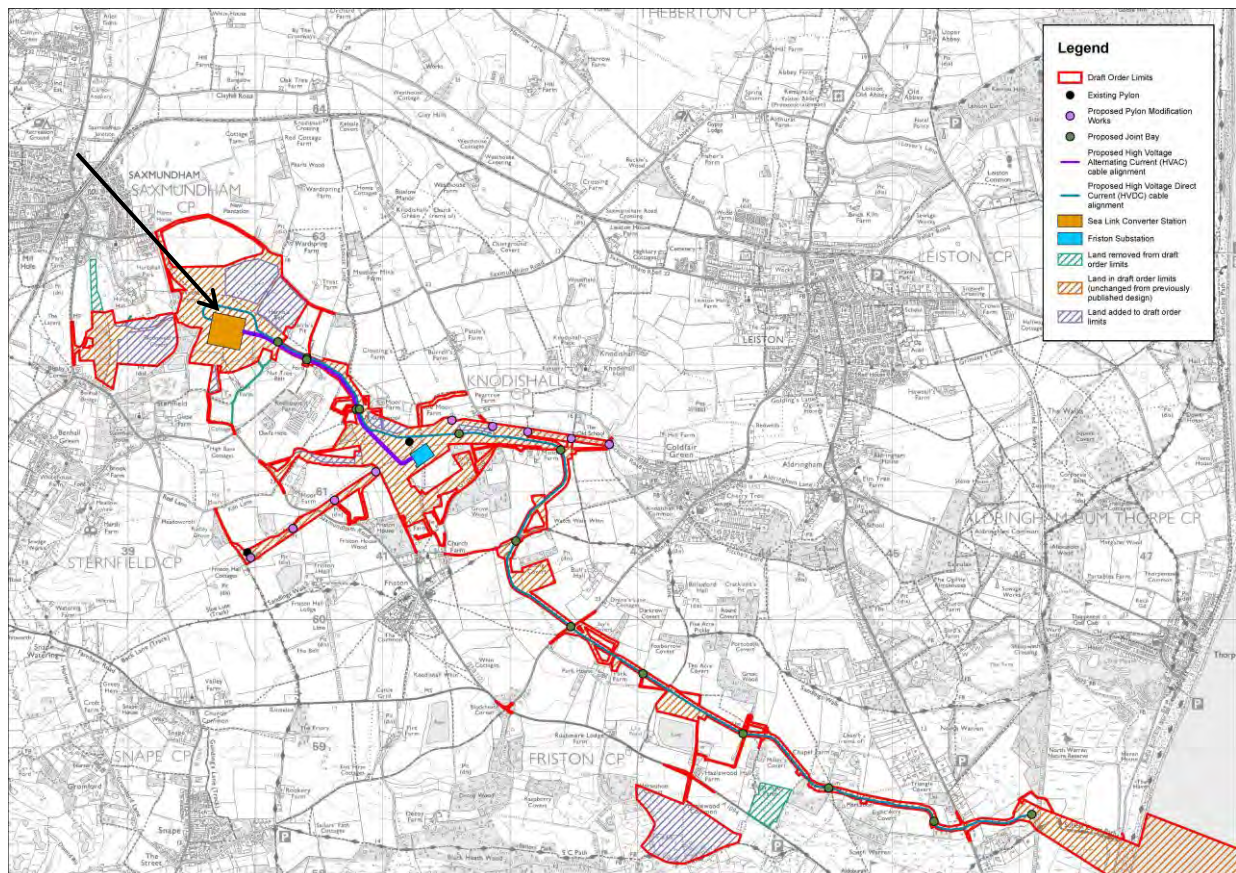


Figure 38: Overview Map : Energy Infrastructure Projects in East Suffolk. Source: National Grid November 2024 Update. Arrow shows location of the Saxmundham converter stations

Nuclear Power: Sizewell

13.6 Although the main construction site for the Sizewell C Nuclear reactor lies outside of the Neighbourhood Area, the construction phase was triggered in January 2024 and preliminary construction has begun.

13.7 The principal impacts for Saxmundham generated by Sizewell relate to construction traffic. This is in the form of vehicular construction traffic using the A12 and rail borne

freight traffic using the line between Ipswich and Saxmundham then on to Sizewell. The impacts are in the form of noise and disturbance from increased road traffic and heavier vehicles using the A12 and from the increase in nighttime trail movements which go directly through the town. Unfortunately, given that the Sizewell development has been consented the Neighbourhood Plan is not able to influence these matters through a Neighbourhood Plan policy. See also **policy SAXGN4** on noise mitigation measures for Garden Neighbourhood).

Off shore Wind Energy: East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two

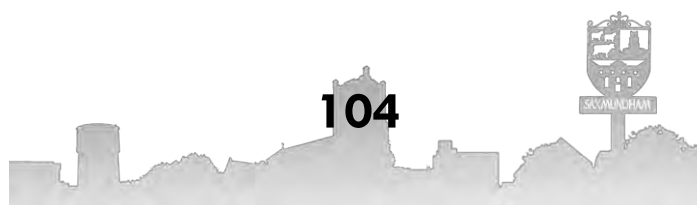
- 13.8 Scottish Power Renewables plans to develop two offshore wind farm projects off the east coast. These projects are in addition to the existing East Anglia One and East Anglia Three Projects. Both EA1 North and EA2 will make landfall under Thorpeness Cliffs and two trenched cable corridors up to 100m wide side by side are to be constructed between landfall and Friston village via Sizewell and Aldringham. These projects do not require any construction or new development within the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Area although the cumulative impacts of construction traffic for these projects together with the Sizewell construction are of concern.

Off-shore electricity interconnectors: Sea Link

- 13.9 This is a new proposed high voltage undersea electricity link between Suffolk and Kent being developed by National Grid Electricity Transmission. National Grid has stated that the Sea Link project is required to add greater capacity to the electricity transmission network, allowing anticipated renewable energy, generated offshore, to connect to the network and be transported around the country. The proposal includes on shore underground cabling, a substation at Friston and a converter station at Saxmundham. This proposed converter station is broadly in the same location as the converter station proposed for Lionlink but will be an additional structure. There does not appear to be proposals for co-location currently, i.e. it is understood that there would be two separate tall structures (SeaLink / LionLink) each with its large operational footprint.

- 13.10 The SeaLink proposal includes the Saxmundham converter station, and access including a bridge over the River Fromus. The River Fromus crossing would provide an access route to the converter station for construction vehicles and reduce construction. The bridge location has been amended in order to reduce the impact on trees to the east of the river but would mean it is closer to heritage assets south of Saxmundham e.g. Hurts Hall (Grade II Listed Building). The exact location of the compound has not yet been confirmed although it is likely to be close to the Lion Link converter station. In term of mitigation SeaLink currently propose a new area of agricultural land between Sternfield and Saxmundham, east of the River Fromus, to create small gaps in the crops so birds can access nesting habitats. An area of land near Aldeburgh, off the A1094 and within the National Landscape area, would also be included and is proposed to be managed 'acid grassland'. This is a type of open landscape and habitat that encourages biodiversity. It should be noted this area lies outside of the Neighbourhood Area for this Neighbourhood Plan.

- 13.11 The impacts of Sealink on Saxmundham will be in addition to the proposals for Lion link and the other energy projects shown above. Taken together, these proposed new Converter Station developments, in particular unless well masked and mitigated, create



a very large new industrial site and 'landscape' in a setting that historically has always been rural / agricultural in use and appearance.

Off-shore electricity interconnectors: Lionlink

13.9 The LionLink Multi-Purpose Interconnector (formerly known as EuroLink) is being developed by National Grid Ventures. The LionLink project involves the creation of a High Voltage Direct Current transmission cable between the UK and Netherlands. The cables would travel between the two countries whilst connecting to offshore wind farm/s at sea. This would then connect to an onshore converter station at each end of the connection to transform High Voltage Direct Current into High Voltage Alternating Current so that the energy can be fed into the transmission network of each country. The scheme proposes a High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Converter station potentially up to 26m in height within Saxmundham Parish to the south and east of Leiston Road. The operational 'footprint' for each Converter Station is likely to be in excess of 3 hectares. Access to the converter station is likely to be from the B1121 to the south of Saxmundham, crossing the River Fromus south of Hurts Hall. The proposed location of the converter station is directly on a public right of way (Saxmundham 3).

13.12 The key impacts for Saxmundham parish are in two parts – one relates to the impacts of construction traffic (and cumulative impacts in association with Sizewell and East Anglian 1 North and East Anglia 2 off shore wind projects) and the other to the impact of the of the proposed converter station itself.

13.13 The direct impacts on the town include the following:

HGV Traffic Impacts:

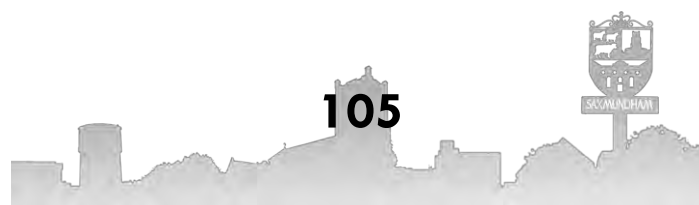
- Noise and vibration
- Air pollution
- Town centre congestion
- Heritage impacts in the town centre

Converter station and construction compounds:

- Landscape impacts
- Townscape impacts.
- Biodiversity impacts
- Public Rights of way

Scope of the Neighbourhood Plan Policy.

13.14 Consultations undertaken in respect of the various energy projects (and the response of Saxmundham Town Council to them) indicate a level of concern from local residents about the scale and number of major energy projects proposed in and around the parish and their potential cumulative impacts on the natural and historic assets of the parish together with the potential to adversely impact residential amenity. This concerns not only related to the major energy projects themselves (which are predominantly to be located offshore) but also to the associated infrastructure required to connect them to the National Grid for example, cables, connectors, pylons, converter stations etc.



13.15 There is also arguably an increasing risk to the reputation of Saxmundham itself. Its existing reputation as a historic Suffolk market town and gateway to the east Suffolk coast with historic coastal villages, national landscapes heritage coast and important wildlife habitats is in danger of being superseded by that of a town under siege from large scale energy infrastructure, town increased town centre congestion from HGV traffic serving the various projects set in an industrialised landscape littered with energy infrastructure and related subsidiary buildings and structures.

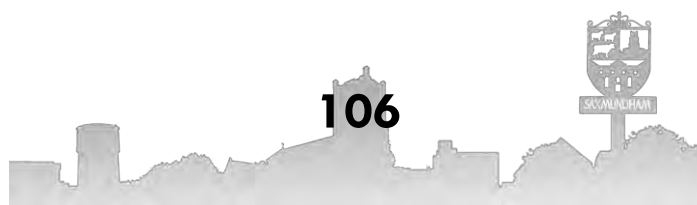
13.16 Whilst some impacts may only be 'temporary' – i.e. digging up the required channels, laying cables and then covering over the excavations, these should also be taken into account and as long as the disturbed area is able to recover within a reasonable time, the emphasis must be on proper restoration. If the disturbance is longer-lasting or permanent, then policy of mitigating / compensating as close as possible to the affected areas is critical.

13.17 The Neighbourhood Plan, therefore, seeks to ensure that the cumulative impacts of multiple energy schemes on the Neighbourhood Area are taken into account by the relevant determining body. The Plan also seeks to ensure that where such energy schemes are identified as being likely to have adverse impacts on the parish, including the cumulative impacts from multiple schemes and their associated infrastructure) that those mitigations are prioritised and suitably located within the Neighbourhood Area. Whilst accepting that the determination of NSIPs lies outside of the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan, the principles of the mitigation hierarchy as applied to applications affecting biodiversity, namely Avoid-Mitigate-Compensate should be employed when considering the location of those mitigations.

13.18 There is scope for a policy to be developed which offers specific details with regard to wildlife and nature recovery, as well as the other impacts noted (landscape, natural environment, historic environment, and residential amenity). This could be achieved through the inclusion of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric to be used to demonstrate that, not only will there be no loss of the ecological value of habitats, but that a net gain will be provided. The statutory minimum net gain is 10% for most development, with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects not required to deliver net gain until at least 2025.

Policy SAXEN1 Addressing and mitigating the impacts of large scale energy projects

13.19 In relation to Proposals for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects that may be located in Saxmundham, or impact directly upon the parish, proposals or options for appropriate mitigation measures and/or significant local community benefits, to proportionately address negative impacts of such developments (including cumulative impacts) on the Neighbourhood Plan area or any part thereof, will be recommended to the promoter and/or other relevant authorities or bodies, in accordance (among other matters) with the policies and strategies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan, and in furtherance of Local Plan policy SCLP3.4



POLICY	<p>SAXEN1: Addressing and mitigating the impacts of large scale energy projects</p> <p>The impacts on the Neighbourhood Area of major energy infrastructure projects and associated developments (e.g. nuclear, off shore wind, interconnectors, pylons, converter stations, pipelines etc) , including the cumulative impacts from multiple schemes should be given significant weight in the determination of such schemes. Where works take place which have temporary impacts, the emphasis should be on timely restoration once works have been completed.</p> <p>Where mitigatory or compensatory measures are identified which are considered necessary to remedy the permanent or long-term impacts of major energy schemes on the landscape, natural environment, wildlife and nature recovery, historic environment or the residential amenity for the parish, these should be provided in the first instance directly in the parish where those impacts are most felt . Only if this is not possible or practicable should they be provided elsewhere in the parish. Where such mitigations are required in respect of biodiversity, the standard biodiversity net gain metric of 10% should be applied.</p>
---------------	--

Specific mitigations for Saxmundham

13.20 Whilst not endorsing the energy infrastructure proposals in principle, Saxmundham Town Council has sought to respond positively to the opportunities for securing mitigation and potential community benefits as a result of the detailed schemes, should it be determined that they go ahead. The presence of converter stations just outside the built settlement of Saxmundham will permanently alter the town and the nearby communities of Kelsale, Carlton, Benhall and Sternfield and recognising that there is no mitigation that can fully compensate for the ecological, physical and visual impacts on the natural and historic environment, the Town Council is working collectively with Councillors from Kelsale cum Carlton Parish Council and Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council, and interested local residents as the Fromus Energy Projects Team to support the Town Council's engagement with the energy project developers and to guide the Town Council through the NSIPs process.

13.21 The aim is to develop a series of mitigatory proposals which can be supported by National Grid to increase community awareness of biodiversity issues and work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the town and wider community, to support local biodiversity projects.

13.22 A number of specific mitigations/interventions have been identified by the Fromus Energy Projects team however not all of these are appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan . However there are a number which have a land use implication and may be appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan and these are set out below.

a. Mitigating the visual and biodiversity impacts of the Converter station(s)

13.21 The area which includes the sites of the converter stations, the new access road, the bridge will suffer the most significant direct impacts on habitat due to:

- altered soil composition



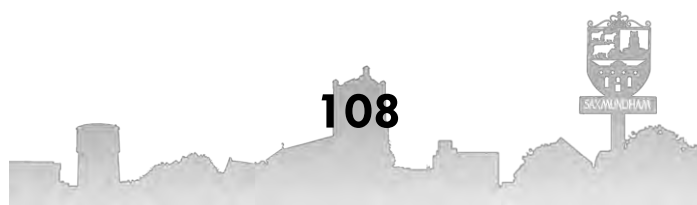
- increased stormwater run-off with vast areas of previously permeable landscape becoming covered with impermeable surfaces
- destruction of irreplaceable established woodland and hedgerows and wildflower margins.

13.22 The converter stations will permanently alter the visual aesthetic of the area and take arable land out of production. There will be no direct benefits to the surrounding communities from the construction or running of this energy infrastructure project. The converter stations are expected to reach 26m in height and will be highly visible in the landscape from all directions. In order to mitigate their visual appearance, built footprint and scale in the landscape proposals for the converter station should be consistent with the following criteria. (footprint)

- Consideration should be given to wholly or partially burying or lowering the converter station buildings to reduce their overall visible height and assist with their assimilation into the wider landscape.
- The exterior materials and colour should be chosen with landscape visibility in mind to reduce their overall effect.
- Opportunities to clad the external elevations of the buildings with 'vertical habitat cladding' as shown below should be considered. The most important elevations are those from the South Entrance to Saxmundham which is identified as an important public view in the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan . This would provide new habitat for swifts, bats and pollinating insects.
- Where new roads or construction accesses are to be constructed to service the converter stations , these should be constructed to adoptable standards so that should they remain after the construction period has ended they would be suitable for future public use as a long term relief road for the town linking the B1121 (South Entrance) and the B1119 Leiston Road thereby reducing traffic congestion in the town centre. .
- Opportunities to clad the roofs of the converter stations in solar panels/pv to provide a further source of green energy
- Hedgerows should be required to be planted both within the development site and adjacent, including along the affected section of the B1119 Saxmundham to Leiston Road, for environmental and landscaping purposes; in addition, also for these purposes, trees including copses should be planted within the development site as far as practicable, and/or in the immediate vicinity, to provide a legacy that echoes the heritage of the Great Wood that formerly stood on or close to the main Converter Station site

b. Mitigating any increase in floodrisk or pollution to the River Fromus

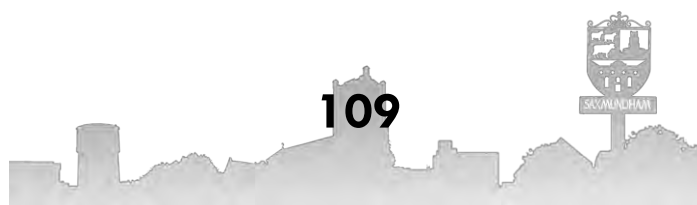
13.23 Development will be expected to manage all water running off impermeable surfaces through water harvesting solutions, attenuation ponds, swales and bio retention basins as appropriate. Where new roads (even temporary roads) are to be constructed these should establish swales and bioretention basins along all new roads to capture and treat water runoff to reduce flood risk and mitigate risk of pollution to the River Fromus.



c. Mitigating the adverse impacts on biodiversity

13.24 The compulsory purchase of the farmland for the cable trench provides an opportunity to repurpose the land for the amenity of the local community and create a Green Nature Corridor., potentially linked with the SANG which is to be delivered as part of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood. The route of the cable trench would allow for a completely hedgerowed and wild-flower margined, accessible, safe, non-vehicular route. This access to nature would provide, health and wellbeing benefits to the local communities. This Green Nature Corridor would be cycle/ bridleway/ mobility/disabled inclusive, offer tourism opportunities and provide connectivity for flagship Suffolk species to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths National Landscape . There are opportunities to create cycle connections with Saxmundham Rail Station to provide sustainable wildlife friendly travel.

13.25 Opportunities also exist for the creation of a wildlife overpass as a Living Green Bridge over the River Fromus. This bridge is required to access and construct the converter stations. Following the completion of construction , the bridge will transition from construction route to rewilded overpass and therefore the initial bridge designs should reflect the later purpose. Whilst remaining an option for future access for maintenance, its main role will be to support wildlife. As with other bridges in the local area, the bridge will be built with an otter ledge to support their safe passage under the bridge.





14. Opportunity Zones: Saxmundham town centre

- 12.1 Saxmundham town centre is the historic heart of the town. It includes the High Street, Market Place and parts of North and South Entrances, together with Station Approach, Street Farm Road and Fromus Square plus Church Street which now gives access to two supermarkets. This is the centre of the town's economic and business activity, where a good variety of facilities are found.
- 12.2 The town centre is not unlike most market towns in Suffolk in that it has a range of issues and challenges to face in terms of reinforcing the retail role of the town centre in a changing retail environment, maintaining a good quality and safe environment for people to shop in and visit but at the same time catering for the demands of those visitors and local residents and businesses in relation to issues of parking, HGVs, traffic congestion, pollution and pedestrian safety.
- 12.3 Saxmundham however, does have some specific town centre issues of its own, which have been identified by the community through responses to consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan as it develops, and also reinforced as challenges by the technical work undertaken by AECOM.
- 12.4 The key physical and environmental issues for the town centre have been identified as:
- Traffic congestion in the High Street
 - Narrow carriageways making an unsafe pedestrian and cycle environment.
 - Lack of pedestrian crossings in the High Street.
 - Unauthorised on-street parking.
 - Lack of coherent signage.
 - Lack of connection between High Street and surrounding open spaces.
 - Station Approach feels disconnected from the town centre.
 - Poor visibility at key junctions.
 - Narrow pavements along the High Street hinder pedestrian flow.
 - Narrow, uneven and inadequate pavements affect mobility, particularly for those with mobility difficulties.
 - Limited street furniture and green elements along the High Street.

- 12.5 The Town Council engaged consultants AECOM in early 2021, to produce a concept Master Plan for the High Street and present some potential options and opportunities for addressing these issues that the Town Council could then take forward.
- 12.6 The following set of primary objectives have been developed to guide the future of the town centre and the identified Opportunity Zones.

Objective STC1: To create an attractive and welcoming town centre with space to gather and socialise, with a pedestrian friendly environment stretching from the Station to Fromus Square and along the length of the High Street.

Objective STC2: To reduce the non-essential use of the High Street by motor vehicles and to prioritise pedestrian movement and safety in the centre, whilst improving and encouraging parking provision in accessible locations within walking distance of the town centre.

Objective STC3: To protect and enhance the historic core of the town as defined by the Conservation Area.

- 12.7 Due to the interdependency of various areas of the town centre, and the wide scope of potential actors involved in potential development proposals, it is important that proposals in this area are co-ordinated. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the town centre as an 'Opportunity Zone' and proposals within the zone should contribute to the overarching town centre strategy as set out in **Policy SAXTC1** below and should be delivered having regard to this Master Planning framework.



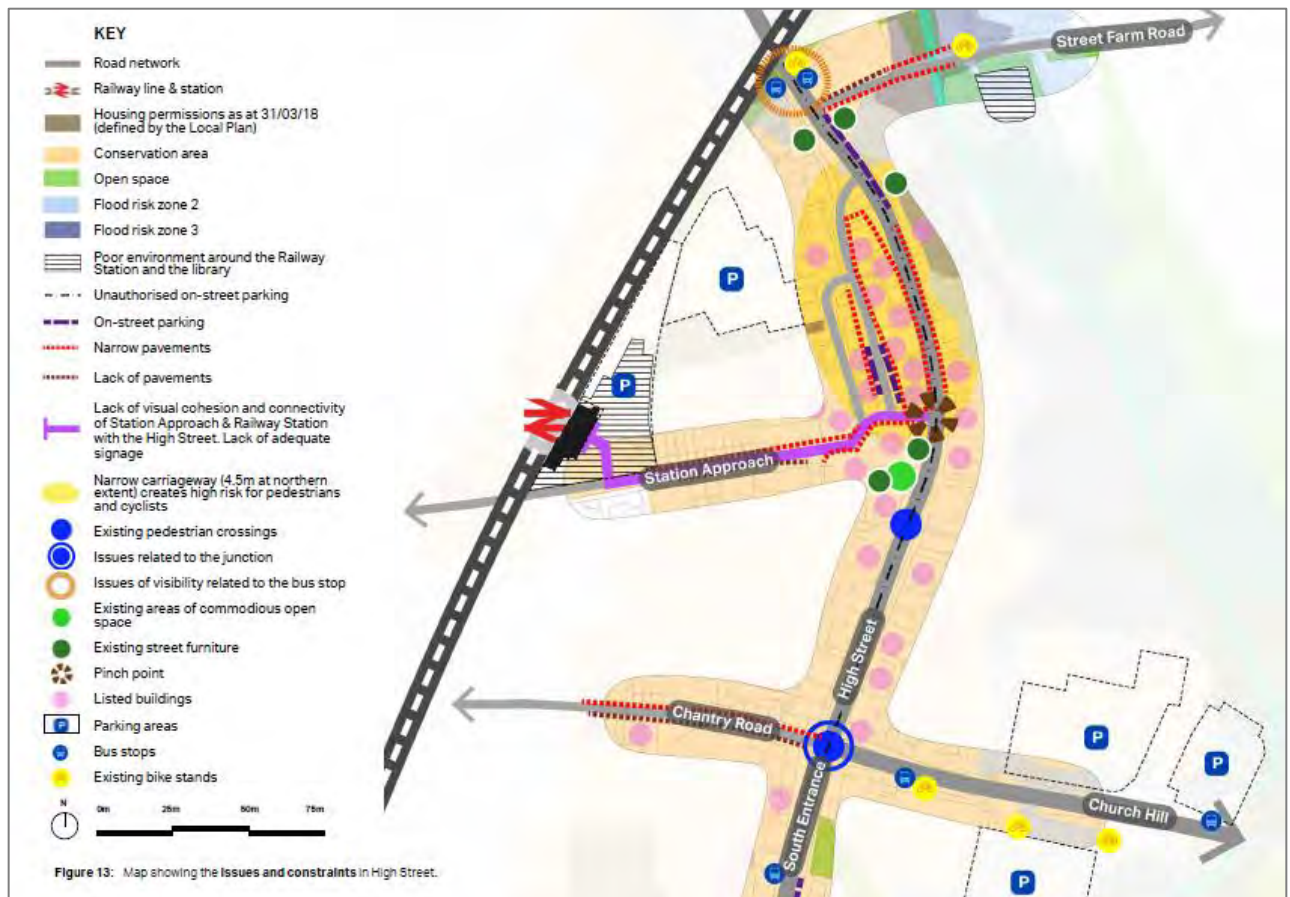


Figure 39: Issues and constraints around the High Street, Saxmundham (source: Concept masterplan for the High Street, AECOM).

