


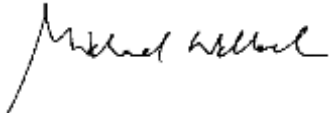
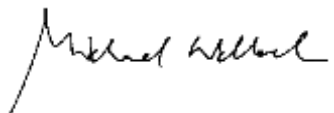
Kirkwells

The Planning People



Planning the Future of Wolston Scoping Report

September 2013

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Summary

This scoping report examines the key issues facing Wolston parish. This analysis has been undertaken so as to advise the Parish Council on how they could attempt to use one or more of the various planning routes available to them to plan to tackle these issues.

The key issues identified include:

- The need to protect the existing high quality environment, landscapes and countryside around the village
- Protection of the Green Belt
- The need to improve traffic management and car parking
- The need to protect existing local community facilities
- An identified local housing need for 15 affordable dwellings
- Possible threat of new housing on larger sites one of which is identified, albeit considered undeliverable in the latest SHLAA
- The need to protect and enhance the Conservation Area and to promote high quality design which reflects the distinctive historic character and setting of the village
- Consideration of existing identified open spaces and whether these require improvement, together with possible identification of other spaces which are of local importance and need protection.
- Concerns about the direction of some of the policies in the new Local Plan and the level of detail they will have concerning Wolston.

In planning to tackle these issues the options open to the parish council range from “do nothing” to use of one of the more pro-active options open to them, these more pro-active options are:

- Route 1* - The Rugby Local Plan
- Route 2* - A new Wolston Parish Plan
- Route 3* - A Wolston Village Design Statement
- Route 4* - A Wolston Neighbourhood Plan

All have their advantages and disadvantages.

Route 1 - The Rugby Local Plan would allow the parish to continue to respond to the Borough Council consultations on the Local Plan as it develops, as they have been doing. But, ultimately, the parish would be a consultee, and would not have any decision-making responsibility in

the planning policy that would affect Wolston up to 2026. Albeit, if the representations made by Wolston Parish Council were taken on board the Local Plan may well be a “very good” plan for Wolston.

Route 2 - A Wolston Parish Plan is something the parish have previously undertaken in 2006 and is an exercise that could be repeated relatively swiftly. Rugby Borough’s Core Strategy also allows approved parish plans to be taken in to account on planning matters. What a Wolston Parish Plan would not be is part of the statutory development plan system.

Route 3 - A Wolston Village Design Statement is very much what it “says on the tin” a document concerned with design. If the Parish Council are only concerned with such matters this may be the option to choose. However, in common with a parish plan it could not become part of the statutory development plan system, and if the Parish council are interested in wider issues it is either not the route to pursue, or a route best pursued in conjunction with one of the other routes.

Route 4 - A Wolston Neighbourhood Plan is the latest route open to parish council. Such a plan would be part of the statutory development plan system and would allow the parish (council and parishioners) to set local planning policy. In exercising this power it should be borne in mind that the process is more exacting than that for Routes 1 to 3 and, therefore, potentially more costly, albeit more funding is available for neighbourhood planning than any of the other routes.

Having assessed all the routes and given the issues facing Wolston our conclusion and recommendation is that a neighbourhood plan is the best way for the parish council to shape the future development of the parish.

1 - Introduction

1. This scoping report examines the key issues facing Wolston parish in Rugby. The parish council have commissioned this report to help them decide how they could best attempt to plan to tackle the issues they face.
2. The parish council are well aware that they have a range of options from “do nothing” to the use of one of the more pro-active options open to them, these more pro-active options are:

Route 1 - The Rugby Local Plan

Route 2 - A new Wolston Parish Plan

Route 3 - A Wolston Village Design Statement

Route 4 - A Wolston Neighbourhood Plan

3. In part, this study has been provoked by the newest of these options, Route 4, statutory neighbourhood plans.
4. Neighbourhood Plans are a relatively new addition to the planning system in England. Parish Councils and other relevant bodies have been given powers under the Localism Act 2011 to prepare neighbourhood plans to:

“establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. They will be able to say, for example, where new homes and offices should be built, and what they should look like. The neighbourhood plan will set a vision for the future.”¹

5. The Parish Council has commissioned Kirkwells planning consultants to prepare this scoping report to consider whether a neighbourhood plan should be prepared for Wolston, or if the planning issues in the parish would be better addressed by other means.
6. This scoping report sets out a response to the key issues previously identified by and agreed with the Parish Council, namely:
 - Background to Wolston – a short pen picture of the parish
 - Previous neighbourhood level planning in Wolston
 - National and Local planning policy context
 - A Review of available evidence base

¹ (Communities and Local Government, 2011) *An introduction to neighbourhood planning*. Crown Copyright.

- Key issues facing Wolston
 - Conclusions and Recommendations
7. It should be noted that the scoping report has been prepared as a desk based document, and should be used as the basis for further discussion by the parish council. The report has been prepared by independent planning consultants, and without prejudice or predetermination of a prior outcome.

2 - Wolston – The Background

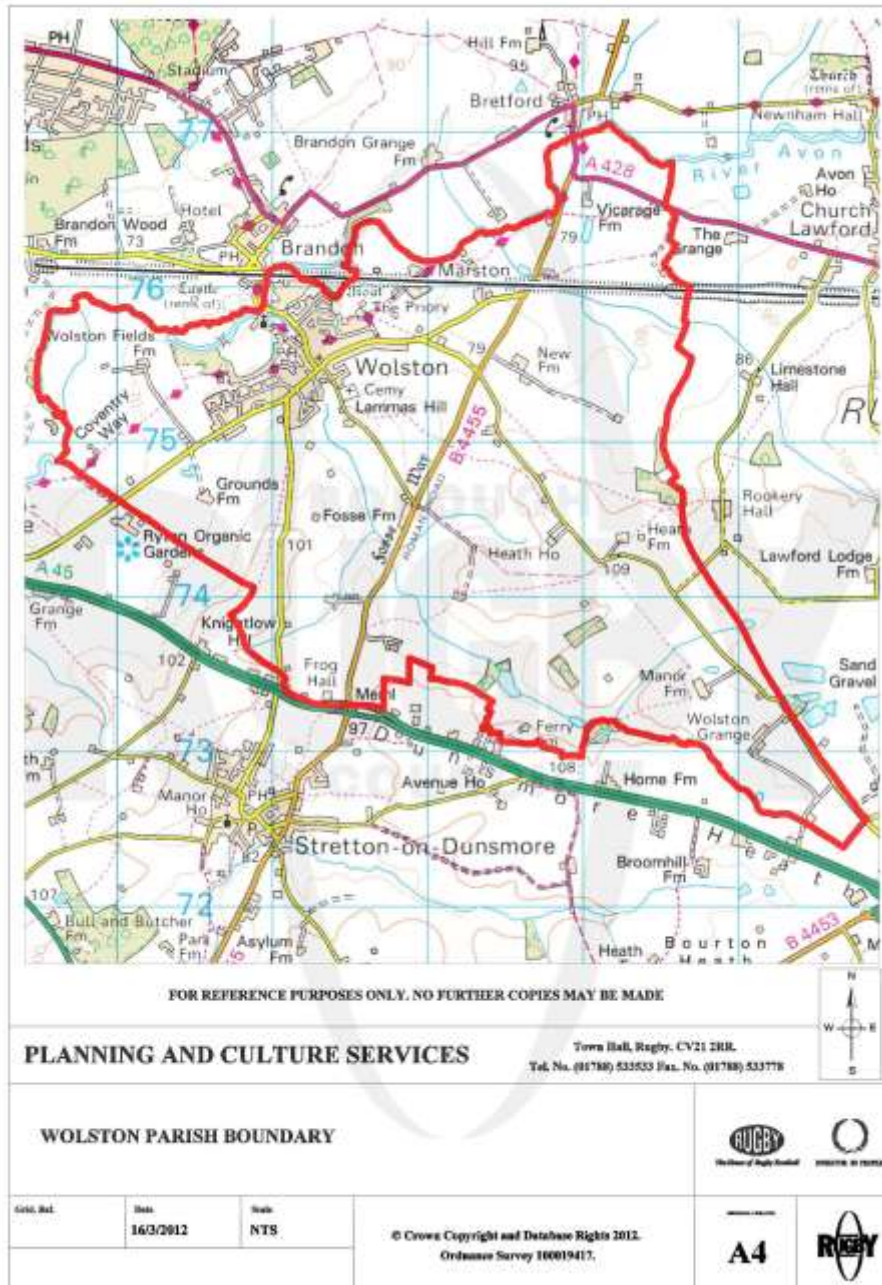
8. The parish and village of Wolston fall within the administrative boundary of Rugby Borough Council. The parish is located approximately 6 miles from Rugby to the east, and Coventry to the west.
9. The village has a population of 2,564 (2011 Census) and has a rural character with a historic core centred on the Conservation Area and listed buildings around Main Street, see Map 1.
10. The Roman Fosse Way runs through the parish from south-west to north-east and is thought to have crossed the Avon at, or very close to, the present Bretford Bridge. A Benedictine priory founded in the 11th century is known to have existed on a site currently occupied by a 16th century building. There are historic records of the bridge from 1279 and 1653.² Extensive earthworks on the northern side of the River Avon mark the site of the former Brandon castle, which was pulled down in 1265 by Baronial troops from Kenilworth Castle as the occupier John de Verdon was an active supporter of the King. It was rebuilt as a holding castle and park and was in use as a residence in 1309.
11. The village has also been shaped by transport. In addition to the Roman Fosse way the parish is crossed from east to west by the Rugby to Birmingham railway line.
12. Today the village has a range of community facilities including a primary school, a church, Baptist chapel, doctors' surgery, village hall, and a public library. There is a leisure and community centre, a scout hut, recreation ground with pavilion, children's play area, and allotments. Local businesses include a public houses, shop and Post Office, hairdressers, and a licensed Indian restaurant in a former public house.³
13. The Wolston Conservation Area covers a large area although the majority of this remains undeveloped and free from buildings. The buildings within the Conservation Area are clustered around the southern part of Main Street and continue on the eastern site of Main Street towards the River Avon. The series of village greens contribute

² From: 'Parishes: Wolston', A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 6: Knightlow hundred (1951), pp. 273-280. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=57147> Date accessed: 22 July 2013

³ <http://www.wolstonvillage.co.uk/Core/Wolston-Parish-Council/Pages/Default.aspx>

towards the area's special character as do the clusters of buildings, landscape character and open spaces.

Map 1 - Parish of Wolston



14. Wolston lies within the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Character Type with Dunsmore Parkland to the north⁴. Dunsmore Plateau Fringe has an undulating topography of low rounded hills, broad valleys and short steep slopes and is mostly an intensively farmed agricultural landscape with smaller pockets of permanent pasture, hedged fields, narrow meandering river valleys and small nucleated villages. Dunsmore Parkland comprises rolling estate parkland with a well wooded character.

