

# New Buckenham Parish Council



# New Buckenham Neighbourhood Plan 2017-36



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## FOREWORD

Welcome to the Referendum Version' of New Buckenham Parish Council's Neighbourhood Development Plan, or 'the Plan' as we call it. This is the first time the Council has gone through a formal process to plan the village's future. The Plan lists your thoughts and ideas gathered through public events and focus groups over the last few years. These have resulted in a set of policies dealing with life in this village, mindful of New Buckenham's celebrated heritage, rural surroundings and the need to keep up with changing times.



Karen Hobley

This Plan lasts until at least 2036. It is a guide to making changes, as and when they happen, to enhance the life of this village.

The village support for our open days and focus groups has been excellent, not least for the survey of residents in 2017, called SURVEY17. The questionnaire was completed by 83% of residents aged 16 and over, a far higher level of participation than similar surveys elsewhere. In some ways this is not surprising as New Buckenham has a long tradition of working together for its common good.

The earlier Pre-Submission Version' of the Plan, published on 21 December 2019, was open for consultation by all who live and work in the village and other interested parties. It is still available online at [www.np4nb.online](http://www.np4nb.online). The consultation closed on 14 February 2020.

A collection of documents, called the Evidence Base, contains all the evidence supporting the Plan. It's published online only at [www.np4nb.online](http://www.np4nb.online). This Evidence Base includes all the comments submitted and the responses given during the consultation (The Consultation Statement), and the Plan has been revised to take account of the comments made.

The Plan is now formally submitted to Breckland District Council (or 'Breckland' as it will be referred to in this document), together with all its supporting evidence and a statement (The Basic Conditions Statement) showing that it meets the criteria set by the Regulations. Breckland will then subject it to a further statutory consultation and independent Examination to ensure that the Plan adheres to the Regulations.

Breckland will then organise a referendum of village residents to ask whether the Plan is acceptable or not. If there is a majority of residents in favour of the Plan it will then become both part of Breckland's statutory land-use development plan for the area and a policy guide for New Buckenham Parish Council.

On behalf of the Parish Councillors, I wish to thank the whole community for getting involved in the surveys and events and also the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party that has done all the work.

Karen Hobley  
Chair, New Buckenham Parish Council

June 2021



Figure 1 Satellite view of New Buckenham's streets

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## Summary of Plan

This Neighbourhood Plan sets a framework for development and village life until at least the year 2036.

The Plan describes New Buckenham's landscape setting and heritage, countryside and green environment, housing situation, traffic and parking problems, and its culture, sports and community. The issues raised are discussed and take into account the results of SURVEY 17, the survey of residents' opinion in 2017, and the open days, focus groups and commissioned professional reports. Each section of the Plan lists policies and community actions points. Appendices outline design principles for new development.

The Plan's Evidence Base contains the results of SURVEY17 as well as professional reports about Landscape and Heritage, Preliminary Ecological Assessment and additional research. Other documents include *New Buckenham, Norfolk – an Appraisal* (1998), all the comments submitted and the responses given during the consultation (The Consultation Statement), and the Plan has been revised together with all its supporting evidence and a statement (The Basic Conditions Statement) showing that it meets the criteria set by the Regulations. These can all be seen on the Plan's website at [www.np4nb.online](http://www.np4nb.online).

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# 1. Context

## 1.1. What is a Neighbourhood Plan and what difference does one make?

- 1.1.1. Neighbourhood Plans were introduced by the Localism Act 2011 to allow residents a say in the development of where they live. Our Plan is not just about the provision of housing but also about how this village looks and works within its unique environment. All the things indeed that make an area a vibrant, happy and sustainable place to live both now and in the future. The Plan looks forward across nearly two decades to 2036 and will be reviewed at regular intervals throughout this period. It first has some statutory weight after the Examination and must be referred to by the local authority, in our case Breckland. Both Breckland's Local Plan and the New Buckenham's Plan will have equal weight. This Plan's policies will be central to the planning decisions in our geographical area and, if more up to date, take precedence over non-strategic policies in the Local Plan.
- 1.1.2. Although neighbourhood planning is a lengthy process, typically around three years, it's increasingly recognised as being vital to local democracy. By August 2020 across England about 2,600 Neighbourhood Plan projects had been started and over 1,000 plans had been successfully passed at referendum<sup>1</sup>. In its White Paper the Government has proposed that neighbourhood plans should be retained as an important means of community input.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2. What is the benefit of having a Neighbourhood Plan?

- 1.2.1. Unlike other planning policies, a Neighbourhood Plan is the work of the community to which it relates. It becomes part of the 'development plan' when that community agrees it in a local referendum. The Plan will begin to have influence on the planning system after its independent examination has been done and it will then be 'material to' any planning application.<sup>3</sup> The Plan is formally in place once it is 'made' (approved) by Breckland.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.2.2. In order to reflect the residents' views, the Parish Council has drawn up this Plan consisting of policies and guidelines. The Parish Council will use this Plan when commenting on applications and Breckland will refer to it in determining those applications. Developers should therefore use it as a resource before making planning applications and engage in early discussion with the Parish Council.
- 1.2.3. During the preparation of this Plan issues have been raised and debated that are outside any development controlled by formal planning legislation.<sup>5</sup> These issues lend themselves to being dealt with by the community itself. Referred to as Community Actions, they need to be addressed by the Parish Council and local residents to enhance the village for present and future generations.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *White Paper: Planning for the future*, p42.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *White Paper: Planning for the future*, p42.

<sup>3</sup> Town and Country Planning Act (1990) s70, c3.

<sup>4</sup> Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, Section 1.

<sup>5</sup> Town and Country Planning Act (1990) S.55.

### 1.3. What a Neighbourhood Plan can and cannot do

- 1.3.1. When decisions are made on planning applications the policies in the development plan, including the 'made' Neighbourhood Plan must be taken into account by Breckland.
- 1.3.2. All decisions about building and development across England must have regard to the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other relevant legislation. Local authorities must write their own Local Plans and these must be updated every five years as is currently happening in Breckland. Approaches to planning are thus being changed constantly, but a Neighbourhood Plan gives the residents of New Buckenham an unprecedented opportunity to influence those vital planning decisions.
- 1.3.3. Furthermore, a Neighbourhood Plan has local emphasis and, providing it is legal, does not need to conform at every level to national policies. Rather that it need only take account of national policies and conform to the "strategic" policies in the planning authority's Local Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan, however, cannot 'undo' previously granted planning permissions or strategies determined in the current Local Plan.
- 1.3.4. Some of the regulations that the Plan needs to meet are known as the 'Basic Conditions'. These have regard to national policies, achieving sustainable development, being in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan and meeting other environmental and planning legislation and regulations. The Independent Examiner will ensure that the Plan conforms to those Basic Conditions during the formal examination stage.

### 1.4. Description of New Buckenham and its life

- 1.4.1. New Buckenham is a small rural parish in southern Norfolk. Covering an area of 173 hectares (0.67 square miles). It has a population of about 460 people mainly living within a relatively densely built area of a 12th century planned settlement<sup>6</sup> that was laid out for the purpose of commerce and trade. This area is about 10% of the whole Parish. This economic activity continued and the village had over 50 businesses and trades in the 19th century.
- 1.4.2. Its wealth of old buildings surrounded by open fields is remarkable, as is the village's compact layout where residents walk by choice. It has always been on the edge of District and Parliamentary boundaries in a somewhat detached geographical situation. Its five neighbouring villages are all much bigger but there has never been one individual town or village on which New Buckenham relies.
- 1.4.3. Possibly as a result, New Buckenham has developed a distinct ethos of neighbourliness and mutual self-reliance. Its events, particularly the annual fête and arts programme, attract many visitors from other towns and villages, possibly making the village attractive to new business ventures.

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<sup>6</sup> In this Plan, the term 'settlement' is used as a planning term and also where there is a historical context. The almost interchangeable word 'village' is used to describe the settlement and community in modern times.



- 1.4.4. It is supported by small businesses working from home, and some of them online, alongside a collection of respected retailers and services that include a pub, shops, café and garage. Of note is a well-used village hall and Church.
- 1.4.5. Fuller descriptions of the history of New Buckenham's building and social development are given in the Evidence Base.

## 1.5. The local planning context

- 1.5.1. Breckland's Local Plan, recently adopted in November 2019, anticipates substantial growth in this part of the county. Breckland's population is estimated to grow from the current 140,500 residents to 159,400 by 2041.<sup>7</sup> The Local Plan identifies Thetford (16 miles away) and Attleborough (five miles away) as "major towns" and "key areas for future housing and business growth". Attleborough's population is set to double by 2026 to 20,000 with at least 4,000 new homes and an £18 million new southern link road on the eastern side of the town. Continued expansion is anticipated along the A11/M11/A14 corridors as the growth of regional centres like Norwich and Cambridge is promoted.
- 1.5.2. In planning terms 'settlements', whether towns, villages or hamlets, are classified according to the number of essential services they provide, namely (1) public transport, (2) community facilities, (3) employment, (4) shop or post office and (5) a school. The presence of these features makes living there 'sustainable'. Many of the villages around New Buckenham like Banham, Old Buckenham and Kenninghall have three out of the five characteristics and are therefore classified as 'Local Service Centres', a designation that actively encourages development.<sup>8</sup> Thus, by 2036, Breckland District Council expects Banham to increase in size by at least 100 houses, Old Buckenham by at least 56 houses and Kenninghall by at least 39 houses.
- 1.5.3. In contrast, New Buckenham is categorised by Breckland in its Local Plan 2019 as lacking a number of basic facilities.<sup>9</sup> For this reason there is no requirement for the community to identify specific areas of land for development while recognising that villages such as New Buckenham are living and working communities that need to adapt and change all the time.
- 1.5.4. The need to adapt offers opportunities and challenges to a unique, historic village like New Buckenham. This is why our Plan is based on a vision for the future formed by the residents themselves yet taking account of National policies and conforming to the strategic policies in the Local Plan. The development of this vision is described in the Consultation Statement in the Evidence Base.

## 1.6. What do we want New Buckenham to be in 20 years?

- 1.6.1. In preparation for this Plan, the village residents had three years of surveys, events, discussions and focus groups. The early SURVEY17<sup>10</sup> had an extraordinarily high (83%)

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<sup>7</sup> Breckland Council (2019-20) *Summary of Accounts*

<sup>8</sup> Breckland Local Plan para 2.16.

<sup>9</sup> Breckland Local Plan HOU 02, p39 and HOU 05, para 3.23.

<sup>10</sup> The major survey of residents' opinion in 2017. Links to the full results are in the Consultation Statement.

response rate from all residents over the age of 16 and this Plan is based on the responses to the questions asked, signified by the question number in brackets, e.g.(Q4).

- 1.6.2. In summary, it is clear that whatever its drawbacks New Buckenham is hugely popular as a place to live. 96% either love it or like it (Q2). In a league table of things most liked (Q3), friendliness and a sense of community ranked highest at more than 65%, followed by the attractiveness of the village and its peacefulness. There's a strong desire to maintain its rural character (Q11), seen as important by an astonishing 96%. Similarly, there's a huge respect for New Buckenham's history and 98% of responders believe it's important to protect its unique heritage.
- 1.6.3. There's frustration with some aspects of the infrastructure which large proportions of the population see as important and would like to see improved, e.g. broadband speeds and mobile phone signal 94% (Q11); controlling traffic, congestion, speed and parking 96% (Q11).
- 1.6.4. The issue of development is much more nuanced with 46% believing housing in the village is important to a greater or lesser degree with 52% thinking it's not (Q11). There is more agreement on the size of the housing, in that any new builds should be aimed at singles or couples, nearly 60% (Q21), and that it should reflect local styles<sup>11</sup>, more than 50% (Q21). There is clearly an understanding that change of all types will come, but there is also a wish to preserve character and have as little impact as possible on the environment and the natural and built landscapes, by being sustainable in all social, economic and environmental aspects.
- 1.6.5. As the world increasingly addresses issues of environmentalism and well-being, it is notable that residents are already well aware of the significance of their location and the environment. 98.9% of responders (Q11) wished to protect and continue to have access to surrounding countryside, New Buckenham's Common and the valuable wildlife and rare species. These are perceived as essential components of the character of New Buckenham.



**Figure 2 Being part of the community**

Clockwise from top left: Annual Hair of the Dog Walk on New Year's day, Queen's Jubilee party, village quiz, coffee morning in St. Martin's Church.

<sup>11</sup> Examples of modern local building styles are illustrated in Figure 30 and heritage styles are described in the separate Heritage and Landscape Assessment.

## 1.7. What are the aims of this Neighbourhood Plan?

1.7.1. This Neighbourhood Plan reflects the community's aims:

Aim A	Consider well designed development that fulfils local need while conserving or enhancing the village's character, heritage, and landscape setting.
Aim B	Enhance facilities to meet the wellbeing, recreational, and social needs of all in the village.
Aim C	Make a positive contribution to the social, environmental, and economic functioning of the village.
Aim D	Conserve and enhance the village's heritage and natural environment.
Aim E	Conserve and enhance the village's setting and landscape character, including the open views and ecological environment.
Aim F	Ensure new development recognises and minimises increased flood risk.
Aim G	Have a watching brief on the maintenance of public footpaths, improve pedestrian safety and address parking issues.
Aim H	Support appropriate renewable and sustainable energy sources and energy saving measures.
Aim I	Improve existing poor quality telecommunications.

**Figure 3 Aims of the Neighbourhood Plan**

1.7.2. These aims appear next to the relevant policies at the end of each section later in the Plan.

1.7.3. To achieve these aims, the Parish Council welcomes proposals for sustainable development that comply with these policies.

## 1.8. How has this Plan been drawn up?

1.8.1. Over the years there has been little formal appraisal of the village other than that published 21 years ago<sup>12</sup> and until now the Parish Council has no written policy guidelines. Rather than merely continuing to react to development proposals it was decided the Parish Council should take the lead and develop a Neighbourhood Plan. A Working Party was commissioned by the Parish Council to do the task and the process has been undertaken according to Government regulations. Full details are available in the Evidence Base.

