



Warminster Neighbourhood Plan

Pre Consultation Draft Summary

February 2015

INTRODUCTION

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy has recently been adopted. It will result in 1920 new houses being built in Warminster over the period 2006–2026. The town is therefore entering a period of considerable growth.

The Localism Act 2011 encourages towns to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. It allows us to:

- Have a vision for our neighbourhood.
- Have a say on what we want – subject to higher policy.
- Identify and protect green spaces.
- Influence the quality and look of new developments.

Without such a plan we are at the mercy of developers who will impose their will on the town.

The Warminster Neighbourhood Plan has been drafted in response to the above. It has been prepared by a diverse body of local organisations including: Wiltshire Council, Warminster Town Council, local businesses, schools, surgeries, Churches Together, the army garrison, individual community members, Civic Trust, Preservation Trust, Development Trust and the Warminster and Villages Community Partnership.

The Neighbourhood Plan builds on the Vision and Scoping Study which was published in March 2014. This earlier document identified the issues of greatest concern and developed the objectives for this plan under three main themes:

A Place to Live
A Place to Work
A Place to Enjoy

This summary highlights the main features of the draft Neighbourhood Plan, along with its proposed policies. The Warminster Draft Neighbourhood Plan should be consulted for a more detailed explanation.

A PLACE TO LIVE

Background

Of the 1920 new houses to be built in Warminster, 504 have already been built and 900 will be built on the west side of town in a development known as the West Urban Extension. When taking into account other known developable commitments, including the Ashwood Care Centre, Damask Way, the Victoria Road garage site, the United Services Club and other small sites, there is a potential shortfall of 317 houses.

Wiltshire Council has advised that the West Urban Extension together with windfall and brownfield sites will satisfy the town's requirement for new housing. This Plan does not therefore need to identify additional greenfield sites to meet strategic housing requirements. What we can address is how this new housing is to be integrated into the town.

This Plan has to fully comply with the Wiltshire Core Strategy and other higher policy. We can ask for more housing to be built than provided for by the Core Strategy, but we cannot ask for fewer houses to be built.

Settlement Boundaries

The existing settlement boundaries were established some years ago. Wiltshire Council is currently carrying out a review to ensure they reflect recent developments and the intent of the Core Strategy.

Wiltshire Council is required to follow a formal statutory process in determining the settlement boundaries that we cannot interfere with. However, we can offer comment on what we want. There is a keen desire within the town to draw the settlement boundary tightly around the present conurbation, and to protect a number of key areas from development.

POLICY L1 – SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES

The settlement boundary is to be drawn to protect key leisure and environmental areas from development including:

- Smallbrook Meadows and the Town Park
- Yeates Field
- St George’s playing fields
- The football stadium
- Warminster Common and the Tynings allotments
- Areas of land that have a high risk of flooding
- Inclusion of a strong buffer zone between the West Urban Extension and the A36 bypass.

What Do We Want for New Housing?

A number of principles have been established for new housing in the town. They include:

- Sustainable growth that balances the needs of the whole community.
- Good urban design that preserves Warminster’s character.
- Sympathetic integration of new housing.
- High sustainable standards of design and construction.
- A mix of housing suitable for a balanced and diverse population.

- Conservation of the local environment.
- Encouragement of ‘rootedness’.

West Urban Extension

There are three principal developers involved in the West Urban Extension: Persimmon, Redrow and Hannick Homes. Wiltshire Council requires them to draw up a Master Plan to avoid a piecemeal approach to development and to ensure close integration of the whole area. The site includes provision for:

- 900 houses
- 6 ha of employment land
- A new primary school
- Other community amenities
- A link road running from Victoria Road to Bath Road

The main issues identified in relation to this development are:

- The visual impact on the town.
- How is it to be integrated into the rest of Warminster?
- The poor traffic routes into the centre of town and the effect of increased traffic.
- The impact on the town’s character.
- The effect of the increase in population on existing community and leisure facilities, including education and health care.

- The need to separate housing and employment land.

POLICY L2 – WUE DESIGN

The design and layout of the West Urban Extension and other new developments are to reflect the principles outlined in the Building for Life 12 industry standard.

POLICY L3 – WUE COMMUNITY

The West Urban Extension should include a local centre with:

- A limited number of small corner shops/services to meet immediate needs.
- A primary school to meet educational needs.
- Community facilities to include a community hall/meeting place.
- Appropriate green spaces and leisure facilities, including playing fields.

