

Woodhouse Parish Neighbourhood Plan – Executive Summary

1. Background

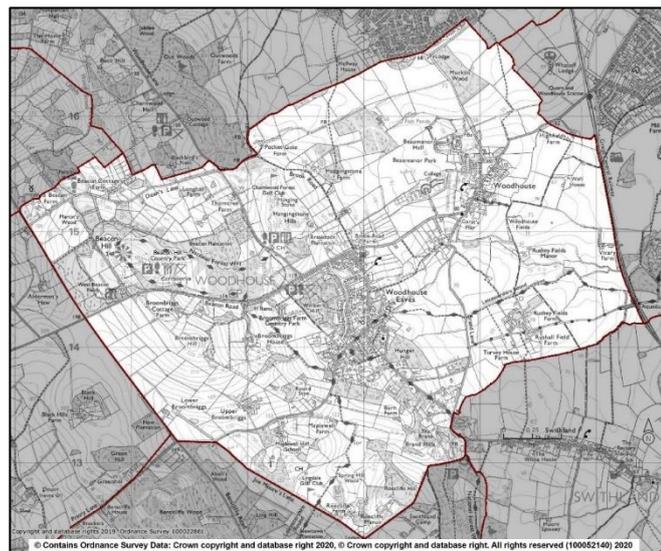
The opportunity to prepare a neighbourhood plan (NP) was established through the 2011 Localism Act. Once the NP has been formally ‘Made’ by Charnwood Borough Council, it will sit alongside the Borough’s Local Plan and all planning decisions taken by Charnwood Borough Council will need to take the Plan’s policies into account. It adds Woodhouse Parish-specific detail to the strategic policies contained in the Local Development Plan and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The NP has to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Borough’s Core Strategy and have regard for the NPPF. It cannot promote policies that do not accord with these requirements.

NPs are opportunities for local people to shape planning policy in their area and helps to make sure that planning decisions taken by Charnwood Borough Council reflect local issues and not just Borough-wide concerns. They add local detail to Borough-wide strategic planning policies.

2. Introduction

The process of creating the Woodhouse Parish Neighbourhood Plan has been driven by Parish Councillors and members of the community. The aim of this NP is to put forward the wishes of the community regarding future development and to deliver local aspirations within the context of the strategic planning framework. The whole of the parish was formally designated by Charnwood Borough Council for neighbourhood planning purposes on 3 May 2018.



Neighbourhood Area

An Advisory Group was established, and an initial consultation day was held on 1 September 2018. 102 people attended and shared their thoughts about the Parish and what the NP should consider. A stakeholder consultation event took place on 23 October 2018 and was attended by 39 delegates.

Three Theme Groups were established to identify the policies needed to deliver an effective NP for the Parish, looking at areas such as housing, the environment and community sustainability. They continued to meet into 2020 and until the policies were drafted.

This work is now concluded. We planned to hold an Open Event to share the emerging policies but were unable to do so because of the Coronavirus. It is hoped instead that this Executive Summary of the NP helps to reach everyone in the parish and explains in plain English why we are preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and how we are doing it. There are still opportunities to shape the final document as there are more formal consultation stages still to be undertaken.

Our vision for the parish up to 2036 (a timescale deliberately chosen to mirror that of the emerging Charnwood Local Plan) is as follows:

The parish of Woodhouse is set in the heart of the beautiful Charnwood Forest and includes two distinct villages, Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves, surrounded on all sides by open countryside, all of which is officially designated as distinctive and/or significant. The landscape is characterised by ancient rocks, and wooded hills, rare heathland, to the west, and farmland.

There is a strong sense of a community that wishes to thrive, be inclusive and welcoming.

The natural and historic heritage of the area is valued by residents and visitors alike and will be protected and enhanced.

Housing developments will be primarily to meet local need, be small scale and within the Limits to Development for Woodhouse Eaves, and the built-up area of Woodhouse.

Design will be sympathetic to the character of the area.

Construction will have minimal environmental impact.