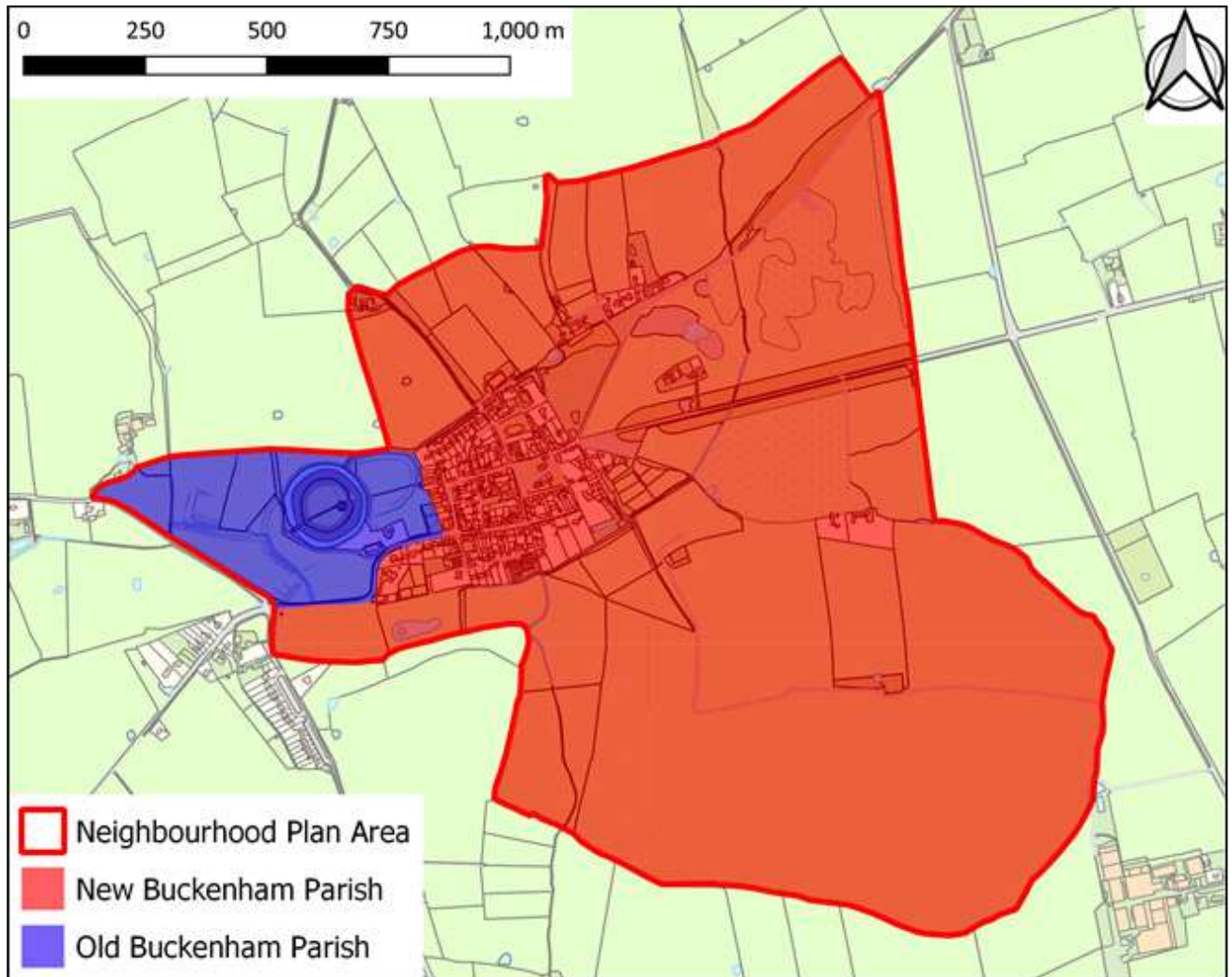
1.8.2. The Plan results from a major survey of individual residents, commissioned reports, open days, focus groups, public awareness campaigns in local printed and online media, and face-to-face discussion with residents.

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<sup>12</sup> New Buckenham Society (1998) *New Buckenham, Norfolk – an Appraisal* is in the Evidence Pack.

## 1.9. New Buckenham Neighbourhood Plan area

1.9.1. Figure 4 shows the Plan's area surrounded by the red line. This includes the whole Parish of New Buckenham (shown in pink), plus that part of New Buckenham's designated Conservation Area (see below) which extends into Old Buckenham (shown in blue). The reason for extending the boundary outside the parish is to encompass the whole of the Conservation Area which includes Buckenham Castle and its immediate surroundings, as these are inextricably linked to the history of the village. This Plan area has the kind endorsement of Old Buckenham Parish Council.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 4 Neighbourhood Plan Designated Area**

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1.9.2. The Plan's area was formally designated by Breckland on 30 March 2017.

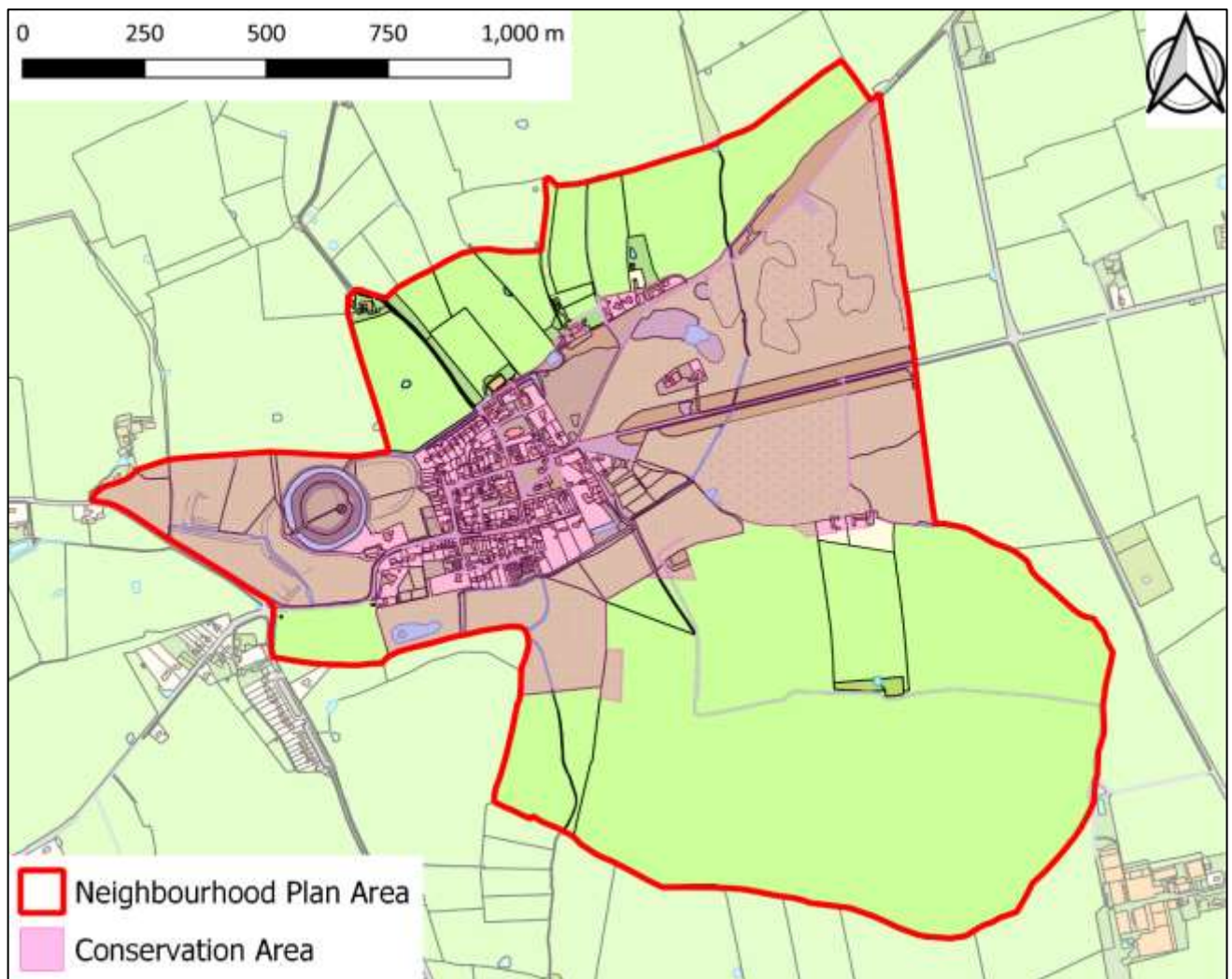
<sup>13</sup> Old Buckenham Parish Council minutes 16 November 2016

## 1.10. New Buckenham Conservation Area

1.10.1. A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.<sup>14</sup>

1.10.2. New Buckenham's planned layout of Norman origin has resulted in a built environment characterised by numerous tightly-packed historic buildings, regularly-aligned streets, crossroad junctions and long thin tenement plots. These make the village exceptional, even in a national context. Gradual development within the village of its buildings of various ages, materials and styles contribute to its special character.

1.10.3. New Buckenham amply satisfies the definition of a conservation area and achieved formal Conservation Area status on 15 January 1973.<sup>15</sup> As with other conservation areas in Breckland, no appraisal information since inception is on record. The Conservation Area's designated boundary (Figure 5) has remained unchanged.



**Figure 5 New Buckenham Conservation Area**

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<sup>14</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) Section 69.

<sup>15</sup> Breckland District Council designation 1973.

## 2. New Buckenham Neighbourhood Plan policies

2.1.1. This section of the Plan deals with separate topics, each one describing the relevant facts and issues, concluding with proposed policies that are displayed in **blue boxes**, followed by Community Actions that are displayed in **green boxes**. Community Actions are not part of the statutory Plan however they can support policy implementation. The topics are:

- Landscape and heritage
- Countryside and environment
- Housing and building
- Traffic and parking
- Business and tourism
- Recreation, health and leisure

2.1.2. The Parish Council will formally review the implementation of this Plan and consider reviewing its policies at least every five years. (see Section 4).

2.1.3. The Parish Council welcomes proposals for sustainable development that comply with the policies in this Plan.

## 2.2. Landscape and heritage

- 2.2.1. A comprehensive Landscape and Heritage Assessment was commissioned to accompany the Plan and is available to view at [www.np4nb.online](http://www.np4nb.online). This exceptional piece of academic research is the basis of the factual information in this section and many of its maps are shared with this Plan.
- 2.2.2. New Buckenham's economy was founded on trade and commerce, resulting in a built environment that is characterised by tightly-packed buildings, regularly-aligned streets, numerous crossroad junctions and long narrow burgage tenement plots<sup>16</sup>. Although the planned settlement has its origin in the mediæval period, the buildings within the settlement are the products of a wide range of periods and architectural styles, giving the village its distinctive character. It is also unusual for being entirely designed to support the castle and trade in an otherwise agricultural landscape.
- 2.2.3. The historic and natural environment of New Buckenham contributes greatly to the significance and character of the parish. The most important heritage assets are the extensive earthworks and ruins of the mediæval castle, and the associated planned town laid out in the 12th century and the Church (mid-13th century). Taken as a whole, the castle and town with the deer park to its north and rabbit warren and dovecote to the south, are one of the best surviving examples of Norman town planning and are of national importance. The archaeological value of the Plan's designated area is high.
- 2.2.4. The significance of New Buckenham's heritage is reflected in the high concentration of designated heritage assets in the Plan's area: two Scheduled Monuments (the castle and St. Mary's Chapel), more than 40 Listed Buildings and a Conservation Area.

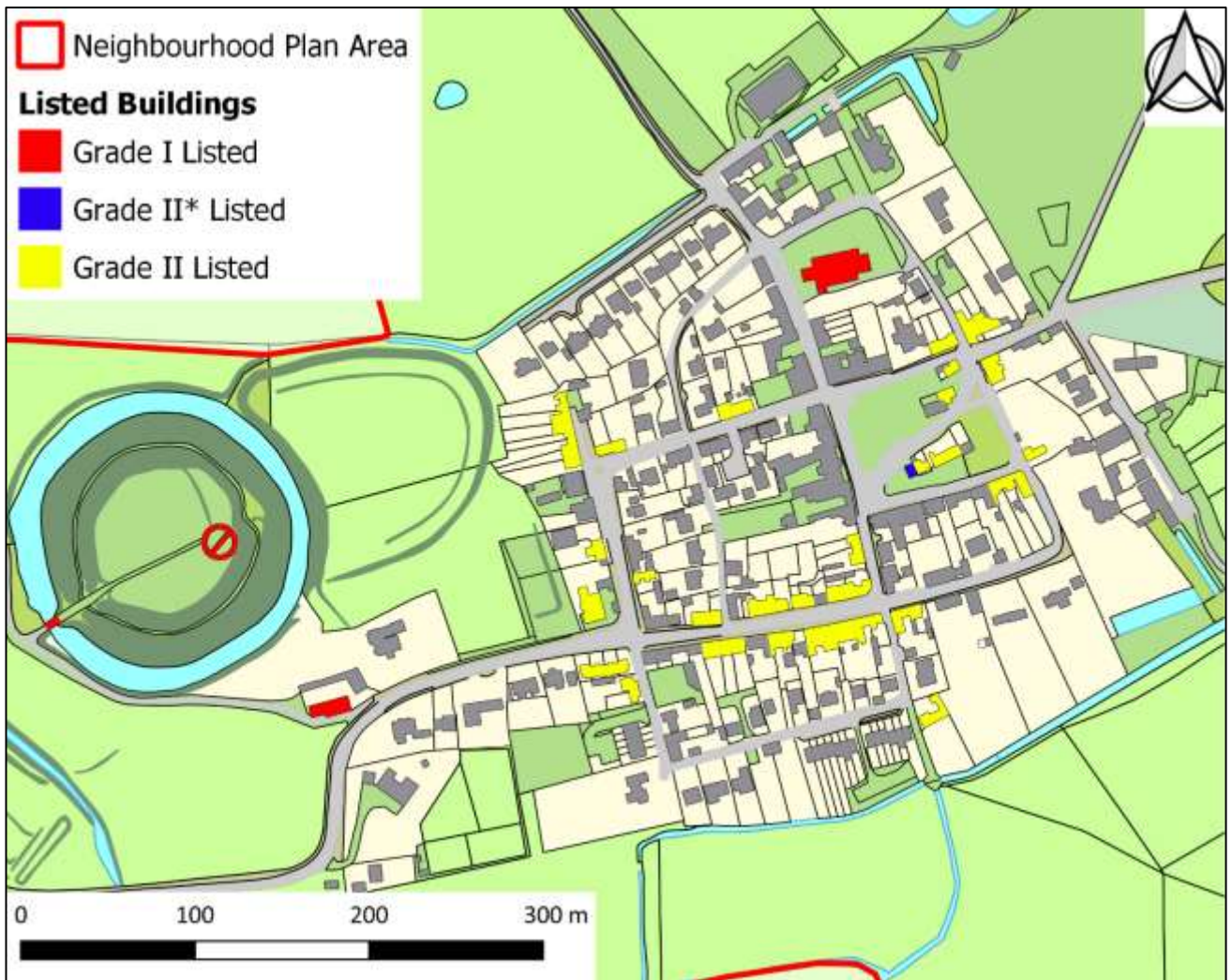


**Figure 6 Aerial view of earthworks and remains of mediæval castle keep**

Aerial view taken February 2002 by Mike Page, reproduced with permission.

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<sup>16</sup> Long narrow rented plots and dwellings with street frontage, the residents being typically traders or artisans.



**Figure 7 Listed buildings in New Buckenham**

OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

Scheduled Monument and Listed Building data © Historic England copyright and/or database right 2018

2.2.5. The original grid layout of the village has remained relatively static, although there has been encroachment onto the central market place and limited expansion beyond the town's original boundary ditch from the 16th century onwards, mainly in Castle Hill Road. Historic mapping demonstrates that the town developed at a rapid rate throughout the 20th century (see Figure 12), with some of the older properties being replaced and much of the open space within the town being in-filled.





Figure 8 Some of New Buckenham's historic buildings



**Figure 9** Some of New Buckenham’s historic buildings

**The Town Ditch** (see also 2.3.24 for related environmental issues)

2.2.6. In the middle of the 12th century New Buckenham was probably laid out as a defended settlement with the status of a mediaeval town. It was surrounded by a square moat that was at least five metres wide and three metres deep.<sup>17</sup> In 1493 this was referred to as the ‘borough ditch’ and in 1598 as the ‘greate ditch’. By 1600 the moat was no longer being maintained although evidence of it remains today, not least the water-filled ditch parallel to St. Martin’s Gardens and a large pond on private property at the south-east of the village. Other areas such as around The Grange are overgrown with trees. The remnants of the ditch are therefore important because they delineate the original (and largely remaining) boundary of the village.



**Figure 10** Some remnants of the Town Ditch: (left) north boundary and (right) west boundary

<sup>17</sup> Paul and Tom Rutledge (2002) *New Buckenham. A Moated Town* New Buckenham Society



**Figure 11 Possible line of Town Ditch**

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(Archaeological Observation numbers refer to entries in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER)<sup>18</sup>. The red areas under NHER reference numbers refer to where excavations have taken place.)