POLICY L4 – SEPARATE HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

The 6 ha of employment land which forms a part of the West Urban Extension requires clear separation from the adjoining residential areas and should have its own separate access.

Other related policies are included under: A Place to Work, Education and Getting About.

Future Housing

The Strategic Housing Land Availability (SHLAA) register is managed by Wiltshire Council and indicates how future housing needs might be met. The appearance of land on the SHLAA is no guarantee that it will be developed. Any development will be subject to existing planning regulations.

The Core Strategy is expected to satisfy strategic housing needs up to the year 2026. There is no consequential requirement to identify any other greenfield or SHLAA site for housing development. To do so would place an increased burden on the town's infrastructure and community facilities when they are already being stretched.

Concerns exist that the West Urban Extension places the majority of development up to 2026 on the west side of town. Any future developments after 2026 should address this issue and seek to create a balanced community.

POLICY L5 – FUTURE HOUSING

Any future strategic housing plans for new housing areas in Warminster beyond the period of this Plan should seek to even out the traffic load across the town's entrances with a view to minimising cross-town traffic.

A PLACE TO WORK

Sustainable growth of Warminster requires people to live close to their place of work. New housing therefore requires new employment opportunities. Increased employment opportunities are not just about the availability of land. New businesses need to be attracted to the town.

There are approximately 220 businesses located in the town centre at present. A further 200 businesses are located around the rest of the neighbourhood area. The garrison and Center Parcs provide additional employment opportunities in the local area.

Employment Aims

A number of key aims have been identified for future employment in the town:

- The creation of favourable conditions that attract new businesses to the town.
- A diverse range of employment opportunities satisfying a wide skills range.
- The proximity of places to work with where people live.
- An adequate supply of suitable employment land.
- The accessibility of employment sites.
- The separation of employment and residential land.

Issues

A number of issues relate to existing employment sites that need to be addressed.

- Crusader Park and Warminster Business Park are not operating at full capacity. Their existing infrastructure also provides for expansion to the north.
- The roads and footpaths of Woodcock industrial estate have never been adopted by Wiltshire Council and require urgent upgrade.
- The Factory Lane site has poor access and is largely unused.
- Heavy lorries accessing businesses in the town centre or using it as a through route.
- Would it be better to place employment sites close to edge of town where access to the bypass is good?

POLICY W1 – NEW EMPLOYMENT SITES

Locate new employment sites on the periphery of the town where they have strong access links to the bypass.

POLICY W2 – SEPARATE HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT (see also Policy L4)

The 6 ha of employment land which forms a part of the West Urban Extension requires clear separation from the adjoining residential areas and should have its own access.

POLICY W3 – BOREHILL FARM SITE

Any development of the Borehill Farm site should be restricted to employment use only.

POLICY W4 – WOODCOCK INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

Roads, pavements and common infrastructure to be adopted by Wiltshire Council.

POLICY W5 – SMALLER EMPLOYMENT SITES

Retain and enhance existing smaller employment sites, particularly where they enable either 'start-up' activity or the expansion of new businesses.

POLICY W6 – BEECH AVENUE/FACTORY LANE SITE

Change site use from employment to residential.

- Health and well-being.
- A sense of safety.

Our overarching aims are to:

- Offer a broad and diverse range of amenities that meet the needs of a growing population.
- Ensure good accessibility to all leisure facilities.
- Ensure that what is available is of the right quality and inherently safe.
- Create an attractive environment.
- Provide what is necessary to ensure a positive sense of well-being that will contribute to a contented community at ease with itself.

Leisure and Recreational Space

Translating the above aims to the town's leisure and recreational space highlights the need for measures that will:

- Ensure that everyone has access to high-quality open spaces and leisure facilities that are well maintained and managed.
- Provide for a diverse range of leisure activities that appeal to local residents and attract others to the town.
- Enhance the provision of youth-related activities, particularly those which contribute positively to health and well-being.

- Conserve existing resources, including recreational green spaces, and allocate new areas to meet current shortfalls and the needs of a growing population.
- Protect and enhance the Town Park and Smallbrook Meadows.
- Enhance access to the countryside.