⁴ Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby Sensitivity and Condition Study, Warwickshire County Council, 2006
[http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/wccweb.nsf/Links/C7131B28880DCAE080257861003A09CB/\\$file/Landscape_assessment_Rugby.pdf](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/wccweb.nsf/Links/C7131B28880DCAE080257861003A09CB/$file/Landscape_assessment_Rugby.pdf)

3 - Previous Neighbourhood Level Planning in Wolston

15. A Parish Plan for Wolston was completed in 2006. The basis for this was a questionnaire survey sent to all households in December 2004. This had a very high response rate of over 57% and the results provided a valuable snapshot of local opinions on the key issues at that time.
16. Key issues identified in the Parish Plan include the following:
 - People valued the community spirit, attractive rural environment, good communication links and local facilities.
 - There were a minority of negative comments including that community spirit was deteriorating and that the village was growing and becoming a suburb of Coventry.
 - Concerns about the reduction in local community facilities such as the loss of the high school and police station and increased levels of traffic.
 - Identification of parking as a significant issue.
 - The countryside was identified as the most important environmental feature and people felt strongly about the need to improve public footpaths; and that priority should be given to protection of open spaces and green verges, improving wildlife habitats, and improving footpaths.
 - Concerns included the need to tackle fly tipping and anti-social behaviour.
 - The majority of respondents rated village services as between satisfactory and excellent.
 - The frequency of evening and weekend bus services required improvement, as did the range of destinations.
 - Traffic levels and lack of provision of public parking for shops were a concern.
 - A lack of affordable housing was likely to lead to a number of local people leaving the village and a subsequent Housing Needs Survey undertaken by Rugby Borough Council indicated a local need for more rented housing, and some shared ownership and housing to buy.
 - There was a need to improve information about local health services.
 - The closure of the business park was seen as a loss to the village. Future development should not impact on the surrounding green belt.

- Concerns about crime were linked to the recent closure of the police station and fear of crime was an issue.
- There was an identified need to improve communication within the village.
- There was interest in clubs and recreation.
- There was support for more facilities for young people.

17. Although conducted some time ago the issues raised at the time of the Parish Plan's preparation remain the only comprehensive snapshot of attitudes and opinions in the parish. Table 1, therefore, uses this information to show how the various local and neighbourhood planning routes could address the, then, and the current issues affecting Wolston.

18. This table shows that there are fundamental differences in what the different plans can and cannot do.

Table 1 - Key Parish Plan Issues and Possible Planning Responses

Key Issue	Planning Response
Maintaining Community Spirit	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan or Parish Plan (in our view a Village Design Statement less so) could both help to galvanise community spirit by providing new opportunities for local people to have their say and get involved in decisions and actions to improve their parish. Residents could be involved in steering groups and working groups, attend consultation events and put forward their ideas and comments on the future of the Parish.</p> <p>The Local Plan could include policies to protect local services and support wellbeing, through for instance protection of natural heritage assets, allotments and open spaces. There will be opportunities for taking part in consultation activity on the Local Plan at key stages.</p>

<p>Loss of Local Community Facilities</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan could include policies to protect local community facilities and identify those for protection through the development plan. The neighbourhood plan strategy and allocations could also support local services through appropriate land allocations, e.g. new housing development, to ensure the future population of the village remains sustainable to support viable services and facilities. It could also identify community assets such as local shops or public houses for Community Right to Bid activity.</p> <p>A Parish Plan could be used to identify service improvements and key local facilities – what it could not offer is to protect these through the development plan system.</p> <p>A Local Plan could include policies to protect community facilities by defining for instance, village centres and identifying open spaces and associated facilities for protection.</p>
<p>Parking and traffic levels</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan could identify a site for a village car park and include policies to improve traffic management, subject to funding through for instance the County Council highways programmes or Community Infrastructure Levy.</p> <p>A Local Plan could include strategic policies for supporting and promoting improved traffic management through a range of schemes.</p>

	<p>A Parish Plan could be used to identify traffic issues, and then be used to influence future County transport policy and planning. It could also be used to identify parking issues and actions the parish council could pursue to address them.</p>
<p>Protection of Countryside, Open Spaces and Wildlife Habitats and improving accessibility</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan could include specific policies to protect locally identified natural heritage assets and opportunities for improving wildlife habitats and accessibility. A neighbourhood plan could be used to take advantage of the new local green space designation policy in the NPPF.</p> <p>A Local Plan could include strategic policies for protecting wildlife habitats and biodiversity, and promoting a green infrastructure approach to managing open space. Representations could be made by the parish to include important green spaces under the new local green space designation policy in the NPPF.</p> <p>A Parish Plan could be used to identify the actions the parish would take to improve accessibility and either make or seek to influence others to make in local habitats and their management.</p> <p>A Village Design Statement could be used to set out the considerations developers should take in to account when designing new buildings and how they relate to and impact upon important local green spaces.</p>
<p>Fly tipping and Anti-social</p>	<p>These are not really planning issues,</p>

<p>Behaviour</p>	<p>but both Neighbourhood Plans and Local Plans can include policies on design of new development to promote overlooking and “secure by design” principles.</p> <p>If there are particular hotspots for fly tipping and anti-social behaviour a Neighbourhood Plan could identify the sites for environmental improvement such as provision of a community garden / wildlife area etc. and support this with education and awareness raising activity by the Parish Council.</p> <p>A Parish Plan could identify issues and the type and quality of responses key local agencies would take to tackle such issues.</p>
<p>Off Peak Bus services, and destinations</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan could include policies which require new housing development to be located close to existing bus routes and stops. Consideration could be given to asking for developer contributions to support local bus services.</p> <p>A Local Plan could include strategic policies which support transport by means other than the private car and allocating new housing sites where there is good accessibility to services.</p> <p>A Parish Plan could identify issues and be used to influence the service planning of local providers and the policy of the County.</p>
<p>Lack of Affordable Housing</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan could include policies and site allocations to support provision of affordable</p>

	<p>housing to meet locally identified need. A Community Right to Build Order would, in effect, grant planning consent for an appropriate development proposal.</p> <p>A Local Plan could include strategic policies which support appropriate affordable housing development to meet local needs in rural areas.</p> <p>A Parish Plan could identify issues and be used to influence the Local Plan, planning decisions, and the policies of affordable housing providers.</p>
<p>Information about health services</p>	<p>This is not really a planning issue.</p> <p>A Parish Plan could be used to provide some of this information and set out actions the parish council would take, with service providers, to improve its dissemination.</p>
<p>Protecting the Green Belt</p>	<p>The green belt is protected from development in national planning policy (the NPPF). Green Belt boundaries can only be changed in “exceptional circumstances”.</p> <p>The Local Plan would be the document to change the Green Belt boundary. Rugby Borough sees no need to do this.</p> <p>Development acceptable in the Green Belt is also set by national planning policy. The Local Plan currently follows this. There is very little scope, if any, for any neighbourhood level document to go beyond national policy.</p>

<p>Fear of Crime</p>	<p>This is not really a planning issue, but both Neighbourhood Plans and Local Plans can include policies on design of new development to promote overlooking and “secure by design” principles.</p> <p>Similarly, a Village Design Statement could be used to promote similar principles.</p> <p>A Parish Plan could identify issues and the type and quality of responses key local agencies would take to tackle such issues.</p>
<p>Improving Communication</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to address this issue.</p> <p>A Local Plan is unlikely to address this.</p> <p>A Parish Plan could be used to establish protocols or service level agreements between the parish and other service providers.</p>
<p>Improving leisure and recreation facilities and facilities for young people</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan could include policies and site allocations to protect and enhance recreational facilities and open spaces to meet local need. A Community Right to Bid could be used to acquire facilities under threat for the benefit of the local community.</p> <p>A Local Plan could include strategic policies which protect local facilities, open spaces and play areas.</p> <p>A Parish Plan could be used to identify issues and then be used to influence service providers.</p>

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Wolston Parish Council's Responses to Rugby Planning Consultations and queries regarding neighbouring planning

19. More recently there are a number of planning related issues and concerns identified by Wolston Parish Council in correspondence with Rugby Borough Council. These include the following policy areas which could have implications for potential neighbourhood level planning in Wolston. One of the key areas is *Housing Allocations and Housing Need*.
20. A number of sites have been considered for housing through the Strategic Housing Land Availability SHLAA process. One large site, Site RS183, Site 2 Wolston, remains in the 6-10 year list of sites. This is considered developable *but not deliverable*.
21. The Parish Council considers that the proposed mix of housing in an area should be determined by local housing needs as identified in up to date local housing needs surveys.
22. The Parish Council is concerned that any provision of open market housing to support delivery of affordable housing on an exception site should only be considered as a last resort, where an up to date Housing Needs Survey supports this, the exception site is considered suitable, and the proposed development is consistent with local planning policy, including neighbourhood plans.
23. The parish could remain a consultee responding as they are and seeking to influence Rugby's emerging planning policy. A neighbourhood plan for Wolston could go further and include detailed planning policies and site allocations to guide new housing development to meet local need within the parish. Beyond this, a Neighbourhood Development Order could be used to grant planning consent for such development as the Parish Council considers appropriate. A Village Design Statement could be prepared to influence design of future development. A Parish Plan would have very little scope to influence such issues. Although as discussed later in this report Core Strategy policy CS2 would allow a parish plan to "inform" such decisions.
24. *Designation and Protection of Open Space* the saved Local Plan (2006) Policy LR4: *Safeguarding open spaces* continues to be applied by the

Borough Council when determining planning applications on designated open spaces. In addition open spaces are protected by Core Strategy Policy CS14. The Parish Council regards the safeguarding of existing open space as critical, and has concerns about the intentions of Policy LR4 in the recently published Local Plan Discussion Document. On-site and off-site provision of open space in new developments may be acceptable to local communities.

25. One area that the National Planning Policy Framework opens up is the opportunity for local communities through local and neighbourhood plans to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. The designation should only be used:
- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular local significance; and
 - where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Both Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan could take advantage of this new planning policy.

26. **Landscaping** - The Parish Council have expressed concerns that there is a lack of forward strategy and robust planning policy requiring landscaping to be an integral part of the overall design of development. Policies in a Neighbourhood Plan could require appropriately designed landscaping in proposed new developments, having regard to the distinctive landscape character and historic setting of the parish.
27. **Design** - The Parish Council is concerned that there is insufficient weight given in existing planning policies to requiring high quality design and promoting healthy communities.
28. Again, policies in a Neighbourhood Plan could be used to highlight local character and to strengthen planning principles requiring designs of new development to be appropriate to the local context, for instance by use of materials, scale, height, massing and landscaping. Similarly, a local list of (non-designated) historical assets could be identified and given additional protection in a Neighbourhood Plan.

29. A Village Design Statement could be prepared with very similar content but would not form part of the statutory development plan.
30. **Employment** - The Parish Council has concerns about the flexible approach of the Borough Council's policies in relation to employment type and change of use.
31. A Neighbourhood Plan could include policies to protect local employment sites and to support existing and future employment opportunities in the Parish. However the neighbourhood plan would have to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Borough Council, as well as mindful of the NPPF's commitment to securing economic growth and building a strong, competitive economy. Paragraph 22 of the NPPF advises that planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Applications for alternative uses should be treated on their own merits, having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.
32. **Community Facilities** - The Parish Council is concerned about the lack of Local Plan protection for local services and community facilities in villages. Whilst a Local Plan policy would be appropriate to provide strategic protection to local services and facilities a Neighbourhood Plan could provide much more detail in relation to Wolston. The Parish Council may wish to consider whether some services should be identified for protection in a Neighbourhood Plan or for identification on the list of assets of community value, and targets for possible Community Right to Bid activity: for instance where a local public house or village shop / post office is at risk of closing.
33. **Wildlife – non-designated sites** - The Parish Council is concerned that not enough protection is given to non-designated wildlife sites in the Local Plan. The Parish Council may wish to use a Neighbourhood Plan to identify and protect non-designated natural heritage assets in the parish, working with local wildlife groups and using local knowledge and expertise.
34. **Historic Environment** - Similarly, in relation to built heritage assets, the Parish Council could consider preparing a "Local List" of locally important built heritage assets and including these in a Neighbourhood Plan for added protection.