Our vision will be achieved through:

- Supporting development that is sustainable, eco-friendly, in keeping with national and local design guidelines, be proportionate to the needs of the community and protect the character of the Charnwood area.
- Maintaining, restoring, recreating and reconnecting habitats to create a resilient and healthy natural environment, highly valued and accessible for people; full of wildlife, and rich in opportunities for learning, health and well-being.
- Supporting developments and policies that are sustainable, mitigate for climate change and work towards a carbon neutral future.
- Protecting and enhancing the conservation areas and open spaces.
- Enhancing and supporting our rural economy by encouraging suitable small-scale expansion of local businesses and services, diversification and tourism.
- Managing traffic and parking issues to ensure the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, walkers and drivers.

3. Housing policies

The policies in this section seek to shape residential development in line with locally important issues.

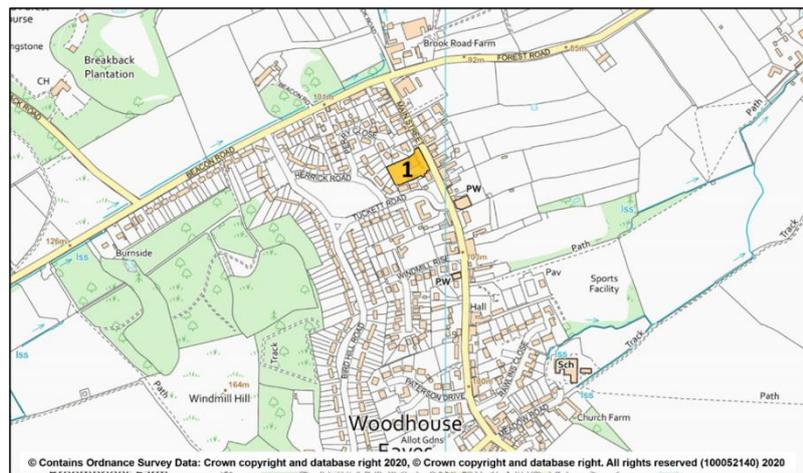
The Parish will be required to contribute to the supply of new housing across Charnwood irrespective of whether it prepares a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan can shape the type, size and location of new housing in the Parish – executive houses, family houses or starter homes. It can specify expensive or affordable homes, specialist housing for older people or people with support needs. It can also influence housing design and protect locally important buildings from inappropriate development.

The consultation draft of the local plan sets a target for an additional 160 residential units to be delivered through NP’s in nine of the fourteen “other settlements” between 2019 and 2036. In discussion with Officers from CBC, it has been agreed that a target of around 20 new residential units need to be delivered in Woodhouse Eaves before 2036. Woodhouse has no specific housing target because of its position in the settlement hierarchy.

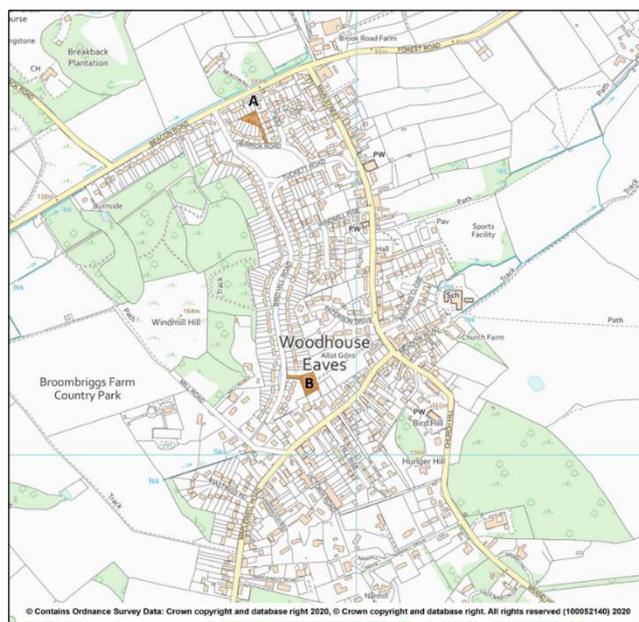
The principal aim of the NP has therefore been to consider the current housing situation and deliver the future housing provision that is required to meet the needs of the parish in a holistic fashion.