<p>POLICY</p>	<p>SAXTC1: Town centre overarching strategy</p> <p>Proposals will be supported that contribute to achieving a vibrant and bustling town centre comprising a healthy mix of retail, service sector, business, entertainment, cultural and residential uses.</p> <p>Proposals should have regard to the advice contained within the Concept Masterplan for the High Street as set out in Appendix F.</p> <p>Development proposals in and around the High Street will be supported where (if otherwise appropriate) they contribute to the following aims, as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reinforce the area’s distinctiveness and attractive character as a location where pedestrian activity is prioritised and users have a high sense of safety and belonging. b. Ensure the impact of vehicular traffic is relatively low and frontage servicing is minimised. c. Support good connectivity between the different areas of the town centre by creating a pedestrian friendly environment. d. Enhance the focal point around the Market Hall and The Bell Hotel as a desirable meeting place. e. Enhance of the appearance of the frontage of the Market Hall as an important landmark building, which contributes to the character of the town centre. <p>Development proposals that improve accessibility and safety for pedestrians, cyclists and other town centre users will be supported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. Provide for parking within easy walking distance from the town centre to encourage walking. g. Improve provision for cyclists both in terms of access and for cycle parking. h. Enhance the visual appearance of the High Street through the use of an increased number of ‘Street trees.’ <p>Proposals will not be supported where they would be detrimental to these aims.</p> <p>See also Policy SAX10: Historic Town Centre and Conservation Area.</p>
----------------------	---

Station area Opportunity Zone

Objective STC4: To encourage the economic and environmental regeneration of the station area Opportunity Zone via a masterplan led approach, which encourages mixed-use development of underused and derelict land, and improves the attractiveness of Station Approach as a route for pedestrians and cyclists.

- 12.8 Saxmundham Railway Station sits to the west of the High Street and is linked to it by Station Approach. This area creates the impression of being slightly disconnected from the town centre and has historically suffered from poor public realm, although some significant environmental improvements have recently taken place in the immediate Station environs which address the latter issue.



- 12.9 The Railway Station will be treated as another type of gateway into the town centre offering a pleasant and welcoming environment with appropriate signage to navigate people around. The station area has significant potential to improve car parking within the town. The Station parking and the District Council's car parking area to the north could be connected or merged to increase public parking capacity in the town centre and also free up the outdoor space in front of the Railway Station building. The level difference between the two car parking areas will need to be taken into account in the design.
- 12.10 The area also provides the opportunity for a public square at the Railway Station with seating areas, shops and information centre and could form part of a wider development opportunity.
- 12.11 There are also opportunities in this zone to promote the regeneration of areas of brownfield, and underused land. An area of land around the station bordered by St John's Road to the north, which includes land either side of the Railway line, the station area itself, the unpaved private car park and the current Saxmundham Town Council offices to the south off Station Approach has been identified in **Policy SAXSA1** below as an 'Opportunity Zone' which has the potential for a mixed development opportunity for a broad range of uses including, housing, commercial, community and retail uses, together with environmental and public realm improvements. Detailed proposals would need to come forward through a holistic masterplan process (for the whole or substantial part of the area) involving existing landowners and economic operators, and with community engagement. The area is partly within, and otherwise abuts, the Conservation Area, and appropriate design will be fundamental to any proposals in this area.

POLICY	<p>SAXSA1: Station area Opportunity Zone</p> <p>Development proposals in and around the station area (figure 40) should as appropriate, seek:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the overall setting of the station. To enable people to easily transfer between sustainable modes of travel (walking, cycling, bus, rail and taxi). To improve bus and coach access to the station area with the longer-term aim to divert heavy traffic away from the narrow streets around the station. To create public access from St John's Road to the Station. To contribute to the economic vitality and viability of the town. <p>Proposals that would result in visual and environmental improvements in this Opportunity Zone will be supported together with proposals that would increase connectivity with the town centre and the other areas of the town. Support is given for proposals that would, as appropriate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Include public realm improvements, including improvements to the carriageway and the incorporation of traffic calming measures that would enable the creation of a more comfortable and welcoming space. Provide improved connectivity to the town centre (see also SAXTC1c) Provide for an outdoor meeting space/sitting space/public square adjacent to the railway station.
--------	---



- d. Improve provision for cyclists for example, by providing, safe, attractive and convenient links to the station, with secure and conveniently located cycle parking.
- e. Include new mixed uses (including commercial/office/workshops) and an information point adjacent to the railway station.
- f. Improve access to the station area for buses and coaches.
- g. Include visual improvements to the area in the form of increased provision of street trees, use of soft landscaping and rationalised signage.
- h. Improve directional signage to link the railway station and the town centre for pedestrians.

Mixed-use development opportunity

The Station Area Opportunity Zone, (figure 40) will be enhanced as a gateway to the town and promoted as a key development opportunity for mixed uses including housing, commercial and community uses. Subject to Master Planning, proposals for the development and enhancement for part or the whole of the area will be welcomed.



Figure 40: Station area Opportunity Zone (source: Parish Online with own annotations).

Street Farm Road Opportunity Zone

- 12.12 Street Farm Road lies to the north-east of the town centre and east of the railway line. The junction of Street Farm Road with the High Street is dominated by the former Royal Mail/BT building which sits on the south of the junction and fronts onto the High Street. On the north side of the junction is the Saxmundham Hand Car Wash which uses a range

of buildings that were formerly part of the Bus Garage and a yard accessed from the High Street.

- 12.13 Street Farm Road is a narrow road of uncertain land ownership which runs east from the High Street along the side of the Royal Mail building. To the rear of the car wash is the library, forming part of the buildings owned and operated by Suffolk County Council, and immediately opposite, between the Royal Mail building and the Fromus Veterinary Group, is an area of undeveloped land owned by BT Openreach which is largely used as a temporary materials store and for informal car parking. These areas are identified as an Opportunity Zone with some potential for development particularly if that would bring about visual enhancements to the area. Both areas have some potential for flooding and therefore any proposals would need to take account of this.
- 12.14 The zone's location at the north end of the town centre and its visual prominence at the junction of the High Street, indicate that it could be suitable for a development comprising public car parking at the front and commercial and employment uses to the rear. It also offers scope for environmental and visual improvements.
- 12.15 The area opposite the library that is currently used as a materials store has significant potential to provide an overall visual and environmental enhancement to the area due to its proximity to the riverside walk and offering potential as open space and recreational benefits associated with the riverside. The area could easily provide a flexible communal space for events and picnics together with significant environmental benefits in the form of a visual enhancement to the area through public realm improvements, structural planting and landscaping.

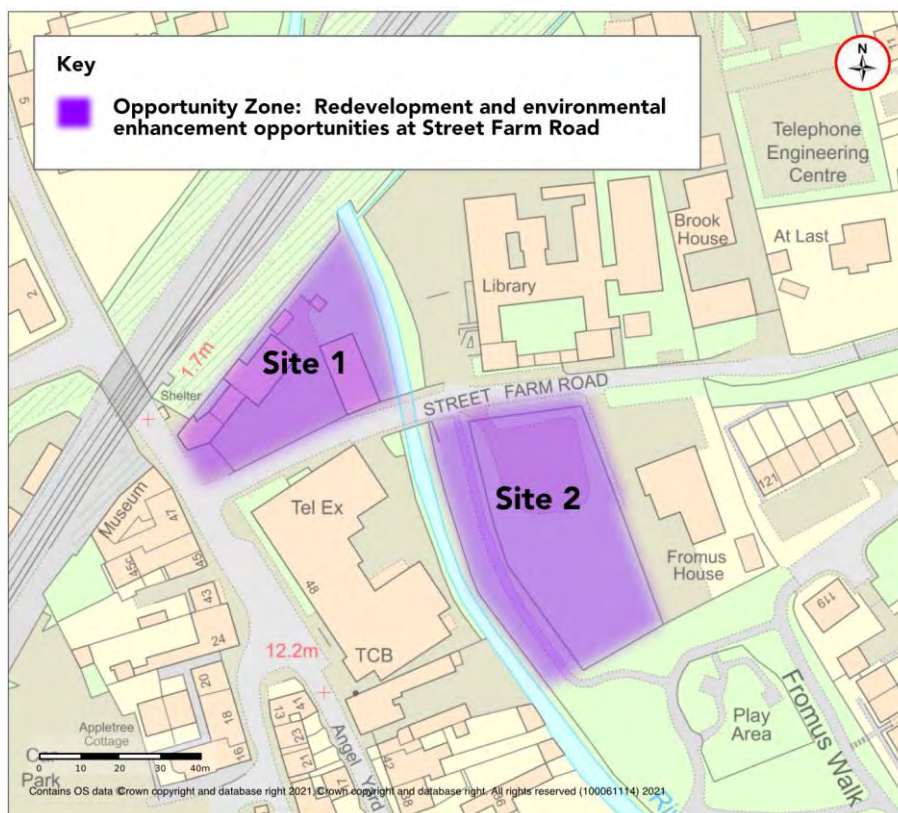


Figure 41: Development and environmental enhancement opportunities at Street Farm Road Opportunity Zone (source: Parish Online with own annotations).

POLICY	<p>SAXSFR1: Street Farm Road Opportunity Zone</p> <p>Two areas are identified in Street Farm Road as having the potential to provide for development and environmental enhancement which would improve the visual appearance and character of the area (figure 41):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site 1: the site of the former Bus Garage, currently used as a hand car wash, is identified for development consisting predominantly of the provision of public car parking (including provision for electrical car charging) to serve the town centre at the front of the site, with commercial and employment uses to the rear. • Site 2: the site opposite the library and currently used as a material store and informal car parking, is identified for a flexible community open space with links to the riverside walk providing environmental and visual enhancements.
--------	---

Fromus Square Opportunity Zone

- 12.16 Fromus Square is set well back and east of the High Street, adjacent to the Waitrose supermarket on Church Street. It provides a pedestrian 'cut through' from the Waitrose car park fronting Church Street, along the side of the supermarket building and onto the High Street. The area is not visually prominent and as it does not have a street frontage is potentially considerably underused. It is not sign-posted from either direction nor does the visual appearance of its direct access onto the High Street encourage pedestrians to use it. The area has archaeological potential, and there is high potential for the discovery of below ground heritage assets within the site. Proposals for development here may need to secure a programme of archaeological investigation and reporting. In addition the area lies within an area of floodrisk which will also need to be taken into account.
- 12.17 However it does provide a potentially attractive, area for retail or hospitality together with a safe and useable community space with a pedestrian priority. It has recently attracted important new retail and hospitality businesses. The area is identified as an Opportunity Zone which could accommodate a range of events including market stalls and seasonal events but could also be suitable for outdoor seating and dining for uses such as cafes, bars restaurants or galleries. The area would benefit from public realm improvements such as planting and paving, together with better signage and connections to enhance its presence and encourage users to find it.



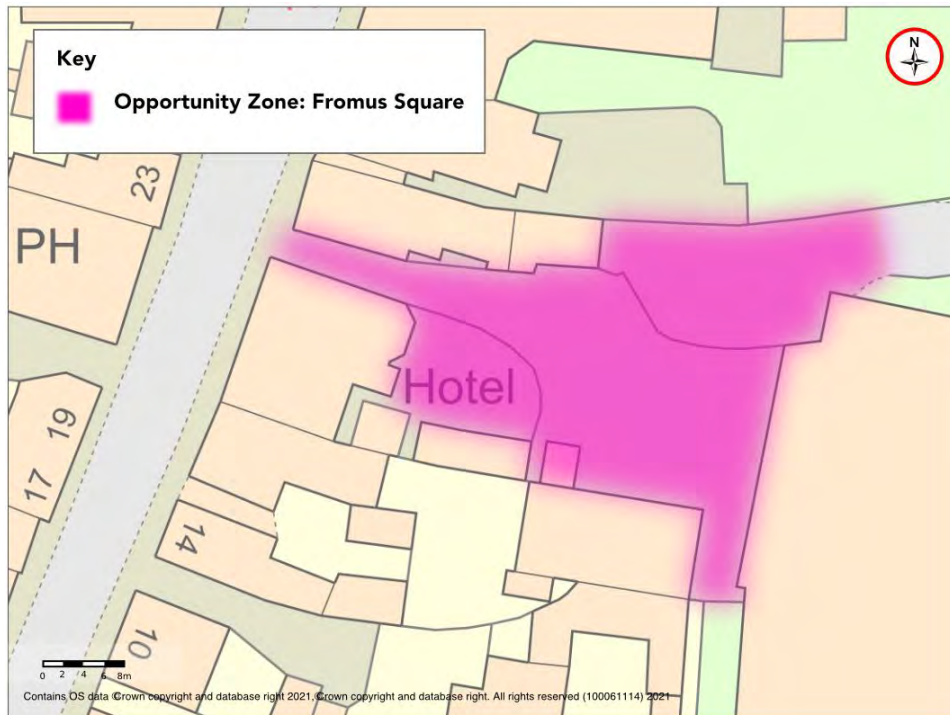


Figure 42: Fromus Square Opportunity Zone (source: Parish Online with own annotations).

POLICY

SAXFS1: Fromus Square Opportunity Zone

Proposals that would provide environmental and visual enhancements (including hard and soft landscaping improvements) to the overall character of Fromus Square (**figure 42**) will be supported.

Proposals which would enhance the retail, hospitality and leisure use of the area, whilst preserving its character, including those for provision of retail, restaurant, café/bar use, and/or facilitate its use for market purposes and enhance its overall visual quality will be supported.

Proposals to improve access to the square from Waitrose and its car park, to and from the town centre, and to and from the residential areas north of Church Hill, will be supported in principle.





15. Opportunity Zone: **Former Fromus Centre and Community Garden**

Objective FFC1: To support good quality development of the area for specialist and other housing purposes and for community use, in particular safeguarding the community garden, and offering improved pedestrian access to and permeability within the site.

- 13.1 The former Fromus Centre Site is located east of Seaman Avenue and to the rear of the Ambulance Station, which itself is located opposite the Fire Station. The centre currently consists of a community building set in an area of open space. It was originally a residential centre for people with special needs, run by Suffolk County Council, which still owns the site. The site includes a Community Garden, which has been created (from a former overgrown kitchen garden site) by local residents to grow food locally and for community benefit purposes.
- 13.2 Vehicular access to the site is from Seaman Avenue via a loop road next to the Ambulance Station, although it is bordered to the east by residential development on Park Avenue there is no vehicular access from this direction.
- 13.3 There is a public path immediately to the north of the site which runs east from Seaman Avenue across the top of the site and comes out on to Mill Road. It is a narrow footpath, relatively well used but not well waymarked. There is also a second footpath of mainly poor quality at present on the eastern edge of the site and running north-south, also adjoining the Free School playing fields and into the area that is due to be the Garden Neighbourhood.
- 13.4 It is understood that the County Council is considering options for the re-development of the site mainly for housing purposes including specialist housing to accommodate people with a specific identified need, as well as private housing for sale. The County Council has in principle agreed to preserve the Community Garden with some vehicular access in its present location.



- 13.5 The area is identified as a potential Opportunity Zone where development of the site provides the opportunity to provide environmental benefits in addition to those social benefits that would accrue, in particular, from the development of specialist housing. Such benefits would include retaining the existing community garden (**See Policy SAX15**), offer greater public access and permeability through the site. Opportunities for greater connectivity between areas of the town could also be created through the improvement of the adjacent footpaths and their potential enhancement into a shared use cycleway, encouraging greater connectivity.
- 13.6 The zone has been identified as having archaeological potential and therefore any proposals will need to take this into account.



Figure 43: Former Fromus Centre Opportunity Zone (source: Parish Online with own annotations).

<p>POLICY</p>	<p>SAXFC1: Former Fromus Centre site and Community Garden Opportunity Zone</p> <p>Proposals that would provide an area of housing and open space that includes provision for a significant element of specialist housing including for those with identified special needs will be supported on this site (figure 43).</p> <p>Proposals should retain the existing Community Garden as an undeveloped open space.</p> <p>Layout and design should provide for appropriate levels of public access and increased permeability by pedestrians and cyclists through the site.</p> <p>Proposals should provide for improved foot and cycle links between the zone, the town and the Garden Neighbourhood.</p> <p>In particular, support is given for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Improved pedestrian links, including public footpath improvements at the north and east of the zone . Provision for cyclists at the southeast corner of the zone as far north as Park Avenue, with improvements to the current north-south public footpath.
----------------------	--





St JOHN'S
WELCOMES
YOU

16. Actions/statements of intent by Saxmundham Town Council

- 16.1 These statements of intent are included in the Neighbourhood Plan to show the Town Council's commitment to taking action within its powers and resources, or bringing its influence to bear, on matters which are outside the planning system, but which are nevertheless vital to the achievement of the overall vision. They will be carried out over the lifetime of the plan.
- 16.2 For Saxmundham to be a **thriving and prosperous town** it needs a healthy business community, adequate public parking to support the local economy, and easy and reliable access for those without private transport. To this end the Town Council will:
- i. Promote and support a business network for the town in consultation with local businesses and East Suffolk Council's economic development team. It will also review the options for the historic weekly market. This includes the engagement of a part-time Town Centre Coordinator, to work with local businesses to promote the town's 'offer'.
 - ii. Promote a varied programme of events and activities in the town centre for all ages, to encourage its use and enjoyment by residents and visitors.
 - iii. Work with The District and County Councils to investigate a) improved short term parking in the town b) the provision of parking bays for quick pull in and deliveries and c) consideration of the introduction of residents' parking permits, where there is support from residents.
 - iv. Encourage East Suffolk Council and Greater Anglia to explore ways of linking their carparks to improve accessibility for commuters.
 - v. Encouragement and support will be given to improved bus services, and the possibility of a new intra town service will be investigated.
- 16.3 **A safe and healthy** Saxmundham requires adequate social, community and leisure provision to meet the needs of the residents. The Town Council will:
- i. Undertake consultation with the community on whether/what types of further indoor sports provision is required, what form(s) it should take, and where it might be provided. Work in partnership with public and private sector bodies to identify funding (including CIL) to support the delivery of the preferred option.
 - ii. Lobby for and support initiatives for new or expanded medical facilities.
 - iii. Support the establishment of The Layers and the land to the east of the railway as a public open space/country park/SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) as included in the ESC Local Plan, for use by the whole community, and (through the natural greening of the whole site) work towards increasing its biodiversity.
 - iv. Develop an overall green infrastructure plan for the town and the rural parts of the parish. To be progressively implemented with support from local interest groups, landowners and ESC.
 - v. Create a comprehensive circular walk around the town.
 - vi. Investigate initiatives to improve facilities for cyclists, including, but not limited to:



- a) a review of the three communities cycle route and its possible expansion to include additional routes through and around the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood.
 - b) the provision of a safe cycle link from Benhall to Saxmundham and on to Kelsale, using existing rights of way and/or inside the existing hedgerow along the B1121.
 - c) ensure that enough and safe cycle parking and storage facilities are available within the town.
- vii. Lobby for and, within resources, work to implement footpath widening and other relevant measures to improve pedestrian safety along Rendham Road.
- viii. Continue to support voluntary and other organisations which provide community and social facilities within the town, in particular for young people and children, and for those sections of the community who are vulnerable or isolated or have special needs. Where possible, the Council will seek to promote more effective coordination of such services for the parish
- ix. Work to secure or enhance for the community of Saxmundham a full range of public and community facilities and services to meet the growing population of the town and its environs.

16.4 To maintain Saxmundham's **distinctive character and attractive environment**, and further enhance it, the Town Council will:

- i. Support and promote proposals for traffic calming and environmental improvements in the town centre including the station area, in order to a) reduce traffic speeds in the town centre, b) reduce the number of HGVs using the town centre (except for deliveries and loading) c) remove illegal parking particularly pavement parking, d) improve the safety and environment for pedestrians, cyclists and those with reduced mobility.
- ii. Support the renovation of 32 High Street commercial property and archway and creation of an attractive approach to the riverside in the town centre.
- iii. Support improvement to and greening of the pathway connecting Fromus Square to the Fromus bridge and to the housing estate.
- iv. Work for the upgrading of the Market Hall's frontage, seeking grant funding.
- v. Implement agreed plans for the redesign and environmental upgrade of the Memorial Field.

16.5 Note: the above statements of intent are not intended to be comprehensive; the Town Council will seek to take the above and other steps as practicable and as prioritised, to support the full realisation of the Neighbourhood Plan's vision, objectives and policies, within its resources and competences.





17. Implementation and monitoring

Implementation

- 17.1 . The planning policies contained in the Plan will be implemented by the East Suffolk Council. The Town Council's role is to bring its influence to bear on matters which lie outside the control of the planning system, but which are of vital importance to the life of the town and the achievement of the vision. The Town Council will support and encourage proposals which further the aims of the plan, it will promote and encourage and facilitate co-operative working and partnership between public and private interests and lobby for change where this furthers the vision for the town.
- 17.2 Through the development of the Neighbourhood Plan a number of actions/projects have been identified which lie outside the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan policies but nevertheless are important issues to local residents and therefore require attention. These are outlined below:

Monitoring

- 17.3 It is good practice for Neighbourhood Plans to undergo a formal review process in consultation with the local community and the relevant District Council at a minimum of every five years, to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan is still current and remains a positive planning tool to deliver sustainable growth. In order to determine when a review is necessary, the Town Council will monitor development in the parish along with local and national planning policy and in the appropriate legislative context.
- 17.4 It is anticipated the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan will require review during its life and that it will be the role of the Town Council to update the Neighbourhood Plan at the appropriate time. It is possible that further development will take place during the Neighbourhood Plan period (2020 – 2036).
- 17.5 Any review will provide an opportunity to reassess the town's housing and economic markets and to resolve some of the bigger issues surrounding development in and around the town including the Garden Neighbourhood, **Energy Infrastructure Projects** and the Town Centre.





Appendix

Appendix A: Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members

- **Geraldine Barker**, Town Councillor
- **Christine Buttery (vice-chair)**, Local resident
- **Diana Eastman**, Local Resident
- **John Findlay (vice-chair)**, Town Councillor
- **Nick Jackson**, Town Councillor
- **Stephen Palmer**, Local resident
- **Justin Power**, Local resident
- **Jeremy Smith (chair)**, Town Councillor
- **John White**, Local resident

Observer

- **John Fisher**, District and Town Councillor

Supported by

- **Sharon Smith**, Town Clerk

Independent Consultants

- **Andrea Long**, Compasspoint Planning
- **Rachel Leggett**, Rachel Leggett & Associates
- **Emma Harrison**, Rachel Leggett & Associates



Appendix B: Justification for Non-designated Heritage Assets

The table below outlined the justification for the inclusion of important character buildings and historic features. The criteria is based on the 'Local Heritage Listing: Historic England Advice Note 7', page 9.

1. The United Reformed Church, Chapel Road and its graveyard	
Age	Founded in 1844, this building erected in 1850.
Rarity	NA.
Aesthetic interest	Local landmark.
Group value	NA.
Archaeological interest	Graveyard is on the Suffolk Monuments Record (SXM 025).
Historic interest	Originally a Congregational church, now United Reformed Church.
Landmark status	Imposing and prominent. Visible from outside the town.




Figure 44: The United Reformed Church , Chapel Road.

2. The Old Fire Station, Rendham Road	
Age	1915 with later additions up to WWII. Closed in 1995.
Rarity	Fairly rare survivor.
Aesthetic interest	NA.
Group value	Close to the United Reformed Church
Archaeological interest	None identified.
Historic interest	Town history.
Landmark status	Town history and WWII associations.



Figure 45: The Old Fire Station, Rendham Road.

3. Toll Gate Cottage, North Entrance

Age	1785.
Rarity	Rare, surviving Toll Gate on the former London to Gt Yarmouth turnpike.
Aesthetic interest	Striking reddish exterior and wooden cladding construction; altered.
Group value	May have originally been part of a group.
Archaeological interest	None known.
Historic interest	A toll house operated by the Ipswich to South Town Turnpike Trust from 1785.
Landmark status	Marks the entrance to the town from the north.



Figure 46: Toll Gate Cottage, North Entrance.