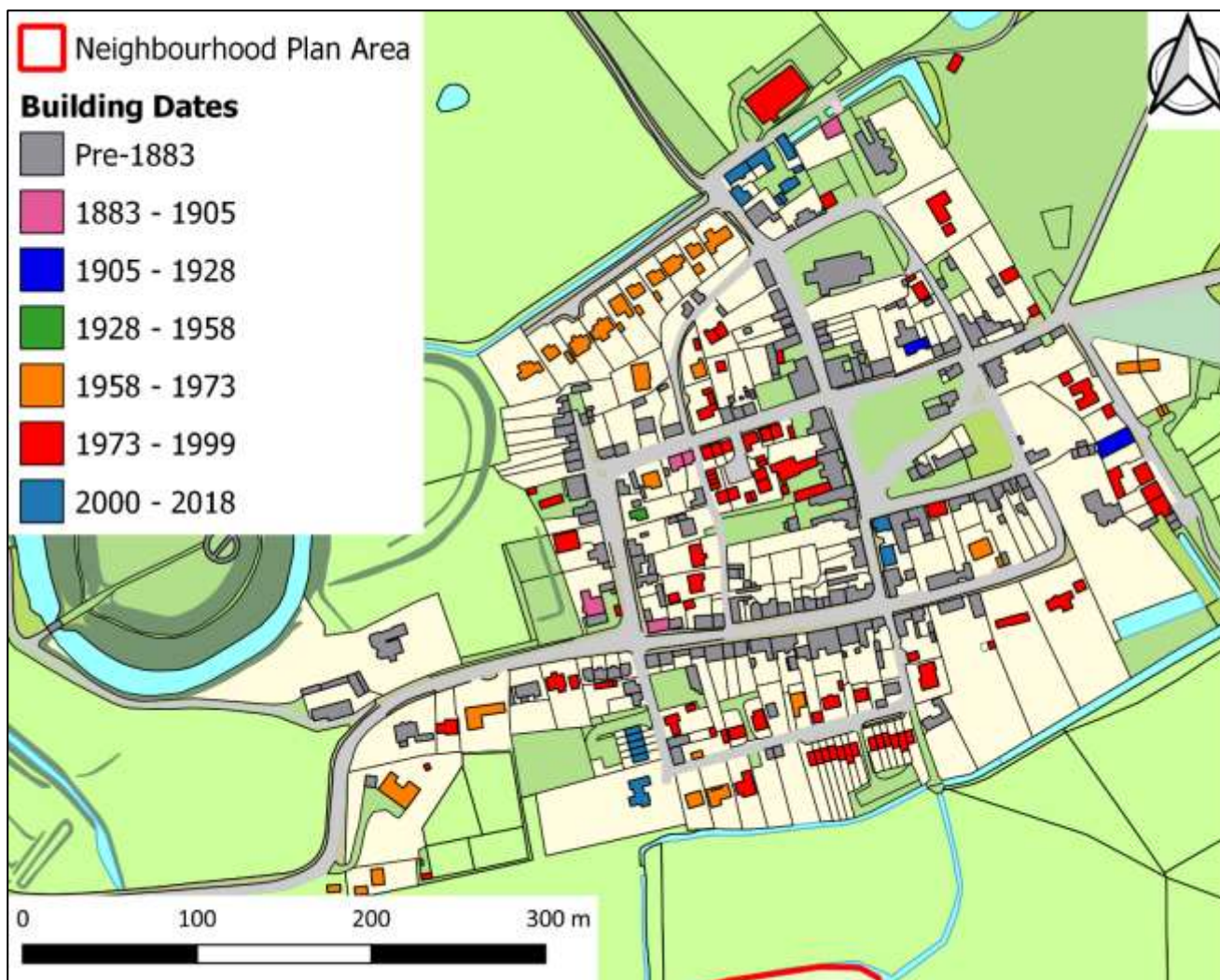
2.2.7. For the most part newer properties have been integrated into the fabric of the village with architectural innovation sitting comfortably alongside mediæval earthworks and timber-framed buildings. Perhaps because of its close-knit structure and relatively isolated position, New Buckenham has always been a dynamic village continually adapting to change, driven historically by trade and commerce rather than agriculture.

## Landscape and heritage issues

2.2.8. SURVEY17 revealed issues and concerns:

- 96% of respondents (Q10) said that protecting village heritage is 'extremely or somewhat important'.
- The need to balance the requirements of modern living and modern building standards with the fabric and form of an historic village.
- The need for the village to continue to develop and prosper while at the same retaining its historic character.
- New Buckenham's concentration of Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Area can be perceived by some as a constraint to renovation and development.

<sup>18</sup> The NHER is found on the Norfolk Heritage website <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk>



**Figure 12 Building construction dates since 1883**

OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

(The grey buildings shown were in existence before the Ordnance Survey First Edition 1-to-25 inch map 1883.)

2.2.9. The national significance of New Buckenham’s heritage and landscape setting is highlighted by Historic England in its Pre-submission comments.<sup>19</sup> Historic England has a significant part to play in advising Breckland on planning and other issues as strict rules apply to altering historic buildings, not just to the fabric of buildings but their settings and public impact.<sup>20</sup>

2.2.10. As appropriate to the significance of the heritage asset concerned, development proposals should be accompanied by information about the buildings and their settings to demonstrate the way in which they would affect local heritage assets, taking into account any relevant findings in the New Buckenham Landscape and Heritage Assessment. Where appropriate, such information could be incorporated within the design and access statement submitted with a planning application. The Parish Council would welcome active pre-application discussions with prospective developers.

<sup>19</sup> “We are therefore pleased to note the inclusion of section 2.2 of your neighbourhood plan that deals with landscape and heritage. New Buckenham is a particularly special place, with a very high level of significance related to the survival of its castle and its magnificent earthworks and keep, but also manifested in the relationship between the castle and the village itself. The village contains many listed buildings of great interest, and its layout and plan form are also very important to the understanding of its history. It is of course designated as a conservation area.” Historic England: *New Buckenham Neighbourhood Plan Pre-submission Comments and Responses*, Section 33.

<sup>20</sup> Historic England (2019) *Planning practice guidance (PPG): historic environment*, Historic England briefing.

2.2.11. Policy LH2 provides a context for new development to come forward. Given the importance of heritage in New Buckenham relevant information should be submitted with planning applications to identify how design and materials have been applied. This should can be demonstrated through submission of a range of drawings, including detailed plans showing the proposal in relation to the setting of the surrounding street scene and landscape.

2.2.12. In practice innovation is not precluded, rather that it requires greater consideration of form, context and materials as summarised in Local Design Guide A. This can be aided by the Parish Council taking an early, active involvement in planning proposals. Policy LH2 provides a context for new development to come forward. Given the importance of heritage in New Buckenham relevant information should be submitted with planning applications to identify how design and materials have been applied. This should be demonstrated through submission of a range of drawings, including detailed plans showing the proposal in relation to the setting of the surrounding street scene and landscape.

2.2.13. Views and vistas reinforce a sense of place. In this village particularly they define the context and character of the settlement, are an incentive to recreational walking, and make the village an attractive and popular place to visit.

2.2.14. The views looking towards and out from the village are important because they illustrate the defined village boundary set in open landscape, an almost unique feature of the village.

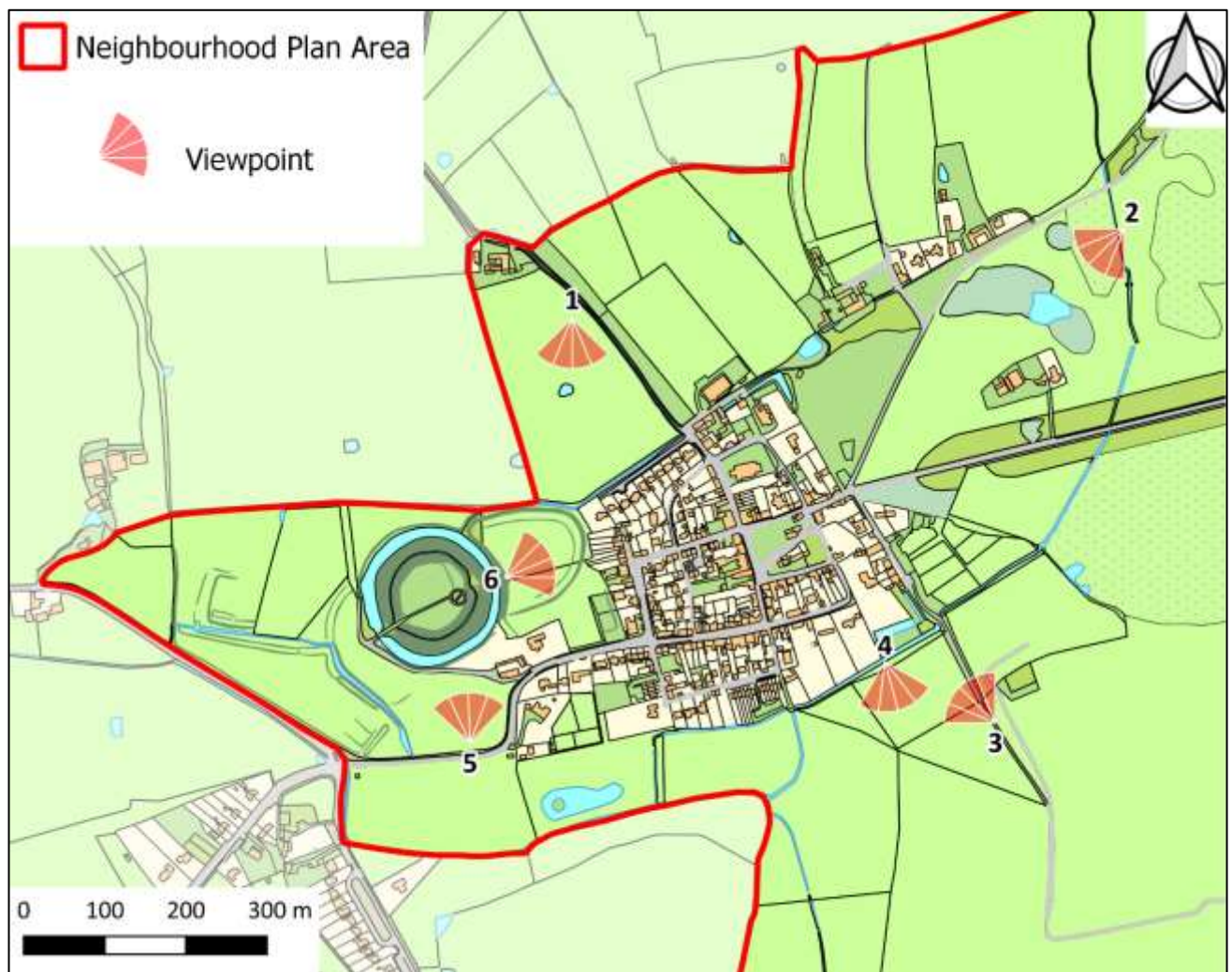


Figure 13 Important village views map

2.2.15. Figure 13 (above) maps these views and they are illustrated in Figure 14. Views 1-5 are publicly accessible and are thus well known to recreational walkers. View 6 is from the castle earthworks (Listed Monument), which is private property to which the public has concessionary access, illustrating the relationship between the castle and its adjacent village boundary. Policy LH4 addresses this important matter. Relevant planning applications should be accompanied by proportionate information which demonstrates the way in which the development proposed has sought to respect the relevant important views as shown in Figures 14.

1. View from Cuffer Lane showing the village between church (left) and castle (right).
2. View of village and church from the Common.
3. View of boundary of village over flood meadow from the south.
4. View from footpath over flood meadow to the south east.
5. View from the road from the Dam Brigg showing castle and St. Mary's Chapel.
6. View of village western boundary from the castle earthworks.



1. View from Cuffer Lane showing the village between church (left) and castle.



2. View of village and church from the Common.



3. View of boundary of village over flood meadow from the south.



4. View from footpath over flood meadow to the south east.



5. View from the road from the Dam Brigg showing castle and St. Mary's Chapel.



6. View of village western boundary from the castle

**Figure 14 Important village views illustrated**

## Landscape and heritage (LH) policies

### **Policy LH 1: Change of use and extensions to historic buildings (Aims A, D)**

2.2.16. Development proposals which involve the appropriate ongoing preservation of heritage assets either through conservation, renovation, remodelling, extension or adaptive reuse will be supported where the works are appropriate to the significance of the heritage asset<sup>21</sup> and respond positively to its importance as set out in the Landscape and Heritage Assessment.

### **Policy LH 2: New Building (Aims A, D)**

2.2.17. New buildings should be well-designed and use good quality materials which reflect other materials to be found in the immediate locality of the application site. New buildings should also reflect and take account of the setting of any nearby heritage assets. Where appropriate, proposals for new buildings should also respond positively to the importance of the immediate locality as set out in the Landscape and Heritage Assessment.

(See also Policy HB 2).

### **Policy LH 3: New development and layout of the village (Aims A, D)**

2.2.18. Development proposals should respect the historic boundaries of the village, including the line of the town ditch<sup>23</sup>. In particular proposals should respect the medieval street grid layout and individual tenement plots and respond positively to the findings of the New Buckenham Landscape and Heritage Assessment as appropriate to their scale, nature and location.

### **Policy LH 4: New development and open countryside setting (Aims A, E)**

2.2.19. Development should maintain and, where practicable, enhance the special quality of the open countryside setting of the village, especially the relationship between the Castle and the planned settlement<sup>25</sup> and take account of the New Buckenham Landscape and Heritage Assessment.

2.2.20. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, the design, massing and orientation of new development proposals should respect the important village views as identified in Figures 13 and 14. Development proposals which have an unacceptable impact on the identified important village views will not be supported.

<sup>21</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paras 185, 200 & 200, Breckland Local Plan COM 01.

<sup>23</sup> Breckland Local Plan COM 01.

<sup>25</sup> Breckland Local Plan COM 01.

## Community actions: Landscape and heritage

- 2.2.21. **CA LH1** Community projects are needed to assess, make recommendations and carry out enhancement of the Town Ditch (see 2.3.24), the Orliit<sup>27</sup> post on the common and the telephone box.<sup>28</sup>
- 2.2.22. **CA LH2** Opportunities should be taken to liaise with utility companies about minimising the visual impact of street furniture and services on the historic character of the settlement, and preserving key views both inside and outside the settlement boundary.
- 2.2.23. **CA LH3** Publicity should be given to the need to report all heritage-related findings to Norfolk County Council<sup>29</sup> and the way this can be done.

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<sup>27</sup> A post-war observation post made of precast concrete sheets.

<sup>28</sup> The telephone box, listed by Historic England, is owned by BT but no longer a functioning telephone.

<sup>29</sup> See Section 8 - Resources.