To contribute towards this target, the NP allocates a single site for residential development for around 16 dwellings (Policy H1). Following a comprehensive site selection process, the preferred site is at Selby’s garage in Woodhouse Eaves.



Residential Allocation

Allocating these sites helps to protect more sensitive areas from inappropriate development in the future.



Reserve Sites

The remainder of the required housing numbers is to be made up through windfall development which has made a steady contribution to the housing supply in the parish over recent years. NPs which allocate sites for residential development have greater power than NPs that do not and are better able to control development into the future.

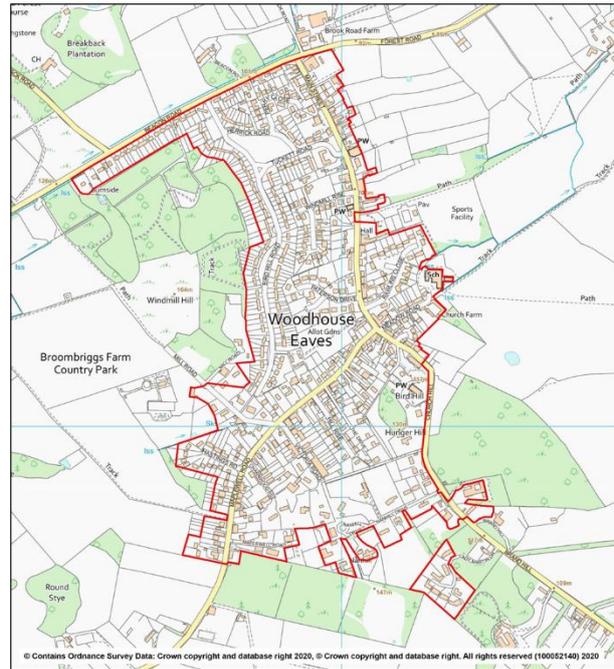
In the event that the housing target increases during the Plan period, two reserve sites have been identified (Policy H2). These sites are not immediately available for development. If they do become available during the Plan period

then the provisions of the policy will apply. These will only come forward for development if

required because of a shortfall in housing due to a failure of the delivery of the allocated site or if additional dwellings are required through the Local Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan defines a Settlement Boundary (Limits to Development) which demarcates between the built-up area of Woodhouse Eaves and the countryside, where development will be carefully controlled. The Limits to Development is marked by the red line in the figure opposite. Woodhouse is already protected from inappropriate development because of its size. A Limits to Development is not required for this village.

Policy H3 states that development proposals within the Limits to Development will be supported where they comply with other policies in this Plan. Land outside the Limits to Development will be treated as open countryside, where development will be carefully controlled in line with local and national strategic planning policies.



Limits to Development

Windfall, or infill, sites are small-scale sites which come forward unexpectedly. These sites often comprise previously developed land or a gap between existing properties in a built-up street scene. With a higher than average share of detached housing, home ownership and houses with more than 4 bedrooms in Woodhouse Parish, the policy promotes smaller houses.

Policy H4 supports small residential development proposals on infill and redevelopment sites subject to proposals meeting relevant requirements set out in other policies in the NP and the Charnwood Core Strategy, and where such development: Is within the Limits to Development; retains, where possible, natural boundaries; has safe vehicular access; allows safe pedestrian and vehicular access; does not adversely impact on the Conservation Area and its setting or reduce garden space such that it adversely impacts on the character of the area or amenity of neighbours and provides a mixture of housing types specifically to meet identified local needs in Woodhouse Parish. Priority should be given to dwellings of 3 or fewer bedrooms and to homes suitable for older people. 4+ bedroom dwellings may be included in the mix of dwellings where they comprise a clear minority

Housing affordability remains a key issue for the parish. The Core Strategy requires 30% Affordable Housing for all developments with 10 or more dwellings. Policy H5 requires this to be spread throughout the development and to be indistinguishable from the market housing. The Parish of Woodhouse Parish has a long and interesting history, resulting in a wide array of heritage assets, attractive landscapes and a distinctive local character. A policy on design helps to maintain this.