4 - National and Local Planning Policy Context

35. Planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan and any other material considerations. The development plan for the purposes of determining planning applications in Wolston comprises the NPPF, and the saved policies of the Rugby Local Plan.
36. Should Wolston Parish Council decide to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, then the Wolston Neighbourhood Plan would form part of the statutory development plan. This is a fundamental difference neighbourhood plans have from parish plans or village design statements.
37. Neighbourhood plans are required to be in general conformity with national and local planning policies. In terms of Rugby Borough planning policy in Policy CS2 parish plans are also required to be in conformity with planning policy.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

38. (Note - paragraph numbering in the extracts refers to the numbering in the published NPPF document to aid referencing).
39. The key paragraphs of relevance to Wolston include the following:
 - “6. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
 7. There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:
 - an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

- a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

11. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

15. All plans should be based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, with clear policies that will guide how the presumption should be applied locally.

16. The application of the presumption will have implications for how communities engage in neighbourhood planning. Critically, it will mean that neighbourhoods should:

- develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development;
- plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan; and
- identify opportunities to use Neighbourhood Development Orders to enable developments that are consistent with their neighbourhood plan to proceed.”

Neighbourhood plans

40. The key policy from the NPPF on neighbourhood plans is set out below. The key features for Wolston Parish Council to consider when making a decision on whether to proceed with a neighbourhood plan are emphasised:

“183. Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Parishes and neighbourhood forums can use neighbourhood planning to:

- set planning policies through neighbourhood plans to determine decisions on planning applications; and
- grant planning permission through Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order.

184. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community. The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. To facilitate this, local planning authorities should set out clearly their strategic policies for the area and ensure that an up-to-date Local Plan is in place as quickly as possible. Neighbourhood plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods should plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.

185. Outside these strategic elements, neighbourhood plans will be able to shape and direct sustainable development in their area. Once a neighbourhood plan has demonstrated its general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and is brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood, where they are in conflict. Local planning authorities should avoid duplicating

planning processes for non-strategic policies where a neighbourhood plan is in preparation.”

NPPF – Threats and Opportunities for Wolston

41. The NPPF promotes sustainable development. It has a strong emphasis on economic growth and supports house building to help stimulate the national economy. The NPPF seeks to redress the identified national shortfall in housing provision, and aims to speed up and simplify the planning system by requiring local planning authorities to prepare up to date Local Plans and to maintain a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites to meet current and future demand.
42. However there is recognition that there is a need to protect rural areas and to ensure that new development is appropriate to local needs. Green Belt policy remains very strong.
43. High quality design, which responds to distinctive local character is encouraged, and natural and built heritage assets are protected, including those assets of local designation.
44. The NPPF also introduces the concept of protected local green spaces. The potential to use this in a neighbourhood plan has already been highlighted in para. 25 above.

Warwickshire County Council

Warwickshire Structure Plan (1996-2011)⁵

45. The saved Warwickshire Structure Plan policies were formally revoked by Statutory Order SI 2013/933. This was laid in Parliament on 24th April 2013 and came into effect on 20th May 2013. Therefore as of the 20th May 2013, the saved Warwickshire Structure Plan policies no longer form part of the statutory development plan for Warwickshire.

Rugby Borough Council

⁵ <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/structureplan>

Rugby Borough Saved Local Plan Policies, 2006 (Post Core Strategy Adoption)

46. Current policies in the Saved Local Plan which are considered of relevance to Wolston are:
- GP2 – Landscaping
 - GP5 – Renewable Energy
 - E6 – Biodiversity
 - E17 – Development affecting parks and gardens and other elements of the historic landscape
 - H12 – Open space provision in residential developments in the rural area
 - LR4 – Safeguarding open space
47. With the emerging Local Plan at discussion document stage these policies have a limited “shelf life”, but would still need to be taken in to account if Wolston were to embark on a neighbourhood plan in the short term.

Rugby Borough Saved Local Plan Policies – Threats and Opportunities for Wolston

48. The above policies provide general protection for a number of planning issues relevant to Wolston. Policy GP2 is considered generally robust in terms of requiring developers to incorporate important features into a high quality design and to use native species to enhance biodiversity. Landscape character is mentioned but a Neighbourhood Plan or Village Design Statement would allow the opportunity to build in more direct references to the local landscape character, and to the particular features distinctive to the parish such as the paddocks and open spaces in the Conservation Area. In addition, landscape design should ideally consider a Green Infrastructure (GI) approach to ensure that landscapes support a range of uses from flood protection to enhancing biodiversity.
49. Similarly Policy E6 Biodiversity, provides general protection to wildlife habitats and species, but will refer largely to existing wildlife records for designated sites.
50. Historic parks and gardens and landscapes are protected by Policy E17, including locally important assets. This is a well worded and robust policy. A neighbourhood plan could supplement this policy by

identifying important historic landscape features and sites, and including more detail about their significance to the landscape setting of the Parish, and identifying views to and from the asset which should be protected. This could include for instance the sites of Brandon castle and the medieval and post medieval settlements.

51. Policy L4 safeguards open space identified on the Proposals Map, and sets out several scenarios where development of open space would be acceptable. If Wolston parish wish to protect an open space which is under threat of development, and the proposed development would include enhancement of sport and recreation facilities, a neighbourhood plan could be used to designate a Local Green Space – offering stronger protection than the Local Plan, see para. 25 above.

Rugby Borough Core Strategy, June 2011⁶

52. The Core Strategy contains the strategic policies which will guide the future development of the Borough up to 2026: all other documents within the Local Development Framework must be consistent with it.
53. The following targets and policies are of relevance to Wolston:

Strategic Development Targets - Housing Development

54. Rugby Borough Council will deliver 10,800 dwellings within the Borough between 2006 and 2026 with at least 9,800 accommodated within or adjacent to Rugby Town itself. This requirement is demonstrated through the consideration of the latest population estimates; household estimates and affordability within the Borough. The Council has undertaken a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment that considers the total supply of housing land and concludes that approximately 6,000 dwellings need to be allocated through the Local Development Framework (LDF).

Policy CS1: Development Strategy

55. The location and scale of development must comply with the settlement hierarchy. It must be demonstrated that the most sustainable locations are considered ahead of those further down the hierarchy.

⁶ http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=5102

MAIN RURAL SETTLEMENTS

Binley Woods, Brinklow, Clifton on Dunsmore, Dunchurch, Long Lawford, Ryton on Dunsmore, Stretton on Dunsmore, Wolston and Wolvey

Will accommodate:

- **Development permitted within existing defined village boundaries; and**
- **Local housing needs.**

COUNTRYSIDE

New development will be resisted; only where national policy on countryside locations allows will development be permitted.

GREEN BELT

New development will be resisted. Only where national Green Belt policy allows will development be permitted.

Policy CS2: Parish Plans

56. Where the views of a community are expressed in a Parish Plan (or equivalent), they will be taken into account in the planning system. For the views of a community to be considered, the Parish Plan will need to:
- have been endorsed by Rugby Borough Council;
 - be in conformity with the LDF; and
 - be regularly updated if necessary.
57. The use of parish plans will principally inform:
- the determination of a planning application;
 - the requirement and scope of development contributions associated with a planning permission; and
 - the assessment of schemes in the context of a need identified through the Parish Plan.
58. This is, in our opinion, a strong policy should Wolston decide to prepare a parish plan. It sets out the conditions necessary for a parish plan to carry “weight” with the borough council, and also sets out how parish plans will be used in planning terms. It is a good basis for any parish

plan – considerably stronger than core strategy policies in other areas. Wolston may wish to consider how it works in practice by discussing this with any neighbouring parish that has a parish plan that fulfils the criteria in Policy CS2.

Policy CS11 – Transport and New Development

59. Development will be permitted where sustainable modes of transport are prioritised and measures mitigating against the transport impacts which may arise from that development or cumulatively with other proposals are provided. This shall be achieved where appropriate through the submission of a transport assessment and:

- Contributions to transport modelling work;
- The provision of travel plans to promote sustainable travel patterns for work related trips; and;
- The entering into of bus partnerships with the County Council and/or third parties.

60. The thresholds above which transport assessments will be required and the relevant car parking standards for all development types are set out in the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document.

Policy CS13: Local Services and Community Facilities

61. Existing local services and community facilities should be retained unless it can be demonstrated that:

- there is no realistic prospect of the existing use continuing for commercial and/or operational reasons;
- the site has been actively marketed for a similar or alternative type of service or facility that would benefit the local community; and
- the existing service or facility can be provided in an alternative manner or on a different site in the local area

62. New local services and community facilities to meet the needs of local communities will be permitted in the following locations:

- as an integral part of a planned new development;
- in identified areas of deprivation where the provision would contribute towards addressing the deprivation;
- in existing residential areas within the urban area and defined rural village boundary settlements; and

- when a provision is identified in a Parish Plan adjacent to the settlement boundary when it cannot be met within the settlement boundary.

63. Provided that:

- it is readily accessible by a choice of means of transport, including by foot and cycle;
- the nature and the scale of the development would be commensurate with its function to provide facilities for the local resident population;
- the nature and scale of service provision will reflect and relate to the size and function of the individual settlement; and
- the development would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the Town Centre or any planned town centre development.

64. Where new developments are proposed the implications on existing services need to be taken into account. This may result in contributions to existing services or new provisions being accrued.

65. This is a very comprehensive policy. Where policy in the Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan are so comprehensive Wolston Parish needs to ask the question “what could a neighbourhood/parish plan add to strategic policy?” For instance could they seek to identify certain sites or buildings as protected community facilities?

Policy CS14: Enhancing the Strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) Network

66. The Council will work with partners towards the creation of a comprehensive Borough wide strategic GI. This will be achieved through the following:

- The protection, restoration and enhancement of existing GI assets within the network as shown on the Proposals Map;
- The introduction of appropriate multi-functional linkages between existing GI assets.

67. Where appropriate new developments must provide suitable GI linkages throughout the development and link into adjacent strategic and local GI networks or assets, where present.

Policy CS16: Sustainable Design

68. All development will demonstrate high quality, inclusive and sustainable design and will only be allowed where proposals are of a scale, density and design that would not cause any material harm to the qualities, character and amenity of the areas in which they are situated. Development will ensure that the amenities of existing and future neighbouring occupiers are safeguarded. New development should seek to complement, enhance and utilise where possible, the historic environment and must not have a significant impact on existing designated and non – designated heritage assets and their settings. Sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) should be proportionately incorporated in all new scales of development. Infiltration SUDS should be promoted where it is practical.
69. Where infiltration SUDS are not applicable surface water should be discharged to a watercourse in agreement with the Environment Agency. Considerations in reducing the use of non renewable resources and taking into account the impacts of climate change include:
- Urban heat islands and cooling
 - Promoting sustainable methods of transport;
 - Conserving and enhancing the built and natural environment
70. All new residential development should meet the water conservation standards in Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Non-residential development shall demonstrate water efficiency of the relevant BREEAM very good standard. Actual provision will be determined through negotiation, taking account of individual site characteristics and issues relating to the viability of development.