## 2.3. Countryside and environment

### National and regional background

- 2.3.1. In recent years there has been a step change in understanding the importance of the countryside, open spaces and what is termed in planning circles "green infrastructure". It is now a major issue to be considered in the planning process. In no small part this is due to the threat of climate change, moving outside the European Union's regulatory influence, and the coronavirus global pandemic.
- 2.3.2. Green infrastructure is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework as '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'<sup>30</sup> and by Breckland as a term used to cover all types of green space, large or small, public or private; including water bodies such as river corridors that can be multi-functional, urban or rural, and capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits to local communities.<sup>31</sup> Thus green infrastructure ranges from a sports field to areas that reduce flooding, preserve soil or provide green corridors through which wildlife can move.
- 2.3.3. In a bid to balance the pressure for development with the recognised importance of the green scene, both national and local governments have updated their guiding principles. The National Planning Policy Framework and Breckland's Local Plan have "sustainable" development as their aim, meaning development can be supported if it "improves the economic, social and environmental objectives of Breckland". Developments that fail to integrate and enhance the existing local green infrastructure network will not be favourably considered.<sup>32</sup>
- 2.3.4. To enable this, Breckland has devised "sustainable development principles"<sup>33</sup> based on accepted national and local guidelines. Top of the list are environmental considerations. The first is to "mitigate and adapt to climate change". The second is "protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment". Policy CE2 sets out a policy approach towards a more sustainable way of life in the neighbourhood area. It is based on the contents of the Local Design Guide B. Items for inclusion in the Green Living Plan are provided in Local Design Green Living checklist of the Guide.
- 2.3.5. A further national advance in this area is "biodiversity net gain", an approach incorporated into the planning system that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand. In the Environment Bill (2020) the Government states: "delivering much-needed housing does not have to come at the expense of vital biodiversity. Through the Bill, we will introduce a mandatory approach to biodiversity net gain. This will require developers to ensure habitats for wildlife are enhanced, with a 10% increase in habitat value for wildlife compared with the pre-development baseline."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> National Planning Policy Framework glossary, p67.

<sup>31</sup> Breckland Local Plan Glossary, p286.

<sup>32</sup> Breckland Local Plan ENV 01.

<sup>33</sup> Breckland Local Plan GEN 01.

<sup>34</sup> Environment Bill (Introduced 2019).

## **The Green scene in New Buckenham.**

- 2.3.6. New Buckenham has a relatively isolated rural setting, 90% of which is largely undeveloped, and would be expected to be a haven for wildlife. Up to now, however, there have been comparatively few official records or data held either by Norfolk County Council, or by national or recognised environmental organisations. Even the Norfolk Wildlife Trust which owns and manages the Common / Site of Special Scientific Interest<sup>35</sup> has comparatively few records. The annual wild orchid count has traditionally been done by village volunteers rather than the Trust, although some of the results have been curated by the Trust.
- 2.3.7. The lack of official data is disappointing but the lack of data gathering does not mean minimal wildlife activity, far from it. In 2018 the need for evidence led the Plan's working party to commission a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal<sup>36</sup>. A residents' wildlife survey completed at the same time revealed enthusiastic interest and many wildlife observations. Sightings included bats, owls, buzzards, turtle doves, snakes and toads.<sup>37</sup> More recently, Norfolk Wildlife Trust increased its observational activities, conducting a fungus hunt in October 2019. This logged a spectacular range of fungi whereas the County Recorder had only one record of fungi on the Common. The village has also submitted four years of data to the British Trust for Ornithology as part of its ground-breaking Norfolk Bat Survey<sup>38</sup>. The most recent (2020) recordings confirm the presence of ten of the UK's 18 species of bat including four of the rarest and most endangered bats on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's red list, all within 2 sq. km. around New Buckenham.
- 2.3.8. With more ecological evidence, including that locally collected by volunteers, increasingly informed decisions can be made on planning and other issues This Plan promotes wildlife observation, recording and submission of data to official registers in Community Action CE 7.

## **Ensuring the future of green infrastructure**

- 2.3.9. This Neighbourhood Plan must ensure strong and effective green policies to protect local countryside and the diversity of its wildlife. Although such policies will necessarily impose demands upon local people and developers, they also promote health and wellbeing for residents and visitors and offer business opportunities. Areas designated for this purpose are protected through planning regulations and, as described in 2.3.17 below, the designation of Local Green Spaces in this Plan.
- 2.3.10. Breckland contributed to a Norfolk-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy which included a Green Infrastructure map. In its Local Plan Breckland commits to a more localised approach, seeking '...to recognise the value of all green infrastructure and the contribution it makes to the local area in which it is located.'<sup>39</sup>
- 2.3.11. Breckland is keen to advance the contribution it makes in terms of health, well-being, business and tourism<sup>40</sup> as well as improving air quality, maintaining the soil and reducing flooding. The Local Plan also requires biodiversity advice be given to all developers and

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<sup>35</sup> A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is land notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). SSSIs are the finest sites for wildlife and natural features in England, supporting many characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features.

<sup>36</sup> The Ecology Consultancy (2018) in Evidence Pack.

<sup>37</sup> Wildlife reports by Local Residents (2018) in Evidence Pack.

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.batsurvey.org/>

<sup>39</sup> Breckland Local Plan para 5.10 and ENV 01.

<sup>40</sup> Breckland Local Plan para 5.10.

residents who submit planning applications. The advice will include details such as the incorporation of bird or bee boxes or bricks into housing plans.

2.3.12. The Local Plan further states 'Developments that fail to exploit opportunities to integrate and enhance the existing local green infrastructure network will not be favourably considered'.<sup>41</sup>

2.3.13. This Plan's policies are in compliance with the Government's Biodiversity 2020 initiative.<sup>42</sup>

### Open spaces

2.3.14. Open Spaces are defined as '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'.<sup>43</sup> Open spaces, particularly sport and recreation facilities, are regarded as important to protect the health and wellbeing of a community and on which there is a presumption against building.<sup>44</sup>

2.3.15. Breckland invited the involvement of all parish councils in the District before publishing its Open Spaces Assessment in 2015. Breckland concluded that the audit highlighted 'the need for protection of all existing open spaces and updating of maintenance contributions'.<sup>45</sup>

2.3.16. The Open Spaces designated within the Local Plan policies map for New Buckenham<sup>46</sup> are listed in Figure 16. The map of the Open Spaces is shown in Figure 17.

Breckland Ref	Primary use	Site	Ownership
NB1	Amenity green space	Castle and grounds	Privately owned with public footpath around castle.
NB2	Amenity green space	Market Place	High Bailiff's Trust
NB3	Amenity green space	St. Martin's ( <i>not St. Mary's</i> ) Churchyard	Parish Council / Parochial Church Council
NB4	Outdoor sports	Village hall playing field	Village Hall Trust ( <i>not Parish Council</i> )
NB5	Parish cemetery	Adjacent to Cuffer Lane	Parish Council
NB6	Allotments	Adjacent to Cuffer Lane	Parish Council
NB7	Outdoor sports	Cricket ground	Parish Council
NB7 (part)	Playground	Children's play site	Parish Council
NB8	Natural/semi-natural green space	Common	Norfolk Wildlife Trust

**Figure 15 Breckland designated Open Spaces**

(Please note that minor corrections in the schedule are shown in italics in Figure 15. 'NB9' in the schedule is not in the Neighbourhood Plan Area so is omitted here.)

<sup>41</sup> Breckland Local Plan para 5.10 and ENV 01.

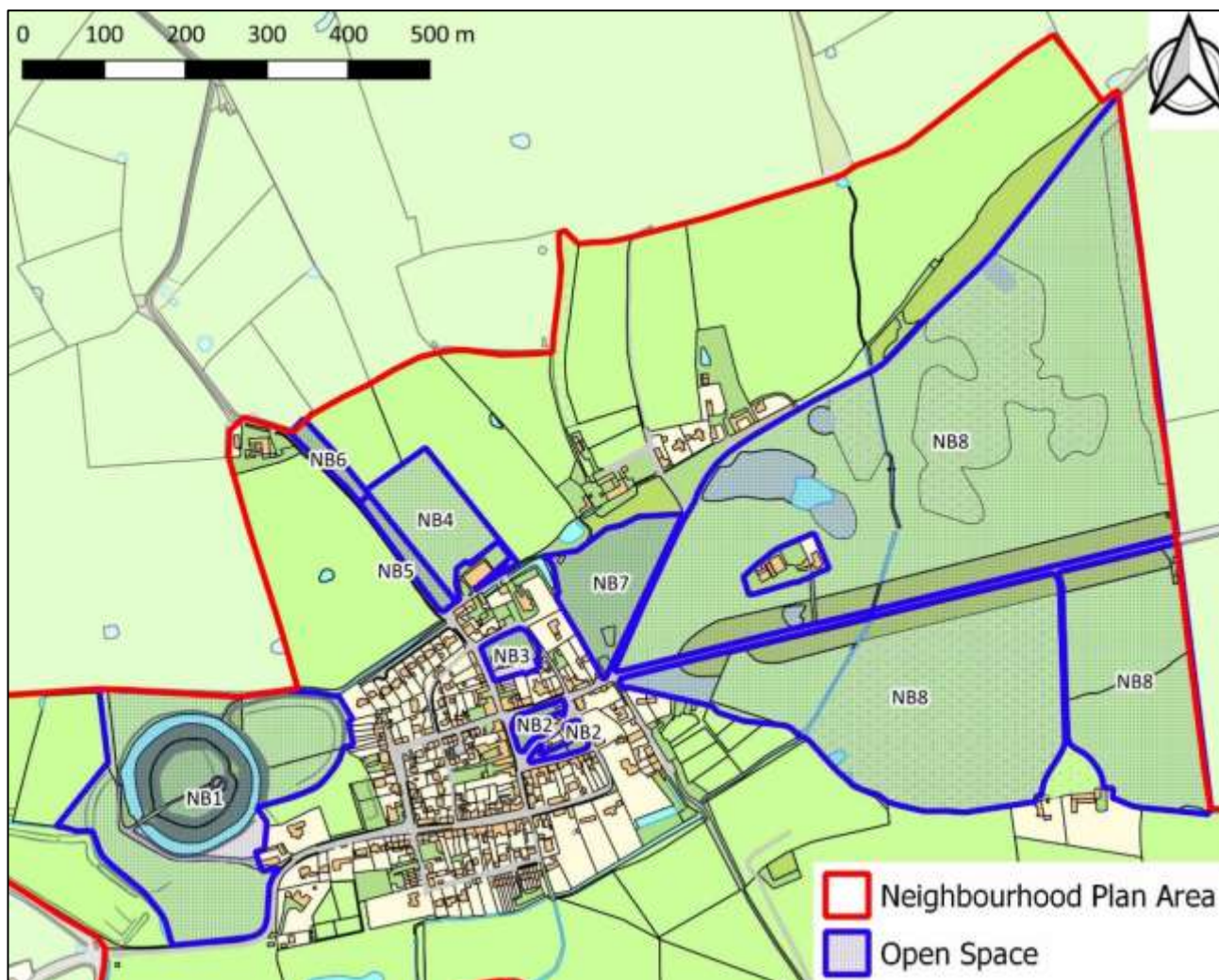
<sup>42</sup> Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

<sup>43</sup> National Planning Policy Framework Annex 2 Glossary and paras 96-101.

<sup>44</sup> National Planning Policy Framework para 97.

<sup>45</sup> Breckland Open Space Assessment (2015) para 10.5.

<sup>46</sup> Breckland Open Space Parish Schedule (2015) Part 2, p184.



**Figure 16 Map of Breckland designated Open Spaces**

OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

### Local Green Space designation

2.3.17. The July 2021 National Planning Policy Framework provides for Local Green Space designation.<sup>47</sup> Such a designation can only be made by inclusion in a Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan, where the land is: (a) not extensive, is local in character and reasonably close to the community, and (b) because it is special for reasons including beauty, historical significance, recreational value or richness of wildlife.

2.3.18. The pond and surrounding area next to the cricket pitch (Figures 17-19) is a small area that is worthy of designation under this category even though it is in the Conservation Area so already has a degree of protection. Adjacent hedgerows are also covered by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. The pond is greatly overgrown with scrub. Some concrete blocks have been left there inappropriately. Consideration should be given to light-touch restoration of the pond, in conjunction with Norfolk Wildlife Trust (a Community Action). In the event that development proposals come forward on the local green space within the Plan period, they can be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the District Council<sup>48</sup>. In particular it will be able to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the proposal concerned demonstrates the ‘very special circumstances’ required by the policy.

<sup>47</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2021) paras 101-103.

<sup>48</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2021) para 103.

Site	Qualifying criteria	Ownership
Pond and surroundings north-east boundary of cricket ground. See Figures 20,21.	Richness of wildlife, close to the local community, recreation value and beauty.	Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

**Figure 17 Local Green Space designation**

OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018



**Figure 18 Local Green Space designation – Pond and surroundings by cricket pitch**



**Figure 19 Views of pond and surroundings by cricket pitch**

## New Buckenham Common Site of Special Scientific Interest

2.3.19. The Common is a major aspect of the wildlife in and around New Buckenham. It is managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. The area of the Common north of the B1113 road was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest in August 1985 because it was “a large area of unimproved grassland” managed only by grazing and occasional mowing and without the use of fertiliser<sup>49</sup>. It is noted most particularly for the large colony of rare green-winged orchids which flourish there.



Figure 20 Orchids on the Common

### The common’s orchids and essential grazing

2.3.20. The rare orchids found on the north part of New Buckenham Common flourish due to the careful arrangements for grazing, involving Norfolk Wildlife Trust (owner), a local grazier and the grazing right holders, some of whom live locally. Without the grazing the grass would grow unchecked and inhibit the orchid growth.

Diss Mercury, 21 May 2019

# NEWS

## How an increasingly rare orchid is thriving in a Norfolk village

**Once a common sight in meadows and pastures, the green-winged orchid is now at risk due to changes in farm land.**

But in one area of Norfolk, the small purple orchid is making a staggering comeback.

The Common at New Buckenham, near Wymondham, is one of the biggest areas of unimproved grassland in south Norfolk, making it the ideal habitat for the rare orchid.

Listed as a site of significant scientific interest because of its impressive flora and warbler population, numbers of the green-winged orchid have been growing year on year since the early 1980s.

On May 5, the 2019 orchid count was conducted by a team of local volunteers – and the results were astounding.

In total 3,352 plants were recorded, an increase of nearly 2,000 from 2011.

Tony Hamerton, chairman of the New Buckenham Common rights committee, has organised the count for the past three years and said the success of the flower

**BETHANY WALES**  
*The Daily Mercury*

was down to a 12-year agreement with a local farmer.

He said: “The land is rented to a farmer for nine months of the year for grazing cattle, which helps keep the wild grasses down so the orchids can come up.

It’s a very nice public space and dog walkers benefit from it. Sustaining the habitat is very important to the village.”

As well as being an established haven for orchids, New Buckenham provides a tempting home for a variety of rare animals.

Last year tens of thousands of bats were counted in the village, representing nine of the 11 species still living in the UK.

Among those was the rarest and most protected breed in the UK, the barbastelle, which is listed as near threatened.

Counts for 2019 will be conducted over four summer months but early figures have revealed hundreds in the first

New Buckenham

Picture: LIBRARY

A green-winged orchid

Picture: NORFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST

month.

The warmer weather could also mark the return of the UK’s fastest declining bird species, the turtle dove.

Although there have been no sightings on the common, visiting ornithologists have reported hearing a pair earlier this year.

Figure 21 Newspaper report of orchids

Diss Mercury

<sup>49</sup> Unimproved grassland supports a rich diversity of species like butterflies, invertebrates and birds, many of which are now threatened nationally. Between 1932 and 1984, an estimated 95% of England’s unimproved grassland was lost. A study in 2013 showed that with the protection of an SSSI the grassland was 91% likely to survive. Without it, the grassland was only saved in 27% of cases.

## Green and blue assets<sup>50</sup> in and around New Buckenham

2.3.21. As well as the Common which extends across approximately a quarter of the parish, there are two County Wildlife Sites and four more CWSs within 2 km (a critical distance for wildlife assessment). The Spittle Mere on the Common represents 1800 sq.m. of open water, although this varies greatly depending on rainfall, and there are many ditches and small ponds which are sometimes dry in summer, resulting in its special ecology.