The biggest challenge facing the future of Woodhouse Parish is to balance the desire to protect the character of its villages with the need for it to grow and evolve in a sensitive and

proportionate manner in order to sustain the community and its facilities. Policy H6 on design seeks to reflect the design principles which the community believes will help to achieve this. The overall aim is to protect Woodhouse Parish so that it retains its character within a unique and distinctive Parish. This can be achieved by the use of the planning system to respond sensitively to the range of historic buildings, structures, landscapes and archaeology situated within the Parish.

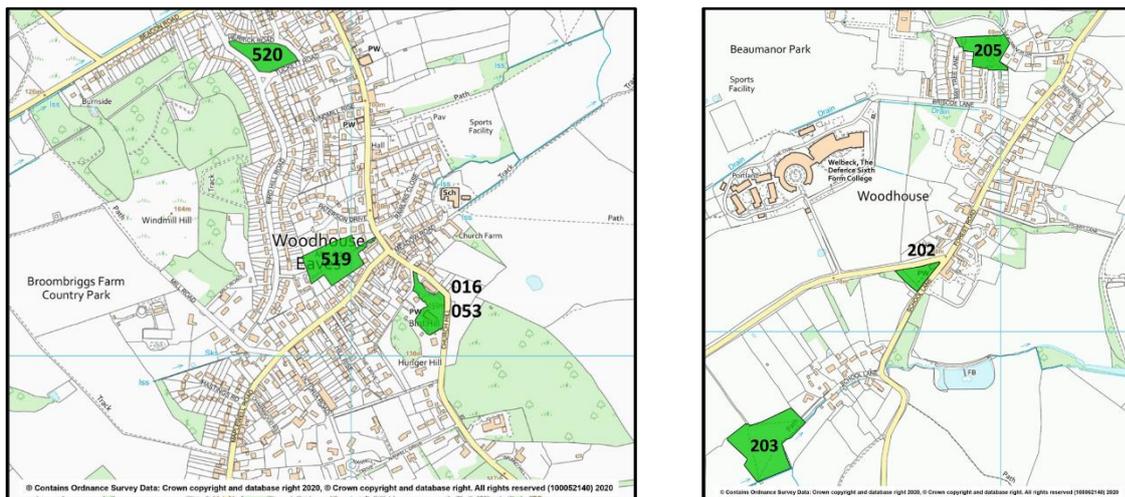
Policy H6 requires development to reflect the guidance in the Village Design Statements and to respect local character, having regard to scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access. Development should not disrupt the street scene and development should follow a consistent design approach. Contemporary materials and design will be supported where positive improvement can be demonstrated.

Development proposals should aim to protect and enhance biodiversity by maintaining connectivity of habitats for hedgehogs; provide integral bird next boxes and ensure that lighting design meets best practice guidelines. Where possible and appropriate, development proposals should incorporate sustainable drainage systems with maintenance regimes to minimise vulnerability to flooding and climate change.

4. Environment policies.

The policies in this section seek to identify and protect the most important environmental aspects of Woodhouse Parish from inappropriate development. They have been informed by the completion of an ‘environmental inventory’ of fields in the parish, compiled by local people who have measured each field against national policy criteria, resulting in a comprehensive catalogue of environmental features.

Policy Env1 designates the most important local environmental sites as ‘Local Green Spaces’. These areas will be protected from inappropriate development in perpetuity and will be given the same level of protection in planning terms as the Green Belt.