Policy CS19: Affordable Housing

71. Affordable housing should be provided on all sites of at least 0.5 hectares in size or capable of accommodating 15 or more dwellings. On sites between 0.5 Hectares and 1 Hectare in size a target affordable housing provision of 33.3% will be sought. On sites exceeding 1 hectare in size or capable of accommodating 30 or more dwellings a target affordable housing provision of 40% will be sought.
72. New housing developments in Main Rural Settlements that are within the thresholds of this policy will be required to meet any identified Local Housing Needs as a priority before the requirements of this policy.

73. Local Housing Need dwellings will be provided in accordance with CS22 and contribute to the achievement of the affordable housing provision target. In circumstances where the provision of the targets set out here are likely to threaten the financial viability of a development scheme, the Council will consider a reduced target. Further details of the requirements are outlined within the Housing Needs SPD which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Policy CS20: Local Housing Needs

74. In Main Rural Settlements permission for Local Housing Needs development will be granted where it is proven to meet the identified needs of local people. In Local Needs Settlements permission for Local Housing Needs development will be granted on sites smaller than 0.2 hectares. Need will be judged with reference to the circumstances of the proposed resident including:

- The suitability of present accommodation to meet the need and whether it could be converted to meet it; and
- Whether the need can be met from the existing housing stock

75. There must be an established local connection for those local people that claim to be in housing need. Local people will include:

- A person or persons and their dependants residing permanently in the parish or adjoining parish, for at least 5 years or more in the previous 20 years;
- A person or persons required to live close to another person who satisfies the above criteria and is in essential need of frequent attention and/or care due to age, ill health and/or infirmity;
- A person or persons required to live close to their place of work in the parish or an adjoining parish.

76. In all cases where a local need has been clearly identified arrangements for the management and occupation of dwellings must be made to ensure that all dwellings provided will be, and will remain available for occupancy by eligible local people both initially and in perpetuity.

77. In circumstances where the provision of this requirement is likely to threaten the financial viability of a development scheme, the council will consider a reduced provision.

Policy CS21: Rural Exceptions Sites

78. The development of affordable housing that meets the needs of local people, as defined in policy CS20, will be permitted as a Rural Exception Site adjacent to defined rural settlement boundaries, where development is normally resisted, if all of the following criteria are met:

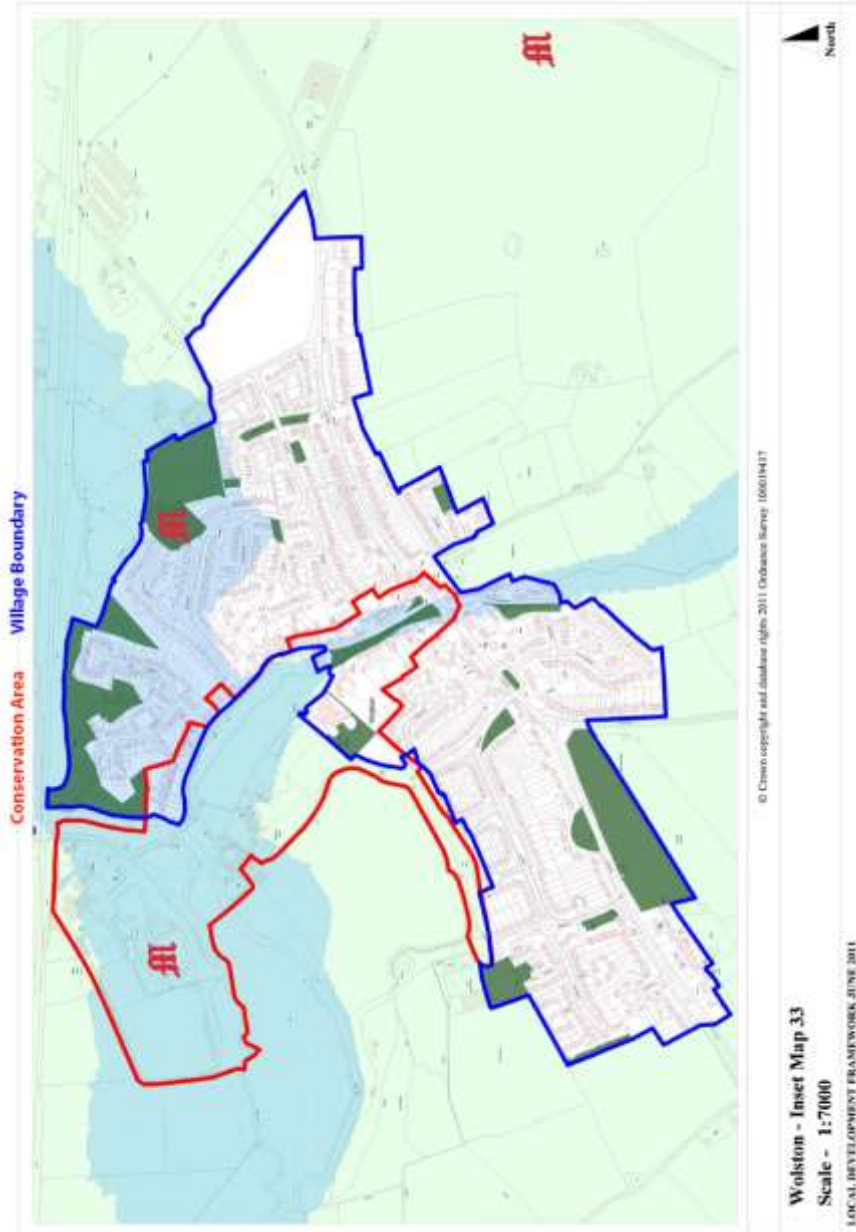
- It is clearly demonstrated that there is a local need for affordable housing which outweighs other policy considerations;
- It is demonstrated no alternative suitable sites exist within the defined settlement boundary;
- The development consists exclusively of affordable housing;
- Developments do not have an adverse impact on the character and/or appearance of settlements, their setting or the surrounding countryside;

79. In all cases arrangements for the management and occupation of dwellings must be made to ensure that all dwellings provided will be, and will remain available for occupancy by eligible local people at an affordable cost and at a range of tenures, both initially and in perpetuity.

80. The Core Strategy also includes a map showing the key planning policies for the village e.g. Green Belt, Settlement Boundary, Conservation Area, Flood Zone. Etc., see Map 2.

Map 2 - Wolston Village Inset Map ⁷

⁷ http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?downloadID=2358



Local Development Framework - June 2011
INSET MAPS NOTATION

		Policy Number
	Borough / Local Plan Boundary	
	Village Boundary	CS1
	Strategically Significant Employment Site and Major Development Site in the Green Belt	ED4.1, ED5.16
	Conservation Area Boundary	
	Green Belt	CS1
	Scheduled Monument	
	Registered Park and Garden	E17
	EA Flood Zone 2 - April 2009	
	Open Space	LR4

Rugby Borough Core Strategy Policies – Threats and Opportunities for Wolston

81. Of particular significance to Wolston are the policies in the Core Strategy which relate to Green Belt, housing development, protection of open space and historic assets and landscaping.
82. A number of policies provide opportunities for new housing in Wolston in order to meet local needs. Policy CS1 identifies Wolston as a Main Rural Settlement where development is permitted within existing village boundaries to meet local needs. CS19 advises that new housing development in main rural settlements will be required to meet identified local housing needs as a priority and CS21 sets out criteria for rural exception sites, where development may be permitted adjacent to the defined settlement.
83. It is possible that such development proposals may be viewed as a threat in terms of impact on the existing compact structure of the settlement, but they may also be seen as an opportunity to provide additional housing to meet local needs. A Neighbourhood Plan could add detail and value to such policies by allocating sites where development is considered appropriate, subject to locally relevant criteria.

84. The Core Strategy also supports the use of parish plans in the planning process in CS2. In our opinion, this is a very firm basis for preparing a parish plan. Any parish plan must be in conformity with the LDF and regularly updated. The existing Wolston Parish Plan is based on survey information dating from almost 10 years ago in 2004, and therefore would require reviewing and updating in order to be used effectively in the planning process.
85. Alternatively a Neighbourhood Plan would offer the opportunity to prepare an up to date statutory planning document, which would have greater weight in planning decisions than a parish plan, notwithstanding CS2.
86. Policy CS13 gives protection to local services and facilities in terms of controlling changes of use, and supports provision of new services and facilities subject to accessibility, suitability of nature and scale and impact on neighbouring centres. However such planning policies are powerless in preventing closure of services which are no longer considered economically viable, with the potential attendant threat of vacant and disused land and buildings. Alternatively Community Right to Bid activity offers the opportunity for a local community to take control of an asset and continue to run it for the benefit of local people. Such community assets can be identified in a Neighbourhood Plan.
87. Green Infrastructure (GI) is addressed in CS14. A Neighbourhood Plan could be used to identify local opportunities for linking in with the strategic GI network and ensuring that landscaping and management of open spaces incorporates a GI approach within the parish.
88. Managing transport impacts of new developments addressed in CS11. However the particular issues of Wolston could be identified for action in a Neighbourhood Plan, tied into policies relating to developer contributions.
89. The Wolston Village Inset Map (Map 2 above) identifies the village boundary, Conservation Area, 3 scheduled monuments, green belt, open space and a flood zone.

Rugby Local Plan Discussion Document, July 2013

90. Rugby Borough Council published a Local Plan Discussion Document for consultation in July-August 2013.

91. This document set out policy areas to be developed and the Council's suggested approach. This round of consultation is to be followed by publication of a Local Plan preferred option document.

92. The Local Plan, alongside the adopted Core Strategy, will replace the remaining saved Local Plan 2006 policies.

93. Relevant proposals in the Local Plan Discussion Document to Wolston include the following:

Housing Mix

94. The Council is proposing the Local Plan will set policy guidance on housing mix. This could be different in urban and rural areas should appropriate evidence justify this.

Conversions

95. It is proposed to have a policy that allows the conversion of redundant buildings in Main Rural Settlements.

Rural Occupancy

96. It is proposed to have a rural occupancy policy in the Local Plan for residential development associated with rural employment uses.

Replacement Dwellings

97. A replacement dwelling policy is proposed.

Open Space and Recreation

98. As the provision and qualitative improvements to open spaces is envisaged to be delivered through CIL there is no requirement to set out provision standards.

Open Space Contributions

99. It is proposed the Local Plan sets no thresholds.

Quality and Accessibility of Open Space

100. A policy to ensure open spaces are of high quality and accessible, whilst ensuring no loss of amenity to residents, neighbouring uses or biodiversity is proposed.

Safeguarding Open Spaces

101. It is proposed a safeguarding policy based on the criteria in para. 74 of NPPF is developed.

Green Infrastructure

102. A strategic approach to Green Infrastructure is proposed that promotes preservation, restoration and recreation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection of priority species populations.

Climate change and flooding

103. The Local Plan will support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings.

Flooding

104. The Local Plan will contain policy outlining a more detailed approach to flood risk management.

Design and Historic Environment

105. The Local Plan will include a further policy on massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access. A single policy will also outline a positive strategy for all aspects of the historic environment.