### Green corridors



Figure 22 Green corridors around the village

OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

2.3.22. Green corridors<sup>51</sup> are thin strips of habitat, often just hedgerows, that allow the movement of wildlife along it. Although the term is often used within urban settings, wildlife corridors are important in countryside to link isolated areas of wooded land, hedgerows and water bodies. This Plan identifies (in Figure 24) examples of such corridors where, although not formally designated, interruption of continuity would be better avoided. Some hedgerows in these corridors are poorly maintained, which diminishes the value for wildlife. This could be improved with some new planting, possibly with grants, and by improving hedge cutting technique.<sup>52</sup> Policy CE1 addresses these important matters. Developers are encouraged to submit appropriate details on how proposals would respond to the first part of the policy. Information on green space and landscaping strategies would be very helpful in allowing Breckland Council to determine planning applications.

<sup>50</sup> Geographical areas of vegetation, wildlife and water.

<sup>51</sup> Also referred to as 'wildlife' or 'habitat' corridors.

<sup>52</sup> Natural England Technical Information Note: TIN085 (2010).

## The Town Ditch

2.3.23. As discussed in para 2.2.6 New Buckenham was surrounded by a 'town ditch' or moat in the middle of the 12th century. Some remnants are still present, not least the water filled Town Ditch parallel to St Martin's Gardens and a large pond to the south-east of the village. Remnants of the Town Ditch are therefore important as a green and blue asset apart from its heritage in delineating the original boundary of the village. Before it further degrades, a community project is needed to assess and make recommendations about the current Town Ditch remnants.

## Track past Tanning Lane

2.3.24. Tanning Lane itself is a privately owned access route to properties off the B1113 road (Figures 25, 26). A track continues as access to farmland south and east of the village, crossing a public footpath. Past the footpath the track runs for approximately 150 metres, uniquely for the village lined on both sides with mature native trees, hedgerows and water filled ditches. Even though the track itself has no public right of access, the view along the track is most attractive, summer and winter, to users of the footpath. More than that, its trees, hedgerows and ditches form a rich wildlife corridor leading into the village and linking up with corridors as shown in Figure 24. Tanning Lane and the farm track are within the Conservation Area.<sup>53</sup>



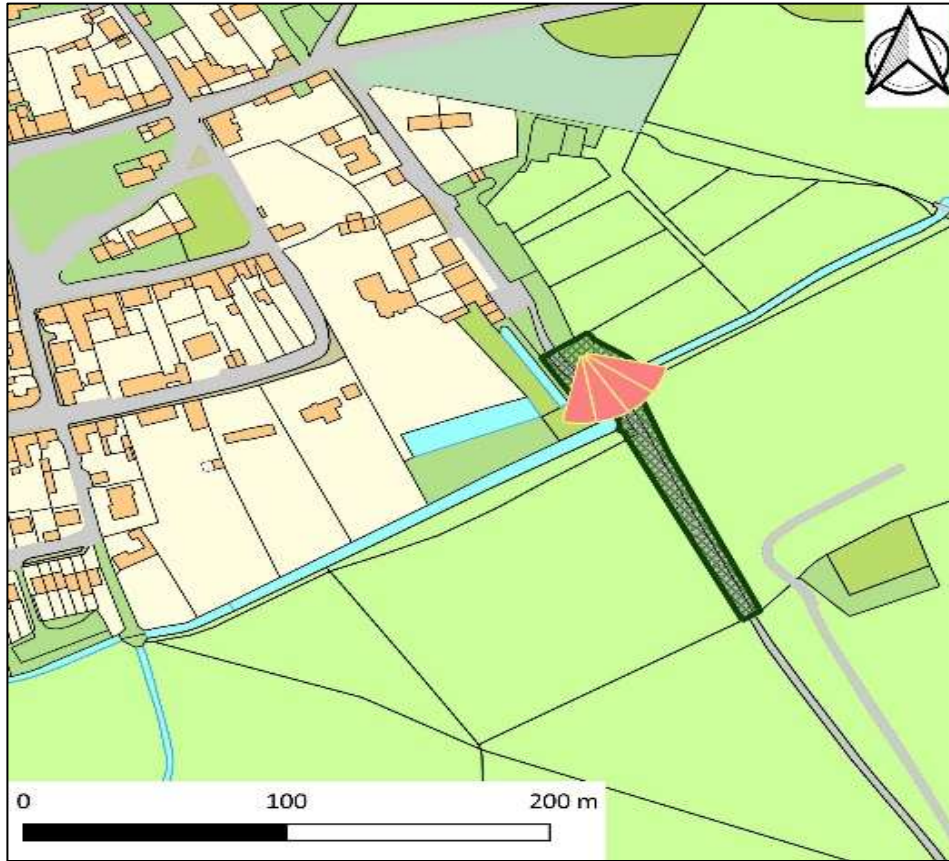
**Figure 23 Track past Tanning Lane**

(See Figure 24 for direction of view.)

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<sup>53</sup> The track's hedgerows are also covered by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.





**Figure 24** Direction of view down track past Tanning Lane

### **Other Green Spaces**

2.3.25. In and around the village there are several important green spaces and corridors that form a network to support wildlife: the Village Hall playing field and cricket ground boundary hedgerows; the cricket pitch; St Martin's churchyard where a wildflower meadow scheme has recently been started as a Parish Council initiative; the Cemetery and allotments on the east side of Cuffer Lane; the overgrown Town Ditch remnants around the village; the land and moat surrounding the Castle, the Haugh Meadow sloping down to Dam Brigg, and the open water and water meadows south of Marsh Lane. To these areas should be added the gardens of private houses, now of increasing importance compared with arable areas and their tendency to monoculture.



**Figure 25 Some rare and endangered wildlife in and around the Common**

Clockwise from top left: Barn owl, yellow hammer, turtle dove, great crested newt, toad, kestrel.

## Countryside and environment issues

2.3.26. In SURVEY17, the responses to Q11 demonstrated an overwhelming appreciation and enjoyment of the environment and countryside in and around New Buckenham.

2.3.27. 98% of our residents wish to protect the countryside and wildlife. This is in line with national models such as Natural England's MENE Report 2018<sup>54</sup> surveying 46,000 people and finding that 93% of respondents thought green space close by is important.

2.3.28. 73% thought the “small village in a rural setting” was extremely important. Most specifically they enjoyed the wildlife, the walking and the peacefulness. Since many have children and more than 60% of residents have dogs (Q31), the access to footpaths and quiet lanes contributes to a healthy and pleasant life-style.

2.3.29. The allotments were considered extremely important by 26% and somewhat important by 35%, others were keen to support the playing fields and children’s play area.

2.3.30. A higher profile of the village’s “green” assets might encourage visitors but could also increase parking problems. This is recognised by Norfolk Wildlife Trust’s Senior Conservation Officer who stated: “an increase in visitor numbers would be desirable at New Buckenham

<sup>54</sup> *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment*, Natural England (2018).

Common, provided it is within the limits of existing on-site visitor infrastructure and offsite local infrastructure".<sup>55</sup>

2.3.31. Applications for development that result in the loss or deterioration of important habitats will not be supported unless there is compelling evidence that these are outweighed by public benefit. Trees and hedgerows should usually be protected and conserved. Where loss is unavoidable there should be replanting with native species to compensate the loss that takes into account the size and state of trees and hedgerows lost.<sup>56</sup>

## Countryside and environment (CE) policies

### Policy CE 1: Developments and natural environment (Aims D, E, F)

2.3.32. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should maintain and, where practicable, enhance biodiversity and protect wildlife habitats and networks.

2.3.33. New development that makes a positive contribution to the existing green infrastructure or provides an increase in the amount of publicly available green space will be supported.

### Policy CE 2: Green living plan requirement (Aims C, D, E, F, H)

2.3.34. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location proposals for new residential development should be accompanied a Green Living Plan which would assist in contributing to a coordinated approach to sustainable living in New Buckenham.

### Policy CE 3: Designation of local green space (Aims C, D, E, F, H)

2.3.35. The Plan designates the pond and its immediate surroundings adjacent to the cricket ground (as shown in Figure 18) as a Local Green Space. Development proposals within the designated Local Green Space will only be supported in very special circumstances.

### Community actions: Countryside and environment

2.3.36. **CA CE 1** Further non-designated green and blue spaces and corridors that benefit local wildlife, landscape and recreation should be identified and mapped to inform future planning proposals.

2.3.37. **CA CE 2** A community project should assess and make recommendations for managing the Town Ditch remnants in conjunction with respective landowners.

<sup>55</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>56</sup> Breckland Local Plan ENV 06.

- 2.3.38. **CA CE 3** The pond and surroundings on the north-east of the cricket ground should be assessed and light-touch restoration carried out in conjunction with any owners that can be identified.
- 2.3.39. **CA CE 4** Footpaths should be assessed for accessibility and a formal system be in place and publicised for reporting to the County Council when problems occur.
- 2.3.40. **CA CE 5** Sources of funding and a budget should be identified to offer grants to landowners for tree planting and hedgerow improvement in appropriate places, possibly in association with grant giving bodies.
- 2.3.41. **CA CE 6** Grassed public areas should be assessed for delayed cutting, such as has been done in the closed churchyard and village hall site.
- 2.3.42. **CA CE 7** Publicity on village websites should highlight information and advice for enhancing diversity of wildlife in gardens and other land within private control.
- 2.3.43. **CA CE 8** Publicity should be given as to the need to report wildlife observations to Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service and how this is best done.



**Figure 26 Result of delayed cutting of village hall amphitheatre**

## 2.4. Dark skies and light pollution

- 2.4.1. There is some street lighting, recently changed from old technology lamps to modern LED. This was done following a survey<sup>57</sup> to reduce running costs (borne by the Parish Council), reduce carbon use and improve the colour temperature of the lighting to a unified near-white. Light pollution (artificial light which shines where it is neither wanted nor needed) has been considerably reduced. The street lighting is run at reduced power after midnight.
- 2.4.2. There is, however, significant ambient lighting from private houses which can cause annoyance to passers-by and neighbours if it is bright and spills excessively into public places and other private properties.<sup>58 59</sup> Although it is reasonable to use outside lighting for personal safety and reasonable adjustments for disability, it should only be used where and when it is needed, especially when public space is involved. The amenity value of dark surroundings in appropriate places should be protected.<sup>60</sup>
- 2.4.3. Policy DS1 addresses this important matter. Permanent outside lighting for built development or activity associated with leisure, recreation and business uses should be accompanied by relevant information to demonstrate that such an approach is essential. In general terms lighting should be managed in such a way that minimises pollution, energy usage, impact on wildlife, annoyance to local residents and visual impact on the local character of the area. Outside lighting design should ideally be fully shielded and enclosed in full cut-off flat glass fittings, directed downwards and not tilted outwards. White light low-energy lamps should be used such as LED technology (as adopted by Norfolk County Council).
- 2.4.4. The ever-growing Attleborough and Wymondham conurbations, together with the A11 trunk road have significant impact on the night. Otherwise, surrounding countryside is inherently dark. Only eight miles away is the Great Ellingham Dark Sky designated area and its Observatory. The creation of artificial light can threaten the survival of protected local wildlife. As discussed in para 2.3.7, New Buckenham has a particularly large population of bats some of which are endangered. Both Norfolk County Council<sup>61</sup> and national policies<sup>62</sup> seek to restrict lighting and encourage dark skies in important areas.
- 2.4.5. There may be a future need to illuminate outdoor sports as discussed in para 2.8.7. Isolated farm and commercial lighting within and outside the Plan area are intrusive to the dark village surroundings, even at a distance. The use of bright continuous lighting is unnecessary as modern and inexpensive technology means that night time security cameras need relatively little light to function and sensor controls can be used.

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<sup>57</sup> New Buckenham Parish Council's street lights survey 2016

<sup>58</sup> Kyba et al. (2020) *Direct measurement of the contribution of street lighting to satellite observations of night time light emissions from urban areas*, Lighting Research and Technology.

<sup>59</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>60</sup> Breckland Local Plan COM 03(7).

<sup>61</sup> Norfolk County Council Environmental Lighting Zones Policy.

<sup>62</sup> National Planning Policy Framework para 180(c).



Figure 27 Dark sky over rooftops in King Street

## Dark skies and light pollution avoidance (DS) policy

### Policy DS 1: Keeping dark areas dark (Aims D, E, H)

- 2.4.6. External lighting should be designed in a way which does not have an unacceptable impact on the unlit parts of the neighbourhood area. Development proposals should demonstrate that all appropriate opportunities to minimise light pollution have been taken, and ensure that the measured and observed sky quality in the surrounding area is not unacceptably affected, having due regard to the following hierarchy:
- a. the installation of external lighting is avoided;
  - b. where external lighting cannot be avoided, it is demonstrated to be necessary and appropriate, for its intended purpose or use;
  - c. Any adverse lighting impacts are avoided or, where this is impracticable, the adverse impacts are mitigated to the greatest reasonable extent including restricting the hours of use.

### Community action: Dark skies

- 2.4.7. **CA DS 1** Publicity should be made available about the appropriate use of external lighting so as not to affect public and private space adversely and this must take account of any 'reasonable adjustments' required under the 2010 Equalities Act. Such lighting should usually be switched off after midnight. Movement-sensitive triggers should be regulated to reduce illumination periods to a minimum.

## 2.5. Housing and building

- 2.5.1. New Buckenham is different from other settlements within East Anglia, and England more widely, because it was planned and established in the 12th century for trade rather than the more usual development from scattered dwellings in an agricultural economy. This explains its built environment of tightly packed buildings, mostly fronting directly onto narrow streets.
- 2.5.2. As previously mentioned, the village was originally enclosed by a water-filled ditch or moat, some of which still remains. With some exceptions new buildings, replacements and alterations have been done within this boundary through infilling rather than expanding outside the boundary. Growth has been more rapid in the 20th century and the Plan area now has 209 households.
- 2.5.3. The deliberate initial planning and development of the village's streets and buildings, still largely retained, make it particularly noteworthy in both a local and national context.
- 2.5.4. Some newer buildings lack local character but others enhance the village as illustrated in Figure 30.

## Housing and building issues

### Village planning definition

- 2.5.5. New Buckenham is defined by Breckland in its Local Plan 2019 as a 'rural settlement without a boundary'<sup>65</sup> on the grounds that it has limited service provision and is 'unsustainable for additional growth' without excluding the possibility of limited small scale development.<sup>66</sup> There is therefore no requirement for the community to identify land for development but new building, both by developers and existing property owners, is likely to occur in the future and will influence the social and economic life of the community.

### Housing needs

- 2.5.6. In 2014 Breckland carried out a Housing Needs Survey<sup>67</sup> in New Buckenham for which there was a 29% response rate. This reported a wish for additional smaller houses, ideally at less than market value, and mainly for younger people. There is currently no rentable housing in New Buckenham other than from the private sector where the rents are higher. SURVEY17, with its 83% response rate, provided the village with another opportunity to look at housing needs (Q21). 60% of the residents who responded to that survey did not think the village needed more houses but if there were to be more houses, they should be smaller rather than larger (60%) and should reflect a local style (85%)<sup>68</sup>. 80% thought building more houses would risk increased traffic and parking problems.

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<sup>65</sup> Breckland Local Plan HOU 02.

<sup>66</sup> Breckland Local Plan HOU 05.

<sup>67</sup> See the Evidence Pack.

<sup>68</sup> Examples of modern local building styles are illustrated in Figure 30 and heritage styles are described in the separate Heritage and Landscape Assessment.