4. The Layers	
Age	The Layers is so called because farmers would bring their livestock (cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens etc) to Saxmundham Livestock Market (which was situated on the current Waitrose site). Prior to going to the market, the livestock would be “laid up” on The Layers in an assortment of pens and enclosures.
Rarity	Potentially the largest area of unrecorded archaeological interest in the parish.
Aesthetic interest	Provides important undeveloped southern entrance to the town and makes significant contribution to its rural setting.
Group value	NA.
Archaeological interest	Archaeological finds across the site. According to the Historic Environment Record held by Suffolk County Council , Geophysical survey in The Layers provided evidence for significant archaeological activity in the east of the site. Anomalies relating to a trackway and adjoining settlement are present. There is evidence for enclosure ditches and possible sub-enclosures and there are discrete responses present that could be related to the remains of the structures or areas of burning or industrial activities. There is a change in the background magnetic responses in the east of the area that is suggestive of a change to, or an increase in the amount of alluvial deposits, presumably associated with the adjacent watercourse.
Historic interest	<p>The area of land where stockmen would ‘lay-up’ their stock prior to the biweekly livestock sale. From 1831 – 1939 , Saxmundham also hosted the annual Suffolk Show a total of 14 times. Used as a camping ground by the 6th Suffolk cyclists during the Great War. On the southern edge of the layers at Kiln Lane, Bigsby’s Corner, there still stands the former “Pest House”, originally known as “The Small-Pox House”. This is where inhabitants of Saxmundham were put in quarantine if they were suffering from infectious diseases.</p> <p>This was also used during WW1 for housing for Italian POWs.</p> <p>During the First World War, The Layers was used for temporary military accommodation by the army.</p> <p>In WWII, The Layers became an important landmark of national and international history when plans were put in place for the D Day Landings and the need to deliver armoured vehicles that could clear mines and other coastal defences</p> <p>Winston Churchill personally selected Major General Percy Hobart to head up the 79th Armoured Division. Hobart chose to base the 79th Armoured Division at Hurts Hall. The peculiar looking vehicles became known as “Hobarts Funnies”. They were first tested on The Layers before being trialled at Fritton Lake , Orford and Shingle Street. It was because of this that Churchill, Montgomery and General Eisenhower (supreme allied commander of Allied Forces in Europe) all visited Saxmundham in January 1944. They came to inspect “Hobart’s Funnies” and to plan for the Normandy Landings.</p>
Landmark status	Historical associations from medieval times to WWII and acts as an important undeveloped entrance to the town and provides the setting of the south entrance.





Figure 47: The Layers.

5. Milestone/post on the B1121

Age	18th or 19th century.
Rarity	Fairly rare.
Aesthetic interest	Simple milestone. Alternative spelling of town's name – Saxmundum. London 89. Woodbridge 12, Ipswich 20, Lowestoft 24.
Group value	NA.
Archaeological interest	At one time had a cast iron face made by Garretts of Ipswich, now lost. The stone may pre-date this.
Historic interest	On the Ipswich and South Town turnpike an historic coaching route from London to Lowestoft.
Landmark status	Associations with the historic route from London to Lowestoft.



Figure 48: Milestone/post on B1121.

6. The Pill Box on the Memorial Field

Age	WWII.
Rarity	Noted as a last survivor.
Aesthetic interest	Hexagonal pillbox.
Group value	NA.



Archaeological interest	On Suffolk Monuments Record (SXM 027), ‘pillbox at Saxmundham, the last survivor from the nodal point defences’ (A guide to Second World War Archaeology in Suffolk – Guide 4, Stope Lines. Robert Liddiard and David Sims).
Historic interest	WWII interest.
Landmark status	Formed part of the coastal defences in WWII.




Figure 49: The Pill Box on the Memorial Field.

7. The War Memorial in Fromus Square	
Age	2004.
Rarity	Not rare.
Aesthetic interest	Cornish granite.
Group value	NA.
Archaeological interest	NA.
Historic interest	WWI and WWII interest.
Landmark status	Focus of Remembrance Day Ceremony.

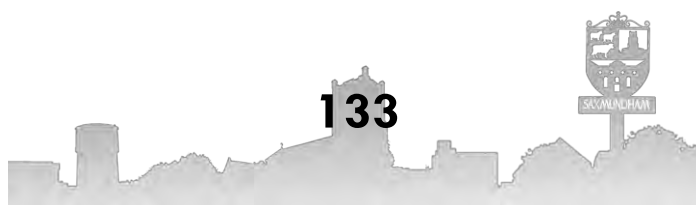




Figure 50: The War Memorial in Fromus Square.

8. The Town Pump

Age	1838 cast by Garretts of Leiston.
Rarity	Only recorded pump.
Aesthetic interest	NA.
Group value	None.
Archaeological interest	NA.
Historic interest	Given to the town by William Long of Hurts Hall.
Landmark status	Was the source of water for the town prior to the arrival of piped water.



Figure 51: The Town Pump.

9. The Gannon Institute, but generally known as The Gannon Rooms

Age	<i>Circa 1900.</i>
Rarity	Constructed specifically as a one off to benefit the town.
Aesthetic interest	Significant details on end gables and over windows.
Group value	None.
Archaeological interest	NA.
Historic interest	WWI interest, was used as a VAD hospital.
Landmark status	A charitable Trust founded for the benefit of the residents of Saxmundham.



Figure 52: The Gannon Institute, but generally known as The Gannon Rooms.

10. The Water Tower, Rendham Road

Age	1952.
Rarity	One of the tallest water towers in East Anglia, standing at over 200ft.
Aesthetic interest	Constructed in concrete, but unique in design as all water towers are. No two are exactly the same.
Group value	NA.
Archaeological interest	An important part of Britain's engineering heritage.
Historic interest	Replaced the water pump as a means of storing water for the town and guarantees water pressure when demand increases at peak times.
Landmark status	Situated at the highest point in the Town. Visible from miles around, whether approaching Saxmundham from any direction by foot, bicycle, car or train.



Figure 53: The Water Tower, Rendham Road.

11. The Telephone Exchange, High Street

Age	1950s.
Rarity	An iconic example of 1950's industrial architecture.
Aesthetic interest	Designed by Thomas Winterburn, one of the ten architects associated with the Festival of Britain movement.
Historic interest	Functioned as a busy working post office and telephone exchange until the 1970's.



Figure 54: The Telephone Exchange, High Street.

12. Victorian Post Box at the Station

Age	c1856
Rarity	Rare, has an unusual internal flap to keep the post dry, unfortunately damaged in recent refurbishment.
Aesthetic interest	Embossed with VR and Crown
Group Value	One of a small number of prominent letterboxes in the town in key locations.
Archaeological Interest	NA.
Historical interest	Manufactured by Smith and Hawkes Broad Street, Birmingham
Landmark status	Integral part of the original station building



Figure 55: Victorian Post Box at the Station.

13. Saxmundham Goods Shed

Age	<i>Circa 1859.</i>
Rarity	Common at the peak of the railway era, however, has rarity value as many have been lost.
Aesthetic interest	Typical of railway architecture at that time.
Group Value	Part of the station complex, a key group of buildings in the town centre.
Archaeological Interest	NA.
Historical interest	Part of the station complex, a key group of buildings in the town centre.
Landmark status	Identified in the Conservation Appraisal as an unlisted building which makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.



Figure 56: Saxmundham Goods Shed.

14. Victorian Post Box at South Entrance

Age	Late 19 th Century
Rarity	Common at their peak of Victoria's reign however, rarity value increasing over time
Aesthetic interest	Embossed with VR and crown
Group Value	One of a small number of prominent letterboxes in the town in key locations.
Archaeological Interest	NA.
Historical interest	Manufactured by W.T. Allen and Co London.
Landmark status	Prominent location in a wall at the south entrance



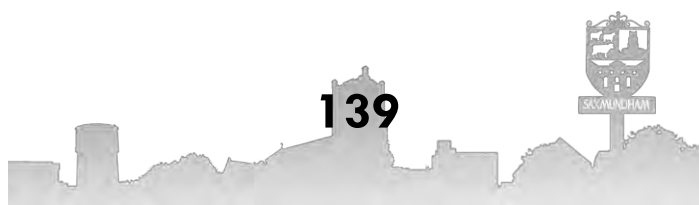
Figure 57: Victorian Post-box at South entrance

15. George V post-box North Entrance

Age	1932
Rarity	Common at the peak of George V's reign.
Aesthetic interest	Embossed with crown and GR
Group Value	Built into a significant old wall. The wall is identified in the Conservation Appraisal as being of importance.
Archaeological Interest	NA.
Historical interest	Manufactured by W.T. Allen and Co London
Landmark status	Prominent location in a wall identified as having heritage value.




Figure 58: George V post-box at north entrance.

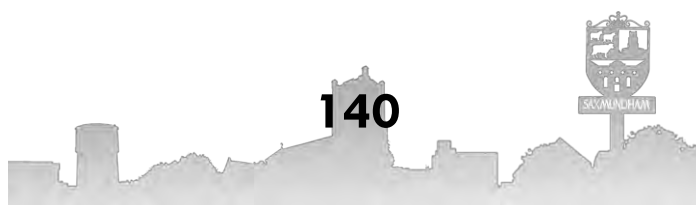


Appendix C: Justification for Local Green Spaces

The table below outlines the justification for the inclusion of each Local Green Space identified. The criteria are based on criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

1. The Memorial Field	
Description: The Memorial Field is owned by Saxmundham Town Council and was established after the First World War as a memorial to those who lost their lives.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	The Memorial Field is within a residential area of the town on the Rendham Road
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	The Memorial Field is a well-used recreation ground with a skate park and scout hut. It is used for fun fairs and other one-off community events.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	It is in character with a town recreational space and is not an extensive tract of land
	
Figure 59: The Memorial Field.	

2. Carlton Park	
Description: Carlton Park is a sportsground owned and run by Saxmundham Sports and Recreational Club.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Carlton Park is adjacent to the northern boundary of the built-up area of the town. It is only partly within the parish of Saxmundham.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Carlton Park is an essential feature of town life providing sports pitches, tennis courts, a bowling green and an adventure playground (NEAP standard). The site is designated in the East Suffolk Local Plan as 'historic parkland'
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Carlton Park is approximately 11 hectares in total which when considered in the context of the overall area of the



town is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.



Figure 60: Carlton Park.

3. Seaman Avenue Playground

Description: Seaman Avenue playground is a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) and is owned by Saxmundham Town Council.

In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	The playground is within a residential area and close to the Free School.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	The playground is an essential feature of town life, providing facilities for 8 -14-year-olds, including a teenage shelter.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	The playground is in character with a town playground and is approximately 2 hectares in size.



Figure 61: Seaman Avenue Playground.

4. Chantry Road Playground

Description: Chantry Road Playground is a Local Area for Play (LAP) and is owned by Saxmundham Town Council.

In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Chantry Road Playground is adjacent to the town centre.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	The playground is an essential feature of town life providing facilities for 4 – 6-year-olds.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	The playground is in character with a town recreational space and is approximately 0.5 hectares and not an extensive tract of land.



Figure 62: Chantry Road Playground.

5. Thurlow Close Playground

Description: Thurlow Close Playground is a Local Area for Play (LAP) and is owned by East Suffolk Council.

In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Thurlow Close playground is within a large housing estate.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Thurlow Close playground provides facilities close to home for 4–6-year-olds.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Thurlow Close Playground is in character with a residential area recreation space and surrounding green area and is approximately 1.12 hectares in size and is not an extensive tract of land.



Figure 63: Thurlow Close Playground.

6. The Community Garden at the former Fromus Centre at Seaman Avenue

Description: The community garden has plots cultivated by local residents. It is owned by Suffolk County Council.

In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves

The Community Garden is situated within a residential area and close to the school.

Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance

The Community Garden was created by residents to help offset food miles and produce locally grown food.

Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land

It is local in character (approximately 0.1 hectares) and not an extensive tract of land.



Figure 64: The Community Garden at the former Fromus Centre.

7. Garden of The Old Bank (formerly Sax 'cess House)

Description: The garden of Sax 'cess House is a community garden run by the Access Community Trust.

In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	The garden is in the town centre.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	The garden is for all to enjoy and also provides support and activities for the disadvantaged and isolated.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	The garden is in character with a town centre location and is not an extensive tract of land (Approximately 0.1 hectares).




Figure 65: Garden of The Old Bank, formerly Sax'cess House

8. Gull Stream path

Description: The Gull Stream path is an enhanced public footpath owned and maintained by East Suffolk Council.

In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	The Gull Stream Path passes through a large area of housing
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	The Gull Stream path provides a wildlife corridor, areas of SUDS and an alternative route to the centre of town away from traffic.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	The Gull Stream Path is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.(Approximately 1 hectare)



Figure 66: Gull Stream path.

9. Saxon Road allotments

Description: Allotments owned by Housing Association for use by Housing Association tenants.

In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the built-up area and surrounded by residential development
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Community value through their use as allotments by the Housing Association tenants
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	The allotments are local in character and not an extensive tract of land. Approximately 0.03 acres.



Figure 67: Saxon Road allotments.

11. Fromus Green and Play Area

Description: Fromus Green and Play Area is an open amenity space and includes a children's play area. It is owned and maintained by East Suffolk Council.

•

In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Fromus Green is in the town centre between the High Street and Hopkins Homes housing estate.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Fromus Green is an essential feature of the town being the only open space for general community use in the heart of the town.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Fromus Green is in character with a town recreational space and at 1.12 hectares is not an extensive tract of land when considered in the context of the area of the town a whole.





Figure 68: Fromus Green and Play Area.



Appendix D: Glossary

Glossary of terms used and/or relevant to the Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan and supporting submission documents.

Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

- a) **Affordable housing for rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20 per cent below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).
- b) **Starter homes:** is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of Plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.
- c) **Discounted market sales housing** is that sold at a discount of at least 20 per cent below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.
- d) **Other affordable routes to home ownership** is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20 per cent below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

Ancient or veteran tree: A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.

Archaeological interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Backland Development: Development that involves the re-use of parts of a number of rear gardens to existing houses for further residential development.

Carbon Free: Where the construction and operation of a development does not involve the use of carbon or its release into the atmosphere



Climate change adaptation: Adjustments made to natural or human systems in response to the actual or anticipated impacts of climate change, to mitigate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

Climate change mitigation: Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Commercial Development: Retail, business uses, offices, workshops, light industrial

Conservation: The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

Deliverable: To be considered deliverable, sites for housing should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years. Sites that are not major development, and sites with detailed planning permission, should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that homes will not be delivered within five years (e.g. they are no longer viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans). Sites with outline planning permission, permission in principle, allocated in the development plan or identified on a brownfield register should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years.

Designated heritage asset: A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

Development plan: Is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made and published spatial development strategies, together with any regional strategy policies that remain in force. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.

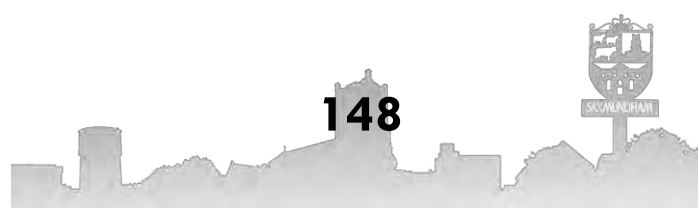
Employment Uses – Former B1 now Use Class E g) i-iii) – Offices, administration, light industry, research and development

Environmental impact assessment: A procedure to be followed for certain types of projects to ensure that decisions are made in full knowledge of any likely significant effects on the environment.

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Habitats site: Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.

Health and Social Care, Community Support Services : Use Classes E e) . Medical services not attached to the premises of the practitioner.



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. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Historic environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

Hospitality: Use Classes E a), E b), includes Public Houses, bars, cafes, restaurants, hotels, etc

Infill Development: Development that takes place on small gaps between existing buildings.

International, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity: All international sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites), national sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and locally designated sites including Local Wildlife Sites.

Local housing need: the number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning guidance, or a justified alternative approach.

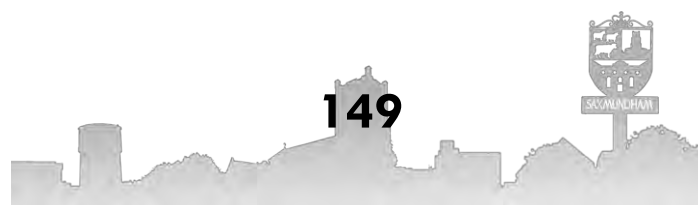
Local planning authority: The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority include the district council, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority, the Mayor of London and a development corporation, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities.

Local plan: A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.

Major development: For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floor space of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) : NSIPs are large scale major development projects in England or Wales which fall into the following categories: energy, transport, waste, waste water, water. They can be projects such as: power generating stations, offshore wind farms, electricity lines, new roads, railway lines, hazardous waste facilities waste-water treatment plants reservoirs. As this type of development is nationally important, consent for a project needs to be given by the government rather than the local planning authority.

Neighbourhood Development Order: An Order made by a local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) through which parish councils and neighbourhood forums can grant planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.



Neighbourhood plan: A plan prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Non-strategic policies: Policies contained in a neighbourhood plan, or those policies in a local plan that are not strategic policies.

Non-designated heritage asset: Local planning authorities may identify non-designated heritage assets. These are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which are not formally designated heritage assets. In some areas, local authorities identify some non-designated heritage assets as 'locally listed'. A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage interest for their significance to be a material consideration in the planning process. (Definition from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment#non-designated-heritage-assets>)

Older people: People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.

Open space: All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

Original building: A building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.

Out of centre: A location which is not in or on the edge of a centre but not necessarily outside the urban area.

Out of town: A location out of centre that is outside the existing urban area.

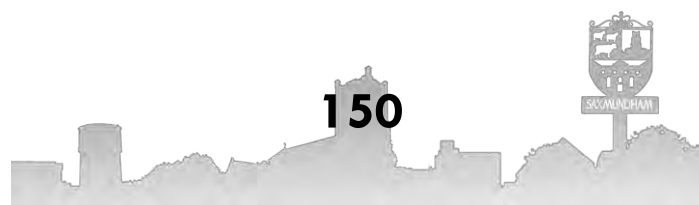
Planning condition: A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Planning obligation: A legal agreement entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

Playing field: The whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Primary shopping area: Defined area where retail development is concentrated.

Priority habitats and species: Species and Habitats of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.



Ramsar sites: Wetlands of international importance, designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention.

Renewable and low carbon energy: Includes energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).

Retail: Use Classes Ea, F1 and F2a – Shops, local commerce,

Self-build and custom-build housing: Housing built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing. A legal definition, for the purpose of applying the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended), is contained in section 1(A1) and (A2) of that Act.

Service industries: Use Classes E c i), ii), iii) Businesses not involved in manufacturing that provide a service e.g. finance, banking, estate agents, accountants, personal services, hairdressers, beauticians, opticians, etc

Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.

Strategic environmental assessment: A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Strategic policies: Policies and site allocations, which address strategic priorities in line with the requirements of Section 19 (1B-E) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Strategic policy-making authorities: Those authorities responsible for producing strategic policies (local planning authorities, and elected Mayors or combined authorities, where this power has been conferred). This definition applies whether the authority is in the process of producing strategic policies or not.

Supplementary planning documents: Documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

Sustainable transport modes: Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.



Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG): This is an area that is aimed at protecting an SPA or Special Protection Area. Surrounding these Areas there are buffer zones in which development is constrained to prevent damage to the SPA itself. These are the SANGs. Development is limited in these areas.

Tandem Development: Development on land set back behind existing properties often existing houses, utilising brownfield or garden land generally with limited street frontage

Transport assessment: A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out transport issues relating to a proposed development. It identifies measures required to improve accessibility and safety for all modes of travel, particularly for alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport, and measures that will be needed to deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development.

Transport statement: A simplified version of a transport assessment where it is agreed the transport issues arising from development proposals are limited and a full transport assessment is not required.

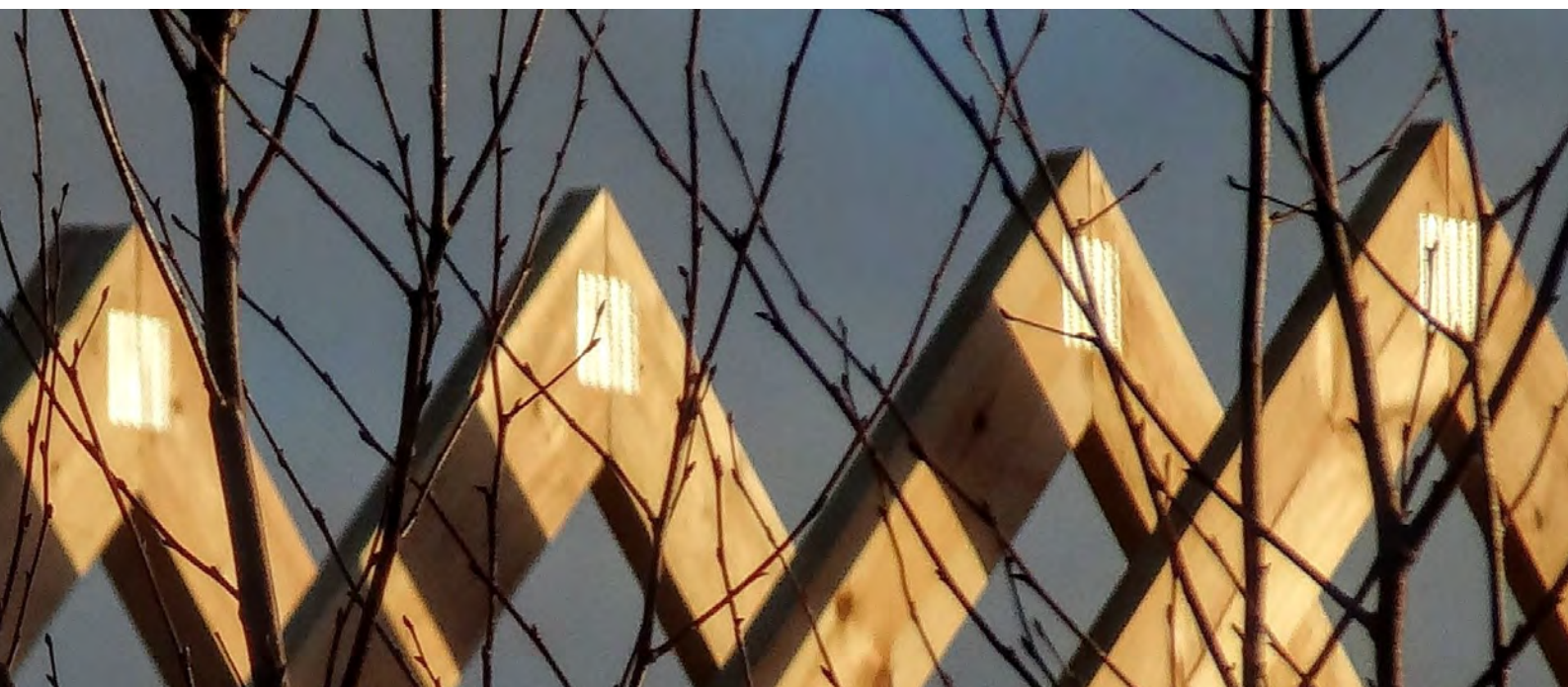
Travel plan: A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives and is regularly reviewed.

Wildlife corridor: Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations. Windfall sites: Sites not specifically identified in the development plan.

Use Classes Order: National classification of land uses as contained within The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development etc.) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2021 (source: www.legislation.gov.uk).

Windfall Development: Development that takes place on sites not usually identified in the development plan. They typically include subdivisions, barn conversions or small infill plots.

Appendix E: Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan Area





Saxmundham Town Council – 9th June 2025

Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Review

Report by Cllr Jeremy Smith, Chair of Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

7th June 2025

Introduction and subject-matters for review

1. The existing Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was ‘made’ formally by East Suffolk Council in July 2023, following a local referendum in which (on a turnout of 17.4%), around 87% voted for the Plan. The [government website](#) explains the NP’s status:

“A neighbourhood plan attains the same legal status as a local plan (and other documents that form part of the statutory development plan) once it has been approved at a referendum. At this point it comes into force as part of the statutory development plan. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

2. The existing NP relates to the whole of Saxmundham parish on the boundaries that existed prior to 1st April 2023, the NP area having been designated several years earlier. The then boundary did not cover the whole of the area identified by East Suffolk Council (ESC) in its Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (policy SCLP12.26) for the “South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood”. In agreement with Benhall Parish Council, with effect from 1st April 2023, the relevant land was transferred from Benhall parish to Saxmundham, together with an additional area of land to the west of the A12 put forward by the would-be developer, Pigeon, for commercial development. The change in parish boundaries is shown in the draft NP Review document, e.g. at Figure 2 page 4. Because of this parish boundary issue, it was not permitted for the Saxmundham NP to include policies that related to the whole of the Garden Neighbourhood area. (See below).

3. Another issue that has arisen since the NP was made is the identification of land in or adjacent to (and strongly affecting) Saxmundham, in terms of major energy National Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), in particular for the siting of one or more giant Converter Stations to the east of town. The impact of such projects, including construction roads, if they proceed, will of course be cumulative to that of Sizewell C construction transport movements upon our town.

4. For almost a year, therefore the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (SG), working with our consultants, has been conducting a review of the existing Plan, considering the issues that might give rise to modifications including in particular NP policies in relation to these new issues, and then drawing up a draft of the Plan containing those modifications.

5. The SG agreed at an early stage that the Review should almost wholly leave in place the existing policies, apart from any consequential changes, and should concentrate on the issues and policies relating to

(a) the Garden Neighbourhood and related development, and

(b) the impact of and mitigation proposals in relation to NSIPs.

A new chapter has been drafted for each of these two issues – Chapters 12 (Garden Neighbourhood) and Chapter 13 (Energy NSIPs).