Rugby Borough Local Plan Discussion Document – Threats and Opportunities for Wolston

106. The Parish Council has already submitted detailed comments as a response to the recent public consultation on the Local Plan discussion document. In summary, these include a number of concerns around potential gaps in local planning policy, when compared to requirements set out in the NPPF. The main concerns are:

- A lack of forward strategy relating to the need to ensure that landscaping forms an integral part of overall design
- Safeguarding open space is critical

- Housing mix should be driven by local housing need
 - More weight should be given to promoting health through design
 - Employment sites should be protected and undue flexibility avoided
 - Local services and community facilities should be retained
 - Areas without Neighbourhood Plans may be at a disadvantage
 - Protection of wildlife should include non designated species and habitats
 - Development should respond to local character and the historic environment.
107. It should be noted that this document is only a discussion document and it does not include draft policies at this stage, but highlights the main policy areas which a new Local Plan would address, including ultimately replacing the saved Local Plan policies.
108. There will be further opportunities for Wolston Parish Council to submit detailed comments during future public consultations on the emerging new Local Plan. The key consideration will be whether the Local Plan provides a robust planning framework for decision making in relation to Wolston, or whether the particular issues would be better dealt with through a more detailed approach to design and site allocations through the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.
109. A key area for consideration by the Parish Council will be whether the existing and emerging planning policy framework at the national, and district level will provide a sufficiently detailed and robust framework for determining planning applications in Wolston.
110. There will be further opportunities to become engaged in the local plan consultation process, for instance at preferred option and pre-submission stage. This will help to ensure that the Borough Council takes account of important local issues in Wolston. However, some issues may be best dealt with at a local level, due to the level of detail required and significance in relation to a particular location. In these cases, the preparation of a neighbourhood plan may offer a more appropriate route.

5 - A Review of the Available Evidence Base

111. A wide range of published planning policy documents have been published to support the preparation of the Core Strategy and Local pPlan. A number of these should be considered in more detail in relation to identifying key planning issues for Wolston.

Rugby Borough Council Housing Strategy 2013 - 2015⁸

112. The strategy sets out how the Borough Council will work, over the next three years, to ensure that Rugby's housing supply meets housing needs.
113. The over-arching objective for the new housing strategy 2013-15 is to:

'ensure that Rugby's housing supply meets housing needs'⁹

Sitting under this are three area wide priorities:

1. Accessing high-quality housing and preventing homelessness
2. Make best use of existing homes
3. Help people to live independently

114. The Action Plan for delivery includes several proposed actions which may have implications for housing provision in Wolston. These include:

- Understand the housing market(s) and housing needs in the borough.

(This will be achieved by conducting an updated strategic housing market assessment (SHMA), developing a Gypsy and Traveller housing needs assessment, brokering a protocol with stakeholders to assist identifying and meeting rural housing needs, and developing a new strategic land availability assessment.)

- Ensure that housing and planning policies are based on high-quality evidence
- Increase the supply of new homes
- Develop a Gypsy and Traveller site allocations development plan document

⁸ http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=6046

⁹ Approval of the Rugby Radio Mast Sustainable Urban Extension could have significant implications for the housing land supply in the Borough.

- Stimulate home-ownership opportunities for first-time buyers
- Enable older people to live independently, regardless of tenure

Wolston Housing Needs Assessment: A Detailed Investigation into the Housing Needs of Wolston, Midlands Rural Housing, 2011¹⁰

115. The survey was conducted in order to obtain clear evidence of any local housing need for a range of affordable housing tenures for Wolston residents. Forms were distributed to all households in the Parish and also to those who contacted Midlands Rural Housing to say that they had moved away from Wolston, or had a strong connection to the Parish and wished to complete a form. In total 1,104 survey forms were distributed and 300 were received in return, giving a return rate of 27% against the number distributed.
116. The information obtained from a Housing Needs Survey is invaluable at the local level, particularly in relation to the Local Authority and Parish Council activities. Such information can be acted upon locally and taken on board in the decision making process when housing issues arise.
117. Key results of the survey included the following.

Supportive of affordable housing development to meet local needs

There were 41 general comments highlighting a lack of affordable / low cost / rented / shared ownership / council housing; for the young / elderly / families / disabled / first-time buyers and those on low and average incomes.

Not supportive of affordable housing development to meet local needs

“Wolston already has a large council/social housing presence, no need for anymore”

“Wolston does not need affordable housing; site was identified after our last survey some 4 years ago”

“There are already properties for sale in the parish which remain unsold/empty. Therefore no need for further build but need for purchase of existing for shared ownership”

¹⁰ http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=3227

“There are plenty of homes, some for sale at a variety of prices, some are very cheap”

Other comments regarding housing, development and life in Wolston

Various comments linked to concerns about the village expanding, impacts on local facilities and traffic and the village becoming a commuter suburb of Rugby.

Housing Needs Analysis

118. As far as the requirement for housing, 19 returns indicated a need for affordable housing either within the next two years or in two to five years' time and all but one of these satisfied the Borough Council's local connection criteria.

Conclusion

119. The survey identified a need for properties of a mixed tenure to meet the immediate (i.e. those with a need within 2 years) affordable housing needs of those with a local connection. (It should be noted that many more households will be on housing registers wanting an affordable property in Wolston, but this survey ascertained those in need who have a local connection to the Parish). The survey also highlighted the needs for market level rent housing and open market housing as well as needs that will arise in two to five years' time.
120. Of the 15 respondents who indicated a housing need within the next two years:
- **13 were assessed as being in need of affordable housing**
 - 7 x 2 Bed house – social rented home
 - 4 x 2 Bed house – shared ownership home
 - 2 x 2 Bed bungalow (physically adapted) - shared ownership home

 - **2 were assessed as being in need of open market housing**
 - 1 x 2 bedroom house - market rent
 - 1 x 2/3 bedroom bungalow (physically adapted) - open market
 - 1 does not yet meet the local connection criteria yet (currently lived in the Parish for less than 5 years)
121. There were 4 respondents who will require a range of housing options in 2 to 5 years' time; 3 are not currently in immediate housing need and 1 does

not yet meet the local connection criteria. They were discounted from the analysis at this time.

122. **The conclusion of this study was that there is an immediate need of 15 local need dwellings in Wolston for those with a local connection. This need was met by the planning permission for 80 homes at Priory Lane (R12/1194).**

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), Phase 1, Rugby Borough Council, 2008 ¹¹

123. The primary role of SHLAA is to:

- Identify sites with the potential for housing;
- Assess their housing potential; and
- Assess when they are likely to be developed.

124. It is important to note that although the SHLAA determines the *housing potential of sites it does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development*. The SHLAA is intended to inform the Local Development Framework which will set out policies that allocate sites for housing development.

Suitability for Housing: Planning Policy Assessment

125. The sites identified in Wolston are shown on Map 3 below.

Size of Site

126. In the SHLAA methodology all sites with an area less than 0.2ha were excluded from the assessment. This included the sites below:

Table 2 - Sites with an area less than 2ha.

Ref	Site Address	Area (ha)	Housing
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¹¹ http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=3528

			potential
RS150	Baptist Church burial ground, Wolston	0.09	3.6
RS151	Woodland west of Brook St, Wolston	0.195	7.8

Open Space Designation

127. All sites containing land designated as Open Space by the 2006 Rugby Adopted Local Plan were also removed. These included the sites below:

Table 3 - Sites designated Open Space

Ref	Site Address	Area Housing Potential	Area	Existing Designation
RS149	Land at Warwick Road, Wolston	1.9057	76.228	OS
RS29	Allotment Land Wolston	4.762	190.48	OS/GB

Sites Outside the Wolston Settlement Boundary

128. Phase 1 of the SHLAA process has only considered sites that are located within a defined settlement boundary. Any site that would represent an extension to an existing settlement boundary has been removed. These included the following sites in Wolston:

Map 3 - Phase 1 SHLAA Sites in Wolston

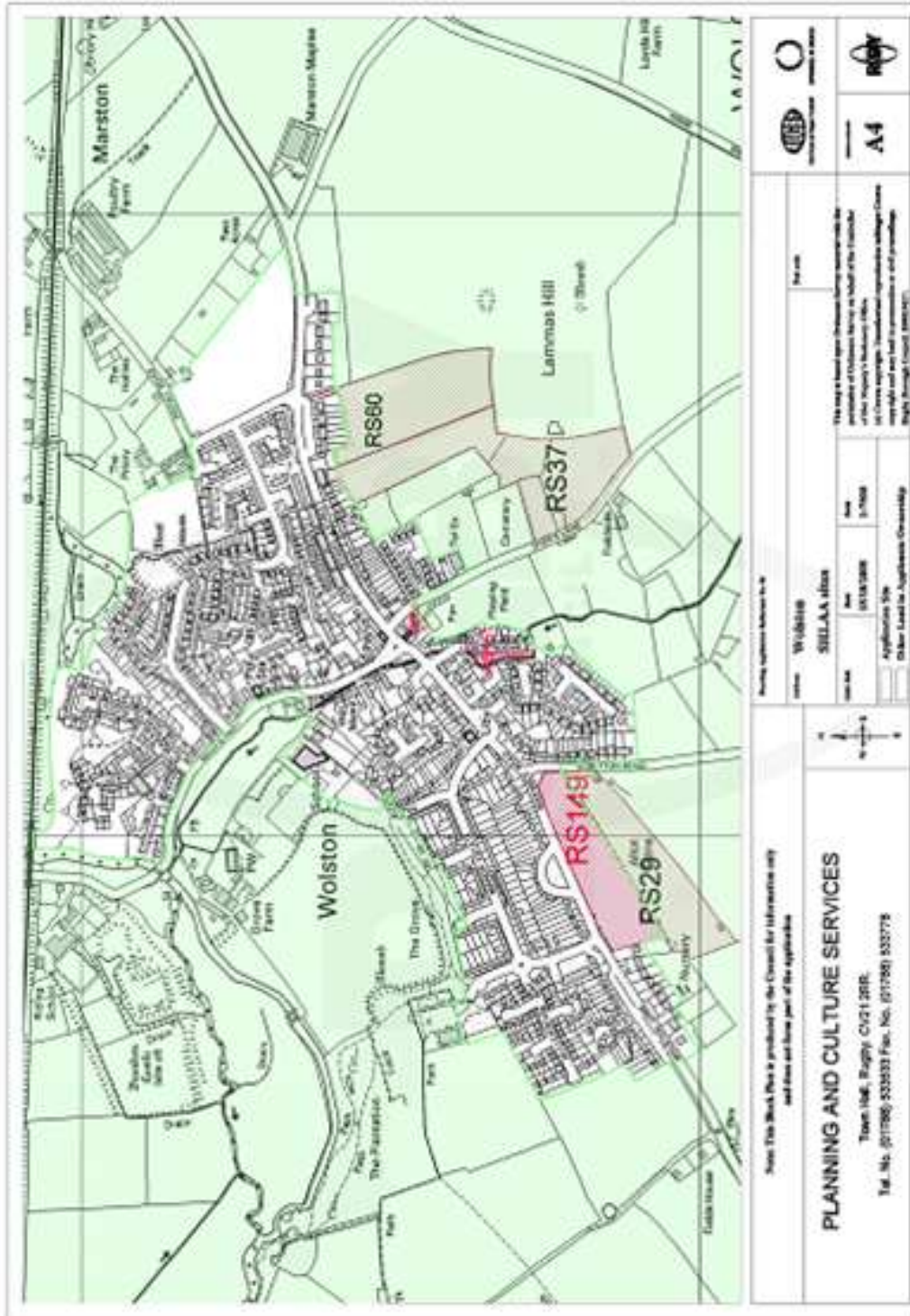


Table 4 - Settlement Extensions

Ref	Site Address	Location	Site Area	Housing Potential
RS60	School Street Wolston 2	MRSE	2.74	109.6
RS37	School Street Wolston	MRSE	12.572	251.44

129. After the removal of these sites none of the SHLAA sites in Wolston were considered suitable for development.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Rugby Borough Council, Phase 2, April 2009¹²

130. This section of the report sets out the methodology adopted for Phase 2 of the SHLAA and outlines the final results of both phases of the assessment.
131. Sites smaller than 0.2ha were removed from the database. These sites are listed in the Table below.