2.5.7. Individual housing needs change but at any one time there is likely be a number of households (that may comprise single occupiers) who wish to have affordable housing, a term defined in the National Planning Policy Framework.<sup>69</sup>

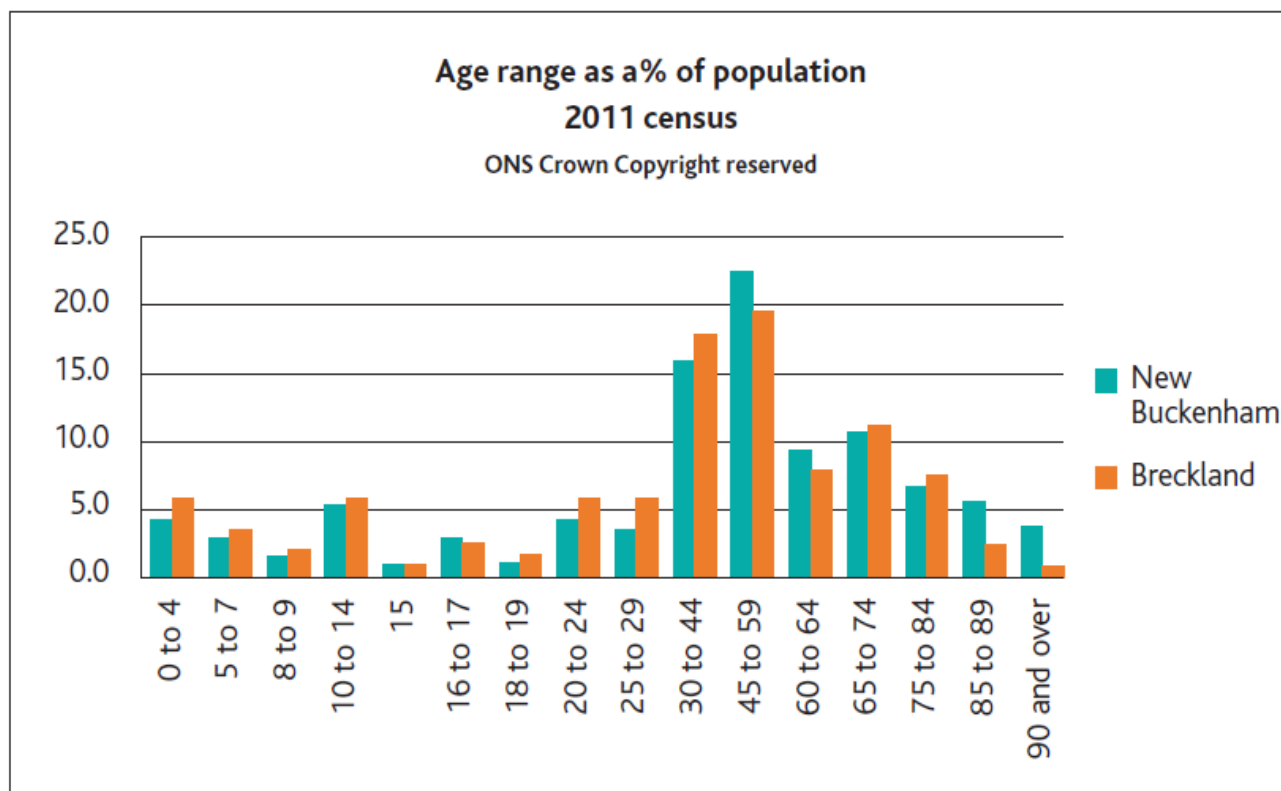


Figure 28 Age distribution of New Buckenham residents, 2011 census

2.5.8. The 2011 census indicates the majority of residents are in their middle age rather than elderly or in childhood. This is broadly similar to Breckland as a whole. About 15-18 of the New Buckenham elderly recorded in the census were permanently in St. Mary’s Residential Home.

2.5.9. Although the rateable values of village properties are close to the Breckland average, the purchase values of properties are higher as the village is seen to be a desirable place to live for heritage and recreational reasons.<sup>70</sup> The Plan’s public consultations (the focus groups and the open days) within the village highlighted the feeling that building larger, more expensive houses in or around the village was unlikely to benefit any local residents who wish to rent or buy at less cost or wish to downsize their existing accommodation.

2.5.10. Normal commercial interests usually come into play with any new housing development. National research by Shelter with the Campaign to Protect Rural England<sup>71</sup>, the Town and Country Planning Institute<sup>72</sup> and the experience of neighbouring communities shows that allowing general development is no guarantee of an increase in housing that those with limited income can afford. Further, even if such housing does become available, ever changing regulations, interpretations and commercial forces allow those properties to drift towards the open market, putting them out of reach for those people in the village (or closely connected with the village) who most need them.

<sup>69</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2021) Annexe 2.

<sup>70</sup> Personal communication, A D Beales FNAEA, Millbank Estate Agents.

<sup>71</sup> Grayston and Pullinger (2018) Shelter and CPRE.

<sup>72</sup> Town and Country Planning Association (2018) *Planning for Affordable Housing*.



2.5.11. The designation of a Rural Exception Site is one way to resolve these issues. Such sites are small and are intended for affordable housing in perpetuity where housing would not otherwise be supported. A Rural Exception Site seeks to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.<sup>73 74</sup>

2.5.12. A Community Development Trust is usually a not-for-profit organisation run by the community itself, sometimes with partner organisations, that develops land to provide housing at reduced costs to the occupants in perpetuity. Such an organisation if it were to exist in New Buckenham has no availability of Parish Council, charity or church land that might be gifted. If land became available from a landowner, it would usually be part of a larger development. More than that, the small village population would have to find committed and able volunteers to be trustees on a long-term basis. This way of providing housing to benefit the community implies the identification of an appropriate site.

2.5.13. New housing is planned for Old Buckenham and Banham (each two miles away) and large estates are being built in Attleborough (less than five miles away), so opportunities for more affordable housing will exist near New Buckenham even if not in the village itself.

### **Infilling around boundary**

2.5.14. Development by 'rounding off' is usually the way in which most settlements can enlarge, using small areas of land abutting irregular and ill-defined housing boundaries. New Buckenham's unique well-defined almost squared-off building boundary makes 'rounding off' difficult without harming this key heritage character and therefore any developments proposing to do this should clearly demonstrate that no harm would be caused to the historic settlement layout.<sup>75</sup>

### **Moving around the village**

2.5.15. Traffic and parking issues are discussed in Section 2.6.

2.5.16. Comments received in the Pre-submission stage emphasised the needs and benefits of walking within the village and easy access to surrounding countryside. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the number of people obliged to stay in the village, often to work from home<sup>76</sup>, appreciating the value of having a local shop and easy access to local countryside for recreation such as walking and cycling.

### **Heritage, environment and design**

2.5.17. Opportunities for development in the surrounding countryside are limited and not easy to reconcile with the retention of the historic boundary, though this has already been breached to the south of the village (Marsh Lane). Elsewhere the built village is immediately adjacent to the Listed Monument, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a grazing meadow that floods. The immediate village surroundings also support a wide range of wildlife. Any loss or

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<sup>73</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paras 64, 71, 77

<sup>74</sup> Breckland Local Plan HOU 14.

<sup>75</sup> Breckland Local Plan 3.28.

<sup>76</sup> McKinsey (2020) *Reimagining the office and work life after Covid-19*.

diminution of the open spaces would be unwelcomed not least because they are a key feature of the village setting. An appropriate use of boundary treatments can contribute to achieving high quality and distinctive developments. This matter is addressed in Policy HB 5. Figure 31 provides visual advice on this important matter.

- 2.5.18. All developments including extensions and alterations should be designed so as to make a positive contribution towards their surroundings.<sup>77</sup> Developments should preserve or enhance the special character of the historic environment, and complement the district's heritage assets.<sup>78</sup> Planning application drawings should clearly show the relationship between a proposed development and neighbouring buildings (or the wider street scene where appropriate) and the surrounding landscape. This approach is consistent with the design-led approach as captured in national planning policy. The Plan sets out the Parish Council's approach towards a clear design vision and expectations for development sites. This will ensure that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable.
- 2.5.19. Innovative designs are welcomed providing they do not have an adverse effect on neighbouring properties or natural surroundings through poor design and inappropriate scale.<sup>79</sup> Design should be sympathetic with the local vernacular in ridge heights, plot sizes and, usually, materials.<sup>80</sup> The Parish Council is aware that the rôle of design will be strengthened at national<sup>81</sup> and local level and awaits further guidance for new development.
- 2.5.20. A community can and should be involved in the design processes<sup>82</sup>, but unfortunately many applications for development are not seen by the Parish Council until they are at an advanced stage thus losing an opportunity to inform design details in the Design and Access Statement.<sup>83</sup> This is addressed in this Plan's Local Design Guide A para 8.
- 2.5.21. Developments should have regard to advances in resources conservation and the provision of new technology such as electric powered vehicles. Provision from the National Grid will have to match the increasing requirements for electric vehicles.
- 2.5.22. Modern technology is however not always welcome if there is adverse visual impact, especially in the historic setting of a Conservation Area.
- 2.5.23. One example of the sensitivities in this respect was demonstrated by the widespread objection from residents and Historic England to the construction of a phone mast on the village hall playing field. This plan was later withdrawn in favour of another location further away from the village.
- 2.5.24. Overhead structures are often intrusive to village street views with the low-level rooflines of old buildings. Exceptions to this are in King Street and the west part of Marsh Lane, where wires were put underground. New overhead structures, wires and cabling should be informed by the Conservation Area setting, including the careful consideration of the height, scale, siting, colours and materials to be used.<sup>84</sup> Whilst such matters are controlled by other legislation, the Parish Council would encourage sensitive approaches to the installation of

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<sup>77</sup> Breckland Local Plan COM 01

<sup>78</sup> Breckland Local Plan ENV 08

<sup>79</sup> Breckland Local Plan GEN 02.

<sup>80</sup> Breckland Historic Characterisation Study (2017).

<sup>81</sup> National Design Guide (2021).

<sup>82</sup> National Design Guide (2021) para 17.

<sup>83</sup> National Planning Policy Framework para 125.

<sup>84</sup> Breckland Local Plan para 8.2.

overhead infrastructure. In the Conservation Area, the installation of any new overhead wires should follow existing overhead wire routes using existing poles or be discretely-located against buildings. Outside the Conservation Area any essential above-ground network installations should be sympathetically-chosen and be designed to reflect the character of their local settings.



**Figure 29 Chapel Street's unsightly overhead wires (top), King Street's wires are all underground (bottom)**



Figure 30 Relatively modern building styles and materials

## Housing and building (HB) policies

### **Policy HB 1: Housing types (Aims A, B, C)**

2.5.25. New housing development should respond positively to local needs and demographic changes and to the demand for smaller, more affordable homes.

### **Policy HB 2: Housing design (Aims A, B, C, D, F, H)**

2.5.26. Both traditional or contemporary development should be well-designed and use good quality materials appropriate to their uses.

2.5.27. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should demonstrate how they respond to their settings taking account of the local heritage assets and respond positively to the contents of Local Design Guide A.

2.5.28. Improvements to the public areas in and around the village will be supported. Where it is practicable to do so, new development should contribute to enhancement work by the provision of trees, improved shop fronts, high quality surface materials, provision of cycle parking, and a well-designed public realm.

### **Policy HB 3: Housing and local mobility (Aims B, C)**

2.5.29. The provision of off-street parking will be supported where it complies with the broader approach of the Plan in general, and preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the New Buckenham Conservation Area in particular.

2.5.30. Development proposals should respond positively to the needs of pedestrians and the use of electric cars, electrically assisted power cycles and scooters.

### **Policy HB 4: Low impact access routes (Aims A, B, C)**

2.5.31. As appropriate to their scale nature and location, development proposal should demonstrate how they relate to existing pedestrian and cycle routes.

2.5.32. Where practicable, opportunities should be taken to provide new, or improve existing, direct links for pedestrians and cyclists to local facilities and surrounding countryside.

## Policy HB 5: Boundaries (Aims A, C, D, E)

2.5.33. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should include green rather than hard boundaries. The use of mixed species native hedging will be particularly supported.

2.5.34. Where hard boundaries are essential, they should consist of good quality materials (such as brick and flint) and provide gaps to allow movement of small wildlife.<sup>85</sup>



Boundaries suitable for wildlife movement



A boundary impervious to wildlife movement

**Figure 31** How boundaries can affect wildlife movement

<sup>85</sup> Further information is at: [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org)

## 2.6. Traffic and parking

2.6.1. New Buckenham has 209 households with a high level of car ownership in a densely-built village with narrow streets. The village sits astride the B1113, a designated lorry route, and all the streets have a 20mph speed limit. Apart from the main road, the narrow street network is a shared space used by pedestrians and vehicles where, as mentioned in para 2.5.16, residents nearly always walk by choice due to the compact nature of the village.

### Traffic and parking issues

2.6.2. Traffic and parking are the most contentious issues for the residents and visitors to New Buckenham. They represent by far the largest number of problems expressed in SURVEY17, traffic (28%) and parking (12%) of responders respectively (Q15). However many aspects cannot be influenced by the Plan since they are categorised as strategic matters dealt with by the County Council. Nonetheless the Plan and its Community Actions can review and address some of the difficulties.

### Public and private transport

2.6.3. Long-standing residents know that car ownership has increased significantly over the last two decades and remains essential for travelling outside the village as there is still only a very limited bus service. Two buses travel to Norwich in the morning and three return later in the day. One bus currently goes on to Diss on Saturday mornings and there is a Flexibus<sup>87</sup> service that can be booked the previous day for journeys on Mondays to Fridays. Only 15% of responders said they would use a bus service if it went to Attleborough, probably reflecting the high availability of a car and the infrequency of the service.

2.6.4. The increase in number and size of residents' work-related vehicles contributes towards parking congestion. SURVEY17 showed that 16% of households keep three or more cars or vans in the village. The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to mean an increase in the use of personal rather than public transport in the foreseeable future.

2.6.5. There is an active Community Car Service but one in six people did not know about its availability.

### Through traffic

2.6.6. With a sharp bend at each end of the village and two in the middle, congestion is worsened by large lorries, farm vehicles and coaches attempting to negotiate the tight 90-degree corners in a narrow road in the village centre. Vehicles can and do speed through the village, especially in King Street and Castle Hill Road. Chapel Street is used as a rat run to beat large slow-moving vehicles on King Street. In SURVEY17 heavy lorries with their sheer size and speed, were perceived by 59% of respondents to cause vibration (Q15) to historically-significant Listed Buildings with little or no foundations. It is noted that a fully laden beet lorry can weigh 44 tonnes.

2.6.7. There are currently fewer lorries than before the last decade's recession but the large ones (40-44 tonnes) make up 22% of lorries compared with 15% in 2007.<sup>88</sup> Although they are

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<sup>87</sup> A local 'ring and ride' bus service supported by Norfolk County Council.

<sup>88</sup> Road Traffic Estimates Great Britain, 2018. Department of Transport Statistical Release.

increasingly improving in emissions and 'road-friendly' suspension technology, they are still large, heavy and intimidating to the village. Large farm vehicles are more local than large lorries although have suspension technologies that are less sophisticated.

2.6.8. The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly increased the use of online ordering and door-step deliveries so vans and lorries of all sorts are expected to increase as this trend is likely to continue.



Figure 32 Heavy vehicles through the village

### Parking, pedestrians and traffic flow

2.6.9. Parking is at a premium with most car owners having to use on-street parking. Some residents struggle to park by their house. Inappropriate parking can obstruct emergency services and some through traffic. Recently proposed conversions to residential use have provided no extra off-street capacity so will increase the number of vehicles parked on village streets still further.

2.6.10. St. Mary's residential home is a particular 'hotspot' where emergency vehicles are often unable to get access owing to parked vehicles, some of which are parked inappropriately. Other areas may be inaccessible to bin lorries for the same reason.