6. The opportunity has also been taken to update some factual matters, and provide demographic data from the 2021 census, which was not available in time for the existing NP (which had to draw on 2011 data). While the town's population has grown a little, the overall composition of Saxmundham's population, including health and deprivation indicators, has not however altered significantly.

What would be changed, and what would not, in the existing NP

Objectives

7. The existing NP contains six 'Area-wide objectives':

Objective 1: To promote a strong and diverse forward looking, local economy, building upon the town's advantages as a service centre market town with a strategic location.

Objective 2: To secure for the community of Saxmundham a full range of physical and community infrastructure to meet the growing needs of the town and its environs.

Objective 3: To improve transport and safe accessibility for the people of Saxmundham by foot, bicycle, mobility scooter and public or private transport, resulting in environmental and health benefits.

Objective 4: To successfully integrate - physically, environmentally, and socially - the new neighbourhood with the existing town and community of Saxmundham.

Objective 5: To promote the development of high quality, energy efficient housing to meet the needs of the people of Saxmundham.

Objective 6: To protect and enhance the conservation area, the town's heritage, green spaces, natural features and rural setting, and to address the challenges of climate change.

In addition, there are five specific 'Opportunity Zone objectives' for the Town Centre, and the Former Fromus Centre site.

All of these Objectives remain unchanged in the draft modified NP.

8. The draft modified NP adds two further Objectives, one new one related to the Garden Neighbourhood and one to the Energy NSIP issues:

Objective SSGN1: To create a high quality, well designed, distinctive development in line with 'Garden City' principles which is valued by its residents and recognised as an asset to the Town.

Objective EN1: To ensure that the necessary measures required to mitigate the physical, visual and social impacts of National Infrastructure and Energy Projects on Saxmundham are identified and implemented.

[The existing Objective 4, which relates to the 'connectivity' of the proposed new development with the existing town (and was retained as all the relevant land fell within the parish of Saxmundham) is reproduced in the modified NP as Objective SSGN2.]

The first new Objective (SSGN1) has been the subject of previous public consultations, in the drawing up of the Saxmundham NP, but was withdrawn from the final version due to the fact that the GN site extended beyond Saxmundham parish. The second new Objective has not been subject to previous consultation.

Existing Policies

9. The existing NP then sets out 15 parish-wide Policies, covering Design Principles; Local Economy; Community Infrastructure; Transport & Movement; Housing; and Heritage & Natural Environment.

In addition there are five 'Opportunity Zone' policies to match the relevant objectives (all unchanged).

The only changes proposed to the existing policies (apart from inclusion of some cross-references to the new draft policies for the Garden Neighbourhood and factual updates) are as follows:

SAX3 – new businesses – minor addition at the end to refer to development being located in the town centre etc. “before out of centre or edge of settlement sites will be considered.”

SAX5 – Improving Connectivity – the subject-matter of the second half of the existing policy, which related to “where major new development is to take place to the south of the town”, is removed from here and transferred to the new policy SAXGN1 – “Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood”, in a somewhat more detailed and strengthened form.

New policies:

10. The draft modified NP includes the following new policies:

SAXGN1 – Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood.

This covers in particular the need for new and good quality non-motor linkages between the GN and existing town, as well as public transport. As mentioned above, this subject-matter is to be transferred from existing SAX5. The new policy contains similar provisions to SAX5 but adds more detail and strengthens the wording. A large majority of the proposed wording was included in the draft NP submitted to ESC but then removed; it has therefore largely been the subject of previous public consultation.

SAXGN2 – Green Infrastructure

The large majority of this proposed new policy was included within the Pre-Submission and Submission Consultation Versions of the current Neighbourhood Plan, but then withdrawn due to the parish boundary issue, and has thus been the subject of previous public consultation. Much of its subject-matter reflects and gives more specific focus to other existing NP policies.

Policy SAXGN3 - Community Facilities

Again, most of this new policy was included in earlier drafts of the existing NP, but withdrawn for the same reason from the final version. It was therefore also the subject of previous rounds of public consultation. It also reflects the ESC Local Plan's policy for the Garden Neighbourhood, to include primary school, early years provision, community hub(s) – and our own proposal for an indoor sports centre.

Policy SAXGN4 – Design of the Garden Neighbourhood

This policy is a new one which has not, in anything like its present form, been the subject of public consultation. It draws upon existing NP policy, however, including in particular the Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan Area, which existing policy SAX1 on Design Principles requires to be considered.

Policy SAXEN1: Addressing and mitigating the impacts of large scale energy projects.

This is also a new one which has not been the subject of public consultation, since the identification of the locality of Saxmundham for placement of Converter Stations in one or more Energy NSIPs has arisen since the existing NP was submitted to ESC in 2022. The Town Council opposes the siting of Converter Stations at Saxmundham, for reasons given in its responses to consultations. But given that the planning consent process for NSIPs rests with national government not the local planning authority, any policy in this area can only be advisory, setting out the Town Council's proposed mitigation measures, from a planning perspective, which it can promote but not require as conditions. The mitigatory measures referred to in this Policy generally relate to and would seek to promote other existing NP policies, e.g. relating to the environment.

The legal procedures for a modified NP

11. The 2017 Neighbourhood Planning Act allows for NPs to be modified. The procedure for a modified NP is broadly similar to that for a new NP. In short,

- Regulation 14 stage – the Town Council agrees the draft modified NP for consultation, and carries out a broad consultation for at least 6 weeks.
- Reg 15 stage - the Town Council considers the results of consultation, explains how it has addressed matters raised, revises its proposal and 'submits' the draft modified NP to East Suffolk Council
- Reg 16 stage – ESC as local planning authority itself undertakes formal consultation on the submitted draft
- Reg 17 stage – ESC appoints a mutually agreed external Examiner, who considers the submitted modified NP plus any Reg 16 representations received
- Examiner stage – the Examiner considers the issues and legal requirements and recommends to ESC whether or not to accept the NP's proposed modifications
- Referendum stage – a local referendum may be required, if the Examiner considers the changes proposed are so substantial as to change the nature of the NP – see below.
- Modified Plan is adopted by ESC after taking account of the Examiner's recommendations, and after the local referendum if that is required.

Where we are now – the Regulation 14 stage

12. The first stage (known as Regulation 14 stage) requires the Qualifying Body – which is normally the town or parish council – to agree the draft NP for consultation purposes and related steps which are:

Before submitting a modification proposal to the local planning authority, a qualifying body must [my **bold**]:

- (a) publicise, in a manner that is likely to bring it to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area—

- (i) details of the modification proposal;
 - (ii) details of where and when the modification proposal may be inspected;
 - (iii) details of how to make representations;
 - (iv) the date by which those representations must be received, being not less than 6 weeks from the date on which the draft proposal is first publicised;
 - (v) **in relation to a modification proposal, a statement setting out whether or not the qualifying body consider that the modifications contained in the modification proposal are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the modification proposal would modify, giving reasons for why the qualifying body is of this opinion;**
- (b) consult any consultation body referred to in paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 whose interests the qualifying body considers may be affected by the modification proposal

Statement on whether the modification proposals ‘change the nature’ of our NP

13. As set out above, the Town Council as Qualifying Body must widely *publicise* its proposed modification proposal, i.e. the draft Revised NP, with information on how to make representations, and by when, with a minimum 6 week consultation. It must also publicise the statement required under (v) above. In my view that should best be done at the same time as publicizing the other matters, though this seems not to be legally required.

The question posed is not whether the modifications proposed are in themselves “significant or substantial” but whether they are “so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the modification proposal would modify”.

So the Town Council needs to reach and express its opinion on this matter. Whether the opinion is “yes, they do change the nature of the existing NP”, or “no, they do not change the nature of the NP”, the reasons need to be articulated and “given”.

14. In the present case, that is not so simple, and it would be possible, in my view, for different conclusions to be reached. I next set out below possible reasons for reaching either the “yes” or “no” opinion, the matter being for the Town Council to decide. The public, including statutory consultees, may also then express an opinion on the Town Council’s opinion!

15. The importance ultimately relates to whether a referendum will be required, which is the decision of the Examiner. Before that, ESC as local planning authority, following the Reg 16 consultation, must express its own opinion, with reasons, on the modification proposal which is put before the Examiner.

Possible arguments for “Yes, the modifications would change the nature of the NP”

1. The modification proposals are significant and substantial in their own right, and add new Objectives and Policies of importance to the existing plan, covering the Garden Neighbourhood area much of which did not form part of the existing NP area, and an important new subject-matter relating to energy NSIPs
2. The Modification Proposal introduces 4 new policies into the NP for the Garden Neighbourhood area, including one major one (on design) on which specific public consultation has not taken place.

3. The Garden Neighbourhood once developed will substantially increase the population and related infrastructure needs of the parish, and will be likely to have a major impact more widely on the town
4. Likewise, the NSIP energy proposals – including the current Sealink proposal, the application for which has been accepted by the Planning Inspectorate for examination, and which proposes a Converter Station in the locality of Saxmundham – are likely also to have a strong impact on the character of the town and parish, and thus on the nature of the existing Plan.
5. Taken together, the modifications proposed (in particular relating to the Garden Neighbourhood and Energy NSIPs) would in the Town Council’s opinion add new issues and policies that are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the existing NP.

Possible arguments for “No, the modifications would not change the nature of the NP”

1. The existing Saxmundham NP set out a timescale (to 2036), a Vision, a set of Objectives, and a set of planning Policies for the parish on a wide range of issues
2. In the proposals for the modified NP:
 - (a) The timescale of the existing NP is unchanged
 - (b) The Vision is unchanged
 - (c) Of the objectives, all existing ones are retained, while just two are added – one relating to the successful development of the Garden Neighbourhood, one to the need to put in place mitigation measures for the NSIP Energy projects that are proposed for our area by the relevant entities.
 - (d) Of the existing 15 policies, all are retained, with a minor amendment to one (SAX3), and the transfer of some of the material in one (on Improving Connectivity - SAX5) to a new proposed specific Garden Neighbourhood policy.
 - (e) The modifications together are aimed to complement and update the existing NP rather than to change its overall nature
3. Of the proposed new policies for the Garden Neighbourhood, 3 out of 4 have been the subject of earlier public consultation at Reg 14 and Reg 16 stages of the existing NP, and the content of two – on connectivity and on community assets – add no new subject-matter to that contained, in wider context, in the existing NP and Local Plan policies, on which wide consultation has taken place in recent years. The same applies, in general terms, to the proposed new policy on Green Infrastructure. The draft policy on Design of the Garden Neighbourhood has not been previously consulted on as such, and raises important points; much of it however comes from the Saxmundham Design Guidelines and Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan Area, which existing NP policy SAX1 on Design Principles requires to be considered.
4. While the new chapter and policy on Energy NSIPs relates to an issue of major importance for the town, on which previous consultation has not taken place, the draft policy in relation to mitigation is advisory only in nature, given that planning consent decisions on NSIPs are taken at national level.
5. Taken together, and including the points set out above, the modifications proposed (in particular relating to the Garden Neighbourhood and Energy NSIPs) – while of significance in their own right - would not, in the Town Council’s opinion, be so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the existing NP.

Conclusion

16. Town councillors may have other points they consider relevant in reaching this decision. Our consultant on NP matters has – in addition to drafting the new chapters and policies together with the NP Steering Group - drawn up a draft “Statement to accompany pre-submission version – June 2025”. My view is that it provides a very helpful summary of the changes, in tabular form, and of the issues, but that it does not in the end quite address the key issue, whether the proposed modifications are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the existing Neighbourhood Plan.

17. My proposal, subject to further advice or proposal from our Clerk or colleagues, is that the Council specifically discusses and votes on the opinion it wishes to put forward on that issue, at this stage, as part of the statutory consultation.

18. Finally, the Town Council can change its opinion and Statement of that opinion (with reasons), before actually sending it formally to ESC, but that should only be done in the light of consultation responses. Thus the Statement at this stage would be a draft, for consultation purposes, but does need a clear conclusion based on the statutory test.

Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Review

Statement to accompany pre-submission version – June 2025

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared to comply with *Regulation 14 (v) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012* which relates to the modification or review of Neighbourhood Plans as follows:

Before submitting a plan proposal or a modification proposal to the local planning authority, a qualifying body must—

(v) in relation to a modification proposal, a statement setting out whether or not the qualifying body consider that the modifications contained in the modification proposal are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the modification proposal would modify, giving reasons for why the qualifying body is of this opinion;

- 1.2 In July 2023, Saxmundham had its first Neighbourhood Plan adopted to guide future development in the area between 2022 and 2036. After a Community Governance Review, in April 2023, the Saxmundham Parish Boundary was amended to include land that was previously in the parish of Benhall. The reason for the Parish Boundary change, which was initiated by Saxmundham Town Council with agreement from Benhall Parish Council, was so that all of the land allocated in the East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan 2020, as the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood would fall within the parish boundary of Saxmundham.
- 1.3 In December 2023, the Town Council applied to East Suffolk Council to amend the Neighbourhood Area. The request was approved by East Suffolk Council on 30th April 2024..
- 1.4 There are two principal reasons for reviewing or ‘modifying’ the Adopted 2023 Neighbourhood Plan. These are:
- To ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan and its policies can successfully influence the development of the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood to gain maximum benefit for the community and ensure its proper integration with the existing settlement of Saxmundham.
 - To ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan contains suitable policies for influencing the mitigations required as a consequence of the multiple National Significant Energy Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) proposed in the local area, if these are ultimately approved for development.



- 1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan Review takes the original Plan and adds further detail and justification to it in respect of the two key issues outlined above. However the overarching vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan Review are the same as those of the original Plan and the existing policies remain unaltered except for some updates e.g. where the name of a property has changed or the change in location of the Fromus Centre. The supporting text contained in the parish chapter has been updated to reflect data now available from the 2021 Census. Updated references to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 have also been made.
- 1.6 The Neighbourhood Plan Review covers the same time period as the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.7 The Neighbourhood Plan Review does not make any new allocations.
- 1.8 The differences between the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan Review are set out below:

Adopted Neighbourhood Plan 2023	Proposed Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025	Commentary
Vision	No change	
Objectives	<p>Parish wide objectives – no change.</p> <p>New objectives relating to the Garden Neighbourhood and National Infrastructure and Energy Projects.</p>	<p>The objectives relating to the Garden Neighbourhood are the same as those in the Submission Version of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan and were the subject of public consultation at Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) and Submission (Regulation 16). They are therefore not ‘new’ concepts to the public or statutory consultees. The objective relating to Energy Projects is new and has not been the subject of public consultation.</p>
Policy SAX1: General Design Principles	No change	
Policy SAX2: Expansion of existing business	No change	

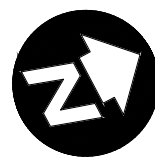
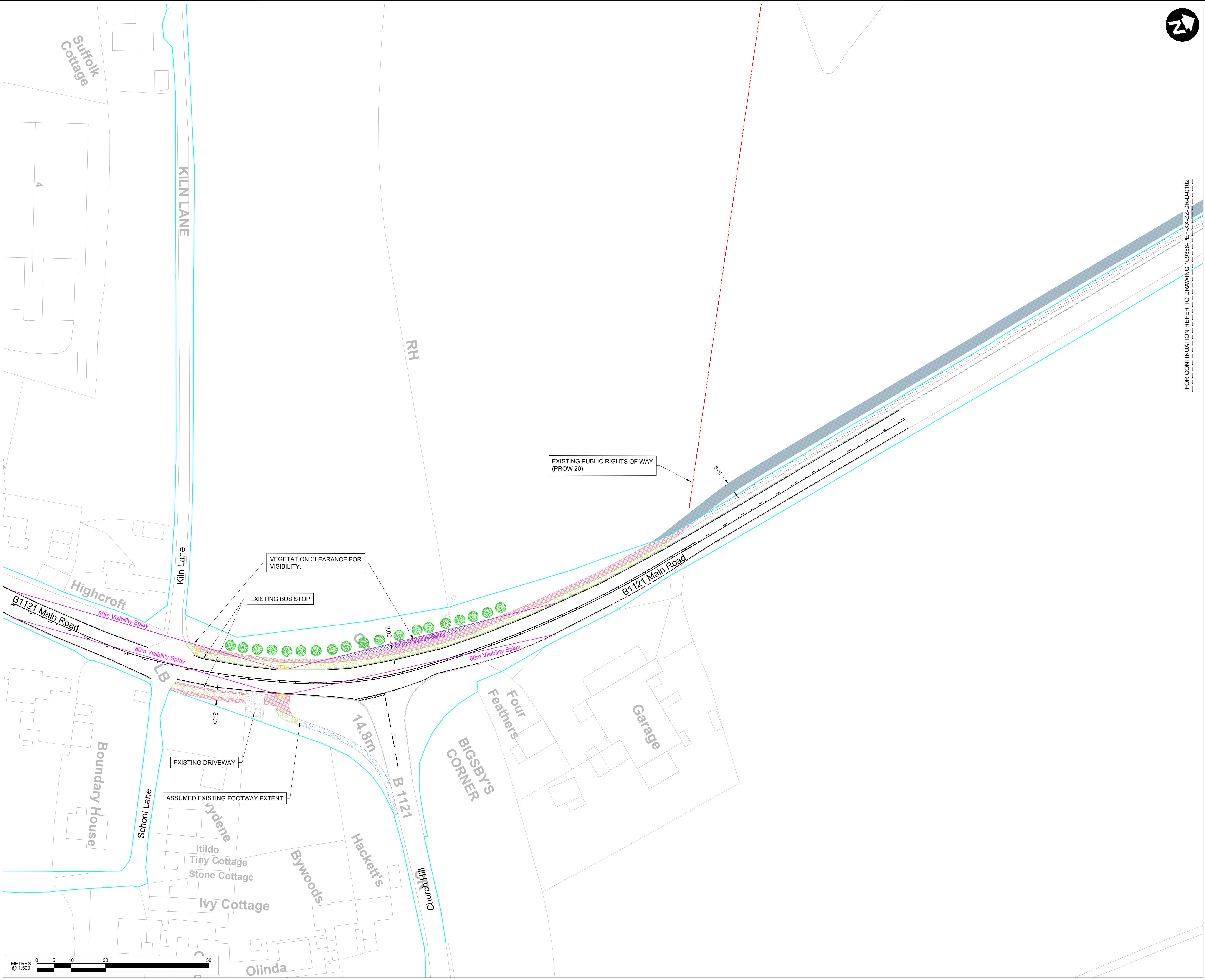
Adopted Neighbourhood Plan 2023	Proposed Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025	Commentary
Policy SAX3: New businesses	Minor wording change (not significant)	Text amendment to refer to existing and allocated employment sites, out of centre and edge of settlement sites.
Policy SAX4: New community facilities	Minor wording change (not significant)	Insertion of cross reference to new Policy SAXGN3
Policy SAX5: Improving connectivity	Policy wording relocated (not significant)	Second half of policy referring to Garden Neighbourhood, relocated to Policy SAXGN1
Policy SAX6: Public rights of way	No change	
Policy SAX7: Parking provision	Minor wording change (not significant)	Insertion of cross reference to new Policy SAXGN4
Policy SAX8: Windfall and Infill Development	No change	
Policy SAX9: Tenure blind housing development	No change	
Policy SAX10: Historic town centre and Conservation Area	No change	
Policy SAX11: Non Designated Heritage Assets	No change	
Policy SAX12: Gateways, views and the landscape setting of Saxmundham	No change	
Policy SAX13: Protection and enhancement of natural assets	No change	
Policy SAX14: Community Gardens and allotments	No change	

Adopted Neighbourhood Plan 2023	Proposed Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025	Commentary
Policy SAX15: Green Spaces	Minor factual changes	Updating name of LGS6 to include word 'former' before Fromus and LGS7 to Old Bank, (formerly Sax'cess House
	NEW: Policy SAXGN1: Connecting the Garden Neighbourhood. New stand-alone policy which relocates existing policy wording from existing Policy SAX5 with additions.	Significant portion of the policy and the accompanying diagram are included within Policy SAX5. Policy SAXGN1 was included in the Pre-Submission and Submission Consultation Versions of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan and has been the subject of public consultation
Policy SAXGN2	NEW: Policy SAXGN2. Green Infrastructure. New policy.	Significant portion of the policy and the accompanying diagram were included within the Pre-Submission and Submission Consultation Versions of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan and has been the subject of public consultation
Policy SAXGN3	NEW: Policy SAXGN3. Community Facilities New policy.	The policy was included within the Pre-Submission and Submission Consultation Versions of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan and has been the subject of public consultation
Policy SAXGN4	NEW: Policy SAXGN4: Design of the Garden Neighbourhood. New policy	New policy devised for the Neighbourhood Plan Review and not included in any previous versions of the Neighbourhood Plan. Draws on the guidance in the Design Code which has been the subject of public consultation.
Policy SAXEN1	NEW: Policy SAXEN1: Addressing and mitigating the impacts of large scale energy projects.	New policy devised for the Neighbourhood Plan Review and not included in any previous versions of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Adopted Neighbourhood Plan 2023	Proposed Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025	Commentary
	New policy	
Policy SAXTC1: Town Centre overarching strategy	No change	
Policy SAXSA1: Station Area Opportunity Zone	No change	
Policy SAXSFR1: Street Farm Road Opportunity Zone	No change	
Policy SAXFS1: From Square Opportunity Zone	No change	
Policy SAXFFC1: Former Fromus Centre Opportunity Zone	No change	

- 1.9 From the above, it can be seen that although there are new policies in the Neighbourhood Plan Review (SAXGN1-4 and SAXEN1) there is little policy within them that has not already been included in a previous version of the Neighbourhood Plan and therefore subject to public consultation. The only new areas of policy with no previous equivalent policy are SAXGN4 on design and SAXEN1 relating to the energy projects. These are new policies untested with the public or with statutory consultees.
- 1.10 The only wording changes to existing policies are factual updates caused by the passage of time (SAX15) or the insertion of cross references to new policies (SAX4, 5 and 7). The only exception is SAX3 where new wording (consistent with Local Plan policy SCLP4.2) has been inserted.
- 1.12 For these reasons the Saxmundham Town Council as the qualifying body under the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations, on balance does not believe that the modifications to existing policies are "so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the modification proposal would modify".
- 1.13 In reaching this provisional conclusion, the qualifying body recognizes that However, the introduction of 5 new policies – four of which

~~specifically relate to land within the extended Neighbourhood Area,~~
two of which have ~~not previously been~~~~never being~~ consulted on and
three being substantially the same as included in the original
Submission Version of the Neighbourhood Plan,~~on balance,~~ could be
~~considered~~argued to constitute a more significant change to the
Adopted Neighbourhood Plan. However, for reasons set out above,
we consider that overall, the changes are not “so significant or
substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood
development plan”.



FOR CONTINUATION REFER TO DRAWING 109358-PEF-XX-ZZ-DR-D-0102

- GENERAL NOTES
- G1. DO NOT SCALE THIS DRAWING.
G2. ANY DIMENSIONAL DISCREPANCIES SHOULD BE NOTIFIED TO THE ENGINEER IMMEDIATELY.
G3. ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN MILLIMETRES - (mm)
ALL LEVELS ARE IN METRES - (m) AND ARE ABOVE ORDNANCE DATUM AT NEWLYN, CORNWALL UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE.
G4. NORTH SHOWN INDICATIVE ONLY
G5. THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL RELEVANT; SPECIFICATIONS; DRAWINGS; DETAILS AND OTHER DESIGN INFORMATION.
G7. ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT IS COPYRIGHT ©
G8. WHERE THE CONTRACTOR UNDERTAKES OR ENGAGES A THIRD PARTY TO UNDERTAKE TEMPORARY WORKS DESIGN, OR VARIES THE PELL FRISCHMANN DESIGN IN ANY WAY, THEN THE CONTRACTOR WILL TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY FOR ALL DESIGN ASPECTS, INCLUDING A DESIGN RISK ASSESSMENT. THE CONTRACTOR SHALL INFORM PELL FRISCHMANN OF ANY PROPOSED VARIANCES TO THE DESIGN.