Table 5 - Sites with an area less than 0.2ha.

Ref no.	Site Name/Address	Area (ha)	Housing Numbers (40/Ha)
RS150	Baptist Church burial ground, Wolston	0.09	3.6
RS151	Woodland west of Brook St, Wolston	0.195	7.8

132. The following table, however, identified sites considered developable in 6 to 10 to years. RS183 Wolston Site 2 is a larger site covering site RS60 considered in the Phase 1 SHLAA. There is no explanation as to why the methodology adopted in Phase 1, whereby settlement extensions were excluded has been changed.

Table 6 - 6-10 year SHLAA sites

¹² http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?downloadID=1750

Ref no.	Site Name/Address	Area (ha)	Housing Numbers	Deliverable	Developable
RS149	Land at Warwick Road, Wolston	1.9057	76.228	No	Yes
RS183	Wolston site 2	3.269	130.76	No	Yes

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Rugby Borough Council, Phase 2 Update, June 2010¹³

133. Following the publication of the Phase 2 SHLAA report Rugby Borough decided to make a number of changes. This was based on updated information becoming available to the Council, and a number of errors being identified within the Phase 2 SHLAA report.
134. As a result of this RS149 - Land at Warwick Road, Wolston was excluded from the list of 6-10 year sites. Wolston Site 2 (RS183) remains within the identified housing land supply for 6 – 10 years – but it should be noted whilst it is considered developable it is not considered deliverable – presumably because of its Green Belt location.

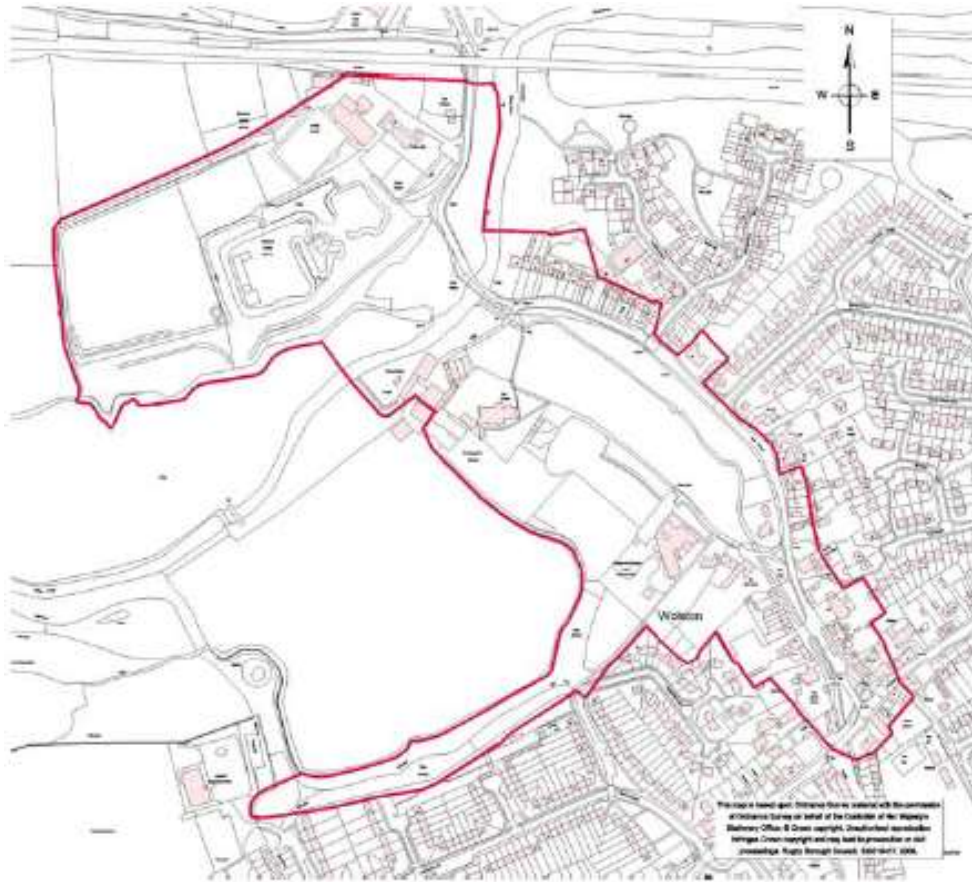
Wolston Conservation Area Appraisal, Rugby Borough Council, June 2010¹⁴

135. Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act in 1967. A Conservation Area is defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an ‘area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

Map 4 - Wolston Conservation Area Designation

¹³ http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?downloadID=1750

¹⁴ http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=4969



136. The Conservation Area covers a relatively large area mostly free from buildings, Map 4. Land to the north and west is mostly undeveloped. In contrast buildings are clustered to both sides of the southern part of Main Street. Buildings continue on the eastern side of Main Street leading towards the River Avon.
137. The overall character is of a linear village with large areas of relatively undeveloped spaces. The buildings in the Conservation Area are mostly dwellings. However, there are a number of shops at the southern end and pubs are situated on both sides of Main Street. The area includes two churches, the chapel is the first building on the eastern side of Main Street; the Church of St Margaret is to the west behind the open space. To the north of this church is Grove Farm, a working farm.
138. Landscaping and open space play a major role in the Conservation Area, see Map 5.

Map 5 - Important Landscaping and Open and Green Spaces



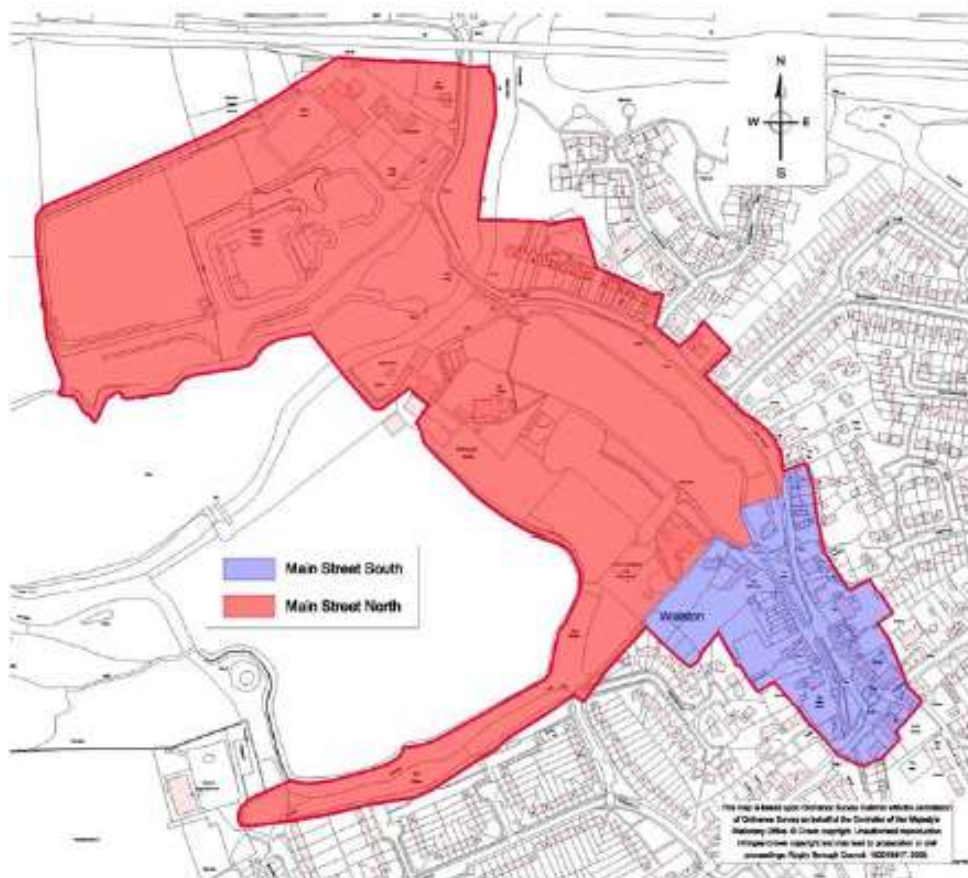
139. The extent of the Medieval Settlement at Wolston, recorded from cartographic and aerial photographic evidence, extends across the southern extent of the Conservation Area. An area of settlement earthworks, associated with the shrunken post-medieval settlement at Wolston, also lies within the extent of this medieval settlement. Local information suggests that the site of the post medieval manor house at Wolston also lay within this area. A bridge of 17th century appearance lies on a tributary of the River Avon. Wolston Bridge itself dates from the 18th century. The Conservation Area incorporates the site of Brandon Castle, which is a Scheduled Monument in recognition of its National Importance.

Detailed Architectural Assessment

140. In order to make the appraisal more accessible the detailed assessment of the architectural and historic character has been divided into two smaller areas (see map 6 below) and comprise:

Area 1: Main Street North
Area 2: Main Street South

Map 6 – Conservation Area Appraisal Sub-Areas



Area 1: Main Street North

141. This sub area is characterised by two elements. A sweeping terrace dominates the eastern side of Main Street providing an almost unbroken wall of development, set behind long narrow front gardens. In contrast the open spaces of the paddocks, equestrian centre, Brandon Castle and the churchyard, provide large areas of undeveloped land with occasional buildings.

Area 2: Main Street South

142. This sub area represents a significant change in character from the northern section. The grass verges and broader highway creates a focal point at the southern end of Main Street with buildings on both sides of the road. There is no single characteristic style of architecture, instead there is a mix of buildings in appearance and stature. The built development comprises buildings read as groups, individual buildings of different characters and terraces. Density of development is higher with buildings to all sides.
143. The Conservation Area Appraisal also identifies the significant contribution of unlisted buildings, street furniture and key views and vistas which should be protected.
144. It is concluded that the overall historic character of Wolston Conservation Area has been well maintained and most architectural details in the older buildings have been preserved. The overall quality of the Conservation Area remains high with the traditional buildings prevailing. Changes have taken place to buildings but the designation retains its integrity despite the scale of the twentieth century development to the east and south. Enhancements could be achieved however with the reduction in the impact of the larger expanses of tarmac and car parking and the reinstatement of missing original features or materials.
145. A number of opportunities for enhancement are identified and it may be appropriate for a village design statement or neighbourhood plan to consider the inclusion of policies to support some of these:
 - replace uPVC/non original timber fenestration with timber using the original windows as reference;
 - delineate the main highways with areas used for car parking. Blue engineering bricks, granite setts etc. could be used to reduce the expanse of tarmac to the foreground of the pubs and buildings on the western side of Main Street;
 - place overhead wires underground;
 - use consistent approach to bollards, e.g. all timber;
 - use consistent approach to street lighting and road signs in a style to reflect the rural location;
 - replace any non native trees with native species;
 - enhance the facades of the buildings fronting onto the southern end of Main Street, improve the shop fronts and aim to achieve a more cohesive appearance;
 - establish a management plan for Brandon Castle;

- provide further landscaping to the farm and equestrian buildings;
- reduce the impact of hardstanding on the front gardens of the northern terracing. Smaller areas of blue engineering bricks with gravel between reduces the visual impact. Maintain landscaping to the front parts of the front gardens;
- establish a management plan for the Grove Plantation.