2.6.11. King Street can be a major problem for pushchairs, wheelchairs, and those with limited mobility and visual impairment, due to its pavements containing bollards, parked vehicles and planters. Some of these obstructions could be reduced by appropriate publicity and community cooperation. Elsewhere, narrow streets have flint cobbled pavements (as on Church Street) and other streets have no pavements at all. In such streets people walk in the middle of the road.



2.6.12. In Q16 of SURVEY17, 75% thought that increasing capacity for car parking by enlarging the car park by the play area (Parish Council land) or using the Village Hall car park might help but this wasn't certain. There is on-street parking capacity elsewhere in the village such as Grange Road north of the churchyard but it is little used. Visitors could, however, be directed to these free parking places if informed through advertising and co-operation with businesses and organisations that attract visitors.

### **Highways considerations**

2.6.13. Access into and out of the village is limited almost to the single main through road. The only other access, leading into narrow Church Street, is from Cuffer Lane (width about 2.3m) which is suitable only for smaller vehicles because large ones damage the verges. The lane is much favoured by pedestrians going to the allotments or cemetery and by recreation walkers, all of whom have to clamber up the raised grassy verge to get out of the way of a passing vehicle.

2.6.14. Meetings with Norfolk County Council's Highways Department have confirmed that there is little or no funding to improve even "minor traffic issues".

2.6.15. Restricting parking outside St. Mary's Residential Home to improve emergency access (para 2.6.10) would cause nuisance to nearby residents and the King's Head, potentially provoking opposition and moving the parking congestion elsewhere. Double yellow lines would cost £5,000-15,000, mainly through legal costs, and this would have to be met largely by local funding with questionable benefit. Alternatively, the road could be widened opposite St. Mary's Residential Home but the telegraph poles by the kerb make this difficult and there would be resulting loss of designated Open Space in the picturesque heart of the village.

2.6.16. Re-routing heavy lorries would require alternative roads with equivalent or higher-grade classification, but nearby roads do not meet these requirements. Achieving this could only be done after extensive consultation, piloting and upgrading which would be prohibitively expensive. Any injuries or fatalities from heavy lorries might increase priority but not hasten change.

2.6.17. 75% of villagers would support traffic calming either in King Street or at each end of the village (Q16). The loan of community speed watch equipment is currently not freely available to villages with a 20mph limit, so establishing a speed monitoring 'community presence' within the village is difficult other than by the use of flashing speed signs. Such a sign would be appropriate in Castle Hill Road, facing either way. The cost would be in the region of £3,500-£4,000 and paid for using Parish Partnership schemes, an initiative created to enable local communities to apply for match funding to deliver additional highway projects.

2.6.18. A village boundary 'gateway' is another concept used to slow down traffic<sup>89</sup> supported to some extent by 75% (Q16). Possibilities include reducing road width, changing the colour of the road surface, planting schemes on verges – perhaps flowers or small shrubs, or incorporating mature trees to create 'side friction', or altering the nature of the road surface or painting simple road murals.

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<sup>89</sup> Department of Transport Guidance TAL 13/93 and Local Transport Note 1/07, 2007.

## Traffic and parking (TP) policy

### Policy TP 1: Pedestrian safety (Aims A, B, G)

2.6.19. New developments should provide safe access for pedestrians and cyclists both within the site and as it connects to the wider pedestrian and vehicular network. Where it is safe to do so, access routes should allow pedestrian and vehicular traffic to share access and circulation areas.

### Community action: Traffic and parking

2.6.20. **CA TP 1** Investigate the Parish Council's car park near the play area for the possibility of enlarging it and adding electric vehicle charging points.

2.6.21. **CA TP 2** Maps published by the Parish Council or local businesses should show clearly where parking is easily available.

2.6.22. **CA TP 3** Publicity should be given to the avoidance of indiscriminate parking that leads to obstruction of the highway.

2.6.23. **CA TP 4** Pavements and footpaths in the village and surrounding areas will be monitored to ensure safe access for all and publicity given to the avoidance of clutter on pavements where this causes obstruction to passers-by.

2.6.24. **CA TP 5** Investigate the need and effectiveness of an extra flashing speed sign, probably in Castle Hill Road facing traffic approaching or leaving King Street.

2.6.25. **CA TP 6** Village boundary 'gateways' are to be installed at either end of the village.

2.6.26. **CA TP 7** The Parish Council will continue to work towards improving highway safety and take opportunities to minimise or slow down traffic.



Figure 33 Current car park



Figure 34 Former regular bus service from the village

**BUSES! BUSES!! BUSES!!!**

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**BARNARD**  
(New Buckenham)  
Is Now Booking for  
**Seaside & Pleasure Trips**

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**Up-to-Date Buses.  
Comfortable and Reliable.  
School Treats and Private Parties  
Catered for.**

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**SPECIAL TERMS FOR SCHOOLS.**

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**BOOK EARLY TO AVOID  
DISAPPOINTMENT.**



Figure 35 Businesses in the village, 21<sup>st</sup> century

## 2.7. Business and tourism

2.7.1. Unlike other rural villages of comparable size, New Buckenham was founded as a trading settlement in the 12th century, initially to support the Castle and later holding a regular market. The village flourished and some 800 years later Pigot's Directory (1839) records a lawyer, a surgeon, three bakers, five shoe-makers, five carpenters, two chemists, five grocers and drapers, three pubs, two ironmongers, a miller, two saddlers, four tailors, a watchmaker, a cooper, a glover, a tallow chandler, a painter and glazier and a mason. There was also a Post Office and a number of carriers and vans which, arguably, provided a better transport system than public services offer now. In total there were about 50 businesses in this tiny area.

2.7.2. Visitors used to come to the village for goods and services, and they still do. Increasingly visitors come for recreation and to enjoy the heritage and the village's traditional welcome at public events such as the fête and arts events.



**Figure 36 Old businesses in the village**

Clockwise from top left: Old forge, Market Place (early 1900s), Harness makers, King Street (1900s), Hardware shop, Market Place (1920s), Grocer and draper, Market Place (1920s).



**Figure 37 Businesses in the village, 21<sup>st</sup> century**

- 2.7.3. The village's few remaining shops belie the ongoing business activity. The Neighbourhood Plan's Business Survey (March 2018) was circulated to those who were understood to have businesses in the village. 33 people responded, many of whom had a wide range of business interests. Many are 'invisible' either through working at home or out on the move. In the same month a local business forum was addressed by leaders of the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce and New Anglia Business Growth with some 15 businesses represented.
- 2.7.4. The Biz Buzz group was immediately set up and has a current mailing list of nearly 100. All are businesses in the village or nearby. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Biz Buzz has published frequent topical business news items on the Neighbourhood Plan website and the village Facebook page.
- 2.7.5. In the Business Survey many difficulties were highlighted: a lack of suitable space (48%); cost of commercial premises (20%); poor mobile phone service (44%); and other issues such as slow or expensive broadband (34%). However the most pressing need (51%) was for a community of business people to offer contacts and help.
- 2.7.6. There are no premises available within the village for use as business hub which might solve some of the problems highlighted in the Business Survey. Gradually premises that might have been retained for business, commercial or community use have been converted into housing as has most recently happened with the Inn on the Green restaurant (2021).
- 2.7.7. To encourage tourism 76% of responders (SURVEY17, Q19) supported the preservation of heritage, wildlife and quiet rural countryside. As elsewhere, tourism attracts investment and if

handled well can be beneficial to sustaining the village in the future.<sup>90</sup> Within a decade there will be growth in neighbouring towns (4000 new homes are planned for Attleborough) and the surrounding villages. New Buckenham is ideally placed to benefit from this potential source of tourist income. If handled judiciously there can be a clear advantage for village businesses that cater for visitors and tourists.

## Business and tourism issues

- 2.7.8. Business in the village faces significant problems, not least the lack of a useable mobile phone signal. A new mast to serve the area has been anticipated for many years. There is a fast fibre broadband service ('fibre to the cabinet') but there is no 'fibre to the home' so is less effective in many parts of the village and for outlying households where there are long lengths of traditional copper wiring.
- 2.7.9. Encouraging visitors to New Buckenham and increasing footfall could be a major boost to some village businesses. SURVEY17 showed that the majority (57.5%) of responders are in favour of more tourism and 18% thought it was a bad idea (Q18). Tourism in New Buckenham is not likely to encourage mass coach arrivals since the majority of visitors come to walk, cycle, investigate history and enjoy village events. Their numbers could be accommodated with improvements in parking or bus services.
- 2.7.10. In the Business Survey 75% of responders considered that tourism, B&Bs, walkers, cyclists and visitors of all types could provide a good source of business income and all businesses were prepared to contribute towards the cost of appropriate publicity.
- 2.7.11. Increased tourism would need to be sensitively managed so as not to damage the village's character or cause more traffic disruption and parking problems as noted in para 2.3.30.



Figure 38 Biz Buzz group meeting in village hall

- 2.7.12. A higher profile of the village's "green" assets would encourage visitors. Business thrives on good communications but opportunities may be overlooked if developments are not provided at the outset with modern connection to telecommunication and broadband services.

<sup>90</sup> Breckland Local Plan para 6.68.

## Business and tourism (BT) policies

### Policy BT 1: Communications infrastructure (Aims A, B, C, I)

2.7.13. Proposals to provide access to a super-fast broadband network to serve the village and other properties in the local countryside will be supported.

### Policy BT 2: Support for business and tourism (Aims A, B, C, I)

2.7.14. Sensitively designed and appropriately scaled business and tourism development initiatives that support locally-based businesses, contribute to the economy, local employment and well-being of the village, will be supported. New business proposals that support homeworkers, enhance tourism and the visitor experience within the village and conservation area will be supported.

### Community actions: Business and tourism

2.7.15. **CA BT 1** The Parish Council will actively lobby for the provision of an effective mobile phone reception, useable by different telecom service providers. If a mast is situated in New Buckenham it should be in a place where it does no harm to the natural, historic or visual environment.

2.7.16. **CA BT 2** The Parish Council will support initiatives to promote New Buckenham's 'visitor assets' by supporting advertising and other media including leaflets, maps, articles and books. An effective mobile signal would enable newer technology to be used to support this.

2.7.17. **CA BT 3** Premises that can be seen as having potential benefit to the village and its businesses will be considered by the Parish Council for designation as a Community Asset (see glossary).





**Figure 39** Visitors to the village

Clockwise from top left: Visiting cycling club, village bonfire night, village fête, visiting choir in St. Martin's Church, visiting walking club.



**Figure 40** St. Martin's Church from the south

## 2.8. Recreation, health and culture

2.8.1. There is strong community support for preserving important community assets. SURVEY17 (Q5) showed over 80% joined in village events and cited community spirit as being important to them (Q11). Village activities help to create a sense of identity and belonging. Similarly, over 80% stated that village amenities such as pubs, shops, restaurant, beauty salon and garage were extremely important to them. Residents feel that New Buckenham is well served by its community assets and amenities.

- A modern, well-equipped village hall is used by local clubs and societies to provide a range of sporting and recreational activities including arts events, drama, film shows and exhibitions. Equipment includes modern catering, theatrical and display equipment. The hall is available for hire for external events serving the wider community such as Pilates, slimming and fitness groups.
- The village hall grounds provide football pitches for a thriving Junior Football Club.
- A cricket pitch and pavilion are supported by the Parish Council for New Buckenham Cricket Club.
- The Parish Council owns 16 allotments, all of which are taken and well tended.
- St Martin's Church (Figure 40) is a beautiful 13th century Grade 1 Listed building. The Church has toilet and kitchen facilities. The Church and churchyard are available for social events and occasional concerts during the warmer months.
- A children's play area, equipped and supported by the Parish Council, is well used by villagers and visitors. New adult exercise equipment has just been installed (2021).
- The Community Car Scheme is especially important to ensure access to healthcare as there are no healthcare facilities within the village.
- A network of good public footpaths (Figure 43) provides varied walking routes for ramblers and dog walkers, including a circular route around the village and part of longer routes including the Tas Valley Way (Figure 44).

**Figure 41 Village community facilities**



Figure 42 Recreation, health and culture in the village

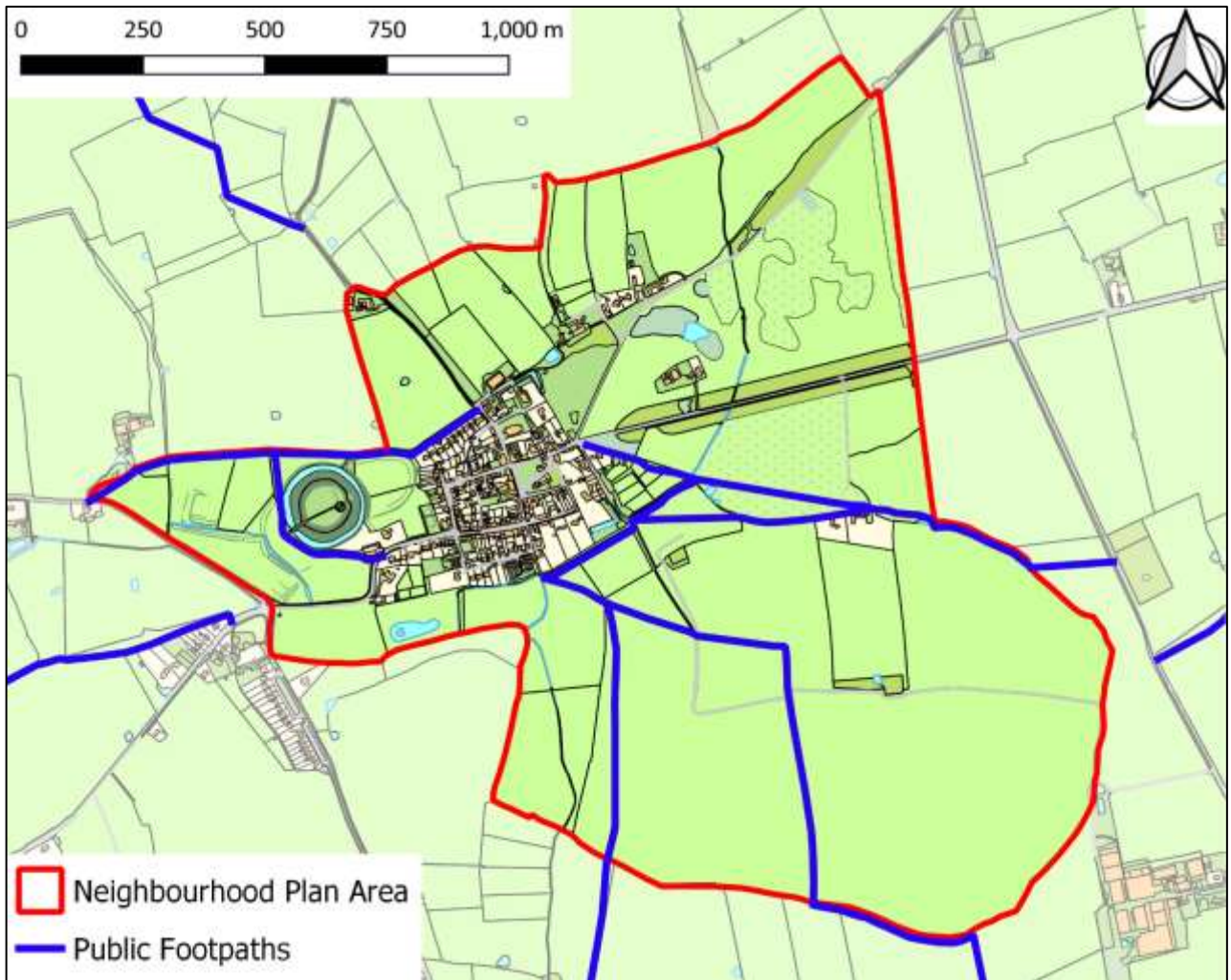


Figure 43 Public footpaths in the village

2.8.2. New Buckenham is on the Tas Valley Way long distance path from Cringleford to Attleborough. It is used daily throughout the year. A variety of circular walks exist in and around the village, largely avoiding roads.