Local Green Spaces in Woodhouse Eaves (left) and Woodhouse (right)

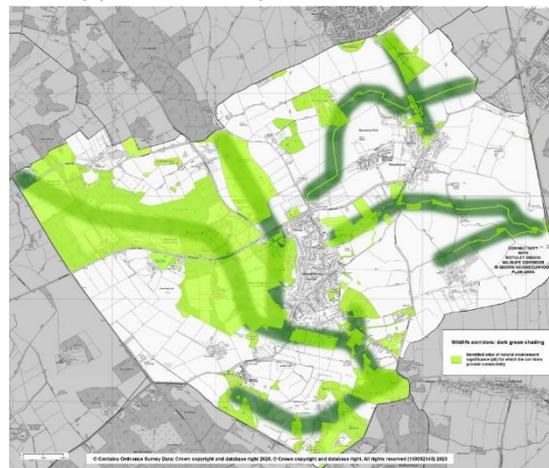
The fields selected for this designation are as shown on the figures above and comprise Church Hill, comprising St Paul’s churchyard and Stone Hole (‘Forest Rock’), Woodhouse Eaves; Parish allotments Woodhouse Eaves; Herrick Green, Woodhouse Eaves; Johnson’s Meadows,

Woodhouse; St Mary in the Elms churchyard, Woodhouse; May Tree Lane green and spinney, Woodhouse.

Important Open Spaces in the Parish are identified in policy ENV2. They include Herrick Green; King George V Playing Field; St Paul’s Primary School Grounds; Main St Allotments; Tuckett Road Green; Forest Rock Open Space; Woodhouse Eaves Community Orchard; Rawlins Close Green and St Paul’s Churchyard (Woodhouse Eaves) and May Tree Lane and Spinney and St Mary in the Elms Churchyard (Woodhouse). Development resulting in the loss of any of these sites will not be supported unless the open space is replaced by equivalent or better provision in an equally suitable location, or unless it can be demonstrated that the open space is no longer required by the community.

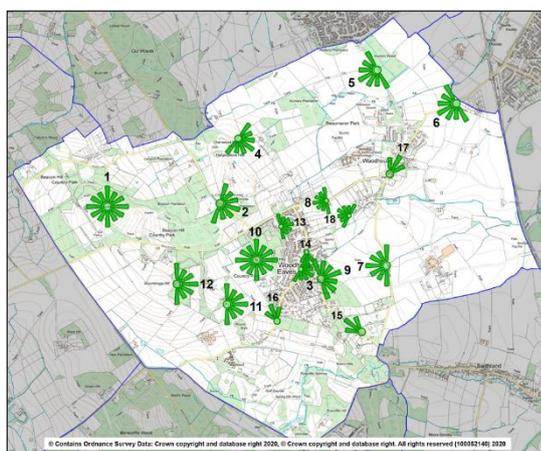
Policy Env3 identifies other significant features that are present elsewhere in the Parish. The features are detailed in the Environmental Inventory and represent features of natural environmental significance. Any development proposal will need to take these features into account and will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the benefit of the development outweighs the harm caused. Policy Env 5 applies similar protections of sites of historical significance.

The protection of biodiversity, woodland, trees and hedgerows and habitat connectivity is described in policy Env4 which seeks to ensure that development protects and enhances biodiversity, safeguards important trees and does not adversely affect the wildlife corridors identified in the map alongside.



Wildlife Corridor

Neighbourhood Plans can designate ‘local heritage assets’ for recognition in the planning system. Policy Env6 highlights local buildings and structures which have heritage value in the Parish. There are 7 structures identified as ‘non-designated heritage assets’ over and above those already identified by Leicestershire County Council in their historic environment record, and afforded a degree of protection in the planning system against inappropriate development either to the structure itself or to its setting. These are the old slate pit pump house; the Pinfold; Selby’s Model Windmill; Stone Hole (cavity under Forest Rock); Liberty Hall and Three wall-mounted letterboxes in Woodhouse Eaves.



Important Views

The surviving areas of ridge and furrow are recognised in policy Env7 which requires the benefit of any development to outweigh the significance of the ridge and furrow. 18 views are identified across the parish of being of local importance and policy Env8 resists development that have a significant impact on the views listed, which are shown on the map alongside.

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A policy on flood risk resilience (ENV9) ensures that appropriate measures are taken to mitigate flood risk concerns in the Parish where new development is under consideration.

Env 10 sets conditions that need to be in place before small-scale renewable energy generation infrastructure is supported.