Rugby Open Space Audit, Rugby Borough Council, 2008¹⁵

146. The Open Space Audit provides a comprehensive Borough-wide audit of the distribution, quantity and quality of Rugby's open spaces and play facilities. The Audit includes an assessment of the open space and recreational needs of the open space and recreational needs of the local community.
147. The audit assessed 15 open spaces in the parish. Four of these were considered high quality/high value: Warwick Road allotments, the Village Green; the Burial Ground at Dyers Lane; and the Dyers Lane Recreation Ground.
148. The remaining sites were considered to be of high quality/low value.

¹⁵ http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=3495

Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Sub-Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy, February 2013¹⁶

149. At the moment this is a consultation document. It starts from the basis that:

“Green Infrastructure is a network of multifunctional greenspace, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities.”

The purpose of the Strategy is to provide evidence for the preparation of plans, policies and strategies relating to Green Infrastructure (GI) at a sub-regional level and at a local level.

Rugby Community Infrastructure Levy Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule, Sept 2012¹⁷

150. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a new tariff that developers pay on commencement of new development. This tariff is then used by local authorities to help fund infrastructure to support new development in their area. It is a fixed rate charge, based on square metre net additional floorspace. It is set by the local authority (the Charging Authority) in a Charging Schedule, and is based on evidence of infrastructure needs and the level of development viability across the Borough. It is not intended to cover all the costs of providing infrastructure but will be an important funding source to help deliver growth within the Borough.
151. CIL will supplement and partially replace the current system of securing developer contributions or planning obligations via Section 106 agreements. Section 106 agreements will still be sought, but mainly to secure on-site infrastructure necessary to enable development to come forward.
152. Rugby Borough Council has published a Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule for consultation.
153. New development, including extensions to buildings, which are over 100 square metre (sq. m.) gross internal floorspace are liable to pay CIL. All new dwellings regardless of their size are also liable. CIL is only chargeable on net new floorspace.
154. Table 7 shows the proposed CIL rates for different development types. The physical extent of the residential charging zones is shown in Map 7 below. Wolston falls in Zone B CIL is proposed to be levied at £50 per sq.

¹⁶ http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=5875

¹⁷ http://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=5637

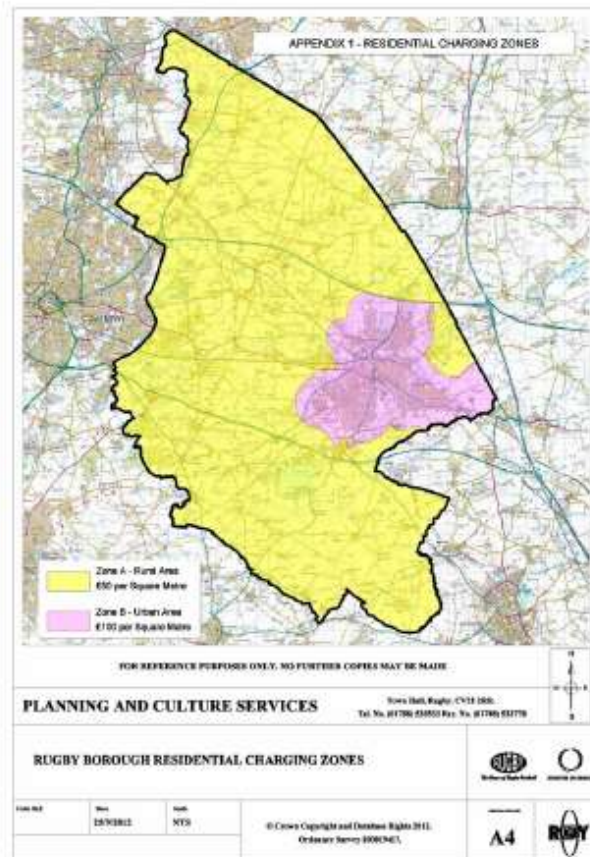
m. on residential development (note there is a mismatch in zones between the Table and Map 7 – this is in the rugby original).

Table 7- Proposed CIL Zones and Charges

Zones	Development Type (Use Classes)	Proposed CIL rate (£ per sq m)
Zone A	Residential (Use Class C3 including sheltered or specialist housing) Urban	£100
Zone B	Residential (Use Class C3 including sheltered or specialist housing) Rural	£50
Zone C	Retail Town Centre and Out of Centre (Use classes A1 – A5)	£112

Map 7 - Residential Charging Zones

Appendix 1: Residential Charging Zones



Other relevant Local Plan evidence base documents

Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby Sensitivity and Condition Survey¹⁸

155. This is a broad scale landscape assessment and sensitivity analysis of the Borough of Rugby.

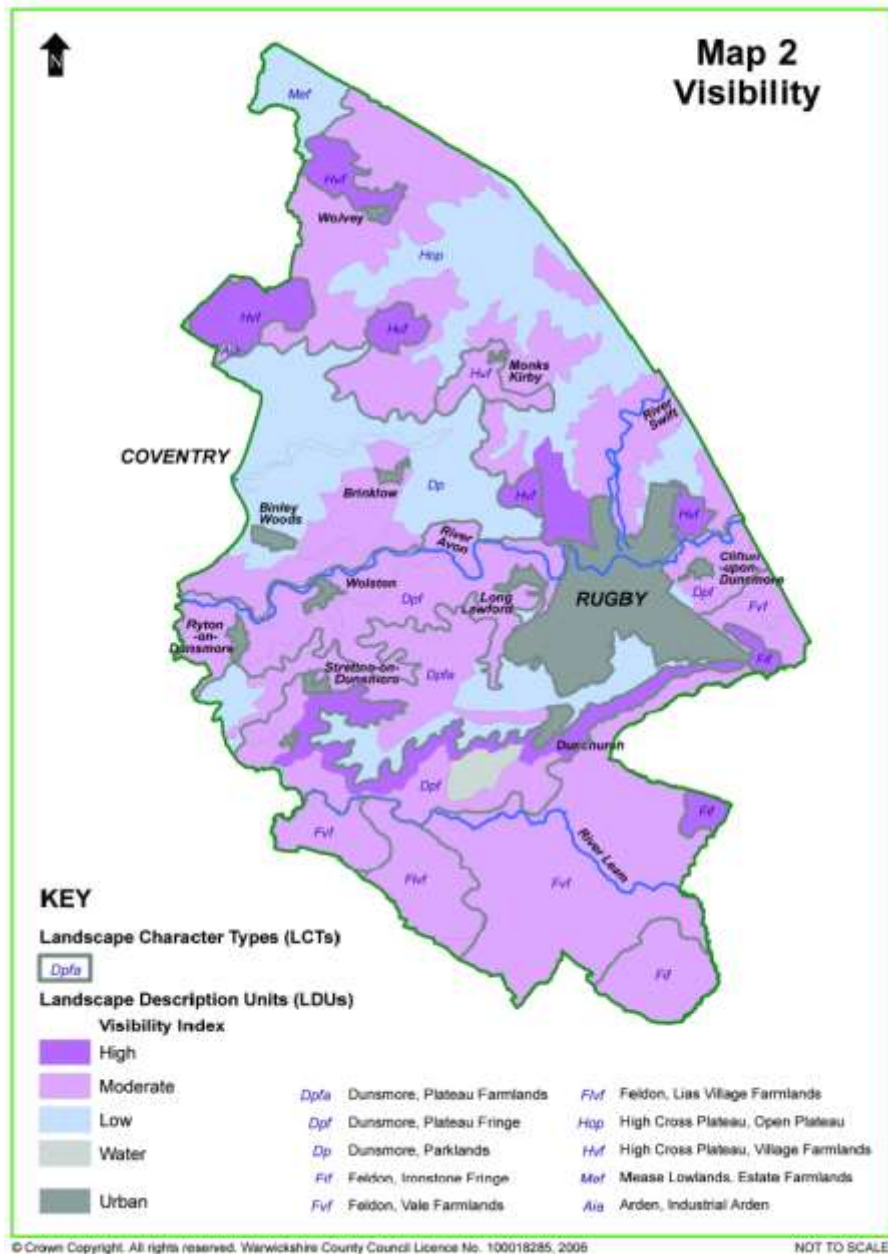
Sensitivity analysis

156. Landscape sensitivity is a measure of the degree to which the countryside can accept change without causing irreparable, long term damage to the essential character and fabric of the landscape. Sensitivity is closely related to the nature and pattern of key elements that define the character of a particular landscape and any analysis of sensitivity needs to look separately at the **fragility** of the inherent (**natural and cultural**) pattern and the degree of **visibility** within each landscape. The concept of fragility is related to the extent to which change may result in the loss of features, or patterns that cannot be easily replaced. The concept of visibility relates to the degree to which change is likely to cause a visual impact within a particular landscape.

¹⁸ Produced by Environmental Design Group, Warwickshire CC
[http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/wccweb.nsf/Links/C7131B28880DCAE080257861003A09CB/\\$file/Landscape_assessment_Rugby.pdf](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/wccweb.nsf/Links/C7131B28880DCAE080257861003A09CB/$file/Landscape_assessment_Rugby.pdf)

157. It can be seen from the Map above that Wolston is in the Dunsmore Plateau Fringe Landscape Character Type, with Dunsmore Parklands to the north. Wolston lies in an area of moderate fragility.

Map 9 - Visibility



158. Visual sensitivity, or ‘visibility’ is a measure of the degree to which change is likely to cause a visual impact within a particular landscape. A

visibility index can be defined by looking at the relationship between the prominence of landform and the nature/extent of tree cover. From the Map above it can be seen that Wolston is in an area identified as Moderate on the Visibility Index.

Landscape Character Types

159. Wolston lies within the Dunsmore Landscape Character Type.
160. The area known as Dunsmore is characterised by a range of historical and ecological associations, which are strongly influenced by the underlying geology of the region. It lies almost wholly within Rugby Borough, comprising an area of low glacial plateaux and incised, meandering river valleys lying between Leamington Spa, Coventry and Rugby. The widespread occurrence of glacial sands and gravels is reflected in the strong association with former common and heath. Although none of the heath remains today, the occurrence of remnant heathy vegetation, the late enclosure pattern of large geometric fields, and the abundance of "Heath" names, all impart a strong sense of regional identity. Light sandy soils and large geometric fields have resulted in an intensively farmed landscape. The extent of semi-natural habitat is therefore rather limited to: pockets of unimproved grasslands; flood meadows and associated wetland habitats along the river corridors; and to two major ancient woodland complexes to the south and east of Coventry. These ancient woodlands, together with characteristic mature hedgerow oaks, and historic parklands, give this region a well-wooded appearance.
161. Dunsmore can be sub-divided into three different landscape types, each of which is characterised by a particular aspect of the wider regional character:
 - Plateau Farmlands
 - Plateau Fringe
 - Dunsmore Parklands
162. Wolston lies within the Plateau Fringe with Dunsmore Parklands to the north.