KEY:

	PROPOSED FOOTWAY REGULATION AND RESURFACING
	PROPOSED FOOTWAY TO SHARED USE
	EXISTING HEDGE
	PROPOSED VEGETATION CLEARANCE
	PROPOSED VERGE TO SHARED USE
	PROPOSED BRIDLE WAY
	PROPOSED BUFF TACTILE PAVING
	PROPOSED CORDUROY TACTILE PAVING
	EXISTING TREES (INDICATIVE)
	HIGHWAY BOUNDARY
	PROPOSED KERBS
	PROPOSED ROAD MARKINGS
	STOPPING SIGHT DISTANCE

DRAFT

P01.1	FIRST ISSUE				
REV	DESCRIPTION	DRN	CHK	APP	DATE

Pell Frischmann

SUITE 109, PLAZA 668, HITCHIN ROAD, BEDFORDSHIRE LU2 7XH
Telephone +44 (0)158 232 1222
Email: pfluton@pellfrischmann.com
www.pellfrischmann.com



Project

MAIN ROAD
BENHALL GREEN

Drawing Title

GENERAL ARRANGEMENT
SHEET 1

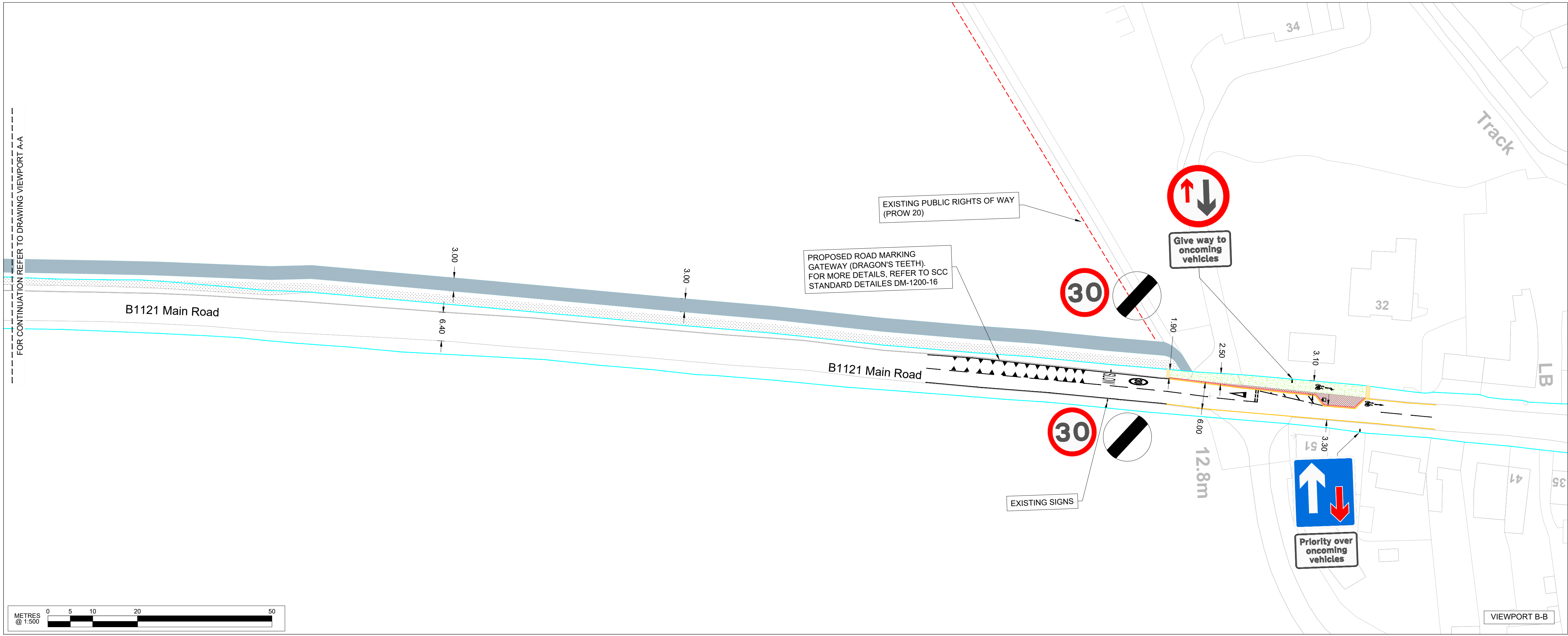
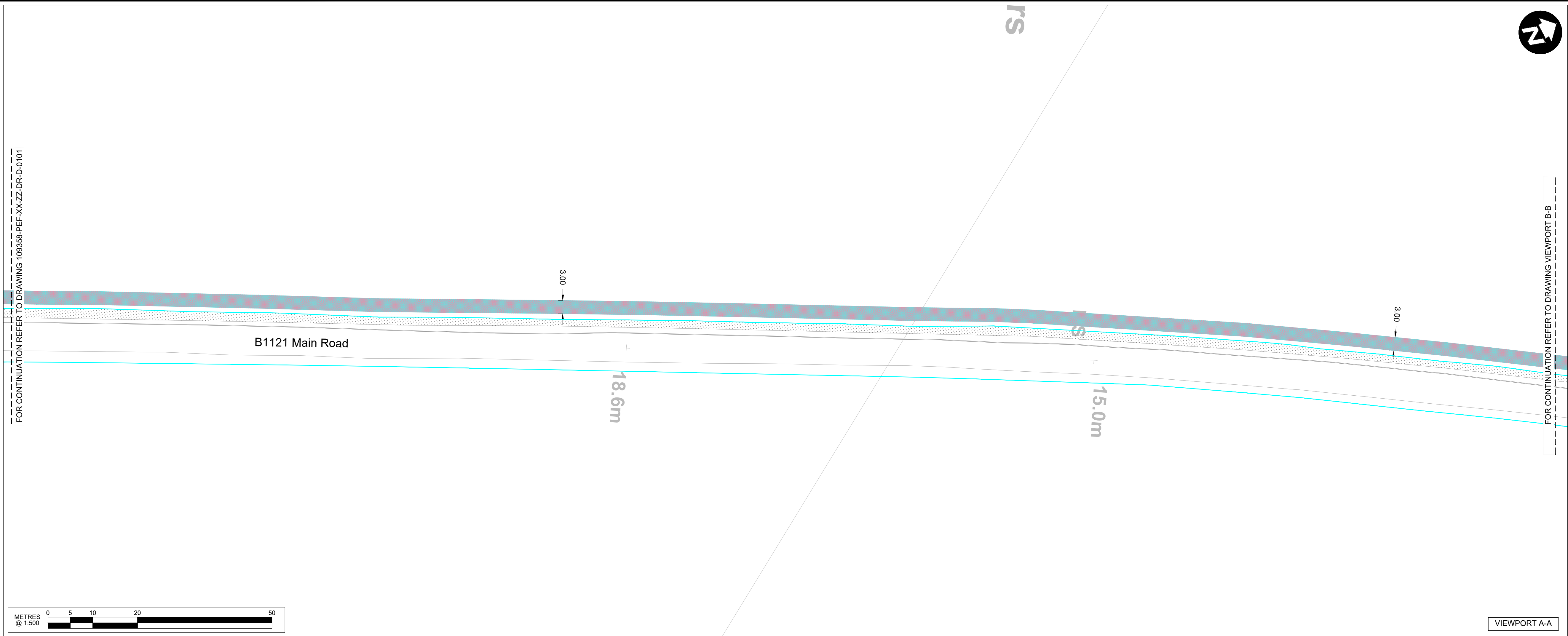
Drawing Status

WORK IN PROGRESS

Drawn	Name	Date	Status Code
Designed			S0
Eng Chk			Scale
Approved			1:500 @ A1
			Revision
			P01.1

Drawing No.

109358 - PEF - XX - ZZ - DR - D - 0101




GENERAL NOTES

G1. DO NOT SCALE THIS DRAWING.
G2. ANY DIMENSIONAL DISCREPANCIES SHOULD BE NOTIFIED TO THE ENGINEER IMMEDIATELY.
G3. ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN MILLIMETRES - (mm)
ALL LEVELS ARE IN METRES - (m) AND ARE ABOVE ORDNANCE DATUM AT NEWLYN, CORNWALL UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE.
G4. NORTH SHOWN INDICATIVE ONLY
G5. THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL RELEVANT; SPECIFICATIONS; DRAWINGS; DETAILS AND OTHER DESIGN INFORMATION.
G7. ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT IS COPYRIGHT ©
G8. WHERE THE CONTRACTOR UNDERTAKES OR ENGAGES A THIRD PARTY TO UNDERTAKE TEMPORARY WORKS DESIGN, OR VARIES THE PELL FRISCHMANN DESIGN IN ANY WAY, THEN THE CONTRACTOR WILL TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY FOR ALL DESIGN ASPECTS, INCLUDING A DESIGN RISK ASSESSMENT. THE CONTRACTOR SHALL INFORM PELL FRISCHMANN OF ANY PROPOSED VARIANCES TO THE DESIGN.

KEY:

	PROPOSED CARRIAGEWAY TO SHARED USE
	PROPOSED FOOTWAY TO SHARED USE
	EXISTING HEDGE
	PROPOSED VERGE TO SHARED USE
	PROPOSED BRIDLE WAY
	PROPOSED CORDUROY TACTILE PAVING
	PROPOSED KERBS
	PROPOSED ROAD MARKINGS
	HIGHWAY BOUNDARY
	PROPOSED SIGN POSTS

DRAFT

1:		FIRST ISSUE			
EV		DESCRIPTION	DRN	CHK	APP
					DATE
Pell Frischmann					
SUITE 109, PLAZA 668, HITCHIN ROAD, BEDFORDSHIRE LU2 7XH					
Telephone +44 (0)158 232 1222					
Email: pfluton@pellfrischmann.com					
www.pellfrischmann.com					
Architect/Client/Contractor					
		Suffolk County Council			
Project					
MAIN ROAD BENHALL GREEN					
Drawing Title					
GENERAL ARRANGEMENT SHEET 2					
Drawing Status					
WORK IN PROGRESS					
Drawn	Name	Date	Status Code	S0	
Designed			Scale	1:500 @ A1	
Eng Chk			Revision	P01.1	
approved					
Drawing No.					
109358 - PEF-XX- ZZ - DR - D - 0102					

Saxmundham Town Council

Committee Meeting	Town Council
Meeting Date	9 June 2025
Item Number	Item 7
Report Title	3 Communities Link – Active Travel Infrastructure and CIL Bid Submission
Report Author	Town Clerk

1. Purpose of Report

To summarise the background, objectives, and significance of the 3 Communities Link project and to inform members of a new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bid submitted by East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council to support delivery of a key section of the route.

2. Project Overview

The 3 Communities Link is a long-standing community-led initiative to deliver a continuous, safe, and accessible pathway connecting Benhall, Saxmundham, and Kelsale for cyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair users, and mobility scooters.

The route follows the B1121 corridor and aims to address a major infrastructure gap that currently forces users onto narrow pavements or high-speed roads with poor visibility and multiple pinch points.

The project responds directly to resident concerns raised in the Saxmundham Town Survey (2013) and has been endorsed by Saxmundham Town Council, Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council, and Kelsale-cum-Carlton Parish Council.

3. Evidence of Need

Surveys conducted with local schools show that while fewer than 2% of pupils currently cycle to school, over 60% would like to do so if safe routes were available. Traffic and pedestrian usage surveys further demonstrate a significant lack of active travel between the three communities due to safety concerns. These findings are reinforced by broader national evidence showing high benefit-cost ratios for walking and cycling schemes.

4. Outcomes and Benefits

The project is expected to:

- Enable safer travel to schools and reduce school-run traffic
- Improve health and wellbeing through increased physical activity
- Enhance access to Saxmundham's town centre and station
- Support low-carbon and sustainable transport choices
- Increase local tourism by linking with National Cycle Route 1 and Quiet Lanes

5. CIL Bid Submission

A formal CIL bid has now been submitted by Suffolk County Council to East Suffolk Council for funding to deliver the Benhall to Saxmundham section, including:

- Upgrade of Footpath 19 to a shared bridleway
- New safe crossing point connecting to School Lane

- Associated accessibility and landscaping improvements

The Sustainable Travel Officer at East Suffolk Council, has requested that the Town Council formally consider and express its support for the scheme to strengthen the bid.

6. Recommendation

That the Council:

1. Notes the submission of the CIL funding bid for the Benhall to Saxmundham section of the 3 Communities Link project;
2. Reviews the proposed design and route plans (attached);
3. Resolves to formally support the scheme and authorises the Town Clerk to communicate this endorsement to East Suffolk Council.

Saxmundham Town Council – Annual Delivery Plan – 2025-2026

Theme 1 – A Thriving and Prosperous Town					Responsibility		Timeline		Funded By					
SP Ref	Item	ADP Ref	Activities	Stakeholders	Committee	Officer	Due Date	1 Year+	Budget	CIL	CRF	EMR	Grants	Precept
1.1	Develop a Strong Marketing Strategy	1.1	Create and launch a dedicated ‘Visit Saxmundham’ website to showcase local attractions, events, and amenities, supporting tourism and local businesses. Also SP 3.1 - Celebrate Saxmundham’s Historic Identity	ESC Town Economic Development Team/Local Businesses/Visitors/Consultants	Civic and Community Committee	CO	Quarter 3	N	£7,000	£0	£0	£0	£3,000 ESC Town Economic Development Fund	£4,000 (NC 4405)
		1.2	Create strong brand guidelines for use on online and printed media.	Residents/Visitors	Civic and Community Committee	CO	Quarter 2	N	£500	£0	£0	£0	£0	£500 (NC 4400)
		1.3	Develop an Instagram profile to engage with a wider community.	Residents/Visitors	Civic and Community Committee	CO	Quarter 1	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
1.2	Improve Accessibility and Connectivity	1.4	Work with neighbouring parishes and principal authorities to develop the 3 Communities Link Project by creating a cycling, walking and wheeling route from Kelsale through Saxmundham to Benhall. Also SP 2.3 - Improve Active Travel and Connectivity Also SP 4.3 - Encourage Sustainable Transport and Reduced Carbon Footprint	ESC/SCC/Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council/Kelsale-cum-Carlton Parish Council/Residents/Visitors	Town Council	TC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		1.5	Promote the town’s road and rail links through regional partnerships and online content to encourage investment and tourism.	Local Businesses/Residents/Visitors	Civic and Community Committee	TC/CO	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		1.6	Identify ways to enhance parking availability within walking distance of the town centre.	ESC/SCC/Local Businesses/Residents/Visitors	Town Council	TC	Quarter 4	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
1.3	Create a Pedestrian-Friendly Town Centre	1.7	Liaise with other Town Councils to explore ways to secure a 20mph speed limit in the Town Centre. Also SP 2.5 - Enhance Road Safety and Traffic Management	ESC Town Economic Development Team/Local Businesses/Residents/Visitors	Town Council	TC	Quarter 3	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		1.8	Install solar lighting along the walkway between Fromus Green and the High Street Also SP 2.2 - Develop Safe and Accessible Walking Routes	Local Landowner/Residents/Visitors	Amenities and Services Committee	DTC	Quarter 3	N	£1,000	£1,000	£0	£0	£0	£0

			Also SP 2.6 - Promote Community Safety and Resilience											
		1.9	Support the provision of solar lighting in Fromus Square.	Local Landowner/Residents/Visitors	Resources Committee	TC	Quarter 2	N	£4,740	£4,740	£0	£0	£0	£0
1.4	Establish a Collaborative Stakeholder Group	1.10	Form a partnership between local businesses, community organisations, and local authorities to drive a shared vision for Saxmundham.	ESC/SCC/Local Businesses/Local Organisations	Civic and Community Committee	TC/CO	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
1.5	Strengthen Collaboration with Supermarkets	1.11	Partner with supermarket retailers to develop initiatives that attract shoppers into the town centre enhancing the overall retail experience while supporting independent local businesses.	Local Businesses/Residents/Visitors	Civic and Community Committee	TC/CO	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
1.6	Revitalise Fromus Green and the High Street	1.12	Lobby East Suffolk Council for the opportunity to acquire Fromus Green then revitalise to draw shoppers from the supermarket area for recreation and community engagement.	ESC /Local Businesses/Residents/Visitors	Town Council	TC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		1.13	Liaise with new and existing businesses to support the creation of a Business Association.	ESC Town Economic Development Team/Local Businesses	Town Council	CO	Ongoing	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		1.14	Work in partnership with East Suffolk Council's Town Economic Development Team to identify strategies and actions to revitalise the High Street.	ESC Town Economic Development Team/Local Businesses/Residents/Visitors	Civic and Community Committee	TC/CO	Ongoing	Y	£5,000	£0	£0	£0	£5,000 ESC Visitor Economy Support Fund	£0
		1.15	Identify ways to enhance the High Street shopping experience with flags, hanging baskets, Christmas lights, etc.	Local Businesses/Residents/Visitors	Amenities and Services Committee	DTC	Ongoing	N	£8,500	£0	£0	£0	£0	£8,500 (NC 4560/ NC 4830)

Theme 2 – A Safe and Healthy Town					Responsibility		Timeline		Funded By					
SP Ref	Item	ADP Ref	Activities	Stakeholders	Committee	Officer	Due Date	1 Year+	Budget	CIL	CRF	EMR	Grants	Precept
2.1	Enhance Community Facilities	2.1	Draw up a specification and secure funding to install a circular walking path around the Memorial Field to support public health and recreation. Also SP 2.2 - Develop Safe and Accessible Walking Routes	Local organisations/Residents/Consultants	Amenities and Services Committee	DTC	Quarter 2	N	£50,000	£20,000	£0	£0	£25,000 Sizewell C Community Fund	£5,000 (NC 4829)

		2.2	Add additional items of play equipment to Seaman Avenue play park to encourage use by all age groups.	Residents/Visitors	Amenities and Services Committee	DTC	Quarter 2	N	£60,000	£15,000	£15,000	£0	£30,000 Sizewell C Community Fund	£0
		2.3	Complete the central feature of the Memorial Garden.	Residents/Visitors	Amenities and Services Committee	DTC	Quarter 1	N	£5,000	£0	£0	£5,000 Project Improve Fund	£0	£0
		2.4	Outsource the monthly market to a professional company to ensure Saxmundham retains its heritage as a thriving market town.	ESC Town Economic Development Team/Local businesses/ Residents/Visitors	Civic and Community Committee	TC	Ongoing	N	£500	£0	£0	£0	£0	£500 (NC 4825)
		2.5	Lease the Community Garden at the old Fromus Centre from Suffolk County Council and licence to Greener Sax to maintain.	SCC/Greener Sax/Residents	Amenities and Services Committee	TC	Quarter 2	N	£500	£0	£0	£0	£0	£500 (NC 4615)
		2.6	Secure funding to create an allotment garden at Saxon Road to support access to nature-rich areas and community wellbeing. Also SP 4.1 - Enhance Green Spaces and Natural Habitats See SP 2.4 - Strengthen Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity	Residents/Local organisations	Amenities and Services Committee	DTC/EC	Quarter 3	N	£5,000	£2,500	£0	£0	£2,500 ESC Community Partnership Fund	£0
		2.7	Advocate for the provision of an indoor sports centre.	SCC/ESC/Residents	Town Council	TC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		2.8	Advocate with NHS and local health authorities for improved primary care facilities in Saxmundham..	SCC/ESC/Residents/ NHS/MP	Town Council	TC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
2.2	Develop Safe and Accessible Walking Routes	2.9	Lobby Suffolk County Council to maintain well-signposted public rights of way in the parish.	SCC/ Residents/Visitors	Amenities and Services Committee	DTC/TC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
2.4	Strengthen Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity	2.10	Endorse and promote the Empowering Nature paper, advocating that energy project developers implement its recommendations as part of any approved infrastructure work. Also SP 4.2 - Promote Sustainable Development and Energy Efficiency	Residents/Local organisations/ Benhall and Sternfield Parish Council/Kelsale-cum-Carlton Parish Council/Energy developers	Town Council	TC/EC	Quarter 1	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0

		2.11	Develop a feasibility plan and a funding bid to create a boardwalk and nature trail along the River Fromus to support access to nature, recreation and biodiversity.	ESC/Residents /Visitors/Consultants	Town Council	TC/EC	Quarter 3	Y	£5,000	£0	£0	£0	£5,000 ESC Visitor Economy Support Fund	£0
		2.13	Collaborate with local authorities to enhance green spaces and to create diverse areas for recreation, wildlife, relaxation and social interaction.	ESC/SCC/ Residents/Visitors	Amenities and Services Committee	TC/EC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
2.5	Enhance Road Safety and Traffic Management	2.14	Implement traffic calming measures by purchasing a second speed indicator device and regularly rotate two devices between the four entrances to town.	Residents/Visitors	Amenities and Services Committee	DTC/MO	Quarter 2	N	£3,500	£1,000	£0	£0	£0	£2,500 (NC 4824)
		2.15	Implement traffic calming measures by organising a team of Community Speed Watch and ensure regular sessions are held throughout the town.	Suffolk Police/ Residents/Visitors	Amenities and Services Committee	DTC	Quarter 2	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		2.16	Lobby East Suffolk Council to take enforcement action against illegal, dangerous and inconvenient parking on the High Street.	ESC/Residents/ Visitors	Amenities and Services Committee	TC/DTC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
2.6	Promote Community Safety and Resilience	2.17	Complete registration of the Market Hall as a Community Rest Centre. Identify other buildings with the parish to also serve this purpose.	SCC/ESC Joint Emergency Planning Unit/ Residents/Visitors	Market Hall Trust	DTC/ATC	Quarter 4	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		2.18	Create a town-wide emergency plan and encourage community involvement in disaster preparedness.	SCC/ESC Joint Emergency Planning Unit/ Residents/Visitors	Town Council	DTC/TC	Quarter 4	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		2.19	Encourage community involvement in crime prevention by regularly communicating ways to report crime to Suffolk Constabulary.	Suffolk Constabulary/ Residents/Local Businesses/Residents	Town Council	CO	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0

Theme 3 – An Attractive and Distinctive Town					Responsibility		Timeline		Funded By					
SP Ref	Item	ADP Ref	Activities	Stakeholders	Committee	Officer	Due Date	1 Year+	Budget	CIL	CRF	EMR	Grants	Precept
3.1	Celebrate Saxmundham's Historic Identity	3.1	Protect the Conservation Area by reporting infringements to East Suffolk Council and ensure swift action is taken against breaches.	Local Businesses/ Residents/Visitors	Planning and Development Control Committee	ATC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0

3.2	Revitalise our Historic Buildings	3.2	Commission expert guidance to develop a vision for restoring and enhancing the Market Hall as a vibrant and multifunctional hub at the heart of town.	Residents/Visitors/ Local Businesses/Local Organisations/ tConsultants	Market Hall Redevelopment Working Group	TC	Quarter 3	Y	£10,000	£0	£0	£0	£10,000 Architecture Heritage Fund	£0
		3.3	Enhance the rear entrance of the Market Hall by replacing the door, restoring windows, installing planters maintained by volunteers, and adding new signage to improve visibility and appearance.	Residents/Visitors/ Local Businesses/Local Organisations	Market Hall Trust	DTC	Quarter 2	N	£4,000	£0	£0	£4,000 Market Hall Trust	£0	£0
		3.4	Build on improvements to the Gannon Rooms enhancing its potential as a welcoming community asset on a key route between the train station and the High Street.	Residents/Visitors/ Local Businesses/Local Organisations	Gannon Institute Trust	TC	Ongoing	Y	£5,000	£0	£0	£0	£0	£5,000 (NC 4500)
3.4	Strengthen Community Engagement	3.5	Rebrand the Events and Communications Committee as the Civic and Community Committee as the public face of the Council.	Local Businesses/ Residents/Visitors	Town Council	TC	Quarter 1	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		3.6	Increase Councillor presence at monthly markets at 'Meet and Greet' sessions.	Residents/Local Businesses/Visitors	Civic and Community Committee	CO	Quarter 1	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		3.7	Support and empower local groups to drive positive change fostering a sense of belonging and wellbeing.	Residents/Local Organisations/ Visitors	Civic and Community Committee	TC/CO	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		3.8	Support National Volunteering Week.	Residents/Local Organisations	Civic and Community Committee	CO	Quarter 2	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		3.9	Support local community organisations by providing financial grants.	Residents/Local Organisations	Civic and Community Committee	CO	Ongoing	Y	£34,500	£0	£0	£0	£0	£34,500 (NC 4555)
3.5	Enhance Cultural Identity and Public Spaces	3.10	Engage with Sax Community Fest by providing a market of local traders providing artisan and bespoke products.	Residents/Visitors/ Local Organisations	Civic and Community Committee	CO	Quarter 2	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
		3.11	Build on the success of the Christmas Fayre to ensure it is the highlight of the season and the local showstopper event.	Residents/Visitors/ Local Businesses/Local Organisations	Civic and Community Committee	CO	Quarter 3	N	£7,500	£0	£0	£0	£0	£7,500 (NC 4505)
		3.12	Develop a dynamic event programme that celebrates Saxmundham's cultural identity.	Residents/Visitors/ Local Businesses/Local Organisations	Civic and Community Committee	CO	Ongoing	Y	£7,500	£0	£0	£0	£5,000 Events Coordinator Funding	£2,500 (NC 4505)
3.6	Turn Challenges into Opportunities	3.13	Engage robustly with the energy project developers and the examining authority to secure the best outcome for the area, should the energy projects be consented.	Residents/Local Businesses/Visitors	Fromus Energy Projects Team	TC	Ongoing	Y	£6,000	£0	£0	£6,000 Project Consultancy	£0	£0

		3.14	Modify the Neighbourhood Plan to include design policies for the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood and mitigatory policies for the energy projects, should they be consented. Also SP 3.3 - Seamlessly Integrate the Garden Neighbourhood Also 4.2 - Promote Sustainable Development and Energy Efficiency	East Suffolk Council/Residents/Visitors/Local Businesses	Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	TC	Quarter 4	N	£6,376	£0	£0	£0	£6,376 Locality Fund	£0
		3.15	Identify opportunities arising from local government reorganisation and lobby to secure them.	SCC/ESC	Town Council	TC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0

Theme 4 – A Biodiverse and Sustainable Town					Responsibility		Timeline		Funded By					
SDP Ref	Item	ADP Ref	Activities	Stakeholders	Committee	Officer	Due Date	1 Year+	Budget	CIL	CRF	EMR	Grants	Precept
4.1	Enhance Green Spaces and Natural Habitats	4.1	Support the Green Team and Blue Spaces Team to continue their valuable work.	Residents/Visitors	Amenities and Services Committee	EC	Ongoing	N	£3,000	£0	£0	£0	£0	£3,000 (NC 4810)
4.2	Promote Sustainable Development and Energy Efficiency	4.2	Develop a feasibility study and funding bid to improve the thermal efficiency of the Gannon Rooms.	ABC Radio/ IP17 Good Neighbours Scheme/Consultants	Gannon Institute Trust	TC	Quarter 2	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
4.4	Increase Community Involvement in Environmental Stewardship	4.3	Promote environmental stewardship by supporting resident- and youth-led conservation initiatives, school activities, and local clean-up events.	Residents/Local Businesses/Local Organisations/Local Schools	Amenities and Services Committee	EC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
4.5	Improve Waste Management and Circular Economy Practices	4.4	Support sustainable event management by minimising waste, using eco-friendly materials, and promoting resource use at Town Council and community-led events.	Residents/Visitors/ Local Organisations	Civic and Community Committee	CO/EC	Ongoing	Y	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
4.6	Strengthen Climate Resilience and Water Management	4.5	Develop rainwater harvesting solutions to sustain watering of hanging baskets and planters in the town centre and at Saxon Road allotments and the old Fromus Centre Community Garden.	Residents/Local Organisations	Amenities and Services Committee	EC	Quarter 4	N	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
										CIL	CRF	EMR	Grants	Precept
									Totals	£42,240	£15,000	£15,000	£91,876	£74.000

Acronyms

SP – Strategic Plan	ADP – Annual Delivery Plan
SCC – Suffolk County Council	ESC – East Suffolk Council
CIL – Community Infrastructure Levy	CRF – Capital Replacement Fund
EMR – Earmarked Reserves	NC – Nominal Code
TC – Town Clerk	DTC – Deputy Town Clerk
CO – Community Officer	ATC – Assistant Town Clerk
EC – Environment Coordinator	MO – Maintenance Officer

31st March 2024

31st March 2025

31st March 2024		31st March 2025	
Current Assets			
190	Debtors	160	
8,331	VAT Control	4,006	
4,768	Prepayments	3,589	
67,798	Unity Trust Bank - Current	9,762	
82,510	Cambridge Building Society	85,000	
0	Unity Trust Bank - Savings	10,164	
0	CCLA - PSDF	60,000	
163,597		172,681	
163,597	Total Assets	172,681	
Current Liabilities			
3,812	Charitable Trusts VAT	2,084	
802	Creditors	9,892	
270	Accruals	350	
0	Receipts In Advance	1,000	
4,884		13,326	
158,713	Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	159,355	
Represented By			
81,880	General Reserves	87,222	
76,833	Earmarked Reserves	72,134	
158,713		159,355	

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31/03/2025 and reflects its Income and Expenditure during the year.