Particular issues relate to:

- A shortfall in youth-related amenities.
- A lack of any leisure attractions that act as a destination in their own right.
- The increased needs of a growing population.
- The quality of existing provision.

POLICY E1 – EXISTING LEISURE FACILITIES

New developments will not be supported where existing playing fields, play spaces and other recreational land, whether publicly or privately owned, are lost unless:

- The facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the development of a small part of the site.
- Alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made in the immediate vicinity.

A PLACE TO ENJOY

Enjoyment takes many forms. It includes:

- Having a diverse range of good sporting and leisure facilities
- Good community services.
- Cultural activities with broad appeal.
- A quality environment.
- Good access to the countryside.
- Having a vibrant town centre.

POLICY E2 – NEW LEISURE FACILITIES

Significant developments in Warminster are to include provision of:

- Playground areas.
- Green amenity spaces.
- Sports facilities with all weather and floodlight facilities as appropriate.
- Allotments where appropriate.

POLICY E3 – YOUTH-RELATED AMENITIES

Support development of:

- Cycle pump track adjacent to Town Park.
- Reinstatement of BMX cycle track in vicinity of Dorothy Walk/Portway for local use.

Sports Facilities

A number of issues have been identified in respect of existing sports facilities.

- Highbury Youth Football Club has over 400 members but very limited facilities of their own.
- West Wilts Hockey Club with over 240 junior and senior members requires access to two astro turf pitches with floodlighting.
- Warminster Cricket Club requires a new clubhouse and modernised changing facilities.

- Warminster Rugby Club is short of pitches and requires floodlighting.
- Other facilities around town are dated and require modernisation.
- More facilities are required to support the needs of a growing population.

POLICY E4 – WEST URBAN EXTENSION SPORTS FACILITIES

Draw together the individual sports pitches that are currently planned for the West Urban Extension into a single, enlarged sports amenity that is focused on the needs of an expanded youth football club and hockey club. The facility requires good access, adequate parking and changing facilities.

POLICY E5 – CIL/SECTION 106 MONIES

Other sports clubs/activities to seek CIL/Section 106 monies paid by developers to enable the expansion/modernisation of existing sports/club facilities (e.g. Rugby Club) and also the creation of new facilities that are lacking.

Cultural Facilities

Culture in Warminster is limited and generally dependent on local talent. Meanwhile the present cultural offering tends to favour the older generations. Against this background cultural facilities were ranked the least positive attribute by the Town Users' Survey carried out in 2014.

Few ideas have been offered that would improve the situation. Aspirations for a cinema may be unrealistic following the opening of a new complex in Trowbridge, and with development plans for a second in progress. It may therefore be a question of making the best of what we have got, including:

- The Athenaeum Centre.
- The present museum.
- Dents Glove museum.
- The garrison's small arms collection.
- The town's proximity to Salisbury Plain.

POLICY E6 – ATHENAEUM CENTRE

Combine the youth development centre with the Athenaeum Centre to create an enlarged amenity for arts and cultural activities.

POLICY E7 – MUSEUM FACILITIES

Wiltshire Council's campus should include enhanced, dedicated museum facilities.

Health Care

Consultation during the Vision and Scoping study revealed widespread concerns about waiting times to see a GP. It was generally felt that this situation would be exacerbated by any growth in the town's population.

Meanwhile there are concerns about the future of the community hospital which currently provides a temporary haven for Smallbrook Surgery. Finally, there are only limited NHS places available at the town's dental practices.

Health care provision is the responsibility of the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and falls outside the ambit of this plan. Local residents nevertheless feel strongly that they must be able to readily access the wider aspects of health care provision that are pertinent to their needs. The continued existence of the community hospital is central to this requirement.

POLICY E8 – HEALTH CARE PROVISION

Future health care provision is to be located in the centre of town.

Education

Education was similarly identified early in the process as being a problem area. The existing schools in Warminster are operating close to capacity. There is limited scope to expand the existing primary schools leading to a projected shortfall in places. This should be alleviated by building a new primary school in the West Urban Extension. Meanwhile Kingdown School has very limited scope to expand on its present site and there are no plans for an additional secondary school based on projected growth levels.

POLICY E9 – PRIMARY EDUCATION

The new primary school to be provided as part of the West Urban Extension is to be built early in the development to alleviate pressure on Princecroft School.