Plateau Fringe

163. The Plateau Fringe is a rather variable landscape with an undulating topography of low rounded hills, broad valleys, and short, steep slopes occurring on the northern and southern edge of the Dunsmore plateau. For the most part it is a large-scale, intensively farmed agricultural landscape, characterised by large arable fields, often with a poorly defined field pattern.
164. In places, however, there are smaller scale pockets of permanent pasture and smaller hedged fields, usually associated with more steeply sloping ground. The narrow meandering river valleys of the Avon and Leam are also noteworthy features within this landscape with large arable fields often sweeping down to the river's edge. Pockets of river meadowland still survive in places, notably on the Avon at Little Lawford. Small nucleated villages are also a characteristic feature and contrast with the sparsely populated nature of the adjoining Plateau Farmlands.
165. **Sensitivity – Fragility:** Cultural sensitivity is moderate due to the historic, coherent pattern within this LCT. Ecological sensitivity is low with the exception of: the moderately sensitive steeper slopes of southern escarpment which fall towards Feldon; and the highly sensitive River Avon.
166. **Sensitivity – Visibility:** Visibility is generally moderate due to the presence of small woods and trees superimposed over a rolling topography. On the slopes of the southern escarpment, however, visibility is high.
167. **Overall sensitivity:** With the exception of the southern escarpment and the River Avon, overall sensitivity is moderate, with visibility being the limiting factor.
168. **Condition:** To the north, the Plateau Fringe is generally in decline with the exception of an area of parkland between the River Avon and Long Lawford, and land around Church Lawford and King's Newnham, where the condition is strong. The southern fringe or escarpment on the other hand, is not only highly sensitive, but also largely in strong condition, making this an important feature to the south of the town.

Dunsmore Parklands

169. Dunsmore Parklands is a gently rolling estate landscape with a well-wooded character, defined by woodland edges, parkland and belts of trees. Wooded streamlines and mature hedgerow and roadside trees, (typically oak), reinforce this impression by creating a sequence of linked wooded spaces. Large blocks of woodland and smaller coverts help to create a sense of scale and enclosure in an otherwise intensively farmed landscape. Field pattern is large but poorly defined, and in places absent altogether, allowing middle distant views to wooded skylines.
170. **Sensitivity – Fragility:** Cultural sensitivity is generally moderate due to the historic coherent pattern which exists in this area. Where it is high this is due to a slightly older, more unified pattern (ancient woodlands are contributing to this pattern). Overall ecological sensitivity is moderate due to the ancient wooded landscape character.
171. **Sensitivity – Visibility:** Visibility is generally low, due both to the level of tree cover, as well as to the low-lying, rolling topography. It is moderate when tree cover is reduced.
172. **Overall sensitivity:** Overall sensitivity is moderate as a result of both cultural (time depth) and ecological factors – primarily ancient woodlands.
173. **Condition:** Apart from an area to the south of Harborough Parva, where the condition is strong, this area is generally in decline.

6 - Key Issues Facing Wolston

174. The desktop review of relevant published planning related documents above provides an indication of the main planning issues facing the parish of Wolston. Briefly these can be summarised as:

- The need to protect the existing high quality environment, landscapes and countryside around the village
- Protection of the Green Belt
- The need to improve traffic management and car parking
- The need to protect existing local community facilities
- An identified local housing need for 15 affordable dwellings
- Possible threat of new housing on larger sites one of which is identified, albeit considered undeliverable in the latest SHLAA
- The need to protect and enhance the Conservation Area and to promote high quality design which reflects the distinctive historic character and setting of the village
- Consideration of existing identified open spaces and whether these require improvement, together with possible identification of other spaces which are of local importance and need protection.
- Concerns about the direction of some of the policies in the new Local Plan and the level of detail they will have concerning Wolston.

175. In addition the Parish Council has provided Kirkwells with Map 10 below which illustrates discussions so far around future planning and land use issues.

References for Wolston Village Map

Reference	Present use	Preferred future use (2)
A	Motor vehicle repair business	Not housing, prefer shop house style retail units with associated car parking
B	a) Public house / Indian food restaurant b) adjacent car park	a) Remain as a PH or restaurant, not housing b) Remain as car park
C 1	Allotments – private, held by Trustees – white land	Protect from development, remain as is
C 2	Allotments – private, held by Trustees – green belt	Remain as is
D	Open green field	Planning permission already granted for 80 houses (at appeal, after two refusals). Details here.
E	Car parking area of Wolston Leisure and Community Centre, land owned by Warwickshire County Council.	Remain as is
F1, F2, F3	Scheduled Ancient Monument. Details here.	Remain as is
G	Privately owned land off Brook Street	Remain as is
H	Closed churchyard, Baptist Church	Remain as is
I	Land appears on SHLAA	Verify that this is still in the Rugby BC SHLAA
J	Site for possible future extension to Wolston Leisure and Community Centre to provide a sports hall etc...	Construct a fully equipped multi-purpose sports hall
K	Village Hall	Refurbish, upgrade and extension.
L	Open field, let for grazing	Required for future extension to cemetery

Note 1: The map is designed to be printed at A2, so will easily enlarge to 400% for viewing.

Note 2: this is the very first look at what we may want to achieve, and is suggested for the initial study only. It has not been endorsed by the Parish Council.

7 -How the Key Issues Facing Wolston could be addressed through the Various Types of Plan

176. This section of the report provides an assessment of how the various routes available to the Parish Council could potentially address the key issues facing Wolston. This section also estimates cost and identifies possible sources of funding.
177. Aside from “do nothing”, something that we assume the parish council do not want to do, given the active involvement in planning consultations and the previous work on a parish plan, these routes are:

- Route 1 - The Rugby Local Plan*
- Route 2 - A new Wolston Parish Plan*
- Route 3 - A Wolston Village Design Statement*
- Route 4 - A Wolston Neighbourhood Plan*

Route 1 - The Rugby Local Plan

178. Following this route would see the Parish Council reacting as a consultee. It would be relatively inexpensive, unless, say, professional help were needed to put together objections, or to represent the Parish at any examination in to the Local Plan.
179. In our opinion, based on the Core Strategy, and some of the emerging Local Plan policy work, contained in the Local Plan Discussion Document, some areas of policy are very strong and may not need adding to by the parish through a plan, of any kind, of their own. And, by continuing to influence the development of the Local Plan through the making of representations the Parish may well secure a Local Plan that perfectly reflects how the Parish would wish to see Wolston develop to 2026, and would be fit for purpose for the determination of any planning applications in Wolston.
180. Clearly, however, through the Parish’s own comments on the Local Plan Discussion Document there are other areas where the Parish feel emerging Local Plan policy may be less robust, and, in some cases, e.g. open space, weaker than existing policy. Our advice is, in this instance, that if the Parish Council wishes to add to, enhance, or strengthen Local Plan policy then the best route to do this is a statutory neighbourhood plan.

Route 2 - A new Wolston Parish Plan

181. A new parish plan for Wolston could review and refresh the 2006 Parish Plan. It has the advantages of being relatively quick to prepare (not having some of the procedural hoops Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans have to follow), it would also be relatively inexpensive (c. £2-3,000, all figures exclude VAT).
182. Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy is, in our opinion, a very good strategic policy under which to prepare a parish plan. In that if prepared in line with CS2 such a plan would *inform* the determination of planning applications; the setting of development contributions associated with planning permissions; and the assessment of schemes in the context of identified needs.
183. To have a Wolston Parish Plan that could inform future planning decisions the parish would have to prepare it in accordance with CS2 and this would mean: having the plan endorsed by Rugby Borough Council; making sure the parish plan is in conformity with the Local Development Framework (Core Strategy and Local Plan); and that the plan is regularly updated.
184. We would note here that whilst CS2 is a strong policy some of the bars it sets are *very similar* to those for a neighbourhood plan, i.e. submission to Rugby Borough; ensuring conformity; and the keeping of an up to date plan.

Route 3 - A Wolston Village Design Statement

185. In contrast to the other plan routes available to the parish a Village Design Statement is much more of a “single issue” document. If future design is the key issue the parish wish to address this is the document to prepare. In our opinion, the issues faced by Wolston, and the issues they wish to address go beyond design and are concerned with future land use, the control of development, and improved services.
186. The costs to prepare such a document are probably in the region of c. £3-5,000 depending on the level of professional support required.

Route 4 - A Wolston Neighbourhood Plan

187. A Wolston Neighbourhood Plan would be the most expensive of the four options. In our experience, depending on the level of outside professional assistance required, this would be in the region of £4,000 to £9,000. It

may also be the most demanding and time-consuming, although the requirements of Policy CS2 may make the development of Rugby approved parish plan more demanding than the previous version. But with an early application for designation as a neighbourhood planning area, and a Core Strategy in place, Wolston could have a draft plan ready for submission to Rugby within 12 months. All of the other routes are of a similar timescale.

188. Our view is that given the Parish Council are also concerned about planning policy and the allocation/designation of sites that this should be a policy and allocations plan. Map 10 is a good starting point for this. Such a plan would allow the Parish to set more detailed planning policy for Wolston, and e.g. to identify infill sites for new housing, or the local green spaces for protection.
189. However, what a neighbourhood plan would offer is the opportunity for the parish to set local planning policy that would be part of the statutory development plan system and would be used in the future determination of planning applications. In effect, taking some power and control from the Borough Council.
190. Having examined the key issues facing Wolston and the concerns of the Parish Council about emerging Local Plan policy our view is that a neighbourhood plan offers Wolston the best way of achieving what it wants. A neighbourhood plan would set planning policy, could look at a Wolston specific design policy, or policies, that would be stronger than a Village Design Statement. A neighbourhood plan could also be used to “flag up” service improvements and other non-planning issues, and identify actions the parish and others would take outside the neighbourhood plan to seek improvements.

Possible Funding Sources

- *Route 1 - The Rugby Local Plan*

Funding for this activity would have to come from the parish council's own resources.

- *Route 2 - A new Wolston Parish Plan*

Parish council's own resources; Big Lottery Fund Awards for All grants of £300-£10,000.

- *Route 3 - A Wolston Village Design Statement*

Parish council's own resources; Big Lottery Fund Awards for All grants of £300-£10,000.

- *Route 4 - A Wolston Neighbourhood Plan*

Parish council's own resources; Big Lottery Fund Awards for All grants of £300-£10,000. Locality grants for neighbourhood planning £500-£7,000, also available is direct support. Should Wolston decide to prepare a neighbourhood plan Rugby Borough would also receive £5,000 on Wolston's designation as a neighbourhood planning area, £5,000 on publication of a plan before examination; and £20,000 once a plan has successfully passed through examination. There is no requirement any of this funding is passed to the parish, but the letter from Department of Communities and Local Government announcing its availability to local planning authorities is clear the spending of it should be discussed with the parish.

8 - Conclusions and Recommendations

191. Wolston faces a number of key planning issues. It appears to be an active parish council and has shown this in the past with the preparation of a parish plan. We would recommend the following to the Parish:
- a. The Parish continues to engage with Rugby Borough and makes further representations on the Local Plan, pursuing these at examination if necessary;
 - b. The Parish looks to prepare a neighbourhood plan. In doing this they take the following actions:
 - i. They seek designation as a neighbourhood planning area by making an application to Rugby Borough Council.
 - ii. Following designation the Parish makes a grant application to Locality for neighbourhood planning support.
192. We have reached these conclusions based on the challenges Wolston faces, most are development plan issues. Therefore, a neighbourhood plan is the most effective way for Wolston to address these development issues and have a greater say in how the parish develops in the future.
193. We would make two final observations; much of the foregoing discussion has concerned the village itself. In our opinion, a neighbourhood plan, if it is to be pursued, should cover the whole parish and careful thought would need to be given to how the whole parish is engaged and involved in the plan's preparation. The second observation is that parishes with a neighbourhood plan would receive 25% of any Community Infrastructure Levy gathered in their area, as against 10% for parishes without a neighbourhood plan.

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