Signed :
Chairman

Date : _____

Signed :
Responsible
Financial
Officer

Date : _____

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** **must** be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** **must** be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2025**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2025**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2025
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2025 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2024/25**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2024/25**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2025 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024/25

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2025.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2024) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2025).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2025**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?		
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?		
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?		
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?		
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?		
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?		
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?		
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2025 been reconciled to Box 8?		
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?		
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		

***Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices**, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2024/25 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.			
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.			
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.			
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.			
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.			
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.			
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.			
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.			
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.			
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.			
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(during the 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).</i>			
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24 AGAR <i>(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).</i>			

O. (For local councils only)	Yes	No	Not applicable
Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

DD/MM/YYYY DD/MM/YYYY DD/MM/YYYY

ENTER NAME OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

***If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).**

****Note:** If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025, that:

	Agreed		
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.			<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.			<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.			<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.			<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.			<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.			<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.			<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.			<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward			<i>Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies			<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts			<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs			<i>Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments			<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments			<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward			<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments			<i>The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.</i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets			<i>The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.</i>
10. Total borrowings			<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				<i>The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

DD/MM/YYYY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02 as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/> .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2025; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2024/25

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2025.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

Saxmundham Town Council**Income and Expenditure Account for Year Ended 31st March 2025**

31st March 2024

31st March 2025

Operating Income

274,187	Precept	254,050
0	Community Infrastructure Levy	1,046
0	Bank Interest	5,280
0	Market Stallage Fees	2,628
0	Land Hire Fees	602
0	Grants	10,000
274,187	Total Income	273,605

Running Costs

108,372	Staff Salaries & Related Costs	114,873
325	Councillor Expenses	470
29,437	Office and Administration	30,717
22,903	Loan Repayments	24,389
3,075	Communication and Promotion	4,908
13,625	Community Grants	50,776
45,701	Community Events	14,954
1,355	Neighbourhood Plan	10,485
19,270	Parks and Recreation	18,347
44,066	Maintenance	3,042
288,130	Total Expenditure	272,963

General Fund Analysis

81,213	Opening Balance	81,880
274,187	Plus : Income for Year	273,605
355,400		355,485
288,130	Less : Expenditure for Year	272,963
67,269		82,522
(14,610)	Transfers TO / FROM Reserves	(4,699)
81,880	Closing Balance	87,222



SAXMUNDHAM TOWN COUNCIL

INTERNAL AUDIT

EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2024-2025

Annual Approval:

Minute Item:



Legislative Background

This review is undertaken in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which requires relevant authorities to:

“...undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.”

Guidance issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) states that authorities should undertake an annual review of the effectiveness of internal audit as part of the consideration of the system of internal control, which supports the Annual Governance Statement.

Scope and Objectives of Internal Audit

Internal audit is an independent and objective assurance process designed to add value and improve the Council's operations. Its core objectives are to review whether:

- Proper accounting records have been kept;
- Financial regulations and standing orders have been followed;
- The Council's assets are safeguarded;
- Adequate measures are in place to prevent and detect fraud and corruption;
- Financial management and budgetary control are effective;
- Risk management processes are in place and functioning appropriately.

Independence and Competence

The internal audit function is carried out by an independent organisation - Suffolk Association of Local Councils - with no involvement in the financial decision-making, management, or preparation of records. This ensures the necessary degree of independence and objectivity.

The appointed auditor is suitably qualified and experienced to undertake internal audit duties for a local authority of this size and complexity.

Audit Planning and Coverage

The internal audit work plan is agreed in advance and covers key risk and control areas, including:

- Cashbook/bank reconciliations
- Income and expenditure
- VAT returns
- Payroll
- Asset register



- Budget setting and monitoring
- Compliance with relevant laws and regulations
- Year-end procedures and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

Coverage for the 2024-2025 audit was appropriate and proportionate, with adequate evidence of risk-based sampling and control testing.

Reporting and Follow-up

The internal auditor provides a written report to the Council with detailed findings and any recommendations for improvement. The report is reviewed at a full Council meeting and any recommendations are noted and acted upon as appropriate.

Effectiveness Assessment

The Council assesses the effectiveness of the internal audit function using the following criteria:

Criteria	Assessment
Independent and objective	✓ Yes
Competent and suitably qualified	✓ Yes
Works to agreed audit programme	✓ Yes
Provides detailed written reports	✓ Yes
Recommendations acted upon	✓ Yes
Adds value to financial governance	✓ Yes

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council confirms its satisfaction with the internal audit arrangements and notes this review as part of the evidence base for the Annual Governance Statement.

CIL REPORT - SAXMUNDHAM TOWN COUNCIL

1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

A	Total CIL income carried over from previous years	£46,832.83
B	Total CIL income received (receipts)	£1,045.91
C	Total CIL spent (expenditure)	£445.23
	Total CIL requested to be repaid in the year	£0.00
	Total value of CIL receipts subject to a Repayment Notice served <u>in any year</u> that has not been repaid	£0.00
D	Total CIL repaid in the year following a Repayment Notice	£0.00
E	Total CIL retained at year end (A+B-C-D)	£47,433.51

CIL Expenditure

Items to which CIL has been applied:	Date of Spend	Amount spent £
River Fromus Clean-Up Project Equipment	28/05/2024	£134.94
River Fromus Clean-Up Project Equipment	04/10/2024	£68.74
River Fromus Clean-Up Project Equipment	22/10/2024	£18.44
River Fromus Clean-Up Project Equipment	02/12/2024	£71.50
River Fromus Clean-Up Project Equipment	27/01/2025	£151.61
Total spent		£445.23

Signed: _____ Position: Responsible Financial Officer

Verified: _____ Position: Chair

Saxmundham Town Council

Bank - Cash and Investment Reconciliation as at 31 March 2025

Confirmed Bank & Investment Balances

Bank Statement Balances

31/03/2025	Current A/C	9,762.42
31/03/2025	Cambridge Building Society	85,000.00
31/03/2025	Unity Trust Bank - Savings	10,163.59
31/03/2025	CCLA - PSDF	60,000.00

164,926.01

Receipts not on Bank Statement

0.00

Closing Balance

164,926.01

All Cash & Bank Accounts

1	Unity Trust Bank - Current	9,762.42
3	Cambridge Building Society	85,000.00
4	Closed Account	0.00
5	Unity Trust Bank - Savings	10,163.59
6	CCLA - PSDF	60,000.00

Other Cash & Bank Balances 0.00

Total Cash & Bank Balances 164,926.01

Earmarked Reserves

Account	Opening Balance	Net Transfers	Closing Balance
320 EMR - Capital Replacement Fund	25,000.00	-9,300.00	15,700.00
324 EMR - CIL 20/21	7,979.95	-7,979.95	0.00
326 EMR - Project Improvement Fund	5,000.00	0.00	5,000.00
327 EMR - CIL 21/22	31,308.92	-31,308.92	0.00
328 EMR - CIL 22/23	6,438.25	-6,438.25	0.00
331 EMR - CIL 23/24	1,105.71	-1,105.71	0.00
333 EMR - Project Consultancy	0.00	4,000.00	4,000.00
400 EMR - CIL 20/21	0.00	7,534.72	7,534.72
401 EMR - CIL 21/22	0.00	31,308.92	31,308.92
402 EMR - CIL 22/23	0.00	6,438.25	6,438.25
403 EMR - CIL 23/24	0.00	1,105.71	1,105.71
404 EMR - CIL 24/25	0.00	1,045.91	1,045.91
	76,832.83	-4,699.32	72,133.51

WHAT SMALLER AUTHORITIES NEED TO DO TO ADVERTISE THE PERIOD DURING WHICH ELECTORS AND INTERESTED PERSONS MAY EXERCISE RIGHTS RELATING TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The [Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#) and the [Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#) require that:

- 1) The accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records must be made available for inspection by any person interested, during a period of 30 working days set by the smaller authority and including the first 10 working days of July.
- 2) The period referred to in paragraph (1) starts with the day on which the period for the exercise of public rights is treated as having been commenced i.e. the day following the day on which all of the obligations in paragraph (3) below have been fulfilled.
- 3) The responsible financial officer for a relevant authority must, on behalf of that authority, publish (**which must include publication on the authority's website**):
 - a) the Accounting Statements (i.e. Section 2 of either Form 2 or 3, whichever is relevant, of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)), accompanied by:
 - i) a declaration, signed by that officer to the effect that the status of the Accounting Statements are unaudited and that the Accounting Statements as published may be subject to change;
 - ii) the Annual Governance Statement (i.e. Section 1 of either Form 2 or Form 3, whichever is relevant, of the AGAR); and
 - b) a statement that sets out—
 - i) the period for the exercise of public rights;
 - ii) details of the manner in which notice should be given of an intention to inspect the accounting records and other documents;
 - iii) the name and address of the local auditor;
 - iv) the provisions contained in section 26 (inspection of documents etc.) and section 27 (right to make objections at audit) of the Act, as they have effect in relation to the authority in question;

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

- 1) You will meet statutory requirements if you fully and accurately complete the notice of public rights pro forma in this document, and publish (**including publication on the smaller authority's website**) the following documents, the day before the public rights period commences:
 - a) the approved Sections 1 and 2 of either Form 2 or 3, whichever is relevant to your smaller authority, of the AGAR; and
 - b) the completed Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return. Please note that we have pre-completed it with the following suggested dates: Tuesday 3 June – Monday 14 July 2025. (The latest possible dates that comply with the statutory requirements are Tuesday 1 July – Monday 11 August 2025); and
 - c) the notes which accompany the Notice (Local authority accounts: a summary of your rights).

Where the authority has answered 'No' to any assertions on Section 1, as stated on the face of Section 1 of the AGAR, a sufficiently detailed explanation of the reasons must be published with the AGAR on the authority's website.

Smaller authority name: Saxmundham Town Council, Suffolk

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION
OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE &
ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN**

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

**Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 Sections 26 and 27
The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)**

NOTICE	NOTES
<p>1. Date of announcement <u>Monday 9 June 2025</u> (a)</p> <p>2. Each year the smaller authority's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) needs to be reviewed by an external auditor appointed by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd. The unaudited AGAR has been published with this notice. As it has yet to be reviewed by the appointed auditor, it is subject to change as a result of that review.</p> <p>Any person interested has the right to inspect and make copies of the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records must be made available for inspection by any person interested. For the year ended 31 March 2025, these documents will be available on reasonable notice by application to:</p> <p>(b) <u>Sharon Smith, Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer, The Town House, Station Approach, Saxmundham, IP17 1BW, townclerk@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk, 01728 604595</u></p> <p>commencing on (c) <u>Tuesday 10 June 2025</u></p> <p>and ending on (d) <u>Monday 21 July 2025</u></p> <p>3. Local government electors and their representatives also have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The opportunity to question the appointed auditor about the accounting records; and• The right to make an objection which concerns a matter in respect of which the appointed auditor could either make a public interest report or apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful. Written notice of an objection must first be given to the auditor and a copy sent to the smaller authority. <p>The appointed auditor can be contacted at the address in paragraph 4 below for this purpose between the above dates only.</p> <p>4. The smaller authority's AGAR is subject to review by the appointed auditor under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the NAO's Code of Audit Practice 2015. The appointed auditor is:</p> <p>PKF Littlejohn LLP (Ref: SBA Team) 15 Westferry Circus Canary Wharf London E14 4HD (sba@pkf-l.com)</p> <p>5. This announcement is made by (e) <u>Sharon Smith, Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer</u></p>	<p>(a) Insert date of placing of the notice which must be not less than 1 day before the date in (c) below</p> <p>(b) Insert name, position and address/telephone number/ email address, as appropriate, of the Clerk or other person to which any person may apply to inspect the accounts</p> <p>(c) Insert date, which must be at least 1 day after the date of announcement in (a) above and at least 30 working days before the date appointed in (d) below</p> <p>(d) The inspection period between (c) and (d) must be 30 working days inclusive and must include the first 10 working days of July.</p> <p>(e) Insert name and position of person placing the notice – this person must be the responsible financial officer for the smaller authority</p>

LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOUNTS: A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS

Please note that this summary applies to all relevant smaller authorities, including local councils, internal drainage boards and 'other' smaller authorities.

The basic position

The [Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#) (the Act) governs the work of auditors appointed to smaller authorities. This summary explains the provisions contained in Sections 26 and 27 of the Act. The Act and the [Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#) also cover the duties, responsibilities and rights of smaller authorities, other organisations and the public concerning the accounts being audited.

As a local elector, or an interested person, you have certain legal rights in respect of the accounting records of smaller authorities. As an interested person you can inspect accounting records and related documents. If you are a local government elector for the area to which the accounts relate you can also ask questions about the accounts and object to them. You do not have to pay directly for exercising your rights. However, any resulting costs incurred by the smaller authority form part of its running costs. Therefore, indirectly, local residents pay for the cost of you exercising your rights through their council tax.

The right to inspect the accounting records

Any interested person can inspect the accounting records, which includes but is not limited to local electors. You can inspect the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records. You can copy all, or part, of these records or documents. Your inspection must be about the accounts, or relate to an item in the accounts. You cannot, for example, inspect or copy documents unrelated to the accounts, or that include personal information (Section 26 (6) – (10) of the Act explains what is meant by personal information). You cannot inspect information which is protected by commercial confidentiality. This is information which would prejudice commercial confidentiality if it was released to the public and there is not, set against this, a very strong reason in the public interest why it should nevertheless be disclosed.

When smaller authorities have finished preparing accounts for the financial year and approved them, they must publish them (including on a website). There must be a 30 working day period, called the 'period for the exercise of public rights', during which you can exercise your statutory right to inspect the accounting records. Smaller authorities must tell the public, including advertising this on their website, that the accounting records and related documents are available to inspect. By arrangement you will then have 30 working days to inspect and make copies of the accounting records. You may have to pay a copying charge. The 30 working day period must include a common period of inspection during which all smaller authorities' accounting records are available to inspect. This will be 1-14 July 2025 for 2024/25 accounts. The advertisement must set out the dates of the period for the exercise of public rights, how you can communicate to the smaller authority that you wish to inspect the accounting records and related documents, the name and address of the auditor, and the relevant legislation that governs the inspection of accounts and objections.

The right to ask the auditor questions about the accounting records

You should first ask your smaller authority about the accounting records, since they hold all the details. If you are a local elector, your right to ask questions of the external auditor is enshrined in law. However, while the auditor will answer your questions where possible, they are not always obliged to do so. For example, the question might be better answered by another organisation, require investigation beyond the auditor's remit, or involve disproportionate cost (which is borne by the local taxpayer). Give your smaller authority the opportunity first to explain anything in the accounting records that you are unsure about. If you are not satisfied with their explanation, you can question the external auditor about the accounting records.

The law limits the time available for you formally to ask questions. This must be done in the period for the exercise of public rights, so let the external auditor know your concern as soon as possible. The

advertisement or notice that tells you the accounting records are available to inspect will also give the period for the exercise of public rights during which you may ask the auditor questions, which here means formally asking questions under the Act. You can ask someone to represent you when asking the external auditor questions.

Before you ask the external auditor any questions, inspect the accounting records fully, so you know what they contain. Please remember that you cannot formally ask questions, under the Act, after the end of the period for the exercise of public rights. You may ask your smaller authority other questions about their accounts for any year, at any time. But these are not questions under the Act.

You can ask the external auditor questions about an item in the accounting records for the financial year being audited. However, your right to ask the external auditor questions is limited. The external auditor can only answer 'what' questions, not 'why' questions. The external auditor cannot answer questions about policies, finances, procedures or anything else unless it is directly relevant to an item in the accounting records. Remember that your questions must always be about facts, not opinions. To avoid misunderstanding, we recommend that you always put your questions in writing.

The right to make objections at audit

You have inspected the accounting records and asked your questions of the smaller authority. Now you may wish to object to the accounts on the basis that an item in them is in your view unlawful or there are matters of wider concern arising from the smaller authority's finances. A local government elector can ask the external auditor to apply to the High Court for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful, or to issue a report on matters which are in the public interest. You must tell the external auditor which specific item in the accounts you object to and why you think the item is unlawful, or why you think that a public interest report should be made about it. You must provide the external auditor with the evidence you have to support your objection. Disagreeing with income or spending does not make it unlawful. To object to the accounts you must write to the external auditor stating you want to make an objection, including the information and evidence below and you must send a copy to the smaller authority. The notice must include:

- confirmation that you are an elector in the smaller authority's area;
- why you are objecting to the accounts and the facts on which you rely;
- details of any item in the accounts that you think is unlawful; and
- details of any matter about which you think the external auditor should make a public interest report.

Other than it must be in writing, there is no set format for objecting. You can only ask the external auditor to act within the powers available under the [Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#).

A final word

You may not use this 'right to object' to make a personal complaint or claim against your smaller authority. You should take such complaints to your local Citizens' Advice Bureau, local Law Centre or to your solicitor. Smaller authorities, and so local taxpayers, meet the costs of dealing with questions and objections. In deciding whether to take your objection forward, one of a series of factors the auditor must take into account is the cost that will be involved, they will only continue with the objection if it is in the public interest to do so. They may also decide not to consider an objection if they think that it is frivolous or vexatious, or if it repeats an objection already considered. If you appeal to the courts against an auditor's decision not to apply to the courts for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful, you will have to pay for the action yourself.

For more detailed guidance on public rights and the special powers of auditors, copies of the publication [Local authority accounts: A guide to your rights](#) are available from the NAO website.

If you wish to contact your authority's appointed external auditor please write to the address in paragraph 4 of the *Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return*.

Internal Audit Report for Saxmundham Town Council

for the year ending 31 March 2025

Clerk	Sharon Smith
RFO (if different)	-
Chairperson	Councillor J Findlay
Precept	£ 254,050
Income	£ 273,605
Expenditure	£ 272,963
General reserves	£ 87,222
Earmarked reserves	£ 72,134
Audit type	Annual – non-exempt authority
Auditor name	Victoria Waples

Introduction

The primary objective of internal audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council. To achieve this SALC adopt a predominantly systems-based approach to audit.

The council's internal control system comprises the whole network of systems established within the council to provide reasonable assurance that the council's objectives will be achieved, with reference to:

- the effectiveness of operations
- the economic and efficient use of resources
- compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws, and regulations
- the safeguarding of assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity, and corruption

- the integrity and reliability of information, accounts, and data

Methodology

When conducting the audit, the internal auditor may:

- conduct a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year in order to be able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
- review the reliability and integrity of financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the existence of such assets
- appraise the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed, identify opportunities to improve performance and recommend solutions to problems
- review the established systems to ensure compliance with those policies, procedures, laws, and regulations which could have a significant impact on operations, and determine whether the council complies
- review the operations and activities to ascertain whether results are consistent with objectives and whether they are being conducted as planned

Section 1 – proper bookkeeping The internal auditor will look at the methods and processes used to manage the council's accounts and in particular that it provides clear data for reporting and monitoring purposes. This includes checking information is accurate, kept up to date, referenced and verified.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	The council continues with it's of the Omega Financial Software accounting package which produces a suite of tools to allow for reporting on an Income and Expenditure basis. The software is cloud based allowing for the software to be accessed via a browser with centrally managed back-ups and upgrades thereby adding an extra layer of encryption and security measures. As has previously been stated, the accounting procedure used by the RFO gives a more accurate presentation of the authority's true financial position by ensuring that there is detailed focus on the balance of economic benefits under the council's control, rather than just its bank balance. The financial software used by the Council allows the automation of many of its transactions involving income and expenditure and employee payroll, as well as reports and financial statements.
<i>Is the ledger on the correct basis in relation to the gross income/expenditure?</i>	Yes	Council operates on an Income and Expenditure accounting processes and understands that the accounting statements will include all of the transactions for the year where the council has received economic benefits or given other economic benefits irrespective of the year in which they are paid.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	The cashbook is reconciled on a monthly basis, regularly verified against bank statements and contains entries from day to day of all sums of money received and expended by the council along with matters to which the income and expenditure relates.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	Spot checks were made and were found to be correct. In accordance with good practice, the accounting records also contain a record of income and expenditure in relation to claims made for contribution, grant or subsidies from a government department or other public body.

Section 2 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders The internal auditor will check the date the Council conducted its annual review of both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in particular check if these are based on NALC'S latest model which include legislative changes.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Council's Standing Orders were reviewed and adopted at a meeting of 10 th June 2024 and are based on the latest model published by the National Association of Local Councils (2022) with appropriate amendments. <i>Comment: at the next annual review, Council might wish to note that NALC have updated Model Standing Order (England) section 18 to comply with new procurement legislation and ensure consistency with our Model Financial Regulations. The changes are to 18.a.v, 18.c, 18.d, and 18.f. NALC have also updated Model Standing Order (England) section 14 to better reflect Code of Conduct requirements. 14.a, 14.b, and 14.c have been removed. NALC have also changed the language in the document to gender-neutral terms to align with their policy and the Civility and Respect Project.</i>
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Council's Financial Regulations were reviewed at a full council meeting of 8 th July 2024. Those on the website show a further review date of April 2025. The reviewed regulations are based on those produced by NALC in March of this year and relate to changes necessitated by the Procurement Act 2023.
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	Yes	The Council's Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Parish Council.
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)? ¹	Yes	The Council, in accordance with proper practices and with reference to section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, has employed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) who is responsible for the financial administration of the authority. Council's Financial Regulation 1.5 confirms that the clerk is so appointed.
Additional comments:		

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

Section 3 – Payment controls

The internal auditor will specifically check bank reconciliation including credit/debit cards and management approval processes and evidence that internal Financial Regulations (FO) are being followed. The internal auditor will examine how regular payments are managed and specifically seek evidence that these have been brought back to the Council for verification purposes especially where the actual payment made differs from the amount previously agreed. VAT should be clearly identified including evidence that claims have been correctly managed. The internal auditor will check if the Council has a clear understanding on eligibility in relation to the General Power of Competence and that s.137 has been correctly applied and managed.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	In accordance with its own Financial Regulations covering Banking and payments, expenditure is presented to council on a monthly basis for review and authorisation for payment is made by resolution. Council has ensured that, for the settlement of its invoices by the BACS system, and in accordance with Financial Regulation 7.1, there is a two-tier authorisation system which ensures that the instructions for each payment are signed, or otherwise evidenced, by two authorised bank signatories. A review of the procedures followed for receipt of invoices, agreement of invoice detail and confirmation of goods or services delivery along with approval for payments was undertaken on a sample of individual payments. In the actions undertaken in committing the council's resources, Council is operating within Financial Regulations 7.1 through to 7.12. <i>Comment: with reference to council's own Financial Regulation 6.7 payments made in relation to a continuing contract or obligation (which have been authorised in advance) are reported to the next appropriate meeting of the council for information only.</i>
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	Council continues with its procedure, in accordance with Council's Financial Regulation 7.1, of retaining a two-tier security system for payments which are settled by the BACS system. In the case of BACS payments, the RFO may set up transactions online for approval in advance, once the accounts for payment are approved by the Council, two bank signatories shall authorise the transactions online using their own unique ID. The system ensures that two authorised bank signatories sign the instructions for each payment.