POLICY E10 – SECONDARY EDUCATION

The west end of SHLAA Site 2073 (Battlesbury Barracks) is to be reserved for the possible expansion of Kingdown School until further feasibility ideas/options have been assessed.

The Environment

Creating a pleasant and attractive environment is central to making Warminster a place of choice in which to live. The aims include:

- Making the best of the town's landscape, including its buildings of architectural and historical significance.
- Capitalising on the town's setting on the edge of Salisbury Plain.
- Protecting the Warminster and Boreham Road Conservation Areas.
- Removing 'eyesores' in the town.
- Improving the environment in East Street.
- Opening up the vista of the town park from Weymouth Street.
- Enhancing the public realm in the town, including the main pedestrian routes.
- Enhancing the quality of the entrances into town.

POLICY E11 – TOWN CENTRE ENVIRONMENT

Implement the recommendations of the Town Plan with specific reference to:

- Improving the public realm of the Western and Central Car Parks.
- Extending the town centre improvements along East Street.

POLICY E12 – SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

New developments are not to adversely impact on the local environment. In particular:

- Sight lines to surrounding key features are to be preserved.
- Developments are to include green, open spaces that enhance the immediate neighbourhood.
- Conservation areas are to be protected.

TOWN CENTRE

The Town Plan was published in 2012 and provides a template for development of the town centre. Recent initiatives further help to inform what we want for this area. They include: Benchmarking, development of a Master Retail Plan, redevelopment of the old Dents site, and Wiltshire Council’s intention to build a campus and regenerate the surrounding area.

Underpinning all of this work is a keen desire for:

- A thriving town centre
- Shops, services and community facilities that meet the day-to-day needs of local residents and businesses.

- A sustainable shopping centre.
- Easy access for residents, visitors and businesses alike.
- An attractive and appealing environment.
- A centre that builds on Warminster’s heritage as a market town.

Central Car Park Area

All of the above initiatives point to redevelopment of the Central Car Park area. It represents the single most significant opportunity to strengthen the heart of the town.

Ideas for this area include:

- Simplification of the present parking arrangements.
- Improving the public realm, including the provision of safe pedestrian routes to the facilities that surround this area.
- Strengthening the pedestrian link from the Three Horseshoes Walk to the Cornmarket.
- Moving the Warminster Information Centre to the campus facility to allow redevelopment of the present site to include new retail units.
- Moving the library to the new campus. Demolition of the present building and absorbing the site into the car park.

- Demolition of the old police houses on Station Road and offer up this site for development of the new campus.
- Relocating the weekly market to adjoin the strengthened pedestrian link between the Three Horseshoes Walk and the Cornmarket.
- Moving the present coach/bus stands in the Central Car Park to a new facility adjacent to Station Road.
- Improving vehicle access to the car park by creating a new link road through to Portway.

Key to redevelopment of this area will be the actual location of the campus and the extent to which this area is regenerated by Wiltshire Council. Only when such decisions have been made will it be possible for detailed plans to be drawn up.

POLICY TC1 – CAMPUS

Redevelop the site of the old police houses and their service yard for inclusion in the new campus proposals and bus station/ interchange as part of the economic regeneration of this area.

POLICY TC2 – LIBRARY AND WARMINSTER INFORMATION CENTRE

Relocate the library and Warminster Information Centre (WIC) to the new campus.

POLICY TC3 – RETAIL LOOP
 Redevelop the present WIC site to include a number of comparison outlets which should contribute to a retail loop connecting Three Horseshoes Walk to the Cornmarket. Introduce strong continuous pedestrian link between Three Horseshoes Walk and Cornmarket.

POLICY TC4 – CAR PARKING
 Introduce a single management regime for all parking in the Central Car Park area. Remodel car parking to simplify layout and enhance public realm. Introduce clear pedestrian walkways to improve access across car park to peripheral amenities.

POLICY TC5 – BUS STANDS
 Move bus/coach stands to a new combined facility with direct access off Station Road.

POLICY TC6 – WEEKLY MARKET
 Move weekly market to a more prominent position adjacent to retail loop joining Three Horseshoes Walk and Cornmarket. Coordinate the layout of this area with the proposed new campus.