Figure 44 Tas Valley Way (long distance footpath) through the village

## Recreation, health and culture issues

- 2.8.3. New Buckenham has a wealth of local activities most of which flourish. Indoor activities have been largely in abeyance during the Covid-19 pandemic but there is every reason to anticipate that most will resume when it is safe so to do. The events themselves are across the age range and reasonably well supported from adult keep-fit and Pilates to dance. Junior football is particularly popular. Most activities are run by volunteers although commercial classes such as for exercise and weight loss have similar health and social benefits.
- 2.8.4. To make events and organisations viable, improving promotion and publicity is essential. Parish News, posters and word of mouth are used by 90% of the population. Social media much less so (35%), although this will increase when there is an effective mobile signal and an older demographic is replaced by an internet-enabled age.
- 2.8.5. Good facilities and activities help to maintain the strong sense of community that has probably always existed in this compact, relatively isolated village. In this respect, the Village Hall acts as a hub for a wide range of cultural, sporting and social activities. St. Martin's Church provides an alternative venue for events during the warmer months.
- 2.8.6. There will be increasing demand for outside lighting to support sporting activities on the Village Hall playing field. Careful consideration needs to be given to the Dark Skies policies to avoid adverse impact on nocturnal wildlife and the amenity value of a dark night sky.
- 2.8.7. As with many other communities, there is difficulty in attracting new members to some clubs and societies and involving them with charitable, community and fundraising events. This trend may alter with the rebalancing of work and community life engendered by the pandemic.
- 2.8.8. Litter and dog waste can be a problem in the village and any increase in visitors is likely to make this worse. Litter and dog waste bins are provided but the problems persist.



Figure 45 Advertising what's on in the village

## Recreation, health and culture (RHC) policy

### Policy RHC 1: Local facilities for community life (Aims A, B, C, G, I)

2.8.9. Development that enhances community life in New Buckenham will be supported subject to other policies in the Plan.

### Community actions: Recreation, health and culture

- 2.8.10. **CA RHC 1** Seek to provide facilities for young people's activities e.g. youth club, parent and toddler groups. (The availability of volunteers to organise such activities is a prerequisite.)
- 2.8.11. **CA RHC 2** Protect green open spaces and ensure that footpaths are maintained for use by villagers and visitors as they are essential for recreation and health. Consider extra provision of litter and dog waste bins.
- 2.8.12. **CA RHC 3** Promote outdoor activities, using open spaces such as the Village Hall field, Market Place and churchyard.
- 2.8.13. **CA RHC 4** Improve communication through better use of social media, village website and notice board, and use local businesses to promote events. Encourage links between village organisations for publicity and promotion.
- 2.8.14. **CA RHC 5** Protect and promote the Community Car Scheme and encourage new drivers.
- 2.8.15. **CA RHC 6** Consider providing electric car charging points in publicly accessible spaces other than the car park as a community service and source of income.

### **3. List of Policies**

#### **Landscape and heritage policies**

**Policy LH 1: Change of use and extensions to historic buildings (Aims A, D)**

**Policy LH 2: New Buildings (Aims A, D)**

**Policy LH 3: New development and layout of the village (Aims A, D)**

**Policy LH 4: New development and open countryside setting (Aims A, E)**

#### **Countryside and environment policies**

**Policy CE 1: Developments and natural environment (Aims D, E, F)**

**Policy CE 2: Green living plan requirement (Aims C, D, E, F, H)**

**Policy CE 3: Designation of local green space (Aims C, D, E, F, H)**

#### **Dark skies and light pollution avoidance policy**

**Policy DS 1: Keeping dark areas dark (Aims D, E, H)**

#### **Housing and building policies**

**Policy HB 1: Housing types (Aims A, B, C)**

**Policy HB 2: Housing design (Aims A, B, C, D, F, H)**

**Policy HB 3: Housing and local mobility (Aims B, C)**

**Policy HB 4: Low impact access routes (Aims A, B, C)**

**Policy HB 5: Boundaries (Aims A, C, D, E)**

#### **Traffic and parking policy**

**Policy TP 1: Pedestrian safety (Aims A, B, G)**

#### **Business and tourism policies**

**Policy BT 1: Communications infrastructure (Aims A, B, C, I)**

**Policy BT 2: Support for business and tourism (Aims A, B, C, I)**

#### **Recreation, health and culture policy**

**Policy RHC 1: Local facilities for community life (Aims A, B, C, G, I)**

## 4. Monitoring the Neighbourhood Plan

4.1.1. The Parish Council intends to monitor how its Plan is being used and will invite village organisations to share this process.

- How the policies are being applied to shape decisions on planning applications
- Whether Community Actions are being achieved
- Changes to national and local policy
- Changes in local area

4.1.2. This task should be led by the Parish Council's monitoring officer who will provide quarterly reports on planning decision notices, enforcement activities, appeal decisions and divergences from the Plan.

4.1.3. The Parish Council it will consider whether the Plan is to be formally reviewed every five years, after the Plan is 'made'.

4.1.4. Significant issues arising from any of these may lead to revising the Plan.

4.1.5. Monitoring officer's checklist

- Policy compliance: are planning applications being determined in accordance with Plan policies?
- If not, are the reasons for departing from the policies clear, reasonable and being reported on by the monitoring officer?
- Is the Plan being effective in shaping Breckland decisions and appeals?
- If not, why not?
- Are there significant issues arising that are not covered by the Plan?

4.1.6. For the Parish Council to decide

- Are the overall aims being achieved?
- Are local circumstances or opinion changing significantly?



## **5. Local design guide A: Building design checklist for Parish Council and developers**

- 5.1.1. Proposals for development are welcomed in the Plan's Area if they can be demonstrated to respond sensitively with the historical, social and economic context of the village. This Local Design Guide should be used to help householders and developers who wish to carry out new building and alteration work in New Buckenham. Householders and developers should also take into consideration the guidance in Local Design Guide B: Green Living Plan.
- 5.1.2. The Local Authority to which planning applications should be made is Breckland District Council. Attention is drawn to guidance on its planning application process and current national and local design guides.
- 5.1.3. New Buckenham Parish Council is a statutory consultee for all planning applications proposed within the Parish. Old Buckenham is a statutory consultee for land around the castle within the Plan's designated area. While Breckland Council is the local planning authority and offers a pre-application service, householders and developers are urged to send proposals including plans, elevations and illustrations to the relevant Parish Council at an early stage so that guidance and comment may be given at that point. (From April 2020 Breckland are charging for this service).
- 5.1.4. New Buckenham's special character of medieval grid layout of streets should be respected.
- 5.1.5. New house design for older residents and for those with young families are particularly welcomed.
- 5.1.6. Where feasible and practical, developments should incorporate energy efficiency and local energy generation technologies, the siting and design of which should not harm local character.

### **Illustrating the context of proposed developments**

- 5.1.7. Not all planning applications will have a visual impact but, given the historic character within the Plan's designated area, some residential extensions and other new buildings could have more impact than would normally be the case. A proposal for development should include accurate plans and illustrations to show how it would impact on neighbouring properties, the street scene and, where relevant, the surrounding countryside. This will allow the Parish and District Councils to assess its potential impact and respond appropriately.

### **Design**

- 5.1.8. All housing developments, whether renovation, alteration, conversions or new building, must take account of the local character and:
- 5.1.9. Be of high visual quality and respond sensitively to neighbouring buildings, street scene and, where relevant, surrounding countryside.

- 5.1.10. Respond sensitively to local topography, ridge heights, window size, proportions, layout and plot sizes.
- 5.1.11. Have boundaries that ideally are green, using mixed native species rather than hard building materials.
- 5.1.12. Be suitable for use for older residents and those with young families, such as in the Lifetime Homes standard 2020<sup>92</sup>.
- 5.1.13. Should not impact on the views in and around the surrounding countryside such as illustrated in the Plan (Figure 6).

### **Fitness for the future**

- 5.1.14. Developers should have regard to guidelines about adapting to climate change, such as issued by the Committee on Climate Change.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Raising accessibility standards for new homes, a consultation paper*

<sup>93</sup> Committee on Climate Change (2019) *UK Housing: Fit for the Future?*

## **6. Local design guide B: Green living plan checklist**

6.1.1. Planning applications for new developments should seek to incorporate elements of the Green Living Plan as set out in this Local Design Guide B as appropriate to ensure a coordinated approach to sustainable living in New Buckenham.

6.1.2. A Green Living Plan should show that there has been regard to the following points:

- a. Installation of energy efficiency and water conservation measures.
- b. Provision of energy generation systems, while avoiding adverse visual impact.
- c. Minimising light pollution in and around the development (see Policy DS 1).
- d. Provision of recycling and waste facilities that include the storage of bins away from the building frontage, and are compatible with local collection arrangements.
- e. Provision of modern underground telecommunication and internet connection to main services.
- f. Provision of easy access to existing footpaths and cycle ways.
- g. Provision of charging points for electric vehicles.
- h. Sustainable drainage systems for roofs, driveways and car parking spaces to minimise surface water run-off.
- i. Use of species-rich hedging rather than walls and fencing as a boundary.
- j. Appropriately sited provision of bat and swift boxes built into house walls.
- k. Holes in hard boundaries and panel fences to allow movement of small mammals.

## 7. Glossary

### **Affordable housing**

Described in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), defined below, as: 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 definitions in Annexe 2 of the NPPF (July 2021).

### **Asset of Community Value**

A building or other land is an asset of community value if its main use has recently been or is presently used to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could do so in the future.

### **Basic Conditions**

A statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood development plan meets the requirements of paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

### **Community facilities**

Land and buildings used to help meet health, educational and social needs in terms of developing and maintaining the health and well-being of everyone in the community.

### **Conservation Area**

An area designated under Section 69 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as being of 'special architectural or historical interest', the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance.

### **Green infrastructure**

A network of green spaces and other features, such as parks, open spaces, woodlands, playing fields, allotments and gardens providing a range of quality of life benefits for the local community.

### **Independent examination**

Assessment taken by an independent examiner to ensure a Neighbourhood Plan

meets the required conformity and legal requirements.

### **Listed Building**

Any building or structure which is included in the list of 'buildings of special architectural or historic interest' as drawn up by Historic England under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

### **Local Green Space**

A green area of particular importance to local communities designated to provide special protection against development.

### **Local Plan**

A document that sets out the vision and strategic policies for the local planning authority, in our case that published by Breckland District Council.

### **Local Referendum**

A direct vote in which communities will be asked to either accept or reject the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

### **Material consideration**

Factors other than the development plan that are relevant to a planning application.

### **Mitigate**

Taking action to reduce adverse effects of a development.

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The Government document that sets out national planning policy and how this is expected to be applied. Provides a policy framework for Local Plans and Neighbourhood Development Plans.

### **Neighbourhood Area**

Area to which a proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan will relate.

**Neighbourhood Development Plan**

A development plan prepared by a parish council and community representatives for a particular neighbourhood area, which includes policies on the use and development of land.

**Open Space**

All open space of public value including land, rivers, canals, lakes which offer important opportunities for recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

**Planning permission**

Formal approval sought from the district council allowing a proposed development to proceed.

**Scheduled Monument**

An historic building or site that is included in the Schedule of Monuments kept by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979).

**Space Shared**

A design approach that seeks to change the way streets operate by reducing the dominance of motor vehicles, primarily through lower speeds and encouraging drivers to behave more accommodatingly towards pedestrians in the same space.

**Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

An area of Britain that is, in the opinion of the statutory agency concerned, of special scientific interest for its flora, fauna, geological or geomorphological features. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

**Sustainable development**

Development that allows growth without damaging the environment or natural resources and that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, as documented by Breckland Council.

## 8. Links to resources

[Breckland Council \(Planning\)](#)

[Council for Protection of Rural England](#)

[Historic England](#)

[Natural England](#)

[New Buckenham Archive](#)

[New Buckenham Neighbourhood Plan Facebook](#)

[New Buckenham Neighbourhood Plan website](#)

[New Buckenham Parish Council](#)

[Norfolk County Council Highways](#)

[Old Buckenham Parish Council](#)

[Report archaeological find](#)

[Sport England](#)

## 9. Documents in support of this Neighbourhood Plan

### Statutory documents

[Parish Council's application to designate Neighbourhood Plan area](#)

[Parish Council's application statement](#)

[A map of the Neighbourhood Plan area](#)

[Breckland press notice](#) regarding the consultation on the proposed area designation

[Old Buckenham Parish Council minutes 16.11.2016](#) confirming the inclusion of the Castle in its Parish within the Neighbourhood Plan Area

[Designation decision notice](#) of the New Buckenham Neighbourhood Plan Area

[Breckland SEA and HRA screening reports](#)

Consultation Statement

Basic Conditions Statement

### Evidence base

Incorporated in the Consultation Statement:

Reports on Focus Groups and results

Report on Walk and Talk with the Architect

Report on Traffic, Parking and Walking

Business reports:

Forum attendees survey results

Big Buzz survey results

Business and tourism

Survey of Landowners

Residents' survey of wildlife results

Separate documents:

Survey17 results: (a) [Stats and graphs](#) (b) [Free text comments](#)

Commissioned report: [Preliminary Ecology Assessment](#)

Commissioned report: [Landscape and Heritage Assessment](#)

Earlier documents:

Breckland Council [Housing Needs Survey 2016](#)

New Buckenham Society ['New Buckenham, Norfolk: An Appraisal' 1998](#)

### Working Party and Parish Council agreements

[Terms of Reference](#)

[Communications Strategy](#)

## 10. Acknowledgements and Afterword

Neighbourhood Plan Working Party:	Don Crossman*, Mary Dowson*, Violet Highton, Mary Manning*, Karen Hobley* (ex officio), Charles Oxley and Janet Trewin. <i>*Indicates Parish Councillor.</i>
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Mapping:	Richard Hoggett
Survey advice	Diana Vance, Vance Associates
Photographs:	Charles Oxley, Janet Trewin, Mike Page (front cover) and New Buckenham Society Archive. <i>All photographs were taken in the Plan's designated area.</i>
Breckland Council:	Susan Heinrich MSc MRTPI, Neighbourhood Planning Co-ordinator
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Funding:	Locality, Breckland Council and New Buckenham Parish Council

### Afterword

When we embarked on our Neighbourhood Plan in 2017 we had only a vague idea of the amount of work that this would entail, but the high degree enthusiasm amongst our small band of volunteers and the warm response from the village residents enabled the project to proceed comfortably through 2018-19. By 2020, when the COVID19 pandemic arrived, work was considerably advanced. The working party was unable to meet face to face so the final stages of writing up the Plan continued via phone calls and Zoom.

More than any amount of surveying or focus group work could tell us, the periods of 'lockdown' highlighted the strengths and benefits of living in New Buckenham. Here is a small close-knit community, with a strong culture of providing help and support to each other, and excellent recreational attractions in the surrounding countryside.

Many reported on the increased numbers of new visitors who flocked to visit the village and the castle, to walk or cycle.

We mourn the loss of Violet Highton shortly before this Plan was submitted. An invaluable member of the working party, she gave freely of her experience and wisdom.

The production of the Plan has given us an opportunity to reflect on the future of the village and provided a reason to hold conversations that would not otherwise have taken place. We have found all that is great about New Buckenham and we have exposed some problems and challenges for the future. The working party would like to thank everyone for taking part and for sharing their thoughts and concerns with us.

April 2021.