		<p><i>Comment: the system in place not only protects the RFO and fulfils an internal control objective to ensure the safeguarding of public money, but it also allows the council to have in place specific control procedures for payments by bank transfer or other electronic means and a process and mitigating action to protect the council against payment of invoices which may show fraudulent bank account details.</i></p> <p>Council is reminded that Financial Regulation 7.9 states that the approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.</p> <p>Recommendation: council might wish to consider resolving to approve the continued use of the BACS system at its next the Annual Council meeting scheduled for May 2025.</p>
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	<p>VAT is identified in the cash book and reclaimed on an quarterly basis. The VAT Assessment File as produced by the accounting package operated by the RFO was reviewed and verified. The year-end recoverable VAT figure of £4,005.88 was seen and interrogated and reflects that which is shown on the Balance Sheet, as submitted.</p> <p>It is confirmed that the VAT reclaims for Quarters 3 (£5,654.44); 2 (£3,902.22) and 1 (£3,290.07 for the year of 2024-2025 were settled in January 2025, October and July 2024, respectively. The year-end balance of VAT owed from the year 2023-2024 in the sum of £8,237.06 was settled in May 2024.</p> <p>The Internal Auditor undertook sample tests to ensure that the VAT element within payments is being clearly identified and appropriately accounted for within the accounting system. For the period under review, the Finance Officer has ensured that VAT has been appropriately identified in relation and correctly coded according to the council's business and non-business activities within the financial records of the software used thereby confirming that robust arrangements are in place for managing its responsibilities regarding VAT.</p> <p><i>Comment: for the year 2024-2025 VAT has been appropriately identified in relation and correctly coded according to the Council's business and non-business activities within the financial records of the software used by council and the Council has robust arrangements in place for managing its responsibilities regarding VAT.</i></p>

Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ²	Yes	<p>Council, having declared that it fulfilled the eligibility criteria to use the general power of competence (at least two-thirds elected members and a qualified Clerk (CiLCA or higher)), resolved at the meeting of 13th November 2023, to use the power until the next relevant Annual Council Meeting (May 2027).</p> <p>Council continues to ensure that the Grant Scheme offered by the Council has clear evidence supporting requests and payments made. Payments incurred under this category totalled £50,776 against budgeted expenditure of £43,000 and reserves (Capital Replacement Fund) of £9,300. (budget £19,950).</p>
Are payments under s.137 ³ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	N/A	Council uses the discretionary power to do anything that an individual can do unless specifically prohibited by law.
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	Yes	<p>The council has the following Public Works Board Loans:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PW504085 £190,000 which was drawn down in March 2015. Interest repayments are to be made twice yearly on the nearest working day to 2nd May and 2nd November. The half yearly annuity payments of £10,688.62 were made on 14th May and 1st November 2024. Balance outstanding as at 31st March 2025 was seen and verified as £10,567.19. 2. PW659006 £20,000 (net £19,975) which was drawn down in September 2023, following the submission of a full business case, for the renovation of the Gannon Institute. Payments terms are under a EIP for a 10-year term period. Half yearly payments of £1,519.65 and £1,492.30 were made on 12th September 2024 and 12th March 2025, respectively. Balance outstanding as at 31st March 2025 was £17,000.00.
Additional comments:		

² Localism Act

³ Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. The basic power is for a local council to spend money (subject to the statutory limit – of £10.81 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

Section 4 – Risk management The internal auditor will expect to find evidence of the management of risks from identification of what those are for each individual Council through to how these will be managed and the controls in place to mitigate these and that these have been approved by the Council.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?	Yes	<p>At the meeting of 13th January 2025, full council formally reviewed and approved its Risk Management Documents and Procedures for the year 2024 – 2025. Council is aware that its risk assessment needs to focus on the safety of the parish council's assets and in particular its money, and that it needs to demonstrate on an annual basis that it has taken actions to identify and assess those risks and that it has considered what actions or decisions it needs to take during the year to manage in order to avoid financial or reputational consequences.</p> <p><i>Comment: council has ensured that it has annually reviewed the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller relevant body and that it has ensured that measures are fully utilised throughout the year to provide assurance to members that there is a robust system in place which is effective and adequate for preventing members from approving or authorising fund transfers that are not supported by appropriate documentation.</i></p>
Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?	Yes	<p>A review of the Council's financial risk assessment documentation shows that there are in place specific control procedures for payments made by direct bank transfer, which, if reviewed on a regular basis, will provide reassurance that the Council has taken steps to identify, assess and record risks associated with actions and decisions it has taken or considered taking during the year that could have financial or reputational consequences. Council has shown best practice by ensuring that it conducts control and compliance tests of the systems in operation by a non-signatory, thereby separating the roles of overview from that of authorisation. Appropriate mitigation measures are in place to address the risks associated with the management of public finances.</p>

		<i>Comment: Council has noted that in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, it should conduct a formal review of its system of internal control and should have in place monitoring documents which would identify the risks involved with and the potential for improvements to its arrangements to protect public money.</i>
<i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee and has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i>	Yes	<p>During the period under review, council had insurance in place under a Local Councils policy with Clear Council which shows core cover for the following: Public liability: £10million; Employers Liability: £10million; Hirers' Liability £2million and Fidelity Guarantee of £500thousand. Premise cover is identified on a number of properties in the ownership / remit of the council for insurance purposes.</p> <p><i>Comment: it is confirmed that council followed guidance which recommends that the Fidelity Cover is sufficient to provide cover that was equal to at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants to be received in the following April/May thereby reducing the council's exposure to the risks associated with the handling of money, securities and property.</i></p> <p>During the year, being aware that it is the responsibility of the Council as a whole to satisfy itself that insurances are adequate and that all steps have been taken to mitigate and manage identified risks with appropriate insurance, annual reviews of the council's insurance were undertaken prior to renewal. From paperwork seen, council is able to demonstrate that it has reviewed the risks facing the council in transacting its business and has taken out appropriate insurance to manage and reduce the risks relating to property, cash and legal liability (amongst other things), and has satisfied itself that there are no materials facts which might influence the acceptance or assessment of the risks covered by the policy.</p> <p><i>Comment: currently council's insurance policy covers the needs of not only the council but also the Market Hall Trust and the Gannon Institute Trust with cross charges being made to the relevant charity by the town council. Council should be aware that for a body to be a charity it must be independent and undertake its own decision making in terms of administrative responsibilities. Council should understand that there are legal and administrative differences in the manner in which the parish council and the trusts should operate.</i></p>

<i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed⁴</i>	Yes	<p>Confirming that the council is operating within its own internal control, formal evidence (via a minute reference) was given at the meeting of full council on 10th January 2025 that council had formally reviewed the effectiveness of its review as outlined in its Statement of Internal Control for the year ending 31st March 2025.</p> <p><i>Comment: in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, council has understood the requirement to undertake a formal review of its internal controls to enable it to demonstrate that it has taken steps to identify, assess and record the control mechanisms in place to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to safeguard and protect public finances.</i></p>
<i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit was conducted during the year, including consideration of the independence and competence of the internal auditor prior to their appointment⁵</i>	Yes	<p>In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the council formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements, as well as the competence and independence of those conducting the internal audit review.</p> <p><i>Comment: the review of the terms of reference and effectiveness of internal audit are demonstration that Council has understood that the role of internal audit is to evaluate and report on the adequacy of the system on internal control.</i></p>
Additional comments:		

⁴ Accounts and Audit Regulations

⁵ Practitioners Guide

Section 5 – Budgetary controls		
The internal auditor will seek verification that budgets are properly prepared, agreed and monitored. In particular they will look for evidence of good practice in that the key stages of the budgetary process have been followed		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed	Yes	<p>The budget for the year 2024 - 2025 was approved at the council meeting of 15th January 2024, with the minutes demonstrating that the council resolved to accept the Resources Committee recommendation to adopt the draft budget of £257,550 for the financial year 2024-2025.</p> <p>The budget for the year 2025 - 2026 was approved at the Council meeting of 16th January 2025 with council accepting the recommendation from the Resources Committee to adopt the draft balanced budget of £284,000.</p> <p><i>Comment: in accordance with proper practices, council should seek to evidence, within the minutes, the actual budget being set alongside the reasoning for such a budget thereby ensuring transparency in the budgetary process followed by the council.</i></p>
Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted	Yes	<p>The precept for the year 2024 – 2025 was discussed and approved at the meeting of 15th January 2024 with the minutes demonstrating that council resolved to accept the recommendation from the Resources Committee recommendation to set the precept at £254,050 for 2024-2025 which would be a 4.99% increase to the 2023-2024 precept to meet necessary expenditure and level of reserves. The minutes state that this would equate to a Band D Council Tax of £158.03 which would be an increase of £7.73 per annum when compared to that for 2022-2023.</p> <p>The precept for the year 2025 – 2026 was set at the meeting of 16th January 2025 with the minutes confirming that the council accepted the recommendation from the Resources Committee to set the precept at £278,037. The minutes demonstrate that this would equate to a 4.5% increase on a Band D Council Tax and was needed to meet necessary expenditure and maintain the level of reserves. The cost to a Band D property would be £165.14 per annum which would be an increase of £7.11 per annum compared with the previous financial year.</p>

<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	Yes	<p>The minutes evidence that the council conducted reviews covering the budgets for the current year with a review of income and expenditure against budget at relevant periods throughout the year. Monitoring statements produced include breakdown of all receipts and payments balance against the bank.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council in accordance with its own standing order 17c produces regular statements showing evidence of comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure to form the basis of approval for virements in accordance with council's own Standing Orders and Terms of Reference.</i></p>
<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked⁶</i>	Yes	<p>The Council, as at year-end, had Earmarked Reserves totalling £72,133.51 and General Reserves of £87,221.60.</p> <p>Council has, within its own Reserve Policy, (as reviewed and adopted by Council at its meeting in April 2025) set a limit to be held for its general reserve and is aware that this will be subject to further reviews to include cash flow requirements, inflationary and interest rates, diversification of funds to spread risk and optimize interest returns. The adopted policy states that the town council will hold at least three months' equivalent expenditure and that the level of general reserves must be reviewed at least annually during budget setting. Reasoning for the holding of general reserves is given as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To cover unexpected shortfalls in income or emergency spending. • To provide working capital for cash flow needs. • To manage risks, such as legal claims or loss of a revenue source. <p><i>Comment: Council has noted guidance, as issued by Proper Practices (March 2024), which states that it is regarded as acceptable for a council's general (non-earmarked revenue) reserves to be maintained at between three and twelve months of Net Revenue Expenditure and that it should ensure that the level of general reserves adopted is in accordance with its general reserve policy. It is still generally held that councils with income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 should plan towards three months equivalent general reserve and that those councils with self-generated</i></p>

⁶ In accordance with proper practices, the generally accepted minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months of Net Revenue Expenditure

		<p><i>income, should take into account situations that may lead to a loss of revenue as well as increased costs.</i></p> <p>Whilst there is no upper or lower limit to EMRs, save only that they must be held for genuine and identifiable purposes and projects, council has ensured that the levels set are subject to regular review and justification (at least annually and at budget setting) and that they are separately identified and enumerated.</p>
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

Section 6 – income controls		
The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked, and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	Yes	<p>During the year under review, Council received income from a number of identified sources all of which was banked intact with the transactions identified within the accounting system operated by the RFO.</p> <p>In accordance with Financial Regulation 13.2, Council understands that it should review all fees and charges annually, with increases as deemed appropriate. Full council, at its meeting of 8th July 2024 accepted the recommendation from the Amenities and Services Committee to approve revised Market Regulations for the weekly and monthly markets. Under delegated powers, further amendments were made to market rents at the meeting of the Amenities and Services Committees of 3rd October 2024 and 21st November 2024.</p> <p><i>Comment: council is aware that fee reviews are essential to ensure that the council's income module remains competitive as well as ensuring profitability is maintained. This will ensure that the council's revenue streams are fully optimized allowing for adjustments where necessary.</i></p> <p>A sample review of the control rents for market and land rentals was undertaken during the internal audit visit and all expected income was found to be based on the correct price, properly recorded and promptly banked with VAT (where appropriate) accounted for.</p> <p><i>Comment: in accordance with proper practices, Council has ensured that there are appropriate control procedures in place along with documentation to provide a clear audit trail through to invoicing and recovery of all such income.</i></p> <p>Further spot checks during the internal audit visit on further items paid under BACS / Direct Credit into the Council's Accounts were cross checked against cashbook, bank statements and invoices raised by the Council.</p>
Is income reported to full council?	Yes	A review of the financial transaction reports was undertaken to ensure income was coded to the appropriate nominal income code and all were

		<p>found to be in order with appropriate control procedures and documentation to provide a clear underlying audit trail through to invoicing and recovery of all such income.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is aware that Proper Guidance states that uncollectible amounts, including bad debts, should only be written off with the approval of members, or under delegated authority by the Responsible Financial Officer and that such approval should be shown in the accounting records.</i></p>
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	<p>Council received precept in the sum of £254,050 from East Suffolk Council for the period under review in April and September 2024 as reported within the Income and Expenditure Reports for the months of April and September. Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved to being served on the Charging Authority to remittance advice showing the Precept to be paid and receipt of same in the Council's Bank Account.</p>
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁷</i>	Yes	<p>For the period under review Council received CIL Receipts in the sum of £1,045.91. CIL receipts are reported to full Council as part of its overall Income and Expenditure Reports.</p>
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	Yes	<p>CIL receipts received are reported within the financial reports submitted to full council.</p>
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	Yes	<p>The CIL financial overview report for 2024-2025 shows a year-end balance of £42,693.51 which is retained in Earmarked Reserves specifically allocated, in accordance with the Regulations.</p>
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	<p>The Annual CIL Statement for 2024-2025 has been produced and presented to full Council for formal approval.</p>
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	Yes	<p>The statement for the year ending 31st March 2025 was confirmed as being present on the council's website and reflects the sums incurred, expended and retained by the council.</p> <p><i>Comment: council is aware that the Regulations provide clarity on the timing of the reports, and by which date they should be brought into the public domain.</i></p>
Additional comments:		

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

Section 7 – petty cash The Internal Auditor will seek evidence that the Council has followed its own policies, procedures, and verification processes and that these are up to date.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	<i>No</i>	The council does not operate a petty cash system.
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	<i>N/A</i>	
Additional comments:		

Section 8 – Payroll controls		
The Internal Auditor will check salaries were approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	Yes	Council had 6 employees on its payroll at the period end of 31 st March 2025. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit visit for the year ending 31 st March 2025, but the Clerk has confirmed that all staff have an employment contract.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	Council ensures that there are suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and associated liabilities and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.
<i>Minimum wage paid?</i>	No	No member of staff is paid the minimum wage.
<i>Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments to the council? Does this include a verification process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied?</i>	Yes	There are suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and associated liabilities and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.
<i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i>	Yes	The payroll function for the year under review is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines and outsourced. Cross-checks were completed on payments covering salary and PAYE were found to be in order. Deductions paid to HM Revenue and Customs during the year under review were made in accordance with timescales as set out in the regulations. The meeting of 10 th February 2025 resolved that the town clerk would sign up to an HR and Health and Safety software package to streamline process which would also be used for the payroll function.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?⁸</i>	Yes	Council is aware of its pension responsibilities and payments are made in accordance with timescales agreed with the council's Pension Providers.

⁸ The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

<i>Have pension re-declaration duties been carried out</i>	Yes	Council's re-declaration of compliance with regards to re-enrolment was confirmed as having been undertaken on 11 th October 2022.
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	Yes	There is a satisfactory expense system in place and all staff expenses claimed are approved in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations. <i>Comment: it is noted during the year under review, council was, on occasions, in breach of its own financial regulation 9.4 with staff using personal credit or debit cards to purchase items on behalf of the town council.</i>
<p><i>Comment: the clerk has confirmed that the above practice relating to staff use of person credit or debit cards has now ceased and that effective 1st April 2025, the town council and the Gannon Institute Charity and Market Hall Chairty have their own corporate credit cards. The cards have an appropriate monthly limit along with a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by the Resources Committee in writing before any order is placed. The clerk has ensured that there is a 2-factor authentication process involved for all payment.</i></p> <p>Recommendation: council should ensure that each payment is recorded in a separate control account with the total of such payments each calendar month reported in the cashbook. The cashbook account specifically set up for the newly acquired debit cards should be reviewed by two members to ensure that the correct payments have been made.</p>		

Section 9 – Asset control		
The Internal Audit will be seeking to establish if there is a list of assets in accordance with proper practices including the date of acquisition, location, and value. This extends to checking policies (with evidence of review) and that the Council has applied the documented approach in practice. The Internal Auditor will check not only valuation processes but the existence of reserve budgets for depreciation and adequacy of insurance. A clear audit trail should be available when items are purchased including minutes to evidence approval.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?⁹</i>	Yes	The Asset Register is held on a computerised system and covers those items listed under insurance and within the parish council's remit for maintenance and ownership. Council's asset policy defines fixed assets as items of machinery and equipment which have a useful life of more than one year. The Asset Register currently stands at £487,422.79 and shows overall movement to that declared at the year-end of 31 st March 2024 (£486,202.83) taking into account acquisitions and disposals during the year under review. The Internal Auditor reviewed the Asset Register to allow the spot check to be conducted.
<i>Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	The RFO has ensured that the council has a formal asset register which is routinely updated to record new assets at historic cost price, net of VAT along with removal of any assets disposed of / no longer serviceable. Where assets have been gifted or where there is no known value, assets have been given the proxy value of £1. This value has also been applied to community assets, which, in accordance with guidance, are treated in the same manner as gifted assets. <i>Comment: This current valuation for assets commonly known as community assets is in line with requirements for smaller authorities to record each asset at its original purchase cost or where the original purchase cost is unknown at the time of first recording on the asset register, a current value is recorded, which acts as a proxy value to the original cost and will remain unchanged until disposal.</i>

⁹ Practitioners Guide

<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	N/A	Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit review.
<i>Are copies of licences or leases available for assets sited at third party property?</i>	N/A	Council has declared that it does not have any assets located on third party property.
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	The asset register is still to be signed off by the council but the values on the Asset Register seen on the website equal that detailed at Line 9 on the DRAFT Accounting Statements of the AGAR. The council continues to use the preferred value for exiting assets as the original acquisition cost and has ensured that the fixed asset value for any individual item will not usually be altered from year to year (unless a material enhancement has taken place). As such the change in the total value for fixed assets (in box 9 of the Council's accounting statements) indicates the acquisition of new assets of significance.
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	The Asset Register was reviewed during the Internal Audit Visit and a spot check of assets against the insurance schedule was undertaken to ensure that all assets are recorded appropriately and under insurance. Council has insurance under all risks cover for its assets as specified under the headings on the insurance schedule including furniture, fixtures and fittings at four premises listed on the insurance schedule.
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

Section 10 – bank reconciliation The internal auditor will seek to establish that the Council understands and can evidence good practice and internal control mechanisms in relation to bank reconciliation.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	Yes	<p>Bank reconciliations are completed on a regular basis and reconcile with the cash sheets. Overall there is regular reporting of bank balances within the detailed financial reports submitted to both full council and the Finance and Governance Committee.</p> <p>A review of sample of transactions from the cashbooks from the months of April 2024 to March 2025 across the accounts held by the council was undertaken to verify the detail held within the cashbooks to that shown on the bank statement. There were no matters arising from the review which suggested that there were errors in the entries and there was no identification of signs of fraud or duplicate entries (for which explanations or corrections were not forthcoming).</p> <p><i>Comment: The reconciliations conducted allow for the process of comparing internal records against statements from financial institutions and other external sources to ensure money that exits in an account matches money spent.</i></p>
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	<p>Bank balances as of 31st March 2025 agree with the year-end bank statements and at year end stood at £164,926.01 across the accounts held in the council's name.</p> <p>Saxmundham Town Council currently holds investments with the Cambridge Building Society and CCLA and both current and savings accounts with Unity Bank. Council is aware that in accordance with proper practices it is required to ensure that it has assessed the counterparty and is satisfied that the sum invested is not subject to unreasonable risk. Council has adopted and annually reviews its Investment Policy & Strategy. The adopted policy reflects the statutory guidance on Local Government Investments (3rd Edition) issued under Section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003 and sets out the Town Council's objectives, practices and reporting arrangements for the effective management and control of treasury activities</p>

		and associated risks. Clear reporting and monitoring procedures are outlined within the policy with any departures being brought back to the Resources Committee for review and approval.
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	<p>Overall there is regular reporting of bank balances within the detailed financial reports submitted to the council. Council continues with the system whereby the monthly reconciled bank accounts are presented to the council appointed Internal Controller ensuring that there is access to not only the reconciliation of the cash book to bank statements but also the underlying background evidence upon which the reconciliation is based.</p> <p><i>Comment: Approval of the bank reconciliation by the authority or an authority nominee is not only good practice but is also a safeguard for the Responsible Financial Officer and fulfils one of the authority's internal control objectives.</i></p>

Section 11 – year end procedures		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Are appropriate accounting procedures used?	Yes	The Internal Auditor confirms that, having reviewed the year-end files, there is a full underlying financial trail from financial records to the accounts produced.
Financial trail from records to presented accounts	Yes	<p>The RFO has ensured that the Council's accounting software contains and records details on its assets and liabilities including the asset and investment register and other debts. The accuracy of the year-end bank reconciliation detail is verified along with the correct disclosure of the combined cash and bank balances in the AGAR, section 2, line 8.</p> <p>Year-end balances agree with cash book and bank reconciliations:</p> <p>Debtors: £160.00 Prepayments £3,589.32 VAT Account: £4,005.88 Bank Accounts: £164,926.01 Charitable Trusts VAT (Liability): £2,083.67 Creditors (Liability): £9,892.43 Accruals (Liability): £350.00 Receipts in advance (Liability): £1,000.00 Represented by: Total Reserves: £159,355.111</p>
Has the appropriate end of year AGAR ¹⁰ documents been completed?	Yes	<p>As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it will be required to complete Part 3 of the AGAR. Section 2 - Accounting Statements of the AGAR were completed and signed by the RFO at the time of Internal Audit.</p> <p>It should be noted that given its level of income, the Council meets the requirement for an intermediate level review. Details of the additional submission requirements for those meeting this level of review can be found within the Detailed Instructions Update for the year ending 31st March 2025.</p>

¹⁰ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

<i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?</i>	N/A	As the Council was a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 during the year 2023-2024, it was not able to certify itself as an exempt authority.
<i>During the period in question did the small authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015?</i>	No	<p>The internal auditor is able to confirm that the notice of the public rights was seen on the website and can confirm that the dates set were 3rd June to 12th July 2024 with the form dated 29th May 2024. However, although the AGAR was signed on 13th May 2024, proper practices requires the council to review the effectiveness of internal audit relating to the audit work carried prior to signing off the annual Governance Statement within the AGAR. As such the AGAR was brought back to council on 10th June 2024 and so signed. This therefore meant that the period for the exercise of public rights began after that period.</p> <p><i>Comment: Within the Annual Internal Audit Report, internal control objective test M requires the internal auditor to establish whether the parish council correctly provided for the exercise and published a copy of the required "Public Notice" by ensuring that it clearly identified the statutory 30 working day period when the Authority's records are available for public inspection. Whilst this was initially evidenced by the notice on the website which contained the period for the exercise of public right; details of the manner in which the documents can be inspected; the name and address of the external auditor and the provisions as contained under section 25 and section 27 of the Act, a new form should have been produced after the meeting of 10th June to ensure compliance with the regulations.</i></p> <p>Recommendation: as Council is unable to demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of the public rights during Summer of 2024, it should answer in the negative to Assertion 4 on the Annual Governance Statement for the year under review.</p>
<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?¹¹</i>	Yes	<p>The Internal Auditor is able to confirm that the Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 and published the following for the year 2023/24 on a public website:</p> <p>Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the AGAR</p>

¹¹ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

		Section 3 – The External Auditor Report and Certificate Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Notice of Conclusion of Audit Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR as audited.
Additional comments:		
Section 12 – internal audit The internal auditor will revisit weaknesses and recommendations previously identified to see if these have been addressed. They will also check if any changes introduced require further verification to ensure effectiveness of the corrective action taken.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?</i>	Yes	The Internal Audit Report for the year ending 31 st March 2024 was considered and adopted at a meeting of full Council on 10 th June 2024.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	Yes	Members received the internal audit report and noted the one recommendation and accepted the Resources Committee's recommendations to address any recommendations therein. 1. Review of VAT assessment file versus that declared as at year-end. <i>Comment: Council has followed guidance which confirms that, in accordance with Proper Practices, the annual review of internal audit should be received and recorded as such by the Council (or delegated committee). Any actions planned from the outcomes of the tests undertaken along with the narrative reports from the Internal Auditors should be the subject of an audit plan detailing actions to be undertaken, members or officers responsible for delivering improvement and deadlines for the completion of the actions.</i>
<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i>	Yes	At the meeting of 10 th June 2024, full council, having reviewed the effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements with full regard to the statutory requirements for internal audit in terms of size, scope and current financial arrangements, resolved to appoint SALC as its internal auditor for the year 2024-25 on the basis of Section 4 of the Accountability and Governance Practitioner's Guide 2024. The letter of engagement was signed at the meeting of 14 th April 2025.