Rest of Town Centre

The Town Plan’s proposals for other areas are explicit and endorsed. There are, however, three aspects that require reinforcement

- The SHLAA register identifies sites on the north side of High Street and south of Market Place for possible new housing developments. These entries appear to run counter to the Town Plan. Any redevelopment of these areas should accord with the Town Plan.
- Strengthening and improvement of the pedestrian link between the Western Car Park and High Street is urgently required and should be acted upon with priority.
- The fabric of East Street is generally very poor. The streetscape requires improvement along with measures to improve traffic flow.

POLICY TC7 – HIGH STREET/SOUTH OF MARKET PLACE
 Any redevelopment of SHLAA sites 214 or 215 to accord with the Town Plan.

POLICY TC8 – WESTERN CAR PARK/HIGH STREET
 Priority is to be given to upgrading the pedestrian link between the Western Car Park and High Street.

POLICY TC9 – EAST STREET
 Improve the public realm in East Street to better reflect Warminster’s heritage and character.

GETTING AROUND

The town centre has a linear high street with Copheap Lane providing the only other east-west route. Cross-town traffic problems are exacerbated by the presence on the east side of town of Kingdown School and the army garrison. Against this background, traffic issues received the greatest number of comments during the consultation process. They highlight the fragility of the present road infrastructure both into and through the town centre.

The majority of people access the town by car. Benchmarking indicates, however, that 31% walk into the centre, 12% arrive by public transport and 4% use a bicycle. It highlights the importance of meeting the needs of people who don’t use cars.

A number of factors impact upon our ability to get around easily. We need in particular:

- A system of easily navigable roads.
- Low congestion.
- Sufficient parking in the right place.
- Good public transport links.
- A good network of public footpaths.
- A good network of cycleways.
- Good access to the countryside.

A number of issues impact on the above:

- The quality of the main access routes into the town centre vary. West Street and East Street represent particular problems.
- Benchmarking highlights that the Central Car Park has the highest percentage usage of all car parks in the town centre. Improved access to this area would help to alleviate cross-town traffic problems.
- Car parking availability and accessibility needs to account for a growing population.
- Public transport links should be improved with a new bus/coach interchange in the vicinity of the campus.
- Cycle routes will need to be extended to account for new developments.
- The West Urban Extension will require strong pedestrian and cycle links into the centre of town.
- Pedestrian links need to be improved in the centre of town, particularly in the vicinity of the Central Car Park.

POLICY GA1 – CENTRAL CAR PARK

Create a new road access to the Central Car Park from Portway via site of fire station, Shearwater Lodge and northern end of The Avenue.

POLICY GA2 – BUS/COACH INTERCHANGE

Create a new bus/coach interchange off Station Road in the vicinity of the old police houses.

POLICY GA3 – CYCLE ROUTES

Create new cycle routes that link the main areas of the town, including new developments.

POLICY GA4 – WEST URBAN EXTENSION INTEGRATION

Create strong well-lit dual pedestrian and cycle paths from the West Urban Extension to the surrounding road network, particularly Grovelands, Victoria Road and Bath Road.

POLICY GA5 – TOWN CENTRE LEGIBILITY

Upgrade/improve pedestrian areas in town centre.

POLICY GA6 – SIGNAGE

Improve car park and other signage.

POLICY GA7 – WAITROSE SITE

Redevelopment of the old police houses should include pedestrian access between the end of Cornmarket and the Waitrose site.

POLICY GA8 – RIGHTS OF WAY

Enhance the rights of way network round the town, and seek to retain and upgrade rights of way in and around developments.

HOW TO COMMENT

We want your comments on the draft Neighbourhood Plan to:

- Highlight what we have got right.
- Indicate whether you support, oppose or have an alternative solution.
- Identify aspects that we might have missed.

This first stage of the consultation runs from 17th March to 8th May. Consultation response forms can be collected from the Civic Centre or the library and can be returned to Warminster Civic Centre, Sambourne Road, Warminster, BA12 8LB or by email to admin@warminster-tc.gov.uk. The form can also be completed online at: <http://www.warminster.uk.com/council/neighbourhood-plan.php>. **All comments must be received by midday on 8th May.**

Please remember that this summary cannot replicate all of the arguments and supporting information contained in the full version of the draft Plan which may be accessed:

- On Warminster Town Council's website: <http://www.warminster.uk.com>
- By viewing a copy in the Civic Centre during normal opening hours, Monday–Friday, 9am–4.30pm.
- By viewing a copy at Warminster Library.