5. Community Sustainability

The NP describes the range of community facilities in the parish and their importance to the community. Policy CF1 resists the loss of these important facilities (including halls, children's play area, teenage games area, youth shelter, tennis courts, playing field, sports pavilion, car park, and allotments) unless there is no longer any need or demand for it, it is no longer economically viable or appropriate alternative provision is made available.

Policy CF2 supports proposals that improve the range and quality of community facilities where they are of an appropriate scale; provide their own parking; do not generate significant additional traffic movements and take into account the needs of people with disabilities.

6. Education

Policy CF3 supports development at the Welbeck Sixth Form College and Beaumanor Hall where it does not adversely affect the character of the parish; provides benefits to the parish through, for example, local employment opportunities and where development maintains the separation from Forest Road; does not generate additional traffic movements and includes improvements to the road and path between the two settlements.

7. Business and Employment

Supporting a healthy and diverse local economy is an important theme of the Neighbourhood Plan. Policy BE1 supports the retention of existing businesses unless it can be demonstrated that the premises in question is not viable and the building has been marketed for a period of 24 months. Policy BE2 welcomes new businesses which are appropriate for a community the size of Woodhouse Parish, will not create a need for additional parking that cannot be catered for and does not impact on residential amenity.

Shop frontages and signage in Woodhouse Eaves is addressed in Policy BE3 which seeks to ensure that new frontages conserve and enhance the qualities of the building; are of good design and have regard for the Village Design Statement.

Policy BE4 supports home working where any development is for the primary use of the residents and the business element remains ancillary to the main building; where the character of the building is respected and there are no significant adverse impact on neighbours.

Support for farmers wishing to diversify is provided in policy BE5 with conditions to ensure that the development does not impact adversely on the community. Appropriate tourism proposals are supported in policy TO1 and proposals to provide access to superfast broadband supported through policy BE6, where any above ground infrastructure improvements are sympathetically located and designed.

8. Transport and Traffic

Policy T1 seeks to ensure that development minimises traffic flows in the parish where appropriate; provides sufficient off-road parking and suitable site access; and improves and creates footpaths and cycle ways where practicable. Policy T2 promotes new public car parking places and resists the loss of existing public car parking facilities.

Policy T3 supports electric car parking points within new dwellings and the provision of communal charging facilities. Policy T4 resists the loss of existing footpaths and cycle routes and promotes their expansion.

9. Review

The NP will be subject to formal review to ensure it remains a helpful tool in determining planning applications. This is likely to occur when the Core Strategy is updated or when housing need increases.

10. Community Actions

During the development of the Plan, a number of Community Actions were identified that will help to improve the community and help satisfy wider community aspirations. They reflect future work activities that it is proposed be undertaken within the Parish which will involve a wide range of third parties alongside the Parish Council to help improve the Parish in line with the outcome of community consultation. Community Actions are not planning policies and are not subject to Examination. They will form a separate Action Plan for the future to be agreed with the Parish Council.

These include consultation on parish wide views; supporting the creation of a working group to improve cycle routes, footpaths and bridleways; supporting education around biodiversity; considering a working group to look at transport-related issues in the Parish; nominating a Councillor to help coordinate between environmentally focussed groups and updating progress regularly at Parish Council meetings.

11. What Happens Now?

The NP is now in the process of formal Pre-Submission consultation. Residents and a range of stakeholders will be able to comment on the draft Plan up to **xxxxx** 2020. Once all comments have been considered, the NP will be amended accordingly and formally submitted to Charnwood Borough Council who will undertake a further six-week consultation and send the NP and all comments received to an Independent Examiner, who will consider the NP against local and national strategic planning policies and make recommendations for any changes felt to be necessary.

Once the Examiner's report has been accepted and the changes made, the final NP will be put before the community of Woodhouse Parish in a Referendum, and the NP will pass or fail on the basis of a simple majority. Everyone living in the parish who is on the electoral roll will be able to vote in the referendum. Once the NP is 'Made', it will be used by Charnwood Borough Council to determine planning applications in the Parish.

The full NP can be found on the Woodhouse Parish Council website **xxx**