<i>Has the letter of engagement been approved by full council?</i>	Yes	<i>Comment: by approving the letter of engagement, Council will be following Proper Practices by ensuring it has clarity on the provision of internal audit including the roles and responsibilities, audit planning and timing of visits, reporting requirements, rights to access to information, members and officers, period of engagement and remuneration.</i>
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

Section 13 – external audit for the period under review		
The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be considered.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Has the Council considered the previous external audit report? ¹²	Yes	The External Audit Report and Certificate for the year ending 31 st March 2024 was submitted to and considered by Full Council with formal adoption at the meeting of 14 th October 2024.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?	yes	<p>The report from the external auditors details a certification which was completed with an exception.</p> <p>The certificate dated 18th September 2024 makes the following comment:</p> <p>“The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The smaller authority has not restated the prior year figure when removing assets that it never owned from the asset registry in Section 2, Box 9. <p>The AGAR has not been approved in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AGAR does not contain the correct minute reference for Section 2, which should read 38/24TCf”. <p>Other matters not affecting their opinion which they draw to the attention of the authority:</p> <p>“We note that the smaller authority did not comply with Regulation 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as it failed to make proper provision during the year 2024/25 for the exercise of public rights, since the approval date was after the start of the period for the exercise of public rights. As a result, the smaller authority must answer ‘No’ to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2025/26”.</p>

¹² Regulation 20 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – following completion of an audit the Council should note that it is the Council as a whole (i.e., All members) and not a committee that should receive and consider the audit letter (including Annual Return and Certificate) from the local auditor as soon as reasonably practicable and the minutes should reflect that these have been received.

		<p>The Internal Auditor is able to verify that the external auditor report and certificate along with the conclusion of the external audit have been published on the Council's website in accordance with the prescribed timescales. Details as to how copies may be purchased have also been included.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council has noted Regulation 16 and 20 (in part) which states that the annual audit letter received from the auditor must be considered by the authority and published (including publication on the authority's website) and to permit copies to be purchased.</i></p>
<p><i>Additional comments: council is aware that it must comply with the instruction given by the external auditor in relation to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statements for the year 2024-2025.</i></p>		

Section 14 – additional information		
The internal auditor will look for additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation? ¹³	Yes	Council held a meeting of the council on 13 th May 2024 at which the Chair was elected for the civic year. <i>Comment: Council is aware that Section 15 of LGA Act 1972, requires local councils to appoint a Chair (Mayor) as the first business to be transacted at the Annual Council Meeting which is to be held in May.</i>
Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation? ¹⁴	Yes	Council is aware that that under LGA 1972 schedule 12, paragraphs 41(1) and 44 the draft minutes of a meeting should be formally approved (with any necessary amendments) at the next meeting. At each meeting, the Chair is given formal approval to sign the minutes.
Is there a list of members' interests held?	Yes	Evidence was seen on the council's website of the Register of Interests for all current parish councillors. <i>Comment: Council has followed guidance under the Openness and Transparency on personal interests – a guide for Councillors – August 2012 -which recommends that where a parish (town) council has their own website, its register of interests must be published on that website. A direct link from the council's website to the District's would also satisfy the guidance issued.</i>
Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?	Yes	The Council acts as sole trustees for the Market Hall, Saxmundham Charity (Charity Number 235072) and Gannon Institute, Saxmundham Charity (Charity Number 242679). The Council holds separate meetings to discuss matters covering the Trusts' transactions in accordance with the trusts' documents. <i>Comment: it is noted that the minutes of the Staffing Sub-Committee of 13th September 2024 received a report in consideration of the estimate of percentage time spent on the Town Council and the Charitable Trusts, to</i>

¹³ The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2)

¹⁴ Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011

		<i>inform any consideration of apportioning the staffing budget. It is confirmed that the budget set for the Town Council for the year 2025-2026 itemises the approximate costs incurred for the two trusts. As has been previously mentioned, council might wish to review the support costs incurred in the general running of the Trusts such as administrative costs and ensure that they are shared (apportioned) across the town council and trust to ensure longer-term financial sustainability.</i>
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	Yes	<p>Council has shown compliancy with the minimum datasets that should be published on a quarterly basis as per the requirements as set out in the Local Government Transparency Code (2015), with a range of documents relating to the current year being able to view on the Council's website.</p> <p>For Saxmundham Town Council, the transparency code requirements include the publication of quarterly reporting of spending transactions valued over £500; quarterly reporting of invitation to tender for contracts over £5,000; quarterly publication of details of every transaction on a government procurement card; the annual reporting of organisational charts; annual reporting of all grants made to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations and the annual reporting of the location of public land and assets.</p> <p><i>Comment: Appendix A of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (published February 2015) provides further details of all information to be published along with relevant timescales.</i></p> <p><i>A link to the guide can be found at: Transparency Code 2015</i></p>
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?¹⁵</i>	Yes	<p>The Council is correctly registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation.</p> <p>The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to have a publication scheme, approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), and to publish information covered by this scheme. Council has such a scheme, which sets out the Council's commitment to make certain classes of information routinely available, such as policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, annual reports and financial information and is available to view on the council's website.</p>

¹⁵ Data Protection Act 2018

<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	Yes	Council has taken active steps to ensure compliancy with the GDPR requirements and has reviewed its GDPR Policies during the year ensuring that at all times it is able to provide clear responsibilities and obligations of the Council in respect of the collecting, using and protecting of personal information in accordance with the provisions of the GDPR. Appropriate Data Protection policies and procedures are in place along with the lawful basis for the processing of data covered by the regulations as well as policies that deal with the effective management of its records thereby demonstrating that the Council has acted in compliance with its legal and regulatory obligations.
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?¹⁶</i>	Yes	The Regulations of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 was enacted on 23rd September 2018. The regulations aim to ensure public sector websites and mobile apps are accessible to all users, especially those with disabilities. Council's Accessibility Statement details how information will be produced on a website and how to gain access to content that is readily accessible to view as well as detailing the technical information of the website along with the methods used for testing the website; the steps being taken to improve accessibility and how the site is being improved to ensure that content meets the WCAG 2.1 Standard under Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
<i>Does the council have official email addresses for correspondence?¹⁷</i>	Yes	Council has a GOV.UK domain for its council website which also supports a secure and digitally managed email system. Council is aware of the importance of ensuring that it uses a secure e-mail system with a gov.uk address thereby identifying that it has local government status and demonstrating authenticity when building trust and credibility with the public.
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	Council's day to day records are subject to regular back-ups to a cloud-based secure system.
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	Yes	Council reviewed the Terms of Reference for its standing committees in July 2024, details of which, including areas of responsibility and delegated authority, are published on the website.

¹⁶ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

¹⁷ Practitioners Guide

Additional comments:

The Internal Auditor offers her appreciation for the assistance given by the Town Clerk and her staff in completing this audit. The year-end files were extremely well presented for review and council's staff are to be commended.

Council is to be commended as it continues to be able to demonstrate effective governance arrangements and can show evidence of strong governance and good financial practice.

The examination of the year-end accounts and supporting documentation has further confirmed that the Responsible Financial Officer has satisfactorily undertaken the administration of the Council's financial affairs and produced satisfactory financial management information to enable the Council to make well-informed decisions.

Recommendations made and/or commentary provided are to enhance the systems in place as opposed to detract from the positive assurance that can be given as to the manner in which the Council's finances are managed.

For further information and for the year effective 1st April 2025 please refer to Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England - [A Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices to be applied in the preparation of statutory annual accounts and governance statements - March 2025](#).

Signed: ***V S Waples***

Date of Internal Audit Visit: 22.04.25

Date of Internal Audit Report: 24.04.25

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils

SAXMUNDHAM TOWN COUNCIL - MAY 2025

01/05/2025			Balance Brought Forward - Unity Trust Bank Current	£162,799.35				
			Balance Brought Forward - Unity Trust Bank Savings	£0.00				
			Balance Brought Forward - Cambridge Building Society	£75,000.00				
			Balance Brought Forward - Public Sector Deposit Fund	£60,000.00				
				£297,799.35				
Payments/Transfers from Unity Trust Bank Current								
Invoice Date	PO No	Supplier	Description	Gross	VAT	Net	Code	Authority
16/05/2025	n/a	Nest	Pensions - Month 2	£506.89	£0.00	£506.89	4000 Pre-Approved Payments List	
20/05/2025	n/a	HMRC	PAYE - Month 2	2110.71	£0.00	£2,110.71	4000 Pre-Approved Payments List	
23/05/2025	n/a	Staff Salaries	Salaries - Month 2	£7,688.96	£0.00	£7,688.96	4000 Pre-Approved Payments List	
19/05/2025	n/a	EE	Mobile Phone - Month 2	£19.20	£0.00	£19.20	4260 Pre-Approved Payments List	
28/04/2025	n/a	The Cleaning Company	Cleaning - Month 1	£299.40	£49.90	£249.50	4200 Pre-Approved Payments List	
02/05/2025	n/a	Smartest Energy	Electricity - Month 1	£72.32	£3.44	£68.88	4205 Pre-Approved Payments List	
02/05/2025	n/a	Smartest Energy	Gas - Month 1	£86.69	£4.13	£82.56	4205 Pre-Approved Payments List	
13/05/2025	n/a	Everflow	Water - Month 3	£30.30	£0.00	£30.30	4205 Pre-Approved Payments List	
31/05/2025	n/a	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges - Month 2	£14.70	£0.00	£14.70	4235 Pre-Approved Payments List	
30/04/2025	n/a	OfficeFlow	Photocopier Service Charge - Month 1	£177.22	£29.54	£147.68	4240 Pre-Approved Payments List	
01/05/2025	8/25TC	Public Works Loan Board	Final Payment - Town House Loan	£10,688.71	£0.00	£10,688.71	4300 Pre-Approved Payments List	
09/05/2025	n/a	Groundworks UK	Neighbourhood Plan - Unspent Funds	£6,376.00	£0.00	£6,376.00	4705/EMR Resources Committee - 58/24RC	
16/05/2025	n/a	Unity Trust Bank Savings	Transfer	£40,000.00	£0.00	£40,000.00	n/a Resources Committee - 16/25RC	
16/05/2025	n/a	CCLA PDSF	Transfer	£50,000.00	£0.00	£50,000.00	n/a Resources Committee - 16/25RC	
16/05/2025	n/a	Cambridge Building Society	Transfer	£20,000.00	£0.00	£20,000.00	n/a Resources Committee - 16/25RC	
02/04/2025	n/a	Market Hall - PHS Group	Sanitary Disposal	£854.38	£142.39	£711.99	4210 Pre-Approved Payments List	
17/04/2025	n/a	Robert Ross - Ebay	Equipment	£21.00	£3.50	£17.50	4265 Pre-Approved Payments List	
29/04/2025	9/25TC	Viking	Stationery	£192.40	£32.07	£160.33	4245 Pre-Approved Payments List	
06/05/2025	n/a	Sharon Smith - Travis Perkins	Wildlife Walk - Boardwalk Materials	£65.82	£7.64	£58.18	4829 Amenities and Services Committee - 121/24AS	
15/05/2025	n/a	Lisa Hamon - Tesco	VE Day Event - Supplies	£35.90	£0.00	£35.90	4505 Events and Communications Committee - 65/24EC	
29/04/2025	85A/24TC	Amy Rayner - Ladybird	Town House - Planters Compost	£52.00	£0.00	£52.00	4670 Amenities and Services Committee - 48/24AS	
25/04/2025	??	Harris Handyman Services	Memorial Field Bridge Labour	£800.00	£0.00	£800.00	4235 Amenities and Services Committee - 121/24AS	
30/04/2025	n/a	Geraldine Barker	Fromus Energy Projects Team - Stationery	£10.42	£0.00	£10.42	4105 Pre-Approved Payments List	
01/05/2025	n/a	Hoey Ainscough Associates	Code of Conduct Training	£918.00	£120.00	£798.00	4095 Resources Committee - 7/25TC	
06/05/2025	85A/24TC	Amy Rayner	Town House - Planters	£27.45	£0.00	£27.45	4670 Amenities and Services Committee - 48/24AS	
06/05/2025	n/a	Coastal Fire	Emergency Lighting Service - Town House	£71.40	£11.90	£59.50	4670 Pre-Approved Payments List	
06/05/2025	n/a	Coastal Fire	Emergency Lighting Service - Youth Booth	£71.40	£11.90	£59.50	4675 Pre-Approved Payments List	
03/05/2025	n/a	Harris Handyman Services	Contracted Help - Lamppost Brackets	£40.00	£0.00	£40.00	4830 Pre-Approved Payments List	
02/05/2025	n/a	Viking	Felt Notice Board	£50.33	£8.39	£41.94	4265 Pre-Approved Payments List	
29/04/2025	n/a	Robert Ross - Ebay	Lampost Neoprene Sleeves	£43.75	£0.00	£43.75	4830 Pre-Approved Payments List	
28/04/2025	n/a	Market Hall	Monthly Market - Hall Hire	£80.00	£0.00	£80.00	4220 Pre-Approved Payments List	
28/04/2025	n/a	Market Hall	Town Council - Hall Hire	£40.00	£0.00	£40.00	4220 Pre-Approved Payments List	
06/05/2025	n/a	Saxmundham Museum	Grant	£1,350.00	£0.00	£1,350.00	4555 Resources Committee - 18/25RC	
06/05/2025	n/a	Saxmundham Womens Institute	Grant	£150.00	£0.00	£150.00	4555 Resources Committee - 18/25RC	
06/05/2025	n/a	Saxmundham Music & Arts CIC	Grant	£5,000.00	£0.00	£5,000.00	4555 Resources Committee - 18/25RC	
12/05/2025	n/a	IP17 GNS	Grant	£10,000.00	£0.00	£10,000.00	4555 Town Council - 23/25TC	
12/05/2025	13/25TC	Jess Palmer	VE Day - Decorations	£151.24	£21.59	£129.65	4505 Events and Communications Committee - 65/24	
				£158,096.59	£446.39	£157,650.20		

Lloyds Bank Multipay Card

Invoice Date	PO No	Supplier	Description	Gross	VAT	Net	Code	Authority
09/05/2025	n/a	Lloyds Bank	Credit Card Charge - Month 2	£3.00	£0.00	£3.00	4235	Pre-Approved Payments List
17/04/2025	n/a	Travis Perkins	Wildlife Walk - Boardwalk Materials	£482.47	£80.41	£402.03	4235	Amenities and Services Committee - TBC
17/04/2025	n/a	Travis Perkins	Wildlife Walk - Boardwalk Materials	£465.12	£77.52	£387.60	4235	Amenities and Services Committee - TBC
19/04/2025	n/a	Travis Perkins	Refund	-£5.71	£0.00	-£5.71	4235	n/a
				£944.88	£157.93	£786.92		

Receipts to Unity Trust Bank Current

Received	Invoice No	Payer	Description	Amount	Code
01/05/2025	n/a	Gannnon Institute	Rialtas Cashbook and Ledgers Fee Reimbursement VAT	£70.60	1105
01/05/2025	n/a	Gannnon Institute	Rialtas Year End Fee Reimbursement	£100.00	1105
01/05/2025	n/a	Gannnon Institute	Rialtas Year End Fee Reimbursement VAT	£20.00	1105
01/05/2025	n/a	Gannnon Institute	Rialtas Cloud User Fee Reimbursement VAT	£67.60	1105
27/05/2025	TC13	Stall Holders	Weekly Market - May	£40.00	1100

15/05/2025	TC16	Stall Holders	Monthly Market - May	£15.00	1100
14/05/2025	TC21	Stall Holders	Monthly Market - May	£15.00	1100
19/05/2025	TC22	Stall Holders	Monthly Market - May	£15.00	1100
01/05/2025	n/a	Cambridge Building society	Transfer	£10,000.00	n/a
02/05/2025	n/a	CCLA	Intrest	£220.06	n/a
30/05/2025	TC14	Stall Holders	Weekly Market - May	40.00	1100
				£10,603.26	

Payments from Cambridge Building Society

Received	Invoice No	Payer	Description	Amount	
01/05/2025	n/a	Unity Trust Bank Current	Transfer	£10,000.00	
				£10,000.00	

Receipts to Unity Trust Bank Savings

Received	Invoice No	Payer	Description	Amount	
15/05/2025	n/a	Unity Trust Bank Current	Transfer	£40,000.00	
				£40,000.00	

Receipts to CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund

Received	Invoice No	Payer	Description	Amount	
16/05/2025	n/a	Unity Trust Bank Current	Transfer	£50,000.00	
				£50,000.00	

Receipts to Cambridge Building Society

Received	Invoice No	Payer	Description	Amount	
19/05/2025	n/a	Unity Trust Bank Current	Transfer	£20,000.00	
				£20,000.00	

31/05/2025

Balance Carried Forward - Unity Trust Bank Current	£14,361.14	
Balance Carried Forward - Unity Trust Bank Savings	£40,000.00	
Balance Carried Forward - Cambridge Building Society	£85,000.00	
Balance Carried Forward - Public Sector Deposit Fund	£110,000.00	
	£249,361.14	

Town Council Budget Versus Actual Income and Expenditure 2025-2026											
Line Number	Cost Centre	Nominal Code	Item	Approved Budget 2025-2026	Income and Expenditure 31/05/25	Committed 31/05/25	Budget Under/Overspend 31/05/25	Percentage			
			INCOME								
			RESOURCES COMMITTEE - ADMINISTRATION AND CONSULTANCY								
1	100	1076	Precept	£ 278,037	£ 139,019	£ 139,019		100%			
2	101	1150	Community Infrastructure Levy	£ -	£ 9,799	£ -					
3	102	1105	Charitable Trusts' Reimbursement	£ -	£ 4,770	£ -	£ 4,770				
4	103	1090	Bank Interest	£ 4,000	£ 449	£ -		11%			
			Total	£ 282,037	£ 154,037	£ 139,019	£ 4,770				
			CIVIC AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE - CIVIC SERVICES								
5	110	1305	Civic Grants	£ -	£ 5,000	£ -	£ 5,000				
6	105	1100	Market Stallage Fees	£ 1,800	£ 364	£ -		20%			
			Total	£ 1,800	£ 5,364	£ -	£ 5,000				
			AMENITIES AND SERVICES COMMITTEE - PARKS AND RECREATION								
7	107	1110	Land Rental	£ 603	£ -	£ -					
8	106	1310	Project Grants	£ -	£ 1,000	£ -	£ 1,000				
			Total	£ 603	£ 1,000	£ -	£ 1,000				
			TOTAL INCOME	£ 284,440	£ 160,401	£ 139,019	£ 10,770				
			EXPENDITURE								
			STAFFING COMMITTEE - STAFFING RESOURCE								
9	120	4000	Town Council Salaries (82%)	£ 101,008	£ 16,739	£ 84,269		100%			
10	120	4055	Payroll Service	£ 350	£ -	£ -		0%			
11	120	4060	Recruitment	£ 100	£ -	£ -		0%			
12	120	4095	Staff Training and Development	£ 2,500	£ 2,178	£ 36		89%			
13	140	4120	Councillor Training and Development	£ 300	£ 798	£ 650	£ 1,148	483%			
			Total	£ 104,258	£ 19,715	£ 84,955					
			RESOURCES COMMITTEE - ADMINISTRATION AND CONSULTANCY								
14	140	4105	Councillor Expenses	£ 50	£ 10			20%			
15	140	4275	Elections Contingency	£ 1,000	£ -	£ 1,000		100%			
16	160	4200	Town House Cleaning	£ 3,000	£ 374	£ -		12%			
17	160	4205	Town House Utilities	£ 3,200	£ 245	£ -		8%			
18	160	4210	Town House Refuse Collection	£ 1,250	£ 449	£ -		36%			
19	160	4220	Meeting Room Hire	£ 600	£ 70	£ -		12%			
20	160	4228	Financial Software	£ 3,500	£ 3,261	£ -		93%			
21	160	4230	Internal and External Audit	£ 1,250	£ 524	£ -		42%			
22	160	4235	Bank Charges	£ 153	£ 31	£ -		20%			
23	160	4240	Photocopier Lease and Toner	£ 2,000	£ 396	£ 746		57%			
24	160	4245	Stationery	£ 1,300	£ 160	£ 28		14%			
25	160	4250	Subscriptions	£ 1,800	£ 1,125	£ -		63%			
26	160	4255	IT Support	£ 4,050	£ 736	£ 3,042		93%			
27	160	4260	Telephone and Broadband	£ 1,000	£ 217	£ 648		87%			
28	160	4265	Town House Equipment and Supplies	£ 1,000	£ 338	£ 50		39%			
29	160	4270	Insurance	£ 1,800	£ 4,953	£ -	£ 3,153	275%			
30	310	4615	Legal Consultancy	£ 1,000	£ -	£ -		0%			
31	310	4705	Project Consultancy	£ 6,000	£ -	£ -		0%			
32	170	4300	Town House - PWLB Repayment	£ 10,700	£ 10,689	£ -		100%			

33	170	4406	Gannon Institute - PWLB Repayment	£	2,903	£	-	£	2,903		100%		
			Total	£	47,556	£	23,578	£	8,418	£	3,153		
			CIVIC AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE - CIVIC AND COMMUNITY SERVICES										
34	200	4400	Newsletter & Publicity	£	1,500	£	145	£	-		10%		
35	200	4405	Website Support and Development	£	4,000	£	60	£	-		2%		
36	140	4100	Chairs Civic Allowance	£	400	£	310	£	-		78%		
37	200	4825	Markets Support	£	500	£	-	£	-		0%		
38	300	4555	Community Grants	£	34,500	£	16,500	£	-		48%		
39	320	4505	Events	£	10,000	£	631	£	-		6%		
40	320	4560	Christmas Trees and Lights	£	6,700	£	-	£	6,700		100%		
			Total	£	57,600	£	17,646	£	6,700	£	-		
			AMENITIES AND SERVICES COMMITTEE - TOWN HOUSE										
41	600	4670	Building Maintenance	£	250	£	476	£	-	£	226	190%	
42	160	4285	Health and Safety	£	1,100	£	1,077	£	-	-£	23	98%	
			Total	£	1,350	£	1,553	£	-	£	203		
			AMENITIES AND SERVICES COMMITTEE - PARKS AND RECREATION										
43	500	4829	Memorial Field	£	6,000	£	1,008	£	420		24%		
44	500	4830	Street Furniture	£	3,000	£	847	£	2,702	£	549	118%	
45	500	4810	Green Team Activities	£	3,000	£	20	£	302		11%		
46	500	4815	Grounds Maintenance	£	3,300			£	-		0%		
47	500	4821	Tree Survey and Maintenance	£	2,600			£	-		0%		
48	600	4650	General Town Maintenance	£	1,000			£	177		18%		
49	600	4675	Youth Booth Maintenance	£	200	£	60	£	-		30%		
50	500	4824	Traffic Calming	£	2,500			£	-		0%		
51	500	4820	Play Equipment Inspection and Maintenance	£	4,501			£	-		0%		
			Total	£	26,101	£	1,935	£	3,601	£	549		
			MARKET HALL TRUST										
52	300	4500	Contingency	£	5,000	£	-	£	-		0%		
53	120	4000	Salaries (13%)	£	18,477	£	2,654	£	15,823	£	-	100%	
54	160	4285	Health and Safety	£	1,100	£	1,077	£	-	-£	23	98%	
				£	24,577	£	3,731	£	15,823	-£	23		
			GANNON INSTITUTE TRUST										
55	300	4500	Contingency	£	5,000			£	-	£	-	0%	
56	120	4000	Salaries (5%)	£	6,198	£	1,021	£	5,177	£	-	100%	
57	160	4285	Health and Safety	£	1,100	£	1,077	£	-	-£	23	98%	
				£	12,298	£	2,098	£	5,177	-£	23		
			TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£	273,740	£	70,255	£	124,674	£	3,859		
			TOTAL INCOME	£	284,440	£	160,401	£	139,019	£	10,770		
			TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£	273,740	£	70,255	£	124,674	£	3,859		
			VARIANCE	£	10,700	£	90,146	£	14,345	£	6,911		
			PLUS TRANSFER FROM EARMARKED RESERVES	£	-	£	202	£	202				
			LESS TRANSFER TO EARMARKED RESERVE	£	-	£	14,799	£	14,799				
			MOVEMENT TO GENERAL RESERVES	£	10,700	£	75,549	-£	252				