

A Neighbourhood Plan for Halesworth.

A group of dedicated volunteers have been working with the support of Halesworth Town Council to create the first Neighbourhood Plan for Halesworth.

- A Neighbourhood Plan gives more local control over planning decisions. It carries statutory weight and, in the case of Halesworth, would be in force until 2035.
- A Neighbourhood Plan must be based on the views of, and agreed by, the local community. Its function is to ensure that Halesworth gets the right types of development in the right places, and what we love about Halesworth is protected for future generations.
- Our Neighbourhood Plan cannot challenge detailed planning decisions that have already been agreed, or are referenced in the Waveney District Plan. However, it could influence developments that have been granted outline planning permission by the District Council. It will also have a significant impact on any new development proposals in the future

Progress on our Neighbourhood Plan

We have been meeting for over 18 months; holding consultation events, producing our first questionnaire, talking to local groups and engaging with young people. Over 500 people have completed our questionnaire and nearly 200 people have attended events, meetings and focus groups. Highlights include a public meeting with over 70 people in attendance and a rumbustious workshop at Edgar Sewter School with a very lively and passionate group of children from Years 5 and 6.

The purpose of all these activities has been to understand what matters most to people about Halesworth and its future development. With your help and listening to your views, we have begun to pull together the key themes for our Neighbourhood Plan. We will be launching a major consultation about them in early January 2020, but here is a flavour of some of the issues that are important to you.

Appropriate housing for all generations and incomes. People have said that they want a mix of housing with an emphasis on affordable housing, with smaller 2 and 3 bed units, not just 4 or 5 bedroom properties.

The Natural Environment. Young people have talked about making Halesworth a 'Green' town. But all groups say that we should be doing more to make the best of our parks and enhancing and protecting our river. Flooding remains a major concern, with fears that new building will increase flood risk.

Transport, movement and connecting people. How can we improve walkways and cycle paths and make getting around the town safe for pedestrians, cyclists and car drivers too? Can we make it easier for people to walk from one side of the town to another, making use of our parks and pathways?

Environmental Design. How do we maintain our lovely heritage buildings and conservation areas? Can we ensure that new buildings comply with our green agenda while being aesthetically pleasing and built to the best possible standards?

Funding Success for the Neighbourhood Plan Group.

The Group has been successful in getting 3 major central government grants to support the development of our Plan. The first meets the costs of consultation and helps us write and prepare our Neighbourhood Plan. We have engaged a consultant to support us because it is important to

meet government requirements and get our Plan absolutely right. It will be scrutinised by East Suffolk Council, central government and must also be agreed by you through a local referendum.

The second grant has allowed us to undertake a 'Housing Needs Assessment' for Halesworth. This will help us understand what sort of housing we have in Halesworth and what we will need in the future.

The third grant is funding work on design and 'design codes'. This will be a wide-ranging assessment of significant buildings and views, how the town looks overall, and the design standards that should be applied to buildings, both existing and new.

Next Steps.

We will be completing our work on creating a town vision for our Neighbourhood Plan and developing our key themes. We will start a consultation with you about these in January / February 2020. If you would like to learn more about Halesworth's Neighbourhood Plan, you can visit the Town Council Website <https://www.halesworthtowncouncil.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan-steering-group/> or contact us through the Clerk at Halesworth Town Council.